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AMENDING EVNINE'S ONTOLOGY: THE PROBLEM OF FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC

by Ronan Brooks
Central European University

Simon Evnine holds that music is created through the composer's intentional work on a structure of sound.[1] This account suggests that the composer's intentional states must coincide with the composer's work on the sound structure. Consequently, Evnine's theory fails to address forms of composition in which the composer's intentions are distinct from the composer's work. For Evnine's ontology to stand, it must be capable of addressing these cases.

I begin by outlining the foundation of Evnine's discussion of music. Then, I offer an exegesis of Evnine's ontology. Importantly, I accept Evnine's broader ontological argument, which ties a piece's constitution to the composer's intentions and work. To illustrate the flaw in Evnine's account, I explore the example of free improvisation. To amend Evnine's account and address the flaw, I argue that the composer's intentional states need not coincide with the composer's work on the sound structure.

THE BASIS OF EVNINE'S ACCOUNT

Evnine's ontology is fundamentally Platonist. That is, Evnine assumes that works of music are abstract artifacts, which are constituted by sound structures.[2] In addition

1 Simon Evnine, *Making Objects and Events: A Hylomorphic Theory of Artifacts, Actions, and Organisms* (Oxford University Press, 2016): 137.

2 Simon Evnine, "Constitution and Qua Objects in the Ontology of Music," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 49, no. 3 (2009): 203.

to music, Evnine argues that "novels, poems, fictional characters, [...] prescriptive laws, political constitutions, and theories" are abstract artifacts.[3] These abstract artifacts are distinct from material artifacts, like chairs, and artifactual events, like theatrical performances.[4] Within the class of abstract artifacts, music's distinguishing feature is its sound structure. Sound structures are the sets of formal properties that underlie works of music. As Evnine explains, "a sound structure is a set-theoretic construct of some kind," so "a purely monodic sound structure might be a sequence of ordered triples of pitches, timbres, and lengths."[5] As set-theoretic constructs, sound structures are causally inert.[6] Under these Platonist assumptions, Evnine recognizes that "a musical work is not identical to a sound structure."[7] This reasoning is motivated by a series of potential objections.

First, if works of music were exclusively constituted by their sound structures, then the composition of music could not be understood as a creative act. In other words, if music were solely identified with causally inert sets of properties, then the composition of music could not be understood as bringing something new into existence.[8] Such a conclusion would conflict with the intuitive understanding of composers as artists, equivalent to those working in other mediums.

More pressingly, an absolute reliance on sound structure complicates an account of the modal flexibility of music. That is, the identity of a work of music may persist through small changes in sound structure. To illustrate this modal flexibility, consider if a violin section were added to the opening measure of Vivaldi's "Spring" of *The Four Seasons*, and this violin section duplicated the sound structure delegated to the violas. With this alteration, the sound structure of the new piece would be slightly different from the original. Namely, there would be a change in the timbre of the sound structure in the opening measure. If music only consisted of sound structures, then this small alteration would bring a distinct piece into existence. An ontology with exclusive reliance on sound structure is unable to account for the persistence between the two arrangements of the same piece.[9] To avert these potential pitfalls, Evnine posits an ontology with conditions

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3 Evnine, *Making Objects*, 136.

4 Ibid., 66.

5 Ibid., 136.

6 Ibid., 137.

7 Ibid., 136.

8 Evnine, "Constitution," 203.

9 There are various ways to demonstrate that music is not solely identified with sound structures. Briefly, I offer two alternative examples: First, consider the practice of revision in composition. If pieces of music were solely identified with structures of sound, then minute edits in the structure would bring new entities into existence. If an unfinished draft and its final score differed in the articulation marking of a note on a single beat, each version would constitute a distinct work. Second, if music were exclusively constituted by sound structures, then modern prints of baroque scores would be distinct works from the originals, since the timbre of baroque instruments is different from the timbre of modern instruments.

beyond the music's sound structure: the composer's work and intention.

EVNINE'S ONTOLOGY OF MUSIC

Evnine presents his ontology of music as an extension of his novel solution to the issues of material constitution. Evnine refers to his approach as amorphic hylomorphism. Unlike morphic hylomorphism, Evnine holds that "hylomorphically complex entities are sui generis entities that have matter to which they are not identical, but there is no further component of them that plays the role of form."[10] Evnine argues that there are three components to the constitution of artifacts: the artifact's matter, the work of making the artifact, and the intentional states of the maker in making the artifact.[11] Artifacts are "ideal" because they are the product of impressing a mind onto matter.[12] As a result, for Evnine, the existence of an artifact is dependent on the mind of its maker.

Analogous to his account of material artifacts, Evnine holds that a piece of music is the product of a composer's intentional work on an abstract structure of sound. Evnine summarizes his ontology of music when he writes:

> A musical work is a sui generis kind of object that is essentially such that it comes to exist, and to have a sound structure as its matter, when an artisan (a composer) works on the sound structure with the intention of creating a musical work (or a musical work of a certain kind) out of it.[13]

Thus, parallel to his analysis of material artifacts, Evnine argues that there are three components to a piece of music's constitution: the sound structure of the piece, the work of the composer on the sound structure, and the intentions of the composer during the work on the sound structure. [14]

The first component, the sound structure, assumes the role of matter from Evnine's account of material artifacts. To clarify how something abstract can assume the role of matter, Evnine argues that the composer determines a piece's structure by selecting properties from the "saturated sound space," the totality of all possible sound struc-

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10 Evnine, *Making Objects,* 12.

11 Ibid., 70.

12 Ibid., 69.

13 Ibid., 136.

14 I must briefly acknowledge the historical context of Evnine's ontology. Evnine's hylomorphism is a refinement of Kit Fine's approach. For Fine, an object O with property P forms a distinct qua object, O qua P, so "a musical work will be a certain characteristic pattern of sounds under the description of being rendered realizable in a suitable way and in such and such circumstances": see Kit Fine, "Things and Their Parts," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23, no. 1 (1999): 68. Fine's ontology refines an earlier approach defended by Jereold Levinson. Levinson argues that a piece is constituted by its sound structure as indicated by the composer at a given time, an "indicated structure": see Jerrold Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is," *Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 1 (1980): 20.

tures.[15] Evnine encourages the reader to think of this sound space as a "block of white noise."[16] In composing music, the block of white noise serves the same role as a block of clay in the production of a statue. That is, just as a sculptor carves the form of a statue from a block of clay, so too does the composer reveal a piece's structure from the block of white noise. Crucially, the sound space (and the totality of noise it encompasses) is causally independent of the composer. Evnine's commitment to Platonism requires that the sound structures of all realized and unrealized musical works exist prior to any particular composition. Evnine does not attempt to justify how it is possible for an artist to interact with a causally independent entity. Evnine even notes that "there are serious and interesting problems about how abstractions can be represented in thought, given the impossibility of a causal connection with them."[17] Evnine decides to forgo this issue. Troublingly, the same issue faces many Platonist ontologies beyond Evnine.[18]

The second and third components of Evnine's ontology of music are closely related. The second component is the work of the composer. This work refers to the act of identifying a piece's sound structure from the saturated sound space.[19] For instance, in notated music, the work of the composer is the process of writing the piece's score. The third component is the composer's intention.[20] This intentional component refers to the "attendant mental states" in the mind of the composer.[21] Evnine explains, "The intentional component must be a creative intention, an intention to bring into existence a thing with an essence that determines (or at least partially determines) spatial and temporal boundaries, and degree and kind of modal flexibility."[22] Thus, these intentional states guide the composer's work of identifying the pitches, lengths, timbres, etc. from the sound space. The composer's selection of these properties determines the sets that constitute the piece's sound structure.[23] Evnine explains how the three components fit together in an act of composition:

> [The composer] intends to compose a composition of kind G, where G is some more or less determinate kind of sound structure. And she does this by working on [...] a sound structure of kind G. In engaging in this work, she brings into existence a new object, in

15 Evnine, "Constitution," 215.

16 Evnine, *Making Objects*, 137.

17 Ibid., 137.

18 Although Evnine fails to directly address this issue, he hints at a potential solution. I discuss this potential solution in the penultimate section of the paper.

19 Evnine, *Making Objects*, 136.

20 Throughout my argument, I exclusively employ Evnine's notions of intention/intentional. These notions are distinct from the notion of intentionality employed by authors like Tim Crane.

21 Evnine, *Making Objects*, 70.

22 Ibid., 72.

23 Ibid., 136.

addition to the sound structure of kind G, namely a musical work of kind G.[24]

Evnine therefore holds that the composer's work, the identification of the sound structure, is directly connected to the composer's intentional states.

THE PROBLEM, FREE IMPROVISATION

While Evnine's theory is successful in addressing common objections to Platonist ontologies of music, a new problem arises from the role of intention. If composition requires deliberate action on a sound structure, then Evnine's ontology is unable to account for forms of composition in which the work of identifying of the sound structure is necessarily distinct from the intentions of the composer. That is, music can be created randomly and spontaneously, without the deliberation in composition expressed in Evnine's theory. To demonstrate the problem this poses, I focus on the example of free improvisation. Importantly however, this problem and my solution extend to any example of music in which the identification of the sound structure is distinct from the intentions of the composer.

A free improvisation is a composer's spontaneous determination of a sound structure. In practice, the demand for spontaneity in composition implies a limit on the composer's capacity to reflect on the sound structure of the piece. In a fully spontaneous determination of a sound structure, the composer would be precluded from reflection. Accordingly, during a free improvisation, as the composer selects sets of properties from the sound space, the content of the composer's mental states likely excludes the sound structure of the piece.[25]

Evan Parker's *Monoceros* is an example of the music I have in mind.[26] In *Monoceros*, Parker performs a solo free improvisation on soprano saxophone, which was recorded directly onto vinyl in a single take. Throughout the piece, Parker's spontaneity in identifying the sound structure is evident in his erratic performance, which rejects musical expectations (the piece is frantically atonal and arrhythmic, and it sounds like wailing).

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24 Evnine, "Constitution," 215.

25 My notion of free improvisation is informed by the work of Eric Lewis. Although Lewis writes on issues distinct from my present argument, his characterization of improvisation is instructive: First, Lewis would likely agree that free improvisation is a form of composition: see Eric Lewis, *Intents and Purposes: Philosophy and the Aesthetics of Improvisation* (University of Michigan Press, 2019): 247-9. Consistent with my notion of free improvisation, Lewis highlights that "much improvising involves what is called 'embodied knowledge,' which has as one of its phenomenological features the fact that conscious acts of deciding what to play, or how to play it (which would map onto deciding how to represent some thought or appropriate musical response), are largely absent": see Lewis, *Intents*, 245. In further comments on improvisation, Lewis notes that "there is nothing that the improvisation is consciously attempting to represent": see Lewis, *Intents*, 247.

26 See Evan Parker, *Monoceros*. Recorded 30 April, 1978. Incus Records, 1978, vinyl record.

So, how would Evnine's theory, as it stands, address a free improvisation like *Monoceros*? As a free improvisation, Parker's intentional states would be distinct from his identification of the sound structure. These components would be distinct because the performance of the piece is equivalent to the identification of the sound structure, and the performance necessarily lacks a relevant intention. For Evnine, the only intention that is ontologically relevant is the artist's "creative" intention, which "determines [. . .] degree and kind of modal flexibility."[27] The performance in *Monoceros* lacks such an intention because Parker's intentional states cannot directly involve the sound structure of the piece. Since the identification of the sound structure in *Monoceros* (the performance) lacks a relevant intention, the piece would not fulfill the components of Evnine's theory. I doubt Evnine would want to reject *Monoceros*, or other notable free improvisations, as music. Yet, it is unclear how Evnine's ontology can address this example.

In defense of Evnine, one may reject the notion of free improvisation. Seemingly, to dismiss the notion is to avert the problem. In search of intention in *Monoceros*, one might highlight Parker's musical training, his knowledge of music theory, or his previous experience of performance. One could lean on these facts to posit an indirect form of intention in *Monoceros*. One might even argue that Parker was unaware of his mental states as he identified the sound structure of *Monoceros*. By pursuing these arguments, however, one would miss the thrust of the problem of free improvisation. The problem of free improvisation concerns more than just free improvisations. Namely, the problem concerns any method of composition in which the composer's work and intentions are distinct. At this point, I only ask for any detractors to entertain the possibility of such compositions. I discuss examples beyond free improvisation in the final section.

INTERPRETING EVNINE

Before exploring my solution, I must recognize that the problem of free improvisation relies on my strict interpretation of Evnine's writing. If my interpretation were less strict, then the problem of free improvisation might dissolve. So, to justify my interpretation, I briefly return to Evnine's discussion of music. As I will illustrate, free improvisation is a problem under any interpretation of Evnine's ontology.

First, Evnine claims that a piece comes into existence "when a composer works on the sound structure with the intention of creating a musical work."[28] Here, Evnine explicitly connects the component of work, the composer's identification of the sound structure, "with the [composer's] intention." This passage implies the coincidence between the composer's intentional state and the composer's work on the sound structure. This passage also suggests that the content of the intentional state of the composer involves

27 Evnine, *Making Objects*, 72.

28 Ibid., 136.

"creating a musical work." If Evnine did not intend for my interpretation, then he missed every opportunity for clarification.

Second, my interpretation is consistent with Evnine's earliest articulation of his ontology of music: "There is some kind F, such that the musical work is an F, and the sound structure becomes the work through the composer's acting intentionally on it in order that it become an F."[29] In this passage, with the phrase "acting intentionally," Evnine joins the component of intention with the component of work on the sound structure. Again, this passage implies the coincidence of intention and work. If Evnine had intended to avoid the problems I present, he would have avoided using such a phrase.

In addition to the passages above, Evnine's exclusive reference to classical pieces of music supports my interpretation. By only analyzing examples of classical music, a form of composition that demands deliberation in notating the sound structure, Evnine fails to consider situations in which the composer's intentions and the composer's work are separate. Such an oversight demonstrates that Evnine may not have been aware of the harm in implying the coincidence of intention and work. By restricting his examples to classical music, Evnine invites the criticism I offer.

If the strict interpretation is still unconvincing, then a lenient reading might construe Evnine's ontology as vague, or incomplete. However, even under such a charitable interpretation, free improvisation remains a salient problem. An ontology that only reflects the dominant form of composition is incomplete to the point of error. And if Evnine's theory is too vague to address free improvisation, then he has no chance of addressing the more ontologically complex forms of composition, which I discuss in my conclusion. I therefore assume the strict interpretation drawn out above.

AN AMENDMENT TO EVNINE'S ONTOLOGY OF MUSIC

To modify Evnine's theory and to address forms of composition with distinct intentions and work, I propose that the composer's intentional states need not coincide with the composer's identification of the sound structure. By allowing more flexibility in the role of intention, Evnine's amended ontology accounts for a wider diversity of forms of composition. Critically, I am not contesting the principles of Evnine's ontology. That is, I do not disagree with Evnine's approach to incorporating intention into the constitution of music. In this section, continuing with the example of free improvisation, I explore the consequences of loosening Evnine's restrictions on the role of intention. When the composer's relevant intentional state occurs separately from the composer's work, there are two possible scenarios: either the composer's intentional state is prior to the composer's identification of the sound structure, or the composer's identification of the

29 Evnine, "Constitution," 214.

sound structure is prior to the composer's intentional state. First, I explore the scenario in which the composer's work is prior to intention.

In free improvisation, if the composer's intentional state occurs after the identification of the sound structure, then the intention would occur after the performance of the piece. Consider a musician who freely improvises a series of notes. These notes would constitute a sound structure, yet the notes would not become a piece of music until the musician applied intention. Imagine questioning this musician and asking something like, "What was that?" The musician could reasonably reply that the notes were not music. Instead, the musician might explain that the notes were just noise (perhaps, the musician was tuning or testing a sound). Equally reasonably, the musician could name the sound structure (an act of "creative intention" in Evnine's sense), and the improvised notes would become a piece of music. Regardless of whether the musician decides the performed sound structure was a piece of music, or whether the performance was merely noise, the lack of intention in identifying the sound structure remains the same. The only difference between the music and the noise is the musician's subsequent intentional state.

Situations in which the intentional state is prior to the act of identification may be more common. I return to the example of *Monoceros*. In *Monoceros*, the composer's work (the act of identifying the piece's sound structure) is identical to the performance of the piece. That is, because *Monoceros* is a free improvisation, the performance of the piece is the act of identifying the sound structure. Under my amended ontology, since *Monoceros* was an intentionally recorded performance, the relevant intentional state can be understood as occurring before Parker's identification of the sound structure. That is, given that Parker was not unwittingly recorded, his awareness and arrangement of the recording would be enough to constitute Evnine's notion of "creative intention."

With my amendment, Evnine's ontology can account for free improvisation and other experimental methods of composition. As long as a composer's intentional state occurs in relation to the identification of a sound structure, a piece of music will come to exist, regardless of whether the intention coincides with the identification. By addressing methods of composition beyond the classical, Evnine's amended theory is more reflective of music history and the current culture.

A COMPATIBLE AMENDMENT

Evnine may be amenable to my amendment. For Evnine to accept my modification, however, his amended analysis of music would need to be consistent with his broader ontology. In demonstration of such consistency, I explore a material example with features analogous to free improvisation.

In the examples in the previous section, there is one difference between the free

improvisation as a work of music and the free improvisation as spontaneous noise: the attendant mental states of the composer. Seemingly, a freely improvised sound structure becomes a work of music through thought. Evnine addresses a parallel situation in material artifacts. Specifically, Evnine entertains the possibility of *creation by thought alone* in the case of ready-made sculptures. To illustrate the problems posed by ready-made artwork, Evnine examines the contentious example of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*. The *Fountain* is a regular, commercially manufactured urinal, which became a work of art through Duchamp's selection.[30] Evnine postulates that Duchamp's *Fountain* may be "a case in which [the artist] 'works' on an object, a urinal, by 'thought or talk alone' (i.e., by giving it a title, putting it in a gallery, etc.) and thereby brings into existence a distinct object, a sculpture, that has that urinal as its matter."[31] Evnine does not conclusively endorse this explanation.

Although Evnine does not explicitly warrant *creation by thought alone*, he expresses confidence and interest in such explanations. Initially, Evnine claims that "creation by thought alone is not, in itself, anything mysterious."[32] Clarifying, Evnine writes, "whether the creation of something by thought or talk alone is problematic depends on the kind of thing in question."[33] Evnine even implores "we not reject out of hand [...] the possibility that 'we can bring things into existence' by thought or talk alone."[34] If Evnine lends such credence to *creation by thought alone* in examples of concrete artwork, then he may accept similar accounts in cases like free improvisation. Perhaps, a freely improvised work of music emerges through thought in a similar manner as a ready-made sculpture.

Interestingly, Evnine highlights *creation by thought alone* as a potential solution to a common issue arising from Platonist assumptions about music. As I mentioned in the exegesis of Evnine's theory, Platonist ontologies must explain the composer's apparent interaction with causally inert sound structures. Evnine speculates, "It may be that the composer simply indicates the desired sound structure (perhaps by writing a score) and thereby makes a composition out of it;" and he reiterates, "I have not ruled out the possibility that one can make an object out of some matter by mere thought or talk."[35] Here, again, Evnine is on the cusp of endorsing *creation by thought alone*. However, Evnine declines to move beyond speculation.

If Evnine entertains the explanations above, then he may entertain my amendment.

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30 Evnine, *Making Objects,* 133.

31 In Evnine's footnote to the preceding quote, he acknowledges an omission in his characterization of Duchamp's *Fountain*, "we abstracted away from the fact that Duchamp signed the urinal in question 'R. Mutt 1917'": see Evnine, *Making Objects*, 135.

32 Ibid., 112.

33 Ibid., 134.

34 Ibid., 135-6.

35 Ibid., 137.

To create the *Fountain*, Duchamp selected an object, and it became an artwork. Analogously, to create *Monoceros*, Parker selected a sound structure, and it became music. As I have argued, *Monoceros* differs from a conventional composition in one respect: the sound structure of a conventional piece is revealed with intention, while the sound structure of a free improvisation is revealed without intention. Evnine's ontology, as it stands, fails to account for forms of composition marked by this distinction. Given Evnine's comments on *creation by thought alone*, he may be comfortable accepting my amendment.

MOVING FORWARD

By incorporating my amendment, Evnine's ontology moves toward a more robust account of musical composition. Although I have only focused on the problem presented by free improvisation, Evnine's amended theory is equipped to address the disparate roles of intention in more ontologically complex music. Consider, for example, the potential issues posed by procedurally generated music. In a procedurally generated song, the sound structure is generated according to an algorithm. For procedurally generated music, the composer-engineer's intentional state could be completely removed from the work of identifying the sound structure. Similarly, in music created by artificial intelligence, the component of intention is murky. But in such cases, if the work of identifying the sound structure is autonomous, would the finished piece of music maintain a connection to the intentions of the composer-engineer? Finally, consider music created through sampling, a method of composition in which the composer edits and arranges other artists' recordings. For sampling, a piece's constitution would need to incorporate the distinct intentions and work of each musician mixed into the sound structure. Flexibility in the role of intention in my amended theory allows for analysis of the ontological issues arising from these complicated forms of music.

Moving forward, more attention is due for ontologies of music. There is almost no discussion of forms of music outside of the classical genre. Experimental genres of music present unique philosophical problems. Addressing these problems may yield progress in broader ontological discussions. Above all, music is mysterious and worth the analysis.

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PORNOGRAPHY'S PROTECTION AS SPEECH IN THE CONTEXT OF RAPE CULTURE[1]

by Emma Rippey
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INTRODUCTION

Watching pornography is a highly popular activity. Within the United States, it is legally regarded and, therefore, legally protected as speech. Despite this reality, pornography functions as more than a thought or idea. Certain feminist philosophers argue that pornography is speech that is action-like and thus regard pornography as a speech act. Radical feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon, for example, claims that pornography is the subordination of women, and this claim is interpreted by philosopher Rae Langton as providing insight into the illocutionary function of pornography. The term "illocutionary" stems from the theory of speech acts elaborated in J.L. Austin's work "Performative Utterances." In this work, Austin argues that speech acts have three different ways of functioning, or, in other words, that three things are done in speech.[2] These three things are the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act can be understood as the words, mechanisms, and group of sounds that make up a word or phrase's conventional meaning. For example, the locutionary act of the word "marriage" is predicated on the combination of the letters m, a, r, r, i, a, g, and e in a specific order (the word would not have the same conventional

1 Lauren Ashwell, (lecture, "Language and Power," Lewiston, ME, January 26th, 2022).
2 Ibid.

meaning if written as "ria mar ge" even if this phrase consists of the same letters). An illocutionary act of a word or phrase describes what is being done with the words; the illocutionary act of a speech act could be an order, a request, or a marriage. For example, the words "I do" stated at a wedding performs the illocutionary act of marriage. Austin also explains that a perlocutionary act describes the effects of a speech act, or, in other words, what a speech act brings about. For example, the effect, or perlocutionary act, of two women declaring "I do" at a wedding performs the illocutionary act of marriage and the perlocutionary acts of having a jealous ex-partner, emotional parents, and excited friends and coworkers. Although many feminist philosophers may agree that pornography is a subordinating speech act, this provides little information on how specifically pornography linguistically functions. In this paper, I outline how pornography linguistically functions by making three main claims. First, I argue that two perlocutionary effects of pornography are rape culture and sexual violence. Second, I argue that these perlocutionary effects significantly contribute to the subordination of feminized subjects, which is itself an illocutionary function of pornography. Third, I assert that pornography derives the authority required for a speech act to subordinate from government omission to intervene in actions resulting from pornography that should be legally unprotected if United States law were to be correctly followed but seem to be protected due to abuse of the First Amendment.

SUMMARY OF MACKINNON & LANGTON'S THEORIES

In her work "Pornography: On Morality and Politics," MacKinnon outlines the relationship between pornography and sexualization as a mode of domination. More specifically, she argues that intimate intrusion and access to women is sexualized, that sexualization of women contributes to constituting their social definition as inferior, and that the pornography industry mass produces sexual intrusion on, access to, possession of, and use of women.[3] MacKinnon outlines that the feminist concern for pornography is predicated on the violence it inflicts on women: "women's bodies trussed and maimed and raped and made into things to be hurt and obtained and accessed and this presented as the nature of women…this and more grounds the feminist concern with pornography."[4] Additionally, MacKinnon objects to pornography's eroticization and glorification of male dominance by arguing that the ideal male sexuality looks a lot like violence to the feminist: "[s]exual liberation in the liberal sense frees male sexual aggression in the feminist sense. What in the liberal view looks like love and romance looks a lot like hatred and torture to the feminist. Pleasure and eroticism become violation. Desire appears as

3 Catharine MacKinnon, "Pornography: On Morality and Politics," in *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 195.

4 Ibid., 196.

lust for dominance and submission."[5]

MacKinnon's argument for why pornography subordinates women seems to be rooted in the belief that pornography creates sexual violence against women. For example, MacKinnon mentions that the feminist concern of pornography is "[s]ex forced on real women so that it can be sold at a profit to be forced on other real women."[6] In this quote, MacKinnon seems to state that female pornography actors are forced into creating pornography that is consumed by men and that these men then "force" the standards and depictions of sex they have learned through this pornography on their own female sexual partners. The standards and depictions of sex learned through pornography may consist of violent, dominating, "consensual" sex or sexual violence. This sentiment appears in a number of other places in MacKinnon's work, such as when she mentions that pornography contributes to attitudes and behaviors of violence, that it capitalizes on a dynamic of power and powerlessness, and that pornography's depiction of allowing men to obtain sex that is "not allowed" is what makes sex sexy.

As mentioned in her work, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," Rae Langton aims to interpret how MacKinnon understands pornography to linguistically function. Langton argues that MacKinnon's view seems to assert that subordinating women is an illocutionary function of pornography. In other words, in the same way that "I do" is the act of marriage, Langton believes that MacKinnon asserts that pornography *is* the subordination of women. Importantly, Langton is *not* asserting that pornography has the effect (or, the perlocutionary act) of the subordination of women; she is not arguing against pornography on the basis of its perlocutionary effects.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN ILLOCUTIONARY AND PRELOCUTIONARY ACTS

One difference between arguing that the perlocutionary act of pornography is subordination and that the illocutionary act of pornography is subordination is that asserting a perlocutionary act requires empirical evidence, whereas asserting an illocutionary act does not. To better understand this idea, let's refer back to our marriage example raised in the introduction. If one asserts that the illocutionary act of "I do" in a specific context is that of marrying, this assertion requires no explanation. It is simply a fact that the utterance of the statement "I do" at the conclusion of a wedding performs the act of marriage. However, if one were to assert that the perlocutionary acts of marriage are a jealous ex-partner, emotional parents, and excited friends and coworkers, this statement would require evidence because the very understanding of something being a perlocutionary act is *rooted* in that thing being an effect. If one were to argue that the perlocutionary act of a speech act was not actually an effect of the speech act, this thing

5 Ibid., 198

6 Ibid., 196

would not qualify as a perlocutionary act.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATING PORNOGRAPHY'S CORRELATION WITH SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Given that any assertion that something is a perlocutionary effect of a speech act requires empirical evidence, we must provide empirical evidence to support MacKinnon's tacit assertion that sexual violence and rape culture are perlocutionary effects of pornography. "A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies" by Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, and Ashley Kraus, for example, demonstrates the correlation between pornography and sexual violence through their meta-analyses of 22 experimental studies from seven different countries that studied the correlation between pornography consumption and sexual aggression.[7] Within this study, the authors found that there was a significant association between pornography consumption and sexual aggression both in the United States and internationally. Additionally, this study investigated whether sexual aggression was mostly verbal or physical and found that associations between pornography consumption and verbal sexual aggression were particularly strong, and associations between pornography consumption and physical sexual aggression also existed.[8] Given that verbal and physical sexual aggression constitutes sexual violence, these correlations found in Wright et al.'s study demonstrate a correlation between pornography consumption and sexual violence. This correlation between pornography consumption and sexual violence is notable because it at the very least implies that sexual violence is a perlocutionary effect of pornography.

While Wright et al.'s study establishes that sexual violence is a perlocutionary effect of pornography, "Pornography Viewing among Fraternity Men: Effects on Bystander Intervention, Rape Myth Acceptance and Behavioral Intent to Commit Sexual Assault" by John D. Foubert, Matthew W. Brosi, and R. Sean Bannon demonstrates that rape culture is also a perlocutionary effect of pornography. This assertion can be made because rape culture includes types of harm that extend beyond the boundaries of sexual violence such as attitudes, messages, and behaviors, and the following scientific study demonstrates how consuming pornography negatively and significantly impacts an individual's attitudes surrounding sexual violence and bystander intervention in instances of rape. Within their study, 62% of fraternity members at a Midwestern public university were surveyed about their consumption of mainstream, sadomasochistic, and rape

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7 Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, and Ashley Kraus, "A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies," *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 1, (2016): 183, https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12201.

8 Ibid., 194-95.

pornography, where pornography was defined as "media used or intended to be used to increase sexual arousal."[9] Rape pornography can be understood as a "consensual" depiction of rape by pornography actors. The authors noted that fraternity members are often focused on in scientific studies regarding sexual violence, given that, compared to other college-attending men, they are "three times more likely to commit sexual assault."[10]

The study found that 83% of participants had viewed mainstream pornography during the last 12 months, and these participants "indicated a greater behavioral intent to rape as shown by their answers to questions about their likelihood of committing rape and likelihood of committing sexual assault if they could be assured of not being caught or punished" than compared to participants who had not viewed pornography in the past 12 months.[11] In regards to sadomasochistic pornography, 27% of participants had viewed it in the past 12 months, and these participants "reported significantly less bystander efficacy to intervene in a rape situation, greater belief in rape myths, and a greater behavioral intent to commit rape as measured by questions asking about their likelihood of committing sexual assault and likelihood of committing rape if they could be assured of not being caught or punished."[12] 19% of study participants had viewed rape pornography in the past 12 months, and these participants "reported significantly less bystander willingness to intervene in a rape related situation, greater belief in rape myths, and a greater behavioral intent to rape through questions assessing likelihood of committing sexual assault and likelihood of committing rape" when compared to the 81% of participants who had not viewed rape pornography in the past 12 months.[13]

Despite arguing that subordination is an illocutionary act of pornography, Langton also seems to demonstrate that pornography performs the perlocutionary act of harming women. This reality seems to be true given that she includes empirical evidence from the 1983 Minneapolis hearings that demonstrates a correlation between rape culture and pornography. Therefore, Langton seems to demonstrate that pornography performs the perlocutionary act of harming women. During these hearings, Langton explains that pornography seemed to cause its listeners to be more accepting of violence against women:

> "[s]ome, it seems, have their attitudes and behavior altered by it in ways that ultimately hurt women: they can become more likely to view women as inferior, more disposed to

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9 John D. Foubert, Matthew W. Brosi, and R. Sean Bannon, "Pornography Viewing among Fraternity Men: Effects on Bystander Intervention, Rape Myth Acceptance and Behavioral Intent to Commit Sexual Assault," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 18, no. 4, (2011): 212-231, 212.

10 Ibid., 217.

11 Ibid., 222.

12 Ibid., 222-23.

13 Ibid., 223.

> accept rape myths (for example, that women enjoy rape), more likely to view rape victims as deserving of their treatment, and more likely to say that they themselves would rape if they could get away with it."[14]

Here, it is important to note the relationship between attitudinal shifts caused by pornography and structural subordination. One might ask: "How do rape myths and decreased bystander efficacy amount to subordination?" Rape myths and decreased bystander efficacy cause subordination because sexual violence is subordinating, and rape myths and decreased bystander efficacy cause sexual violence. One's belief in rape myths seems to increase their likelihood of causing sexual violence; if someone truly believes the rape myth that women enjoy rape, what would stop them from doing it themselves? Decreased bystander efficacy leads to increased instances of sexual violence through one's failure to intervene in possible instances of sexual violence. Langton explains that the sexual violence against women constitutes subordination and not solely harm against women because this sexual violence is unequally felt by women.[15] In other words, if sexual violence and the harmful effects of rape culture were equally directed towards men and women, both groups of individuals would be harmed but neither category of individuals would be subordinated. Langton's empirical observation surrounding the Minneapolis hearings is important because it demonstrates changed attitudes surrounding rape that result from pornography consumption, and, therefore, demonstrates that rape culture is a perlocutionary effect of pornography.

One might object and argue that the link drawn between pornography and sexual violence in these studies is an example of reverse causation. In other words, one might disagree with the use of a study discussing a correlation between pornography consumption and sexual violence to establish that sexual violence is a perlocutionary act of pornography by arguing that, rather than pornography *causing* sexual violence, individuals who are predisposed to carrying out sexual violence are more likely to consume pornography. Luckily, Wright et al.'s meta-analysis addresses this argument by explaining that both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies: "[do] not support the position that pornography – sexual aggression associations are simply due to sexually aggressive individuals watching content that conforms to their already established aggressive sexual scripts."[16]

Another objection that one might make against using observational studies demonstrating a correlation between pornography and sexual violence to establish that sexual

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14 Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 22 no. 4 (1993): 306.

15 Ibid., 307.

16 Wright et al., "A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies," 199.

violence is a perlocutionary act of pornography is that this evidence is not strong enough. More specifically, one might argue that evidence proving causation between pornography and sexual violence rather than correlation is needed to establish that sexual violence is a perlocutionary act. Unfortunately, there is no way to refute this objection because creating experimental studies that demonstrate that pornography consumption causes sexual violence would pose severe ethical concerns. Specifically, an experimental study finding that pornography consumption causes sexual violence would require individuals to be sexually violated for the purposes of their study. Fortunately, Wright et al. acknowledge these ethical concerns through the following statement in their meta-analysis: "ethical considerations preclude attempts at sexual aggression inducement. In sum, experiments cannot make the requested contributions. They can only be made by correlational investigations, such as survey studies."[17]

MACKINNON'S RELIANCE ON PORNOGRAPHY'S PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECTS

As mentioned, Langton interprets MacKinnon's work as an argument that subordination is an illocutionary function of pornography, and illocutionary functions of speech acts are typically understood as not requiring empirical evidence. Despite this reality, MacKinnon's supposed assertion that an illocutionary function of pornography is subordination relies on referencing experiences and empirical evidence that demonstrate the correlation between pornography, rape culture, and sexual violence (which can both be understood as perlocutionary effects of pornography). One example of this reliance is Langton's reference to the 1983 Minneapolis hearings, which discuss the legality of pornography. Given MacKinnon and Langton's reliance on empirical evidence in asserting that subordination as an illocutionary function, this paper asserts that there seems to be more of a connection between empirical evidence and illocutionary functions than is typically understood by linguistic philosophers. Additionally, MacKinnon asserts that, in identifying sexual violence and rape culture as perlocutionary effects of pornography, we also establish that subordination is an illocutionary function of pornography (or, that pornography is a subordinating speech act). In order to better understand this assertion, we can use an example of another subordinating speech act in which their perlocutionary acts ground its illocutionary function: the speech of Crisis Pregnancy Centers. Crisis Pregnancy Centers are nonprofit organizations established by anti-abortion groups whose main goal is to persuade pregnant women not to get an abortion.[18] Although the speech used in these centers is legally protected under the First Amendment, these centers often distribute misleading or coercive information. The perlocutionary effects

17 Ibid., 196.

18 "Crisis pregnancy center," Wikipedia, accessed April 6th, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_pregnancy_center.

of these centers include delaying access to abortion, creating confusion, and contributing to stigma, and these perlocutionary effects especially impact feminized or marginalized individuals. Occurring repeatedly with social and institutional backing, these effects contribute to putting certain people in a position of less power and agency over their own reproductive choices over time. Hence, in this case, the perlocutionary acts of Crisis Pregnancy Centers do the real-world harm, but it's through these effects that the speech gains the authority and force to subordinate when left unchallenged by institutions. This case seems highly similar to the case of pornography.

A FLAW IN MACKINNON AND LANGSTON'S FRAMEWORKS

Although this work supports Langton's claim that pornography performs the illocutionary act of subordination, MacKinnon makes false assertions about the profile of those who suffer from sexual violence, and these false assertions cause Langton to misidentify who exactly is subordinated through pornography. MacKinnon and Langton's argument surrounding the subordination of women through sexual violence is flawed because it creates a false binary around gender and sexuality that does not comprehensively represent the victims of sexual assault. MacKinnon falsely assumes in her theory that all instances of sexual violence consist of a male perpetrator and a female victim and that the category of "women" is a collective, homogenous group. Given that 83% of juvenile victims and 90% of adult victims in instances of sexual violence are female and 99% of perpetrators in instances of sexual violence are male, MacKinnon's assumptions may represent the "average" account of sexual assault.[19, 20] However, the assumption that *all* instances of sexual assault consist of a male perpetrator and a female victim erases the existence of non-binary individuals and the sexual violence experienced by these individuals. This erasure is concerning given that transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming individuals are more susceptible to sexual violence than other individuals. For example, while 18% of non-TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming) females and 4% of non-TGQN male college students have been sexually assaulted, 21% of TGQN college students have been sexually assaulted.[21] MacKinnon's assumption of a male perpetrator and female victim also erases the existence of non-heterosexual individuals, same-sex sexual violence, and male victims of

19 Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics," Rainn, accessed April 18th, 2022, https://research.wou.edu/c.php?g=551307&p=3785496#:-:text=Publication%20Year.-,%E2%80%9CTitle%20of%2 0webpage.%E2%80%9D%20Name%20of%20 publishing%20entity.,URL."

20 "Sexualized Violence Statistics," Cal Poly Humboldt, accessed October 21st, 2024, https://stoprape.humboldt.edu/statistics.

21 "Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics," https://research.wou.edu/c.php?g=551307&p=3785496#:-:text=Publication%20Year.-,%E2%80%9CTitle%20of%2 0webpage.%E2%80%9D%20Name%20of%20publishing%20entity.,URL."

sexual violence.

MacKinnon's implication that "women" should be treated as a collective, homogenous group seems to imply that all women's experiences with sexual violence are the same. This assumption erases the fact that other identities, such as race and whether someone is a cisgender woman or a transgender woman, significantly impact one's experience with sexual violence. Although 80% of the victims in reported sexual assaults are white women, women of color are at a higher risk of assault.[22] For example, compared to 17.7% of white women, 18.8% of Black women, 24.4% of mixed-race women, and 34.1% of American Indian/Alaskan women experience sexual assault.[23]

To salvage MacKinnon's otherwise insightful claims about sexual violence and porn, we must modify her framework to accurately account for victims of sexual violence. As mentioned, Langton asserts that MacKinnon is able to claim that women are subordinated – and not just harmed – by pornography because women suffer from exponentially higher amounts of sexual violence than men. In other words, the subordination that results from sexual violence is not derived from the very act of sexual violence but from the unequal amounts of sexual violence in comparison to other groups of individuals. Using this theory, one could argue that any group of individuals of a given identity who experience high levels of sexual assault in comparison to another group of a different identity are subordinated through sexual violence. Hence, rather than using a limited conception of gender that creates a gender binary and erases the existence of gender nonconforming individuals to argue that all women are subordinated by sexual violence, MacKinnon and Langton's theory could be adapted to assert that individuals with certain identities of sexuality, cisgenderness/transgenderness, race, gender (including genders besides men and women), or another identity that increases the individual's likelihood of experiencing an unequal amount of sexual violence are subordinated.

One might object to the claim that MacKinnon and Langton's theory can be used to account for other identities besides the identity of "women" by asserting that pornography typically depicts the subordination of women. Therefore, one might argue that the sexual assault of non-women is not a perlocutionary effect of pornography because the subordination of these individuals is not depicted in pornography. Although it is true that women are often portrayed in pornography, this fact does not necessarily mean that the individuals subordinated by pornography are solely women. Rather, pornography can be read as depicting the subordination of feminized subjects or depicting the process of "becoming" masculine by subordinating others. Feminized subjects can be understood as including women, non-binary individuals, and transgender individuals. Hence, this reading accurately accounts for the sexual assault statistics of transgender and gender

22 "Sexualized Violence Statistics," https://stoprape.humboldt.edu/statistics.

23 Ibid.

nonconforming individuals, and this reading also aligns with the reality that the majority of sexual assault perpetrators are male.

THE AUTHORITY PROBLEM WITH HATE SPEECH

Given that many linguistic philosophers argue that all instances of subordination require an individual to have authority, all speech acts that subordinate must establish a source of authority that enables them to subordinate. In other words, arguing that pornography is an illocutionary act of subordination – or, is a subordinating speech act — requires us to point to a place in which pornography gains authority. This obstacle is called the Authority Problem. Within the philosophy of language, having "authority" is often understood as having some sort of formal, legitimated power as socially determined depending on the context. For example, philosophers would recognize a president, a South African legislator, and a king as all having authority. However, philosophers would not typically recognize other leadership positions – such as the president of a college a cappella group or captain of a sports team – as having the same, legitimated authority.

Despite this reality, Ishani Maitra's work "Subordinating Speech" explains the Authority Problem in relation to hate speech, and she explains how there may be more ways of gaining authority than typically recognized. Maitra explains that the Authority Problem arises in instances of ordinary racist hate speech when one grants that the subordination of an individual can only occur when the perpetrator of this subordination has authority, and she also grants that an ordinary person who touts racist hate speech does not have authority (or, does not *appear* to have authority). The existence of these two aspects together creates a problem because it seems that ordinary hate speech cannot subordinate recipients of this speech. There are two main conclusions that philosophers have made in order to resolve the Authority Problem: some philosophers argue that ordinary racist hate speech cannot subordinate individuals, and some philosophers argue that authority is not necessary for speech to subordinate. Maitra, however, creates a third resolution to the Authority Problem: she argues that, unlike the belief of other philosophers, hate speech spoken by ordinary people can subordinate individuals because there are more ways for an individual to come to have authority than is generally recognized.[24]

In her work, Maitra introduces "derived authority" and "licensing" as two uncommonly recognized ways that authority can be gained. Maitra explains licensing as a process in which an ordinary individual performs a given act (for example, touting ordinary racist hate speech) and is able to gain authority through the failure on the part of all

24 Ishani Maitra, "Subordinating Speech," in *Speech and Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012), 3.

members of an audience to object to or challenge this individual's given action.[25] Maitra explains that an ordinary individual acquires derived authority through the granting or omission (failure to intervene) of authority from an individual who holds basic authority. This paper chooses to only discuss Maitra's conception of derived authority in relation to pornography. Two examples Maitra uses to better understand this concept are the examples of "Bossy student" and "Cross burner."

In "Bossy student," an elementary school teacher assigns a class project that requires each student to perform a different task. One of these students, Arlo, is excited to begin working and starts assigning different tasks to their fellow classmates. Frustrated with Arlo's unjustified assertiveness, fellow classmates turn to the class teacher in the hopes that they will intervene. However, the teacher fails to intervene, and Arlo continues to assign tasks. In this case, Arlo derives authority from the basic authority of the elementary school teacher. Specifically, Arlo derives authority from failure to intervene, or omission (rather than granting) of the elementary school teacher.[26]

After establishing derived authority through the simple "Bossy student" example, Maitra discusses derived authority through the ordinary racist hate speech example of "Cross-burner(s)." In "Cross-burner(s)," a working-class Black family who has moved into a predominantly white community wakes up to find a burning cross left in their front yard.[27] Within the neighborhood this family lives in, there are clear leaders of the community who have the authority to make decisions about community-related matters and, therefore, can legitimize or sanction certain behaviors. When brought to the attention of the community leaders, the leaders fail to denounce the cross-burning and do not express sympathy for the victimized family. Although Maitra grants that many meanings can be interpreted from the act of cross-burning, she explains that it at the very least communicates that the Black family is less important than the white families in the affluent neighborhood and that the Black family's residence is unwanted. From this interpretation, Maitra asserts three things: 1) the act of cross-burning sends the message that the Black family is "below" the neighborhood's white families and that they are unwanted, and these two things together perform an act of ranking 2) that, according to Langton, ranking is an authoritative illocution, and 3) if ranking is an authoritative illocution and the act of cross-burning has successfully ranked the Black family below other families, then the cross-burners must occupy some sort of positional authority.[28] In short, Maitra's multi-step explanation is used to establish that the cross-burners derive authority from the community leaders' omission to denounce the cross-burners' attempt

25 Maitra, "Subordinating Speech," 17.

26 Ibid., 11.

27 Ibid., 14.

28 Ibid., 15.

at ranking the Black family through their act of cross-burning.

Another example in which speech acts can gain derived authority is when sexist comments are made in the workplace. At a given company, Holden Smith makes several comments to his co-worker Sarah Farrar that imply women are inferior to men. First, being impressed with Sarah's job at a client presentation, Holden Smith comments that Sarah did a pretty good job on the presentation "for a woman." Later in the week, Holden refuses Sarah's request to write her a recommendation for a promotion within the company but gladly writes a recommendation for her male counterpart, citing that Sarah would be too busy with the new responsibilities of the role in addition to taking care of her kids because "childcare is a woman's job." Finally, Holden makes an off-handed comment that women who have sex before marriage are "whores" but that men who have sex before marriage are not. Upset by the sexist nature of Holden's several comments, Sarah chooses to report these comments to Human Resources, who also informs the company's Chief Executive Officer of the offense. However, both Human Resources and the Chief Executive Officer fail to take action in response to these comments, telling Sarah that the comments "are not a big deal." Similar to the example of "Cross burner," the example of "Sexist comments" seems to perform three main things: 1) the sexist comments send the message that women are "below" men and that they are unwanted and unwelcome at the company, and these two things together perform an act of ranking 2) ranking is an authoritative illocution, and 3) if ranking is an authoritative illocution and the act of making sexist comments has successfully ranked Sarah Farrar below her male counterparts, then Holden Smith must occupy some sort of positional authority.[29] In short, Holden derives authority from Human Resources' and the Chief Executive Officer's omission to denounce Holden's attempt at ranking women below men through his sexist comments.

PORNOGRAPHY'S DERIVATION OF AUTHOURITY THROUGH GOVERNMENT OMISSION AND ABUSE OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Maitra introduces derived authority as a way to account for the Authority Problem in regards to ordinary racist hate speech. However, Maitra's theory of derived authority also explains how pornography gains authority and, therefore, how pornography accounts for the Authority Problem.

Pornography derives authority through the basic positional authority of the government. Specifically, this authority is derived through the omission or failure of government intervention. However, the assertion that pornography derives authority through omission of the government should not be misconstrued as an assertion that pornog-

29 Ibid., 15.

raphy derives authority because the government legally protects the speech of pornography.

The First Amendment legally protects vast amounts of highly offensive speech; it protects the use of derogatory slurs, toutings of white supremacy, and sexist utterances. Despite its protection, the legal protection of offensive speech cannot be understood as government endorsement of offensive speech.

The government protects offensive speech because it endorses the principle of freedom of speech and the importance of exploring the "marketplace of ideas," not the actual speech that is allowed under the First Amendment. For example, the United States government legally protects the toutings of white supremacy by Neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan because it endorses the principle of freedom of speech. However, the government clearly opposes (or, at least purports to oppose) white supremacist views, as evidenced by non-explicitly-white supremacist legislation and government officials' statements that express disgust for white supremacy. In the same vein, the United States legal protection of the speech of pornography is not an endorsement of the messages presented within pornography (such as messages that women are whores, sluts, deserve to be raped, or should be dominated by men). Rather, this legal protection stems from an endorsement of the principle of freedom of speech, which is often supported through the justification that exploring a variety of ideas (however wrong they may be) is important because this process leads our society closer to the "right" or "best" ideas. Although I will argue that pornography derives authority from the government, pornography's derived authority does *not* result from the government's inaction in reprimanding, sanctioning, or banning pornography through the premise that this type of speech's messages is offensive. The government legally protects various forms of speech, and this does not necessarily give them authority. Interestingly, it does seem as if speech would only derive government authority if its treatment differed from government treatment of other speech. For example, if the government reprimanded, sanctioned, or banned all speech about race, but failed to intervene when individuals touted messages of white supremacy, this speech would derive authority through the government's failure to intervene.

Although racist speech is often legally protected, tangible racist violence is clearly not protected. For example, an act of violence against an individual who is targeted by Neo-Nazi racist speech is obviously not legally protected. In addition to an act, even some types of speech are not legally protected; "fighting words," or "any words whose very utterance inflicts injury or tends to incite an immediate breach of the peace," are not legally protected by the United States.[30] For example, a Neo-Nazi speaking at a white

30 "fighting words," Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, last modified November 2021, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/fighting_words#:-:text=Fighting%20words%20are%20words%20meant,immediat e%20breach%20of%20the%20peace.

supremacist rally who orders an angry crowd of audience members to attack all individuals who are targets of their racist hate speech is not legally protected.

The principle of freedom of speech used to protect pornography protects more than the thoughts and ideas of pornography that freedom of speech is known to protect. The principle of freedom of speech seems to protect aspects of pornography – such as pornography's perlocutionary act of sexual violence – that are banned under United States law. It is through this governmental failure to intervene that pornography gains derived authority.

One might object to applying the same framework used in Maitra's example of "Cross-burner(s)" to how pornography gains authority under the argument that "Cross-burner(s)" sites specific people that gain authority (the cross-burner(s)), whereas the example of pornography seems to simply claim that the speech act of pornography itself gains authority. In other words, the example of pornography does not cite specific individuals who gain authority. Fortunately, this objection can be undermined through the argument that the individuals and/or corporations involved in producing pornography and making it accessible – such as the individuals and/or corporations that post pornography, the individuals and/or corporations that produce pornographic videos, and/or the individuals that write the script of pornographic videos – are the individuals that gain the needed authority for pornography to subordinate. In this sense, pornography clearly functions in the same way that Maitra's example of "Cross-burner(s)" functions; the cross-burner(s)' racist hate speech of crossburning derives authority from the community leaders' omission to denounce the cross-burner(s)' act in the same way that the individuals and/or corporations posting, producing, and writing pornography derive authority from the government's omission to intervene in aspects of pornography that should be legally unprotected if United States law were to be correctly followed but seem to be protected due to abuse of the First Amendment.

One may object to the claim that pornography derives authority through government omission to assert basic authority in pornography's perlocutionary act of sexual violence through the argument that there are legal systems that provide protection against these acts. In other words, one might argue that current legislation – which is in turn supported by the government – is a sufficient assertion of basic authority in response to the perlocutionary effects of pornography. However, this objection can be responded to through the assertion that legal sanctions aiming to mitigate pornography's perlocutionary act of sexual violence do not qualify as governmental intervention that sufficiently disallows pornography from deriving authority. If the government is aware of pornography's perlocutionary effects and asserts that they are intervening in the form of legal sanctions, there is an unspoken acknowledgment that lies within this assertion: it is an implicit acknowledgment that the government is aware that current pornography creates tangible violence but that they will not attempt to terminate this violence by

banning or regulating pornography. Therefore, they are omitting to intervene. In other words, the existence of legal sanctions is not sufficient government intervention because it is not actually an attempt to prevent or stop sexual violence. Although punishing a perpetrator of sexual violence may accomplish a feeling of "justice," this act is marginally beneficial in cases of sexual violence because it fails to undo any of the eternal pain and life changes endured by survivors of sexual violence.

One could also undermine the objection that the existence of legislation against sexual violence is sufficient government intervention through the assertion that these laws do not provide actual protection against sexual violence in the same way that other laws provide protection against different crimes. This claim can be proven by examining the comparative reporting statistics between sexual assault and other crimes. Sexual assault is reported significantly less than other crimes; while 61.2% of robberies and 62.7% of assault and battery crimes are reported to police, only 31% of sexual assault instances are reported to police.[31] This statistic is even lower for college-aged students; for example, only 20% of female college students will report instances of sexual assault.[32] One might argue that the comparative reporting difference between sexual assault and other crimes does not demonstrate government failure to provide sexual assault sanctions because the government lacks control over who reports instances of sexual assault. However, this argument victim-blames and overlooks a plausible interpretation of what this empirical evidence reveals: that the current legal approach to sexual assault is ineffective and that the government fails to create better reporting methods and incentives.

One could also respond to the objection that the existence of legislation against sexual violence is sufficient government intervention through the assertion that, of the already limited instances of sexual violence reported to the police, very few sex abuse offenders are convicted at trial. For example, only 8.2% of sexual abuse offenders in the United States were convicted at trial in 2018.[33]

Given that the government's "intervention" against pornography's perlocutionary effect of sexual violence through sanctions does not attempt to prevent or stop instances of sexual violence and that these sanctions in comparison to other crimes are severely less effective, it seems that there is a need to turn to explicitly preventative measures that restrict or ban pornography that seem to cause sexual violence. One genre of pornography that should be banned, for example, is rape pornography, also known as consensual

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31 "Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics," https://research.wou.edu/c.php?g=551307&p=3785496#:-:text=Publication%20Year.-,%E2%80%9CTitle%20of%20webpage.%E2%80%9D%20Name%20of%20publishing%20entity.,URL."

32 Ibid.

33 "Quick Facts: Sexual Abuse Offenders," United States Sentencing Commission, accessed October 20th, 2024, https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Sexual_Abuse_FY18.pdf.

non-consent pornography. This pornography is clearly harmful as it explicitly fetishizes sexual violence.

CONCLUSION

Within this paper, I dove deep into the linguistic functioning of pornography. Specifically, I made claims about pornography's illocutionary act and perlocutionary acts. First, I established that rape culture and sexual violence are perlocutionary effects of pornography. Second, I asserted that these two perlocutionary effects in connection with an adapted version of MacKinnon and Langton's theories establish that an illocutionary function of pornography is the subordination of feminized individuals. Third, I established that pornography gains the authority necessary for a speech act to subordinate from derived authority. Specifically, I argued that the government fails to intervene and sanction certain aspects of pornography that receive legal protection under the principle of freedom of speech but are not legally protected actions.

In order to establish my first claim, I explained J. L. Austin's speech act theory, Catharine MacKinnon's theory about pornography, and Rae Langton's assertion that MacKinnon argues that the illocutionary act of pornography is subordination of women. I analyzed aspects of MacKinnon's work to argue that she regards sexual violence as a perlocutionary function of pornography. Additionally, I used various studies to establish that two perlocutionary acts of pornography are rape culture and sexual violence.

After establishing that two perlocutionary functions of pornography are rape culture and sexual violence, I asserted that the establishment that two perlocutionary effects of pornography are sexual violence and rape culture also establishes that an illocutionary function of pornography is subordination. In this sense, I argue that the perlocutionary and illocutionary functions of speech acts are more interwoven than typically acknowledged by linguistic philosophers. Importantly, my assertion that subordination is an illocutionary function of pornography is not an assertion that an illocutionary function of pornography is the subordination of women. Rather, I assert that an illocutionary function of pornography is the subordination of feminized subjects. In this sense, my assertion makes space for instances of sexual violence carried out against men, transgender non-conforming individuals, and between same-sex individuals.

The assertion that an illocutionary act of pornography is subordination means that it is a subordinating speech act. Within the philosophical discussion of subordinating speech acts, one must establish a source of authority that enables them to subordinate. This dilemma is called the Authority Problem. Hence, the next aspect of pornography's linguistic function discussed within this work was how pornography overcomes the Authority Problem.

Within my work, I drew on Ishani Maitra's work, "Subordinating Speech," to argue

that pornography derives authority through the basic positional authority of the government. However, this assertion should not be misconstrued as an assertion that pornography gains authority simply because it is protected by the First Amendment. Rather, my third claim is that pornography gains authority through government omission because the principle of freedom of speech is used to protect more than the thoughts and ideas of pornography that freedom of speech is known to protect. Specifically, I argue that this principle unfairly protects pornography's perlocutionary act of sexual violence. Within this argument, I combat the objection that pornography does not gain authority through government omission because there are legal sanctions against sexual violence. First, I assert that legal sanctions against sexual violence do not sufficiently combat the issue because these legal sanctions do not prevent sexual violence from occurring. Second, I assert that current legislation does not provide actual protection against sexual violence in the same way that other laws provide protection against different crimes given that instances of sexual violence are reported significantly less often than other crimes. Third, I assert that, of the instances of sexual violence in the United States reported to police, only a small percentage of perpetrators are convicted at trial.

Having now established the following argument, a next step might be to consider other possible ways that pornography gains authority; one might argue that an adapted version of licensing that accounts for power dynamics can be applied to pornography. Another next step might be to explore legislation that the government could take to regulate or ban pornography in an effort to prevent pornography from gaining authority through derived authority.

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SYMBOLIC PLACEHOLDERS FOR NON-SPATIAL CONCEPTS: HOPE FOR SOLVING THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

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I. INTRODUCTION

In his paper "Can We Solve the Mind--Body Problem?" Colin McGinn answers the question posed in the title with a firm "no"—human beings cannot produce a theory that explains how physical activity in the brain can give rise to consciousness.[1] Adopting standard physicalist assumptions, McGinn holds that the brain does, by some natural and scientifically describable process, give rise to consciousness. He points out that consciousness is a non-spatial phenomenon—it is not an object of perception laid out in space—and argues that because of this, it will never be satisfactory to provide an answer to the mind-body problem by pointing to spatial properties of the brain. According to McGinn, a solution to the problem must involve apprehending the non-spatial property of the brain that can explain the similarly non-spatial phenomenon of consciousness. To make his case, McGinn makes use of the highly plausible claim that human beings' cognitive abilities restrict us to understanding the brain only in spatial terms and thus preclude the grasp of non-spatial properties like that which causes consciousness. In McGinn's words, humans are cognitively closed to the property of the brain from which

1 McGinn's written answer is really "No and Yes," where "No" refers to the scientific problem (i.e., No, we cannot come up with a scientific theory to explain how the brain gives rise to consciousness), and "Yes" refers to the philosophical problem (i.e., Yes, we can resolve the philosophical mystery of consciousness by accepting that the solution is fundamentally unavailable to us.) I attend to only the scientific problem.

consciousness is derived (let us call this property P, as in McGinn's paper). McGinn argues that because humans are cognitively closed to P, we are prevented from constructing T, a theory that explains how the brain gives rise to consciousness. I affirm his point on cognitive closure but will argue that cognitive closure to P does not necessarily prevent the construction of a scientifically respectable theory relating brain to mind.

II. REPRODUCTION OF McGINN'S ARGUMENT

McGinn's argument assumes a standard version of physicalism, the view that physical brain events cause consciousness, and their relationship can be explained using science. This implies that consciousness must be caused by or explainable in terms of physical properties: "There exists some [physical] property P, instantiated by the brain, in virtue of which the brain is the basis of consciousness."[2] The theory of consciousness we seek, per McGinn, will explain how the physical and nonspatial property P gives rise to consciousness, or conscious experience. Following McGinn, I will refer to this theory as T. Next, McGinn argues that the human cognitive apparatus prevents it from ever achieving a 'grasp' of P. To show this, he canvases what he takes to be all the possible routes to achieving this grasp—introspection, physical observation, and inference from physical observation—and argues that none of them will allow us to grasp P. Finally, he asserts that a grasp of P is necessary for obtaining knowledge of T, the theory that explains how consciousness arises from brain matter.

McGinn's argument is briefly reproduced as follows:

1. Humans can never grasp P; they are cognitively closed to it.
    a. Introspection fails to grasp P.
    b. Physical observation fails to grasp P.
    c. No form of inference from physical observation can lead us to grasping P.

    Inference requires data of the same kind as the phenomenon being explained. Humans cannot access non-spatial data regarding the brain. Consciousness is non-spatial. Thus, we cannot discover P by inference.
2. If humans can never grasp P, then they can never know T.
3. Therefore, humans cannot know T.

III. A PROBLEM FOR McGINN'S ARGUMENT

I will undermine McGinn's argument by showing that his reasoning can be used to argue that we cannot access physical theories that we have good reason to believe have already been accessed. That is, if we apply McGinn's argument to another phenomenon instantiated by a property that humans cannot grasp, then we should conclude that we

2 Colin McGinn, "Can We Solve the Mind--Body Problem?," *Mind* 98, no. 391 (1989): 353.

cannot form a theory that explains how the ungraspable non-spatial property gives rise to its corresponding phenomenon. However, there exist many reputable scientific theories that do explain how a non-spatial property causes a corresponding phenomenon. Since McGinn's argument, reproduced above, is valid, there must be a false premise, and I argue that this is premise 2. Contra McGinn, we should not accept that a grasp of P is necessary for knowledge of T, as I will argue using analogous cases from science and mathematics.

This means that I will not base my argument on a rejection of physicalism. Nor will I take issue with McGinn's point in premise 1 that humans' perceptual capacities are limited to the spatial, which prevents them from truly grasping non-spatial phenomena. Indeed, humans cannot grasp P. However, it is premise 2, which states that if P cannot be grasped, then T cannot be known, that is doubtful. I contend that humans' inability to grasp non-spatial phenomena is not problematic for developing a theory to explain relationships between spatial and non-spatial, such as the relation of brain to mind.

The essence of my argument is this: while humans cannot conceive the true nature of certain non-spatial elements of reality, we can conceive of the existence of these non-spatial elements and use symbols as placeholders to represent these elements that exist but are beyond access. Symbolic representations of non-spatial elements are sufficient to theorize causal relationships so long as humans understand how to appropriately maneuver these symbols in relation to other things. This can best be appreciated by looking at other examples from science and mathematics.

In quantum physics, particles are known to have wave-particle duality.[3] This means that any particle has properties of both a wave and a particle, and it is in virtue of this property that quantum particles have definable probabilities of behaving in certain ways. But this property cannot truly be grasped by any human—it is beyond the reach of our cognitive faculties. Wave-particle duality is a property that cannot be faithfully rendered in spatial terms, but humans can conceptualize only in spatial terms. If McGinn's argument is correct, then by parity of reasoning, the fact that humans are unable to grasp the true non-spatial nature of the property that gives rise to spatial particle behaviors should imply that no theory can be constructed to link the two. Yet such a theory exists: the Schrödinger equation.

In short, this equation relates the physical properties of a particle to the probability that it will behave in certain ways via a simple mathematical transformation of a probability amplitude, which is an idea expressed as a complex number.[4] Crucially, this theory

3 E. Schrödinger, "An Undulatory Theory of the Mechanics of Atoms and Molecules," *Physical Review* 28, no. 6 (1926): 1049, https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRev.28.1049.

4 Ibid., 1068–69.

uses the imaginary unit[5] *i*, defined as √-1, to construct this relationship. I argue that *i* can be understood as a symbolic placeholder that expresses a non-spatial entity that does not exist in the spatially knowable world.

It is clear that *i* expresses non-spatial information; it has no clear physical analog. Simply contrast the unreal-ness of *i* with our idea of the number "1"—an idea so fundamental to the physical world that most toddlers can grasp it. Nevertheless, *i* has a definable relationship to spatially defined reality: taking the complex norm of a complex number produces a real number, which can represent a measurable quantity. Thus, a complex number is an example of a symbolic placeholder for non-spatial information that can be related through symbolic manipulations to spatial information. This placeholder functions as a bridge between spatial and nonspatial; it expresses non-spatial information by defining it in spatial terms, thus allowing us to refer to and manipulate non-spatial information in the same expression as spatial properties of particles.

That special quality *i* possesses of relating the spatial with the non-spatial and the real with the not-quite-real is a long-standing source of philosophical discomfort for mathematicians. The seventeenth-century polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz wrote to the mathematician Christiaan Huygens: "The remark you make concerning inextractable roots, and with imaginary quantities, which however when added together yield a real quantity, is surprising and entirely novel. One would never have believed that √ (1 + √- 3) + √ (1 - √- 3) make √6 and there is something hidden therein which is incomprehensible to me."[6] Mathematicians tolerate the discomfort prompted by the incomprehensibility of complex numbers because of how useful, and often indispensable, complex numbers are in finding solutions to the problems they wish to solve.[7] A similar tolerance must be applied to the use of *i* in the Schrödinger equation. Complex numbers are indispensable to the equation's accuracy; attempts to supplant it with a strictly real-valued version have all failed.[8] My suggestion is that this tolerance be applied once more in the case of P to solve the mind-body problem.

In summary, in the Schrödinger equation, *i* serves as a symbolic placeholder for some non-spatial information we cannot perceive by our senses or grasp by our cognition,

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5 Generally, *i* alone is referred to as the imaginary unit, rather than a complex number, though all complex numbers involve *i*. Strictly speaking, complex numbers consist of both real and imaginary components, i.e. 1 + *i*, where 1 is the real component and *i* is the imaginary component. A complex number that is equivalent to the imaginary unit *i* is 0 + *i*. Quantities in which i has a real-numbered coefficient but no real component, i.e. 2*i*, are referred to as imaginary numbers. These distinctions are not important for my purposes; I am interested in *i* exactly as much as I am interested in all other quantities involving *i*. Hence, I may hereafter use the term complex number to refer to any quantity containing the imaginary unit, *i*.

6 Collected in Gerhardt 1899; cited in Bigelow 2001.

7 Bigelow, John. *The Reality of Numbers: A Physicalist's Philosophy of Mathematics.* Reprint, Clarendon Press, 2001.

but which nonetheless has bearing on physical reality. Since *i* is defined in spatially manipulable ways, it permits the transition from spatially defined features of particles to non-spatial probabilities. Furthermore, *i* is instrumental to the formation of an explanatory bridge between a physical entity (a particle) and non-spatial phenomena experienced by that entity (probabilities of certain particle behaviors). Importantly, this relationship is constructed without any real grasp of the non-spatial property that gives rise to the probabilistic account of particle behavior.

Quantum physics is not unique with regard to its use of placeholders to describe non-spatial phenomena. Another major physical theory, the theory of general relativity, holds that the universe consists of three spatial dimensions and one non-spatial dimension. It takes only a brief moment of self-reflection to realize that humans are incapable of truly conceptualizing the nature of this non-spatial fourth dimension. Nevertheless, Einstein's Field Equations describe a mathematical relationship between the four-dimensional curvature of spacetime (expressed by what is generally denoted $G_{\mu\nu}$, the Einstein tensor) and the distribution of matter and energy within the universe.[9] The human inability to make spatial sense of a fourth dimension is no obstacle when a placeholder for the nonspatial concept can be maneuvered in relation to spatial concepts.

What these examples show is that there is no pressing need to have a genuine grasp of a non-spatial concept in order to use it in establishing a causal relationship. All we need is to find some way to define symbols that carry parcels of non-spatial meaning in ways that we can manipulate spatially. If the problem we face regarding body and mind is in relating spatially observable brain states to non-spatial conscious states, it seems that there is no need to grasp the particular non-spatial property P; there needs only be a symbolic bridge from spatial to nonspatial.

What does this mean for the problem of P and T? I propose that, despite McGinn's argument, it is possible that we will one day construct a symbolic placeholder, analogous to *i*, that allows for the construction of an explanatory theory relating physical brain states to conscious experience. P is a non-spatial property whose true nature we cannot grasp, but it remains possible that we could construct some tools with which to represent it, or a proxy for it, using spatially defined terms. That representation, and its relationships to spatial reality, could serve as an explanatory bridge between spatial and non-spatial. While this possibility does not offer evidence that humans will discover a

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8 Zheng-Da Li et al., "Testing Real Quantum Theory in an Optical Quantum Network," Physical Review Letters 128, no. 4 (2022): 040402, https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.128.040402; Ming-Cheng Chen et al., "Ruling Out Real-Valued Standard Formalism of Quantum Theory," Physical Review Letters 128, no. 4 (2022): 040403, https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.128.040403.

9 Albert Einstein, "The Field Equations of Gravitation," in *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein*: Writings, 1914-1917, trans. Alfred Engel, English translation of selected texts (Princeton University Press, 1997), 117.

solution (T) to the mind-body problem, it is sufficient to refute McGinn's reasoning that being unable to grasp P makes it impossible for us to know T.

IV. OBJECTIONS

The objection which may most readily come to mind will be to question the appropriateness of the analogy between *i* and P. This objection may take two forms, to which I will respond in turn.

First, one may object that there is some sense in which the non-spatial nature of consciousness is fundamentally different from the non-spatial nature of some mathematical concepts like *i*. Furthermore, humans are equipped with some sensibility that allows us to understand mathematical concepts like *i*, but no such facility for concepts pertaining to consciousness. The upshot of this objection is that we may be unable to stipulate conditions on a symbolic placeholder that appropriately represents a non-spatial concept pertaining to consciousness. In other words, if *i* is indeed fundamentally more accessible to us than concepts like P, then we would not be able to define a symbolic placeholder for P in the way that we have defined *i*.

For this objection to pose a concern, there needs to be convincing evidence that it truly is the case that *i* and P are concepts of fundamentally different kinds, such that we can grasp more of *i* than we can P. However, there is no evidence that *i* is distinctly more or less accessible to us than P. It may seem that, because *i* is so prominently used in mathematical expression, we must have some grasp of what it is. But what mathematicians claim to understand about *i* is only in virtue of the tools we have used to confine and describe it in spatial terms. As I will show, we do not and cannot grasp the true complex nature of *i*. To see this, consider what it is that we "know" about *i*. At a basic level, *i* has an algebraic definition. We have defined '*i*' as the symbol such that, when squared, the result is -1. Importantly, although this allows us to 'represent' *i* spatially for certain computational purposes, this does not give us a genuine spatial grasp of *i* independent of the real number system. Consider another form of conceiving *i*: plotting it within the complex number plane, a coordinate system nearly identical to the Cartesian plane used to visualize the real number line. The complex plane offers a way of geometrically illustrating the idea of complex numbers, but it too takes a non-spatial concept and places it on a spatially defined plane. After all, we have no way of knowing what geometric form the complex number line actually takes—constraining it to Cartesian coordinates offers a spatial configuration that we can more easily maneuver in mathematical theories. These mathematical provisions may hint at a concept beyond spatial access but ultimately fail to provide a real grasp of what a complex number really is. Given that we have nonetheless stipulated important mathematical properties for *i* despite our utter lack of grasp for complex numbers, it seems premature to assume that we will never define symbolic placeholders for ideas like P, about which it is unclear how much we will one day know.

This applies even if one suspects that consciousness arises not from a single property P but rather the interactions between multiple properties of a set, say, { P1, P2, P3, . . . }. A scientifically-respectable theory of consciousness might use one symbolic placeholder to represent the aggregate of some subset of these properties which instantiate consciousness, or, if the set of properties is finite, it is also possible that each property in the set is assigned its own symbolic placeholder. The explanatory power of a theory of consciousness does not hinge on our ability to dissolve the component properties of consciousness into indivisible parts.

Second, one might reject the analogy by appealing to a fundamental difference between quantum particle behavior and consciousness. According to this objection, the two cannot be compared because the former describes the behavior of a particle in relation to the spatially known physical world while the latter appeals to something more abstract and decidedly non-spatial: conscious experience. More specifically, the Schrödinger equation describes a particle in terms of its probable location in space and its kinetic and potential energy, and although the equation points at something non-spatial (the relative probabilities of the particle behaving in certain ways), the concepts involved are arguably still more tied to physical, spatially defined reality than the phenomenon of conscious experience. The upshot of this objection is that the Schrödinger equation might only be available to us because particle behavior is more of a spatial or physically rooted phenomenon than is consciousness. It would follow then that a similar theory might not be available to explain something further removed from spatial reality, like consciousness.

This objection may be addressed in two parts. First, the objection relies on the notion that conscious experience is somehow more removed from the truly "physical" than quantum particle behavior. However, it is not necessary to permit such a hierarchy. I, like McGinn, adopt standard physicalist assumptions. Accordingly, I maintain a conception of consciousness that is wholly derived from scientifically explainable physical phenomena. The view that some physical phenomena are more physical than others reflects a failure to internalize the physicalist assumption. That is, if we agree upon physicalism as a basic principle, then it is not possible that one natural phenomenon is more or less 'physical' than another; the phenomenon is simply either a physical process or a non-physical process. As such, the objection should not pose a real problem—if we can agree that quantum particle behavior and consciousness are both physical processes, without regard to their degree of physical-ness, our ability to compare the two is not endangered. Second, the objection also appeals to a sense in which quantum particle behavior is somehow more spatial than conscious states. But I would argue that this hierarchy too is inappropriate. For one thing, quantum particle behavior may not be quite as 'spatial' as it at first seems; we should be careful not to take for granted any definitive spatial understanding of the crucial wave function found in the Schrödinger equa-

tion. The equation's wave function provides constraints on particles' behaviors, including their location in space, but it also reveals less spatially understandable properties, like superposition, the ability of a particle to exist in more than one location at a single point in time before observation. Furthermore, the Schrödinger equation has prompted several debates over how to interpret it—some interpretations attach spatial meaning to its implications for particle behavior, such as de Broglie-Bohm Theory, while others assign to it more abstract meaning, such as the Copenhagen Interpretation.[10] The point is, it is not appropriate to use mere intuition to defend the idea that particle behavior is spatial. For another thing, it is not immediately clear that conscious states are as non-spatial as intuition may guide us to believe. The source of this belief may be simple: our personal access to conscious experience may dilute our understanding of it as a physical process. But I caution against the temptation to accept that consciousness deserves special, wholly non-spatial consideration before broaching the question of how it arises.

Finally, I consider the objection of the reader who, even accepting that it is possible for humans to discover T, complains that discovering T without grasping P is not satisfactory. That is, even if we discover T, there remains an unscratched philosophical itch to "understand" the mind-body problem using ordinary forms of intuition. I will respond to this by reminding the reader that the problem at hand is not whether we may come up with a digestible intuition as to how physical brain states cause consciousness. Rather, we are concerned with whether it is possible to manufacture an explanatory theory at all. As I have shown here, such a theory remains possible—McGinn's reasoning is not sufficient to show that T can never be discovered. Furthermore, I will remark that if T is indeed discovered, there is no reason to consider this discovery an unsatisfactory outcome—certainly, the itch to grasp the essence of consciousness is not relieved, but many theories within science and mathematics do not provide the layman with easy causal intuitions of the sort desired here. The solution to the mind-body problem has long eluded humans, but this does not mean we must hold it to the standard of providing both a scientifically respectable theory and a comfortable intuition as to how consciousness works. The construction of a relationship between mind and body, whether or not we have any intuitive grasp of how and why it works, will likely be an impressive and practically useful achievement.

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10 See David Bohm, "A Suggested Interpretation of the Quantum Theory in Terms of 'Hidden' Variables. I," *Physical Review* 85, no. 2 (1952): 166–79; Jan Faye, "Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics," In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Summer 2024, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2024.

V. CONCLUSION

The goal of this paper is to show that conceding human cognitive limitations (i.e., McGinn's idea that we are cognitively closed to P) does not mean we must resign ourselves to never discovering causal relationships in the natural world. I also suggest the pertinence of considering spatially manipulable symbols so as to productively discuss non-spatial properties in the context of spatially oriented processes of scientific discovery. As seen in many examples within science and mathematics, this technique has allowed us to successfully overcome the human inability to conceive of many non-spatial elements of physical processes. This is all to say, there is hope: our ability to bridge the gap between brains and consciousness may not have perished with our lack of facility with which to grasp that elusive P.

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THE STRIVING OF THE SUBJUGATED SPIRIT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC AND DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Section A of the fourth chapter of *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* G. W. F. Hegel introduces the master-slave dialectic (MSD), through which Hegel elucidates the development of self-consciousness. In "Strivings of the Negro People," W. E. B. Du Bois affirms that African Americans living in the Reformation Era possess what he calls a 'double-consciousness.' Given that power dynamics play a crucial role in both concepts, analyzing them could reveal the effects of oppression on subjugated populations' sense of self and on their ability to acquire self-knowledge. In this paper, I will outline and analyze Hegel's MSD and Du Bois's double-consciousness in turn. Then, I will compare and contrast the two concepts, focusing on them in isolation from the rest of both thinkers' works. Accordingly, the conclusions drawn should not be taken as representative of either thinker's beliefs, but rather as an investigation of the implications of their analyses of self-consciousness. Ultimately, I conclude that while Hegel and Du Bois agree that subjugated individuals can develop a mature self-consciousness, under Du Bois's view, this *is not* something they can achieve independently of their oppressors. Thus, although the similarities between the concepts demonstrate an apparent Hegelian influence on Du Bois, Du Bois provides a superior account of the effects of oppression on one's ability to

achieve self-consciousness.

II. HEGEL'S MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC

Hegel's MSD depicts the effect of power imbalances on the development of a mature self-consciousness. First, Hegel maintains that mutual recognition between beings is necessary for the development of self-consciousness. This is because, for Hegel, human nature is inherently social. He writes: "The I ... is itself vis-à-vis an other ...."[1] In other words, the existence of an individual self-consciousness (an I) is contingent on its relationship with others. A consequence of this interdependence is that beings cannot verify their own individuality. The only way a solitary self-consciousness can sustain itself is by exerting control over objects it encounters in the material world. By destroying these objects—thus reducing them to nothingness—the certainty of its own existence is concretely affirmed.[2] However, this is clearly an unsustainable process, because once the object is destroyed, the solitary self-consciousness has lost its means for demonstrating its individuality. Because self-consciousness is inherently self-oriented, it will not stop searching for self-certainty, meaning that it will have to continuously find and destroy new objects to fulfill its desire.[3] According to Hegel, the only way to end this toilsome cycle is if the solitary self-consciousness recognizes the self-consciousness of another being, as it is through the process of recognizing another's individuality that their own is reflected back to them.[4] Hegel ends his prelude to the MSD by stating, "[a] self-conscious being exists in being present to a self-conscious being. Only thus does it in fact exist at all, since only thus does its oneness with itself in its otherness become evident to it."[5] What he means by this is that to become genuinely self-aware, one must see themselves through the eyes of another.

Mutual recognition is not instantaneous, though; to be recognized by the other, one must first prove that they are, in fact, self-conscious. Hegel maintained that "demonstrating that one exists in the purely abstract manner of a self-conscious entity entails ... showing that one is bound to no specific way of existing, not even to ... life itself."[6] In other words, to distinguish oneself from a merely living thing, the self-conscious being must demonstrate the capacity to willingly risk their life. Under this interpretation, the

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1 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. John Dobbins and Peter Fuss (1807; repub., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 85. muse.jhu.edu/book/67772.

2 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 89-90.

3 Ibid., 90.

4 Robert Stern, *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2001), 73-74. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9780203205044.

5 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 91.

6 Ibid., 93.

violent conflict Hegel calls the "life-and-death struggle"[7] is the result of two independent self-conscious beings testing each other's self-consciousness by attacking the other while simultaneously attempting to prove their own self-consciousness by fighting back.[8] The end of the life-and-death struggle is where the MSD begins to truly take shape. At some point during the struggle, one of the two parties realizes that life is a necessary condition for self-consciousness, making the struggle for recognition pointless if either party were to die as a result. Hence, this individual gives up the struggle and becomes the slave, while the other becomes the master.[9]

The language used at this point in the dialectic seems to suggest that the master occupies the privileged position. "The master," Hegel proclaims, "is a conscious being who exists for himself—doing so no longer by just conceiving of such but via the intermediation of another conscious being."[10] That is to say, the power the master holds over the slave allows the former to continuously use the latter to satisfy their own desire for self-certainty.[11] However, the seemingly advantageous position held by the master does not in fact give them access to true self-consciousness. Maintaining his position that the self is interdependent, Hegel emphasizes that "an I that's but the object of its own conceiving isn't in fact an object."[12] Any conscious being that is not reciprocally recognized by another conscious being – sometimes referred to as the 'simple I' – is not truly self-conscious.[13] This is an issue for the master, as they do not view the slave as a self-conscious being, but rather view them as being analogous to a mere object. As such, the recognition the master receives from the slave is hollow and does not satisfy the necessary requirement for true self-consciousness.

The being who actually has the capacity to develop true self-consciousness is the slave. Like the process of recognition, the development of self-consciousness in the slave is not instantaneous. Rather, it first requires the fulfillment of three conditions. The first condition is satisfied during the life-and-death struggle when the slave realizes that their life is in danger, leading them to submit to subjugation to avoid death. This feeling of existential fear brings the slave face-to-face with their own mortality in a way that the master does not experience. The second condition, servitude, forces the slave to set their own desires aside, eventually freeing them from being influenced by these desires. Work is the third and most important condition.[14] Initially, as the slave is forced to create things

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7 Ibid., 93.
8 Stern, *GuideBook to Hegel, 80.*
9 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 94-95.
10 Ibid., 95.
11 Stern, *GuideBook to Hegel*, 83.
12 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 91.
13 Ibid., 89-90.
14 Stern, *GuideBook to Hegel,* 84.

for the master, their labour entirely defines their being.[15] Over time, however, the slave realizes that the independent existence of the objects they create serves as proof of their own independent existence. Hegel writes: "For as the servile consciousness gives form to things, it becomes evident to him that by sublating the matter-of-fact form they have vis-à-vis him he's objectifying his own negativity, *his* way of existing for himself."[16] That is to say, the slave intuits that their consciousness is being externalized and preserved in the fruits of their labour. Crucially, because the slave's consciousness is reflected back to them in the form of these objects, thus immediately verifying one's individuality by something external to themselves, the slave transcends their dependence on the master for recognition. Through work, the slave develops a sense of self, or, in other words, a mature self-consciousness.[17] Although work is the primary mechanism through which a mature self-consciousness emerges, the other two conditions – fear and servitude – are necessary. Servitude without fear is mechanistic and yields no self-awareness.[18] Likewise, work without servitude is transient; when work is self-serving, the fruits of one's labour are immediately consumed to fulfill one's own desires.[19] In brief, Hegel's MSD claims that it is only through subjugation that a being's consciousness finds freedom.

In light of this, the MSD seems to indicate that the conditions of oppression can bring about the development of self-consciousness. Regarding what this could mean for subjugated populations in general, one interesting implication is that the development of self-consciousness is not only possible in spite of oppression, but *because* of it. Indeed, Hegel argues that fear, servitude, and work "are in any event *necessary* for this reflection to occur" (emphasis added).[20] Moreover, the passive way in which the slave's self-consciousness develops in the MSD implies that the process is inevitable. Recall that the slave is able to achieve self-consciousness without receiving proper recognition from the master. Instead, "in being 'forced back' into itself the servile consciousness *will* come to terms with itself from within and transform itself into a truly independent consciousness" (emphasis added).[21] Here, a sense of inevitability is invoked insofar as the three necessary conditions for the slave's transformation are also essential elements of the master-slave dynamic. If this interpretation is granted, then one need only demonstrate that these conditions are common to the general experience of subjugation to conclude that being oppressed is a necessary and sufficient condition for the achievement of self-consciousness. In other words, one cannot be self-conscious unless they have

15 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 95.
16 Ibid., 97.
17 Ibid., 97.
18 Ibid., 98.
19 Stern, *GuideBook to Hegel*, 84.
20 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 98.
21 Ibid., 96.

experienced subjugation. This line of reasoning seems to suggest that the MSD can be interpreted as justifying subjugation as a necessary state of human development, because without masters, there would be no slaves. Hegel's personal views aside,[22] the text does not support this interpretation. Despite the terminology used, the MSD is not meant to be a description of power relations that exist in slave societies.[23] Instead, it should be understood as a 'state of nature' argument that serves as a foundation for the broader claim that membership in society is necessary for freedom because of the social nature of the self.[24] In any case, what is clear is that – through the MSD – Hegel claims that the development of self-consciousness in subjugated individuals is not only possible, but inevitable.

III. DU BOIS'S DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS

Du Bois introduces the concept of double-consciousness as he describes the struggle of African Americans to achieve self-consciousness in the Reformation Era. Double-consciousness can be characterized as being a consequence of the interaction between the harmful psychological and material conditions experienced by African Americans.[25] In an oft-quoted passage, Du Bois describes how African Americans are prevented from achieving self-consciousness due to a lack of due regard from White Americans.

> [T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, — a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.[26]

Here, Du Bois describes how the phenomenological experience of African Americans during the late-19th century (and, arguably, to this day) gives rise to double-consciousness. In this passage alone, the Hegelian influence on Du Bois is quite evident. As in the MSD, African Americans are not automatically endowed with self-consciousness,

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22 Hegel's racism against Black and Indigenous peoples is well-documented. For a treatment of how his work should be contextualized in light of it, see Avram Alpert, "Philosophy's systemic racism," *aeon*, September 24, 2020, https://aeon.co/essays/racism-is-baked-into-the-structure-of-dialectical-philosophy.

23 Nasar Meer, "W. E. B. Du Bois, double consciousness and the 'spirit' of recognition," *The Sociological Review* 67, no. 1 (2019): 56. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038026118765370.

24 The 'state of nature' is a hypothetical description of the way humans lived before organizing themselves into societies. It is an analytic tool often used to advance one's conception of human nature.

25 Meer, "W. E. B. Du Bois," 56.

26 W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (1897): 194. https://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=modern_english/uvaGenText/tei/DubStri.xml&chunk.id=d3&toc.id=&brand=default.

but rather must find themselves in the eyes of the other. In the same way that the master-slave relationship does not meet the requirement of reciprocal recognition, racism makes it clear to African Americans that White Americans do not view them as equals. Unlike Hegel, Du Bois maintains that the oppressed remain the injured party in this dynamic. Instead of being the key to affirming their individuality, the acute awareness African Americans have of their subjugated status (referred to as "second-sight" in the passage above) negatively impacts their sense of self, as it results in the internalization of the contempt White Americans have for them.

Responding to what at the time was called the "Negro Problem", Du Bois writes: "being a problem is a strange experience, - peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe."[27] Du Bois is communicating that he conceives of himself as "a problem" because, over time, he has internalized how White Americans conceive of him. This suggests that Du Bois believed that the self is (at least in part) a social construct, in the way that our sense of self depends on and is affected by the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of others.[28] While this is not as strong as Hegel's claim that the self does not exist at all unless it is mediated by another, Du Bois's self still has the Hegelian character of being determined by how it is perceived.[29] Du Bois *is* a problem, not by nature, but due to how he and other African Americans are identified by White Americans.

Of all the conditions contributing to double-consciousness, the one with the greatest impact on African Americans' ability to achieve self-consciousness is the existence of a hyphenated identity; that is, two consciousnesses that are distinct yet inseparable. Describing the African American psyche, Du Bois writes: "One feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[30] Here, Du Bois claims that the African American self is hyphenated. Again, a parallel can be found in Hegel, namely his concept of the Unhappy Consciousness. Like the double-consciousness of African Americans, the Unhappy Consciousness is internally bifurcated, with one half playing the role of the master, and the other the slave. When describing the Unhappy Consciousness, Hegel explains that "each of its two conscious orientations inevitably involves the other; and so no sooner does it imagine itself to have prevailed and found peace in the single-mindedness of either one than it is expelled therefrom."[31] In other words, the Unhappy Consciousness cannot just simply pick a

27 Du Bois, "Strivings," 194.
28 Meer, "W. E. B. Du Bois," 52.
29 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 91.
30 Du Bois, "Strivings," 194.
31 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 104.

side because its halves are intertwined. For both thinkers, a bifurcated consciousness is a barrier to self-consciousness. For Hegel, these contradictory halves need to be reconciled for self-consciousness to become self-sustaining.[32] Likewise, Du Bois attests that the African American's "better and truer self"[33] would be the result of a merger between their double consciousnesses. The crucial difference is that while Hegel identifies the process through which the Unhappy Consciousness can unify itself, Du Bois does not do so for the double-consciousness. This is not because he does not believe it to be possible, but because – in light of the alienating conditions that give rise to double-consciousness – it is much easier said than done. In his article, Du Bois mentions various moments in African American history in which it seemed like self-consciousness would be attained (e.g., emancipation, suffrage, and increased access to education) only for them to fall short. Despite these disappointments, African Americans continue to strive "to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, and to husband and use his best powers."[34] In brief, until the United States lives up to its declaration that all men are created equal, the barrier that stands in between subjugated populations and the development of a mature self-consciousness may continue to prove to be insurmountable.

IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Despite the many parallels that can be (and already have been) drawn between the two thinkers' ideas, Hegel and Du Bois reach different conclusions concerning the ability of subjugated populations to develop self-consciousness as Hegel's account does not consider the reality of subjugation. Recall that the MSD is a purely theoretical analysis; it is sheer abstraction, and any attempt to apply it to real-world scenarios would be tangential at best. Du Bois, on the other hand, draws directly from historical, sociological, and political circumstances while – perhaps most importantly – incorporating his lived experience into his analysis. One must assume that the reason why Du Bois does not suggest that African Americans are able to remedy their double-consciousness on their own is because the systemic problems that give rise to the issue require systemic solutions. Enacting such large-scale change would require the cooperation of White Americans, and it is for this reason that the Du Boisian subject – unlike the Hegelian slave – is truly reliant on proper recognition from their oppressors in order to reach their full potential. Besides, if the development of self-consciousness in the face of oppression were as inevitable as portrayed in the MSD, why is it that many political theorists believe that the demand for recognition underlies various social and political struggles?[35] Not

32 Ibid., 104.

33 Du Bois, "Strivings," 195.

34 Ibid., 195.

35 Paddy McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

only would Du Bois deny the inevitability that Hegel alludes to, but he would also argue that without establishing mutual recognition, groups in society cannot effectively work towards social reform. This sentiment is highlighted in the following passage:

Work, culture, and liberty – all these we need, not singly, but together; for to-day these ideals among the Negro people are gradually coalescing ... the ideal of fostering the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to, but in conformity with, the greater ideals of the American republic, in order that some day, on American soil, two world races may give each to each those characteristics which both so sadly lack.[36]

Here, Du Bois points out what White Americans stand to gain from embracing African Americans as equals. In brief, until White Americans properly value the unique contributions that African Americans make to American culture, the latter will exist in a state of double consciousness, thus preventing them from reaching their full potential and undermining the political community as a whole.

V. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, while Hegel's MSD suggests that subjugated individuals inevitably achieve self-consciousness, Du Bois's double-consciousness suggests that cooperation between dominant and oppressed groups in society is necessary for the development of self-consciousness within oppressed individuals. Despite the phenomenological similarities between the two concepts, they arrive at different conclusions because of the empirical aspects of Du Bois's analysis. The ultimate result is that Du Bois provides a more sufficient account of the effects of oppression on an individual's ability to achieve self-consciousness because he actually considers the experiential effects of oppression. That's not to say that Du Bois's analysis is better tout court, as a statement to that effect would ignore the fact that Hegel and Du Bois's analyses were born out of vastly different contexts and served different purposes for their authors. Du Bois clearly looked to his predecessors for the theoretical foundations of his work, but he is considered to be a founding figure of sociology because he understood that theory alone can only get you so far.[37] There is arguably no phenomenon more personal than that of self-consciousness, and Du Bois knew that in order to accurately capture its essence, theory needed to be supplemented with lived experience.

accessed August 31, 2023, https://iep.utm.edu/recog_sp/#H3.

36 Du Bois, "Strivings," 197.

37 Meer, "W. E. B. Du Bois," 47.

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THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE ANOREXIC BODY: BETWEEN APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING

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INTRODUCTION

An eating disorder is not only about problems concerned with eating. Rather, it is about the heaviness of one's steps in the world, the weight of one's commitments, the prominence of one's movements, and the patterns by which one gazes. This essay is an effort to explain my experience with anorexia nervosa. As hard as it may be to tell my story, I still decided to pursue it; now, I ask myself: how do I narrate the longing of a flesh that in its eagerness to be seen was killing itself, eroding itself, dissipating itself?[1] I also wonder, will the readers be able to understand me? Will you acknowledge the

1 In this essay, I prefer to use flesh, instead of body, because it is a reference to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. As will be dicussed later, the flesh is the term which explains the double relationship of the lived body as both seer and seen. This quote is from Merleau-Ponty´s book "The visible and invisible" in which it is introduced as: "The flesh, a concept of "what has no name in any philosophy" is not just a new term for what the Phenomenology of Perception (but already Sartre's Being and Nothingness) brought to light as the set of non-objective phenomena by which the subject's own corporeity is given to him as his "lived body" or "I-body," distinguished from his objective body, appearing publicly as a thing among things of the world: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, edited by Claude Lefort, translated by Alphonso Lingis. (Northwestern University Press, 1968), 139, 147. The flesh is the body inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch— the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing": Ibid., 54.

irony, the paradoxes, and the confusion behind it all? With that said, my essay follows a phenomenological method to be able to narrate this puzzle, since the phenomenology of the body enables one to account for phenomena that can only be glimpsed when one gets immersed in the study of the embodied experience that living subjects have of their world. I suggest that the anorexic body is one torn between appearing and disappearing. It is appearing because it becomes explicit when it is controlled: the anorexic body unfolds before the gaze of the anorexic person as she commands her pursuit of weightlessness; however, it is also disappearing because of the restrictions imposed on it — in the long-run, they make a dying body out of it: a body that perishes, dims, and fades away. I elaborate my argument by presenting general information about anorexia nervosa, and by portraying my own experience with this eating disorder in relation to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

I. WHAT IS ANOREXIA NERVOSA?

Anorexia Nervosa is an eating behavior disorder. The American Psychiatric Association (APA), in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), characterizes the disorder by: a) a persistent restriction in the caloric intake, leading to a body weights below the 85% expected weight for a person's height, sex and age, accompanied by a denial of the problems associated with maintaining such low corporal weight; b) an intense fear of gaining weight, or being "fat," alongside behavioral patterns that preclude weight gain; c) a distorted self-perception in terms of body shape and weight, characterized by severe self-critique; disorder in the way that someone experiences their figure and their weight induced by extreme self-criticism towards them; d) in some cases, amenorrhea.[2]

Contrary to popular belief, anorexia nervosa does not stem solely from a desire for significant weight loss, for this disorder can rarely be reduced to merely one cause. Instead, anorexia nervosa often results from a complex interaction of genetic, biological, behavioral, psychological, and social factors, such as: body dysmorphia, perfectionism, prolonged stress, anxiety or depression periods, an aspiration of control, loneliness, low self-esteem, the pressure to be thin, and bodily changes associated with phases like puberty, hormonal deficits, and genetic variations.[3]

The beauty standards of Western societies also contribute to the development of eating disorders (ED) like anorexia nervosa. For example, in the United States approximately 80% of those who experience the disorder are women,[4] largely due to the societal

2 Amenorrhea is the absence of at least three menstrual periods at a fertile age.

3 Lucy Osler, "Controlling the Noise: A Phenomenological Account of Anorexia Nervosa and the Threatening Body," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 28, no. 1 (2021):45, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2021.0008.

4 "Anorexia Statistics: Gender, Race & Socioeconomics," The Bulimia Project, September 22,

valuation of slender feminine bodies, which are associated with happiness, lovability, success, and societal recognition and acceptance.[5] This homogenization of beauty can lead women to develop unhealthy behaviors to conform to society's celebrated beauty standards by adopting multiple fad diets throughout their lives, and other practices to be slender.[6] In fact, the body parts that an anorexic person seeks to slim down – in pursuit of traits such as a "thigh-gap," slim waist, tiny arms, and sharp collarbones – are those same features esteemed in Western paradigms of beauty for women's bodies.[7] In addition, this bodily homogenization can lead to certain behaviors in the early stages of anorexia nervosa, such as fasting or restricting sugar intake, which are often considered as personal achievements: the perfect body is one that is controlled and disciplined, even to the ultimate detriment of one's health.[8] In this sense, Perez is right in pointing out that AN is symptomatic of a larger phenomenon pertaining to bodily discipline and representation:

> Contemporary anorexia is an indicator of a wider phenomenon: the human-body representation, the idea that the body is an object to be controlled and manipulated. This illness is perhaps a proof of how multiple narratives registered in our culture influence the behaviors, habits and ways of seeing the world by contemporary individuals.[9]

Scholars have identified two subtypes of anorexia nervosa: the restrictive type and the binge-purging type. These subtypes can manifest separately, simultaneously, or consecutively.[10] Both variants co-occur with self-harming behaviors, defined as: "socially unacceptable behavior involving deliberate and direct destruction of one's own body surface without suicidal intent."[11] These behaviors allow an anorexic person to 'handle'

2022, https://bulimia.com/anorexia/statistics/#:-:text=Women%20have%20anorexia%20at%20rates.

5 Mauricio H. Bedoya and Andrés F. Marín, "Cuerpo vivido en la experiencia de mujeres con diagnóstico de anorexia o bulimia," *Iatreia* 22, no. 3 (2009): 221. https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.iatreia.8416.

6 Ian Burkitt and Jordi Sanz, "Embodiment, Lived Experience and Anorexia: The Contribution of Phenomenology to a Critical Therapeutic Approach," *Athenea Digital* 0, (2001), 44-45, https://atheneadigital.net/article/view/n0-sanz-burkitt/4-pdf-en.

7 Bedoya and Marin, "Cuerpo vivido en la experiencia de mujeres con diagnóstico de anorexia o bulimia," 222-224

8 Rawlinson & Ward 2016, 89

9 Lina Pérez, "Una aproximación a la anorexia desde el discurso fenomenológico," *Bogota: Revista Colombiana de Sociología* 35, no. 2 (2012): 188, https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/5515/551556230009.pdf.

10 In the restrictive subtype of anorexia nervosa, people significantly reduce their intake of food to nearly eating nothing, while in the binge-purge subtype, people also restrict the amount and type of food they consume, but allow themselves to eat large amounts of food in short periods of time (binge-eating episodes). Afterwards, they try to get rid of what was uncontrollably consumed by vomiting, using laxatives or diuretics, and practicing extreme exercises (purging episodes).

11 S. Verschueren et al., "Patients With Anorexia Nervosa Who Self-Injure: A Phenomenological Study." *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* 51 (2015): 63, https://doi.

overwhelming emotions, punish themselves for food intake, and even reward themselves for food restriction.

Up until now I have characterized anorexia nervosa as an eating disorder and discussed some of its causes and subtypes. In the next section, I will describe my own anorexic experience, using this information about the disorder and phenomenology, in order to try to understand this illness from an embodied first-person perspective.

II. HOW DID I BECOME FIRENDS WITH *ANA*?

It all started at the end of January, a month after I turned fifteen. I was overwhelmed by all the burdens I had. At the time, I was a good student, friend, athlete and daughter; I felt it was not acceptable for me to fail at anything because those close to me expected me to continue at this perfect pace. I was filled with pain and anxiety as I built an unachievable identity. One day while watching a show featuring an anorexic teenager I found myself captivated by her behavior.[12] I noticed how, as she succumbed deeper into her disorder, the expectations of her lightened. Or, at least, that was how I interpreted her story. As a result, I started imitating her behavior and doing some research into anorexic behaviors. Recalling the beginning of it all now, I think that at the time, I unconsciously saw Anorexia as a way of unburdening myself from the weight with which I was overloaded. This explains why, although I was acutely aware of the grave dangers of developing such a destructive ED like anorexia nervosa, I could not stop familiarizing myself with its problematic behaviors. Contrary to common belief, many EDs begin in a conscious manner, yet those who start this way may find it difficult to acknowledge the intentional nature of the self-inflicted harm and distress. The aforementioned aligns with the affirmation of some scholars about anorexia nervosa being a form of non-verbal communication—a plea articulated through the body. As Rawlinson & Ward (2016, 85) note, "the anorexic body expresses a relationship, communicates a message for others, makes a claim and an appeal to them (...) Anorexia is a cry demanding a response to an originary call that was not heard."[13] In my case, my extreme weight loss aspiration

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org/10.1111/ppc.12061.

12 The character I refer to is Cassie Ainsworth from the TV show *Skins*.

13 The complete passage reads: "Anorexia is a pathology of control, attached to the violence felt by someone unable to attain self-acceptance. In the first place, she struggles to live up to expectations, and then she has the feeling of losing herself, of no longer knowing who she is. The model of the wise child, of the good student who does everything that is expected of her and does well in school, is common among anorexics (...) The refusal to eat is an attack against parents and against one's expectations of oneself, and it is the expression of a will to live that cannot find a positive expression other than as a cry of pain or opposition. The emaciated appearance of the body is enough for this opposition to manifest and enough to retake control from others who have sought to subject the anorexic or who have made her disappear under the weight of injunctions and norms": Rawlinson and Ward, *The Routledge Handbook of Food Ethics*, 85.

functioned as a tangible expression of my desperate need to make my burdens float away.

This is where Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh comes into play. As he states in his unpublished manuscript, The Visible and the Invisible: "We must not think the flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit—for then it would be the union of contradictories—but we must think it, as we said, as an element, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being."[14] Thus, we should understand flesh not only as the physical layer that constitutes singular bodies, but also as the principle of existence: everything that exists is a unique fold, style or expression of a concrete emblem that is the medium and core for every worldly experience. In other words, Merleau-Ponty describes flesh as an elementary form of being; every-body is constituted by an elemental flesh that folds over itself multiple times, creating singular ways, manners or styles of being. Flesh resembles a unique 'melody' whereby bodies move and situate themselves. We are all flesh, but are also our unique stylized *fleshed-selves*.

Moreover, Merleau-Ponty characterizes this elemental form of being in terms of its *reversibility*. The embodied subjects are not only seers/observers (i.e., they see other embodied subjects), but also are seen/observed (because they are also visible to other embodied subjects).[15] Accordingly, bodies simultaneously move and are moved, perceive and are perceived, touch and are touched, remember and are remembered. Not only do we experience the world, but we are also experienced by the world; however, this double experience is not causally organized, but is double precisely because one cannot be without the other: I cannot experience the world if there is no world, but neither can the world have experience of me if I am not already within it. The reason for this double experience is flesh as an elemental reversible form of being which constitutes everything that exists, but allows singular ways of being within it. Consequently, we have individual beings surrounded by worlds of individual beings, or melodies within symphonies though apparently separated, fundamentally connected by the core of their shared existence: *flesh*.

As a consequence, the experiences of singular bodies are not played out in isolation, but in tandem; they are melodies composing, reproducing and rearranging themselves in intertwining ways; they are broadened compasses played within the universal symphony of the flesh. Mujica builds on this by suggesting that being an embodied or fleshed subject entails having ties and commitments with other embodied subjects, insofar as one's melody is never played alone but always in relationship with the fleshed subjects met in a shared world. Mujica also encloses these ties and commitments within the concept of weight and explains that there are moments in which, just as with anorexia nervosa, the

14 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 147.

15 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible.*

heaviness of such weight becomes a burden.[16]

Therefore, when an anorexic person says she is 'fat', she may be articulating the feeling of being "too much in the world, feeling heavy, overly present, or being too visible."[17] The desire for thinness that makes her restrict her caloric intake embodies an effort to lose her own existential weight: to minimize ties and commitments with others, occupy less space, and lighten the flesh. My experience with anorexia nervosa began as a way of lessening the space my body occupied before others so that I could free myself from the burdens of their expectations. I wanted to live just like a feather floating in the air, without ever knowing when it might land, where it would move, and how high it would fly. In Fuchs's words, what the anorexic person pursues "is not only thinness but also lightness, weightlessness, or in one word: disembodiment, expressed in the ultimate fantasy of floating in the air."[18]

When I began my research on anorexic behaviors the first thing I encountered were two blogs, which are nowadays banned: *Thinspo* and *Anaismyfriend*. These websites instructed people with EDs, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder, on how to develop and maintain these disorders. The sites were filled with pictures of emaciated female figures whose bones were sharper than knives, diets for losing weight, exercises targeting specific body parts, recommendations for handling hunger, tricks for hiding the disorder from others, 'motivational' ED quotes, and forums designed not for aiding recovery but to reinforce the disorders' presence. I followed each tip on the blogs like they were commandments. For starters, befriending *Ana* (short for anorexia nervosa) was the main goal of my favorite blog *Anaismyfriend*. This meant getting to know her better: her secrets, her behaviors, her whims, and her powers. At first it was unclear to me how this was possible, for *Ana* was just the name of a disorder, but as I immersed myself in the blog's directives, I noticed how she slowly came to life and, just as friends do, started to influence my behavior.

The blog advised me to establish a weight-loss goal and achieve it through strict dieting, fasting, and exercising. In following these instructions, I began to perceive my own body as an instrument that I could manipulate to accomplish what I wanted.[19] In

16 Francisco Mujica. "Anorexia y experiencia: lecciones de la fenomenología," Academia.edu, 2021. 7-9.

17 Hannah Bowden, ""Too Fat" and "Too Thin": Understanding the Bodily Experience of Anorexia Nervosa," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 19, no. 3 (2012): 252.

18 Thomas Fuchs, "The disappearing body: anorexia as a conflict of embodiment," *Eating and Weight Disorders* 27, no. 1 (2022): 113-14, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-021-01122-7.

19 Usually we exist in the world without noticing our bodies. We move around the world being one with our bodies. However, the anorexic person separates herself from her body so that she can command her weight loss. As a consequence, her body is constantly thrown back at her, it appears in a thematic way, for it to be controlled, manipulated, and monitored by the anorexic person. An analogy for this is when a person takes pictures of herself and then looks at them. The anorexic person does the same to her body, sometimes using pictures,

other words, as my illness developed, I lived my body less as-a-subject and began to contemplate it more as-an-object. Phenomenologically speaking, Merleau-Ponty posits that our bodies are vehicles for experiencing and dealing with the world.[20] There are two ways of experiencing the body. The lived body, or "*Leib*" in Husserlian phenomenology and *corps propre* in Merleau-Ponty's translation, is the felt body, situated and lived in first person; while the objective body, *Körper and corps objectif*, respectively, is observed from a third-person perspective.[21] Usually, we experience our own bodies as lived ones; otherwise, their objectification would constantly interrupt our actions, because we would concentrate on the deployment of our bodies, and not on the deployment of the action:

> Its permanence is not a permanence in the world, but a permanence on my part. To say that it is always near me, always there for me, is to say that it is never really in front of me, that I cannot array it before my eyes, that it remains marginal to all my perceptions, that it is with me."[22]

Merleau-Ponty argues there are times in which the experience of our lived bodies unfolds itself and we can objectify them, albeit only momentarily, for one can never truly disembody oneself from its body. Otherwise, we would simply stop existing, because one would be unable to act. Hence, although we often try to separate our mind from our body in order to be able to control it, just as I tried to for the purpose of losing weight,

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sometimes watching herself in front of the mirror, or sometimes just being extremely attentive to her own movements, to lead her own body into her weight-loss goal. The problem is, she does not look at herself as a person checking out her appearance does, but learns to do it obsessively. Hence, the more time the anorexic person objectifies herself, the more she detaches from her own body and feels as someone different from it.

20 Merleau-Ponty argues that the most fundamental way in which we experience the world is through our bodies, not through our minds. Before we can think about the world, we first sense the world: "The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them": Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 94. For this reason, our most fundamental experience of the world is not a reflexive one. We do not constantly reflect on our experience of the world. Rather, we have a pre-reflexive experience of it in which the body's own motor intelligence dictates how we navigate it. Our bodies know how to move, perceive, and situate themselves in order to achieve what we set ourselves to accomplish, but we are not necessarily aware of the body's workings and know-how because our bodies have incorporated within themselves the habit of doing such things. There is knowledge within the whole of our bodies, or in the words of Merleau-Ponty, "It is possible to know how to type without being able to say where the letters which make the words are to be found on the banks of keys. To know how to type is not, then, to know the place of each letter among the keys, nor even to have acquired a conditioned reflex for each one, which is set in motion by the letter as it comes before our eye. If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what then is it? It is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort": Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (Routledge Classics, 2002), 166.

21 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

22 Ibid., 108

the necessary lived experience of the body insists on the objectifying subject. However, I suggest that, in some pathological experiences of the body, one can disembody for more than just temporary periods. Nevertheless, this is not an advantage, but a crack in the experience of our bodies as our own. When this disembodiment happens, instead of living through our bodies, one deploys the body aimed to be controlled before one's gaze—as if it were different from the one controlling it, while at the same time feeling that alien body on one's side—because the controlled and alienated body is still mine. The result is a subject torn between living its body, guided by necessity, and objectifying its body, guided by illness. In such pathological cases the experience of our bodies is neither lived, nor objectified, but something between the two. An imbalanced transit, a harmful tearing, a burning rip.

An example of a momentary disembodiment is when we place ourselves in front of a mirror. When a person poses in front of a mirror, she is both contemplating her movements from a third-person perspective, and moving and experiencing her body from within. A very similar situation occurs with an anorexic person who places her body in front of herself to command, control, and monitor, but also follows what is commanded, submits to control, and is being monitored.[23] The difference is that in the anorexic person the disembodiment is not momentary, but a prolonged fracture. She is divided into the commander and the commanded; torn between the body she objectifies, and the body rendering her own commands; splintered by the compulsive desire of weight-loss that faces a body determined to survive, trying to resist the masochistic control, while disciplined by a mind determined to starve.

Consequently, when what the *body-as-subject* feels does not correspond with what the anorexic person seeks for her objective body; the person experiences her own body as a *visceral* one.[24] That is, one's body becomes visceral when the body's needs are experienced not as something one owns, but as external agents that threaten one's existence: "Perhaps what is most perplexing about the visceral body is that while I, typically, experience my body's hunger as my own hunger, I can experience the feelings of the visceral body as unwanted, as pressing in on me from elsewhere, as in conflict with my projects, desires, even with (aspects of) my *self*."[25] In anorexia nervosa, the hunger of her needing body becomes a threat to the person who wants to become thinner because, in an intrusive or pulsing way, her now visceral body demands of her what she does not want: to eat. Nevertheless:

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23 Thomas Fuchs, "The disappearing body: anorexia as a conflict of embodiment," 112.

24 Osler, "Controlling the Noise," 46.

25 Lucy Osler, "(Un)wanted Feelings in Anorexia Nervosa: Making the Visceral Body Mine Again," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 28, no. 1 (2021): 68, https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2021.0011.

> "Instead of experiencing hunger as a challenging voice, [for the anorexic person] hunger becomes an affirmation of [her] own power over her visceral body. The very meaning of hunger is transformed, where hunger is no longer experienced as negatively valenced but as a felt reward (…) The individual with AN [anorexia nervosa] 'co-opts' the voice of the visceral body, making it her own. In this way, she overcomes the body-as-subject's [i.e her lived body's] demanding and threatening nature, turning it into an object over which she has control."[26]

As much as the anorexic body is still a lived body with a very intense experience of its needs, throughout the disorder the person tries to detach from its visceral demands to gain control and power over them, so that she can accomplish her ultimate goal of losing weight. In short, the anorexic person uses her bodily experience as a *lived body* to assert her idealized experience as a weightless, *objective body*.

My anorexia nervosa began as the restrictive subtype, and I felt hungry very often. In spite of this experience, the more I controlled my hunger the easier it was for me to spend entire days without eating. The same happened with other behaviors I learned from *Ana*. I went from consuming no less than 1500 calories per day to barely consuming 300, from fasting twelve hours to fasting for more than 3 days, from doing an hour of daily exercise to doing four, from losing one pound per week to losing up to four per week. Nonetheless, the more I gained control over my body's visceral demands, the more I started to feel disembodied from them. In fact, the objectification of my body grew from something occasional to something almost irreversible. I became hyper-vigilant of everything I did with my body.[27] I paid detailed attention to how, when, and what I ate, how I dressed, how different types of clothes looked on me, how I walked, how I sat, and especially how *Ana*, others, and myself looked at my body.

People who knew me noticed my swift weight loss and the strict diets I was following, yet very few disapproved. I have always had a curvy figure, and many people thought that by becoming thinner I was achieving a healthier and prettier figure. Once, even a male teacher asked me: "Woah, what diet are you on? The tuna and water one?" And, at the sports academies, mothers congratulated me for my quick weight loss. Whenever someone praised my thinness, I not only felt encouraged to keep losing weight, but I also became more aware of what others thought of me. As a result, the objectifying look of others intensified my own objectifying look over my body, undoubtedly shaping my own perception of my body as well.[28]

Thus, the extreme control over the visceral demands of my body, coupled with the unceasing gaze it endured, culminated in a bodily objectification that left me feeling dis-

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26 Osler, "Controlling the Noise," 51.

27 Bowden, ""Too Fat" and "Too Thin," 234.

28 Frederik Svenaeus, "Anorexia Nervosa and the Body Uncanny: A Phenomenological Approach," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 20, no. 1 (2013): 83.

engaged, separated, and apart from it. As Fuchs frames it, this process of self-objectification "leads to a growing detachment of the anorexic person from her body, reducing it to its physical dimension—its measurable size, weight, caloric intake, etc.—and keeping it under constant scrutiny."[29]

Thus, the extreme control over the visceral demands of my body, coupled with the unceasing gaze it endured, culminated in a bodily objectification that left me feeling disengaged and estranged from it. As Fuchs frames it, this process of self-objectification "leads to a growing detachment of the anorexic person from her body," reducing it to its physical metrics—size, weight, caloric intake—and subjecting it to constant scrutiny in order to orient it towards the illness's goal. The body becomes less something that *I am,* and more something that *I have,* shifting from a lived experience of hunger, fatigue, cold, and other visceral sensations associated with eating disorders like AN, to an experience of monitoring and managing these sensations as inconveniences in need of control.[30]

In other words, the body of an anorexic person becomes increasingly treated as a foreign, "separate, controllable thing" that could be altered or even replaced to achieve a better self.[31] This is where Osler's (2020) framing of anorexia as a 'project of control' becomes particularly illuminating. The subject oscillates between an objective gaze – used to monitor and direct the body – and the subjective experience of being in that same body. Over time, as the illness deepens, the subject relies and remains more on the objective stance, as it is more effective for achieving the weight-loss goal.

The problem is, that in my case, as I got used to self-objectifying my body, I started feeling as though I occupied more space than ever, that I was more voluminous, that my figure was more prominent, that my steps were bigger, louder, and heavier. Ironically, just a month into undertaking my friendship with *Ana*, I finally saw the numbers I had initially intended to achieve on the scale. I was happy. I looked at myself in the mirror and thought about how beautiful I was. Right up until I heard her for the first time—*Ana*—speaking to me: It is not enough. You still look fat.

From that moment onwards, *Ana*'s voice accompanied my every choice, movement, perception, posture, and situation. My 'imaginary' friendship was now permeating every fiber of my being. She had settled within me like a permanent accessory to my flesh which stylized my way of being-in-the-world. I was completely contaminated by her. Still, despite knowing the risks, I set for myself a new weight-loss goal. I had already lost more than 12 pounds in a month and was at the limit of a 'healthy' weight. I tried to

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29 Thomas Fuchs, "The disappearing body: anorexia as a conflict of embodiment," 113.

30 Ibid., 133

31 Diedra Clay, "The Phenomenology of Anorexia Nervosa: The Intertwining Meaning of Gender and Embodiment," *Health and Health Psychology: European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences* 1, no. 5 (2015): 32, https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2015.07.4.

resume eating as I had before becoming friends with *Ana*, but I could not stop hearing her voice telling me I needed to continue because I was fat, ugly, and unlovable. Therefore, what began in my case not as a disapproval of my body, but as an escape from the burdens I carried, turned precisely into an intensely disapproving attitude toward my own figure. According to *Ana*, the only path towards self-approval, as well as the approval of others, was to lose even more weight. For *Ana*, it was never a matter of just reaching a goal and maintaining it: my weight loss was an indefinite endeavor of thinness, a nonstop striving to the bone, even if that meant falling severely sick in the process. So eventually, I found myself not leading, but being led by her. Again, we—*Ana* and I—set a new weight goal: to lose another 16 pounds. As I continued to lose weight dangerously, two things happened:

First, people kept looking attentively at my figure, yet I no longer viewed their objectifying gazes as motivation but as criticism. I felt they were thinking the same ugly things *Ana* thought of me. Fuchs comments on this transformation of perception:

> "The gaze of others increasingly loses significance because it now becomes the anorexic's own gaze, indeed also her own body feeling. She transforms the external evaluation into a regime of self-observation and self-assessment that detaches itself more and more from the usual norms of body image."[32]

Second, I totally lost control over myself. It was no longer I who objectified my body as an instrument to achieve my goals. *Ana* was the one objectifying it, and I was merely the servant who took her body to the limits in order to fulfill her demands.

I began to feel alienated from my own body, as the voice guiding it did not feel like my own.[33] Every time I looked at myself in the mirror, I felt like there was someone else before me. The way my face, hair, color, and figure had changed was out of my control; *Ana* was in charge of it, and I was just letting myself be dragged by her. As *Ana* continued to push my body towards even more dangerous limits, my body, as a defense mechanism, made its visceral demands louder and, as a consequence, I became obsessed with those demands. All I could think about was food, exercise, and losing weight. My anorexic behaviors had matured into the only things that mattered to me, the only things that called my attention. Over time, *Ana* became an extension of my own flesh, such that everything I did, saw, or thought, was permeated by her—by my eating disorder. The anorexic behaviors turned into obsessions, because they were the only way of living that

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32 Thomas Fuchs, "The disappearing body: anorexia as a conflict of embodiment," 111.

33 Although Merleau-Ponty states that we can never truly disembody from our own bodies, he is not completely correct with respect to anorexia nervosa since the experience of the anorexic's own body as objective is more than temporary. As a result, the anorexic person constantly feels alienated and detached from her own body, as well as perceives the visceral demands of it as something threatening to her pursuit of weight loss.

I could conceive:

> "When the starvation of the body has become independent from external norms, the patients will realize that their initial desire to lose weight has turned into a compulsion to do so. The anorexic is literally obsessed with the subject of food and weight, while interest in almost everything else in life is lost."[34]

This process can be explained in four steps. First, for Merleau-Ponty,[35] our consciousness projects itself on to the world, using our bodies as intermediaries for its intentions, not through a reflexive "*I think that*," but rather through an unreflective "I can" towards which it devotes itself.[36] Second, consciousness stylizes its gaze of the world, because it perceives it in a personalized manner: "Consciousness freely develops its visual data beyond their own specific significance; it uses them for the expression of its spontaneous acts."[37] One's experience of the world is unique because it is infused with the meanings one's embodied consciousness drapes over it: "(...) it puts forth beyond itself meanings capable of providing a framework for a whole series of thoughts and experiences."[38] Third, Merleau-Ponty explains that the different ways in which consciousness makes its experience of the world meaningful can lead to different behaviors of subjects. If repeated, these behaviors turn into habits which consciousness incorporates into its daily life:

> "Consciousness projects itself into a physical world and has a body, as it projects itself into a cultural world and has its habits: because it cannot be consciousness without playing upon significances given either in the absolute past of nature or in its own personal past, and because any form of lived experience tends towards a certain generality whether that of our

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34 Thomas Fuchs, "The disappearing body: anorexia as a conflict of embodiment," 112.

35 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 159.

36 As I mentioned in the previous note, our bodies are the conditions for our most primary experiences that we have of the world; thus, usually our behaviors are not guided by explicit reflections, but by a certain knowledge within our bodies which guides us into accomplishing what we set ourselves to do. In Merleau-Ponty's terminology, our behaviors are not an "I think that." Instead, our behaviors are a pre-reflexive "I can," meaning we do not have to think about our actions in order to do them, but we just throw ourselves into doing them because we know how to accomplish them. When we walk, for example, we do not think about how walking is done, nor command our bodies into doing it. We just walk because we know how to do it: we have incorporated into our bodily habits the knowledge of walking. In fact, when we reflect on how to walk once we have made it a habit, we walk in a strange, unfamiliar, and truncated way, because our knowledge of it is a bodily one and not a reflexive one. Nevertheless, when one first learns how to do something in a way that is completely different to what we are accustomed to, i.e. before interiorizing it as a habit, we do it in a very reflexive way. For example, a musician who plays a song for the first time is constantly thinking about the notes she is playing. But after the musician completely learns the song, she just plays it. In the case of anorexia nervosa, the behaviors of the person with anorexia are initially reflexive, but after repeating them, they turn into compulsive habits.

37 Ibid., 158

38 Ibid., 146

habits or that of our 'bodily functions.'" [39]

Fourth, consciousness projects itself onto the world through the series of behaviors the person with anorexia nervosa has incorporated into her being. In my case, *Ana* became completely attached to my flesh, dictating a new way of being-in-the-world that was always devoted to endless weight loss. *Ana* made every one of her behaviors customary in my daily life. An objectified subject never accomplishes this passively; instead, "she actively 'summons' the invitations to behave from the world; she 'projects' a situation around herself."[40] In this sense, my every perception of the world was filtered through my anorexic gaze. For example, in the changing rooms at school, when I noticed my friends looking at my figure, I felt as if they were criticizing me, reminding me that I needed to continue thinning down.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the movement of our bodies provides us with a way of accessing the world and the objects.[41] Thus, when almost every movement of the anorexic person is tied to her goal of losing weight, her experiences of the world are dramatically reduced to this singular pursuit. The more these behaviors—such as exercise routines, hiding tricks, weighing oneself, fasting, etc.—are repeated, the more deeply the body incorporates them as habits to the point of embodying them as compulsive needs. Merleau-Ponty writes: "A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its 'world', and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation."[42] An example of this is the compulsive and irreflexive need I developed to weigh myself when I got up, before going to sleep, after every meal or fast, and at the end of my exercising, without ever stopping to think about it. In short, when *Ana* attached to my flesh, she reconfigured my whole set of behaviors so that every experience was intended from my illness. The more I behaved as *Ana* wanted, the more my body was reduced, confined, and locked to her singular focus: losing weight.

Continuing my friendship with *Ana*, within a month and a half, I had managed to lose the 16 pounds that I had set as my goal. By this time, I had almost no clue of what was happening in my life, with my anorexic behaviors consuming every memory. I felt so alienated from my body that I started to forget what was being done with it, further blurred by the malnourishment of my body, which worsened my short-term memory and left my daily experiences hazy and disorientating. *Ana*, as expected, did not want

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39 Ibid., 158

40 Kormarine Romdenh-Romluc, "Merleau-Ponty and the Power to Reckon with the Possible." In Reading Merleau-Ponty: On the Phenomenology of Perception, edited by Thomas Baldwin (New York: Routledge, 2007). 55.

41 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 157.

42 Ibid., 160-161.

to stop. Even though I knew that I was too thin, my 'friend' made me believe that I still needed to lose more weight. The concern expressed by my loved ones was twisted by *Ana*, who would tell me that they were envious of me and that these people did not really understand me if they insisted I remain 'fat'. This manipulation led me to distance myself from many people, and although the loneliness I experienced was because of *Ana*'s influence, she made me believe that if I kept losing weight, eventually someone would truly embrace me just as she did.

I therefore decided to pursue a new goal: to weigh less than 88 pounds, the average weight of an eleven-year-old girl. My fasting periods grew longer, and my exercise routines became more exhausting. On the days I did eat, I never consumed more than 100 calories. *Ana* was directing my body towards her new goal, but as I worked towards achieving it, the visceral demands of my body became louder and stronger. They grew so urgent that *Ana*, from time to time, lost control over me: I would binge eat. I could no longer hide the fact that my weight was too low. I lost my short-term memory, and I would faint while exercising. My body was dying and thus losing the ability to keep up with the pace *Ana* demanded of it. But she refused to accept this. After all, what she wanted was for my flesh to weigh nothing: she wanted me to disappear.

The above can be explained with reference to Merleau-Ponty's study of amputees who feel a phantom limb. According to him:

> "What it is in us which refuses mutilation and disablement is an I committed to a certain physical and inter-human world, who continues to tend towards his world despite handicaps and amputations and who, to this extent, does not recognize them de jure. The refusal of the deficiency is only the obverse of our inherence in a world, the implicit negation of what runs counter to the natural momentum which throws us into our tasks, our cares, our situation, our familiar horizons. To have a phantom arm is to remain open to all the actions of which the arm alone is capable; it is to retain the practical field which one enjoyed before mutilation."[43]

Just as the amputee might experience a phantom limb, denying the nonexistence of the amputated limb, the anorexic person's compulsion to continue losing weight at all costs, even though the body is no longer responding, mirrors the denial of how such desire is destroying the vitality of her body. When the disease becomes flesh within another flesh, it contaminates the whole body into a unique mode of being-in-the-world: the anorexic one. As I have mentioned, this disorder determines the experience of the sufferer. However, this determination can be so extreme that, even if the anorexic behaviors lead to death, the host is incapable of giving them up because she can no longer conceive any other ways of being: "The patient therefore realizes his disability precisely in so far as he is ignorant of it, and is ignorant of it precisely to the extent that

43 Ibid., 95.

he knows of it."[44] I knew that if I continued to lose weight, my organs would eventually fail. I knew that the absence of my menstrual periods was not a good sign. I knew that weighing less than 88 pounds was risking my own life, but I was unable to abandon my anorexic behaviors, because the sickness that stylized my flesh was now my only identity, my only fold. I had become one with *Ana*, thus I could not conceive my life without her.

Furthermore, when my morbid body disobeyed *Ana*'s commands in an attempt for survival—for instance, by binge eating—instead of attending to its needs, *Ana* found a new way to exercise self-control: self-harm. Whenever I succumbed to binging, failed to exercise, or ate more than a hundred calories per day, *Ana* made me take laxatives. I sometimes took more than three in a day. This medication abuse caused severe abdominal pain, taking away my hunger and emptying my stomach. Taking laxatives turned into a compulsive need to which I surrendered even when *Ana* did not command it: their intake became a bodily habit, or even ritual, that was necessary to stave off my anxiety: "I realized that I actually wasn't in control. I was not able to resist the urge of self-injury."[45] Paradoxically, the overuse of laxatives also bloated my body and made me retain fluids, so I was no longer losing weight. However, like all the other anorexic behaviors, my laxative consumption spiraled into an unavoidable and compulsive need. Just as I was a servant to *Ana* and did to my body what she commanded, *Ana* became a servant to the habits she had created.

Then, one day, when I was feeling completely detached from my body, directionless, and not knowing how to regain the body from which I had been alienated, I heard my mom crying. She cried because she did not know how to help me, because I was not the same, because I was refusing therapy, and I was dangerously ill. It was a cry of angst, for she was watching her daughter fade away. When I heard her cry, I also began crying: I felt pain for hurting someone I loved. The weight of my flesh rose. I felt lonely because I missed my friends. The weight of my flesh rose. I felt guilty for worrying my dad and brother. The weight of my flesh rose. And, little by little, with each tear I shed for the hurt I had caused to the ones I loved, I began to feel heavy again. But this time, I no longer felt the weight of ties and commitments as a burden, but as a return. My body was mine again (*corps proper*). Its weight was mine. Its bulkiness was mine. Its movements were mine. Its gaze was mine.

The experience of my world became mine again when I was capable of relating to others not by the permeated view of *Ana*, but by the affections that connected me to it. Consequently, I was able to live my body as my own again too, and not just as something I had to control: I felt my hunger, I felt my menstrual absence, I felt my confusion and disorientation from memory loss, I felt the cold in my bones and the weakness in my

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44 Ibid., 95.

45 Verschueren et al.,"Patients With Anorexia Nervosa Who Self-Injure," 67.

muscles. I felt for the first time MY anorexic body as an illness that deeply affected and grieved me, instead of something I commanded and oriented towards a goal, for what could possibly be the goal in a dying body when the ill body truly feels its decay? I realized, when experiencing my body in an objective third-person manner, perishing was something I could control, but when experiencing my body in a subjective first-person point of view, it was only something I could try to escape from.[46]

In other words, after I reconnected with my external world, outside of the niche built up by *Ana*, I was no longer her prisoner, nor did I feel alienated from my body. The flesh I had been controlling in an objectified manner for months, re-attached to myself. I felt everything, and I did not interpret it as visceral demands, but as my demands, my hunger, my fatigue, my sadness. I was, once again, living through my own body, in a subjective-first person manner (as a *leib*), and not through the third person gaze of my illness (as a *körper* or *corps objectif*), because that is what I was a host to: a monstrous disorder disguised as a friend. I still heard her voice screaming at me to befriend her again, but now that I was aware of what she was, and how she heinously camouflaged in my mind, I finally felt capable of turning my back on *Ana*. I assumed the responsibility of my own decayed body, and what I had been doing to it during my illness, and decided to recover.

I promised myself to feel and live my body as my own again, even with the burdens it carried—for I had not realized that what began as a desire for a weightless mundane existence had slowly become a disguised and almost uncontrollable attempt to completely pass away from it. After writing this essay, the most important conclusion I can draw is that, in order to truly live, we must remain tethered and rooted to the world: to its connections, its affects, its burdens, and—most importantly—its subjective and personal experiences. This is, perhaps, precisely what Merleau-Ponty meant when he said that:

> The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects. The subject is a being-in-the-world and the world remains 'subjective' since its texture and articulations are traced out by the subject's movement of transcendence. Hence we discovered, with the world as cradle of meanings, direction of all directions (sens de tous les sens), and ground of all thinking, how to leave behind the dilemma of realism and idealism, contingency and absolute reason, non-sense and sense. The world as we have tried to show it is standing on the horizon of our life as the primordial unity of all our experiences.[47]

III. FINAL THOUGHTS

This article details my experience with anorexia nervosa using phenomenological

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46 This consideration is worth of contrasting with the experience of those that try to take away their lives. The reason for this is because the experience of one's own body in a subjective or objective manner has profound consequences on the way we react to attempts of harm, pain and decay.

47 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 499-500.

conceptual tools. I have argued that the anorexic body is one torn between appearing and disappearing. On the one hand, it appears through constant self-objectification and scrutiny. It is controlled, monitored, and manipulated in order to lose weight. On the other hand, it disappears as *Ana* becomes an extension of its flesh and drives the anorexic body towards endlessly thinning down, even at risk of the death of her host. Some key points of the phenomenological experience of anorexia were explored, including the transition between the body-as-subject and the body-as-object; the self-perpetuating nature of anorexia nervosa; the denial of the body's self-destruction; the desire for weightlessness; the alienation from one's own body; and the loss of control over one's own behaviors when remaining in the third-person point of view. It is important to stress that this phenomenological approach centers on my lived experience with anorexia nervosa. While further research is needed to aid in an individual's recovery from this eating disorder, the first person perspective adopted here shows that phenomenology provides a fruitful philosophical method for undertaking this task. This methodological approach aids in understanding the recovery process from anorexia nervosa from the same phenomenological starting point. I especially recommend undertaking this new commission guided by Merleau-Ponty's theoretical framework of the phenomenology of the body and ontology of the flesh.

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WEAK DEMOCRITEAN EUDAIMONISM

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I. INTRODUCTION

When discussing the history of ancient Greek ethics, scholars usually begin with the figure of Socrates (469–399 BC). He is considered to be the first known ancient Greek thinker to systematically (i.e., with well-reasoned structure or method) engage in ethical inquiry,[1] in a manner that is neither purely conventional nor limited in scope (Meta A.6.987a35–987b3; B.4.1078b18–19; OM V.88).[2] [3]

1 When referring to Socrates in a philosophical context, scholars typically have in mind the character of Socrates as he is portrayed in Plato's dialogues, Plato (c. 429–347 BC) being a student of Socrates. Plato's seemingly early dialogues (e.g., *Euthydemus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Laches, Euthyphro, Apology,* and *Crito*) are often considered to be more or less accurate depictions of the historical Socrates. For discussion of Socratic ethical philosophy, see, e.g., Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, "Socrates," in *The Blackwell Guide to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Christopher Shields (Blackwell, 2003), 55–69; Jenny Bryan, "Socrates: Sources and Interpretations," in *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Frisbee Sheffield and James Warren (Routledge, 2013), 111–124, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315871363; John M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (Princeton University Press, 2012), ch. 2, https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691138602.001.0001; Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 2–4, https://doi.org/10.1093/0195086457.001.0001; and Andrew Mason, *Plato* (Routledge, 2016), ch. 2, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315711638.

2 "Meta" refers to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. All references to Aristotle's texts are taken from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1984). "OM" refers to Cicero's *On Moral Ends*.

3 This is not to say that we find no discussion of ethics amongst Presocratic philosophers,

However, Democritus (c. 460–370 BC), a later Presocratic and contemporary of Socrates, also stands out in the realm of ethics at this time. The majority of fragments that represent the words of Democritus are in fact ethical in nature. Although the doxographical evidence is sparse concerning his ethical views, particularly when compared to his discussions of atomism and epistemology, there are nevertheless indications (as found in the writings of Stobaeus, Cicero, and Seneca) that Democritus offers a complete ethical theory. More precisely, there are reasons to think that he, like Socrates, offers an eudaimonistic ethical theory, that is, a framework aimed at happiness, flourishing, or living well (*eudaimonia*) as the highest good. On the other hand, it is possible that Democritus offers a variety of ethical ideas (possibly more than his Presocratic predecessors), but these ideas simply represent a practical list of more-or-less coherent maxims which lack sufficient unity, structure, or foundation to be considered systematic. In particular, we might wonder if Democritus' views on nature (namely, his commitment to atomism) and knowledge (namely, his position on the superiority of reason over sense perception) offer any necessary justification for his views on how we ought to live. As we will see in what follows, later ancient thinkers — such as Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics — are eudaimonistic ethical theorists who necessarily draw on doctrines concerning reality, nature, knowledge, and psychology in defending their respective accounts of *eudaimonia*. With these points in mind, there are three central questions we should ask. First, do Democritus' ideas constitute a genuine ethical theory (the *Theory Question*)? Second, if there is an ethical system here, is it part of the eudaimonistic tradition of Democritus' contemporaries and successors, namely Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics (the *Eudaimonism Question*)? Third, if we grant that Democritus offers a genuine eudaimonistic ethical theory, is there a necessary relationship between his ethics and the other areas of his philosophy, namely his metaphysics, physics, or epistemology (the *Strength Question*)?

In this paper I will offer answers to all three questions. Section two will outline four formal features that characterize an eudaimonistic ethical theory. Section three will establish what grounds we have for thinking Democritean ideas constitute an

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only that we either lack extant primary sources adequately attesting to their ethical thoughts or what we do have is too sparse to find anything more than a few disparate ethical ideas. For discussion of ethics amongst Presocratic philosophers, see, e.g., Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Routledge, 1982), ch. VII, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203007372; Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Harvard University Press, 1983); G. S. Kirk et al., eds. and trans., *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Richard McKirahan, "Presocratic Philosophy," i*n The Blackwell Guide to Ancient Philosophy* (Blackwell, 2003), 5–26. Barnes (*The Presocratic*, 96–106) argues that, while the Presocratics in general have little to offer in the realm of ethics, nevertheless Empedocles (through his assertion that we should not kill animals due to metempsychosis) and Heraclitus (through the apparent message of various fragments to live in harmony with the universal laws of the *Logos*) offer something noteworthy, if not well-reasoned, systematic, or complete.

eudaimonistic ethical theory in relation to these formal features. Section four will discuss reasons to doubt that Democritean ethics is eudaimonistic or an ethical theory at all, while section five will address these reasons for doubt, further arguing in favor of the eudaimonistic reading. Finally, section six will examine reasons in favor of and against reading a meaningful connection between the ethical and non-ethical doctrines in Democritus' philosophy. Ultimately, my position will be that Democritean ethics does indeed represent an eudaimonistic ethical theory, due to Democritus' conception of cheerfulness (*euthumia*) as a (i) partly objective (i.e., naturalistic), (ii) partly subjective (i.e., affective), (iii) structurally stable, and (iv) exclusively intrinsically valuable good. However, Democritus' ethical theory is weakly eudaimonistic, in the sense that his account of cheerfulness as the highest good is not necessarily or explicitly connected to his non-ethical (namely, metaphysical, physical, and epistemological) views.

II. THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF EUDAIMONISM

In order to evaluate whether Democritus' ethical ideas constitute a theory, and a eudaimonistic one at that, we first need to establish more precisely what we mean by an "ethical theory" and "eudaimonism" in this context. According to Gosling and Taylor, an ethical theory is "a[n] [explicit] test or criterion to be applied in deciding questions of conduct."[4] It provides an explicit and stable foundation upon which to clearly evaluate the appropriateness (i.e., goodness) or inappropriateness (i.e., badness) of actions.

Eudaimonism is a particular kind of ethical theory — one which is focused primarily on well-being. The foundation of an eudaimonistic ethical theory is happiness, flourishing, or living well (*eudaimonia*). More precisely, eudaimonistic happiness consists of (at least) four basic features.[5] First, eudaimonists partly ground happiness (i) objectively in certain key features of human nature. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, for example, all conceive of happiness in terms of the well-being of the human soul (particularly the mind) and how the health of the soul impacts the health of the body and one's interactions with the world. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics argue that happiness consists in virtue as excellently rational dispositions or activities of

4 J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford University Press, 1982), 29, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198246664.001.0001.

5 For comprehensive discussion of ancient moral theory, see, e.g., Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom*; Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, translated by Michael Chase (Harvard University Press, 2002); Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 1994), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2tt8tt; A. W. Price, *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford University Press, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199609611.001.0001. I also discuss these four formal features, and the reasoning behind them, in greater detail in Brandon Smith, *The Search for Mind-Body Flourishing in Spinoza's Eudaimonism* (Brill, forthcoming).

the soul (*Apology* 30b; *Euthydemus* 278e–282a; *Republic* IV–VII, IX; NE I; VI; X; DL VII.85–102, 125–126), while Epicurus argues that happiness is constituted by (with the instrumental assistance of virtue) the enjoyment of freedom from pain in the body and disturbance in the soul (LM §127–132).[6]

Second, eudaimonists partly ground happiness (ii) subjectively in the beliefs or feelings of a subject. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics agree that true virtue requires an individual to deliberately pursue and take pleasure in virtue for its own sake, and, in turn, that happiness is necessarily a pleasant state of being. Epicurus also considers happiness necessarily pleasant, but he instead argues that happiness is constituted by a certain form of pleasure. The beliefs/feelings of a subject therefore play a *necessary* role in eudaimonistic happiness, because I cannot be happy if I do not believe/feel I am happy. However, in light of the naturalistic foundation of happiness, beliefs and feelings are *not sufficient* for eudaimonistic happiness, because our beliefs can be false and we can misunderstand what our feelings truly represent relative to our nature. For example, Aristotle critiques sensual pleasure, wealth, and honor as traditional candidates for happiness as the highest good (NE I.4–5), Epicurus addresses different kinds of desire and pleasure that we fail to distinguish in our attempts to live happily (LM §127–132), and the Stoics criticize the traditional view that external things have any direct and necessary role in achieving or hindering happiness (HB 1.1–4; DL VII.102, 104).[7] In other words, just because I believe/feel I am happy does not entail that I am actually happy. Eudaimonism consequently is partly objective and partly subjective insofar as both human nature and the beliefs/feelings of the subject play a crucial role in happiness.

Third, eudaimonists are concerned with (iii) the overall structure of one's life. For them, true happiness is not something momentary or intermittent, but rather "something permanent and by no means easily changed" (NE I.10.1100b2–3). Eudaimonistic happiness is a stable state of being that determines the way in which one approaches and organizes their life overall. The priority here is the *structural quality* of one's life rather than its length — it is better to spend one day living in a manner harmonious with my natural flourishing than 60 years of instability, self-destruction, or suffering. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics structure life around the possession of virtue as a stable and excellent disposition of the soul (*Apology* 36b–d, 38a; NE I.10.1100b4–1101a6; DL VII.89), while Epicurus structures life around the stable pleasures of freedom from bodily and mental suffering instead of the transient pleasures of mere sensation or satisfaction of desire (LM §126–132).

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6 "NE" refers to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. "DL" refers to Diogenes *Laertius's Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. "LM" refers to Epicurus's *Letter to Menoeceus*. All references to Epicurus's texts can be found in *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, eds. and trans. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Hackett, 1994).

7 "HB" refers to Epictetus' *Handbook*.

Finally, and most famously, eudaimonists consider happiness (iv) the highest good. The highest good is that which is:

(1) Intrinsically valuable (NE I.2.1094a18–19);
(2) Only intrinsically, and not instrumentally, valuable (NE I.2.1097a34–1097b1; L&S §21A1, 63A);[8]
(3) The source of value for all other things (NE I.2.1094a19);
(4) The only ultimate end of value (NE I.2.1094a20); and
(5) Self-sufficient in the sense that it is always in itself desirable and fulfilling (NE I.2.1097b14–15; LM §122)

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics all consider virtue to be this highest good, meaning that it is pursued purely for its own sake, and others things like pleasure, wealth, and social status ultimately derive their value from their role in promoting virtue (even if such things can also be intrinsically valuable). Epicurus, conversely, argues that the highest good is pleasure and that virtue and all other things derive their value from their role in promoting freedom from bodily/mental suffering (LM §127–132).

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish between the *form* and *content* of eudaimonistic accounts.[9] Form is the collection of features that all eudaimonists share in common that makes them eudaimonists. Content is those features that particular eudaimonists add to this general structure that distinguishes them from each other in their respective views on eudaimonistic happiness. The four aforementioned features are formal features of eudaimonism because they are foundational features shared by multiple eudaimonists — in this case Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics.[10] Content-wise, however, these thinkers differ from each other in crucial ways. For

8 "L&S" refers to Long & Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers*.

9 For further discussion of the distinction between form and content in eudaimonism, see Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*; and Jon Miller, "A Distinction Regarding Happiness in Ancient Philosophy," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (2010): 595–624, https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2010.0075. Miller offers the following formal criteria for eudaimonistic happiness: (F1) the highest good, (F2) the ultimate end, (F3) the goal of ethics, (F4) a stable state of being, (F5) realized by a universal set of necessary and sufficient conditions, and (F6) not constituted by a transient feeling. Concerning my own formal criteria, (F1)–(F3) can be linked to (iv), (F4) to (ii) and (iii), and (F5) to (i)–(iv). Miller emphasizes the stability, objective intrinsic value, and overarching ethical status of eudaimonistic happiness. I seek to emphasize not only these features, but also to stress that eudaimonistic happiness combines both objective (i.e., naturalistic) and subjective (i.e., affective) considerations. I omit something akin to (F6) from my criteria to avoid creating the false impression that no kind of feeling can constitute eudaimonistic happiness. Epicurus, for example, will agree that happiness does not consist in a transient (kinetic) feeling, but he nevertheless argues that happiness is constituted by some sort of stable feeling, namely the (katastematic) enjoyment of freedom from mental and bodily suffering (LM §128, 131). Miller ("A Distinction," 607–608) also acknowledges this feature of Epicureanism.

10 Other ancient moral thinkers who are arguably eudaimonists are the Cynics DL VI.104–105; M. D. Usher, *How to Say No: An Ancient Guide to the Art of Cynicism* (Princeton University Press, 2022), 163–175, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691229867) and Pyrrhonian

example, Aristotle argues that happiness consists of morally virtuous, practically wise, or theoretically wise activities aided by a multitude of external goods. The Stoics argue that happiness consists of mere virtuous dispositions with no necessary reliance on external things. Epicurus argues that happiness consists of certain kinds of pleasures with some necessary reliance on external goods.

In examining Democritus' ethical views, then, we want to evaluate more precisely whether he shares with Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics the foundational view that happiness is (i) partly objective (i.e., naturalistic), (ii) partly subjective (i.e., affective), (iii) structurally stable, and (iv) exclusively intrinsically good. Within this foundation, there is room for Democritus to agree and disagree with these thinkers in various ways while still remaining an eudaimonist.

III. EVIDENCE FOR DEMOCRITEAN EUDAIMONISM

Now that we have established our key concepts, let us see if any potential foundation for an eudaimonistic theory can be found in Democritus' ethical ideas. Democritus is said by Clement to have written an ethical "work on the end."[11] Diogenes Laertius refers to this end as the "end of action" (DL IX.45) and Epiphanius refers to it as the "single end" of everything.[12] Clement indicates that Democritus gave serious philosophical thought to some kind of ethical foundation. Diogenes Laertius and Epiphanius indicate that this end may have served as the ultimate ethical goal or standard of evaluation for actions and other things (e.g., possessions or pursuits). This fits with Cicero's description of Democritus' ethical end as "the supreme good" and the "blessed [i.e., happiest] life."[13] Democritus' ultimate ethical end and supreme good is more precisely identified with *euesto* ("well-being") and *euthumia* ("cheerfulness" or "tranquility").[14] Cheerfulness is described as a healthy, untroubled, tranquil state of the soul that is "calm and strong" (DL IX.45), "good," and "stable."[15] Democritus is said to have written a book on this healthy state of the soul, titled *Peri Euthumias* (*On Cheerfulness*).[16] The doxographical

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Sceptics (L&S §1–3, 71–72). An example of ancient thinkers who are not eudaimonists are the Cyrenaics, who deny that happiness (understood as the mere totality of particular pleasures) is (iv) the highest good and do not conceive of the highest good (understood as pleasurable sensations in the present) as (iii) a structurally stable condition (DL VI.86ff., X.136–137).

11 C.C.W. Taylor, trans. *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus* (University of Toronto, 1999), §190, https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442671102. References to Taylor including the "§" symbol refer to those passages found in the "Testimonia" section of the text. Those without this symbol refer to page numbers in the "Commentary" section.

12 Ibid., §193.

13 Ibid., *The Atomists*, §188b.

14 Ibid., *The Atomists*, §188a–190; DL IX.45.

15 Ibid., *The Atomists*, §188b–188c.

16 Ibid., *The Atomists*, §188c; DL IX.45. It is not clear if the "work on the end" that Clement

evidence consequently points to Democritus offering an eudaimonistic ethical theory.

Moving to the ethical fragments which convey Democritus' own words, he tells us foundationally that "[b]lessedness [*eudaimonie*] and wretchedness belong to the soul" (D24) rather than to the body or external objects (D34, D25), because the "perfection of the soul puts right the bad state of the dwelling [i.e., the body, the dwelling-place of the soul], but strength of the dwelling without thought does not make the soul any better" (D52).[17] In line with the aforementioned doxographical reports, we find that Democritus is concerned with *eudaimonia*, which he says is based in the well-being of the soul. It should be noted that the well-being of the soul is described in terms of both *euthumia* and *eudaimonia*, making these terms equivalent in this context. Moreover, the soul is given ethical priority here on the grounds that the body can promote its own well-being but cannot in itself render the soul healthy, while the soul has the power to promote its own health as well as that of the body. If one is concerned with one's well-being overall, then, Democritus argues, their attention should focus on the soul. We are also told that "[t]he best thing for [the soul of] a man is to live his life as cheerfully [*euthumethenti*] as possible, and with the least distress" (D53), the cheerful (*euthumos*) person being "strong and free from care" (D39). The core of happiness is, in other words, a tranquil mind, with unhappiness (wretchedness) residing in mental distress.

This focus on the well-being of the soul and the tranquility of the mind leads to a discussion of character. The cheerful (*euthumos*) or happy (*eudaimon*) person is one who "undertakes right and lawful deeds," while the distressed or unhappy person "takes no heed of what is right and does not do what [they] should" (D39). The cheerful person possesses an untroubled mind and a virtuous character, while the distressed person's vicious character is troubled and immoral. For example, justice is linked to "an untroubled mind" (D79), while injustice is linked to envy, rivalry, selfishness, and a lack of personal shame that creates civil strife and distress for everyone (D109, D113, D128). We achieve and express this untroubled and virtuous character primarily through reason. According to Democritus, we suffer harm and ultimately distress through "blindness of mind and lack of judgment" (D40). A mind that fails to reason, or poorly reasons in making judgments, harms one's soul and overall well-being. This harm can manifest itself simply in the soul, or in both the soul and the body. The unwise tend to trouble their minds by focusing on the good fortune and flourishing of others, wishing they were in the same position (D55).

The unwise also focus on avoiding or delaying death and achieving a pleasant afterlife

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refers to is the same work as the book on cheerfulness, or if they refer to two distinct texts. Diogenes Laertius seemingly lists all the Democritean works, but does not refer to a text with an explicit title on the end (DL IX.46). Consequently, it seems likely that this work on the end is the work on cheerfulness.

17 "D" refers to those passages from "Fragments: Text and Translation" in Taylor, *The Atomists*.

as their ultimate goal (D67, D69–70, D149). As a result, they are less focused on the quality of their life in itself and more on simply escaping death and an unpleasant afterlife, leading to a fearful and overall distressing existence for their soul. Finally, when the body desires things that are unhealthy for it or that cannot easily or reliably be acquired, the fault is not with the body, but rather "a bad state of mind" through poor judgment (D87; see also D34). For Democritus, one who lacks wisdom (i.e., the distressed person) is passive in their life and thus lacks self-sufficiency. The quality of their life is subject to the circumstantial whims of fortune, instead of their own abilities through "the gifts of wisdom" (D61; see also D32, D41, D72–73, D75, D98).

The cheerful person is, in other words, wise. They possess "prudence" in the form of "intelligent clear-sightedness" (D29), and this wisdom, as medicine, "frees [their] soul from passions" that disrupt its stability, tranquility, and self-sufficiency (D30; see also D155). The core of their wisdom is understanding how to use things properly.[18] Democritus points out that "[f]rom the very same things as benefit us we may also get evils" (D37) and that "[e]vils [only] accrue to people from good things, when one does not know how to direct the good things or possess them advantageously" (D38). What Democritus wants to emphasize here is that the things we consider beneficial can be harmful if we use them improperly (e.g., food and money; see D93, D146). To use something improperly (i.e., harmfully) is to use it immoderately; conversely, to use it correctly (i.e., beneficially) is to use it moderately. Cheerfulness is acquired through "moderation in pleasure and by proportion in one's life; excess and deficiency are apt to fluctuate and cause great changes in the soul. And souls which change over great intervals are neither stable nor cheerful" (D55; see also D27).

Distress, and in turn unhappiness, results from poorly reasoned behaviour which disrupts (through excess or deficiency) not only the health of the body in many cases, but, more crucially, the health of the soul. The cheerful person, on the other hand, prudently reasons out the mean between these extremes to evaluate how to moderately make use of some valuable object to promote the health of the body and the soul. Take the obvious example of food: a distressed person fails to understand to what extent or in what sense what they eat is beneficial to their overall well-being, in which case they are led to excess. This can lead to bodily pain from overeating (D97) or mental distress and obsession from realizing how brief is the pleasure of satisfying one's hunger (D99). A cheerful person, conversely, understands precisely how to nourish themselves with various kinds of food, never under or over-valuing the health benefits of what they eat. They also do not trouble themselves with what others might have that they do not. Instead, they "set [their] mind on what is possible and [are] content with what [they]

18 Courage is also linked to wisdom: "he who acts rightly from understanding and knowledge proves to be at the same time courageous and right-minded" (D46).

ha[ve] . . . so that what [they] ha[ve] and [possess] will seem great and enviable'" (D55). This ultimately brings greater and more consistent pleasure (D75). The cheerful person knows how to be moderate and takes profound and stable pleasure in the moderate amount that they possess.

Pleasure, in fact, serves as the standard for prudently evaluating what is moderate and immoderate. Democritus tells us that "[j]oy and sorrow are the distinguishing mark of things beneficial and harmful," respectively (D26). What is beneficial will bring about pleasure and what is harmful will bring about pain.[19] However, Democritus clarifies that "[o]ne should choose, not every pleasure, but pleasure in what is fine" (D71). Thus, not all pleasures are equally good. As discussed above, the ethical priority is the soul over the body. The kind of pleasure that is valued most is the tranquility of mind that constitutes happiness. Democritus says that distress fundamentally comes from preoccupation with bodily pleasures (D34, D53).

In line with this sentiment, Taylor argues that Democritus draws a distinction between the localized pleasures of day-to-day life and the global pleasure of living a good life as a whole.[20] D71 refers to localized pleasure, which "may obviously be pleasant in itself and yet tend to make one's life as a whole unpleasant," while D26 refers to global pleasure, where the standard of usefulness is based on whether something "is likely to make one's life as a whole more or less pleasant." Many localized pleasures (e.g., the excessive bodily pleasure of overeating) may be genuinely pleasant in a given moment, but will not promote a good or cheerful life overall. Pleasure and pain here serve as a global standard for evaluating what is useful and what is harmful in promoting a cheerful life. Localized pleasures that cause pain or distress and disrupt the healthy, tranquil structure of one's life are judged to be bad, while localized pleasures that are harmonious with the cheerful life structure are judged to be good. Pleasure plays an important ethical role in promoting happiness for Democritus, but this fact does not mean that pleasures are ethically equal. In fact, unhappiness qua distress is considered the result of prioritizing localized bodily pleasures over the global pleasure of a healthy soul.

In light of these considerations about pleasure, the prudent person performs what Stobaeus refers to as a rational "distinction and discrimination of pleasures."[21] They recognize the ethical superiority of mental pleasure over localized bodily pleasure for the sake of the global pleasure of cheerfulness. Moderation is therefore beneficial because it brings to the body pleasures free from pain and to the mind a tranquil appreciation of what one has; this makes for a stably healthy, and thus happy, body and soul. Immod-

19 For further discussion of the relationship between pleasure and cheerfulness, and the potential tension between their respective roles, see Gosling and Taylor, *The Greeks*, ch. 2.

20 C. C. W. Taylor, "Pleasure, Knowledge and Sensation in Democritus," *Phronesis* 12, no. 1 (1967): 6–27, https://doi.org/10.1163/156852867x00020.

21 Taylor, *The Atomists*, §189.

erate behaviour, however, is deemed harmful because it brings (through poor reasoning about pleasures) pains of excess or deficiency to the body. With respect to the mind, immoderacy brings about distress in the form of an obsession with trying to excessively or deficiently appease one's various localized bodily desires or to obtain what others have.[22] Through a moderate state of character, one's global enjoyment of bodily and mental pleasures is self-sufficient in the sense that the health of their body and soul is stably dependent upon their own rational abilities instead of the instability of fortune. In summary, cheerfulness as mental tranquility is achieved through rational deliberation about the differing values of pleasures, which leads to moderation and self-sufficiency.

Ultimately, from this discussion of cheerfulness, we see significant evidence of Democritean ethics as an eudaimonistic ethical theory. First, Democritus (i) objectively grounds his ethical account of well-being (*euesto*), blessedness/happiness (*eudaimonia*), or cheerfulness (*euthumia*) in naturalistic discussion of the human body and soul, with a focus on promoting the health of the soul through virtue, which in turn brings out about health in the body, cheerfulness in the soul, and an overall state of well-being. Wretchedness or unhappiness (i.e., distress in the soul) is shown to be the result of an erroneous and vicious focus on the well-being and pleasures of the body over, or to the exclusion of, the well-being and pleasures of the soul. It is through appeal to the relationship between the human soul and body, then, that Democritus explains how we ought and ought not to live ethically.

Second, there is (ii) a subjective qua affective dimension to Democritean ethics insofar as the standard of goodness and badness is said to be pleasure and pain respectively and the ultimate good is argued to be a certain kind of pleasure in the soul: cheerfulness as mental tranquility. While human happiness is based on what is and is not in harmony with the well-being of the soul, Democritus is also clear that happiness is not possible if the subject does not consciously enjoy the flourishing of their soul through a virtuous character (i.e., healthy and beneficial dispositions with respect to thinking, feeling, and acting).

Third, Democritus' primary ethical concern is not with the day-to-day contingencies of life or localized pleasures, but instead (iii) one's life as a whole and the global pleasure of cheerfulness. Cheerfulness is considered the ultimate pleasure, good, and constituent of happiness because it is a stable and reliable state of the soul which is not easily impeded or destroyed by the contingencies of life. In fact, a life structured around the promotion of cheerfulness can be considered the best and happiest sort of life because it offers the most consistent enjoyment of bodily and mental health. A wretched life, in contrast, is the worst and unhappiest sort of life because it consists of fluctuating health

22 This moderation is also linked to courage: "The courageous man is he who overcomes, not only the enemy, but pleasures also" (D78).

and illness, pleasure and pain, in the soul and body, and thus the unstable enjoyment of the goods of life.

Finally, Democritus is clear that happiness as cheerfulness is (iv) the highest good or ultimate ethical end. (1) Cheerfulness is objectively intrinsically valuable, (2) neither the doxographical reports nor the fragments give us reason to think cheerfulness has any instrumental value, (3) we see that other things are pursued and valued based on their relationship to cheerfulness, (4) nothing else seems to have the same centrality as cheerfulness in what Democritus says, and (5) the cheerful life is in itself fulfilling because we lack nothing meaningful once we have stable mental tranquility.

The *Theory Question* and *Eudaimonism Question* can therefore be answered in the affirmative: Democritean ethics is an eudaimonistic ethical theory insofar as Democritus' account of cheerfulness adheres to all four formal features of eudaimonism.

IV. AGAINST THE EUDAIMONISTIC READING

Now that we have examined reasons for thinking of Democritean ethics as eudaimonistic, let us examine some noteworthy objections to this reading. Cyril Bailey, Charles H. Kahn, and Gisela Striker all deny that the aforementioned works of Democritus constitute a genuinely eudaimonistic ethical theory. The primary objection here is that many doxographers offer anachronistic descriptions of Democritean ethics. Because eudaimonistic ethical philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, followed so closely after Democritus and doxographers found so many conceptual similarities between Democritus and Epicurus, they could not help but assume that Democritus must be an eudaimonist, as well.

Bailey thinks that the fragments provide us with a coherent collection of ideas and that cheerfulness functions as a central concept, but he argues that this collection merely represents a coherent practical guide to life, not a true ethical theory. The "detached aphorisms" of Democritus' fragments do not offer a "logically-worked out system."[23] We do not find in these fragments the kind of systematic reasoning present in Platonic dialogues like the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* or Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[24] We simply have disparate ethical ideas that can be coherently arranged to serve as practical guidance to a cheerful (i.e., stably tranquil) life.

What about Democritus' reported work on cheerfulness? The existence of this text might point to more than just anachronism on the part of later writers. Striker, however, does not consider this convincing evidence. She argues that we have no reason to think

23 Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus: A Study* (Russell & Russell, 1928), 191.

24 All references to Plato's works are taken from Plato, *Plato: Complete Works*, eds. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchison (Hackett, 1997).

On Cheerfulness was a systematic ethical analysis akin to the works of Plato or Aristotle.[25] The fragments, our main existing evidence, also do not provide a clear argument for *eudaimonia* or *euthumia* as the highest good, only assertions. Furthermore, Aristotle, well-known for addressing the views of his predecessors on a given topic, seems to consider only Socrates and Plato predecessors in the realm of ethics. We also do not find explicit discussion of any of the formal criteria for the highest good posited by Aristotle[26] and Striker claims that "cheerfulness or peace of mind could hardly be argued to meet the exacting standards that Aristotle sets up for the highest good."[27] In line with this point, while Cicero says that Democritus considered cheerfulness the "supreme good," he also describes what Democritus had to say about cheerfulness as "not altogether polished," particularly in elucidating the nature of virtue in relation to cheerfulness.[28] Cicero's dissatisfaction with Democritus' ethical outline of cheerfulness and virtue may imply that there is too little analysis of cheerfulness as the highest good to classify Democritus' ethical ideas as truly theoretical, systematic, or justified. Consequently, even if we grant that Democritus' text or his fragments contain ideas compatible with or reminiscent of eudaimonism, they may not represent clear and sufficient evidence for thinking that Democritus laid out an ethical theory at all, let alone one akin to eudaimonism.

According to Kahn, discussions of self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) are just as prevalent as cheerfulness in the fragments, so it is not clear that cheerfulness even holds the central importance attributed to it by doxographers.[29] Explicit references to self-sufficiency are found in D41 ("Fortune gives great gifts, but is undependable, while nature is self-sufficient") and D74 ("Fortune provides a lavish table, self-control a sufficient one"). D41 and D74 provide us with an opposition between fortune and self-sufficiency. The former is an unstable condition prone to causing distress and the latter is a stable condition that comes from one's own rational abilities. Kahn argues that self-sufficiency is also implied in D29's assertion that "[p]eople fashioned an image of fortune as an excuse for their own folly . . . [and lack of] intelligent clear-sightedness" and Fr. 146: "The Reason within the soul, accustoming itself to derive its pleasures from itself."[30] Both passages emphasize the importance of reason in rendering one self-sufficient, with a focus on fortune imply-

25 Gisela Striker, "*Ataraxia*: Happiness as Tranquility," *The Monist* 73, no. 1 (1990): 98, https://doi.org/10.5840/monist199073121.

26 Julia Annas, "Democritus and Eudaimonism," in *Presocratic Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Alexander Mourelatos*, eds. Daniel W. Graham and Victor Caston (Routledge, 2017), 179–180, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315246123-21.

27 Striker, "*Ataraxia*," 98.

28 Taylor, *The Atomists*, §188b.

29 Charles H. Kahn, "Democritus and the Origins of Moral Psychology," *The American Journal of Philology* 106, no. 1 (1985): 26, https://doi.org/10.2307/295049.

30 Here "Fr." refers to those Democritean fragments collected in Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Harvard University Press, 1983).

ing a lack of independence or a failure to appreciate one's potential for self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency does not seem any less important than cheerfulness in the fragments. In Kahn's view, it is only when we interpret the fragments from a prejudiced, anachronistic standpoint that cheerfulness becomes the *supreme* good, instead of merely *a* good. It would then be equally plausible to say that the value of reason, moderation, and good conduct towards others is derived from self-sufficiency. Cheerfulness in this case could be seen as a mere positive effect of being self-sufficient or as a separate end altogether, since we are not here assuming Democritus posits a single ultimate end.

At the heart of this objection of anachronism is the suspicion that doxographers are conflating Epicurean and Democritean ethical ideas. It is possible that, because Epicurus considers mental tranquility (*ataraxia*) the highest good (LM §128) and Democritus similarly emphasizes the value of cheerfulness (*euthumia*) as mental tranquility, doxographers mistakenly assumed Democritus also considers tranquility the ultimate ethical end. It is true that Epicurus seems to have been heavily influenced by Democritus in his atomism, epistemology, psychology, and theology.[31] As a result, it would not be unreasonable to think that there is an ethical link between them as well, particularly because of this shared emphasis on tranquility. Stobaeus, in his description of Democritean ethics, in fact links cheerfulness (*euthumia*) to *ataraxia*.[32] Even Kahn thinks that Democritus greatly influenced Epicurus ethically.[33] His point, however, is that Epicurus did not receive the concept of an ultimate end from Democritus; such influences would have come from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In line with this view, Striker claims that Epicurus is "probably the first philosopher who tried to bring tranquility into the framework of an eudaimonist theory."[34] Epicurus could be understood, then, to have combined the Democritean concept of *euthumia* with the systematic eudaimonistic criteria of Aristotle. Furthermore, even Gosling and Taylor, who do read Democritean ethics as an eudaimonistic ethical theory, concede that Stobaeus' use of *ataraxia* in conjunction with *euthumia* is likely an Epicurean-influenced anachronism, since the Democritean fragments themselves never employ the term *ataraxia*.[35] In sum, there are compelling reasons to doubt that Democritean ethics is eudaimonistic or an ethical theory at all, and, further, to think that the eudaimonistic reading is motivated by anachronism.

V. FURTHER DEFENSE OF DEMOCRITEAN EUDAIMONISM

31 For comprehensive discussion of the links between Democritean philosophy and Epicurean philosophy, see, e.g., Bailey, *The Greek*; and David J. Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton University Press, 1967), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400879458.

32 Taylor, *The Atomists*, §189.

33 Kahn, "Democritus," 3.

34 Striker, "*Ataraxia*," 99.

35 Gosling and Taylor, *The Greeks*, 30.

While these objections are thought-provoking, I do not think that they ultimately undermine an eudaimonistic reading of Democritus. Cicero may be correct when he describes Democritus' ethical ideas as lacking in sophistication. However, a lack of sophistication or overall "polish" in one's ethical ideas does not preclude those ideas from being theoretical. Cicero himself describes cheerfulness as the "supreme good" for Democritus. His criticism may not be that Democritus failed to be systematic at all, but rather that he was inadequately systematic compared to his ethical successors, like Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus. It would also be anachronistic to reject Democritus' ethical ideas as theoretical simply because they do not match the comprehensive analyses of someone like Aristotle. The question is not whether Democritus was equally as philosophically sophisticated as Plato or Aristotle, but, more conservatively, whether he had any kind of ethical or eudaimonistic theory at all.

With that said, Bailey is correct in that the Democritean fragments do not provide us with clear ethical arguments, particularly for cheerfulness as the ultimate ethical end, and, as Striker says, we cannot be certain that *On Cheerfulness* was a treatise in the traditional argumentative sense. Ancient doxographers may have read far too much structure into Democritus' ideas, particularly if they mistakenly imposed Epicurean ideas onto them. On the other hand, Annas says that:

> "[i]t is unclear why being in the same intellectual tradition as someone is [in itself] held to be a source of bias; it could equally well be argued that the testimony of the Hellenistic authors is especially reliable on this point, since they are in a better position than we are to recognize that a philosopher belongs to their own (eudaimonistic) tradition."[36]

It is important to keep in mind that ancient philosophers and doxographers had more to work with textually from Democritus than we do, and that they were far more intimately acquainted with the eudaimonistic tradition than we are. They were not drawing on mere fragments. Some of them may indeed have had access to parts, if not all, of *On Cheerfulness*. Seneca's praise of this text as "a splendid book" gives some indication that he at least had perused it.[37] Cicero is one of our greatest ancient sources for analysis of eudaimonistic frameworks. Admittedly, he does not give Democritus the degree of ethical attention given to the Peripatetics, Sceptics, Epicureans, and Stoics, but he does nevertheless feel the need to reference Democritus in this ethical context and to describe the latter's notion of the cheerful life as the "supreme good." Cicero's lack of robust analysis concerning Democritean ethics can be explained by the fact that there were no ethical followers of Democritus in his time (except Epicureans, by virtue of whatever

36 Annas, "Democritus," 171.

37 Taylor, *The Atomists*, §188c.

influences Epicurus drew from him), as well as the aforementioned point that Cicero found Democritean ethics comparatively less sophisticated than these other — currently active — moral philosophies.

However, what about Aristotle's apparent lack of engagement with Democritean ethics? Aristotle contended with past philosophers on various subjects. He was much closer in time to Democritus, and thus would have had greater access to texts and direct reports about the latter. Aristotle in fact provides rich discussion of Democritean atomism in *Physics* (I.2–6), *On the Heavens* (III.2, 4, 7), and *On Generation and Corruption* (I.2, 8; IV.6). However, we do not find the same engagement with Democritus in an ethical context in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (or even his potentially earlier text, the *Eudemian Ethics*). This may imply that Democritus had nothing philosophically relevant to say in the realm of ethics, especially when compared to his atomism. While noteworthy, this fact is not necessarily damning. More accurately, Aristotle's apparent lack of ethical engagement with Democritus only tells us that *Aristotle* may not have thought that Democritus had anything noteworthy to say as a moral philosopher, not that Democritus objectively lacked a genuine ethical theory. Possibly, Aristotle felt that Democritus had said nothing that was not said in a more sophisticated way by Socrates or Plato (in particular Plato), so he engaged with what he considered the superior authority on various issues.[38] Alternatively, the conclusion that Aristotle gave little attention to Democritean ethics may be premature. Taylor points out that Aristotle was reported to have written two lost works on Democritus[39] and we cannot rule out the possibility that at least one of those works may have engaged with Democritean ethics.[40]

Ultimately, the biggest issue here is lack of certainty, due to the sparsity of our Democritean sources. We do not know beyond reasonable doubt whether Democritus took the fragments we have to be part of a fully formed ethical theory or mere practical advice, or if *On Cheerfulness* was written either to formally defend an eudaimonistic ethical theory or simply to make certain ethical claims. Most of the evidence, as we have seen, can be read to support both views. I do not think it is constructive then, based on these considerations, to debate Democritus' intentions. Instead, we should ask a more straightforward question: can an eudaimonistic ethical theory be effectively drawn out of what Democritus says in the extant fragments? Would we, in principle, have a plausible (i) naturalistic and (ii) affective standard by which to (iv) evaluate our actions and (iii) stably structure our lives for the sake of living well? As Section three shows in terms of Democritus' conception of cheerfulness, the answer to this question is yes. Those actions

38 For discussion of Democritus' parallels with Socrates and Plato, see, e.g., Annas, "Democritus"; and Taylor, *The Atomists*, §189.

39 Taylor, *The Atomists*, 224.

40 Ibid., §44a.

and things that stably promote the health or tranquility of the soul would be considered good and thus worth pursuing, while those actions and things which were unreliable in promoting tranquility (either because they are circumstantially or inherently distressing) would be considered bad and thus worth either avoiding or using cautiously.

Recall that Kahn argues self-sufficiency has the same kind of centrality in the ethical fragments as cheerfulness. Democritus certainly emphasizes the ethical importance of self-sufficiency, and an ethical theory grounded in self-sufficiency would be plausible, but it is not clear that the emphasis on self-sufficiency in Democritus' fragments makes self-sufficiency ethically prior or equal to cheerfulness. A fragment on self-sufficiency that Kahn overlooks is Fr. 209: "For a self-sufficiency in food, there is never a 'short night.' (i.e. those who have independence of means do not suffer from insomnia)." Here, Democritus claims that self-sufficiency brings a tranquil sleep in the form of a long night, in contrast to a disturbed sleep represented by a short night. Democritus in other words indicates a connection between self-sufficiency and tranquility. This fragment suggests that tranquility is no less important than self-sufficiency and that the value of self-sufficiency partly derives from the tranquility that it brings to the soul. This point is further reinforced by Democritus' claims that (1) "[j]oy and sorrow are the distinguishing mark of things beneficial [i.e., good] and harmful [i.e., bad]" (D26) and (2) "[t]he best thing for [the soul of] a man is to live his life as cheerfully as possible" (D53). The foundation of value is pleasure and the most beneficial good is cheerfulness as a form of pleasure. Self-sufficiency is also beneficial for Democritus, but he does not describe it as the "best thing" and its role in promoting cheerfulness is obvious, whereas it is less clear that we pursue tranquility for the sake of being self-sufficient. These three passages give us good reason to think of cheerfulness then as the ultimate ethical end (i.e., the only exclusively intrinsically valuable good) for Democritus, despite his emphasis on the intrinsic value of self-sufficiency.

In sum, even though we cannot say with certainty that Democritus had theoretical or eudaimonistic intentions or that his ethical works truly argued for cheerfulness as the highest good, the fragments and doxographical reports do nevertheless enable us to effectively derive from them an eudaimonistic ethical theory — in line with (i)–(iv) — which conceives of the happy life as the life of a stably cheerful soul.

VI. WEAK EUDAIMONISM OR STRONG EUDAIMONISM?

Having answered the *Theory Question* and *Eudaimonism Question* in the affirmative, the final step is to answer the *Strength Question*: is there a necessary relationship between Democritus' eudaimonism and the other non-ethical areas of his philosophy, in particular his metaphysics, physics, and epistemology?

To begin, let us distinguish between *weak eudaimonism* and *strong eudaimonism*.

Weak eudaimonism is an ethical view that is simply concerned with happiness as the highest good, with no necessary reliance on any other fully developed areas of philosophical thought (e.g., metaphysics, physics, epistemology, psychology, etc.). Socrates (at least as he is portrayed by Plato in the latter's early dialogues; see note 1) is arguably a weak eudaimonist. He largely concerns himself with the discovery of ethical truths about the virtue and happiness of the human soul (*Apology* 29d–38a) with no attempt to arrive at definitive, robust conclusions about the cosmos, the natural world, or human nature (*Apology* 19b–c, 29a–c; *Phaedo* 96a–100a).[41] Strong eudaimonism, conversely, represents an ethical philosophy that is necessarily intertwined with other philosophical disciplines, in the sense that its conception of happiness cannot be adequately understood or justified without appealing to these other non-ethical disciplines.

Examples of strong eudaimonists are Plato and Aristotle.[42] In Plato, happiness is closely linked to his metaphysical theory of Forms through knowledge of the Form of the Good or Beauty (*Timaeus* 90b–d; *Republic* V–VII; *Symposium* 204a–205a, 210e–211e) and his tripartite conception of the human soul (*Republic* IV), in particular the importance of having a rationally balanced (just) soul (*Republic* IX). Aristotle argues that contemplation of scientific (i.e., eternal) truths about God, the celestial bodies, and the natural world constitutes the highest happiness (NE X.7–8). His account of *eudaimonia* also crucially draws on his theory of the rational and irrational aspects of the human soul (I.7, 13; see also *On the Soul*).

With this distinction in mind, the question becomes whether Democritus is a weak or strong eudaimonist, that is to say, the extent to which his various non-ethical doctrines may be compatible or deeply interconnected with his ethical views concerning how we ought to live a happy (*eudaimon*) life. In favour of strong eudaimonism, Democritean atomism is *prima facie* compatible with his material on cheerfulness because it can inform what a cheerful vs. distressed soul will look like. A cheerful soul can be said to have a stable, unimpeded relationship between its constituent atoms, which is representative of the soul's health and tranquility. A distressed soul, conversely, experiences massive changes (due to excessive or deficient actions) which impede and destabilize the relationship between its constituent atoms, causing the soul's unstable emotional state (D55).[43] Turning to Democritean epistemology and ethics, we see a shared hierarchical

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41 The Cynics are also arguably weak eudaimonists insofar as they "do away with the subjects of Logic and Physics and devote their whole attention to Ethics" (DL VI.103) in terms of living according to virtue as the ultimate end (VI.104; see also Usher *How to Say No*, 163–165).

42 Epicurus (*Letter to Pythocles* §85; *Letter to Herodotus* §38, 63–6, 76–77, 81; LM §128; *Principal Doctrines* §I) and the Stoics (DL VII.88, 110–111, 138; L&S §26–67) are arguably also strong eudaimonists.

43 Gregory Vlastos, "Ethics and Physics in Democritus," *The Philosophical Review* 55, no. 1 (1946): 63, https://doi.org/10.2307/2181570.

distinction between immediate sensory data and reason. Immediate sensory data are epistemologically and ethically inferior, because in themselves they cannot reliably bring about the main objective of either philosophical framework (i.e., truth and goodness, respectively). As a result, sensory perceptions in themselves are epistemologically and ethically unhelpful unless directed by reason (D22; Fr. 69).[44]

In favour of weak eudaimonism, neither the doxographical reports nor the fragments indicate that Democritus' conception of cheerfulness was derived from or dependent on his atomism,[45] and there may be tension between Democritus' deterministic atomism and his references to chance in his ethical fragments.[46] Moreover, Democritus seems to have given no thought as to how to reconcile his determinism with free will and moral responsibility, which might indicate that he did not dwell heavily on the relationship between his physics and ethics.[47] Finally, epistemologically, there are some fragments that point to a sceptical reading of Democritus (D15, D18, D21) which would apparently run counter to the dogmatic objectivity he relies on in his atomism and ethical framework.[48]

Although I cannot provide a complete analysis of this subject here, these details are nonetheless sufficient to point to Democritus as a weak eudaimonist. Even if the aforementioned tensions could be resolved, allowing us to see Democritean metaphysics, physics, epistemology, and ethics as a coherent overall system, section three illustrates that we can coherently understand and embrace Democritean eudaimonism without committing ourselves to Democritean atomism or epistemology. The same, arguably, could not be said for eudaimonists like Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics for whom metaphysics, physics, epistemology, and psychology play a direct and necessary explanatory and justificatory role in their respective accounts of happiness.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have sought to answer three questions: the *Theory Question* (do Democritus' ethical ideas constitute a genuine ethical theory?), the *Eudaimonism Question* (if there is an ethical system here, is it part of the eudaimonistic tradition?), and the Strength Question (if we grant that Democritus offers a genuine eudaimonistic ethical theory, is there a necessary relationship between Democritus' ethics and the other areas of his philosophy?).

To both the *Theory Question* and *Eudaimonism Question* the answer is yes. From the available evidence we can effectively derive a coherent ethical theory structured around cheerfulness

44 Taylor, *The Atomists*, 179a; Taylor, "Pleasure," 19–25.

45 Taylor, *The Atomists*, 232.

46 Annas, "Democritus," 177.

47 Barnes, *The Presocratic*, 424–425.

48 Taylor, "Pleasure," 20.

as the ultimate ethical end insofar as it is a (i) partly naturalistic, (ii) partly affective, (iii) structurally stable, and (iv) exclusively intrinsically valuable good.[49] Democritus therefore likely deserves more credit than we tend to give him in the ethical domain. Like Socrates, he had meaningful and influential ethical ideas.[50] On the other hand, his ethical framework, while plausibly eudaimonistic, may not be equal to the precision and complexity of later eudaimonists, which can only be expected from an early proponent of an ethical tradition.

Concerning the *Strength Question*, in contrast, the answer is no. While Democritus' metaphysics, physics, and epistemology are in some meaningful sense compatible with his ethics, there are still possible tensions between them, the ethical fragments themselves do not explicitly or substantially appeal to these philosophical doctrines, and Democritean ethics is ultimately intelligible without knowledge of non-ethical Democritean doctrines.

This outcome should not, however, surprise or disappoint us. If my argument is correct, Democritus and Socrates represent the beginnings of eudaimonism — the first attempts to provide a systematic account of how to live a happy life as a whole. Socrates, while likely harboring certain metaphysical assumptions (e.g., concerning the distinction between soul and body; see *Apology* 30a–b), nonetheless did not concern himself with developing full-fledged non-ethical doctrines in his ethical inquiries. It is no surprise, then, that his contemporary Democritus, despite having explored other areas of philosophy in depth, also may not have been concerned fully (or at all) with bringing together the different parts of his own philosophy into an overall system of interconnected doctrines. Neither may have appreciated the need for fully developed theories of reality, nature, knowledge, and psychology to arrive at a complete and well-justified account of the happy life, leading to deficiencies in their respective moral philosophies from either a lack of positive ethical answers (Socrates) or insufficiently demonstrated ethical claims

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49 These four formal features of eudaimonism, as well as the distinction between weak and strong eudaimonism, are also valuable in examining the engagement of later non-Greek (or Roman) philosophers with eudaimonism. Medieval thinkers, such as Augustine, Aquinas, Avicenna, Averroes, and Maimonides, could be considered to continue and contribute to the eudaimonistic tradition insofar as they synthesize Platonic and/or Aristotelian doctrines with Christianity, Islam, or Judaism, respectively. Similarly, early modern philosophers like Pierre Gassendi, René Descartes, Benedict de Spinoza, and G.W. Leibniz might also be considered moral thinkers who contribute to the eudaimonistic tradition through new developments in metaphysics, physics, epistemology, psychology, and politics. I argue that Spinoza shows a consistent commitment to eudaimonism throughout his corpus by appeal to these four formal features, and the distinction between weak and strong eudaimonism, in Brandon Smith, "Spinoza's Strong Eudaimonism," *Journal of Modern Philosophy* 5, no. 3 (2023): 1–21, http://doi.org/10.32881/jomp.247. I discuss his commitment to the ontological and ethical equality of mind and body as a distinctive contribution to eudaimonism in Brandon Smith, "Spinoza's Early Modern Eudaimonism: Corporeal and Intellectual Flourishing," *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, First View (2023): 1–26, http://doi.org/10.1017/S0012217323000409. I explore his rich dialogue with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics with respect to eudaimonistic happiness in Smith, *The Search*.

50 I remain agnostic about whether Democritus influenced Socrates or vice versa (if there is influence at all), because there is too little evidence to say anything meaningful that is beyond speculation.

(Democritus). This is where Plato and Aristotle can be considered innovators, philosophically and ethically. With their Presocratic and Socratic influences, they took the extra steps to bring all the various disciplines of their respective philosophies together, and, in particular, to demonstrate clearly and precisely how metaphysics, physics, epistemology, and psychology necessarily contribute to the formation and justification of a true account of happiness. In other words, Democritean and Socratic (weak) eudaimonism walked, so that Platonic and Aristotelian (strong) eudaimonism could fly.[51]

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51 We might say that Democritean eudaimonism is stronger than Socratic eudaimonism, because Democritus offers more positive ethical and non-ethical doctrines than Socrates and his non-ethical doctrines can contribute meaningfully to his ethical doctrines (even if the former have no necessary connection to the latter). Democritus is therefore a stronger eudaimonist than Socrates, but a weaker eudaimonist than Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics.

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