

AURANTUM

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EROS IN RUINS

PATTERNS OF PASSION AND PERIL

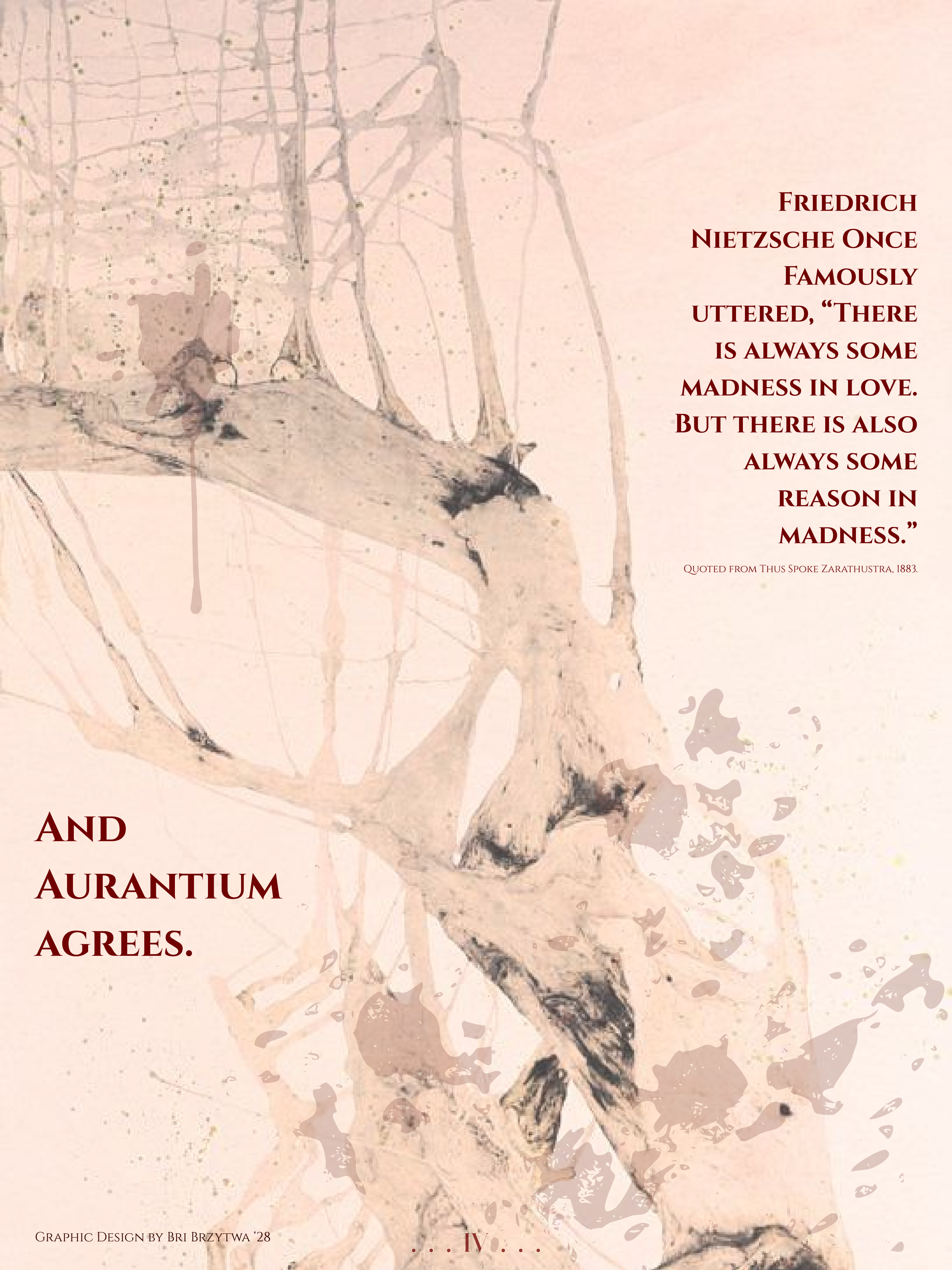
GRAPHIC DESIGN BY BRI BRZYTWA '28





ARTWORK BY MAYA QUON
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**FRIEDRICH
NIETZSCHE ONCE
FAMOUSLY
UTTERED, “THERE
IS ALWAYS SOME
MADNESS IN LOVE.
BUT THERE IS ALSO
ALWAYS SOME
REASON IN
MADNESS.”**

QUOTED FROM THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA, 1883.

**AND
AURANTIUM
AGREES.**





Die Your Daughter

You used to hum while the soup simmered,
your back to me, haloed by the stove light.
The kitchen is now but a battlefield of bottles,
and I can only count the ghosts that wear your face.

I am angry, Mother,
angry about a wound I cannot close.

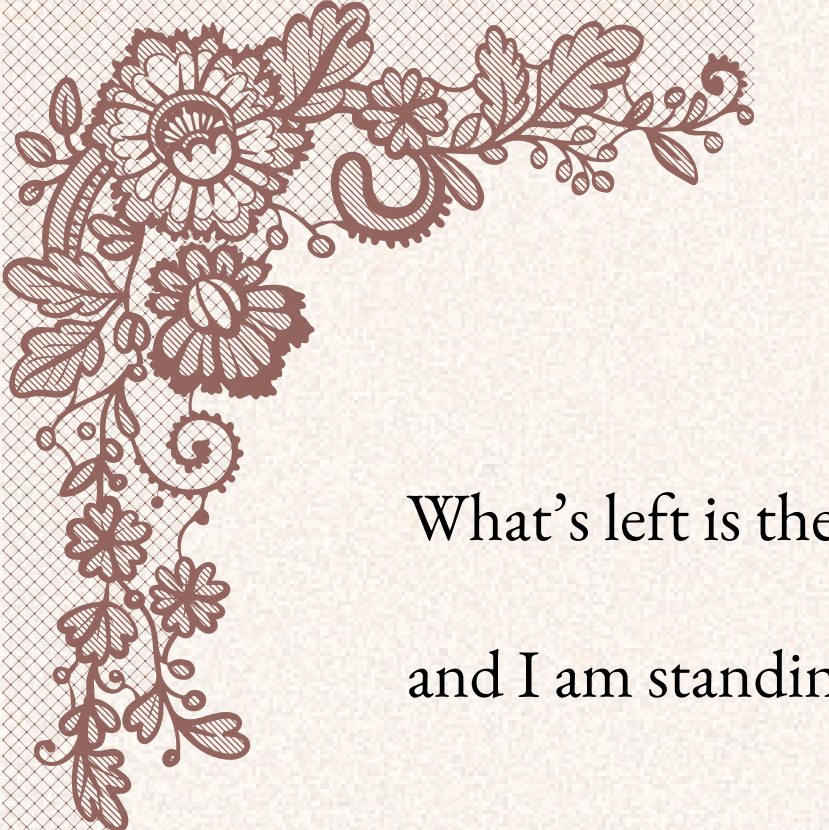
You fling your words like stones,
sharp and certain in their aim.

I miss the scent of Sunday mornings,
and the way you'd press a hand to my shoulder.
Now your touch burns,
and I flinch before you speak.

You told me once that love is patient,
but what if love is flooding the house?

I find myself being the child holding buckets
while I watch you drink the sea

I keep searching for the mother I once knew
before she came and left in passing storms.



What's left is the weather,
and I am standing in the rain.

You say you are trying,
and I want to believe you.

Your trying cuts, it bruises, it begs,
and I am tired of bleeding the proof.

I dream of you as you were,
when you looked at me and saw light.
In the dream, you call me by name
without letting it shatter.

But morning comes,
and I open my eyes to you, gone again.
Half-drunk, half-ghost,
a prayer I no longer know how to finish.

Mother, I love you,
but love can't resurrect the dead.
I am learning to walk away
to find quiet, where your voice cannot reach.

Anonymous – Syracuse University '28







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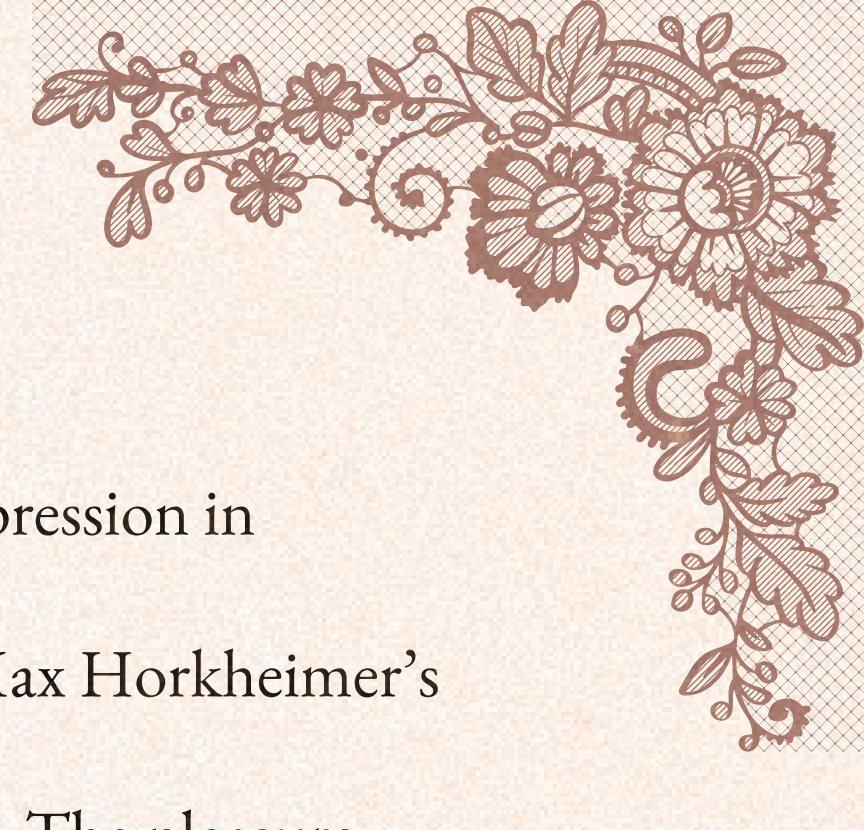
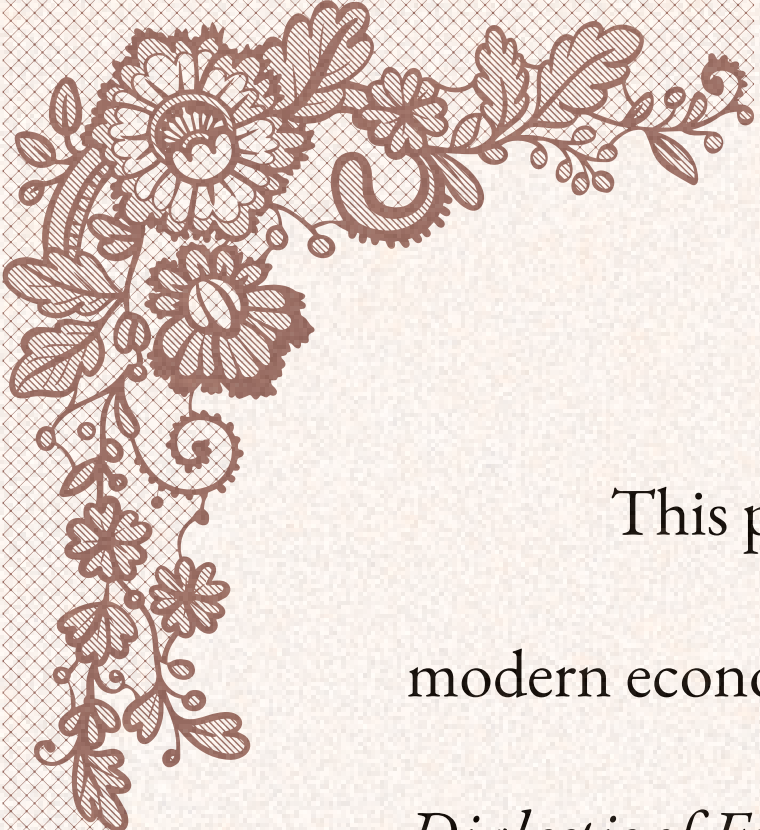


Fun is a Medicinal Bath:
The Pleasure Industry as Mass Deception
Alexandra Owens
University of Toronto

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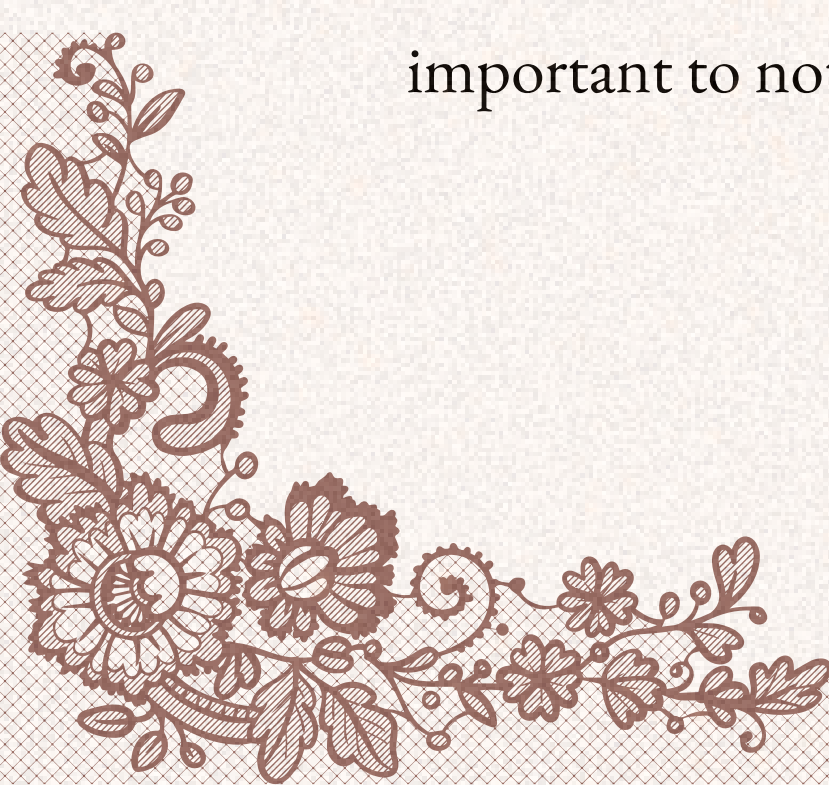
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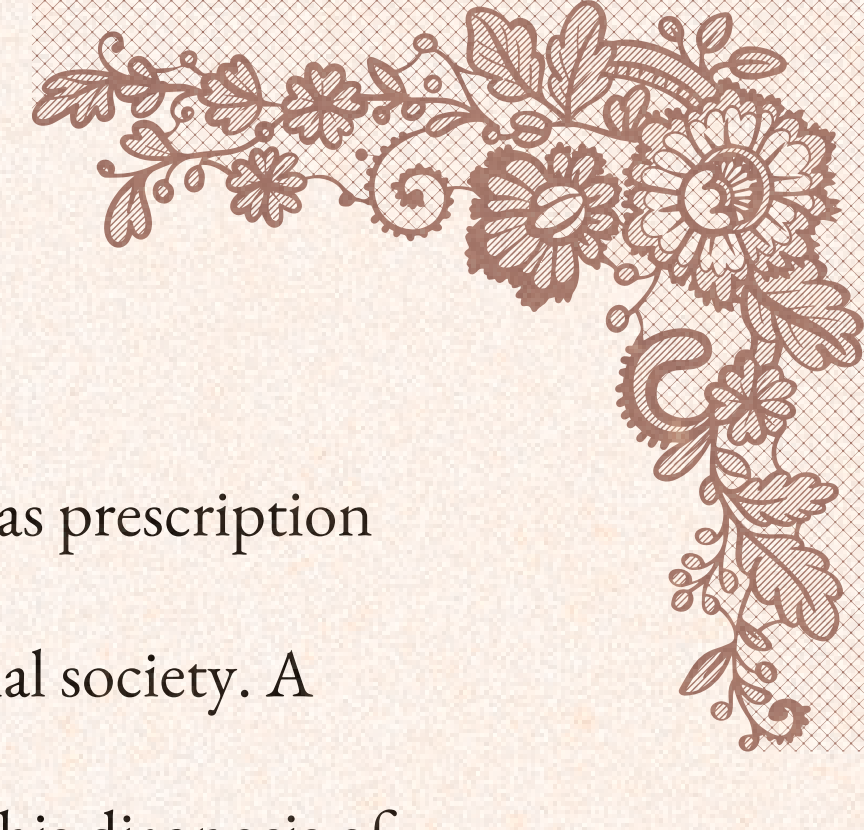
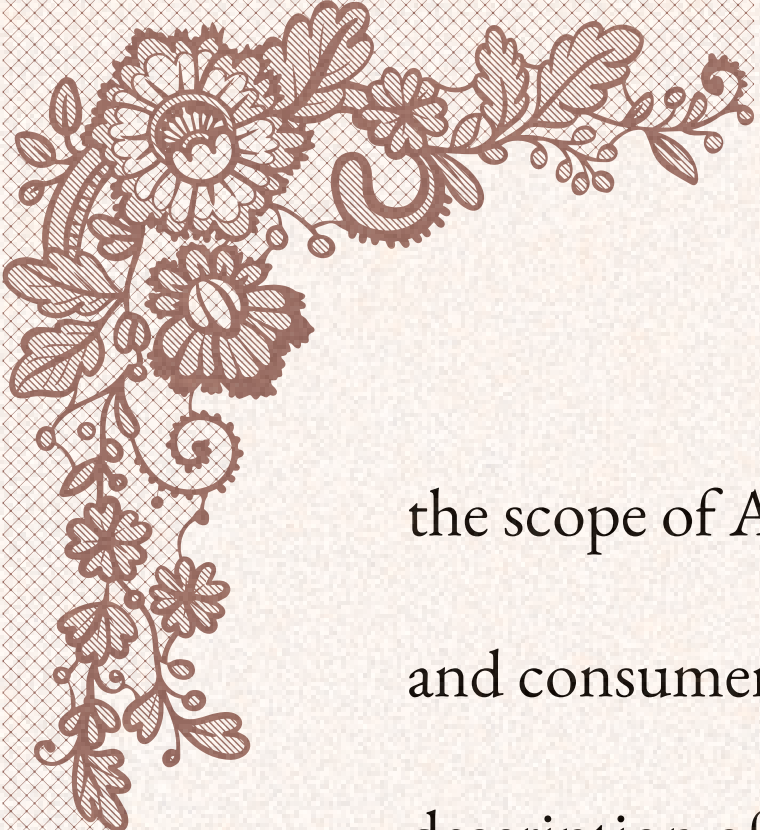


This paper examines the role of the “pleasure industry” as a central tool of repression in modern economic life. The analysis is mainly focused on Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where the idea of the pleasure industry is first introduced. The pleasure industry has two primary features: the mediation and prescription of pleasure and the manufacturing of pleasure as consumer-object. This paper focuses mainly on the relationship between the pleasure industry and modern industrial structures, but also discusses the relationship between the pleasure industry and psychoanalysis, entertainment, the modern vacation, the Enlightenment, sex, totality and the Other, and the repression of eros-in-itself. This analysis is aided by the critical engagement with Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Jean Baudrillard, Byung-Chul Han, Emmanuel Levinas, Mark Fisher, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Herbert Marcuse. While this paper concurs with the understanding of the pleasure industry as constituting the repression of the individual, it critiques the understanding of an “eros-in-itself” as being anarchic, unmediated, and revolutionary in its essence. This paper also critiques the positing of a space “outside” of mediated libidinal investment in modern economic structures, and how this notion of an “outside” is informed by the modern pressure to turn all critique into praxis.

Introduction

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer introduce the concept of the pleasure industry as a part of their larger diagnosis of the culture industry. The pleasure industry has two primary features: the mediation and prescription of pleasure and the manufacturing of pleasure as consumer-object. While only a small part of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the idea of the prescription and mediation of pleasure/desire (what I will subsequently refer to as “eros,” although it is important to note that eros is not necessarily sexual) to support the interest of its mediators surpasses





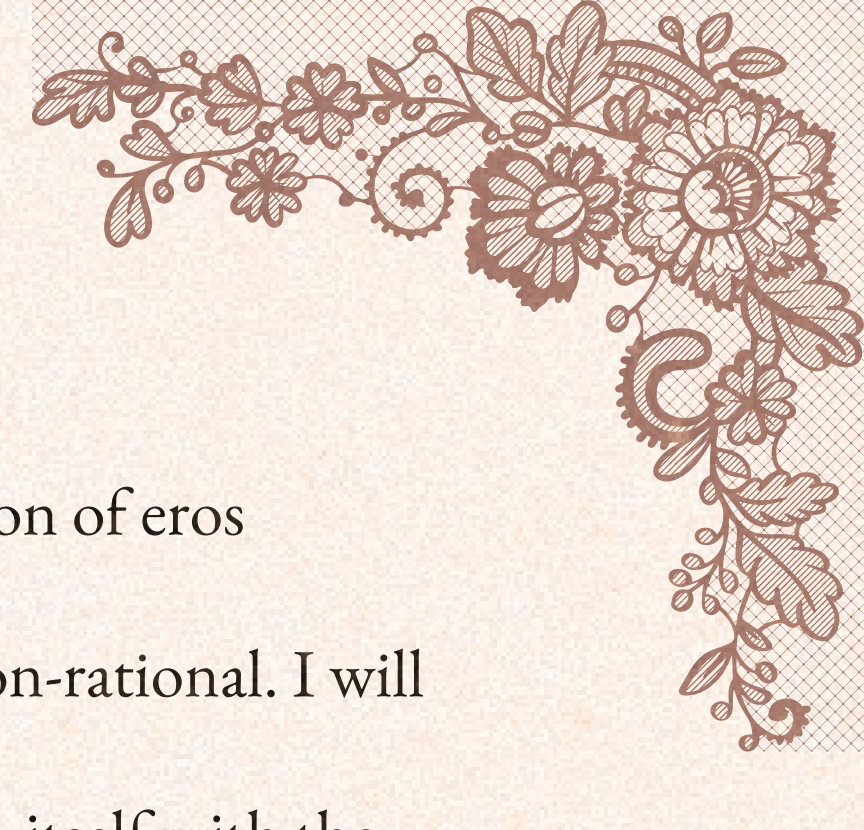
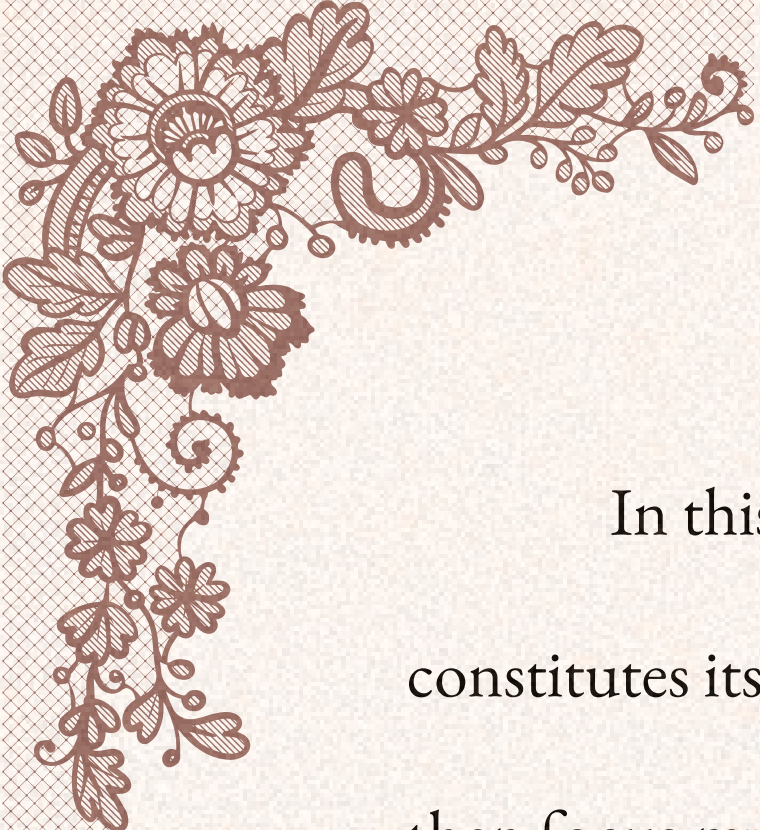
the scope of Adorno and Horkheimer's initial description. Eros being manufactured as prescription and consumer-objects is one of the fundamental foundations of postmodern industrial society. A description of the society of eros-mediation was later taken up by Jean Baudrillard in his diagnosis of *The Consumer Society*. In the consumer society, much like the pleasure industry, eros is forced upon the subject as the "duty of the citizen," and there is no longer individualized desire but "generalized curiosity."¹ Throughout both *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Consumer Society*, eros-in-itself, or "real" uncategorized eros, is painted as the potential tool of liberation, the pure resistor uncorrupted by mediation and rationality. This particular understanding of eros is most explicit in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of "real" eros is as a "molecular phenomenon," devoid of goal or intention, one that has been uncorrupted by its mediation.² Eros-in-itself is revolutionary in its essence, and is often repressed because of its potential for disrupting structure.³ While eros is produced as "...compensatory expenditures [that] are made to cope with dysfunctions rather than increase positive satisfaction,"⁴ eros-in-itself is shown to be anarchic in its essence by resisting organization and rationalization. Adorno, Horkheimer, Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Guattari concur that unmediated eros-in-itself is the most superlative of the tools of revolt against both the tyrannical dictation of pleasure and the structures that dictate said pleasure. I intend to show how eros is prescribed and mediated by postmodern industrial society, that this prescription of eros serves modern economic conditions and perverts the subject's relationship to eros, but that eros-in-itself is not necessarily a transgressive tool for revolution and it is unclear how exactly "eros-in-itself" can exist.

¹ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, 80 (1998).

² Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 342 (1983).

³ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 116 (1983).

⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 40 (1998).

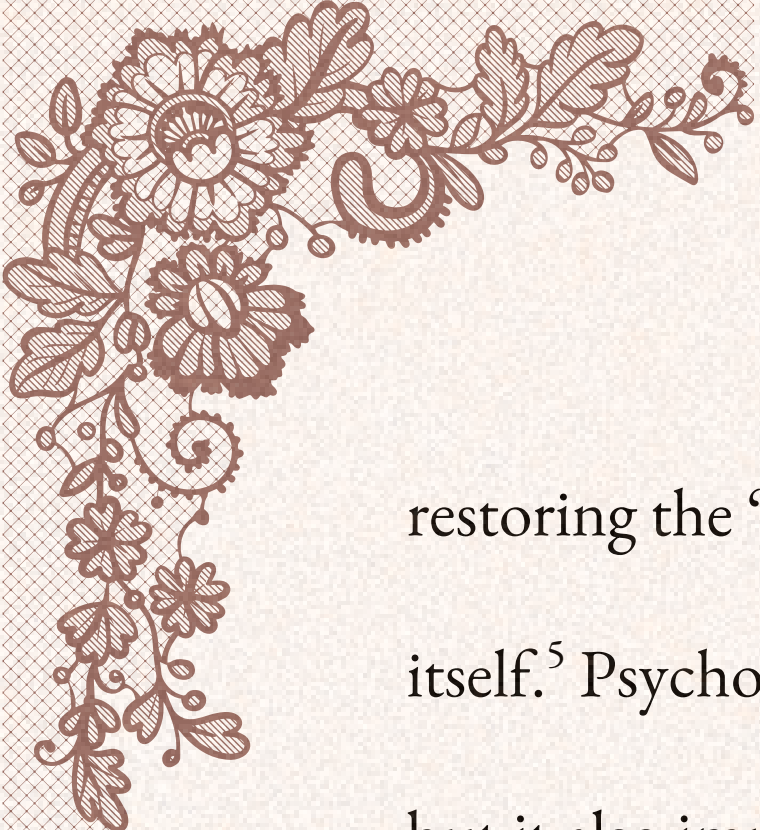


In this paper, I will begin by illustrating how the categorization and production of eros constitutes its absence, as eros is shown to be transcendent, non-categorizable, and non-rational. I will then focus my discussion on the actual industry of pleasure, which substitutes eros-in-itself with the mediated, categorizable manufacturing of eros that it utilizes as self-justification. I will focus specifically on how the pleasure industry has manipulated the relationship its subjects have to eros so that they have been rendered unable to experience any pleasure or desire beyond what it prescribes them. I will also discuss how the pleasure industry is informed by the Enlightenment and how the aim for making the unknowable knowable dissolves the Other, particularly in sexuality. In response to the idea that eros is intrinsically anarchic and uncategorizable, I will illustrate the claim that eros-in-itself is the most fundamental tool of revolution, and the primary tool that exists outside of the pleasure industry to transgress it. Finally, I will critique this claim by questioning the notion of “eros-in-itself” as well as the idea that eros intrinsically possesses any revolutionary quality, and there is no place outside of libidinal investment.

Psychoanalysis and the Pleasure Industry

Eros-in-itself is understood by most major poststructuralist and critical philosophers as being uncategorizable. This understanding of eros informs the main concern with the pleasure industry, in that it tries to categorize what is essentially uncategorizable. Eros can not be consumed, produced, or prescribed. As soon as eros is categorized and demanded upon the subject, all pleasure and desire are removed from it. The pleasure industry turns “pleasure” into a simulation, an image of pleasure where there is no actual interaction with pleasure whatsoever.

Mediated “eros” is fundamentally devoid of eros. We can understand this through Adorno’s diagnosis of psychoanalysis in *Minima Moralia*, where he claims that psychoanalysis prides itself on



restoring the “capacity for pleasure,” yet the concept of a “capacity for pleasure” devalues pleasure itself.⁵ Psychoanalysis aids the demands in the pleasure industry, as it not only categorizes pleasure, but it also imposes on the subject a prescription of how they could access this pleasure.

Psychoanalysis, in speculating on the ontology of eros and subsequently categorizing it, is not what “liberates” pleasure, but is rather a “further encroachment” of institutionally planned behavior-patterns on human experience.⁶ Rather than allowing the subject access to eros-in-itself, psychoanalysis is precisely what represses eros because of its insistence on categorizing it and welding it to intentions and goals. Psychoanalysis rationalizes the irrational, it deprives eros of its essential quality, constituting its repression.

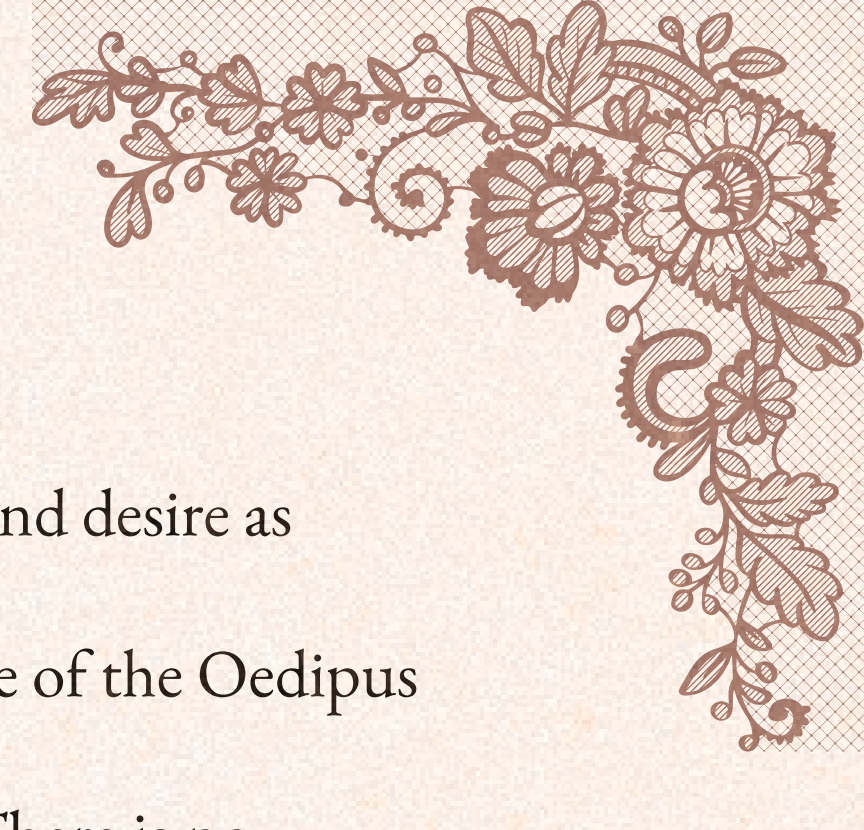
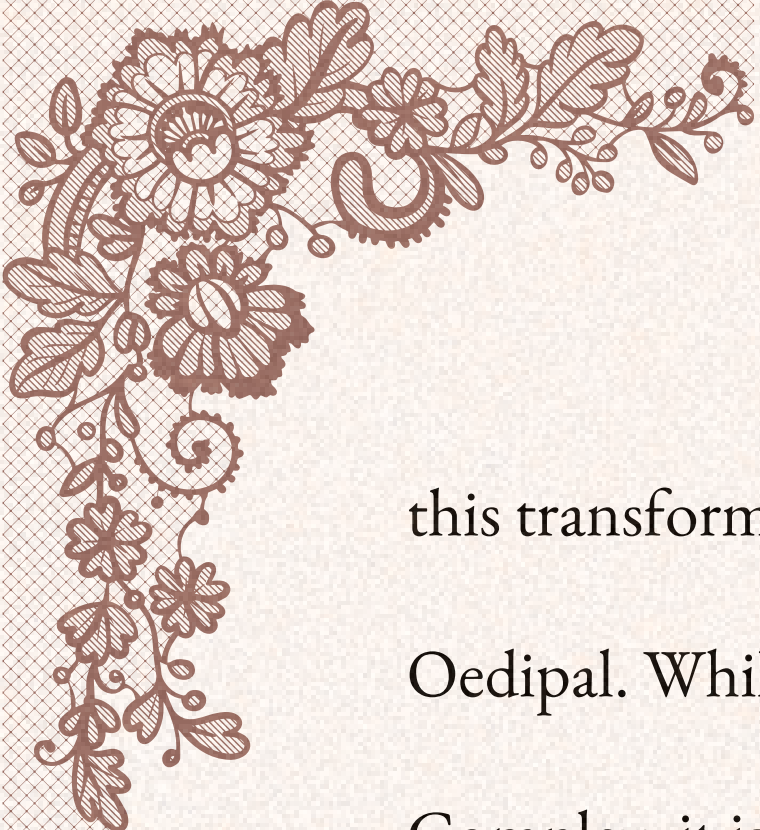
This understanding of eros-in-itself being repressed by psychoanalysis due to its being categorized is also present in Deleuze and Guattari. They claim that psychoanalysis is responsible for the rationalization and repression of eros-in-itself, as it is responsible for welding eros with “intentions.”⁷ Deleuze and Guattari concur that “real” (unmediated) eros is that which is devoid of goal or intention, it is that which resists categorization and rationalization.⁸ By attaching eros to intention, psychoanalysis not only represses eros but changes our understanding of it. It subverts eros entirely by making it understood through purpose and objective, when in essence eros is the rejection of purpose or objective. Eros-in-itself is repressed not only individually but societally, as our understanding of what “eros” means is replaced with a fundamental misunderstanding. Eros under the pleasure industry is the trace of eros. In providing us access to understanding it, this phantom-eros provides us with the knowledge that it is now completely inaccessible to us. Psychoanalysis accelerates

⁵ Adorno, Theodor W, and E F N Jephcott. *Minima Moralia*, 62 (2005).

⁶ Adorno, Theodor W, and E F N Jephcott. *Minima Moralia*, 62 (2005).

⁷ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 342 (1983).

⁸ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 342 (1983).



this transformation of eros-in-itself into a phantom-eros by diagnosing our pleasure and desire as Oedipal. While psychoanalysis prides itself on liberating eros from the repressive force of the Oedipus Complex, it is the declaration of our eros as Oedipal that constitutes its repression.⁹ There is no alternative within the psychoanalytical framework. You are now Oedipal, your desires do not exist, they are conditioned by your familial relations and there are no other conditions of possibility. You do not efface categorization. Under psychoanalysis, every aspect of the individual is necessarily subject to categorization. The repressive powers of psychoanalysis are its categorical powers, psychoanalysis is repressive precisely because of its attempts to categorize and prescribe the uncategorizable and unprescribable.

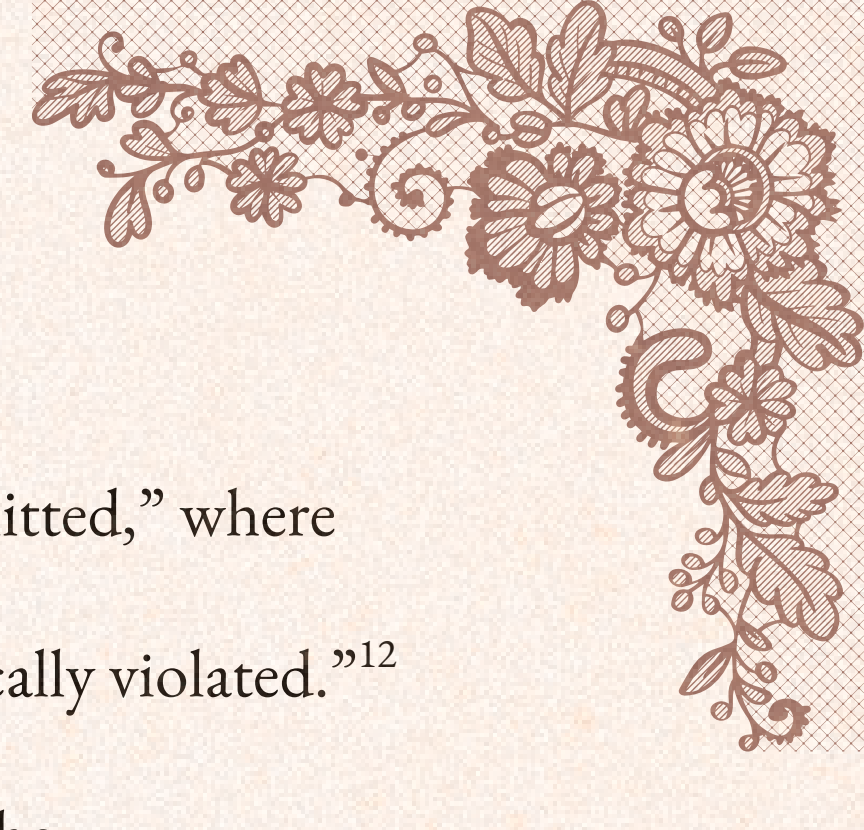
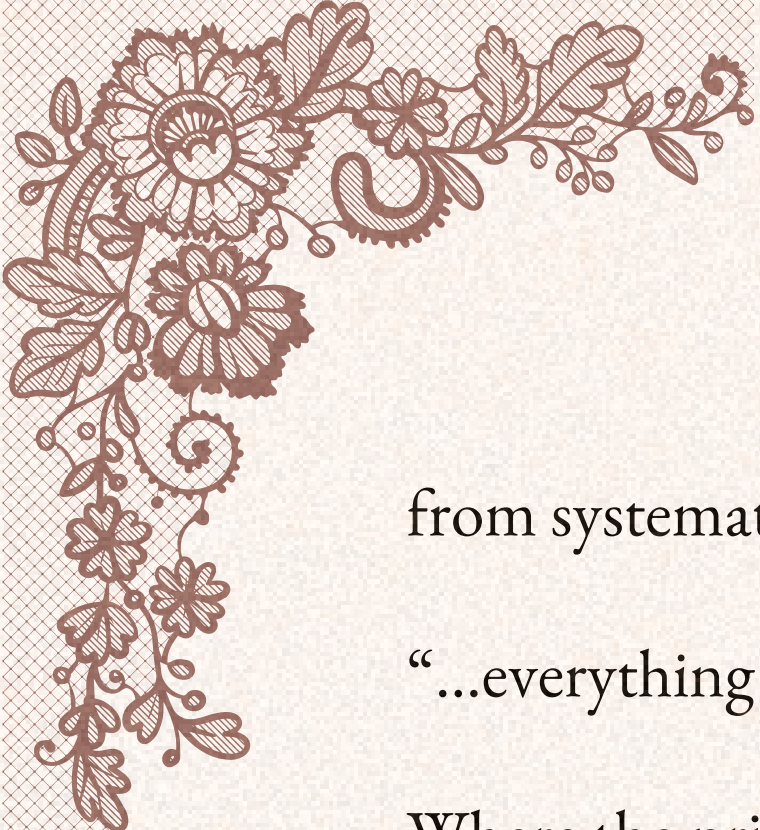
Modern Economic Structures and the Pleasure Industry

While in *Minima Moralia* and *Anti-Oedipus*, Adorno, Deleuze, and Guattari focus on the repressive role of psychoanalysis in its categorization of eros, modern industrial powers most effectively achieve this repression through their prescription and categorization of pleasure. The role of economic structures in the pleasure industry is most important, as it is what gives eros an economic investment. Adorno and Horkheimer explain one of the most fundamental repressions of desire, the substitution of eros-in-itself with the eros-phantom, in their examination of the modern vacation under modern economic structures. The modern vacation is built into capitalism as a brief bureaucratic refuge from work life that gives the individual enough strength to come back and be a more functional worker. It is structurally identical to work. Because capitalism prescribes the vacation, in doing so it spurns any pleasure that would otherwise be found in a refuge from labor.¹⁰

The modern vacation is a deformity of the primitive festival, the jubilant and anarchic reprieve

⁹ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 116 (1983).

¹⁰ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 106, (1987).



from systematic bureaucracy.¹¹ The primitive festival is where “...all excesses are permitted,” where “...everything must be turned upside down,” and where “...social order [is] systematically violated.”¹² Where the primitive festival is the revolutionary celebration, the modern vacation is the bureaucratically scheduled week of systematically identical fatigue and anhedonia. This systematic adoption of pleasure is precisely what kills it, “...pleasure becomes an object of manipulation, until it finally perishes in the administrative arrangements. This process is a development from the primitive festival to the modern vacation.”¹³ The modern vacation is a useful example of how eros perishes in the hands of industrial powers. Eros is effectively killed by its being manipulated and incorporated into administration. Once eros is incorporated into modern labor, which Herbert Marcuse defines as being necessarily completely devoid of pleasure or desire,¹⁴ it is rid of its jubilant and anarchic essence. The mechanization of eros has such a power over leisure and happiness and “...so thoroughly determines the fabrication of entertainment commodities...” that the worker, even while off the job, is unable to experience anything but the after-images of work.¹⁵ From the vacation to domesticity, the structure of labor seeps into all aspects of life outside of labor. There is no “outside” the modern economic system, everything is necessarily incorporated into the capitalist structure. The afterbirth of labor especially seeps into the supposedly pleasurable entertainment that subjects of capitalism use to distract from the repressive alienation of everyday life. “Amusement under capitalism is a prolongation of work, it is sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process and to recruit strength in order to cope

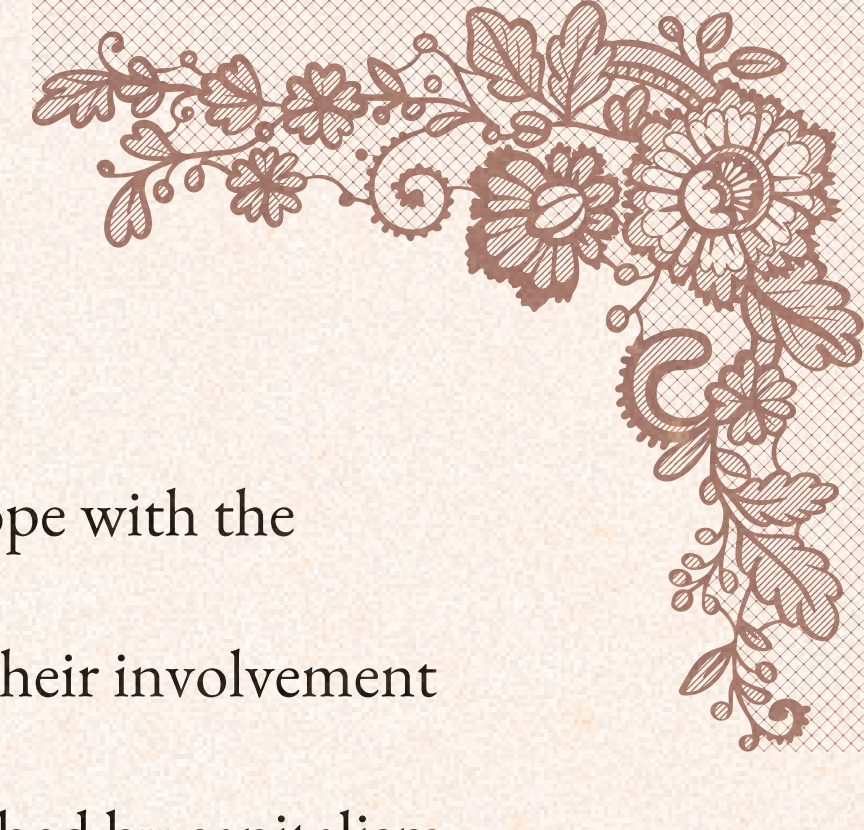
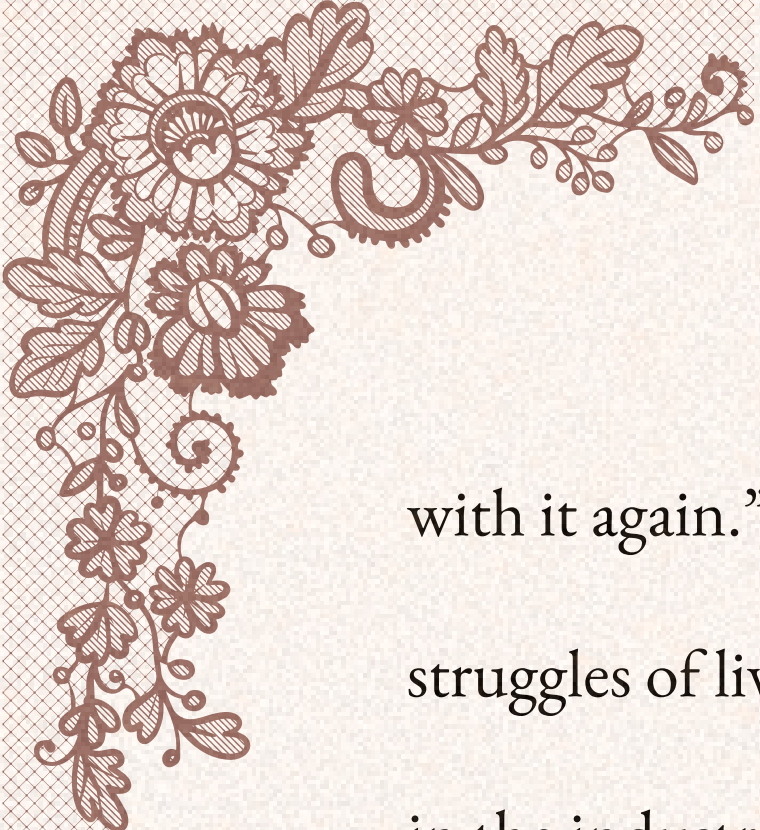
¹¹ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 106, (1987).

¹² Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 105, (1987).

¹³ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 106, (1987).

¹⁴ Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 200, (1991).

¹⁵ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 137, (1987).

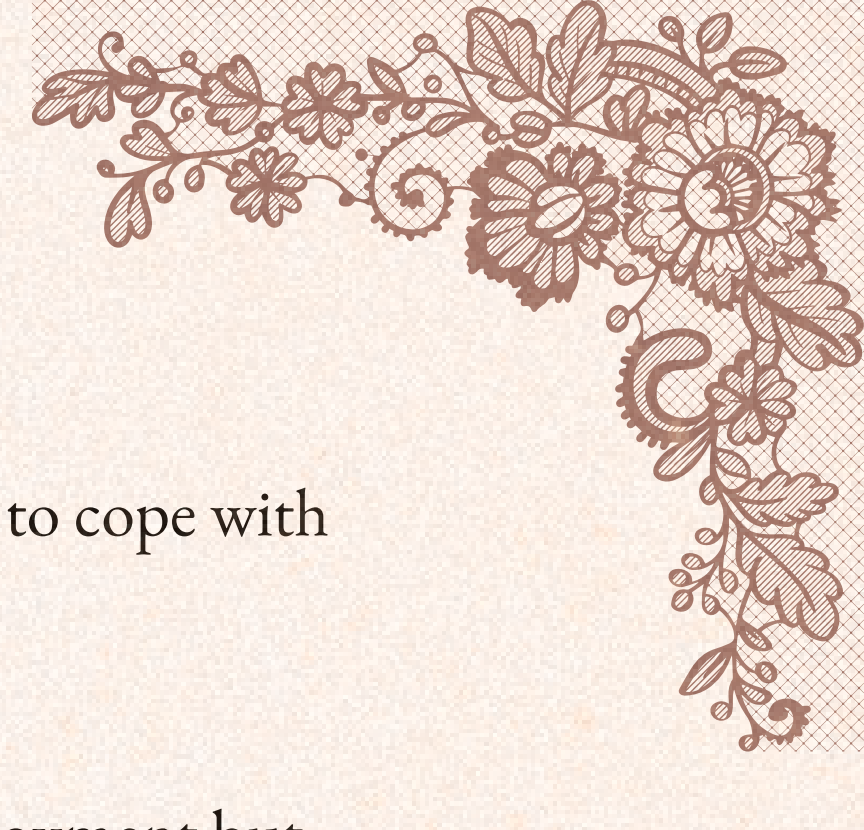


with it again.”¹⁶ The subject, exhausted from the work day, turns to amusement to cope with the struggles of living in modern industrial society. In doing so, they are only furthering their involvement in the industrial structure, as these forms of amusement are also mediated and prescribed by capitalism. The pleasure industry conditions individuals to be oriented towards compensatory distractions to cope with their dissatisfaction. Because individuals are thwarted from experiencing eros-in-itself, the pleasure industry supplements their dissatisfaction (along with the other ailments created by modern economic conditions) with consumer-objects. Individuals are made to turn to consumable pleasure because of their lack of positive satisfaction in alienated society. The structures behind the pleasure industry not only produce this lack of positive satisfaction, but capitalize off of it by turning these individuals towards prescribed pleasure, pleasure as consumer-object. Taking pleasure as a consumer-object only advances the alienation and lack of positive satisfaction the individual faces in the first place, as this “pleasure” is created by the same system that creates the alienation of the individual. A cyclical pattern of alienation-consumable pleasure-alienation is established. Adorno shows this by explaining that, to have a part in prescribed happiness, one must “display indiscriminate enthusiasm for the trashy film, the expensive but bad meal in the French restaurant, the serious drink and the love-making taken like medicine as ‘sex’.”¹⁷ Despite any genuine enjoyment in the fruits of the pleasure industry, one is coerced into enjoying them indiscriminately in order to be a member of modern industrial society. This idea is echoed by Baudrillard when he explains that “...compensatory expenditures that are made to cope with dysfunctions rather than increase positive satisfaction are added in as part of the ‘rise’ in the standard of living.”¹⁸ Man has never had a better standard of living,

¹⁶ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 137, (1987).

¹⁷ Adorno, Theodor W, and E F N Jephcott. *Minima Moralia*, 62 (2005).

¹⁸ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 40 (1998).



if we take “standard of living” to mean sex, drugs, and alcohol prescribed as medicine to cope with dissatisfactions, in turn advancing the alienation of the subject.

The consumption prescribed by the pleasure industry is not a function of enjoyment but instead, as Baudrillard states, a “function of production.”¹⁹ Despite consumption being understood as the utmost form of enjoyment in industrial society, Baudrillard defines consumption as being intrinsically exclusive of enjoyment, as production only produces what is entirely devoid of genuine enjoyment.²⁰ The order of production denies the order of enjoyment and replaces it with productive forces.²¹ Not only is eros denied by the pleasure industry, the “eros-phantom” it is replaced by is one of production. This is precisely why the modern vacation is an aberration of the primitive festival. The order of enjoyment of the primitive festival is replaced by the order of production of the modern vacation, which exists only to reinforce the productiveness of laborers. The most critical point in understanding the pleasure industry’s relationship with modern economic structures is that “...the finality of consumption is not enjoyment or pleasure... [because] it is forced upon us as a duty of the citizen.”²² Consumption, which is forced upon the subject as a simulatory replacement for eros, has no amount of eros contained in it precisely because it is forced upon the subject. This is precisely why Adorno and Horkheimer claim that “...fun is a medicinal bath. The pleasure industry never fails to prescribe it.”²³ What we understand to be “fun” is at its core is enjoyment taken as medicine that the pleasure industry forces onto the citizens as their duty. In the section titled “The Fun System or Forced Enjoyment,” Baudrillard illustrates how this “enjoyment as obligation” manifests in, rather

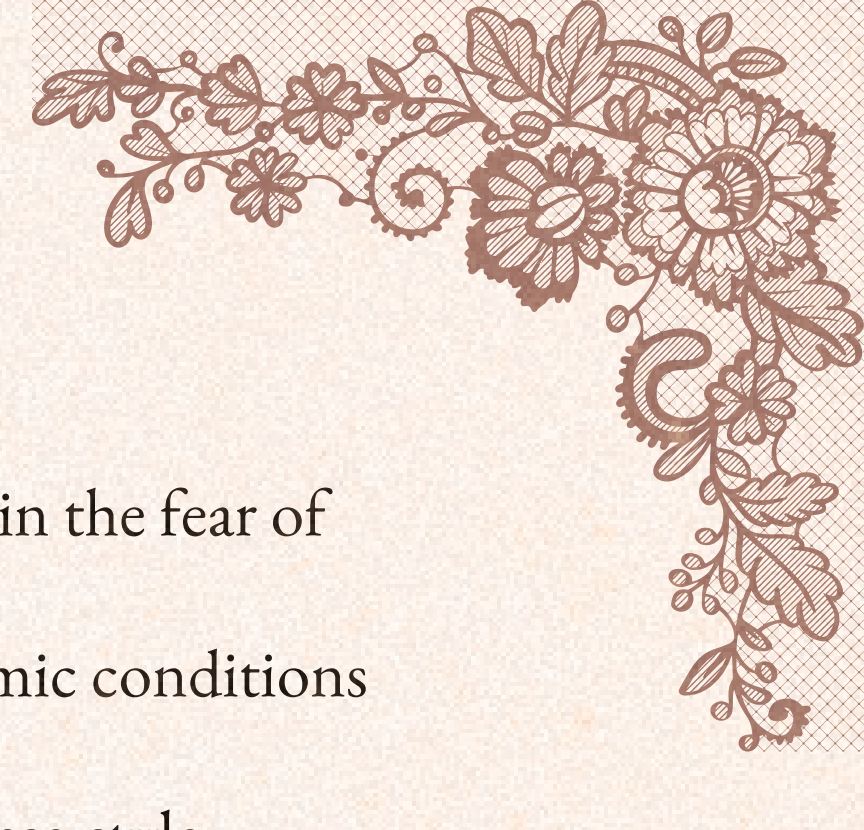
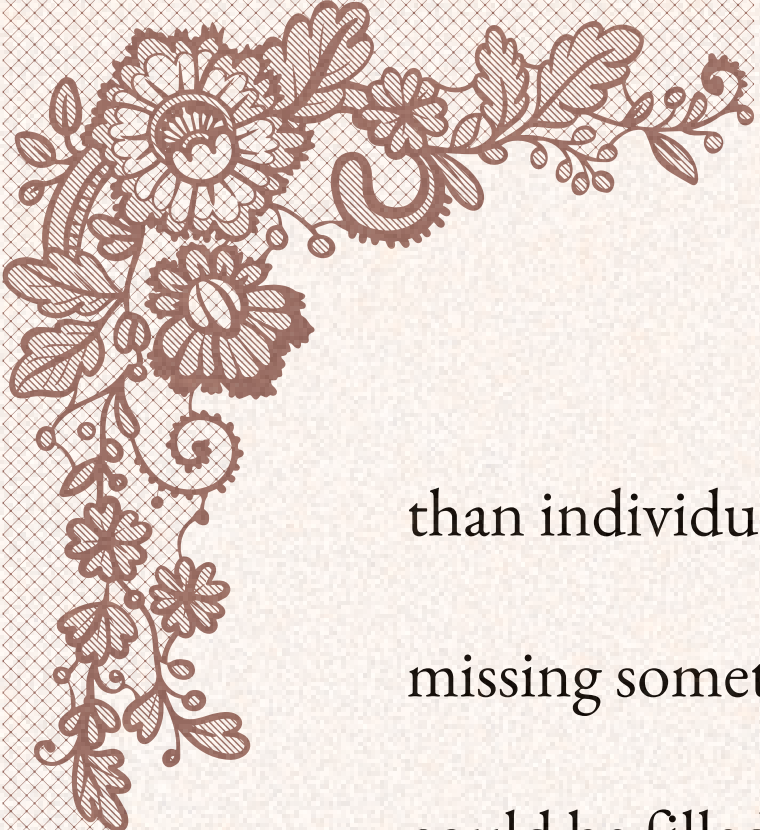
¹⁹ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 80 (1998).

²⁰ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 80 (1998).

²¹ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 75 (1998).

²² Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 80 (1998).

²³ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 140, (1987).



than individualized desire towards an object, a “universal curiosity” to try everything in the fear of missing something.²⁴ Perhaps the void of alienation manufactured by modern economic conditions could be filled with “Christmas in the Canaries, eel in whisky, the Prado, LSD, Japanese-style love-making.”²⁵ “Desire..., taste, or a specific inclination...” are replaced with “generalized curiosity” because of our manufactured unease at missing out on something.²⁶

The Inability to Experience Eros under the Pleasure Industry

Because the pleasure industry replaces eros with its simulated counterpart, it has rendered its subjects functionally incapable of experiencing eros-in-itself. Adorno and Horkheimer illustrate this point by explaining how the masters of the Enlightenment first introduced the notion of enjoyment as something rational, and then administered this rationalized enjoyment sparingly to their subjects.²⁷ When modern industrial structures have a monopoly on what is an already perverted form of eros, and deny eros outside of this phantom, a subject of said structures would be rendered unable to access eros-in-itself. Because of this, the pleasure industry makes it so that the “...real point will never be satisfied, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu.”²⁸ Individualized desire will never be satisfied, the individual must be satisfied with simulated desire. The commands of the pleasure industry to be happy are tyrannical, as Adorno explains: “The admonitions to be happy, voiced in concert by the scientifically epicurean sanatorium-director and the highly-strung propaganda chiefs of the entertainment industry, have about them the fury of the father berating his children for not rushing joyously downstairs when he comes home irritable from his office.”²⁹ Adorno claims that the

²⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 80 (1998).

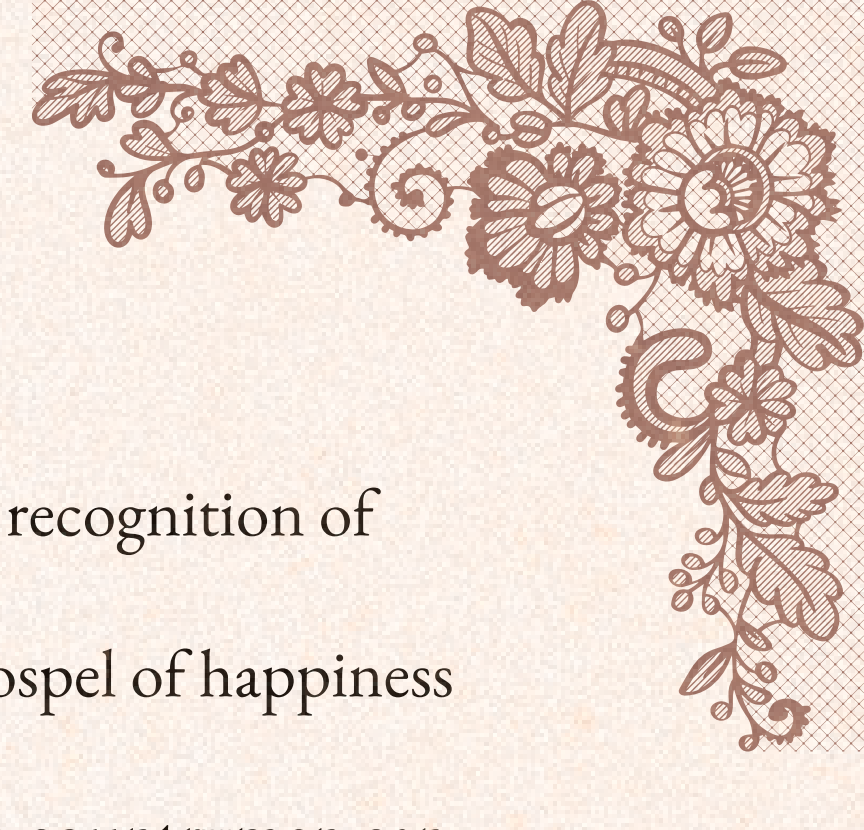
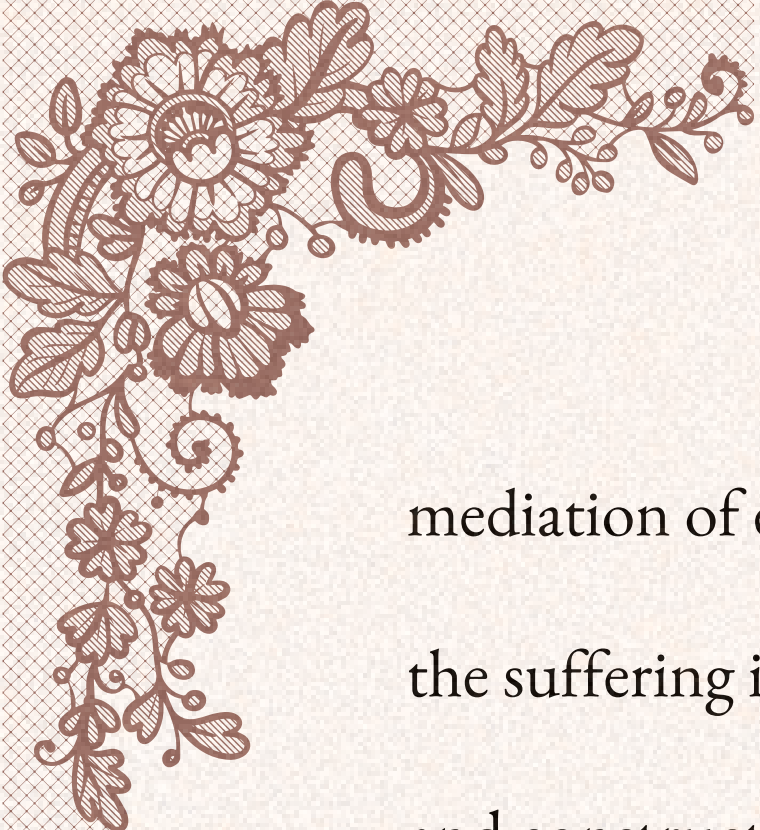
²⁵ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 80 (1998).

²⁶ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 80 (1998).

²⁷ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 106, (1987).

²⁸ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 139, (1987).

²⁹ Adorno, Theodor W, and E F N Jephcott. *Minima Moralia*, 63 (2005).



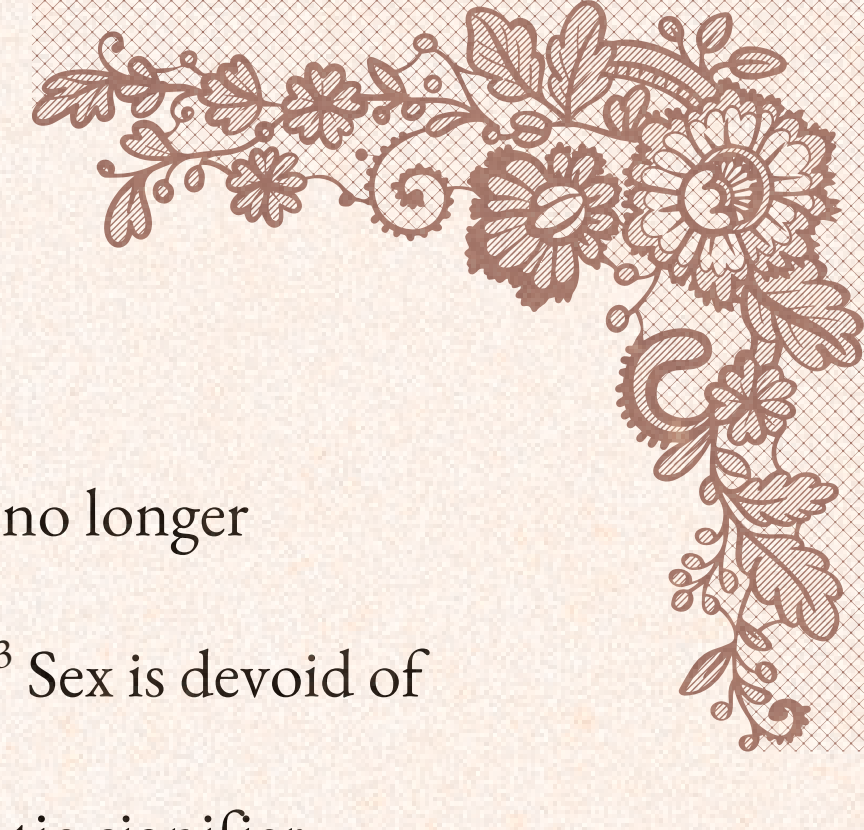
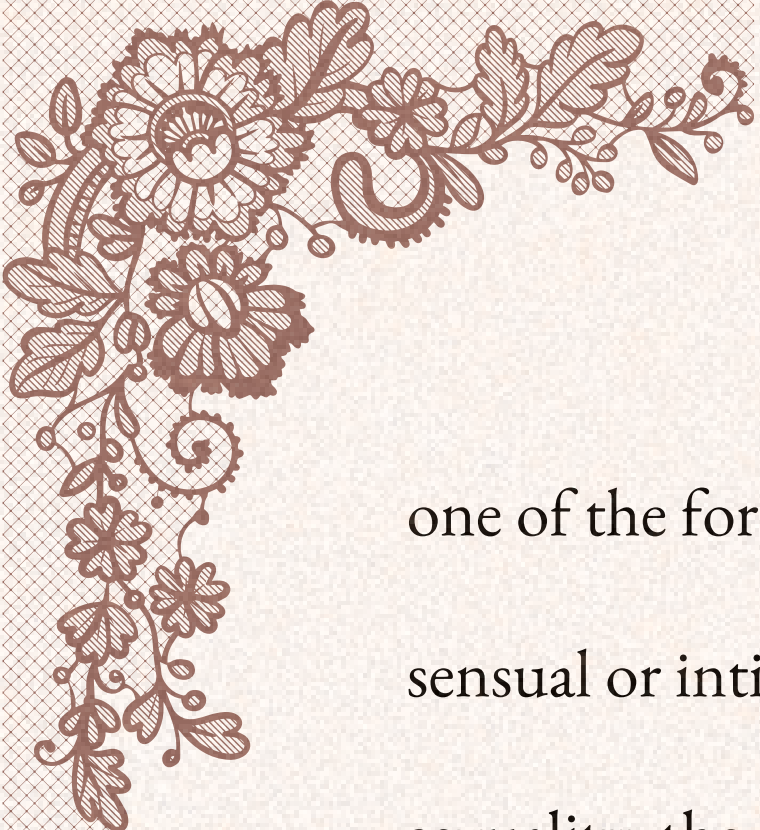
mediation of eros in the pleasure industry is a mechanism of domination that forbids recognition of the suffering it produces.³⁰ He draws a straight line of development between “...the gospel of happiness and construction of camps of extermination so far off in Poland that each of our own countrymen can convince himself that he cannot hear the screams of pain.”³¹ The gospel of happiness produces nothing but unhappiness, but in maintaining its upkeep, the pleasure industry must ensure that its victims understand the eros-phantom to be precisely what they desire. In Adorno’s analogy, we can understand ourselves to be the blissfully ignorant subjects of the Third Reich, so entrenched in the horrors of reality but so reluctant to acknowledge them that we deny ourselves our own acknowledgment. The pleasure industry makes its subjects incapable of even acknowledging their own repression.

Baudrillard further articulates the simulated society of eros in explaining how the subject is essentially incapable of experiencing eros-in-itself because of how the pleasure industry turns it into merely a series of atomized signs. Not only is the function of enjoyment replaced by the function of production, but eros itself is replaced by mere “objects of enjoyment” and the signification of eros. Consumer behavior appears to be oriented towards enjoyment. However, this enjoyment is only accessible through the consumer-object, an object that has no meaning or significance beyond what it signifies. Consumer behavior is not, in fact, oriented towards enjoyment, but other goals, such as “...the metaphorical or displaced expression of desire, that of production, through differential signs, of a social code of values.”³² Not only is real enjoyment completely absent in consumer-enjoyment, but there is nothing meaningful or significant whatsoever, only a structure of signs. Even sex itself,

³⁰ Adorno, Theodor W, and E F N Jephcott. *Minima Moralia*, 63 (2005).

³¹ Adorno, Theodor W, and E F N Jephcott. *Minima Moralia*, 63 (2005).

³² Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 78 (1998).



one of the foremost prescribed compensatory distractions of the pleasure industry, is no longer sensual or intimate, but rather sex appeal comes from calculated sexual signification.³³ Sex is devoid of sexuality, the individual does not desire eroticism, they are made to desire only the erotic-signifier. The diner must be satisfied with the menu because that's all there is: there is nothing beyond significance. The body of the model is no longer an object of desire, but a sign.³⁴ Objects of desire have been replaced by “objects of desire,” rendering eros fundamentally inaccessible.

The Repression of Eros under the Enlightenment

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer describe Enlightenment as being the historical movement towards a totalizing knowledge of the world through the lens of reason.³⁵ What causes the most anxiety in post-Enlightenment life is there existing something that can not be totalized into knowledge. Everything becomes knowable, there is meaning everywhere, and there is nothing that can not be fundamentally understood. This is why Adorno and Horkheimer argue that, “Enlightenment behaves as a dictator towards men. He knows them insofar as he can manipulate them.”³⁶ In making the world knowable, Enlightenment strips it of its essential qualities. Things in the world become malleable to the will of knowledge, and if they can not be understood, they do not exist. Whereas historically reason has been a tool of liberation and self-determination, in modernity it is reason that governs and subjugates man.³⁷ The aim to categorize eros is necessarily informed by the Enlightenment, as eros is precisely the uncategorizable thing. In the post-Enlightenment world, everything must be categorized until they are made understood, and everything must be manipulated

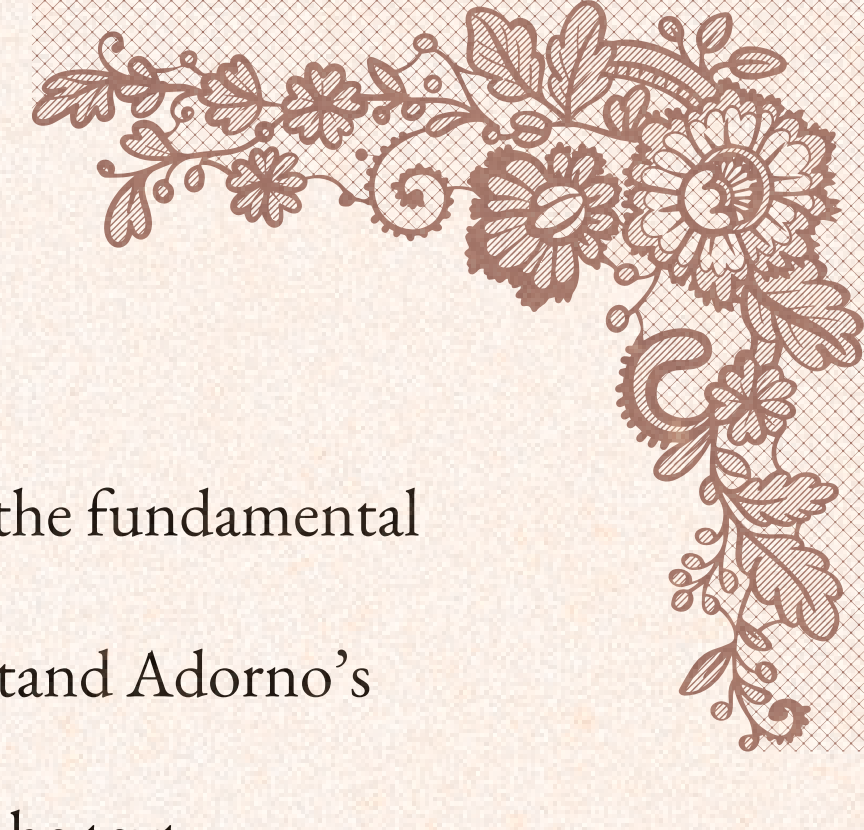
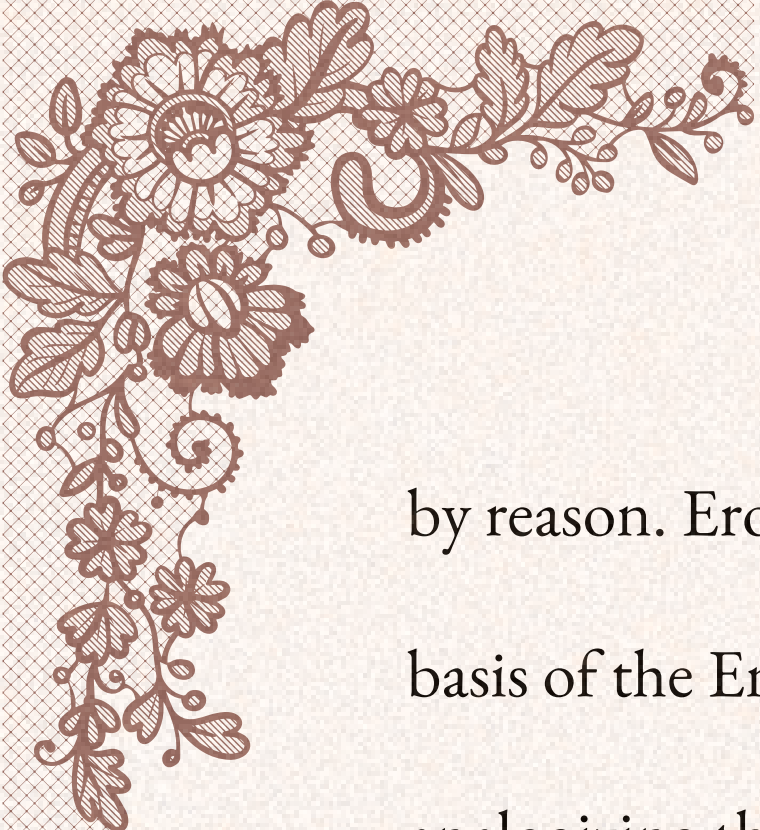
³³ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 133 (1998).

³⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society*, 133 (1998).

³⁵ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 9, (1987).

³⁶ Horkheimer, Max. Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 9, (1987).

³⁷ Horkheimer, Max. *Eclipse of Reason*, 128, (2018).

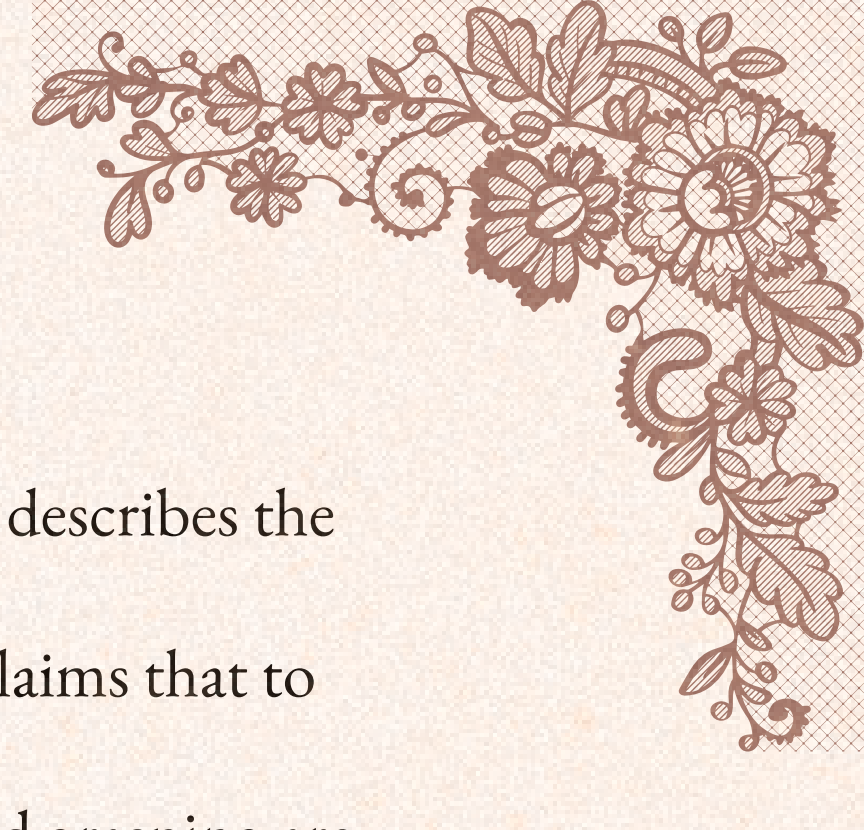
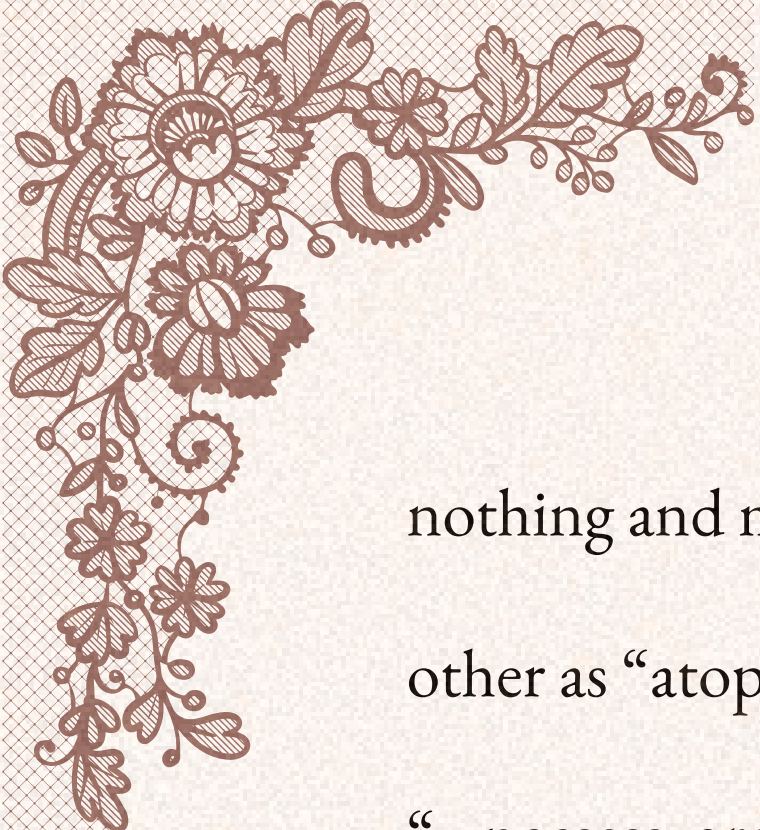


by reason. Eros-in-itself is further subjugated in the enlightened world as it threatens the fundamental basis of the Enlightenment in its inability to be categorized. Here we can fully understand Adorno's analogizing the gospel of happiness to the Holocaust. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the text culminates in showing how the Enlightenment's subjugation of the world under reason has amounted to incomprehensible harm, most notably because it created the conditions of possibility for the Holocaust. The subjugation of man that is created by the Enlightenment, they argue, is what informs modern slavery, oppression, and most importantly, genocide. The gospel of happiness and the Holocaust are both informed by the Enlightenment as they are both caused by the subjugation of man under reason and subsequent denial of this fact.

Industrial Sex and Removing the Otherness from the Other

The production of eros as consumer-object is most glaringly obvious in how the subject of the pleasure industry understands sex in modern industrial society. As Baudrillard has shown us, sex has been replaced with sexual signification, the erotic has been replaced with the signifier. What is most impacted by the pleasure industry in interpersonal relations is the individual's sexual relation to the Other. As Byung-Chul Han explains in *The Agony of Eros*, "Today, love is being posited into sexuality, and, by the same token, subjected to a commandment to perform. Sex means achievement and performance. And sexiness represents capital to be increased. The body—with its display value—has become a commodity. At the same time, the Other is being sexualized into an object for procuring arousal. When otherness is stripped from the Other, one cannot love—one can only consume. To this extent, the Other is no longer a person; instead, he or she has been fragmented into sexual part-objects."³⁸ The manufacturing of the world as consumer-object does not cease, it stops at

³⁸ Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 12, (2017).



nothing and maintains its totalizing powers until all humanity is under its wing. Han describes the other as “atopic,” as being unable to be classified and uniquely obscured to us.³⁹ He claims that to “...possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power.”⁴⁰ There is always something about the other that is elusive to me, that I can not know, that is unknowable through generalization and category. This understanding of the Other is informed by Levinasian ethics, where he claims that the other can not be reproduced, the other can not be generalized. They are individually “this Other.”⁴¹ Where this relationship is most exaggerated is in the sexual relation to the Other: “the negativity of otherness—that is, the atopia of the Other, which eludes all ability—is constitutive of erotic experience.”⁴² Erotic experience is definitionally the experience one has with the elusiveness of the Other. If one were to fundamentally know this Other in their erotic experience of them, it would not be eroticism, rather they would be stripping the Otherness from this Other. Because of its insistence on knowing the unknowable and repressing eros-in-itself because of its uncategorizable nature, the pleasure industry effectively strips the Otherness from the Other in one of its most fundamental relations. The Other as a sexual object is no longer a “thou.”⁴³ The pleasure industry has turned the Other into something that does not exist past this relationship of complete knowability.

What do we do in a society where people have been unilaterally reduced to sexual objects?

“One can call up, or out to, a sex object, but one cannot address it. A sex object also has no ‘countenance,’ which is what constitutes alterity: the otherness of the Other commands distance.”⁴⁴ In

³⁹ Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 11, (2017).

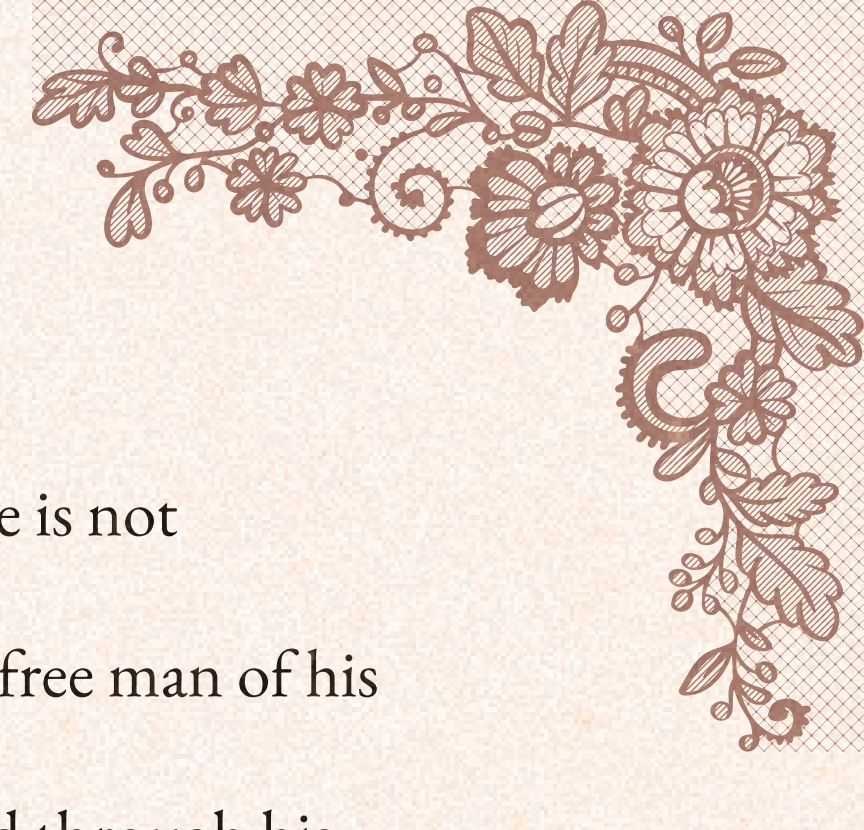
⁴⁰ Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 12, (2017).

⁴¹ Levinas, Emmanuel. “Is Ontology Fundamental?” 125, (1989).

⁴² Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 11, (2017).

⁴³ Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 12, (2017).

⁴⁴ Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 13, (2017).

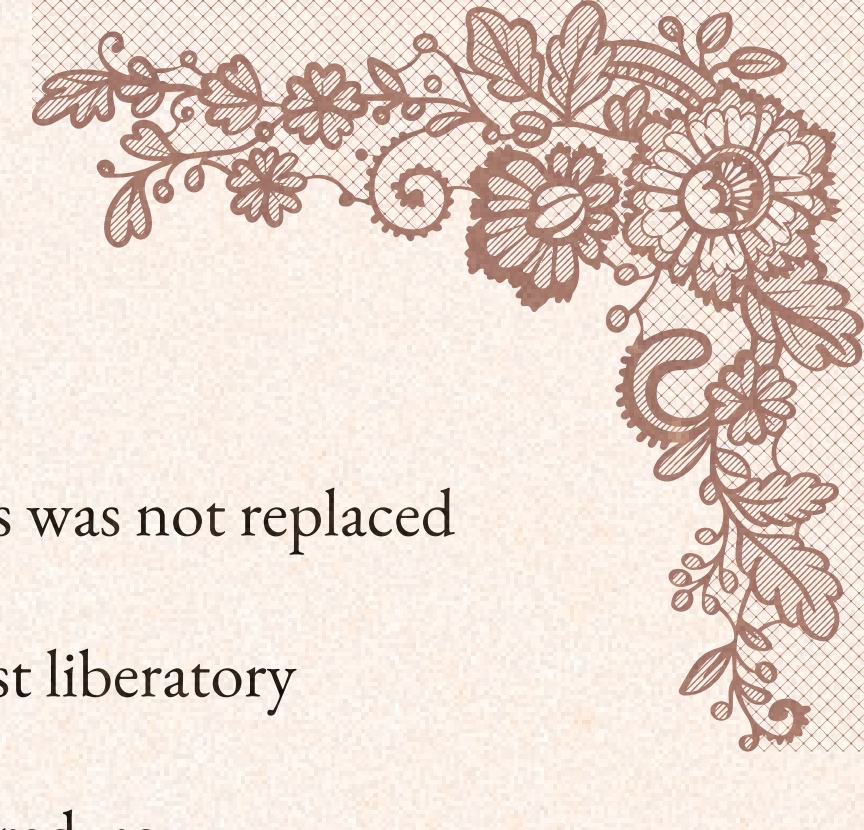
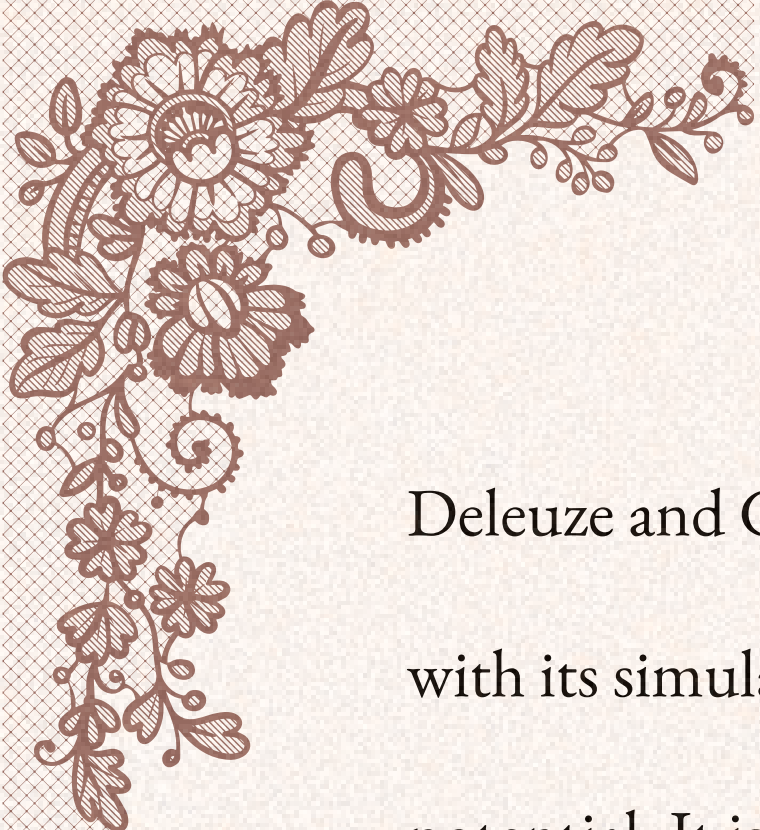


modern industrial society, when one can not address the Other, and subsequently one is not responsible to the other, no one has any obligations to anyone else. Though this may free man of his social bonds, it also frees him of social protection and intimacy, and being understood through his alterity. The pleasure industry aims towards reducing the Other into sexual part-object because of its being informed by the Enlightenment and because of the elusiveness of the Other. If the Other is in essence what we can not know, and this relationship is accelerated in sexuality, then there remains an essential part of human relation that is in its nature unknowable. If we know Enlightenment to be the movement that makes the unknowable knowable, and the unknowable causes the most anxiety in life after the Enlightenment, then sexuality must not only be repressed and consumed but also turned into something that can be produced and monopolized by the modern economic structures informing the pleasure industry.

Eros-in-itself as the Revolutionary Liberator

The consensus between the thinkers discussed hitherto is that the pleasure industry represses eros-in-itself because it is essentially anarchic and undermines modern economic conditions. This is precisely why Deleuze and Guattari frame eros-in-itself, “real” desire as they understand it, as having the greatest potentiality at being liberatory, both liberating eros from its mediation and liberating the subjects that suffer under the mediation of eros. If, as I have shown, we understand eros to be anarchic in its nature, and we understand this essential quality as constituting its repression, then eros is repressed because of its ability to question the established order of society.⁴⁵ Eros must be repressed because of its potentiality at liberating the subject from the tyrannical commands of the pleasure industry. Desire in its essence is explosive and revolutionary, unlike the modern vacation, claims

⁴⁵ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 116 (1983).

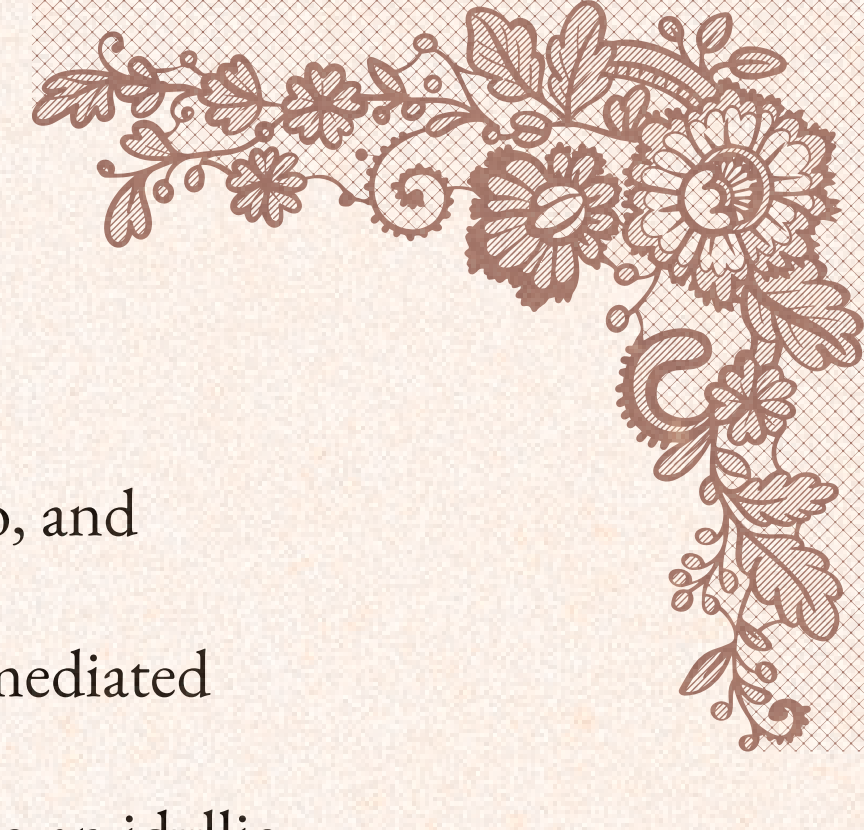
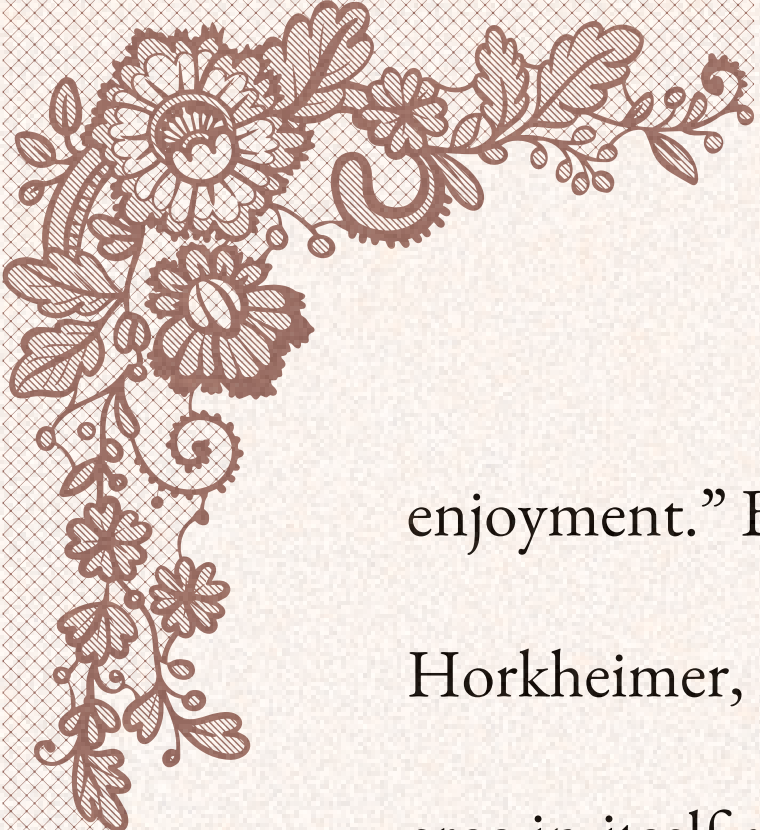


Deleuze and Guattari.⁴⁶ If we were allowed to be made aware of our repression, if eros was not replaced with its simulation, if eros-in-itself was accessible at all to the subject, there would exist liberatory potential. It is then vital to repress “real” eros so that even repression itself can be desired, as eros-in-itself is capable of destroying the social form altogether.⁴⁷ The pleasure industry creates an obligatory libidinal investment in all of its parts, from the compensatory expenditures it produces to even the repression of the individual itself. This is necessary to maintain its social form, as any amount of “real” eros is revolutionary.

We can also understand the positioning of eros-in-itself as the primary tool of liberation in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *Minima Moralia*, and *The Consumer Society*. In these texts, although eros-in-itself is never explicitly mentioned as a tool of liberation per se, we can track the arguments as positioning the inability of categorization of unmediated eros-in-itself as subversive towards the pleasure industry and modern economic conditions more generally. This understanding of eros is especially present in *Minima Moralia*. Adorno understands eros as being transcendent; happiness is the moment of genuine spontaneity. His outrage at prescribed happiness is due in part to the fact that true happiness, in Adorno, is necessarily uncategorizable. This is why the primitive festival is anarchic and revolutionary and the modern vacation is regressive. The primitive festival gives us an idea of what revolutionary eros looks like: eros that exists entirely outside of bureaucracy and labor. In *The Consumer Society* it is not immediately obvious that anything is not subject to the overwhelming tyranny of modern industrial society. However, Baudrillard does imply several alternatives to the prescription of eros in modern society, with “individualized desire,” “positive satisfaction,” “desire, taste, or a specific inclination,” and, most importantly, the “function of

⁴⁶ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 116 (1983).

⁴⁷ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, 342 (1983).



enjoyment.” Baudrillard follows the same methodology as Deleuze, Guattari, Adorno, and Horkheimer, in diagnosing the repression of eros as necessarily bad and implying unmediated eros-in-itself as the potential liberator. Baudrillard, similarly to Adorno, also appeals to an idyllic conception of primitive eros.⁴⁸ The agreement in most seminal postmodern continental thought on the pleasure industry is that it represses eros because of its resistance to being categorized and manipulated into modern economic structures, and a space outside of the pleasure industry is achievable through unmediated eros-in-itself. As Byung-Chul Han explains, “capitalism is eliminating otherness wholesale in order to subordinate everything to consumption. Eros, however, represents an asymmetrical relationship to the Other. As such, it interrupts the exchange rate.”⁴⁹

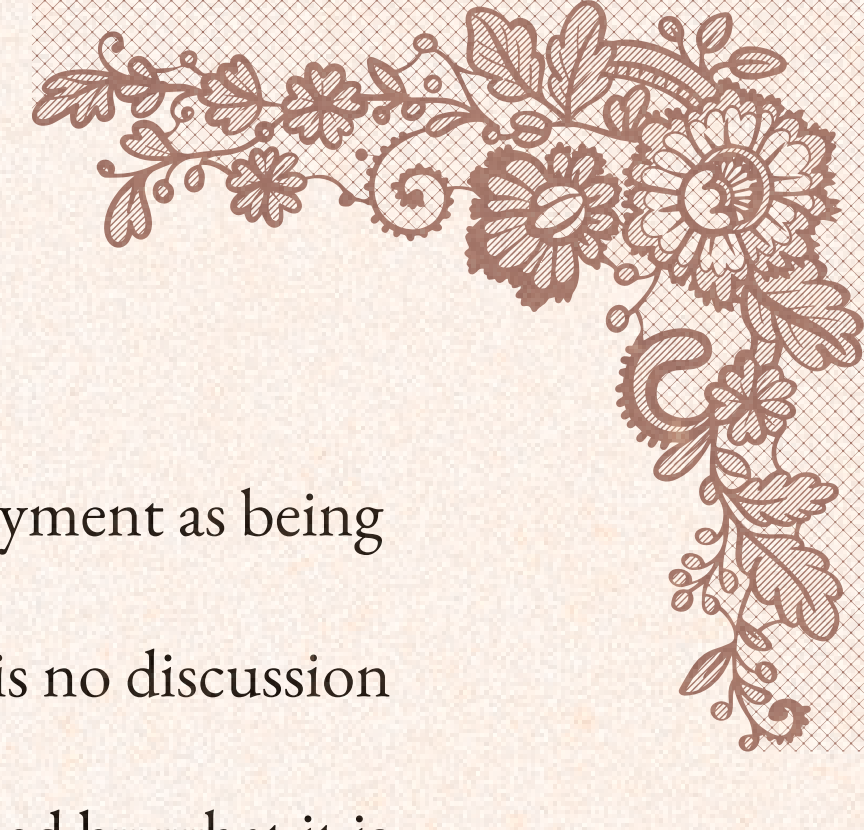
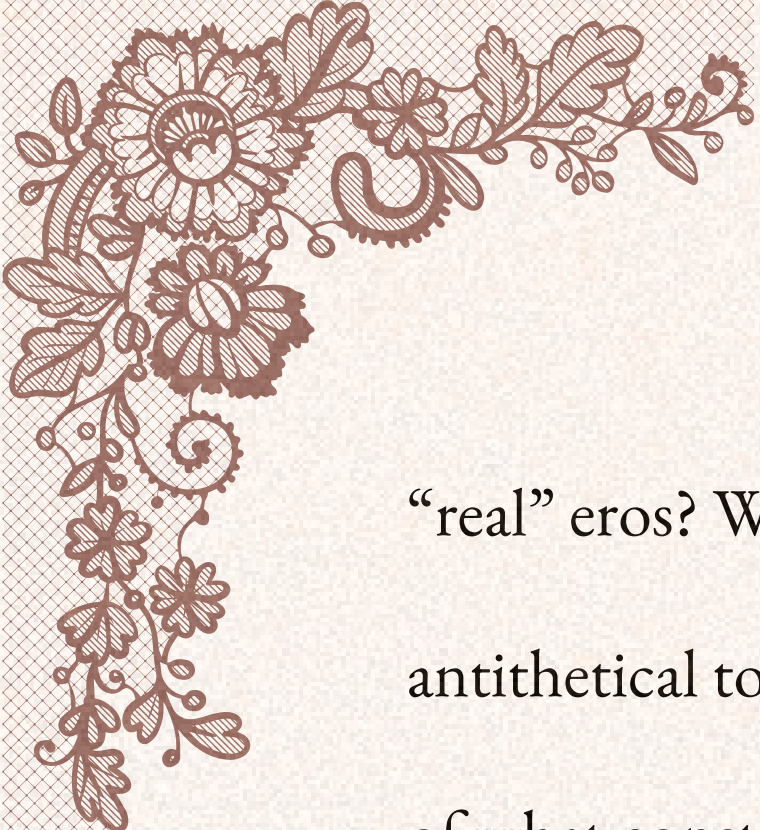
Although the pleasure industry exists to prescribe and categorize eros, and in doing so functionally repressing it, a portrait of liberation seems not entirely out of reach. If eros-in-itself is the thing that liberates, the facet of human experience that is revolutionary in its essence, then “real” eros is what we must draw on to resist the structures that mediate them. The implication of “eros-in-itself” and “real eros” is that there exists an eros that is unmediated by social or political structures, that is intrinsic to the individual and accessible despite the pleasure industry making it next to impossible to access. “Eros-in-itself” is intrinsic, prior to structure, and can manufacture a space outside of both the pleasure industry and social structures themselves.

What is an “In-Itself”?

My critique is not that the diagnosis of the pleasure industry is improper, but that the fundamental understanding of eros that it rests on is unclear. All the theorists discussed propose some “eros-in-itself”, unmediated by structure and untouched by the social, a “real” eros. But what exactly is

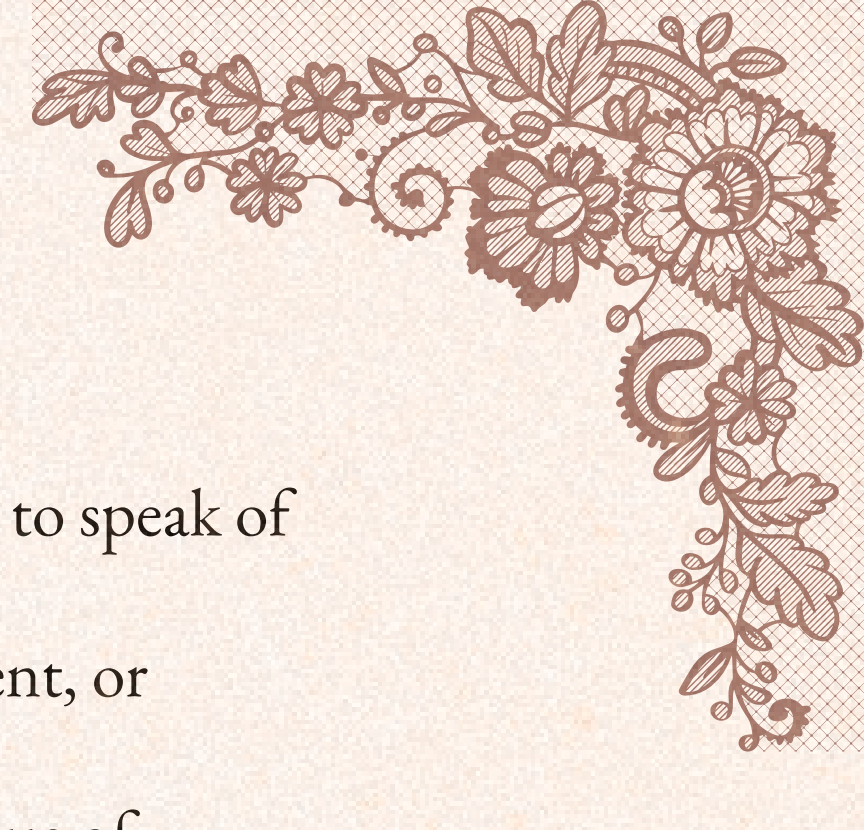
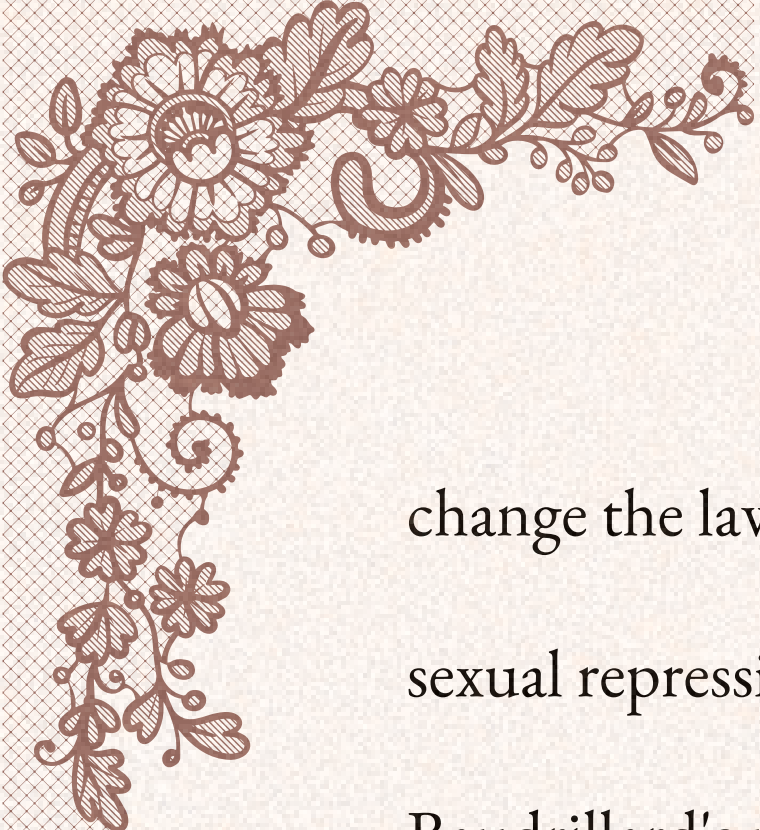
⁴⁸ Fisher, Mark. *Postcapitalist Desire*, 192, (2020).

⁴⁹ Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of Eros*, 16, (2017).



“real” eros? What differentiates “real” eros from “false” eros? Baudrillard defines enjoyment as being antithetical to production and consumption, but this is begging the question. There is no discussion of what constitutes “genuine” enjoyment as opposed to false enjoyment. Eros is defined by what it is not, and always “what it is not” is what is definitionally repressing it. This is the case in the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer as well. Adorno understands eros as being devoid of mediation, but how can anything exist unmediated? Is describing a thing not necessarily mediating it with the tool of language? Is not every function of human existence mediated by the social? The existence of “eros-in-itself” implies an a priori eros. However, what is desire and pleasure if not conditioned by sociality? My most fundamental critique is with the portrait of desire and subsequently liberation offered by Deleuze and Guattari. If desire is informed by social production, it is unclear how it is “uncategorizable,” “unmediated,” or “explosive.” At face value, nothing about desire seems in essence more obviously revolutionary than apathy. There is libidinal investment even in the powers that repress us, as Deleuze and Guattari have shown. We desire repression not just because we are made to, but simply because we desire it. It is unclear then how in its nature desire is revolutionary and explosive if it is precisely desire that constitutes our repression and informs our commitment to conformity and the social form. Foucault explains the desire to create a metanarrative about eros as being incompatible with labor: “if sex is so rigorously repressed, this is because it is incompatible with a general and intensive work imperative.”⁵⁰ Sex is not necessarily repressed as we think it to be, but “what sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to

⁵⁰ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, 6, (1978).



change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights.”⁵¹ It is convenient to speak of sexual repression to advance Adorno and Horkheimer’s diagnosis of the Enlightenment, or Baudrillard’s understanding of the consumer society, or Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of categorization. However, “eros-in-itself” is not repressed precisely because the Enlightenment, the consumer society, and categorization contain libidinal investment.

The Fantasy of “Outside”

There is no “outside” modern economic conditions, there is no “outside” the pleasure industry, there is no “outside” libidinal investment. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse proposes a “great refusal” in response to modern industrial society, a total boycott of power relations.⁵² The problem with any “great refusal” is that it posits a potential society outside the society that is described as encompassing and unilateral. Furthermore, there is no “outside” whatsoever.⁵³ Because everything has libidinal investment, including our repression, because everything is mediated by the social, because everything is etched in power relations, what would be the space outside of mediated pleasure? There are no primitive societies like those that Adorno and Baudrillard propose that we can revert to.⁵⁴ The concept of a “great refusal” even has implicit power relations, and the concept of “eros-in-itself” is still mediated by the social. Primitive societies still mediate pleasure, and modern societies still contain libidinal investment.

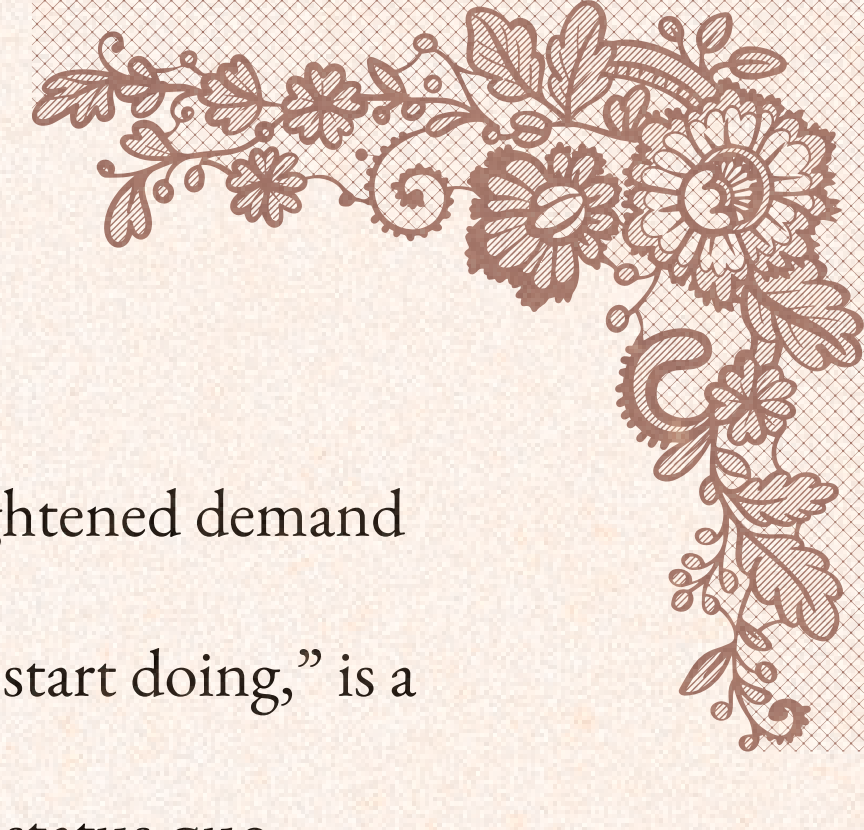
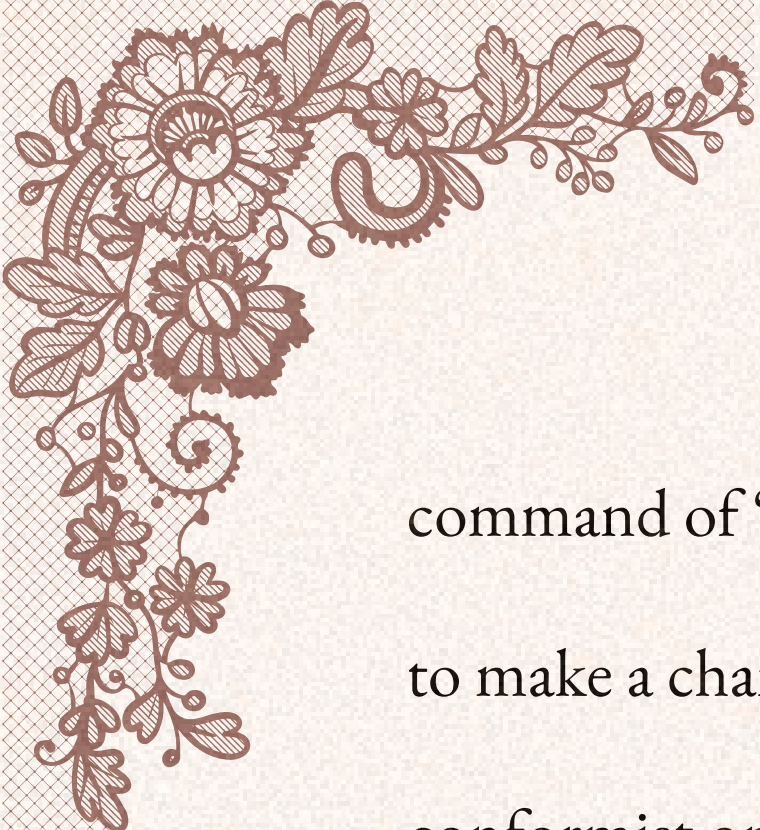
This is precisely why maintaining critique is necessary for any potential change. At any point where theory turns into practice, critique turns into proposed alternative, it allows itself to be instrumentalized and swept into the superstructure. The impulse to respond to the tyrannical

⁵¹ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, 7, (1978).

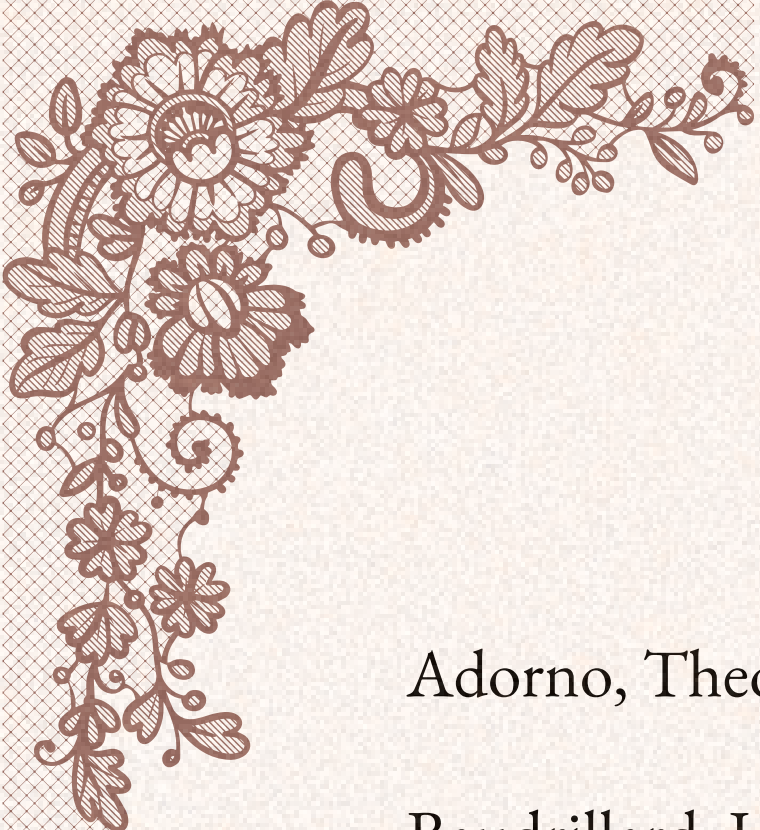
⁵² Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*, 261, (1991).

⁵³ Lyotard, Jean-François. *Libidinal Economy*, 4, (1993).

⁵⁴ Fisher, Mark. *Postcapitalist Desire*, 193, (2020).



command of “...what is to be done?” is giving in to the ideology of progress, the Enlightened demand to make a change. Praxis itself can be regressive and the order to “...stop thinking and start doing,” is a conformist one. Without critical thought, any action would necessarily be one of the status quo, subjugating independent thought under the tyranny of the masses. Thought itself resists instrumentalization because it is always thought for the thinker. While the prescription of eros through modern economic conditions does repress the individual by nestling them deeper within the confines of the superstructure, what is most regressive is appealing to the demands of the structures that inform it by proposing an alternative and stopping there. The time is to reject the demands to provide an alternative, to reject privileged praxis over theory, to reject submission under the constant “What is to be done?” The revolutionaries have hitherto only changed the world in various ways; the point, however, is to interpret it.



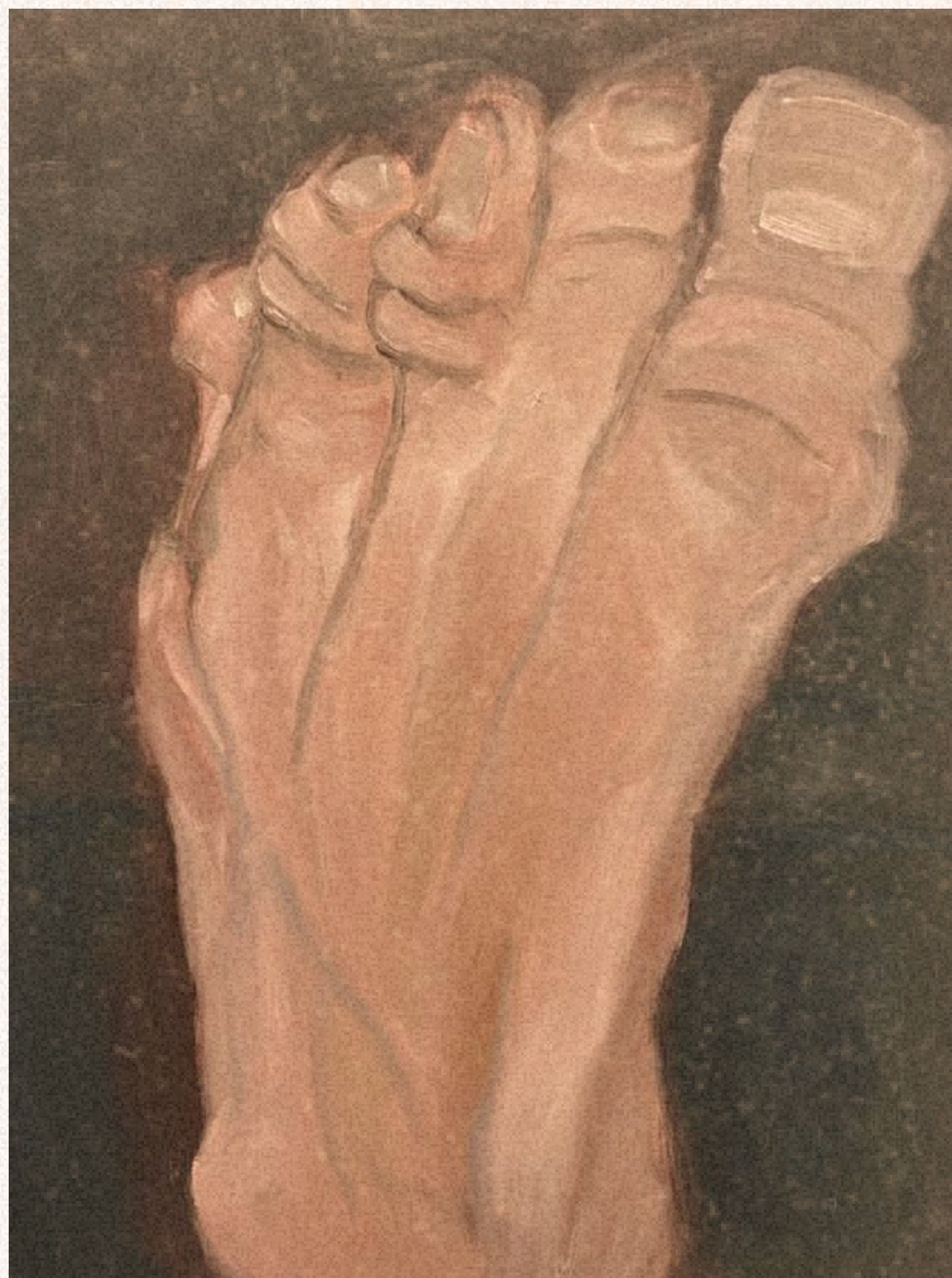
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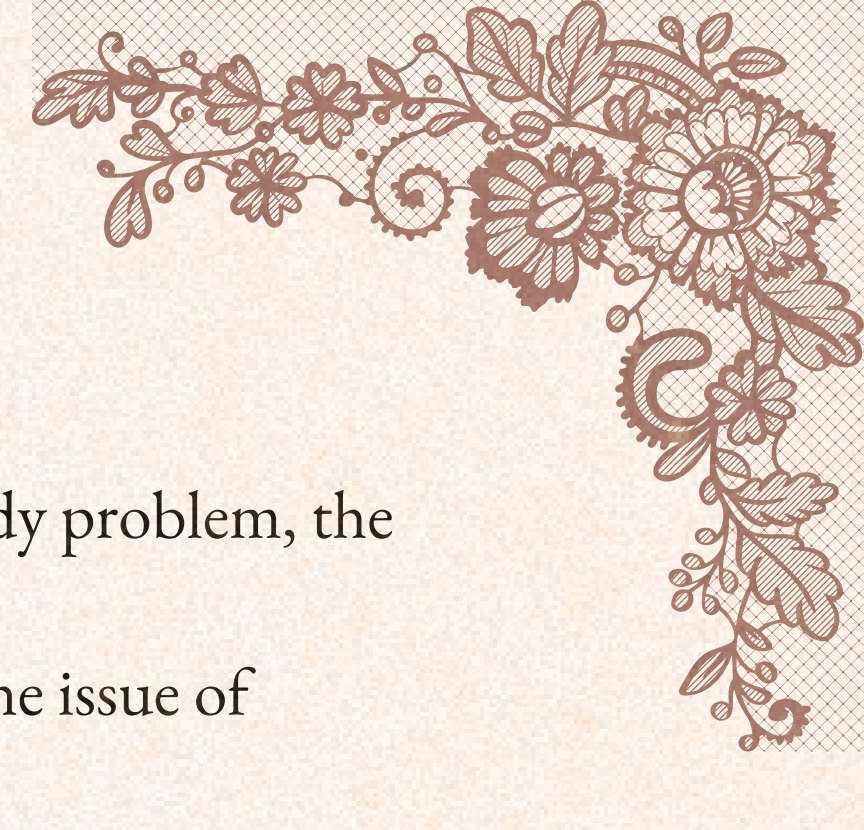
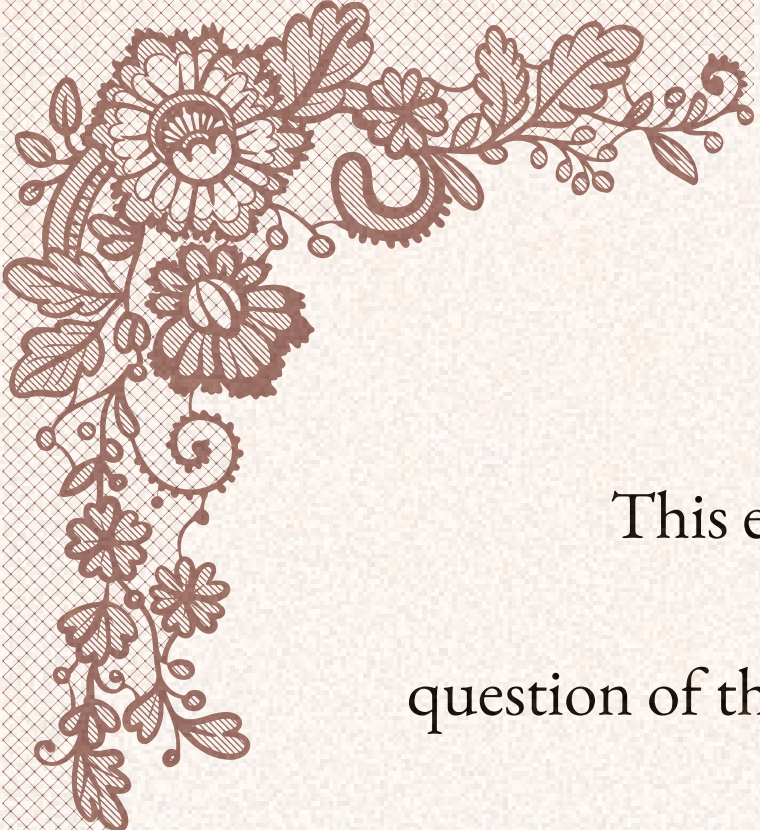


The Mind with the Body:
A Hylomorphic Lens
Emma Cohen-Edmonds
University of Edinburgh

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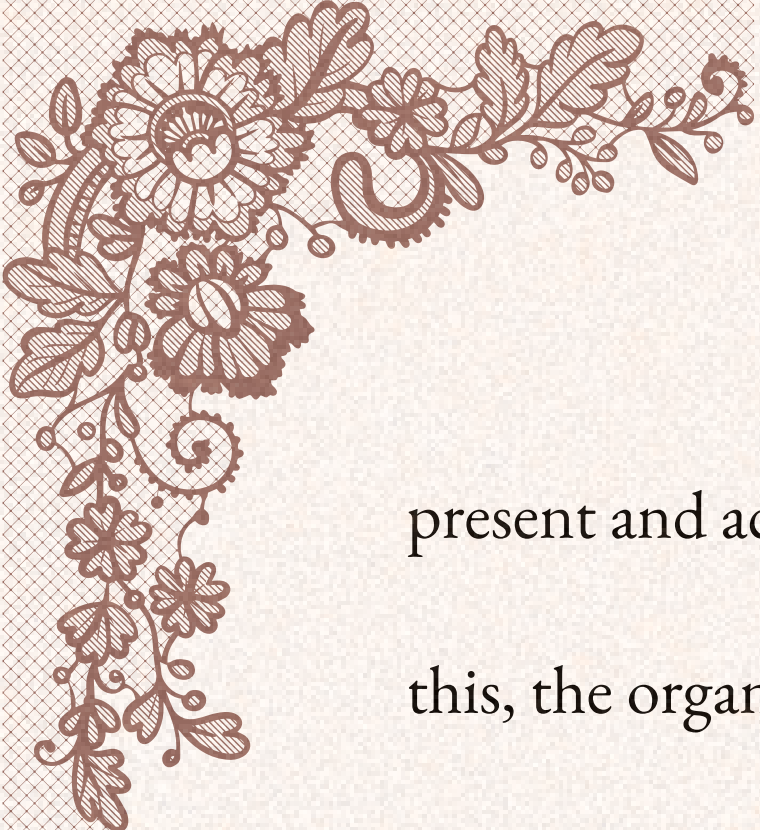
This essay presents the theory of hylomorphism as a solution to the mind-body problem, the question of the relationship between the mind and the body of cognising subjects. The issue of defining the mind has become polarised between extremes of emphasising form or matter. Attempts to solve the problem have resulted in gaps either of dismissing subjective experience entirely or of separating subjective experience to a point where experience becomes inexplicable. Dualism, in its focus on form as opposed to matter, causes the “mind” to lose empirical recourse for understanding itself. Meanwhile, physicalist assertions that eliminate any possibility of mental processes outside of materia (matter) fall short in explaining subjective mental experiences. Reconstructing an understanding of the mind that requires form and matter could provide a sensible solution to the mind-body problem. Hylomorphic understandings of the mind enable us to treat both the physical and phenomenological components of our mental experience with acknowledgement and reverence.

Hylomorphism is the name given to the theory that every physical substance is composed of both matter and form.¹ Its name originates from Aristotle’s writings on matter (hyle) and form (morphe.)² “Matter” refers to the physical material that objects are made of and “form” concerns the metaphysical nature of objects. Aristotle recognised that all substances undergo changes to fit their ends. For example, a cat undergoes “cat changes” to sustain its cat identity. The power or potentiality of these changes makes up a substance’s nature.³ Regarding living objects, substantial form is the

¹ Ainsworth, “Form vs. Matter,” 2024, and Madden, *Mind, Matter, and Nature: A Thomistic Proposal for the Philosophy of the Mind*, 251, 2013

² De Haan, *Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives on Contemporary Science*, 294, 2017

³ Aristotle, *Physics*, 192b10–193b20, 1999



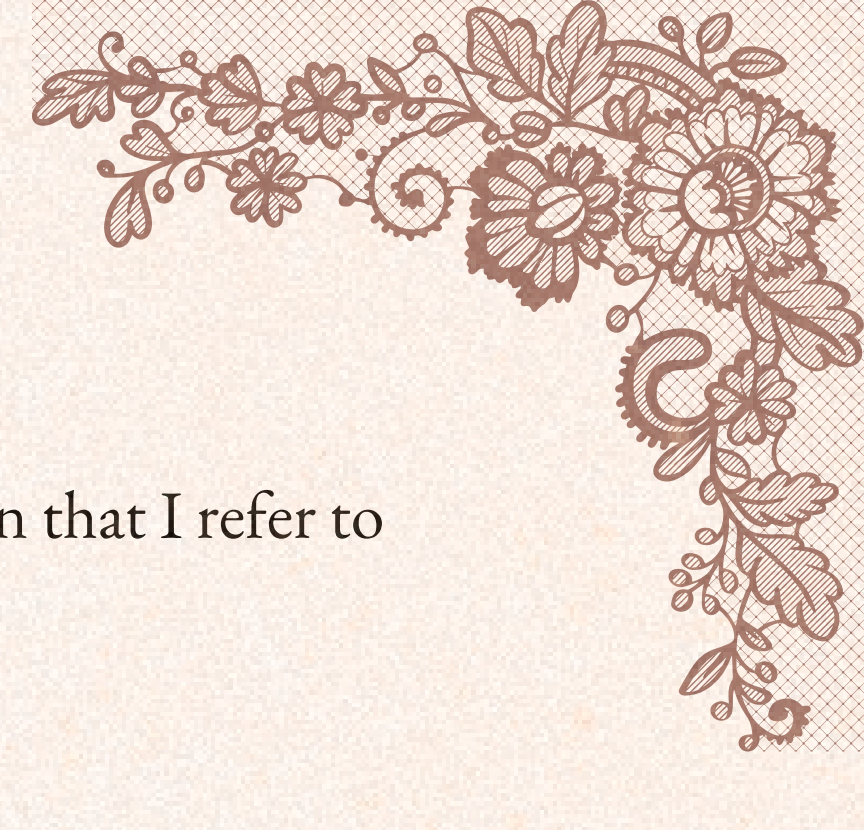
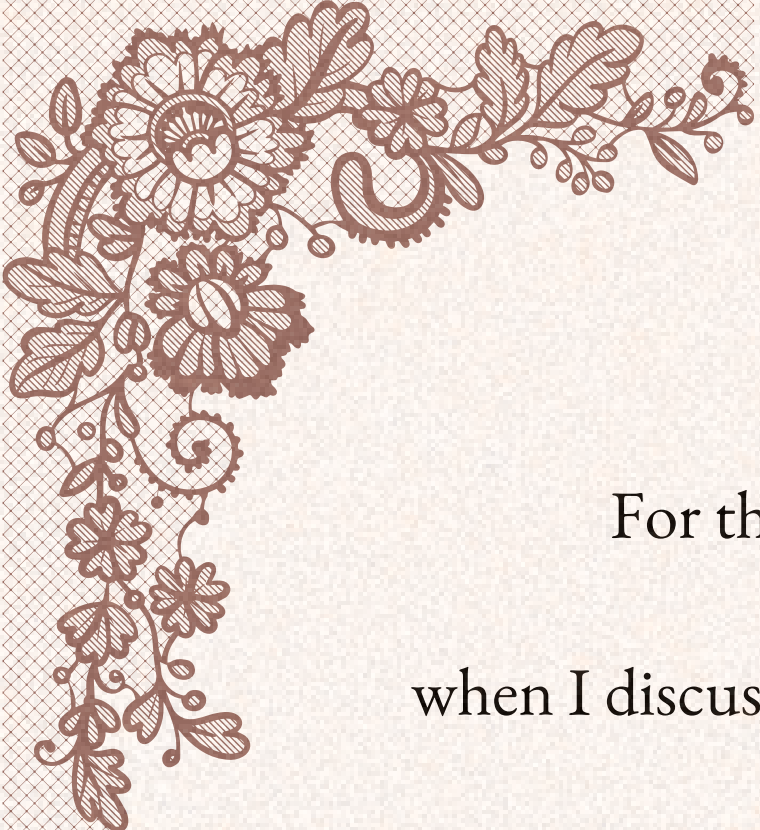
present and active component in animating that living organism to become its actual self. Without this, the organism would instead be a series of potential, inanimate elements.⁴

Applied to philosophies of mind, the mind is understood to be composed of physical and metaphysical components, as with all else. Philosopher William Jaworski explains that hylomorphists understand our mental selves and potentialities (including possibilities to think, feel, and perceive) through the powers of our intrinsic parts (e.g. our brain and our organs) and surrounding materials. Those parts and materials, he recognises, are “ultimately all physical.” Therefore, mental “consciousness” in a hylomorphic framework must refer to something that can be understood physically, not solely phenomenologically.⁵ However, it is typically the task of relating these physical realities to phenomenological understandings of the mind that cause philosophical conflict.

The mind-body problem refers to multiple issues originating from this task. In determining the link between mind and body, there are two questions that initially arise: first, an ontological question, outlining exactly what mental states are as opposed to physical states, and the second asks whether physical states causally trigger mental states, or vice versa. From these questions regarding the relationship between body and mind come more queries, including how consciousness, the self, and intentionality arise. Each question listed above falls predominantly (though perhaps not neatly) into one: Do our minds exist physically?

⁴ Aristotle, *On the Soul and other Psychological Works*, 412a10–15, 2018, and *On the Parts of Animals*, 640b1, 1882

⁵ Jaworski, *Structure and the Metaphysics of the Mind: How Hylomorphism Solves the Mind-Body Problem*, 255, 2016



For the purposes of this essay, it is the difficulty in answering this last question that I refer to when I discuss the “mind-body problem.”

Solutions to this range from 1) eliminating independently existing mental states entirely, instead asserting that mental states are purely physical (eliminative materialism) or otherwise 2) separating mental from physical states entirely, deeming them to occur as if on different planes of existence (dualism).

As Monash University professor of philosophy Tim Bayne argues, dualism is highly intuitive.⁶ Dualism holds that mental and physical substances are both real and one cannot be identical to the other.⁷ Bayne explains the strength of this position, acknowledging our possession of “direct access” to the contents of our minds, exclusive to us individually. This possession naturally leads to a separative understanding of mental phenomena as “radically unlike” physical phenomena.⁸ The fundamental problem of this belief is the consequence of a seeming inability to properly define what mental phenomena could be if not physical. Defining notions like the self and consciousness are at risk of quickly becoming intractable. Bayne notes “consciousness, on this [dualistic] view, is a kind of ontological oddball, a metaphysical freak.”⁹ It is this difficulty in pinning down what “mind” is as distinct from the body that makes solution 1 more attractive.

In contrast to dualism, views of materialism and physicalism offer that all mental states are simply physical.¹⁰ These responses include different explanations such as behaviourism,

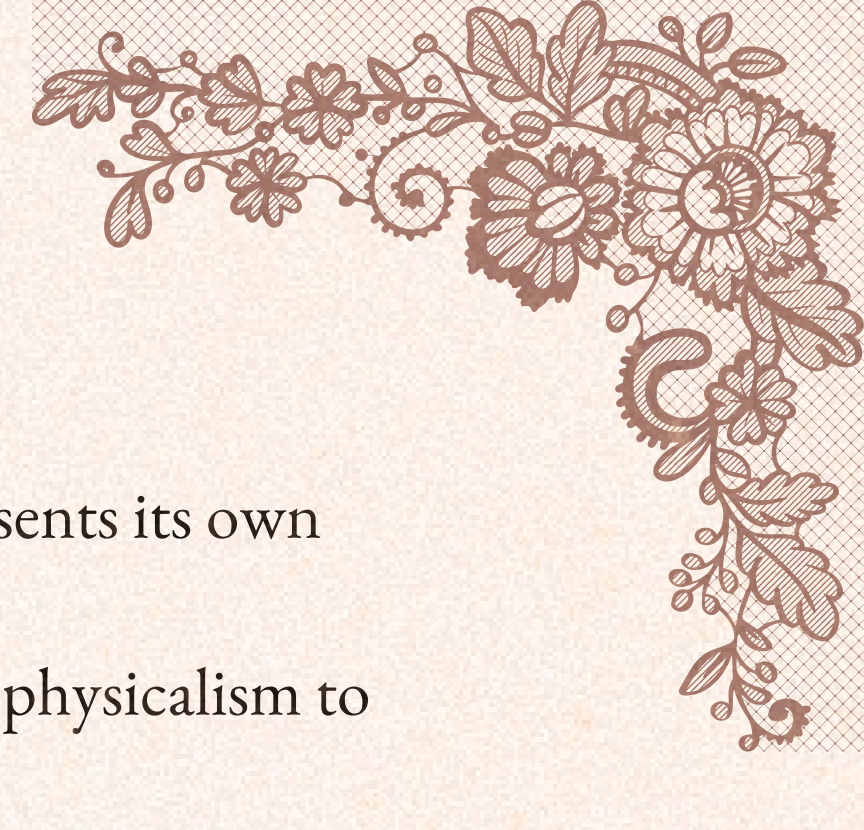
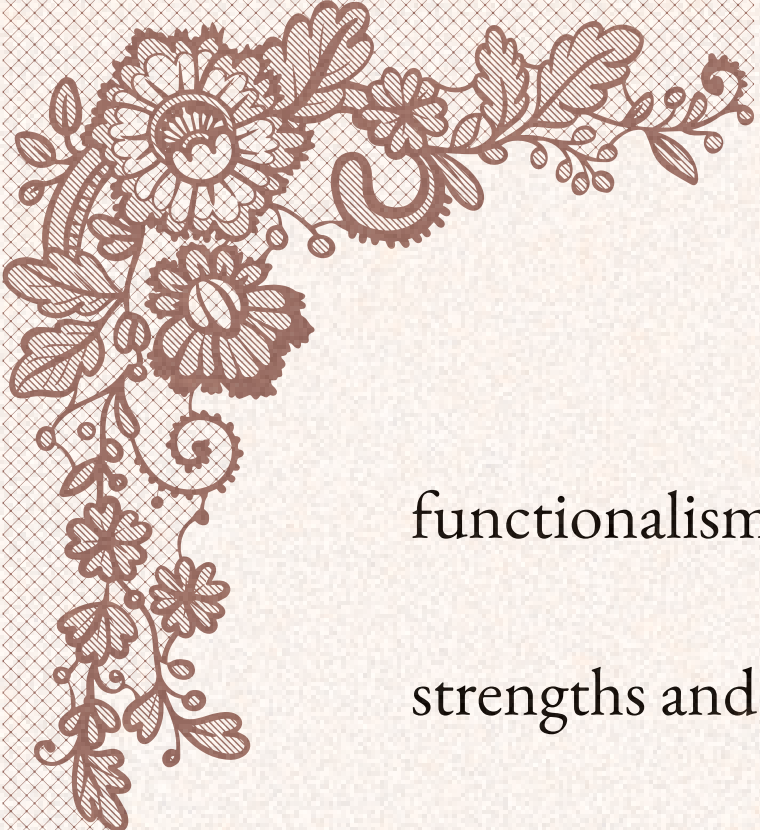
⁶ Bayne, *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction*, 25, 2022

⁷ Robinson, “Dualism,” 1.1, 2023

⁸ Bayne, *Philosophy of Mind*, 25, 2022

⁹ Bayne, *Philosophy of Mind*, 148, 2022

¹⁰ Robinson, “Dualism,” 1.1, 2023



functionalism, and mind-brain identity theory. Each specification of physicalism presents its own strengths and weaknesses; however, outlining these is not the aim of this essay. I raise physicalism to indicate that reducing mental activity to physical processes is an understandable method to make sense of minds. Psychiatrist Frank Jackson puts it neatly, explaining that conscious states are nothing more than the sum of the “right [physical] ingredients.”¹¹ This becomes more convincing when complimenting neuroscientific developments that demonstrate how bodily sensations correlate intimately on electrical, chemical brain states.¹²

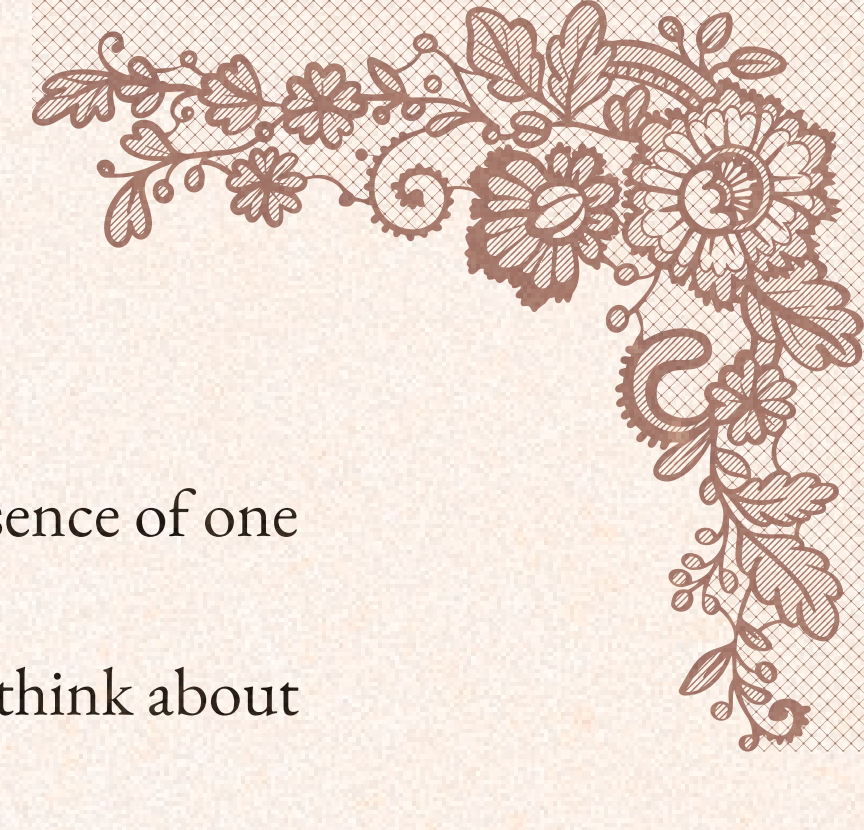
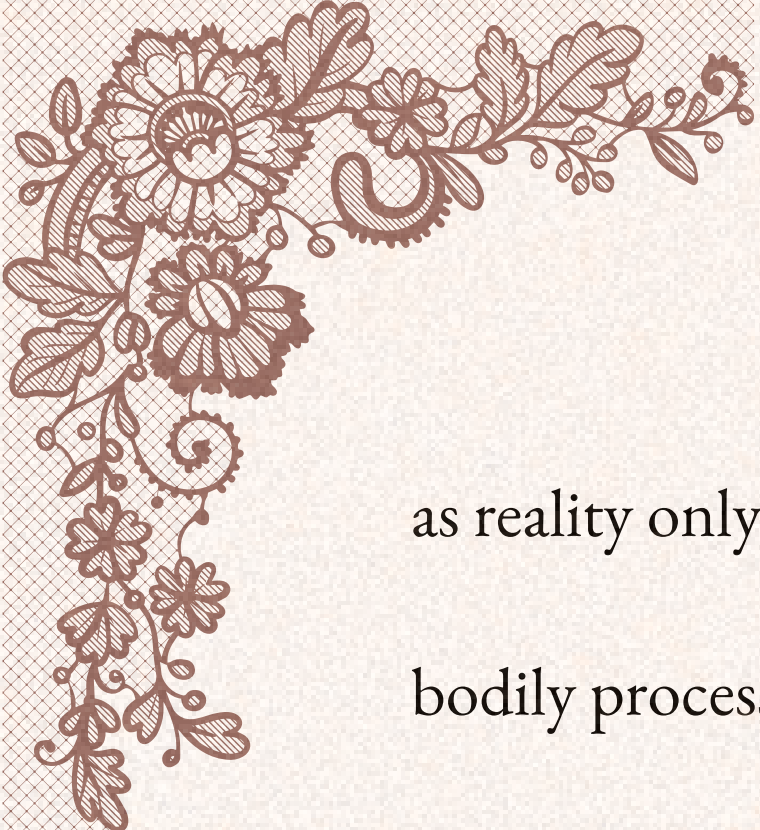
However, like theories of dualism, there exists an explanatory gap that prevents materialism from being truly satisfactory in untying knots of what mind as opposed to body could be.¹³ By enveloping all cognition to consist of the processes of the body, one way or another, we remove any unique phenomenology that humans experience. John Searle is convincing in criticising that throughout materialism’s history, there remains a tension between an explanation of reality that excludes any “special features of the mental” and an explanation for our intuitions about the mind in how we perceive phenomena.¹⁴ Equating mental processes to purely bodily processes results in minimising our ability to reflect and, at large, our values. Philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs defends our potency to reflect, explaining that physicalist perspectives in the end assert that only input-output processes would be real. The consequence would be that “subjectivity, self-awareness, and self-determination become epiphenomena which . . . we may still believe in, but which to regard

¹¹ Jackson, “On Ensuring That Physicalism is Not a Dual Attribute Theory in Sheep’s Clothing,” 236, 2006

¹² Bayne, *Philosophy of Mind*, 25, 2022

¹³ Levine, “Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap,” 427, 2003

¹⁴ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 52, 1992



as reality only testifies to naivety and nostalgia.”¹⁵ Attributing the same functional essence of one bodily process such as digestion to the perception of colour, or the way by which we think about music or our identities, does not seem accurate. The two functions intuitively exist in different ways; however, this is no reason to conclude that consciousness must then be non-physical.

The solutions for the mind-body problem discussed so far fail in different ways. It is seen that in dualist theories, too much emphasis on form causes conceptions of the mind to become less tractable. Meanwhile, in materialist theories, too much emphasis on matter causes reductions of mental experience in becoming identical to bodily processes.

In a fashion of finding a “golden mean,” I look toward a theory that does not yield to an extreme of drawing the mind exclusively in matter nor in form. The mind-body problem arises from an extrinsic attitude toward intuitive dualism, pitting physical substance against mental substance. Looking for a relationship between these two by searching for them independently has seemingly not worked. When form and matter are instead understood to be intrinsic to all things, the problem is removed because concepts like “consciousness” are understood in relation, always, to both physical body along with formal mind.

Philosopher Hans-Johann Glock, in supporting hylomorphism, redefines the mind to be “neither a physical nor a mental substance, but a set of abilities. . .”¹⁶ For him, the mind is not to be located in any material part of the body nor on an inaccessible plane of existence. Instead, cognition (and with it actions of feeling, perceiving, desiring, conceptualizing, et

¹⁵ Fuchs, *In Defence of Human Being: Foundational Questions of an Embodied Anthropology*, 4, 2021

¹⁶ Glock, “Minds, Brains, and Capacities: Situated Cognition and Neo-Aristotelianism,” 2, 2020



cetera) takes place in the whole flesh and blood of the animal that operates in its physical and social surroundings.¹⁷ A formal bridge between acknowledging what is being cognised from the outside world, in accordance with whatever happens in our internal organs, relies on a relationship joining physical spaces (the world outside our bodies and the structures inside our bodies) with the formal, active cognising that consists in actualising one's potential to understand, feel, desire, et cetera. However, Glock's approach begins with negation. He dismisses the mind as one bona fide existing thing. He comes up instead with "the capacity approach." He explains: "whether a subject has mental properties depends on what she is capable of doing."¹⁸ Thus, to have a mind is to possess a diversity of cognitive abilities.

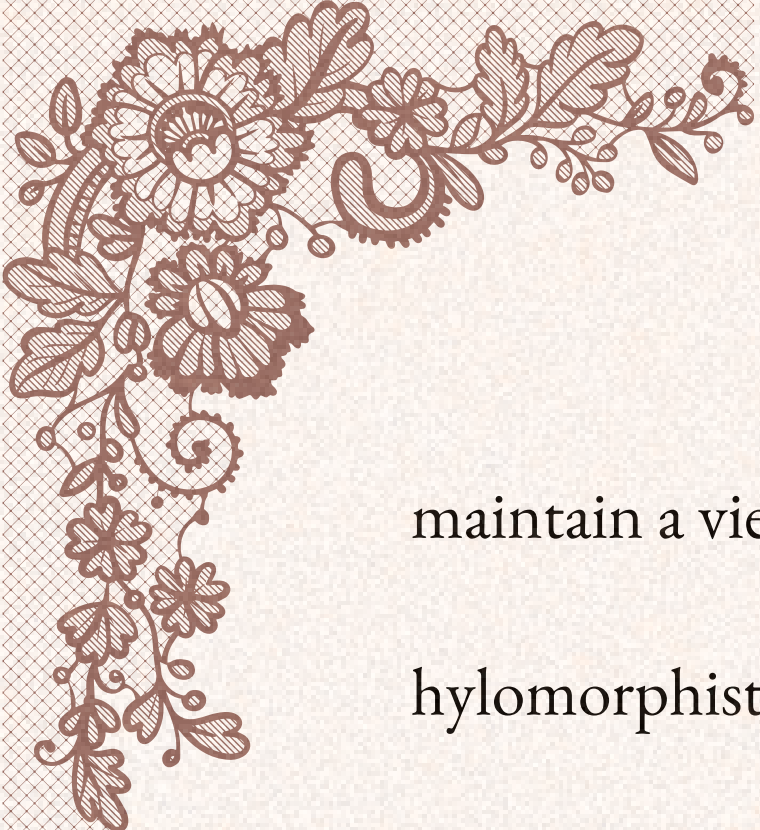
However, it is possible to attribute the same objection against dualism to this capacity approach. The "mind" still lacks a cohesive definition. We are only told what it is not, with the addition of a list of things that it is capable of. Bernard Williams, a moral philosopher, upholds another point of opposition directed the other way, interpreting hylomorphism instead to be "just a polite form of materialism."¹⁹ Thus, the hylomorphist is presented with two choices for productive discourse surrounding a solution to the mind-body problem. It is possible either to (A) bite the bullet and double down with an understanding like Glock has supported, re-constructing the "mind" to be a power or potential, not a de re existence.²⁰ This would predominantly sustain negative claims about what the mind could be (though it is possible to

¹⁷ Glock, "Minds, Brains, and Capacities," 2, 2020.

¹⁸ Glock, "Minds, Brains, and Capacities," 3-4, 2020

¹⁹ Williams and Burnyeat, "Hylomorphism," 224, 2009

²⁰ Glock, "Minds, Brains, and Capacities," 3, 2020



maintain a view of the mind that is relational according to capacities). The other choice for the hylomorphist is (B) positive statements can be made, defining the “mind” through a hylomorphic lens if specific embodied cognition theories are held.

Psychologist Grant Gillett puts forth a strong argument for neo-Aristotelian cognitive philosophy, maintaining position (B.) He outlines a sequence that Aristotle’s hylomorphism follows:

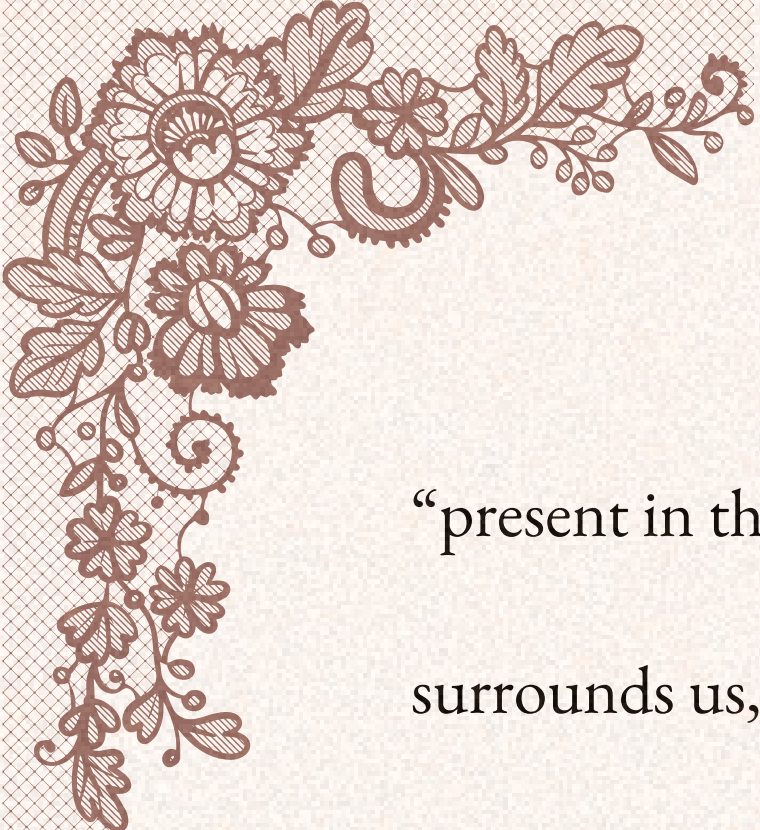
1. Aristotle affirms an ontology of form and matter constituting substances together and inseparably.
2. Aristotle acknowledges a unity of the mind that can be categorised through different components. This is done by analogy through the matter of wax as a vehicle for a form (its seal).²¹
3. This is linked to an integrated natural system, not purely physical mechanisms; Aristotle analyses integrated function as a feature of the whole living body.²²

If this progression of premises is agreed upon, it follows naturally that a hylomorphic notion of the mind can fall into a theory of cognition that is embodied, embedded and enacted.²³ In this context, “enacted” refers to our cognition attuning to the objects and features

²¹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 2.12, 2018

²² Gillett, *From Aristotle to Cognitive Neuroscience*, pp. 16-17, 2018

²³ Wallace, “Does Embodied Cognition Support a Hylomorphic View of the Soul?” 2.2, 2022



“present in the immediate environment.”²⁴ In our cognition, with the environment that surrounds us, lies “action-based” systems that enable “goal-directed” motion.²⁵ Once enactivism is accepted, it can be understood that cognition is shaped by the types of bodily agents that we are.²⁶ By being creatures within a spatial environment, it is through our own presence within the space that we perceive things, thus we are “embodied” in our cognition. The “embedding” then occurs from the cognition of ourselves as bodies being involved in a larger environment. To simplify, it is natural to identify sensation as a “complex action” given the changes in our organs, nervous system, and brain. These physical things all contribute to conscious, sensitive action, rather than being “merely extrinsic to it.”²⁷ The nuance that hylomorphism offers to the embodied cognition theories that do not include it consists of an acceptance of form.

The crux of this appeal leaks into the metaphysics of the environment that an embodiment proponent puts forth. In this essay, a repeatedly faced idea is one of intuitive attitudes toward phenomenal experience. Though there are multiple intuitions, I will look briefly at one intuition, namely seeing organisation in the structures of embodied experience. To be a living, embodied being (as opposed to a potential embodied being) entails obtaining powers of general living things (growth, reproduction, nutrition, etc.) and sensation.²⁸ The

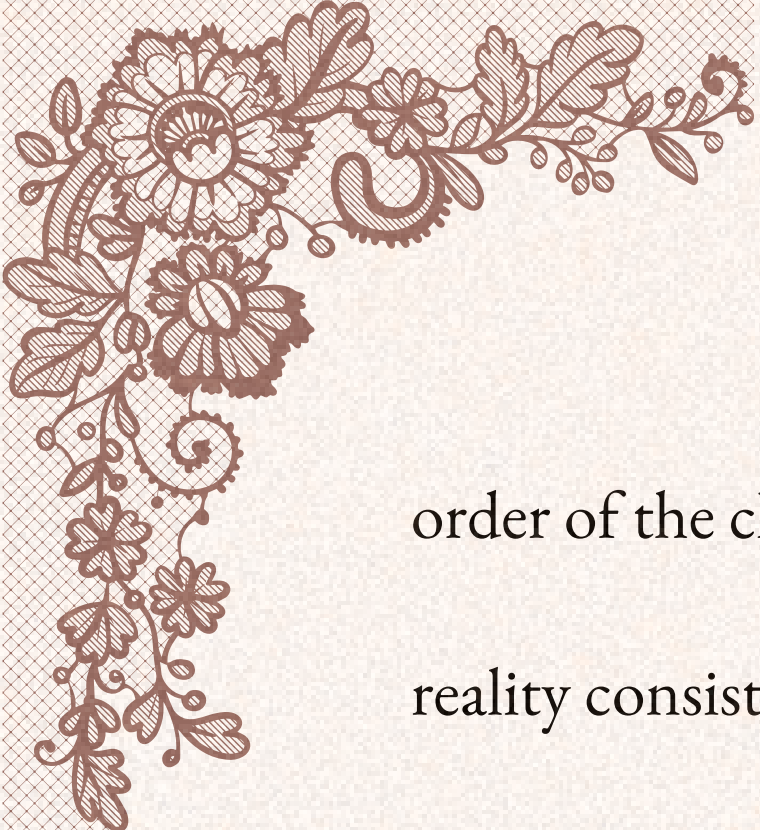
²⁴ Ward, Stapleton, and Paglieri, “Es are Good Cognition as Enacted, Embodied, Embedded, Affective and Extended,” 3, 2012

²⁵ Wallace, “Does Embodied Cognition Support a Hylomorphic View of the Soul?” 2.2, 2022

²⁶ Ward, Stapleton, and Paglieri, “Es are Good Cognition as Enacted, Embodied, Embedded, Affective and Extended,” 12, 2012

²⁷ George and Lee, “Human Beings are Animals,” 11, 2007

²⁸ Madden, *Mind, Matter, and Nature*, 255, 2013

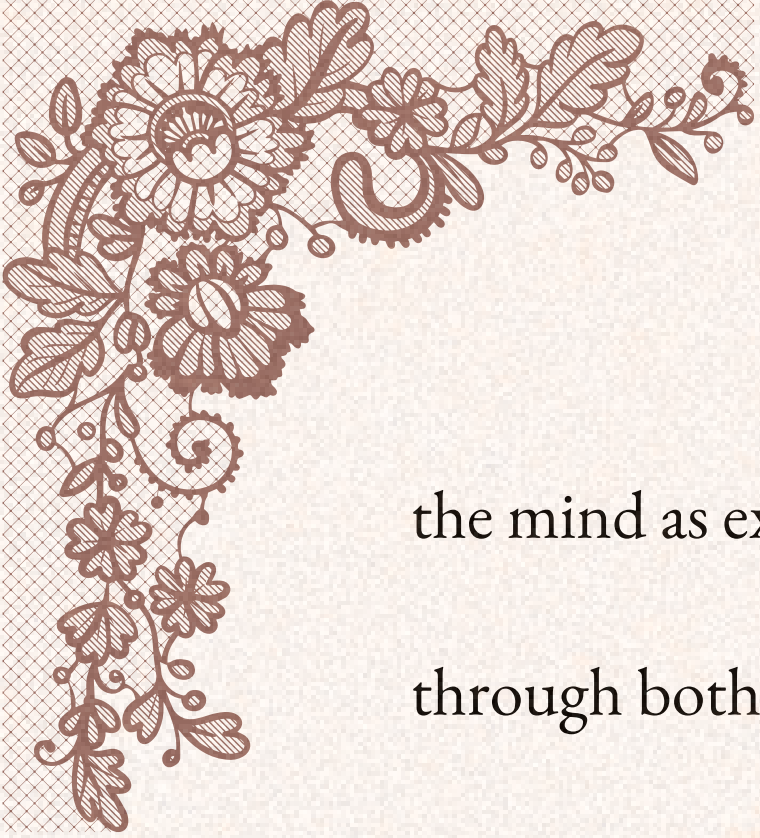


order of the changes that take place in the embodied being to make these different processes a reality consist of form, not matter. In prime matter (without form) we find all of the potentiality for something like sensation, with the actuality living in whatever form that the matter will take. Jaworski demonstrates this in an example of one embodied human being squashed. If we imagine a human being in a bag and that same bag being squashed by lethally abounding weight, the contents of the bag would undergo a change. All of the physical materials in the bag start to finish have remained the same, yet prior to the squashing there was a human being, and after there is not. The difference is accounted for by the destruction of the way that the physical materials in the bag were *structured*. The human's capacity to think and feel depended on that structure.²⁹ Thus, there exists ontological, explanatory principles that underlie what something's abilities are and what something is. With an embodied understanding like this, in response to Williams' criticism, Jaworski is convincing in asserting that hylomorphism is incompatible with physicalism. The real difference is seen in hylomorphism's commitment to structures, including both biological and psychological, that are not explained by physics.³⁰

To conclude, a hylomorphic, embodied understanding of the mind avoids the mind-body problem that asks whether our minds exist physically. After considering excesses of focus on form in dualist solutions of the problem, and excesses of focus on matter in physicalist solutions, hylomorphism offers a mediating alternative. The solution occurs in re-interpreting

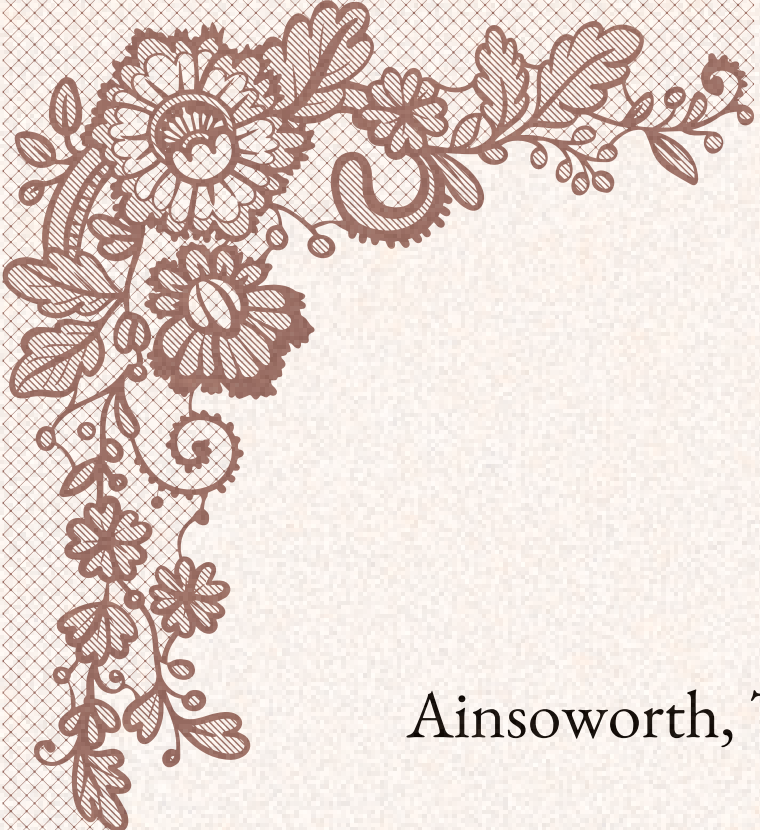
²⁹ Jaworski, *Structure and the Metaphysics of the Mind*, 314-315, 2016

³⁰ Jaworski, *Structure and the Metaphysics of the Mind*, 270, 2016



the mind as existing both in form through the structure by which we cognise and in matter
through both our internal biological process along with our environment.





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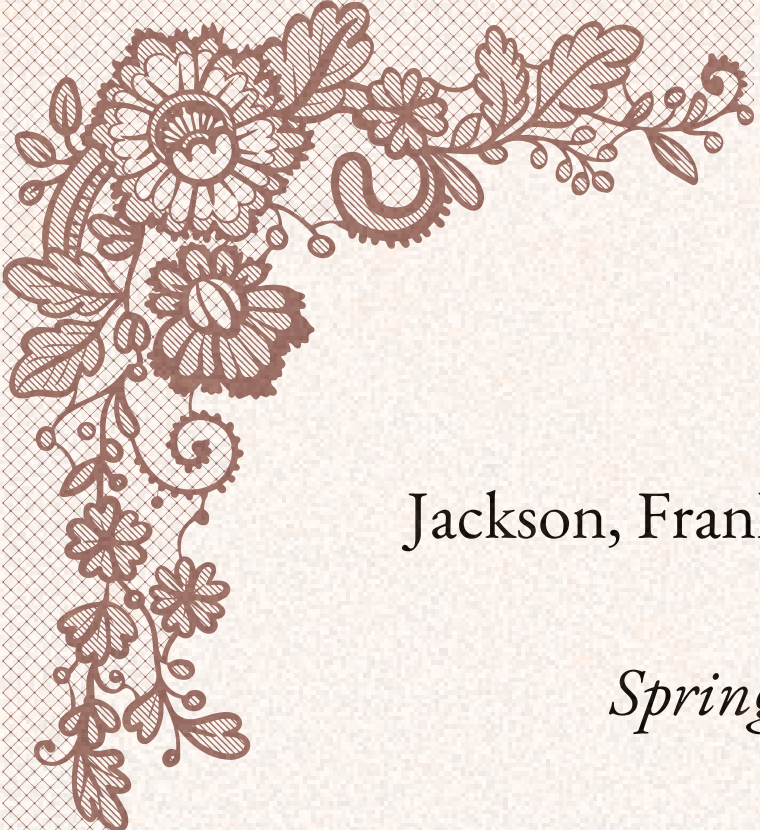
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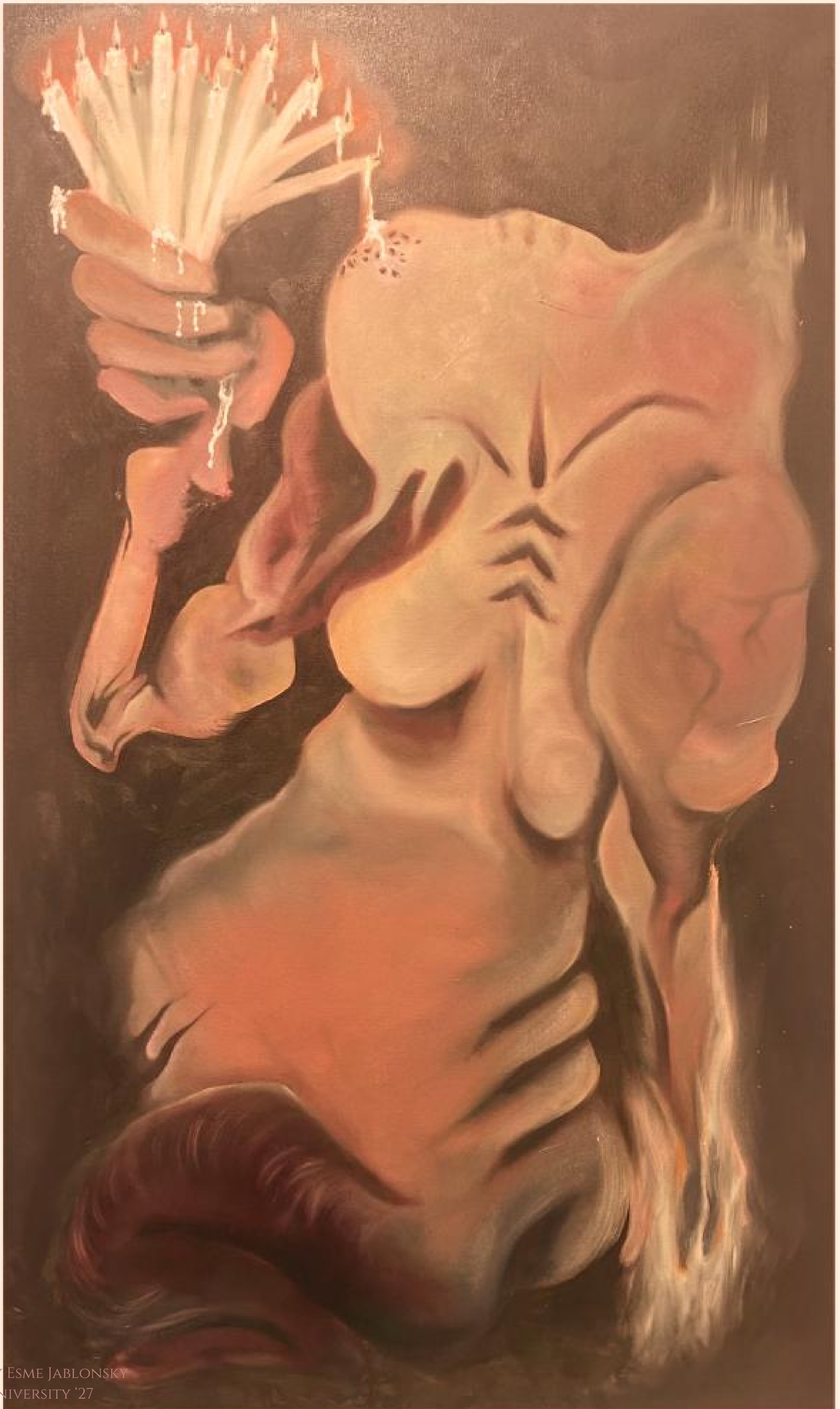
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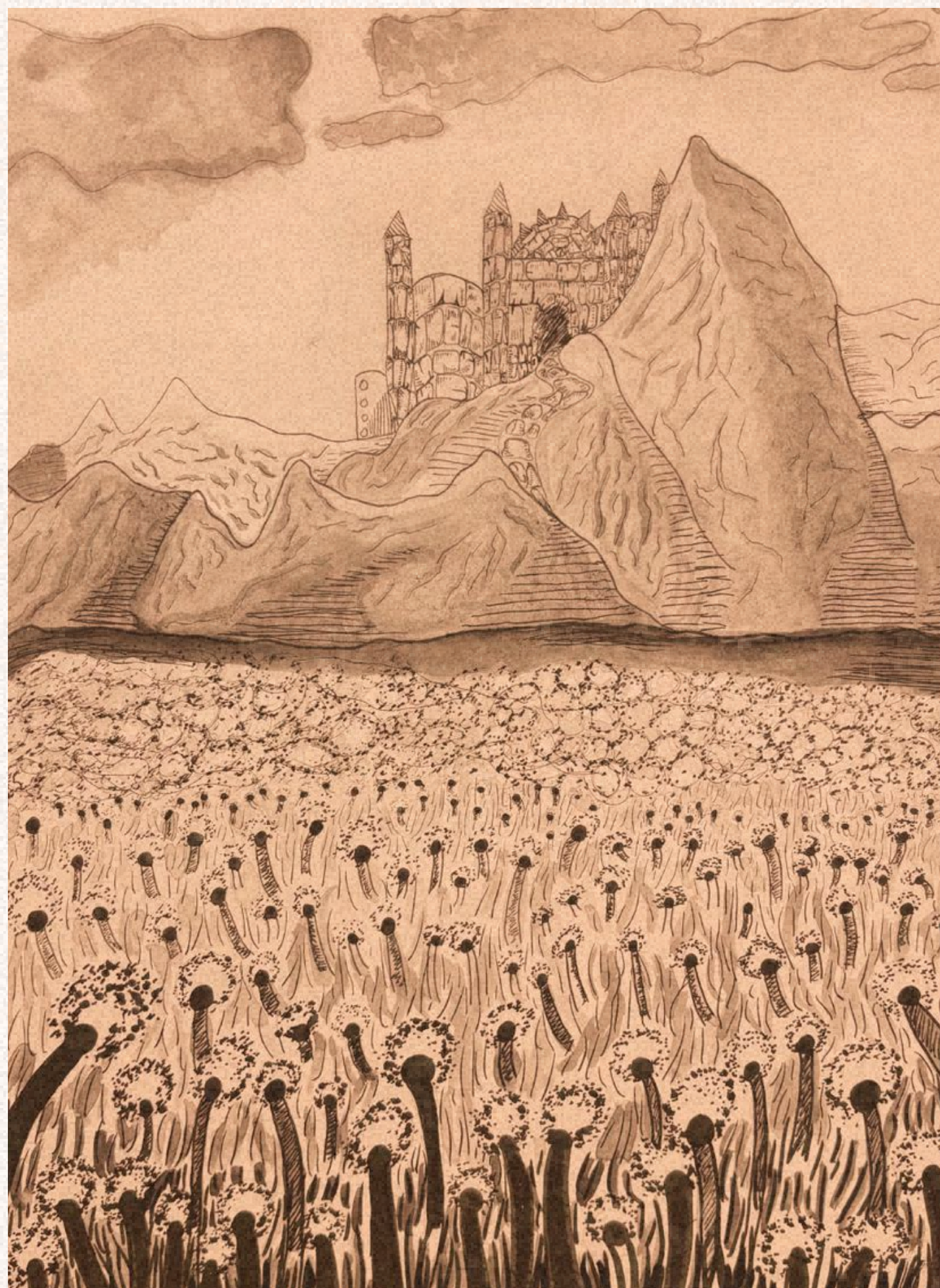
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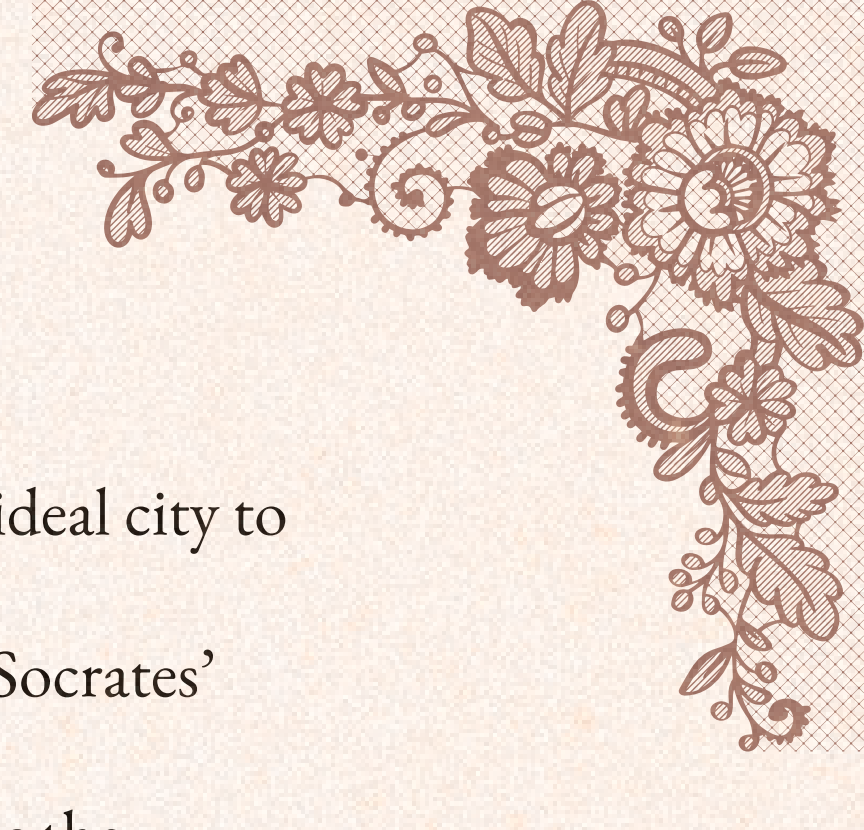
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Social, Political, and Intellectual
Parallels in Plato's Republic
Brandon Hubbard
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
Syracuse University
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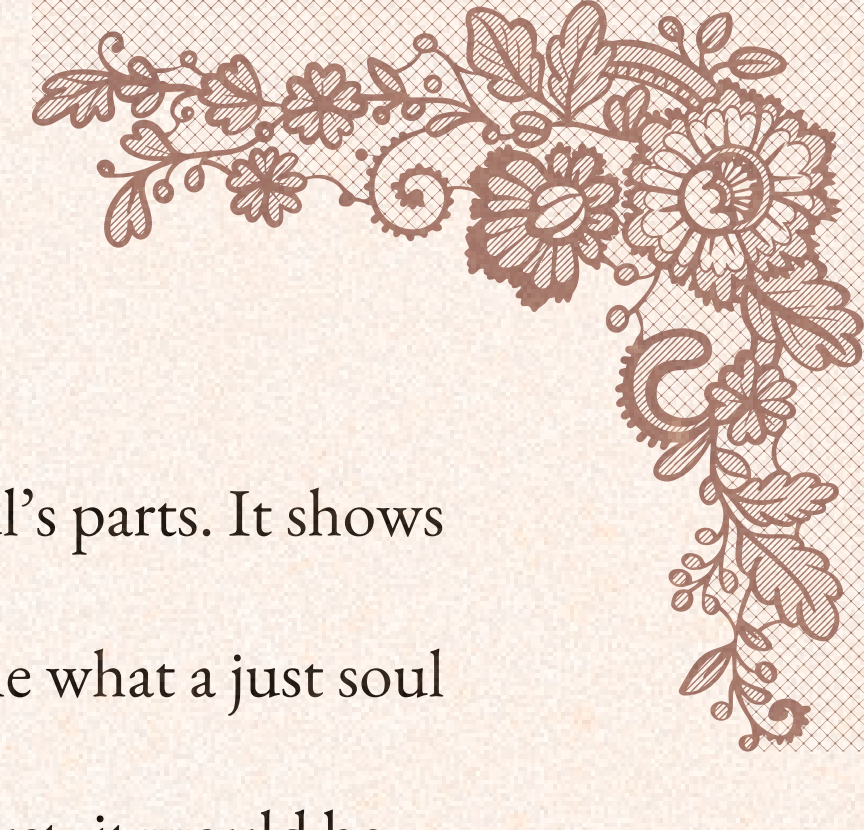
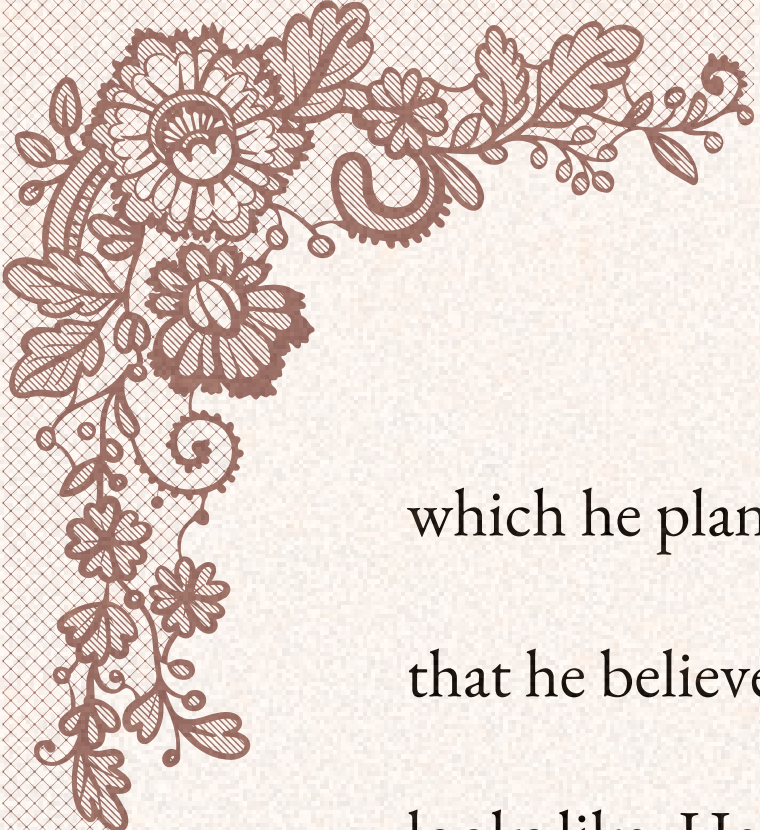
In Plato's *Republic*, the main character, Socrates, imagines and describes the ideal city to discover the qualities of justice within the soul. Socrates does this by way of analogy. Socrates' description of the just city places the philosopher kings as its rulers, and the intellect as the corresponding ruler over the individual soul's parts. The extent to which the psychological side of the analogy parallels the political and social structuring of the city can at times be unclear. Within *The Republic*, there exists an especially perplexing passage to allegorize. This is Socrates' recommendation of creating a program of eugenics and a breeding lottery for the guardian class. The existence of these unusually strange and seemingly uniquely political or social features creates difficulty for arriving at a parallel for the individual soul. Regardless of this perceived complexity, this paper contends that the programs Socrates sets up for the guardian class, which promote eugenics and the regulation of breeding habits, have parallel psychological realities, which Socrates intends the reader to deduce and self-integrate.

Socrates begins his construction of the City-Soul analogy in Book II of *The Republic*. Speaking with Glaucon, he remarks, "...there is a justice of one man, we say, and, I suppose, also of an entire city...is not the city larger than the man?...Then, perhaps, there would be more justice in the larger object and more easy to apprehend."¹ Continuing, he suggests, "let us first look for its quality in states, and then only examine it also in the individual, looking for the likeness of the greater in the form of the less."² By formulating and discovering the origins of the just state, Socrates believes he and his interlocutors will carry the analogy to find justice's likeness in the soul. And so, Socrates begins by imagining the form of the city.

Socrates's implementation of the City-Soul analogy in Book IV helps to discover the extent to

¹ Plato, *Republic*, 368e, (2001).

² Plato, *Republic*, 369e, (2001).

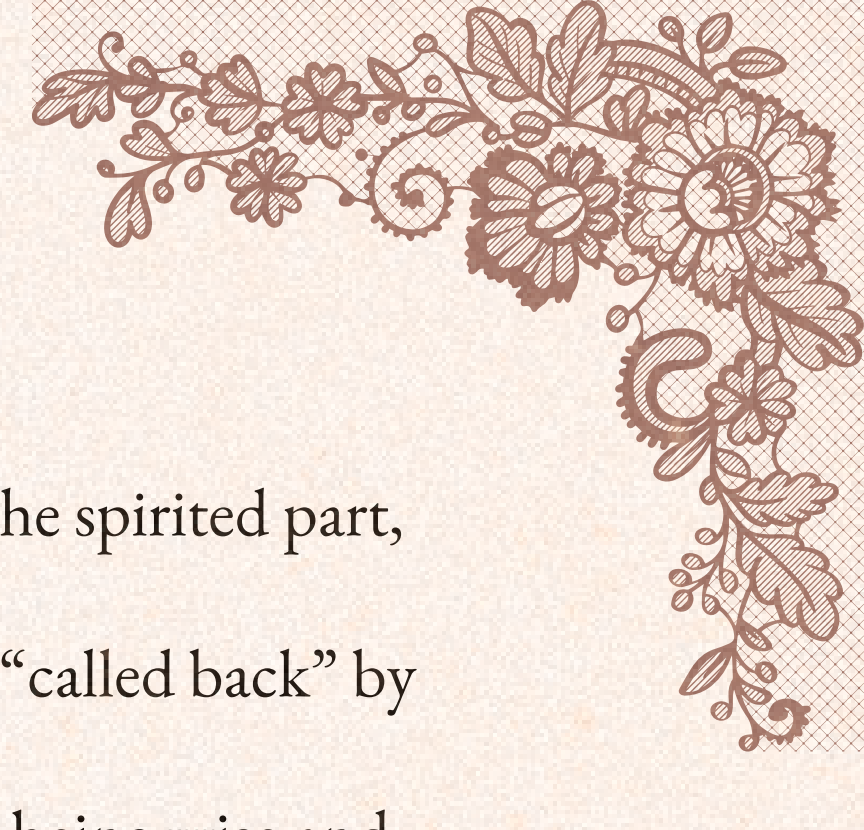
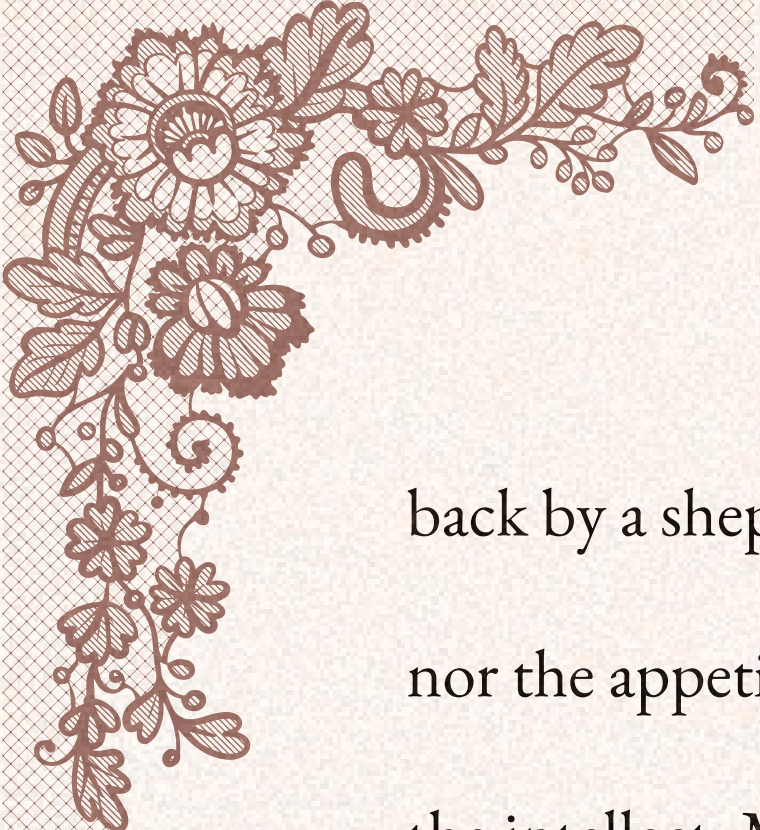


which he planned to extend the political and social interworking of his city to the soul's parts. It shows that he believed that by creating the city, one could extrapolate from that to determine what a just soul looks like. He figured that by constructing a larger system and finding what made it just, it would be easier to find what had made that city good. Supposing the larger will allow his interlocutors and he to deduce the causes of justice in the smaller, he states, "What, then, we thought we saw there, we must refer back to the individual and, if it is confirmed, all will be well. But if something different manifests itself in the individual, we will return again."³ Socrates argues that what one finds in the city will inform us about the individual. The ending remark, "...if something different manifests in the individual, we will return again..." may refer to the differences found in the individual's justice requiring Socrates to return to correct the view of the just society, but it could be argued that it too, affects the ability for the city to reflect the justice of the individual. However, Socrates makes it explicit that the form of justice found in the city will be found in the soul when he states, "Then a just man too will not differ at all from a just city in respect of the very form of justice."⁴ So, at the very least, one can see that Socrates believes the form of the city will mimic the Soul, or visa versa.

Book IV is crucial for understanding Socrates' analogy because it gives the reader the formulation of the properly ordered soul. In Socrates' discussion regarding the roles and distinctions of the parts of the soul, he sets up the rational part as the ruler over the appetitive and spirited parts. These two "lesser parts" act similarly to the lower classes in the city, in that they heed the orders of the rulers and act as their allies. He argues the spirited part, "...in noble souls, it endures and wins the victory and will not let go until either it achieves its purpose, or death ends all, or, as a dog is called

³ Plato, *Republic*, 434c-d, (2001).

⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 435a-b, (2001).



back by a shepherd, it is called back by the reason within and calmed.”⁵ It is not that the spirited part, nor the appetitive, is inherently bad, but they must be able to be quelled, directed, or “called back” by the intellect. Moreover, he states that the role of ruling belongs to the rational part “...being wise and exercising forethought on behalf of the entire soul,” and the spirited part “...to be subject to this and its ally.”⁶ The rational part calculates and rules over, controlling the tripartite system as its head. The spirited part acts as the ally of the rational part, rising to give courage. And the appetitive part informs the individual of the desires, such as to eat, drink, and procreate. These correspond with classes in the city, the rational part reflects the guardian/ philosopher king class, the spirited with the auxiliaries, and the appetitive with the workers. All parts of the soul serve a purpose, but they ought to only act within their intended arena.

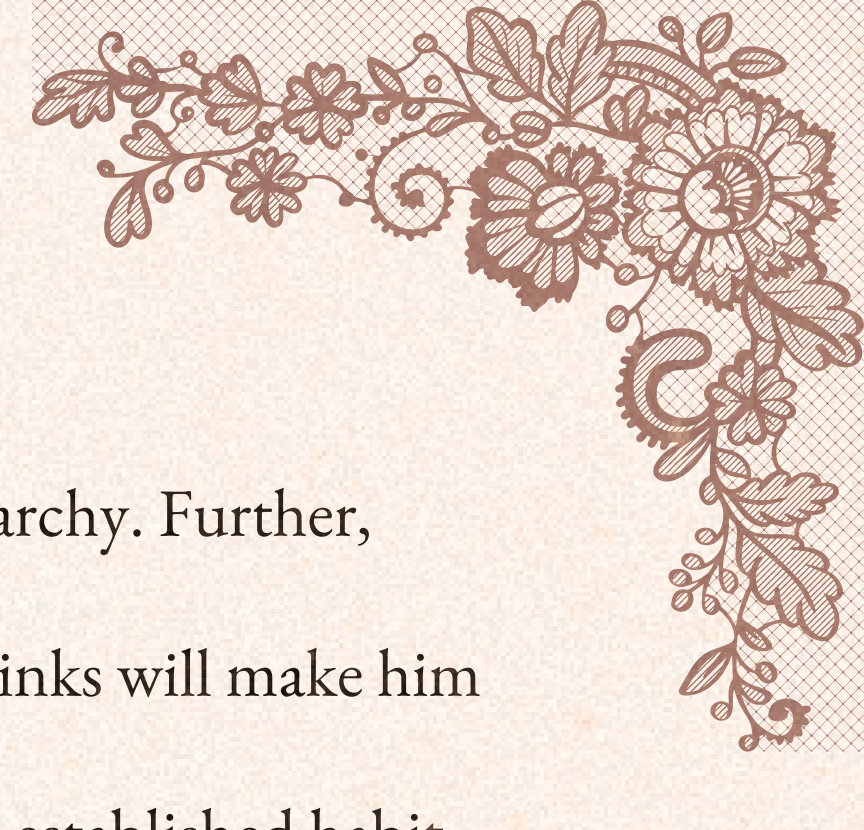
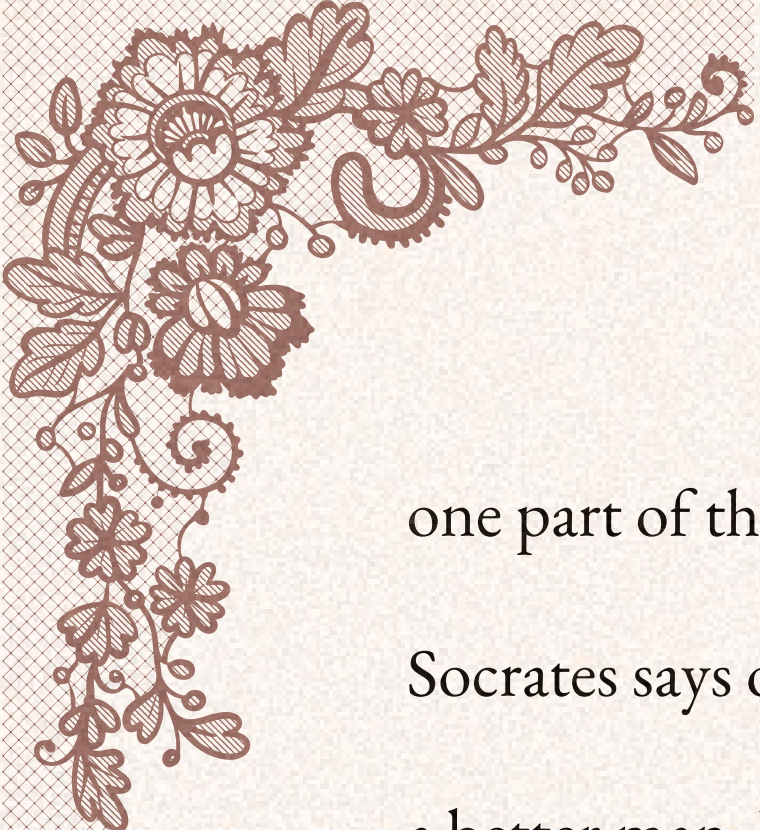
This explains why Socrates argues that, “...justice is indeed something of this kind, yet not in regard to the doing of one’s own business externally, but with regard to that which is within and in the true sense concerns one’s self, and the things of one’s self.”⁷ Socrates explains how the city’s justice emanates from everyone “minding their own business” or doing that which accords to their nature. The principle of doing only that which accords with one’s nature in both the soul and the city is necessary for one to comprehend the danger Socrates attempts to warn against. Socrates explains his idea of a “war within oneself.” Socrates posits that injustice arises from the civil war of the three parts of the soul, and a failure to recognize the other parts’ role as “slaves” to the ruling part.⁸ Socrates clearly explains that what it means to war within one’s soul is to have different parts of the soul act outside their purpose and place. Injustice within the soul is a product of a misstep or a ‘coup d’état’ of

⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 440d, (2001).

⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 441e, (2001).

⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 443d, (2001).

⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 444b, (2001).



one part of the soul over the rest, creating disorder or mis-ordering of the proper hierarchy. Further, Socrates says of the just man, “He will gladly take part in and enjoy those which he thinks will make him a better man, but in public and private life he will shun those that may overthrow the established habit of his soul.”⁹ Here, it is clear Socrates is reiterating that the just man must disallow the lower to usurp control over the higher within the soul; to do otherwise would be tantamount to allowing chaos or civil war.

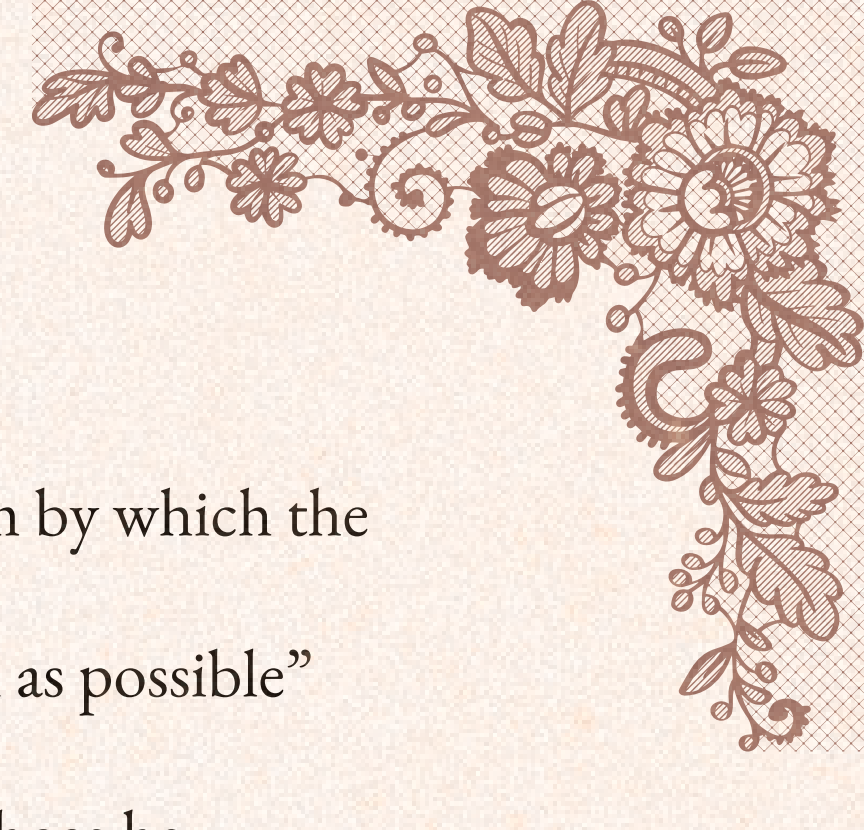
In Book VIII, Socrates explains what he believes to be the origins of the degeneration of a just city. This begins by children being bred out of due season and bred outside of the perfect number, destroying the harmony that had existed within the guardian class.¹⁰ Further, the races of metal which Socrates mentions in his ‘noble lie’ intermix and “beget war and enmity wherever they arise.”¹¹ This suggests that Socrates is explaining how, once the soul has confused the intellect, appetitive, and spirited parts of the soul, there exists the previously mentioned “war within oneself.” The intermarriage of the parts of the soul, instead of the all important hierarchy for Socrates, results in the beginning of degeneration within the soul. The city, giving way to the spirited part, caring more for honor, degenerates into an oligarchy. Similarly, when the spirited part, working as the ruler, rather than the ally of the intellect, begets injustice and disarray within the soul. The city, disregarding the regulation of relations between classes, and the soul, confusing the roles between parts, begets ruin for them both.

To remedy this danger, Socrates creates programs to regulate the birthing habits of the guardians. Socrates’ plan to regulate the breeding of the guardian class is mentioned throughout *The*

⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 592a, (2001).

¹⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 546, (2001).

¹¹ Plato, *Republic*, 547a, (2001).



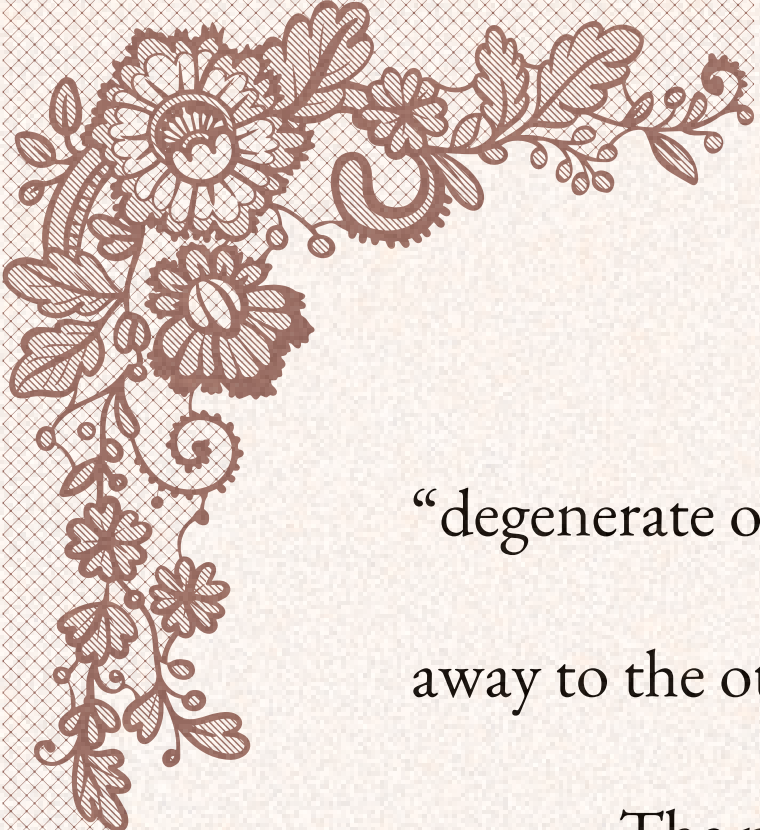
Republic, but most explicitly in Book V., he suggests that there should exist a program by which the “best” is to breed with the “best.” The best of the guardians are to procreate as “often as possible” and the ordinary as little as possible.¹² He also condemns the intermarriage between those he designates as the “ordinary” and “extraordinary,” and makes it forbidden. He proposes, too, a secretive, rigged breeding lottery where the “unlucky” amongst the classes perceive their inability to procreate as due to misfortune rather than an injustice.¹³ This is how the founders are able to prop up this system and create a way to promote proper regulation of the number as well as the quality of births. The guardians who excel in war or elsewhere are given extra breeding privileges. The offspring are taken to be raised by the community, so that no one claims part of their community as less than kin. And any “degenerative offspring” (the result of ‘intermixed’ breeding) born in Socrates’ system will be forced to be “sent away to other classes.”¹⁴ As mentioned previously, Socrates cares to promote a proper ordering of the classes, and for him, this requires a system that abolishes private family life and promotes a rigged breeding program to beget the best offspring from the guardian class.

Supposing that Socrates intends one to discover something about the soul from his description of the city, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the political structuring within classes relates to the soul. If, then, the political structuring of the philosopher kings’ class can tell the reader more about the soul, what, then, can the regulation of their class’s breeding habits mean for the individual? How can the soul have a selective breeding program? What would it mean for the soul to keep a eugenics program, where the “best” only breed with the “best?” What does it mean for the

¹² Plato, *Republic*, 459d, (2001).

¹³ Plato, *Republic*, 460a, (2001).

¹⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 423c, (2001).



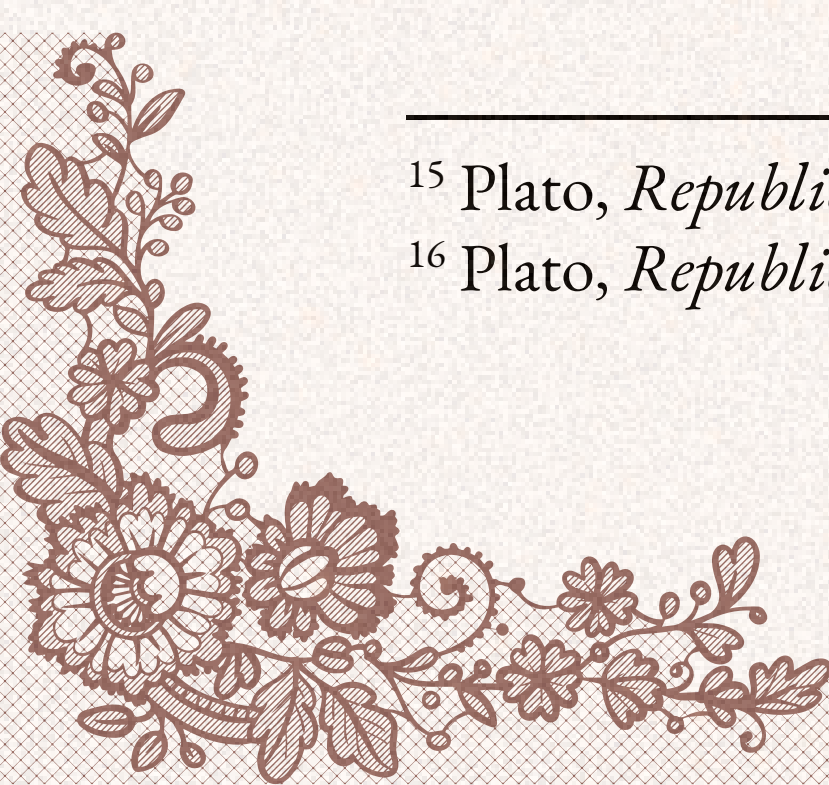
“degenerate offspring” of the intellect being “born” and the requirement for said offspring to be “sent away to the other classes?”¹⁵

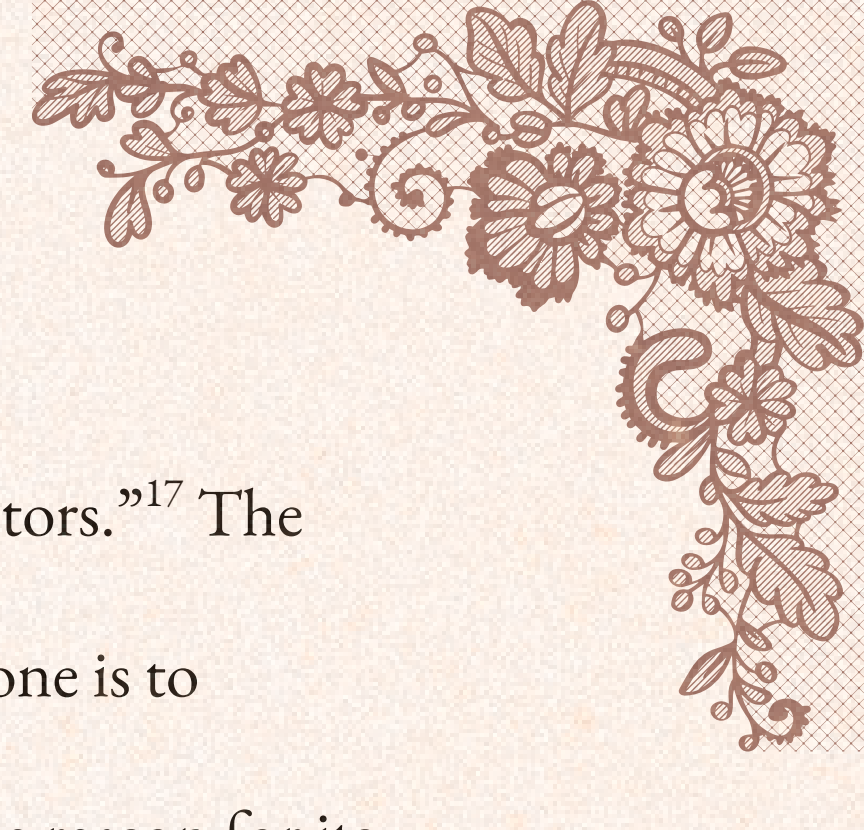
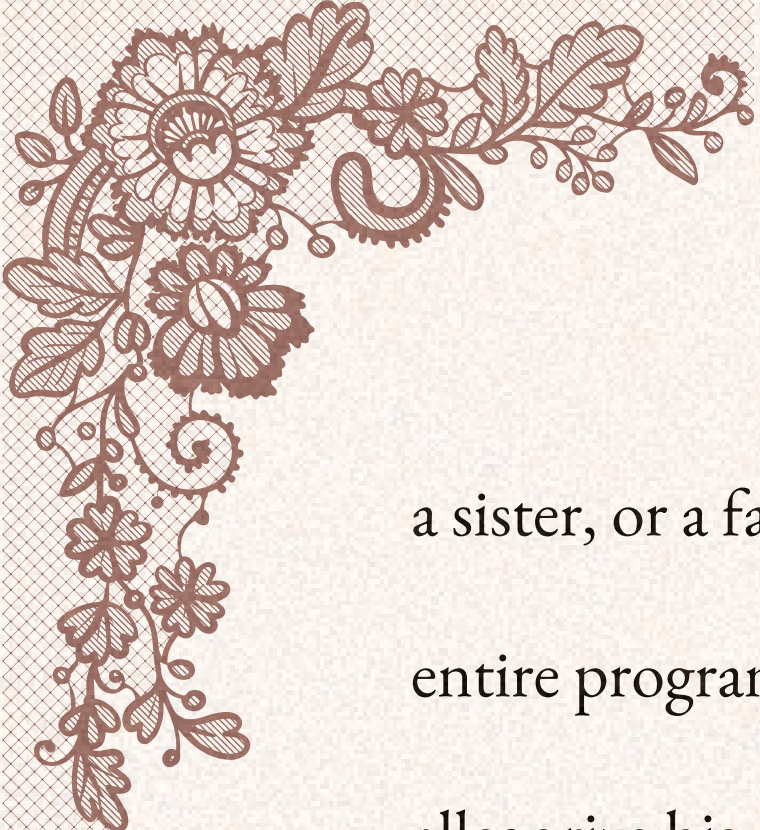
The proposed reading is that Socrates is suggesting that there ought to be a deliberative and self-conscious act within oneself to not confuse and “intermix” the parts of the soul’s functions. The reading would make citizens of Kallipolis, motions of the soul, or mental states. Socrates is concerned with an “intermixture” of the motions within the appetitive or spirited part, being either mixed up with the intellect or being confused for a motion within the intellect. This would explain the degeneration of the city, which Socrates worries about in Book VIII when describing different constitutions of cities.

Presuming a singular intellect resides within the soul, how can one properly draw an analogy of the breeding lottery? The text indicates that Socrates intends to have us “cast away” the intermixture of the parts of the soul, that is, when they are not acting within their rightful role. The sending of the “degenerative offspring” to the other classes may be when one corrects oneself by recognizing that the spirited or appetitive part is rising up to take the rightful place of the intellect, and therefore forces it “back down.” But how can the intellect, within itself, be concerned with that which is “bred?” To properly address this question, it requires understanding why Socrates says he is so concerned with building such a program. Socrates believes that the more things those in the city collectively claim as “their own,” the more just it will be.¹⁶ By setting up this breeding lottery, Socrates hopes to collectivize the family so that no one sees someone as less than their own kin. Within the guardian class, Socrates is trying to construct a method so that they greet everyone as a “...brother, or

¹⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 423c, (2001).

¹⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 461c, (2001).

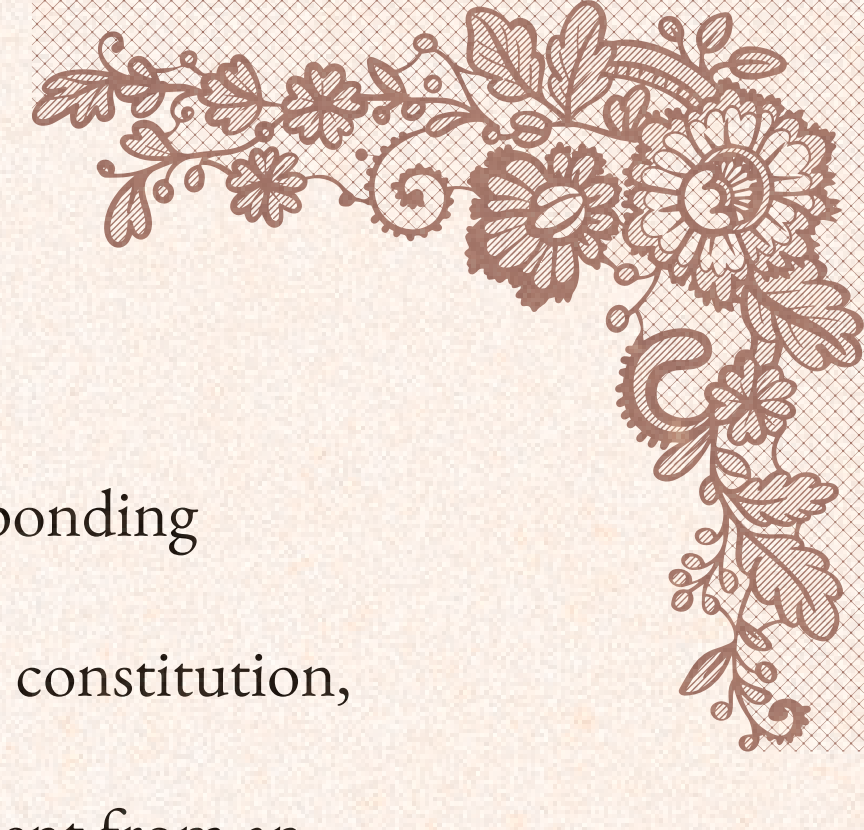
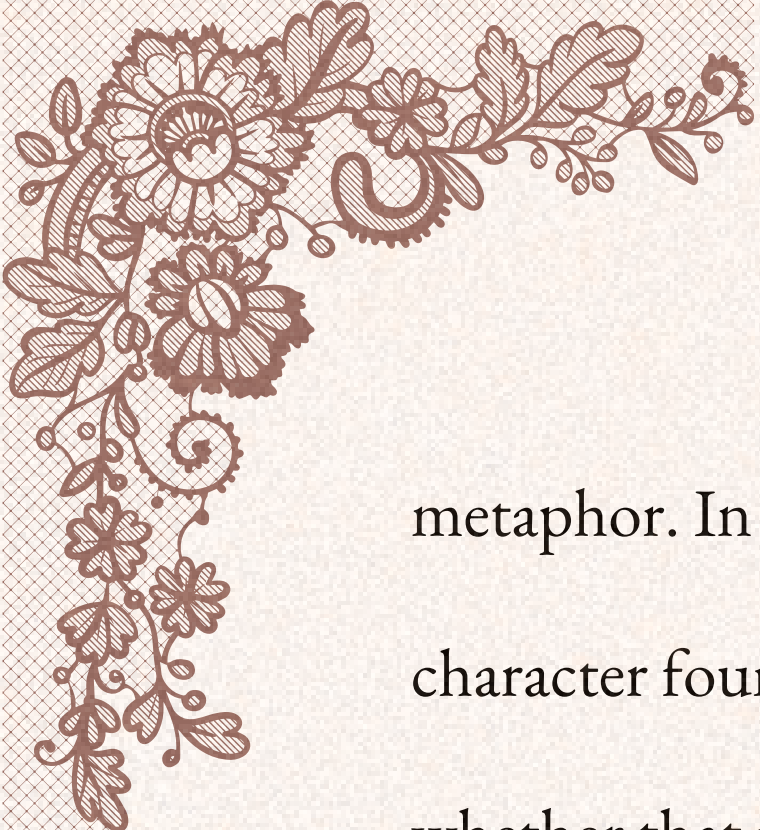




a sister, or a father, or a mother, or a son, or a daughter, or their descendants, or ancestors.”¹⁷ The entire program is to further the unity and harmony Socrates is so concerned with. If one is to allegorize his eugenics program to the soul, it cannot be without a recognition that the reason for its construction is to make the city more whole. Therefore, to extend the allegory, it would seem as though Plato wants the reader not to see any part of the soul as an “outsider” or “foreigner.” Not every political step of the breeding process can be mirrored in the soul, but one can parallel the wider-arching goal Socrates is attempting to set up. The soul is one, with three distinct parts. However, despite the ruling power rightfully belonging to the intellect or rational part, the harmony requires all three parts to be viewed as one. Socrates seems to be mostly concerned with harmony and unity. The soul cannot be properly ruled when the parts are in disarray. Socrates’ construction of the breeding program may therefore be understood as keeping the “best” with the “best” and “...ordinary with the ordinary,” or keeping the rational part’s motions together and acting over the others, and the appetitive and spirited parts’ motions within themselves. As well as remembering that all parts serve a function within one’s soul, so although one is “lesser” or “higher,” that does not mean to view any part as outside of one’s soul and to cast it off. The appetitive and spirited parts work to properly inform the rational part. The worries or concerns of any part must be addressed or acknowledged—although the happiness or satiation of one part may have to be disregarded for the whole—as though your kin came to you with a concern or worry.

The issue with this breeding program, having an analogy to being drawn for the soul, is whether that is truly Socrates’ or Plato’s intention. There seems to be evidence that it is, in fact, their intention. Throughout *The Republic*, Socrates constantly refers to such an analogy by using a sexual

¹⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 463c, (2001).



metaphor. In Book VIII, Socrates describes the constitutions of states and the corresponding character found in individual men. He imagines the causes for the changes in a state's constitution, whether that fall be from a just state's constitution (i.e., aristocracy), or a further descent from an already imperfect constitution. While the oligarchic man is already imperfect, the descent from oligarchy to democracy is important for deducing a psychological reality for Socrates' concerns over breeding habits. He describes the oligarchic man as one who is concerned only with fulfilling the desires of money-making, and those which benefit him by satisfying, whilst forsaking all other desires as unnecessary.¹⁸ The democratic man, on the other hand, is strictly aroused by total license. He picks the regime of democracy because it allows him to do as he pleases, even allowing him to choose whether to rule or not.¹⁹ He concerns himself with satiating his unnecessary desires.²⁰ His descent from oligarchy is due to his inability to control his appetites. Socrates describes the fall into oligarchy, and may be suggesting a continuation of the breeding analogy.²¹ He says, "Sometimes, again, another brood of desires akin to those expelled are stealthily nurtured to take their place, owing to the father's ignorance of true education, and wax numerous and strong...Yes, that is not the way of it...and they tug and pull back to the same associations and in secret intercourse engender a multitude."²² The word Socrates uses for intercourse is "συγγίγνομαι," which is used in the sentence as a kind of intercourse of company, but also strongly suggests sexual relations. Similarly, the word "ὁμιλία," which denotes intercourse of either a sexual or nonsexual nature, is used in Book IV's description of the soul's parts, when Socrates states, "...the soul of a man within him has a better part and a worse

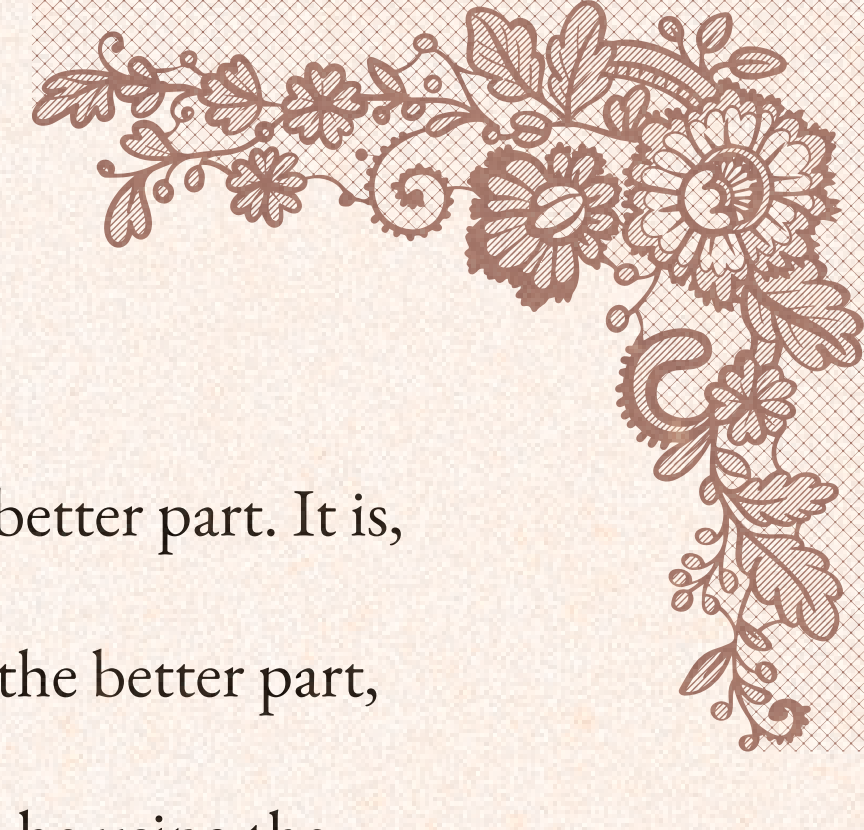
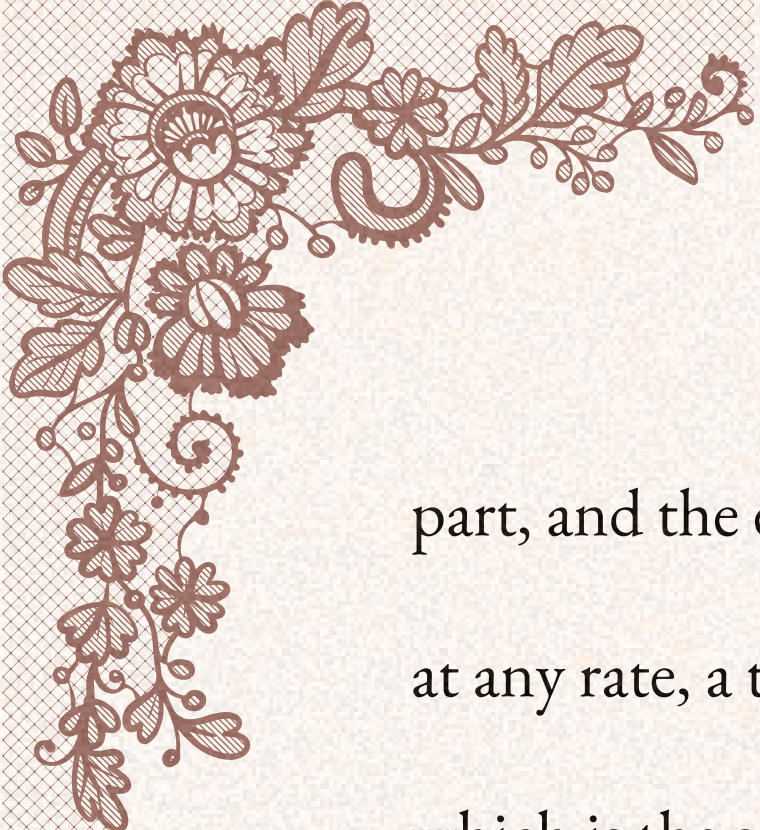
¹⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 557d, (2001).

¹⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 556d, (2001).

²⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 558d, (2001).

²¹ Plato, *Republic*, 560b, (2001).

²² Plato, *Republic*, 560a-b, (2001).



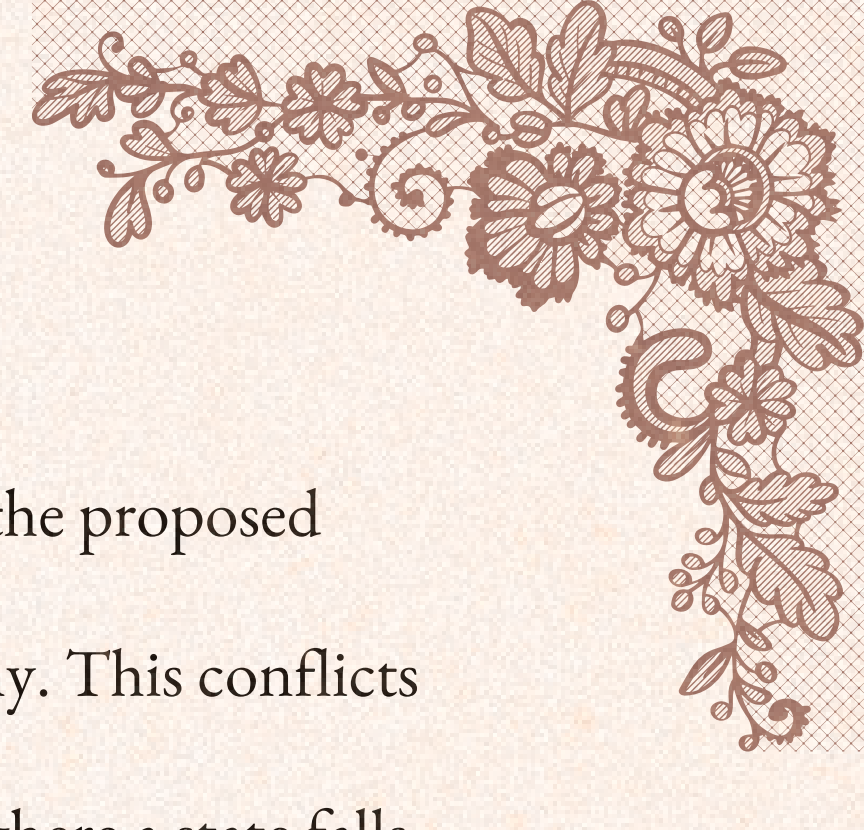
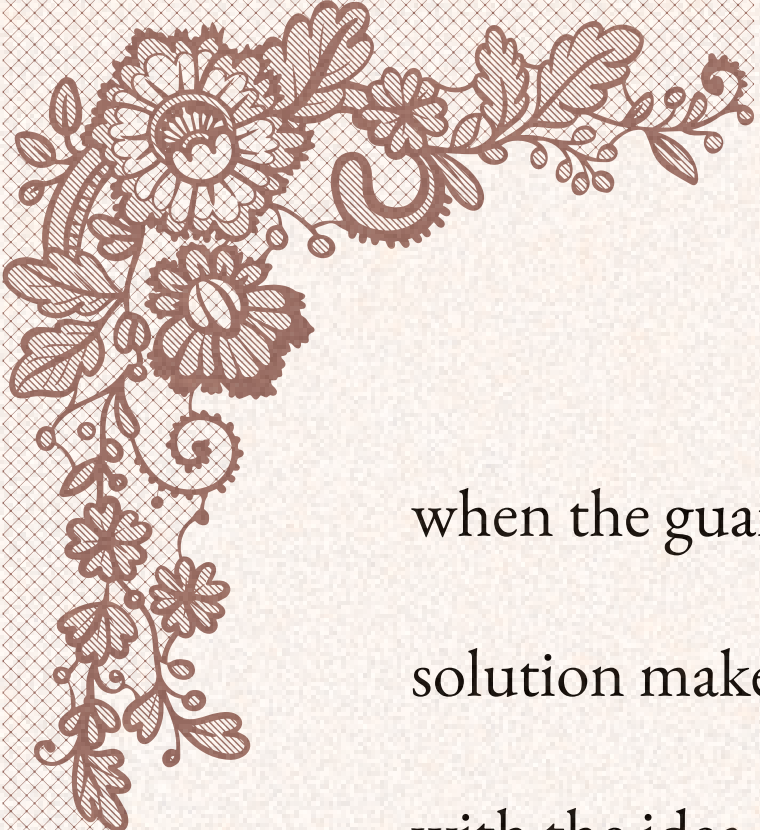
part, and the expression self-mastery means the control of the worse by the naturally better part. It is, at any rate, a term of praise...but when, because of bad breeding or some association, the better part, which is the smaller, is dominated by the multitude of the worse.”²³ Socrates seems to be using the sexual analogy even more explicitly here, this time extending it to the soul. It cannot be neglected to mention that Socrates here states that due to bad breeding, the smaller (the intellect) is being dominated by the worse part. Again, in Book IX, Socrates describes the man who falls into total tyranny. The tyrant, according to Socrates, is the son of the democratic man, who, growing up with so much license, throws off any idea of moderation and shame. The tyrant is inspired, according to Socrates, “in part introduced from outside by evil associations,”²⁴ which uses “ὁμιλία” to render associations. Finally, Socrates brings the metaphor into Book X when he speaks of the prizes of the just men, and the gods’ awareness of said men’s justice. He states, “Is not this the usual outcome for the just also, that towards the end of every action and association and of life as a whole they have honor and bear away the prizes from men?”²⁵ Again, the word he uses for association is “ὁμιλία,” which is what would be expected, assuming he is continuing the analogy. Supposing, then, that Socrates intends to make use of a sexual metaphor, it can be deduced that he is attempting to hint at the proposed solution.

The possible objections to such a solution are twofold: First, the mental states being begotten by different parts of the soul cannot be properly allegorized in the way of Socrates’ eugenics and breeding lottery program, and second, that Socrates does not lend as much support to the view that these programs as suggested. The breeding lottery divorces sexual acts from private family life so that

²³ Plato, *Republic*, 431a, (2001).

²⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 575a, (2001).

²⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 613c, (2001).



when the guardians procreate, they are ignorant of who their kin truly are; however, the proposed solution makes sense of this by alleging that Socrates is concerned with inner-harmony. This conflicts with the idea that the worry about intermixture is to be remedied by recognition of where a state falls (or comes from) within the soul. Therefore, the proposed allegory becomes absurd. To be ignorant and cognizant of the same thing is contradictory. To avoid this absurdity, the hypothetical person objecting may reject the entire proposed solution, or accept one “horn” of the dilemma; either way, there exists an inability to extend the parallel of Kallipolis’ eugenics program and the soul. Not every facet of the political structuring must possess a necessary psychological parallel, but the objection does suggest a limitation on the extent of the parallel, or that possibly, one of, if not both, of the given solutions do not work. Some may also object to the proposed reading, by reference to the fact that “ὁμιλία” and “συγγίγνομαι” do not necessarily need to mean sexual relations but can simply denote an intercourse of company. If, then, Socrates did not intend to deploy sexual metaphor, the idea that the concern for sexual dynamics within the guardian class can be extended to the soul via allegory would be merely speculative or “wishful thinking.”

The proposed dilemma can be easily remedied by acknowledging that Socrates’ eugenics program is to keep “the best with the best” and allow no admixture of lesser with the best. The breeding lottery is infamously rigged.²⁶ For the sake of extending the analogy, it can be admitted that since the soul has no understood concept of the “founders,” the soul cannot keep itself ignorant of its own purposeful enforcement of hierarchy. Therefore, the soul can be understood as recognizing from whence a mental state arrives, whilst also concerning itself with unity between the parts. So, the objection does not require a limitation on the analogy, nor does it adequately prove the two solutions

²⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 459d, (2001).

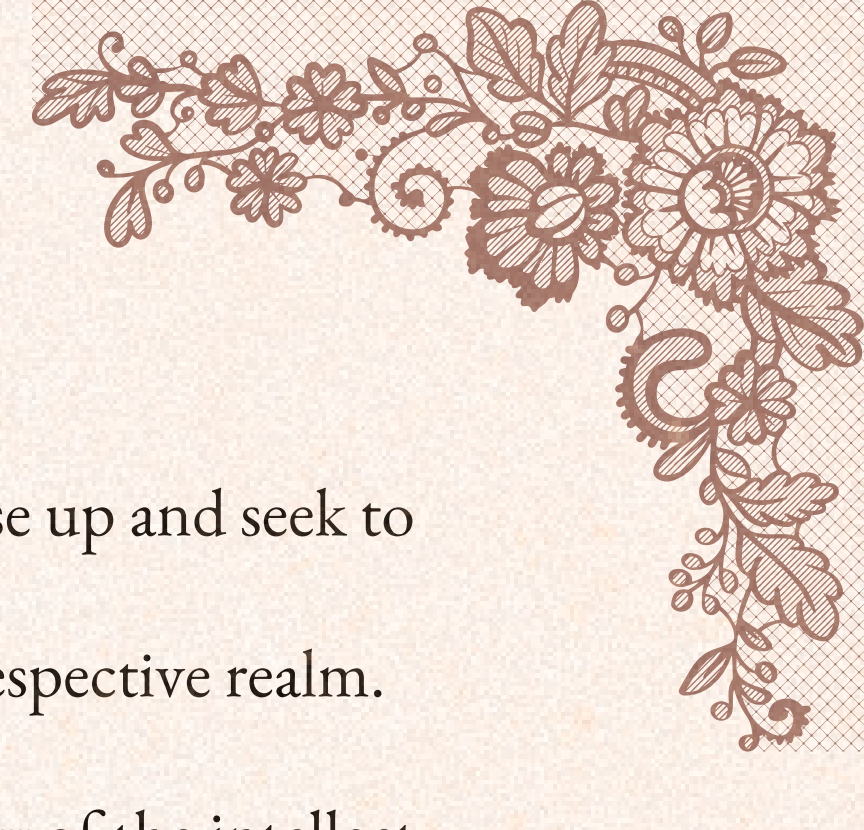
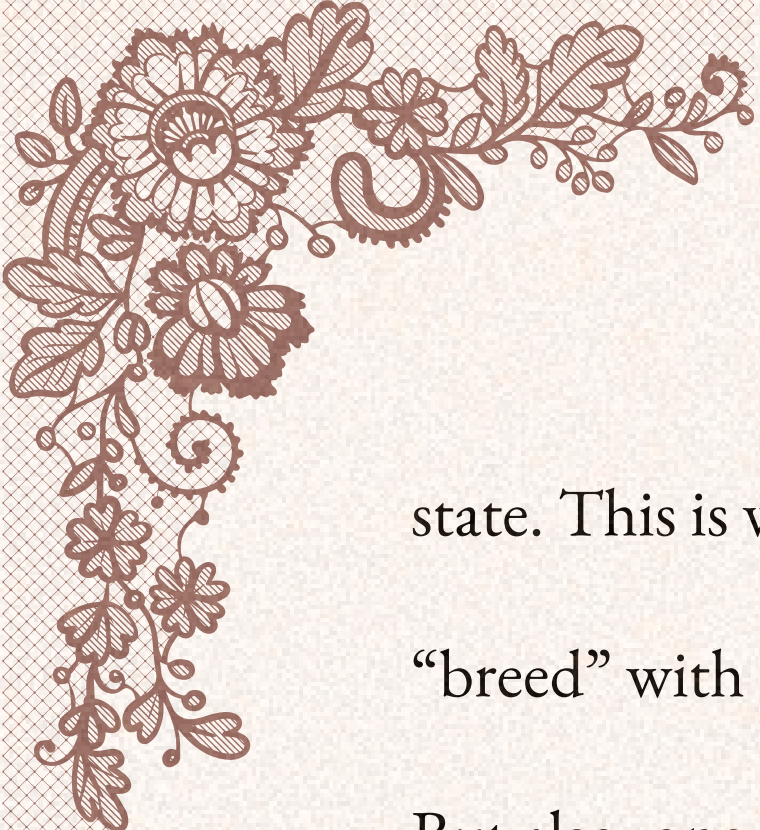


must conflict.

Socrates' use of sexual metaphor throughout the work, should it prove unconvincing, is not a defeat for the argument; however, the evidence is not as lacking as one may first suggest. Firstly, it would seem odd to employ words with a possible sexual connotation as frequently as he does, in the very context that it would be expected to be, should he be referencing the analogy. The context is almost always in concert with a concern of a degeneration occurring from the inappropriate association or mixture of groups. Also, “συγγίγνομαι” is that which is being rendered for intercourse and has even more of a connotation of sexual relation, and it is within the context of breeding, making at least his reference there quite explicitly a sexual metaphor.²⁷ Supposing then that even the references which render ὁμιλία as associations are not attempting to make use of the sexual metaphor, it can still be shown that Socrates, at least in Book VIII, does make use of one.

How then can the analogy be self-integrated? The intermixture of mental states could be understood as the “lower” parts' confusion with the higher. For example, the man who is so given over to gluttony has within him a corruption of his perception of food. His appetitive part is acting where his intellect ought to. He confuses the satiation of his appetite with the rational decision to feed himself properly. Or a man so moved by his spirited part may act rashly on the battlefield. He confuses his current mental state, which urges him to make right the perceived wrong, and he forgoes making a rational decision about how to proceed. The intellect's primacy over the soul must be maintained, and those motions within it ought not to be confused with those of the appetitive or spirited part. The man who denies this will have his lower parts create a “degenerate offspring,” understood as a lower state's motion which acts or is perceived as a higher-order mental

²⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 560b, (2001).



state. This is what Socrates implores us to “cast away.” The lower parts, when they rise up and seek to “breed” with that of our better part, must be sent back down and kept within their respective realm. But also, one cannot fail to realize the importance of unity. The spirited part is the ally of the intellect, and so too does the appetitive part remind the intellect to care for the body. The intellect cannot simply throw off its helpmates, but it cannot allow them to become its “partner.” A ruler, begetting a bastard son, for the sake of securing the kingdom, cannot allow such a son to one day become king, but must reject him, opting for the true heir. Also, a king who denies his citizens cannot be thought to be truly a ruler at all.

Socrates sets up the role of the intellect or rational part within the soul to rule; however, a wider concern for the unity of the whole can allow us to better and more closely allegorize certain questions regarding political structuring within the city. It is also of contention that Socrates gives credence to such a view by his use of sexual metaphor. The breeding programs Socrates implements can be better allegorized, after closer investigation, when one recognizes his wider scheme. The tripartite soul is one, even though it possesses a just hierarchy. To properly be ordered, one must train and compel our intellect to both take its rightful place as the king over the appetitive and spirited parts, but also to recognize and promote the unity of the whole. The promotion of unity and satisfaction of one part’s desires often may come into conflict. But to prevent war within oneself, there has to be a proper integration of order, hierarchy, and care for unity over satisfaction. Keeping the rational part as a calculated ruler, the spirited as its courageous ally, and the appetitive part to remind the body to eat, drink, and fulfill necessary desires, without allowing one to be cast off or to take place of another inappropriately, one can successfully maintain the order Socrates describes in *The Republic*.

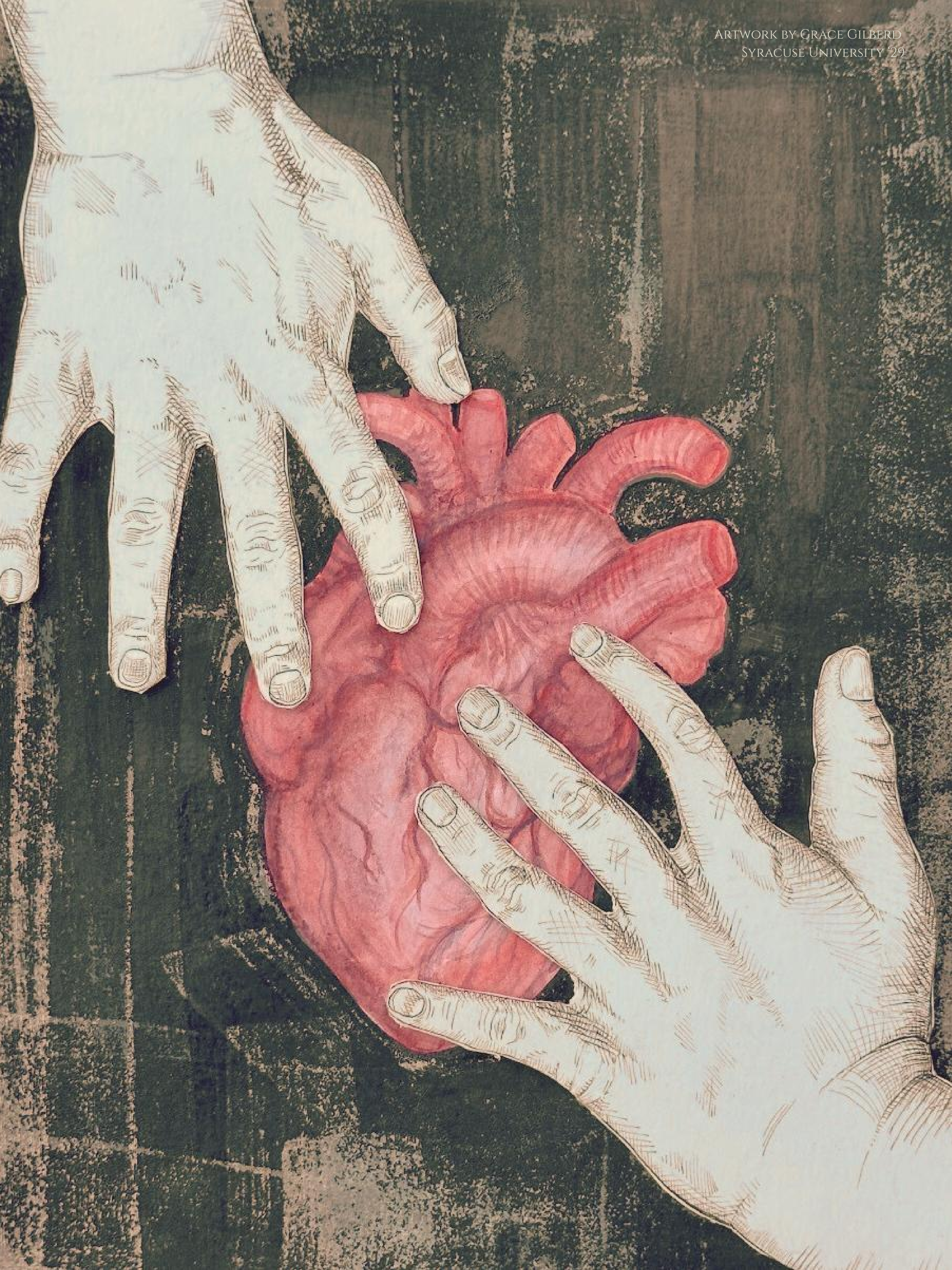


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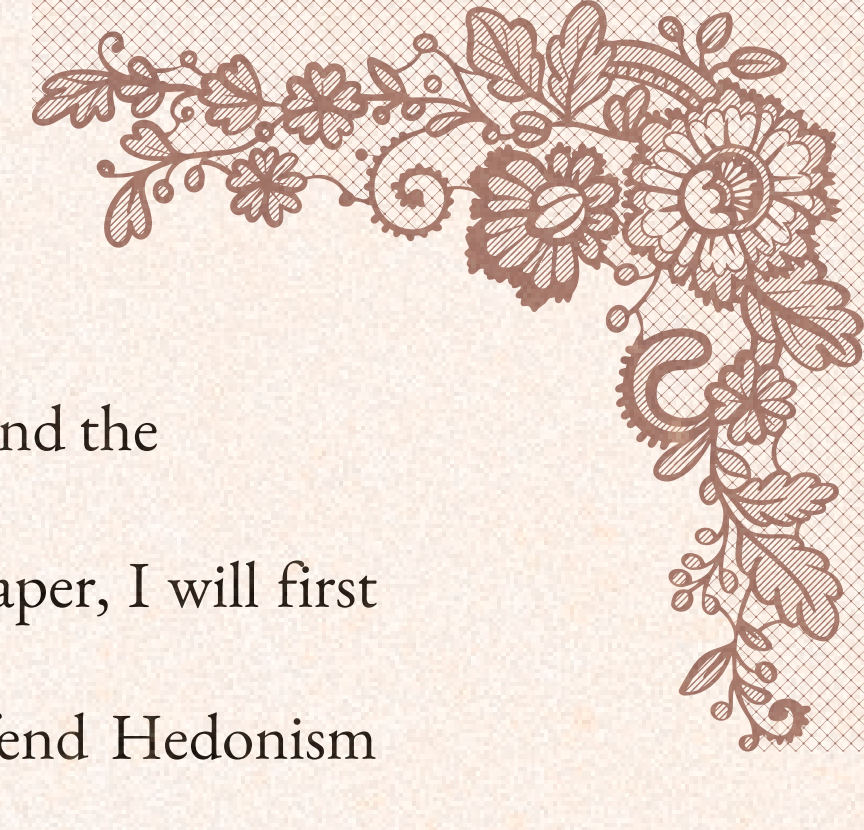
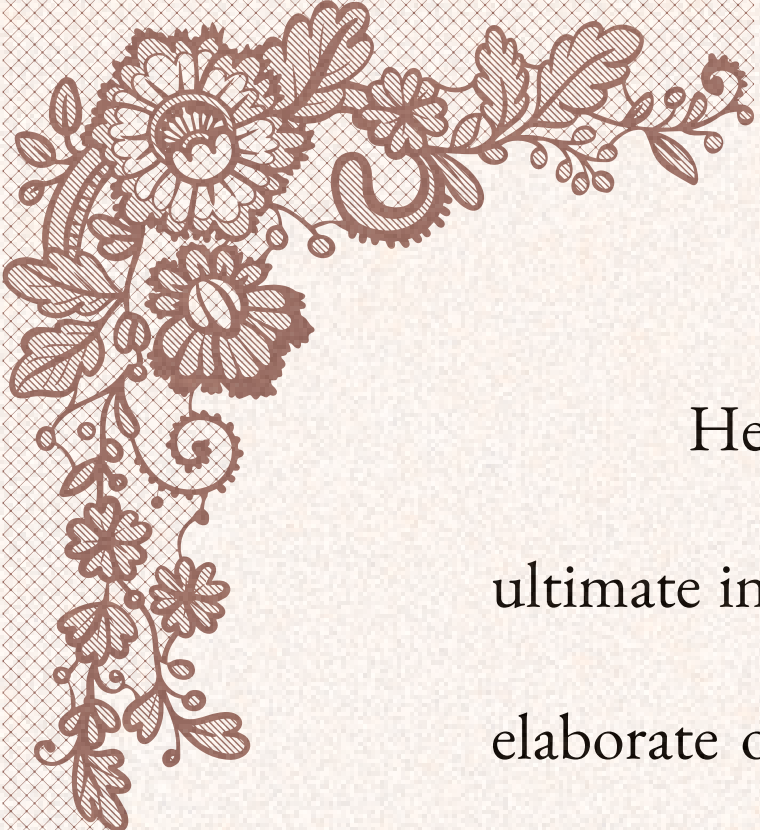


**A Defence of Hedonism:
Understanding Prudential Welfare through
Cognitive and Positive Psychology
Geng Chen Wang
University of Toronto**

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
Syracuse University
Edition ϕ ; Issue III



Artwork by Maya Quon - Syracuse University



Hedonism, as a prudential theory of welfare, claims that value is subjective, and the ultimate intrinsic good and bad are felt in pleasure and pain, respectively. In this paper, I will first elaborate on Traditional Hedonism, as well as an alternate view. Then, I will defend Hedonism with a new account of a feeling, through the use of concepts in cognitive and positive psychology. Traditional Hedonism appeals to the Felt-Quality Answer, which states that pain is bad because it feels bad, and pleasure is good because it feels good. In order for Hedonism to hold, it is necessary that:

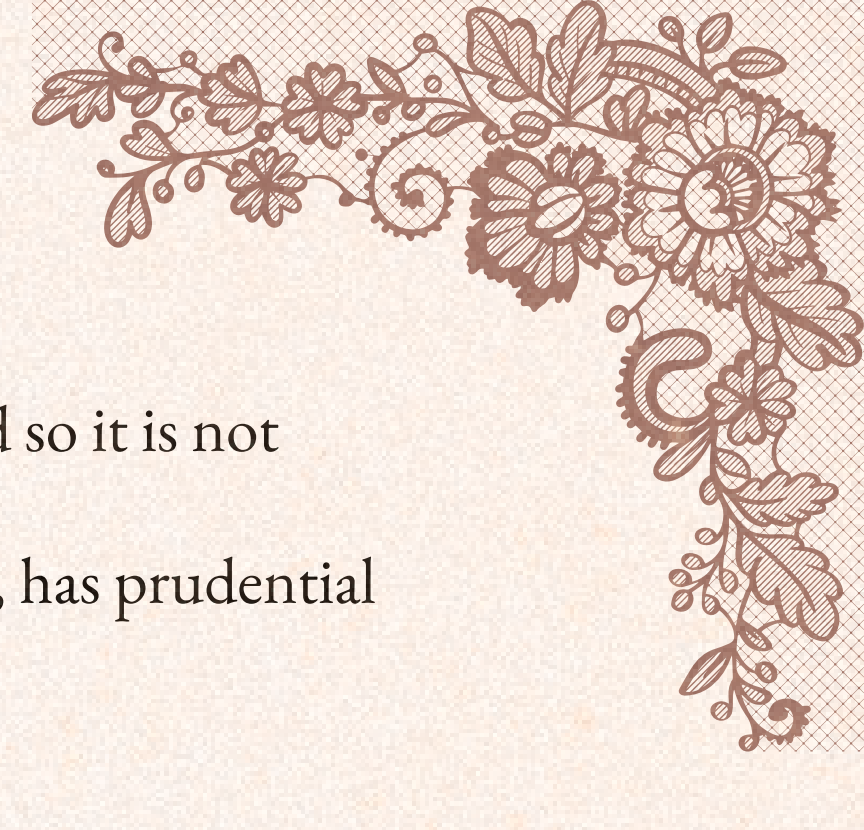
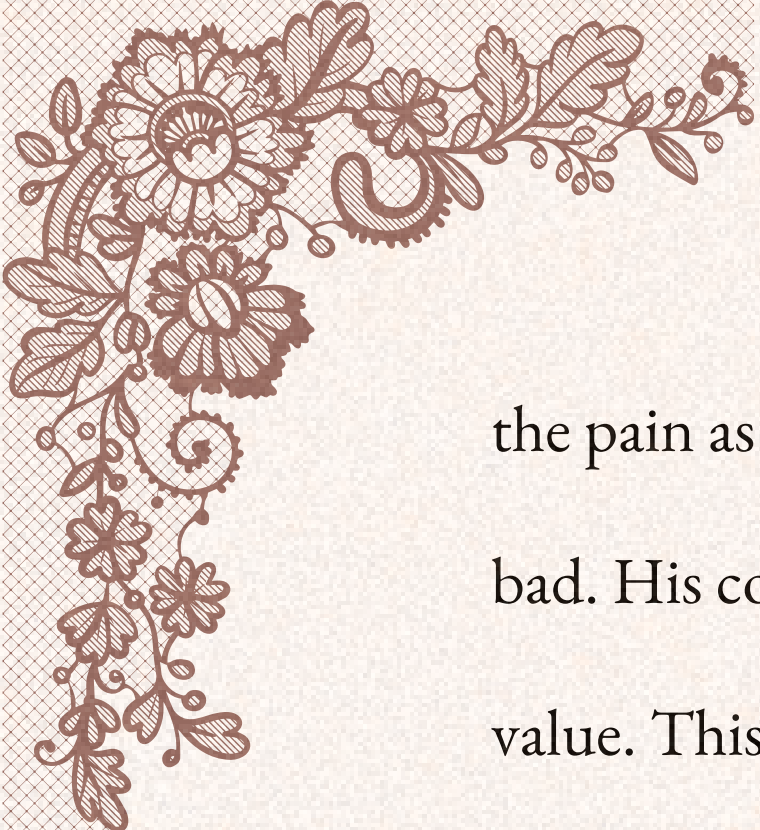
- 1) Value only emerges in the presence of a feeling.
- 2) Welfare is subject-relative on account of feeling.

Critics often reject the first claim, and objective views of prudential welfare emerge out of objections to the second. In Bramble's paper, "Passé Pains," he presents four cases:¹

1. Painasymbolia - a neuropsychiatric disorder in which the person is unable to feel pain.
2. Sages.
3. Routine pains.
4. Hurts-So-Good (HSG) experiences.

In all of these cases, the pain experience is not regarded as bad. Bramble's response to the problem cases is an answer that claims the intrinsic badness of pain lies not in how it feels, but in one's evaluative status of the pain across one's personal history, where, for instance, sages evaluate

¹ Bramble. "Passé Pains." (2022): 21–32.



the pain as not bad through prior encounter and change of judgement over time, and so it is not bad. His conception suggests that the evaluative quality, rather than the feeling itself, has prudential value. This contradicts Hedonism's claim that feelings are intrinsically valuable.

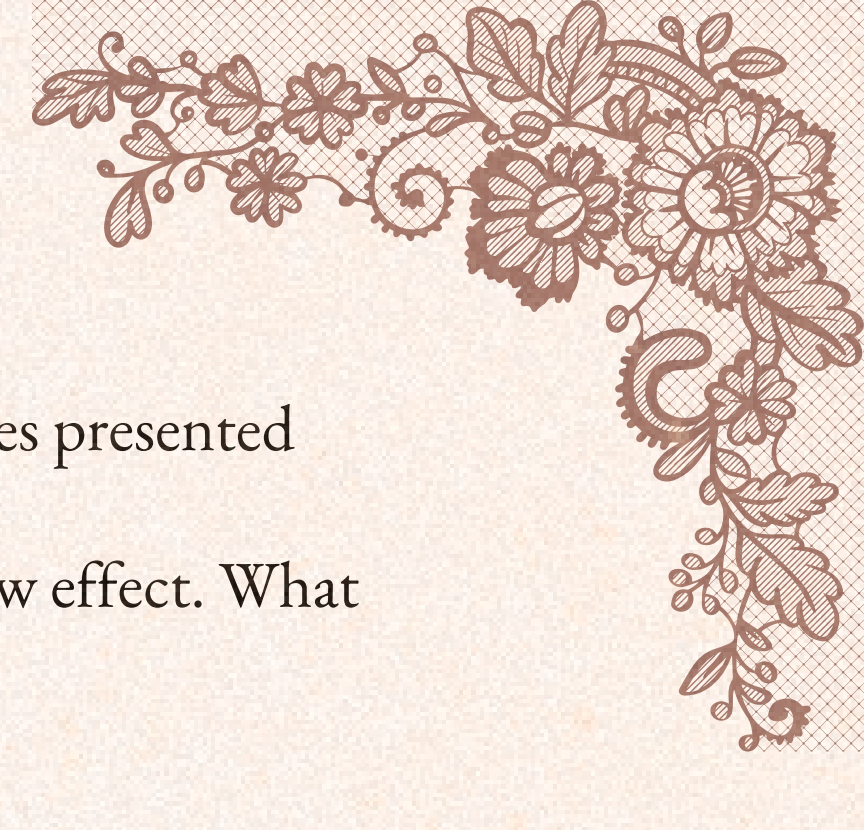
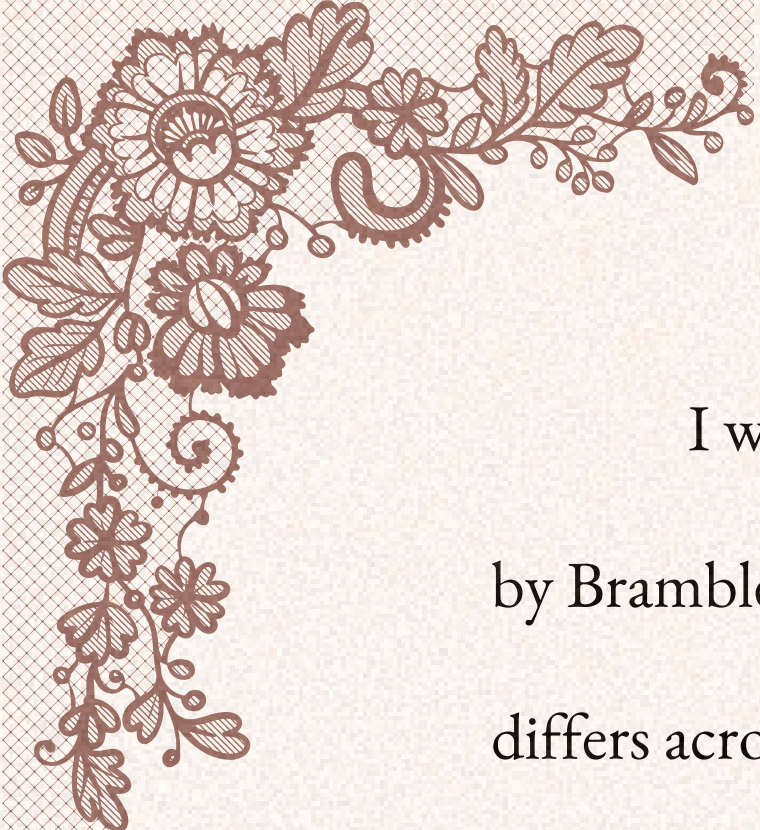
The issue with Traditional Hedonism and Bramble's answer is in the assumption that feelings are mere sensations. A better way to conceptualize feeling is through the psychological definition, which identifies a feeling as composed of three interdependent elements: sensation, emotion, and evaluative appraisal.² A sensation is a bodily experience, which is represented in the brain as an emotion that has a first-order appraisal. This is called a raw effect or a simple feeling, and is what Traditional Hedonism focuses on.

However, for most human beings, raw affect combines with second-order appraisal to form an integrated feeling—the focus of Bramble's problem cases. Feelings can be triggered by physical stimuli or second-order appraisal itself. Further, feelings have value through motivational forces rooted in approach-avoidance systems,³ where avoidance is equivalent to bad/worse, and approach is equivalent to good/better, represented in evaluative appraisal. For simplicity, I will call these X- and Y-forces, respectively. Second-order appraisal integrates the first-order forces of raw affect, which are instinctual, with second-order representational forces. The latter are found in mental concepts regarding the environment, as well as memories, beliefs, and semantic content inherited through prior learning and social conditioning.⁴ Second-order forces are usually the same as, but can be contrary to, first-order forces. This psychological process of emotional processing alters raw affect, resulting in a felt-experience registered as pain or pleasure by way of net prudential value.

² Barenholtz. *Cognitive Psychology*. (2022).

³ Phaf, "Approach, Avoidance, and Affect: A Meta-Analysis of 81 Effect Sizes from 29 Studies." 2014

⁴ Shuman, "Levels of valence." 2013

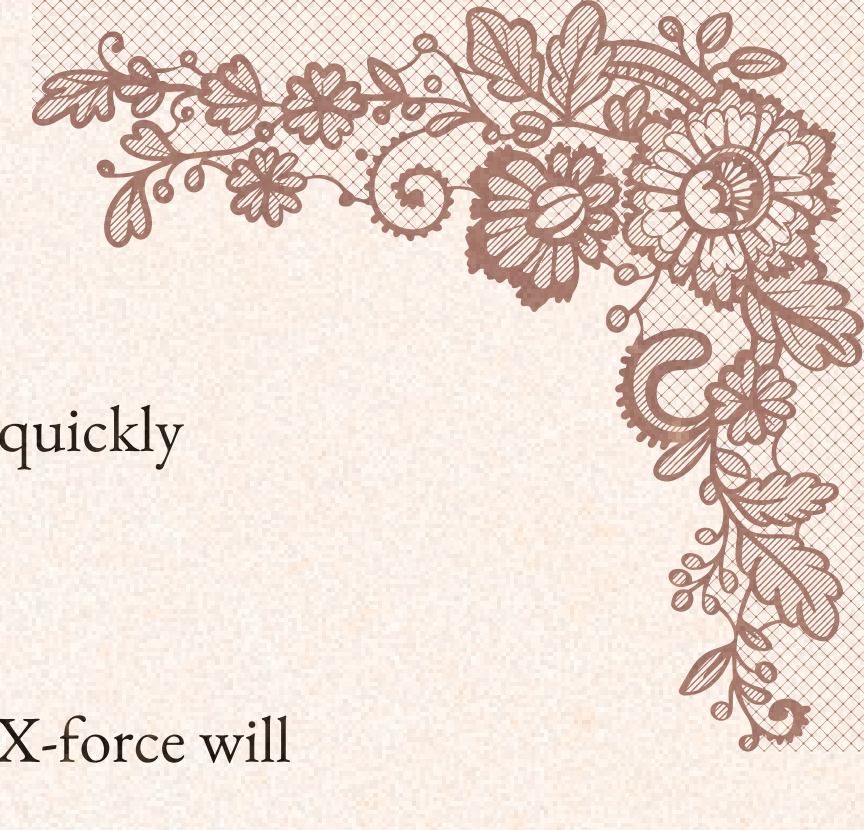


I will now defend the first claim of Hedonism by explaining the problem cases presented by Bramble using the framework of integrated feelings. All four cases begin with a raw effect. What differs across cases is the content of evaluative appraisal.

1. In pain asymbolia, first-order appraisal fails to attach the X-force normally associated with the raw effect. Because the appraisal does not encode the experience as “to-be-avoided,” there is no feeling, only a sensation, like when we “feel” ourselves breathing, so it carries no prudential value.
2. For sages, pain experiences are opposed by a Y-force in second-order appraisal. The X-force of the raw affect and the Y-force of appraisal balance each other, yielding a neutral integrated feeling.
3. With routine pains, the second-order appraisal gradually acquires stronger Y-forces, through semantic content such as “this is fine,” or association with safe environments, which eventually neutralizes the X-force.
4. In hurts-so-good experiences, second-order appraisal contains a strong Y-force (due to association with happy environments, joyous occasions, being told it's good, etc.) which overrides the X-force of first-order appraisal, producing a net Y-force, felt as pleasure. Across all cases, behaviour reflects both forces, where the net prudential value depends on the strength and direction of both forces.

Alternative views may stipulate that thoughts within second-order appraisal do not change the feeling, but whenever a mental concept has an integrated representational force (e.g., good/bad, better/worse), it necessarily produces a feeling, which may be unconscious, but not absent, as it can be brought to awareness.⁵ In the presence of a physical stimulus, the more direct sensation simply

⁵ Shuman, “Levels of valence.” 2013

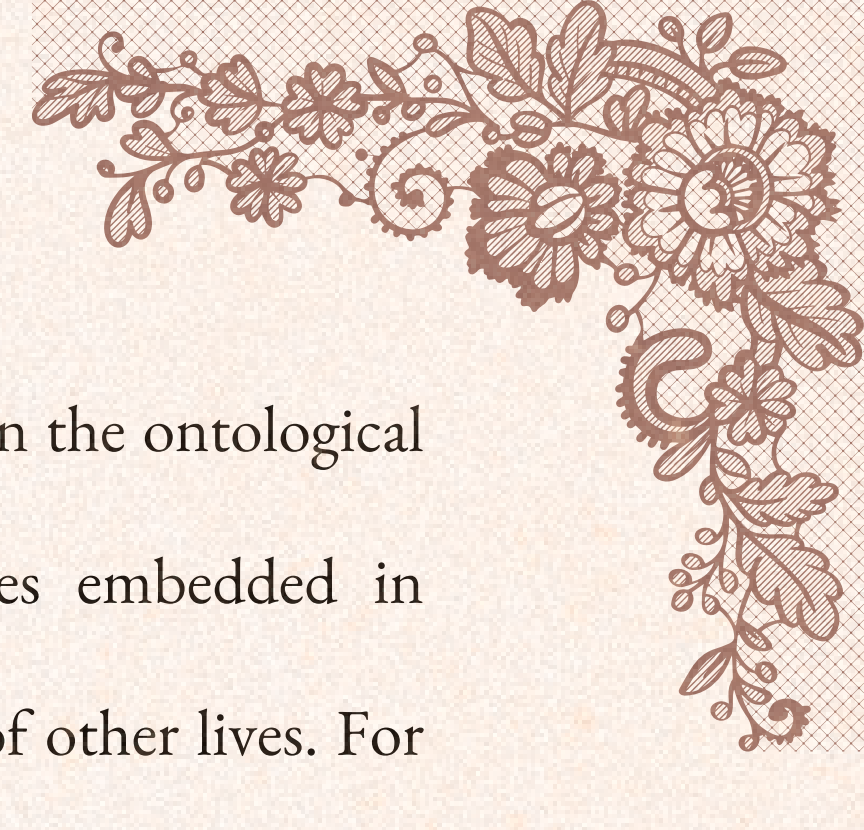
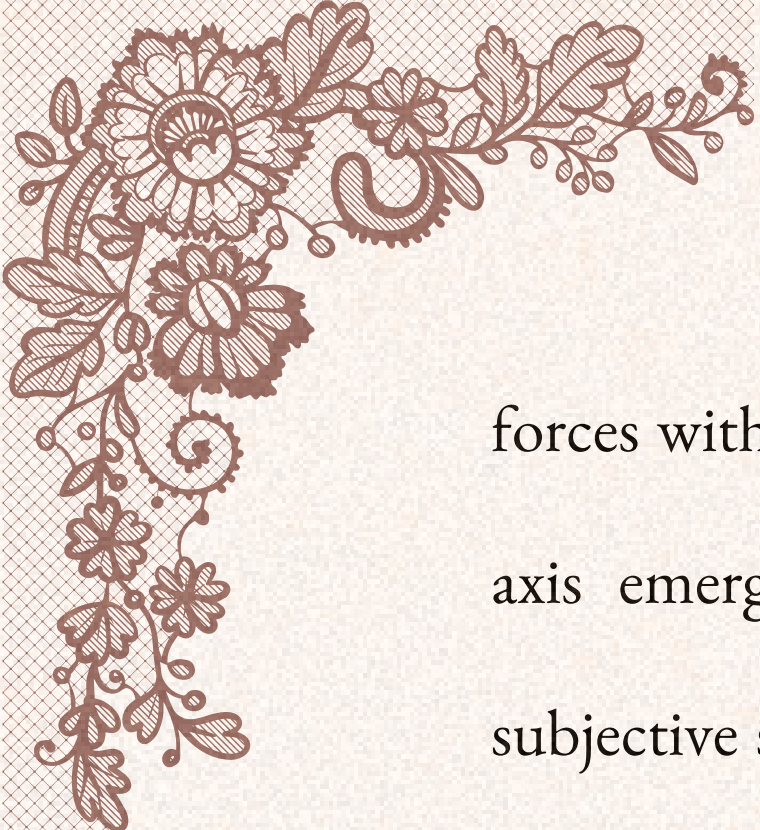


registers with more clarity. But, once the physical stimulus is removed, the sensation quickly changes towards the direction of the force within second-order appraisal.

For instance, someone whose second-order appraisal of spicy noodles has an X-force will experience the sensation of pain for much longer than in the HSG case. Thus, prudential value is in the felt-quality of an integrated feeling, meaning only feelings are intrinsically, subjectively valuable. Secondly, Hedonism must state that welfare is subject-relative on account of feeling.⁶ This is true because each person has their own subjective scale of value, called an adaptation level. What matters for welfare is simply the amount of X- and Y-forces one experiences relative to their own adaptation level. Compare Roger, who comes from a wealthy family, with Paige, who comes from poverty. For simplicity, we can say Roger's experiences fall within a '7+' range of comfort, and Paige's fall into a '3+' range, and the range itself is infinite. If they both stay in a four-star hotel - a '4+' condition - this should, in principle, be equally good or bad for both of them. Yet, Roger experiences an X-force because 4+ is a downward deviation from his adaptation level, while Paige experiences a Y-force because 4+ is an upward deviation from hers. For Roger and Paige to live equally good lives, Roger would need to occupy settings within the 7+ range, and Paige within the 3+ range, since welfare corresponds to forces generated relative to each person's internal scale. Thus, welfare is subject-relative on account of subjective adaptation levels.

One potential objection to my argument is that life can be bad for someone even when they're not experiencing bad feelings. Consider Dave, who has been trapped in a cave since birth; we intuitively think his life is bad. However, this intuition collapses once we distinguish between the ontological axis of welfare and the epistemological axis of welfare. Up until now, I have only been discussing the latter, where net prudential value emerges through integration of first-order

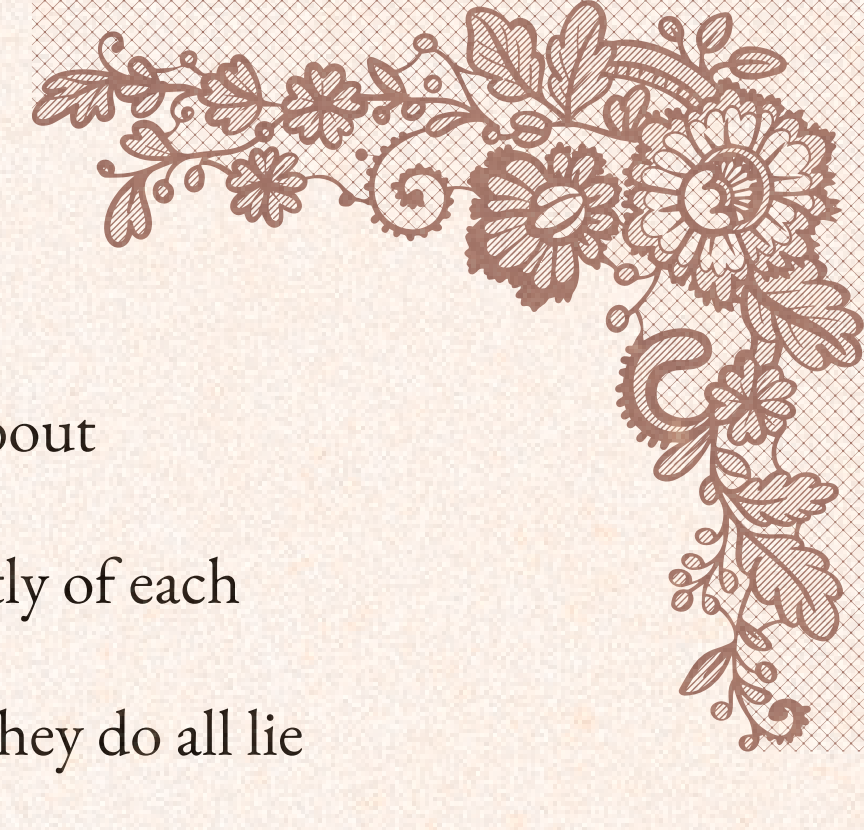
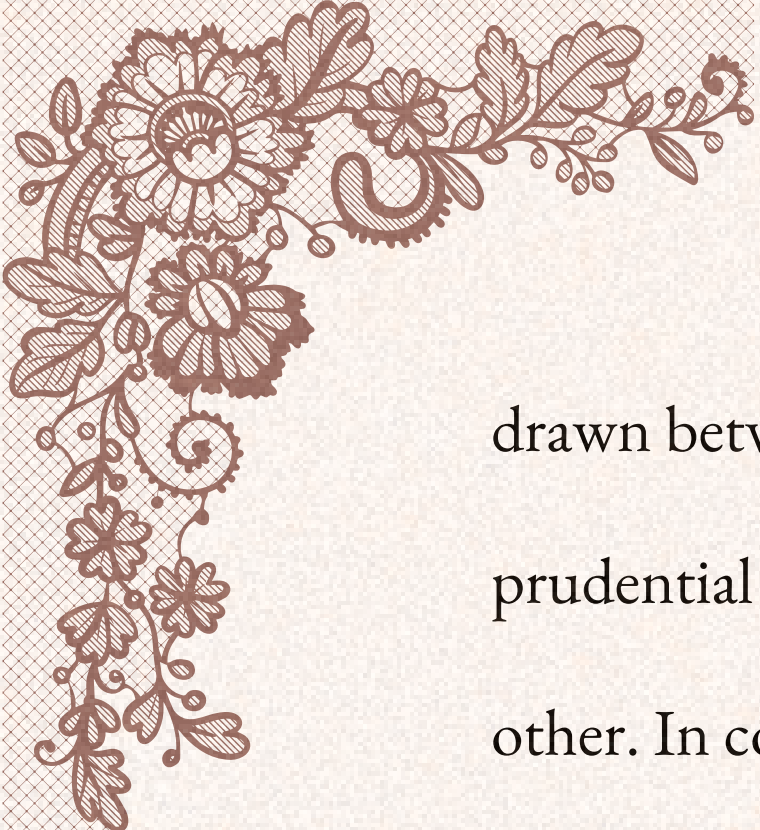
⁶ Brickman, "Hedonic Relativism and Planning the Good Society," 1971.



forces with second-order forces generated from one's personal experiences. Value on the ontological axis emerges through integration of first-order forces with second-order forces embedded in subjective standards of what one ought to have that arise only through awareness of other lives. For instance, when we identify someone as an academic, we mentally represent and feel that higher education is "good" for them. When people experience forces on this axis regarding their own lives, it manifests as prudential value, but when it is regarding other lives, it manifests as projected value. Thus, value on this axis is still felt-value, which emerges through knowledge of other lives, and can be projected onto others.

The feelings corresponding to ontological value can be labelled 'pain' and 'pleasure', but to preserve consistency with psychological frameworks, I will call them unrest and peace, and refer to the associated forces as G- and H-forces. Our intuition that Dave's life is bad results from projecting our G-forces onto him. We identify him as a fellow person, and think that our living conditions are good for him. But, because his seclusion prevents the reflective standpoint and contrast classes required to instantiate value on the ontological axis, meaning he doesn't identify as anything other than himself, and is not experiencing any G- or H-forces, we cannot say his life is subjectively good or bad, unless we know about his epistemological axis. Therefore, while the two axes of prudential value ordinarily interact in complex ways - such that a good life is both subjectively peaceful and pleasurable - they track two fundamentally different kinds of value that must remain distinct, even though both are accessed phenomenally.

With a reformulation of "feeling", I have shown that prudential value only supervenes on subjective feeling, which is determined by how sensations, emotions, and evaluative appraisals manifest physically and psychologically. Welfare is also subjective because the value of each person's experiences emerges relative to their own adaptation level. Additionally, a distinction should be



drawn between the ontological and epistemological axes of welfare when speaking about prudential welfare as a whole. The axes intersect, but must be measured independently of each other. In conclusion, while not all intrinsic prudential value lies in pain or pleasure, they do all lie in its felt-quality embedded with forces of either avoidance or approach, where ‘pain and pleasure’ is one category of feelings.



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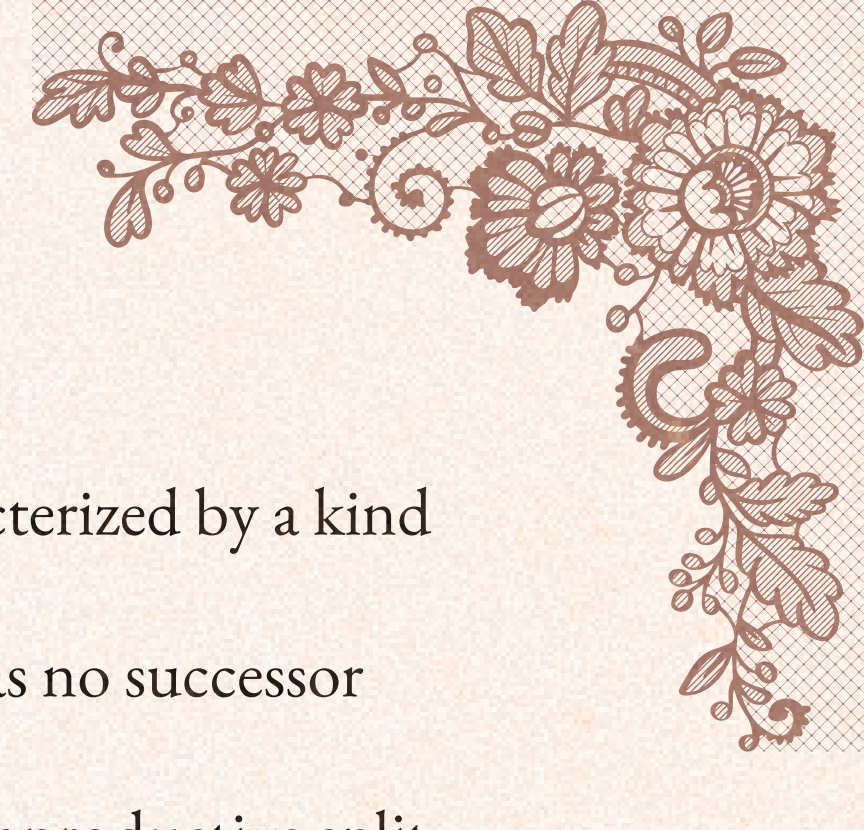
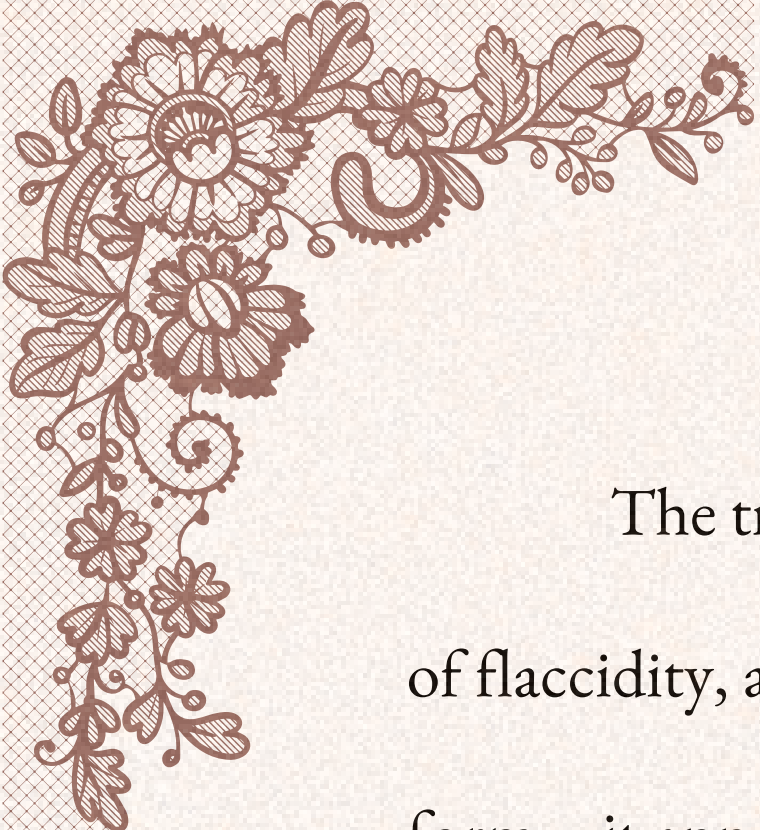


The Frogs and Metatheatricism
in Hegel's Art-Religion
Zainab Rizvi
University of Toronto

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
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Artwork by Chloe Rhodes - Savannah College of Art & Design

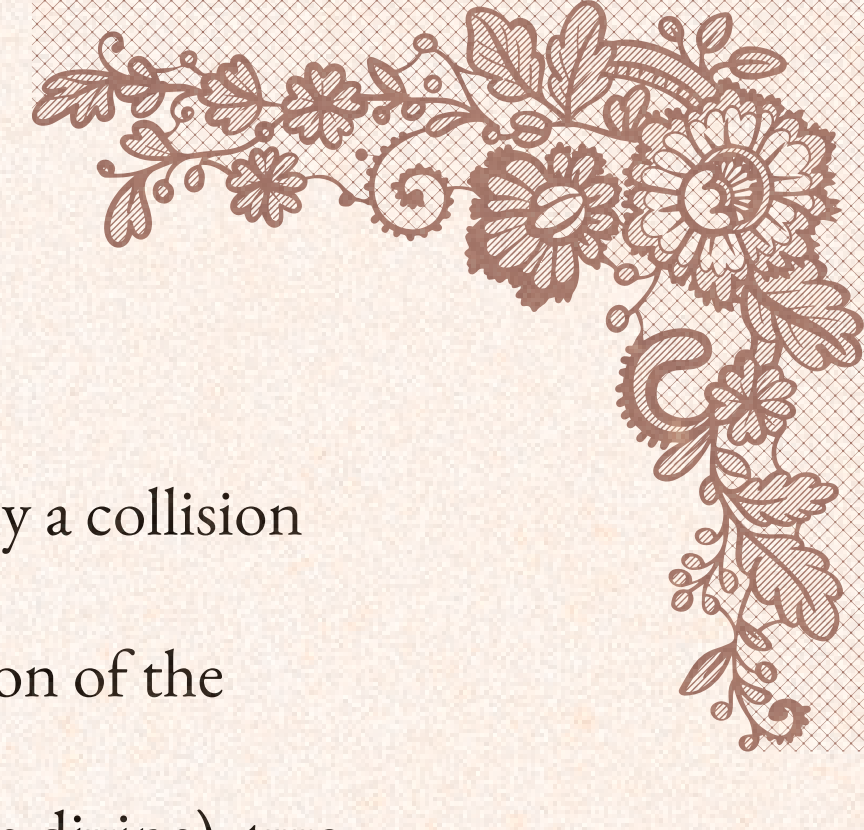
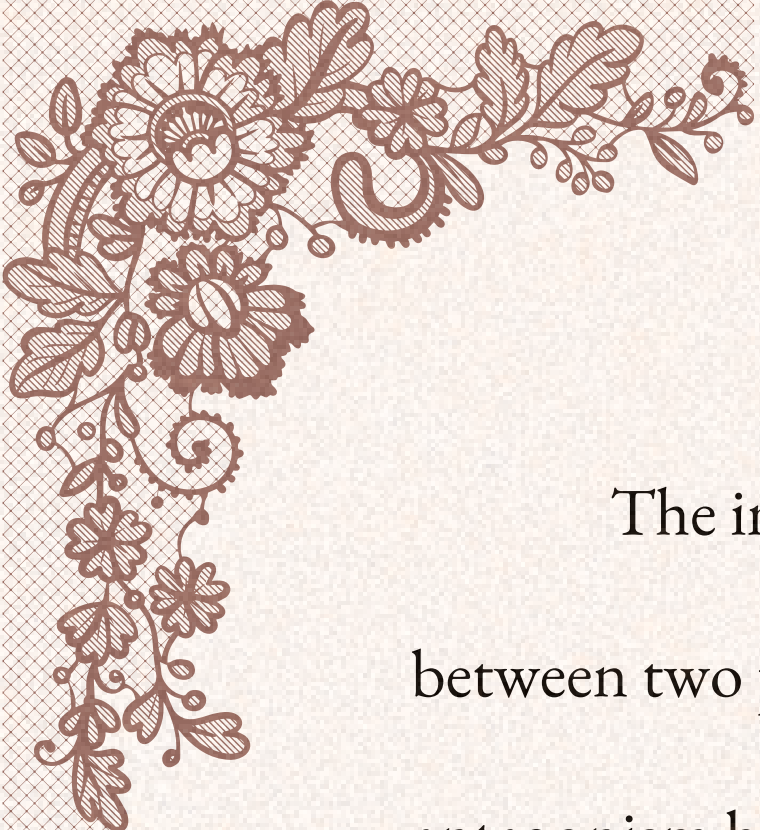


The transition from Art to Religion in Hegel's Absolute Spirit is often characterized by a kind of flaccidity, a fizzling out, or a spectral conclusion. Drama, as the last stage of Art, has no successor form—it appears as an antinomy without sublation or synthesis, as an aesthetically unproductive split, a categorical lunge without mediation. This paper will propose a recontextualization of this transition through an Aristophanic lens, and, more specifically, that this transition may be better understood through the concept of metatheatricism. In the first section, the tragicomic couplet which comprises the last stage of drama (i.e. of Art as such) will be explicated before the (perhaps unsatisfactory) move into Revealed Religion. The second section will define metatheatre and argue that it epitomizes what lies at the crux of the movement from tragedy to comedy, and so from Art to Religion: the tension between mere consciousness and self-consciousness, and thus between the sensuousness of nature and the spirituality of mind. The final section will involve engaging with the devices employed in, and the nature of what is believed to be the paradigmatic example of metatheatre—Aristophanes' *The Frogs*.

I. The Fate of Tragicomedy and Art as Such

As the last stage of Art, drama comes to the scene as a curious consortium, as an ellipsis which recapitulates all the forms of art which came before it—architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry—into the apogee that is the tragedy/comedy dichotomy. It is curious because of its unravelling of what was hitherto a strict form of medium specificity: painting is only to be painting, sculpting only sculpting, music only music, so on and so forth. Despite their necessary interdetermination, there is no integration, at least nothing quite like what is seen in the “synesthesia” of these art forms in drama. This makes the transition from Art to Religion appear all the more chasmic and abrupt. In order to really see what is at play here, one shall first investigate the tragedy/comedy dichotomy, and the way Hegel himself formulates the transition.



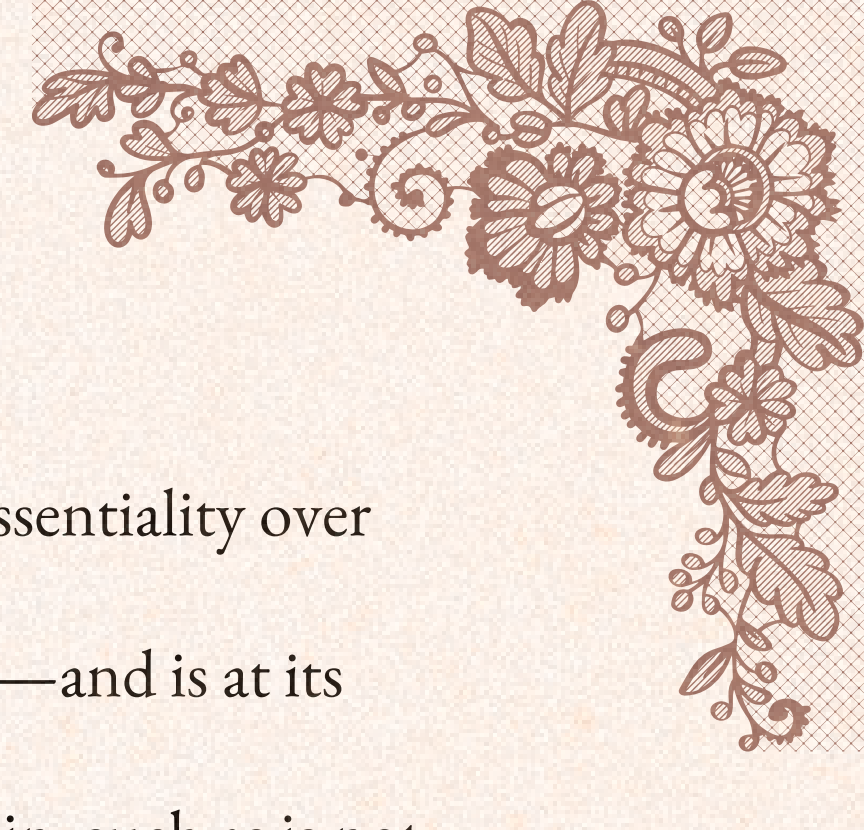
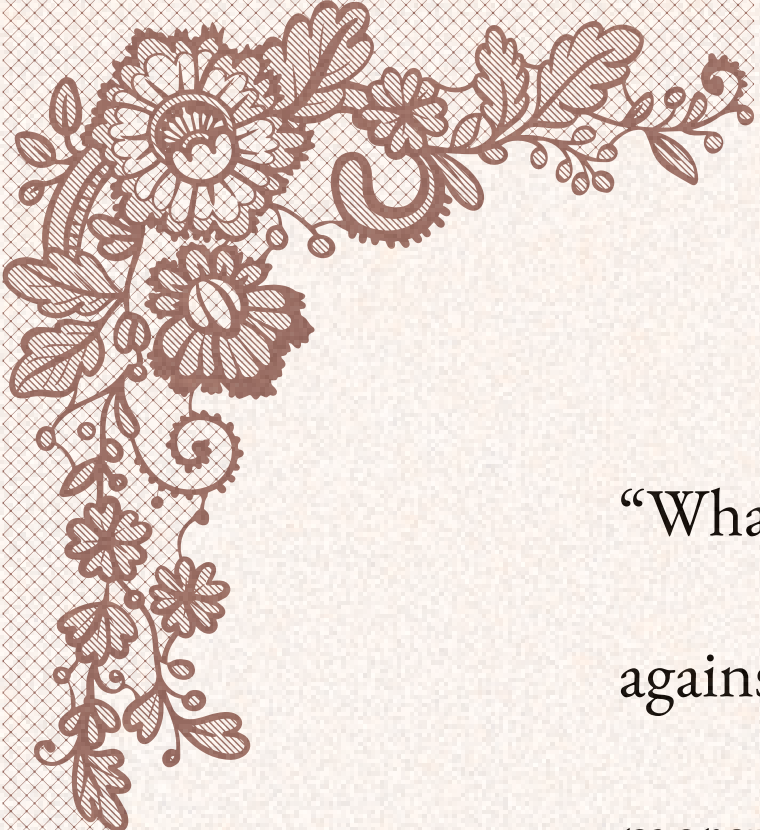


The impasse in tragedy is a contradiction in absolute terms, but more precisely a collision between two powers, or what Hegel terms “ethical substances.” This is a representation of the antagonism between two social units, two absolute and total laws (the human and the divine), two irreconcilable principles. It is an identification with and unfaltering adherence in one of the antipodes, and the insistence that this law is the whole and only law, even though it is, of course, not:

“Lacking the power of the negative, it [tragedy] is unable to hold together and to subdue the riches and varied abundance of divine life, but lets it all go its own separate ways, and in its reverential hymns it extols each individual moment as an independent god, first one and then another.”¹

This is precisely what is seen in, for example, the clash between Antigone and Creon. Each of them assert and pursue their respective absolute laws: Antigone, pursuing the family in its hypertrophy, the human law; Creon, pursuing the polity or the state, the divine law. Tragedy entails a serious assumption of extremes, and depicts the contradiction through an opposition which discloses both as equally wrong and equally right. Both necessitate supersession from their reciprocal falsity. This is where, for Hegel, comedy comes in. Comedy overcomes the contradiction of tragedy through recognizing both of these ethical substances as the objects of Absolute Spirit itself. That is to say, through a humorous demystification of these divine powers, comedy acknowledges that these powers are the products of its own self-consciousness:

¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §734, (1979).



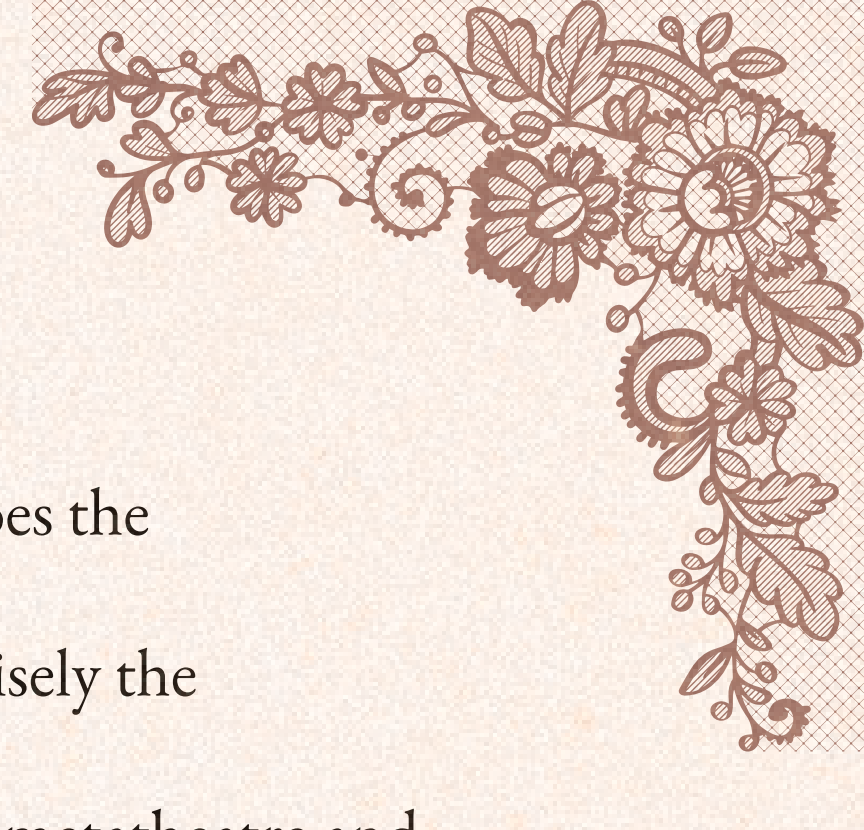
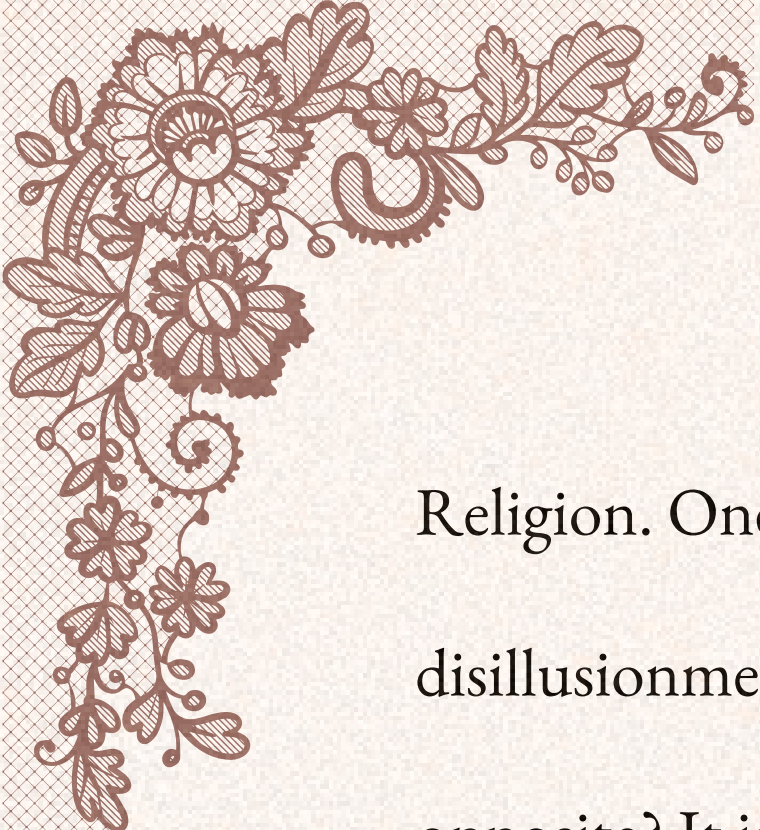
“What this self-consciousness beholds is that whatever assumes the form of essentiality over against it, is instead dissolved in it—in its thinking, its existence, and its action—and is at its mercy...This self-certainty is a state of spiritual well-being and of repose therein, such as is not to be found anywhere outside of this Comedy.”²

In fact, comedy does not only recognize these absolute powers as its own dramatic, hyperbolic, and illustrative constructions, but manipulates and employs them (and the awareness of them) in a satirical and ironic fashion, so to, as it were, play with its own makings. This is essential to understanding the way in which comedy operates from a higher “overview” or speculative standpoint than tragedy. Tragedy dithers between the antipodals, but does not stand outside of the gamut, does not recognize the extremes as constituting a single contexture, as an expression of the Absolute which unites here to there. The self-consciousness of the heroes in tragedy progressively moves beyond their limitations of knowing, i.e., beyond their space and role in the epic tragedy, and is becoming critical. Comedy relies on this very criticality, on the tearing of the membrane of the tragic performance, this fabricated world, in order to catch a glimpse—a caustic, sardonic glimpse at something uncannily self-aware and real.

Comedy thus transcends tragedy in its reflexivity and recursion, its interpolation of Subject into Substance. In its dissolution of the gods, it reveals the sovereignty of subjective self-consciousness over the divine and absolute forms that falsely stood over and against it as something distinct from itself. Herewith Fate unites itself with self-consciousness and knows itself as Absolute.³ Yet, what follows from this final passage above is a precipitation, a stiff and immediate transition into Revealed

² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §747, (2010).

³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §747, (2010).



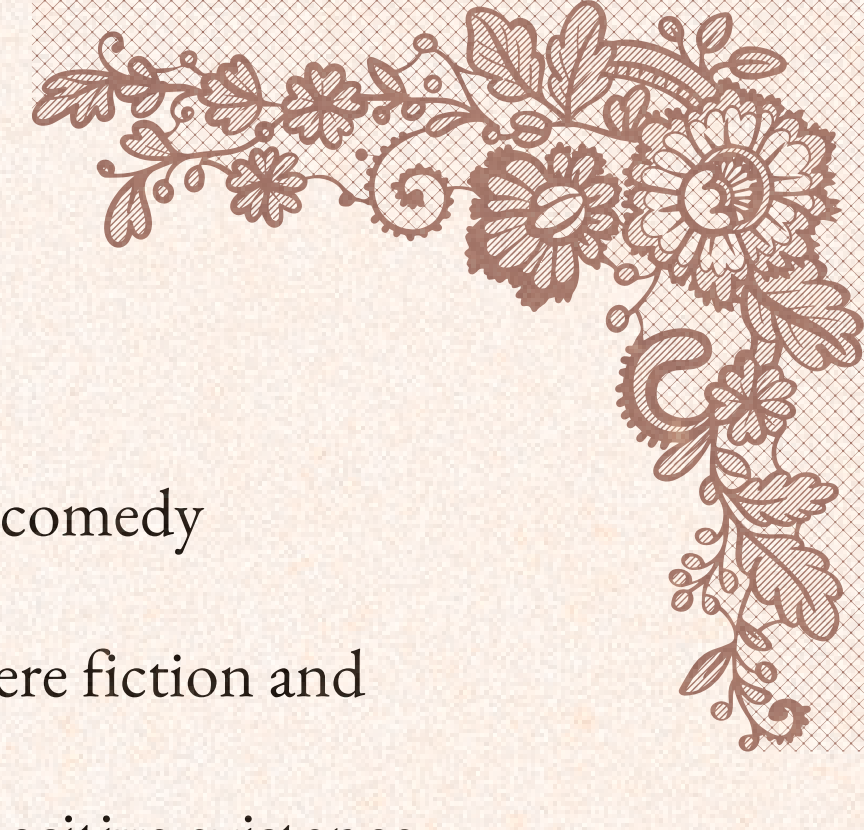
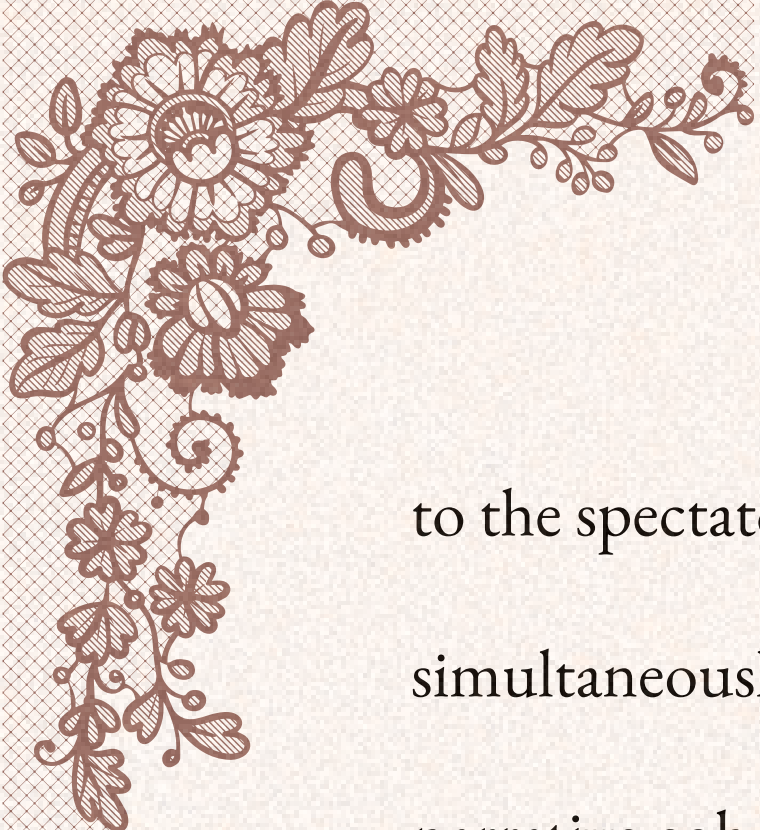
Religion. One might ask, and rightly so, how this transition is justified at all. How does the disillusionment of the gods make way for a transition into Religion, which does precisely the opposite? It is proposed that some insight may be gained by evaluating the notion of metatheatre and what this discloses about the nature of comedy and of drama, and therefore of Art as a whole, and why it necessitates its own supersession in Religion.

II. Metatheatre and Art-Religion Revisited

To begin, what metatheatre is and what it consists of should be defined. Gregory W. Dobrov describes metatheatre as “...that process whereby a representation doubles back on itself, where a narrative or performance recognizes, engages, or exploits its own fictionality”⁴—in other words, it is a spectacle which is doubly-determined: not simply performed, but performed in order for it to reveal its own performativity. It is an image which ricochets and returns to itself. It is self-conscious, specular performance; the point at which theatrical actions and devices reflexively cognize themselves as objects of dramaturgy. A metatheatrical play is, for these reasons, a play that reflects inward and discloses the operating principles of theatre itself.

Importantly, metatheatre recognizes its role in the construction of its own theatrical space. In this way, it is a self-determining drama. Heteronomous movement, i.e., to merely *move along with* and *according to* the dramatic narrative, is consciousness. But to *observe* and *implicate* the dramatic narrative from 'above' and 'beyond', is self-consciousness. The former is, as previously explored, the nature of tragedy. *Antigone* operates only in the innermost, immediate being of its diegesis, and never strays from the center of objectivity, except, perhaps, in the asynchronicity of its “resolution,” which very well may not be a resolution at all. It is resolved virtually at a conceptual level which is observable

⁴ Dobrov, *Figures of Play: Greek Drama and Metafictional Poetics*, 9, (2000).

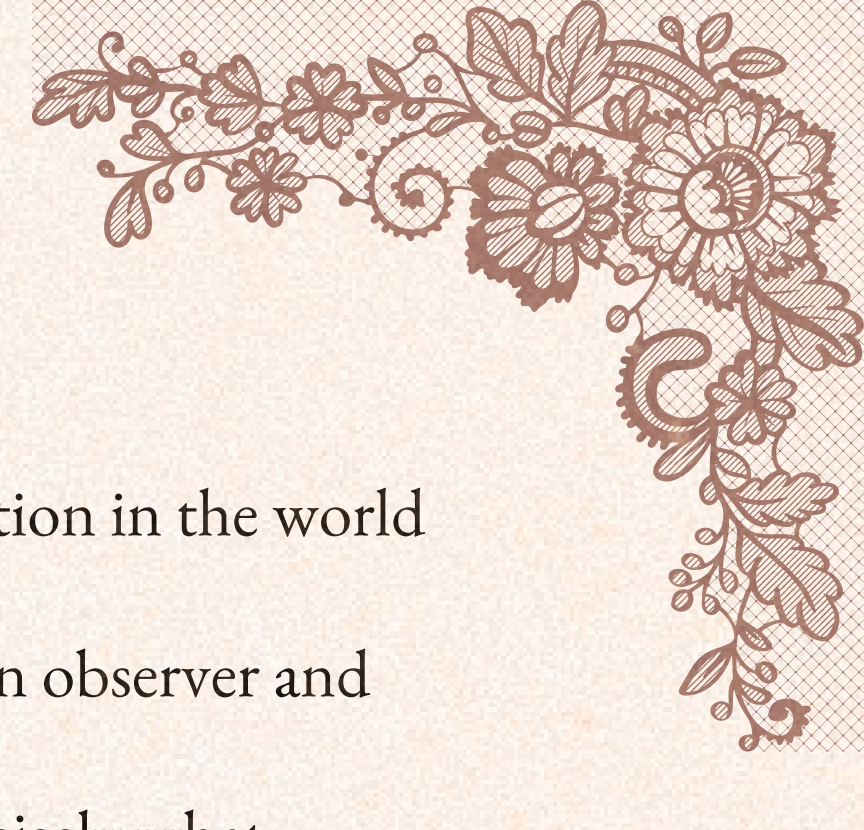
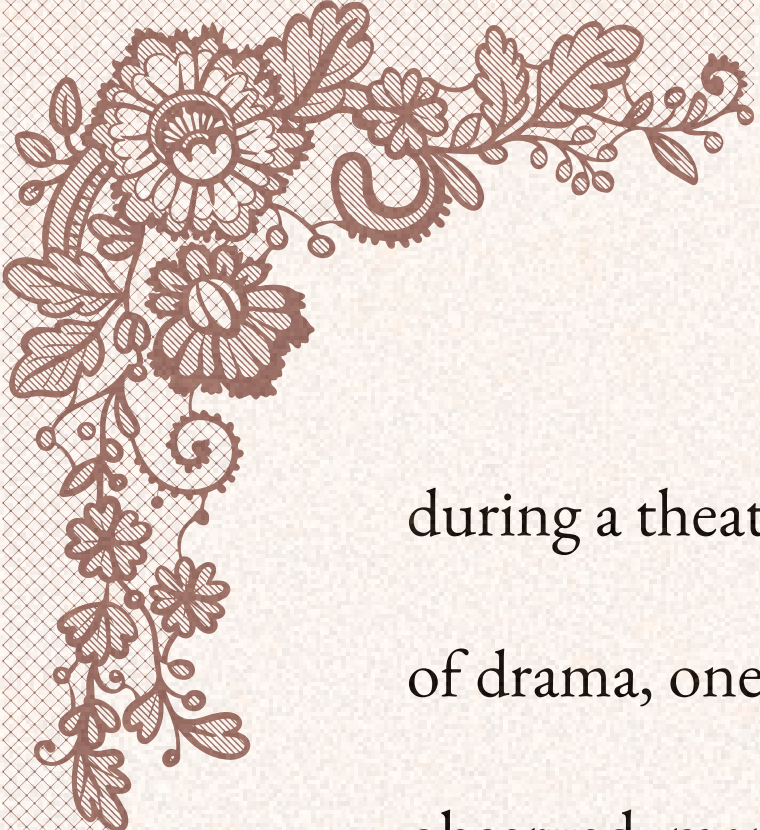


to the spectators, but not to the dramatic personages themselves. On the other hand, comedy simultaneously self-facilitates its own dramatic illusion (that is, a consistent space where fiction and narrative cohere) and the very rupture of this illusion. Both of these moments—the positive existence and maintenance of the dramatic illusion, and the deconstruction of it—are necessary for comedy’s purpose. Its own undoing is contained in the seed of its fashioning, whereas tragedy’s undoing is discordant and extrinsically caused. It thus displays a self-determinacy that is unpresent in tragedy; a pure playing-with-itself that is only the product of a genuine recursion:

“In comedy, conversely, it is subjectivity, or personality, which in its infinite assurance retains the upper hand. [...] In comedy there comes before our contemplation, in the laughter in which the characters dissolve everything, including themselves, the victory of their own subjective personality which nevertheless persists self-assured.”⁵

The tragic modality is one-sided—parabolic as opposed to circular, operating on the dramatic exterior, constative as opposed to truly explanatory. This is perhaps most evident in regards to the way in which its performance is demarcated by the sociophysical construct of the fourth wall and the proscenium. It is confined behind the vertical plane of the theatre; there is an explicit division of the actors and their stage-world, from the audience who has come to witness it. This idea of the fourth wall is not only an abstract or social construct, but it is physically embedded into the architectonics of the theatrical space—it is engendered into the fall of the curtain, into the arch of the stage which serves as the frame into which the audience observes from a more or less unified angle the events taking place

⁵ Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art. Volume II*, 1199, (2010).

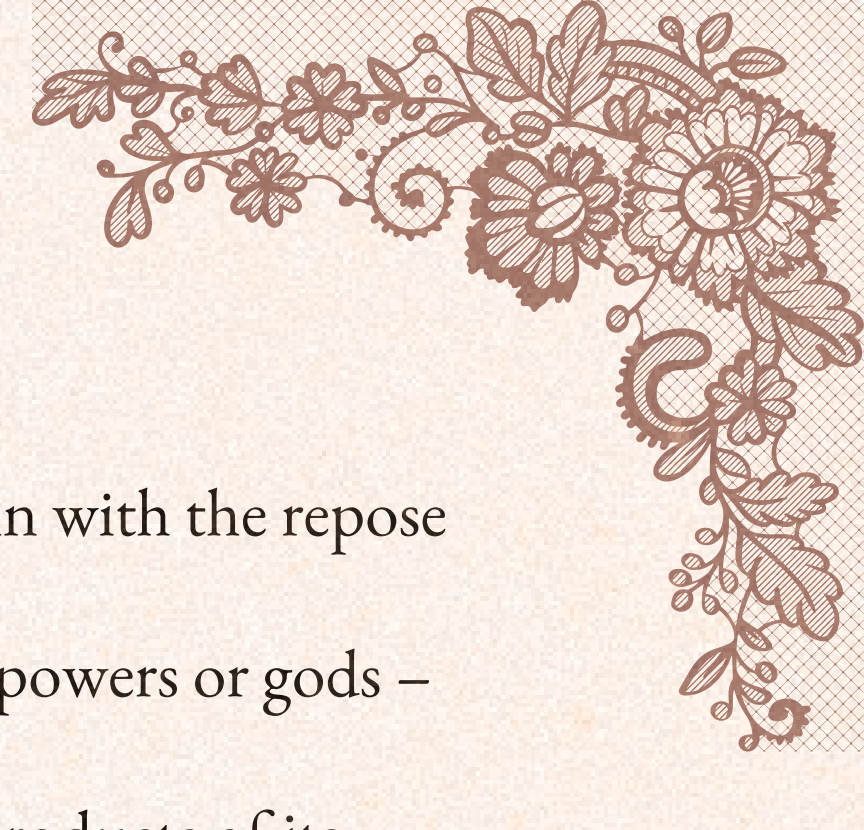
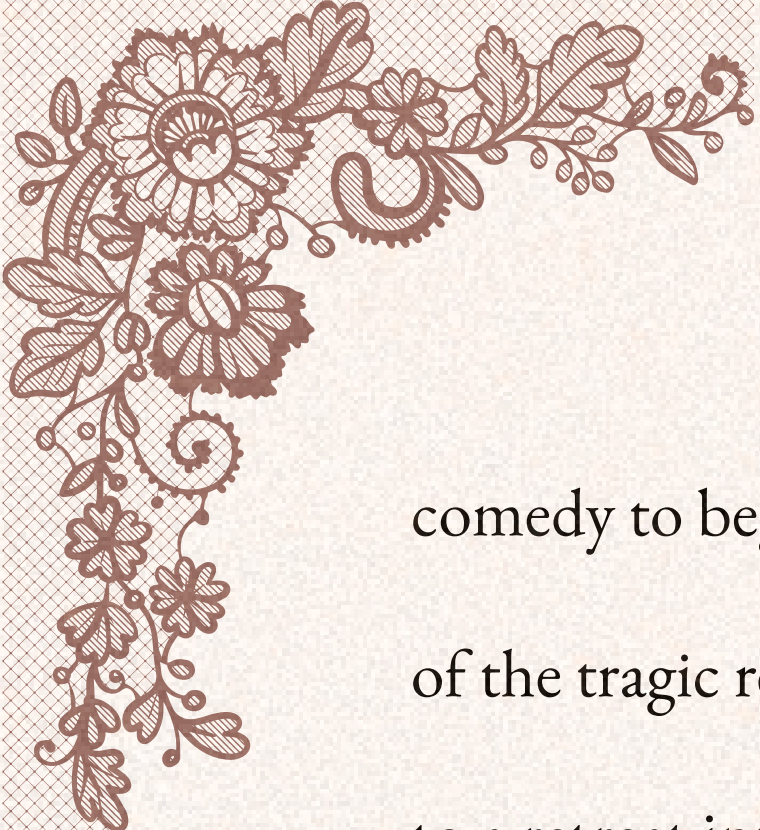


during a theatrical performance. This is a particular kind of spatiotemporal apperception in the world of drama, one that tragedy never steps out of. This appearance of antagonism between observer and observed, manifest at the level of the structurally material and immaterial alike, is precisely what comedy brings attention to and exploits. In comedy's narrative inwardness and simultaneous ecstasis or outside-of-itselfness, it both is and is not itself, and contrives a spectacle out of this paradoxical self-same asymmetry. Comedy points its finger at the pantomime, the orchestration, the spectator, the fourth wall. Comedy reveals, protruding from the illusion to "...come forward in its own nakedness and ordinariness, which it shows not to be distinct from the authentic self, from the actor, nor even from the spectator."⁶

There is an essential parallel, here, between a conceptual barricade and a sort of sensuous barricade made from matter. This is of utmost significance because the progressive movement of Absolute Spirit, for Hegel, is a movement towards increasing disincarnation, anti-gravitation, disembodiment, asomatousness, towards spirit in and for itself. Tragedy is wholly subordinate to its physical organization, while comedy ecstatically relates to it in its cognizance and manipulation of it. This illuminates what it means for comedy to be closer to Religion than tragedy is, and brings us back to our main inquiry about the transition from Art to Religion as a whole. To be sure, in all drama, action moves outward into concrete reality. It is expressed through kinesics, gesture, vesture, body, physics, nature, sense. This is true of comedy just as much as it is of tragedy. What distinguishes the two at base is that the former has an ontological element which reaches beyond mere sensuous, aesthetic expression, one undisplayed by any preceding art forms. This element is, of course, its very self-consciousness and interiority, the subjective caprice belonging to it which has been explored.⁷ For

⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §744, (1979).

⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art. Volume I*, 1180-1181, (1998).



comedy to begin and have its starting point where tragedy ends,⁸ then, is for it to begin with the repose of the tragic resolution—the dissolution of the stagnant, one-sided objectivity of the powers or gods – to a retreat into the self-assured subject who reflexively cognizes these powers as the products of its own absolute thinking.

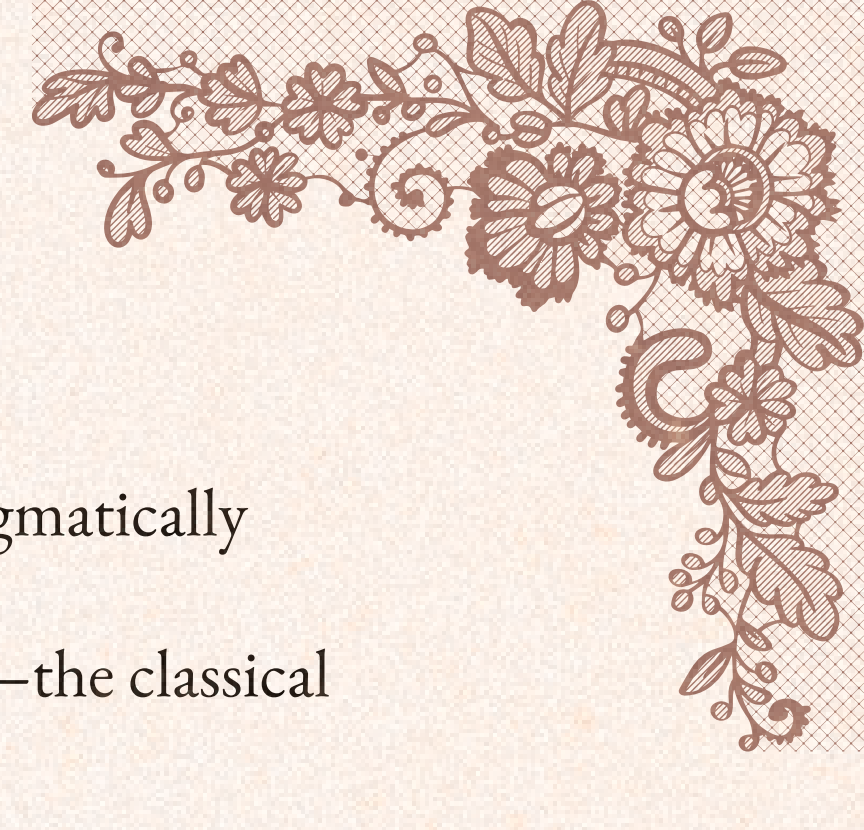
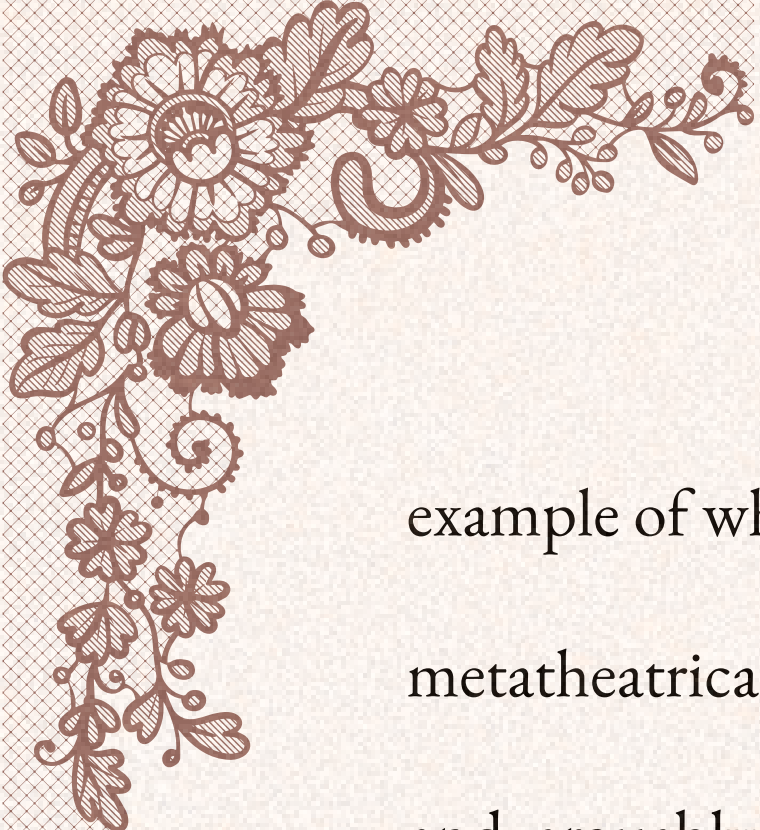
In light of this analysis, the transition from Art to Religion becomes more clear. The movement of Art appears to march upwards and onwards, becoming ever more ethereal and dematerial. This is, as seen, connotative of a progressive shedding of its weighty objectivity, its bondage to the physical world; it is the unravelling of the eternity of the given, and is thus a subjectification. The trajectory of Art, in its counter-force, is one towards pure thought and freedom—thinking is free because it is not tethered to an externality, a materiality that it cannot comprehend or control. This is what was articulated as a move from Substance to Subject: from the unconstructed immediacy of the “there,” to objects being reworked, sublimated, and mediated by human subjectivity. Metatheatre was the apt framework for elucidating this movement, for it showcased the elevation from the immediate consciousness and physicality of tragedy, to the specular, contemplative recursion of comedy. Comedy lifts itself out of the given “thereness” of the object, extricates itself from the yielding of the observer to the observed, and unites the two in a way tragedy cannot. Nevertheless, comedy is still constrained by the fetters of external being—of tactility, embodiment, and phenomenality—which is precisely what necessitates its transition into the rarefaction and ethereality of Religion.

III. The Frogs and the End of Art

Hegel is quite emphatic, and certainly not incorrect, when he situates Aristophanes at the seat of comedy and its peculiar nature as the end of Art.⁹ Further, *The Frogs* stands out as the quintessential

⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1220, (1998).

⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1220, (1998).



example of what is explored in the earlier sections of this paper (i.e. comedy as paradigmatically metatheatrical). Thus, this paper will conclude by examining the devices of this play—the classical and, arguably, perfected example of comedic self-consciousness.

Aristophanic comedy engages in metatheatricism predominantly through what is defined as a fracturing of dramatic illusion in order to convey humour. Aristophanes subtly makes use of, and simultaneously criticizes, various familiar comic devices and tropes; he employs them, and, in tandem, breaches them through bringing awareness to their employment. He brings consciousness to the fact of performance, the theatrical principle, the ethos of drama. One explicit case of this is the way he utilizes the parabases, or the choric digressions. Aristophanes solicits his audience in his choruses, and puts himself in direct relation with the witnesses through expressing his personal political views and invoking their action.¹⁰ Moreover, unlike in tragedy, where the choruses are supposed to represent the audience in an implicit and unacknowledged manner, *The Frogs* unequivocally addresses its spectators:

Dionysus:

Where can I run?

Xanthias [*imitating Dionysus*]:

Where can I run?

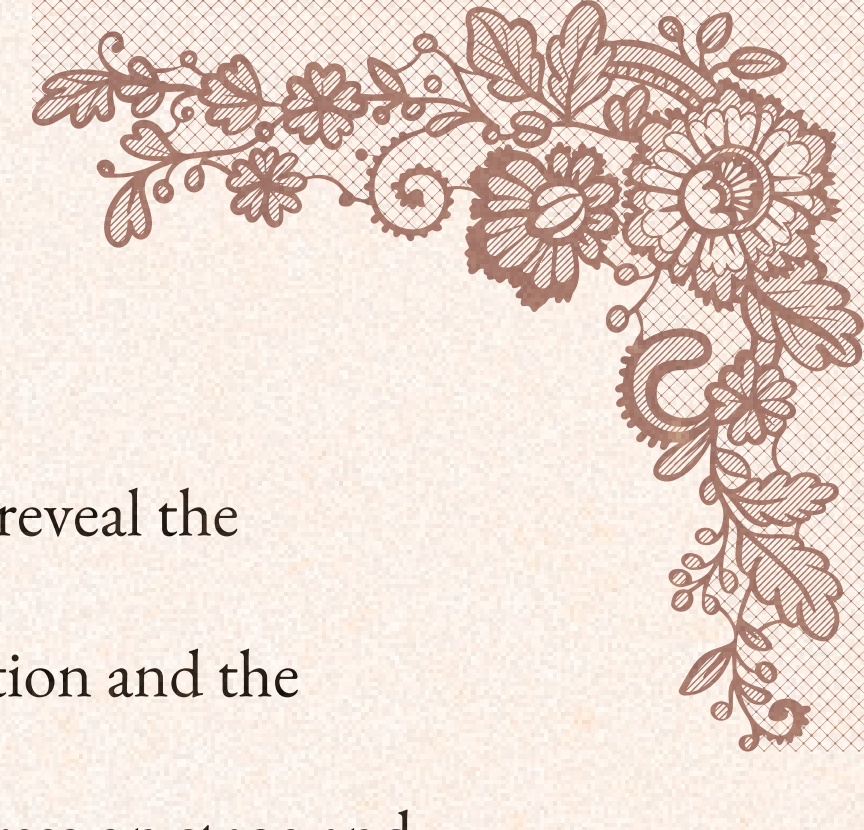
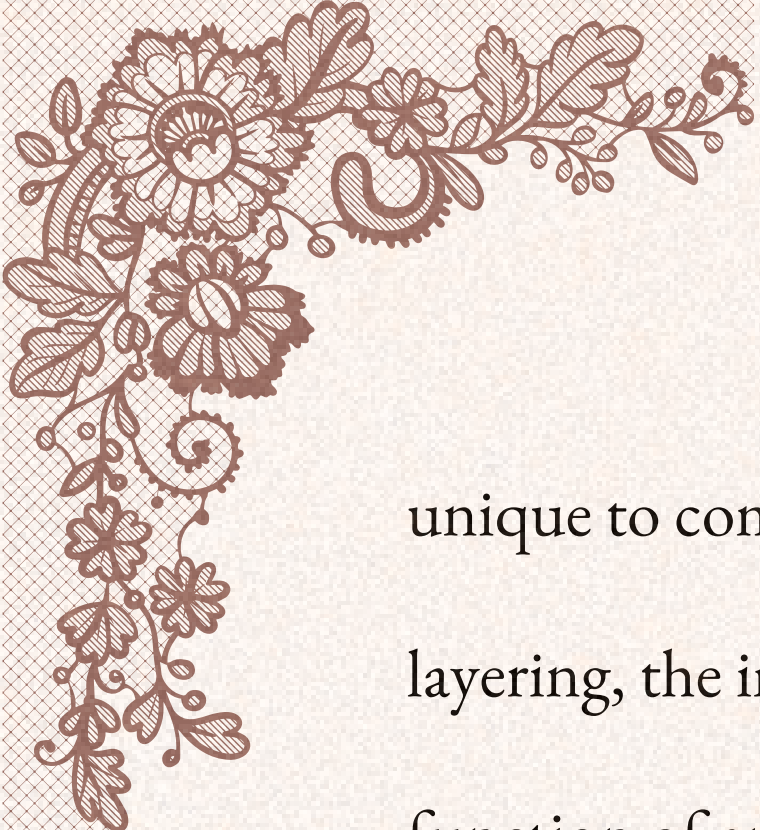
Dionysus [*appealing the audience*]:

O holy man, save me — so we can drink together!¹¹

Another more complex metatheatrical device that Aristophanes uses is mimesis, or the art of imitation through costume play—that is, role-playing within a role. What is especially interesting and

¹⁰ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1180-1181, (1998).

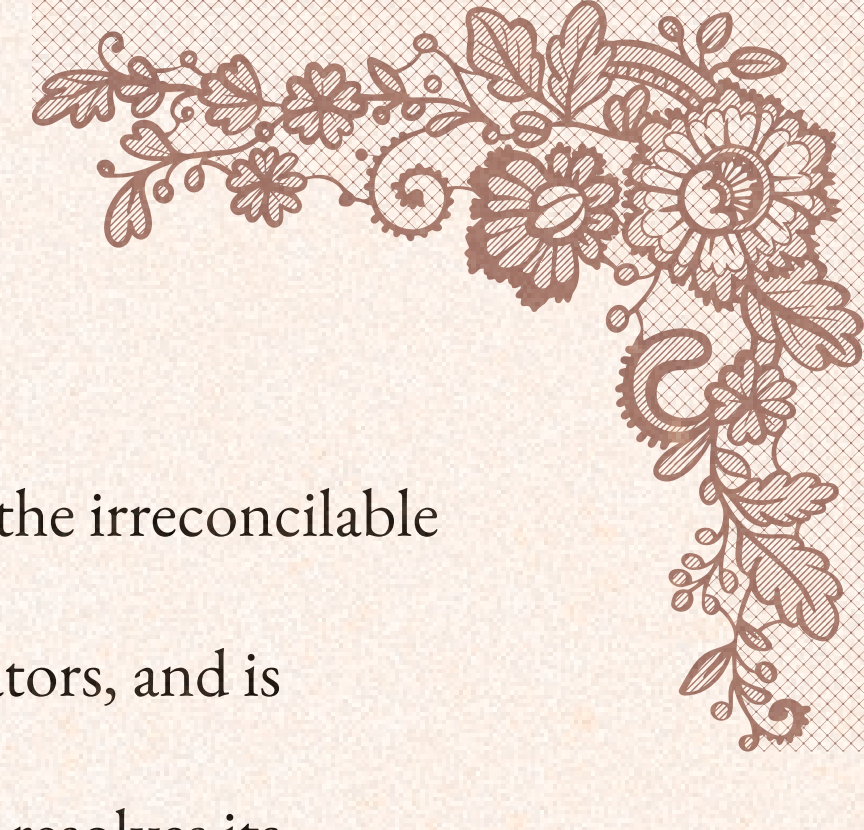
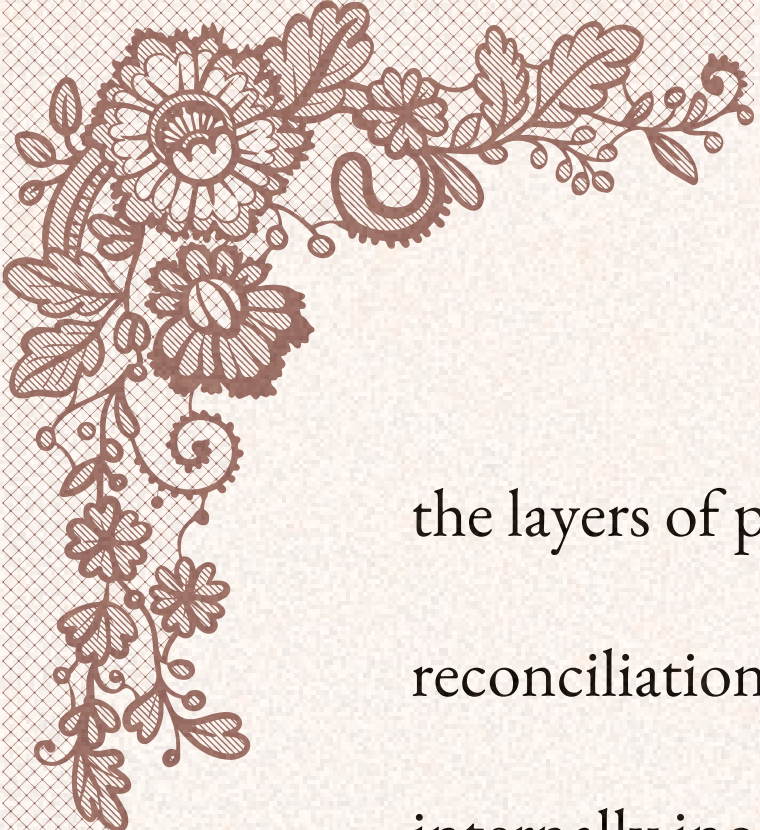
¹¹ Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, [296-300], (2015).



unique to comedy is that there is a purposeful imperfection in these costumes which reveal the layering, the imbrication of identities, in order to bring awareness to the fact of imitation and the function of an actor. In *The Frogs*, Dionysus himself exemplifies the actor's role: to dress on stage and act as if he indeed were a particular character, to take on the spirit of a character. He is particularly suitable for representing this as a deity who is defined by metamorphicism, flux, and vacillation of shape. This fumbling and faltering of Dionysus in his impotent emulation of Herakles is seen,¹² which emphasizes the performative principle of the theatre—it is a space in which identity can be easily subtracted, and a new one can be subsumed with a mere change in costume. Aristophanic comedy really brings attention to this, to the inherent artificiality and falsity of drama.

This is in utmost proximity with the entire second half of *The Frogs*, which engages in yet another central device of comedic metatheatricism: the play-within-a-play. This is a kind of mise en abyme, a smaller drama nested within a larger dramatic framework, which has its own structure consisting of an “internal” world replete with actors and even an audience. It is a replication or superimposed doubling of an audience coming to watch the spectacle, depicting the very nature of theatrical observance. Following the parabasis in the middle of the play, Dionysus finally enters the Underworld (which is, of course, itself a staged theatrical act) to participate as the judge of the competition between the tragedists Euripides and Aeschylus. Curiously, this internal narrative centers around a sequence of events that culminate in the denouement of both the internal and external plays: Dionysus achieves his initial and overall aim, stated at the beginning of the play, to bring back a poet to save Athens and tragedy. The smaller narrative and the overarching narrative within which it is nested are intimately interwoven, and importantly, it resolves itself on multiple fronts, which serves to unify

¹² Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, [460-465], (2015),



the layers of performance with the meta-performance. This diverges drastically from the irreconcilable reconciliation at the end of *Antigone*, which only appears as a resolution to the spectators, and is internally inconsonant with itself otherwise. Again the manner in which comedy self-resolves its foliated chain of events is seen, not only synchronously within itself and within its own layered configuration of actors and plots, but also for the audience.

Over and above this, *The Frogs* is most worthy of representing comedy specifically as the last stage and the end of Art—quite literally, in its exemplification of theatrical immortality and the unending stage. The Underworld presents us with some form of eternal dramaturgy and post-mortem performance; there are deceased dramatists contending in poetic competitions, even despite the acknowledgement of their deaths. What is more, this perpetuity is built into the very structure of drama itself, as it must be ceaselessly reperformed; characters may die or settle offstage, but come back together as a unity at the very end before the curtains close. The encore is the ultimate metadrama. This unending endedness can be understood as the autonomy for Art itself, which cyclically comes back to reenact and reaffirm its own finitude. Thus, it is only through comedy that Art and the theatrical world endures, forever furnished with playwrights, actors, audiences, subjects, spaces, and spectacles, thereby encompassing the immortal movement of Hegelian ideality.



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The Simplest Solution to
the Deepest Paradox of Deontic Logic
is not so Simple After All
Diana Nichvoloda
Harvard University

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
Syracuse University
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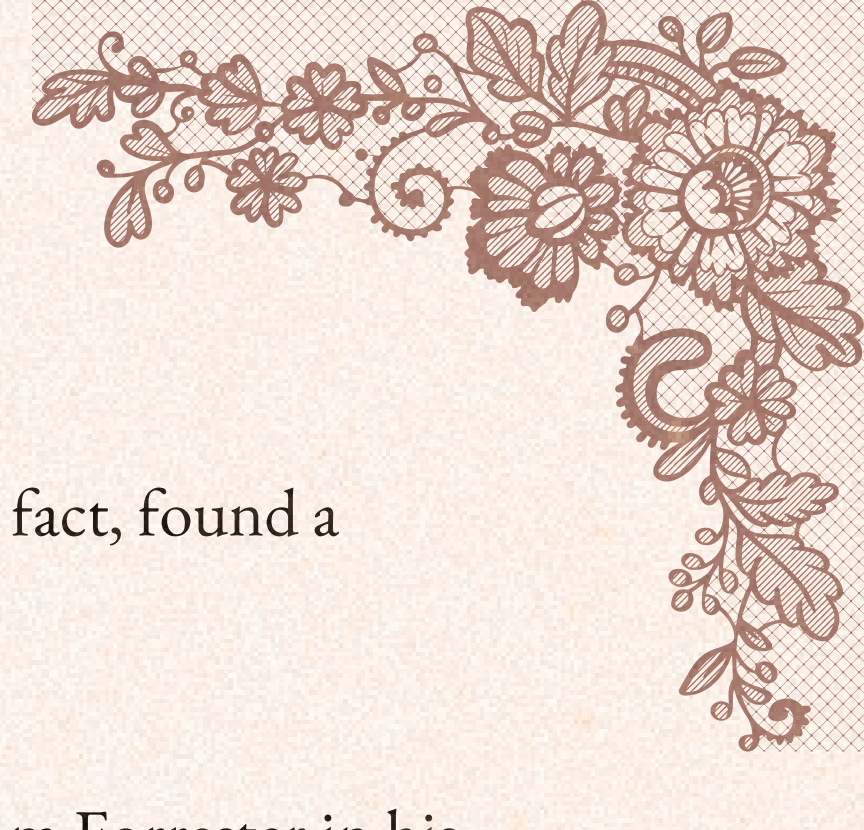
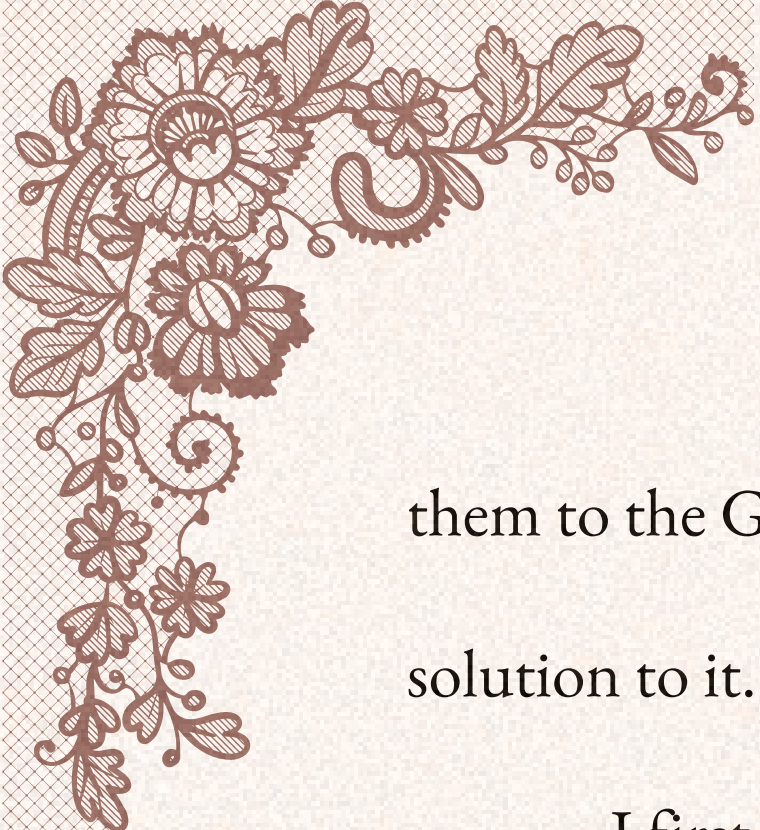
Abstract

In “The Simplest Solution to the Deepest Paradox of Deontic Logic,” Jeremiah Joven Joaquin argues that the Gentle Murderer Paradox arises from a fundamental mistake in its formulation: the deontic obligation operator is applied to indicative statements rather than to imperatives. His proposed solution is to restrict the scope of the obligation operator exclusively to imperatives, thereby dissolving the paradox as ill-formed. Joaquin briefly considers an objection according to which the paradox might be reformulated entirely in imperative terms, but he claims that this “riposte” can be blocked by a corresponding revision of one of the deontic principles. This paper argues that Joaquin’s solution does not succeed. I show that if his reply to the objection is fully developed by systematically reformulating all of the relevant deontic principles so that the obligation operator applies only to imperatives, the Gentle Murderer Paradox re-emerges. The paradox, therefore, cannot be dismissed simply by restricting the scope of the obligation operator.

The Gentle Murderer Paradox

In his 2023 paper, “The Simplest Solution to the Deepest Paradox of Deontic Logic,” Jeremiah Joven Joaquin argues that the problem with the Gentle Murderer Paradox, one of the deepest paradoxes in Deontic logic, arises as a result of an incorrect formulation of the paradox, in which the Deontic operator denoting obligation is applied to indicative statements. His proposed “simplest solution”¹ is to restrict its scope to only imperative statements. Joaquin also briefly considers and rejects an objection that revises one of the axioms of Deontic logic so that it is stated only in terms of imperatives and applies this to the paradox. My paper shows that if Joaquin’s reply to this objection is properly fleshed out by restating all of the Deontic principles in terms of imperatives, then applying

¹ Joaquin, “The Simplest Solution to the Deepest Paradox of Deontic Logic,” *Organon F* 30, no. 4 (2023): 312–322.



them to the Gentle Murderer Paradox, the paradox still stands, so Joaquin has not, in fact, found a solution to it.

I first outline the Gentle Murderer Paradox² as first presented by James William Forrester in his 1984 paper, and as restated by Joaquin. Forrester begins with two reasonable assumptions about murder:

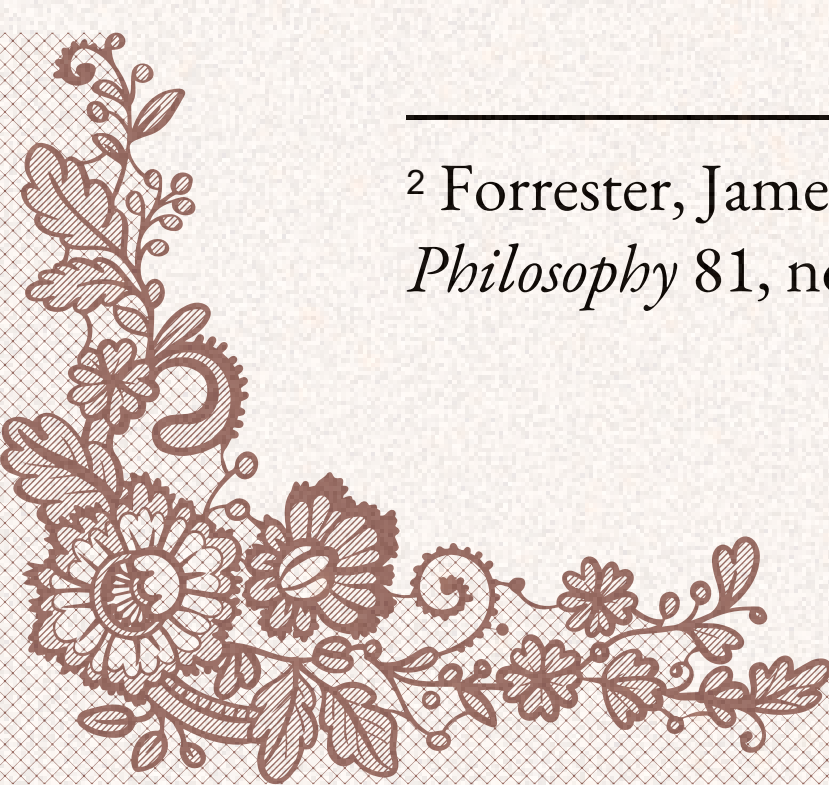
(A1) All kinds of murder are forbidden.

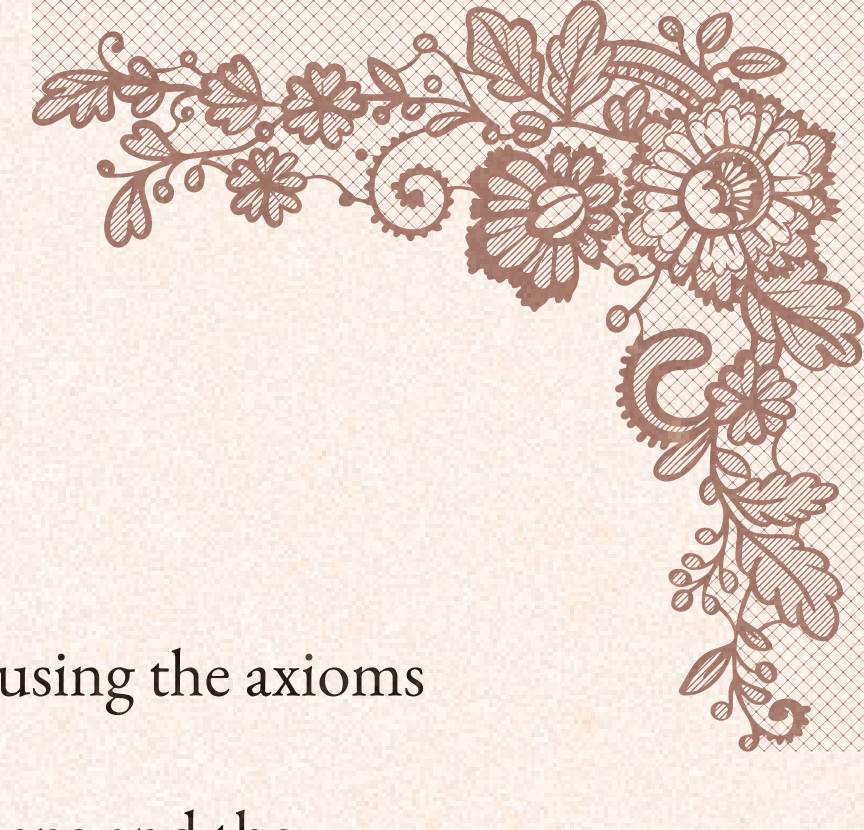
(A2) In a case where murder is unavoidable, murdering someone violently is worse than murdering someone gently.

Forrester and Joaquin then make the following assumption: in fact, Smith did murder Jones. The paradox is stated as follows:

1. It is obligatory that Smith does not murder Jones.
2. It is obligatory that if Smith murders Jones, Smith murders Jones gently.
3. If Smith murders Jones, it is obligatory that Smith murder Jones gently.
4. Smith murders Jones.
5. It is obligatory that Smith murder Jones gently.
6. But if Smith murders Jones gently, then Smith murders Jones.
7. It is obligatory that Smith murder Jones.
8. It is, and it is not obligatory that Smith murders Jones.

² Forrester, James William Forrester. “Gentle Murder, or the Adverbial Samaritan.” *Journal of Philosophy* 81, no. 4 (1984): 193–197.





As a first step to understanding why this paradox arises, Joaquin regiments it using the axioms of propositional and Deontic logic, and defines clearly how he arrives at each of the steps and the conclusion.

The Principles of Deontic Logic

Before examining the Gentle Murderer Paradox, I first give a general introduction to deontic logic as a type of modal logic, and then explain the notation and axioms of deontic logic that Joaquin uses to formalize the paradox. Modal logic extends classical propositional logic by introducing operators representing necessity and possibility. Just as in classical logic, formulas are constructed from the usual propositional variables (such as p, q, r) using the usual propositional connectives: $\neg$ (negation), $\wedge$ (conjunction), $\vee$ (disjunction), $\supset$ (material conditional), and $\Leftrightarrow$ (biconditional). The symbol $\Rightarrow$ is used to represent entailment. However, where classical logic concerns itself only with truth values at a single world, modal logic focuses on a set of possible worlds and the relations that hold among them. Instead of evaluating a claim solely as true or false, evaluating a claim at a certain world a involves examining whether it holds in every world accessible from that world, or whether it holds in at least one such world. To formalize this, modal logic introduces two additional operators:

- $\Box p$, which means “ p is necessary,”
- $\Diamond p$, meaning “ p is possible.”

Most systems of modal logic use the following definition of possibility: $\Diamond p \equiv \neg \Box \neg p$. This means that something is possible if its negation is not necessary. Therefore, $\Box$ is the more fundamental

operator, though for convenience, they are commonly used together. Although modal logic defines statements involving $\Box$ and $\Diamond$ in terms of possible worlds, the modal framework is very versatile and can be interpreted in many different ways: it might represent metaphysical possibility, knowledge, beliefs, or, as in the case of deontic logic, obligation. Deontic logic applies the modal framework to questions of obligation and permission. Obligation, the idea that a certain action, state of affairs, or proposition ought to be the case, is the deontic equivalent of necessity, and permission is the equivalent of possibility. Thus, the deontic operators are defined as follows:

- Op , which means “it is obligatory that p ,”
- Pp , which means “it is permissible that p .”

Just as $\Diamond p$ is equivalent to $\neg\Box\neg p$, the deontic operator P is typically defined as:

$$Pp \equiv \neg O\neg p.$$

Put simply, this means that if not- p is not obligatory, then p is permissible. Deontic logic has three core principles, which Joaquin abbreviates D1, D2, and D3. The first principle of conditional obligations:

$$(D1) O(p \supset q) \supset (p \supset Oq)$$

Therefore, if q is obligatory given p , then, should p obtain, it follows that q is obligatory. The second is the inferential rule:

$$(D2) (p \supset q) \Rightarrow (Op \supset Oq)$$

This somewhat controversially allows us to infer $Op \supset Oq$ from the material conditional $p \supset q$. This means that whenever the material conditional $p \supset q$ is true - even in cases when it is vacuously true - the corresponding conditional about obligations follows. Thus, D2 is a way to show how material conditionals transfer into deontic conditionals.

The third principle is (D3) $Op \supset \neg O\neg p$, which states that if p is obligatory, then it is not obligatory that not- p , i.e., that whatever is obligatory is permissible.

Regimenting the Paradox

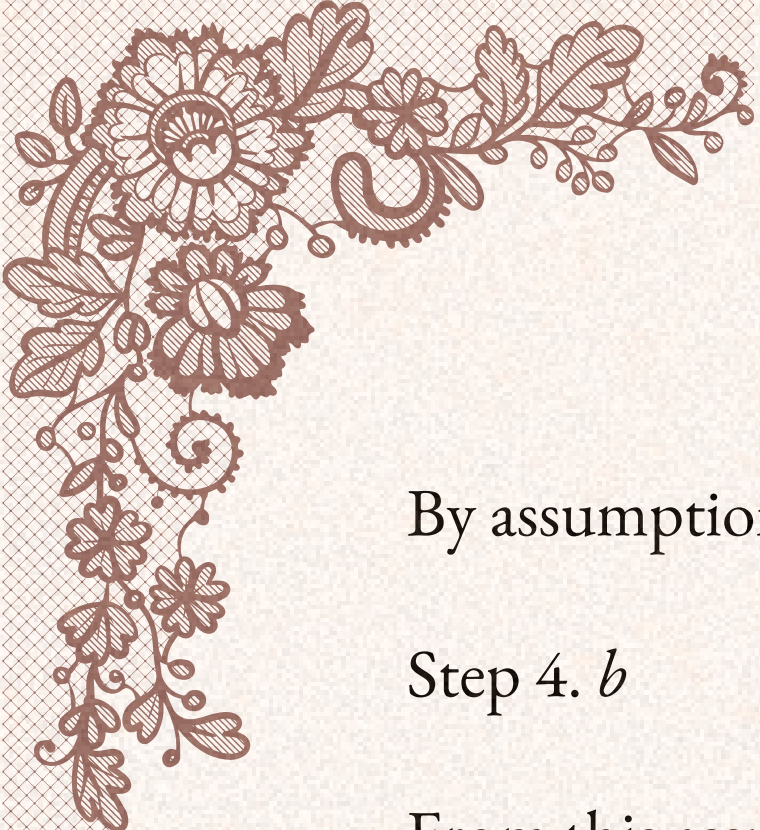
In this section, I explain how Joaquin uses deontic logic to explain Forrester's paradox and how this leads him to the conclusion that the problem with the paradox is its formulation, specifically the scope of the O operator. Though in his paper, Joaquin doesn't regiment the Gentle Murderer paradox only in terms of propositional variables and connectives, I think it is important to do so in order to see its structure and the logic of deriving each step sequentially more clearly. Let a represent "Smith murders Jones gently," and b represent "Smith murders Jones." From the two assumptions (A1) and (A2), we have,

Step 1. $O(\neg b)$

Step 2. $O(b \supset a)$

From Step 2, using D1:

Step 3. $b \supset Oa$



By assumption:

Step 4. b

From this assumption and Step 3, using modus ponens, we derive:

Step 5. Oa

Since any form of murder, gentle or otherwise, is still murder, then if Smith murders Jones gently, then Smith murders Jones:

Step 6. $a \supset b$

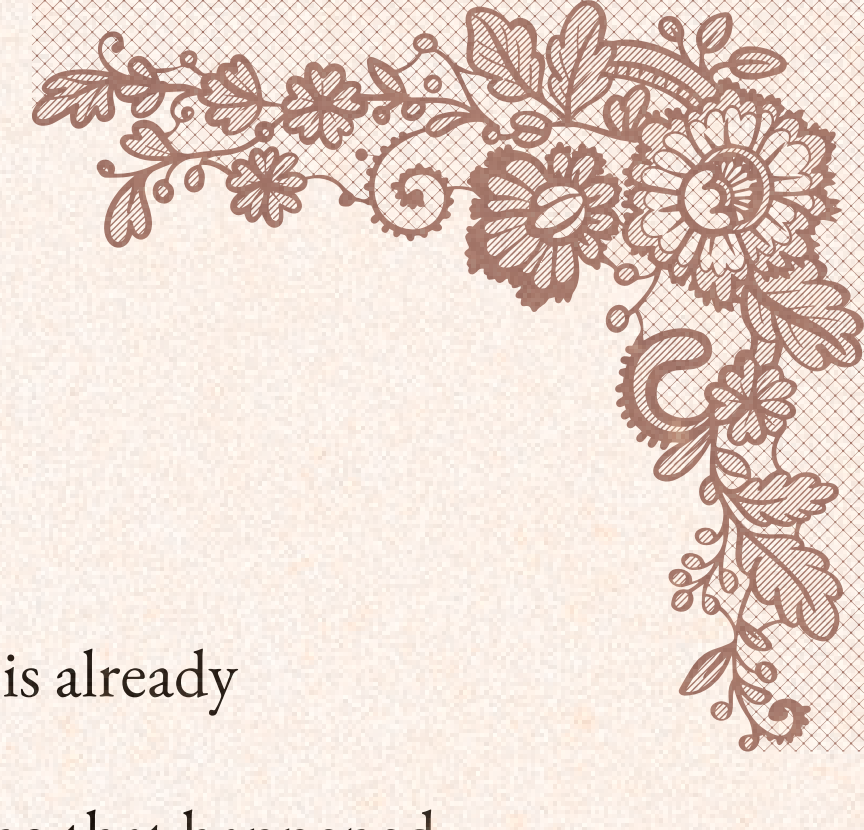
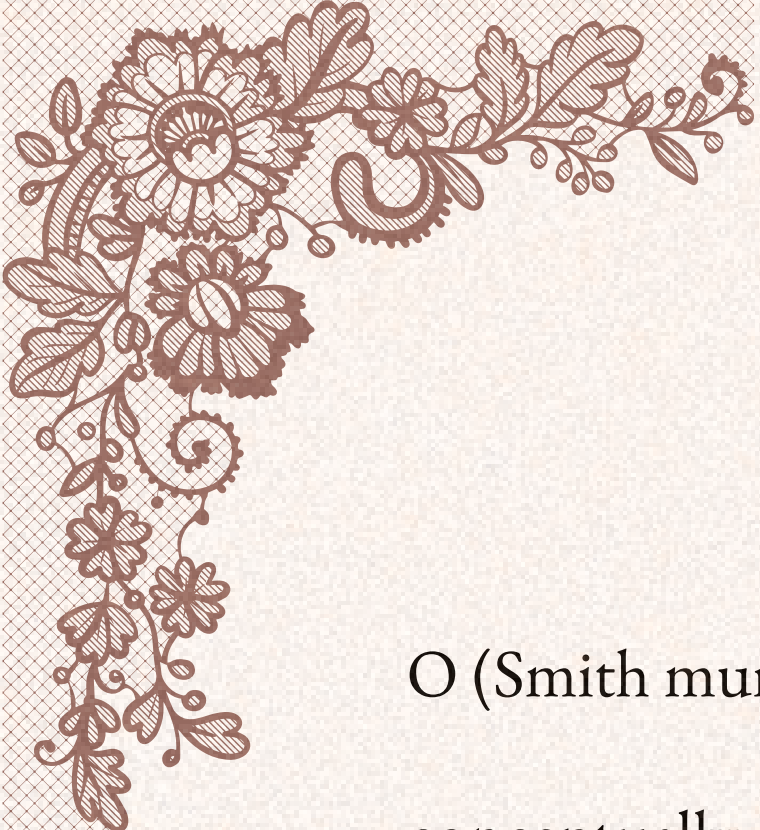
Then, from Steps 5, 6, D2 applied to 6, and modus ponens:

Step 7. Ob

Finally, taking 7 and 1 together, we see that there is a contradiction: Step 8. $(Ob). (O(\neg b))$.

This regimentation allows Joaquin to make his diagnosis: the paradox does not arise because there is something incoherent about deontic logic, rather, it is generated by a fundamental mistake in the formulation of its premises: as written, it treats the deontic operator O as ranging over indicatives of actions - statements describing what an agent does - when in fact, it can only properly range over imperatives of actions.

Joaquin emphasizes that the crux of the paradox lies in assuming that the obligation operator can be used on indicative statements, such as those of the form “S does A.” Such propositions are statements of fact; they are descriptive and not normative. He argues that indicatives and obligations are two fundamentally different entities: facts can be true, false, necessary, etc., but they cannot be obligatory, while obligations cannot be treated as factual assertions. Thus, reading an expression such as:



O (Smith murders Jones gently) as “It is obligatory that Smith murders Jones gently” is already conceptually mistaken. It treats a descriptive proposition, a statement about something that happened, as an obligation, which is applying the O operator to the wrong type of statement. He explains this by arguing as follows. The statement “Amanda cleans her room” describes the fact that Amanda cleans her room. However, if we are allowed to apply O to indicative statements, then O (Amanda cleans her room) is read as “It is obligatory that Amanda cleans her room.” However, he objects, how can the fact that Amanda cleans her room be obligatory? Intuitively, it does not make sense that facts can be obligated to happen. To avoid this problem, Joaquin argues that the obligation operator cannot be applied to indicative statements, because doing so would be turning descriptive facts into normative prescriptions. Joaquin proposes that the scope of the deontic operator should be limited to only imperative statements of the form “S, do A,” or a statement of a mandate directed at an agent, rather than a description of what the agent does. For example, instead of the odd formulation O (Amanda cleans her room),

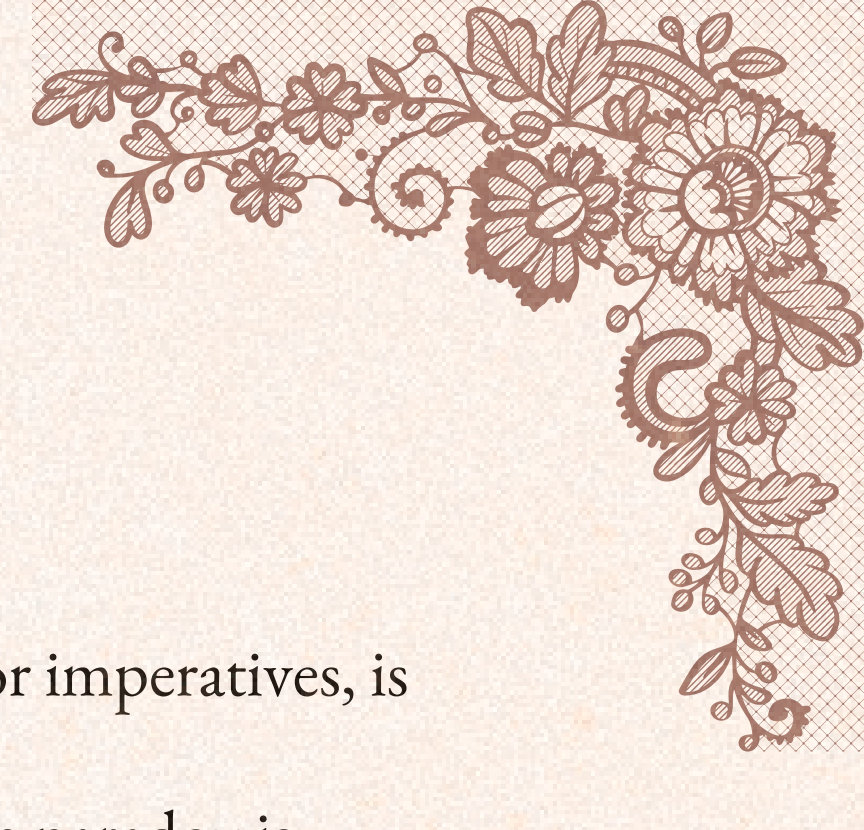
The statement is properly applied to commands such as O (Amanda, clean your room!). He thinks that obligations should attach to acts an agent may or may not perform, not to states of affairs that may or may not happen, independently of the agent’s actions.

How does identifying this problem provide Joaquin with a solution to the Gentle Murderer paradox? Given that he thinks the O operator attaches only to imperatives, he finds fault with the second principle of deontic logic – that $p \supset q$ entails $Op \supset Oq$ doesn’t make sense when applied to certain indicatives p and q . He gives the following example: “If Amanda’s room is dirty, then Amanda cleans it” is a conditional statement in terms of indicatives, but it does not make sense to say that this

statement entails “If it is obligatory that Amanda’s room is dirty, then it is obligatory that Amanda cleans it.” This is because a statement of fact, such as “Amanda’s room is dirty,” according to his reasoning above, cannot be obligatory. This allows him to propose his “simplest solution” to the deepest paradox of deontic logic: if the paradox is stated in terms of indicatives, then it simply doesn’t make sense, in the same way that “it is obligatory that Amanda’s room is dirty” is ill-formulated. Given the explanation above, Joaquin concludes that he has successfully defended his solution to the Gentle Murderer paradox. At the end of his paper, he briefly considers the following objection, which he calls a “riposte:”

What if the Gentle Murderer paradox were reformulated in terms of imperatives and not indicatives of actions? In particular, what if the controversial inferential rule (D2) were re-formulated with its scope narrowed only to imperatives - would that not solve the problem? Thus, Joaquin briefly considers a revised version of D2, which he calls D2*: $(D2^*) (p! \supset q!) \implies (Op! \supset Oq!)$, where exclamation points behind sentence letters denote imperatives. He argues that using D2* in place of D2 blocks the inference from Steps 5 and 6 to Step 7, since we are no longer allowed to infer obligations from statements of fact, which D2 allows us to do in the original paradox. The introduction of D2* leads him to two cases:

- In the first case, granting Step 5 and D2* in the revised paradox, it is impossible to infer from the indicative contents of Step 6 the deontic statement in Step 7, since in the revised paradox, there is no deontic principle that allows for facts to entail obligations.
- In the second case, the inference from Step 5 to Step 7 in the paradox no longer works since D2* only applies to imperatives of actions, not indicatives.

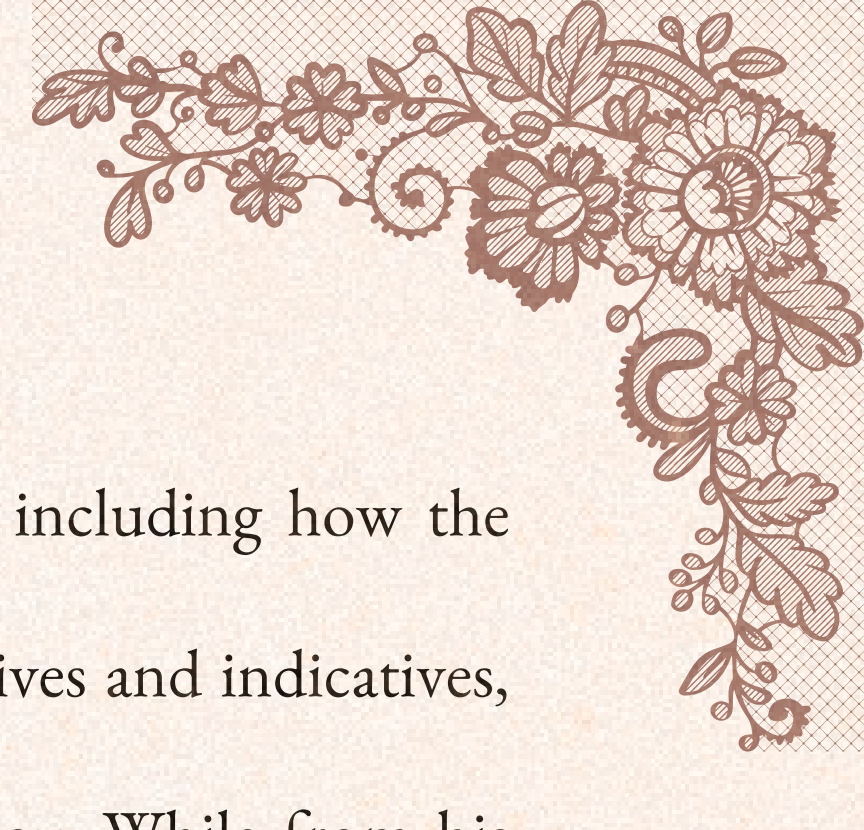
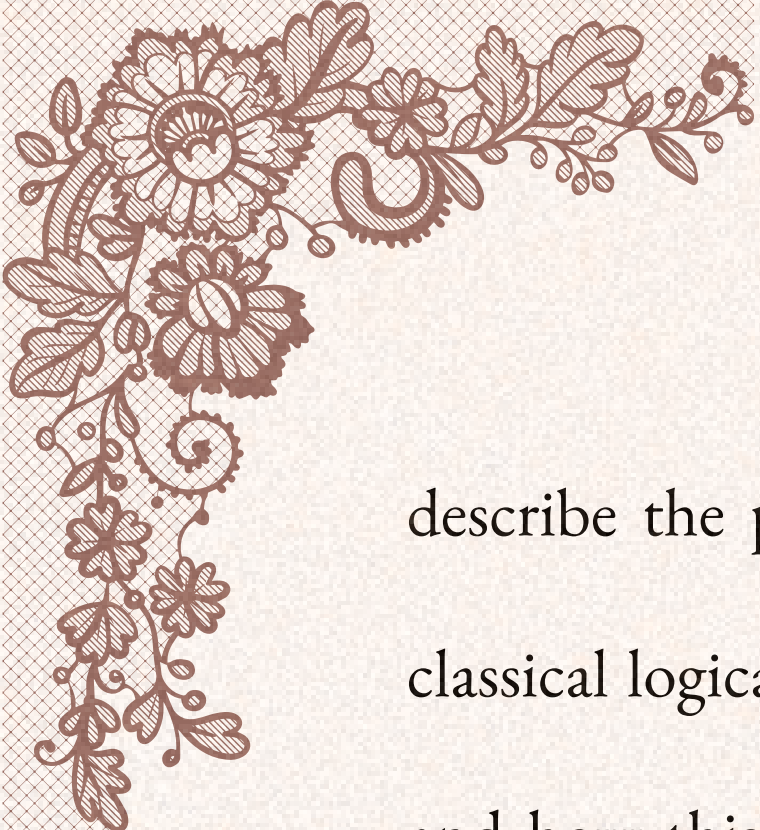


Therefore, Joaquin concludes that writing a new rule, D2*, to be used only for imperatives, is sufficient to address the riposte, and his original diagnosis about the problem with the paradox is correct. I don't find this response satisfactory, especially since Joaquin proceeds directly to rewriting the paradox using D2* instead of taking the time to explain exactly what he means by a statement such as $p! \supset q!$. I also don't think that he can so easily dispense with the paradox by modifying just one of the deontic axioms – to construct a proper response to the objection, I think Joaquin should have revised all of them, making sure that O is applied only to imperatives. In the section below, I flesh out his argument, incorporating two kinds of sentences - imperative and indicative - to show why it fails.

Evaluating Joaquin's Solution to the Paradox

While Joaquin's use of formal methods to regiment the original statement of the Gentle Murderer Paradox is illuminating, his attempt to regiment the riposte and his short reply to it are inadequate at best. While he thinks that he can solve the entire paradox by putting exclamation marks behind sentence letters to represent imperatives and thus restrict the scope of application of O, he fails to consider that by doing so, he is implicitly using a system of deontic logic that combines indicative sentences with imperative sentences, which he entirely fails to discuss. If he were to attempt to flesh out the details of such a system, he would see that restricting the scope of the deontic operator to imperatives does not, in fact, solve the paradox. He would also see that while a statement consisting of entirely indicatives entailing a statement of entirely imperatives in D2 is a problem, an equally important problem is caused by the way the O operator is used on indicatives in D1, something he argues against in words but fails to formally regiment.

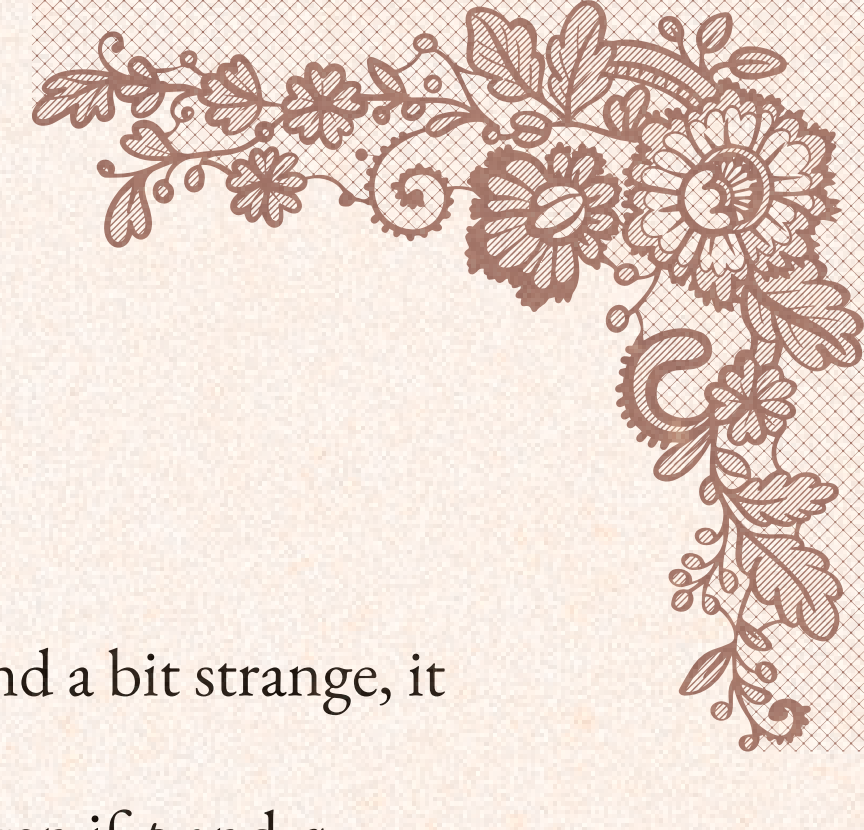
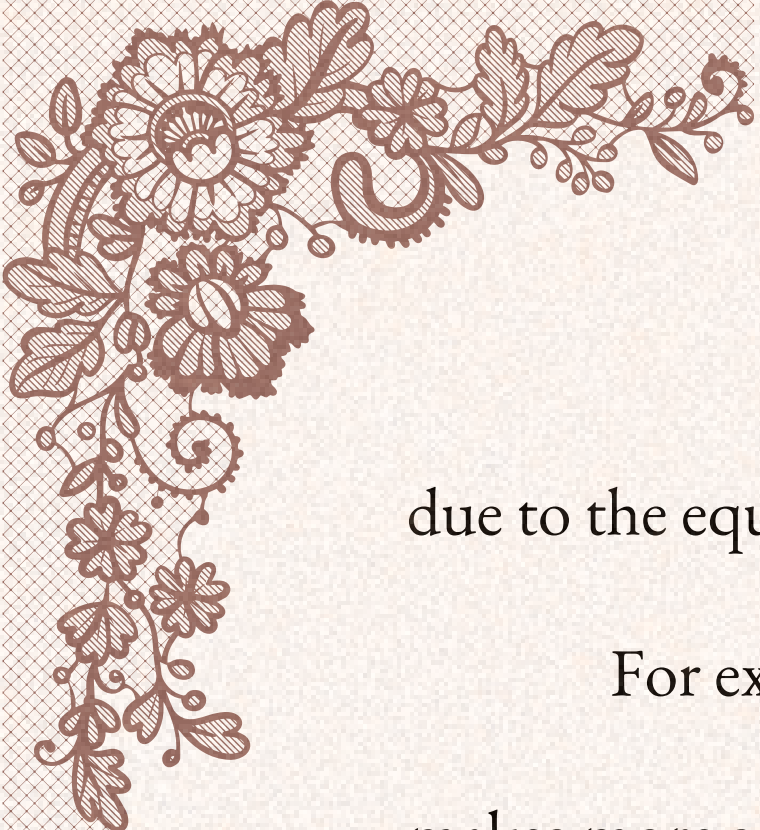
I think that in order to adequately address the objection raised in the riposte, he would need to



describe the particular system of Deontic logic he intends to use in more detail, including how the classical logical operators should apply to imperatives and combinations of imperatives and indicatives, and how this would change the three Deontic axioms when applied to the paradox. While from his paper, it is not totally clear how his proposed system should work or what combinations should be allowed, I propose one plausible candidate for a system, and attempt to rewrite the paradox using this system.

My proposed hybrid logical system contains both indicatives, which are denoted by the usual variables p , q , r , etc., and imperatives, which are denoted by sentence letters in square brackets: $[p]$, $[q]$, $[r]$, etc. The connectives for propositional logic are defined in the usual way for indicative sentences, but there are some differences when applied to imperatives. First, I focus on combinations of two imperatives.

- The negation of an imperative, $\neg[p]$, is an imperative. For example, the negation of “stop!” is “don’t stop!”
- The conjunction of imperatives, $[p].[q]$ is also an imperative. For example, the conjunction of “stop!” and “turn around!” is “stop and turn around!”
- Similarly, the disjunction of imperatives, $[p] \vee [q]$, is also an imperative. For example, the disjunction of “stop!” and “turn around!” is “stop or turn around!”
- The material conditional, when applied to two imperatives, $[p] \supset [q]$, is also an imperative. The intuitive reasoning for this is that just like the material conditional, it is possible to meaningfully interpret the horseshoe between two imperatives regardless of whether they are substantively related,



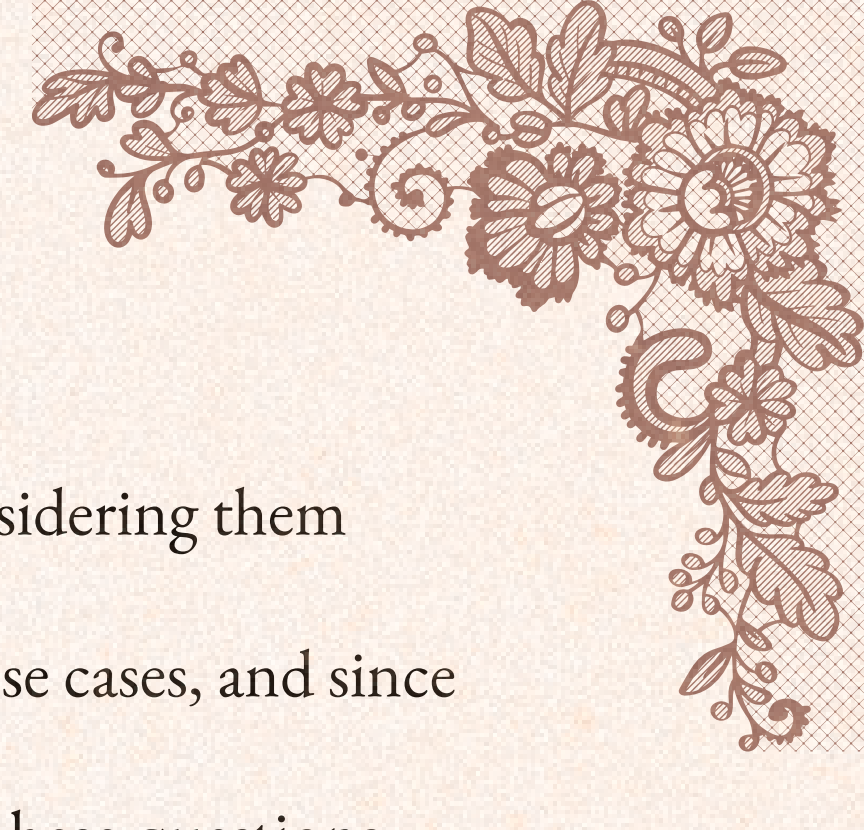
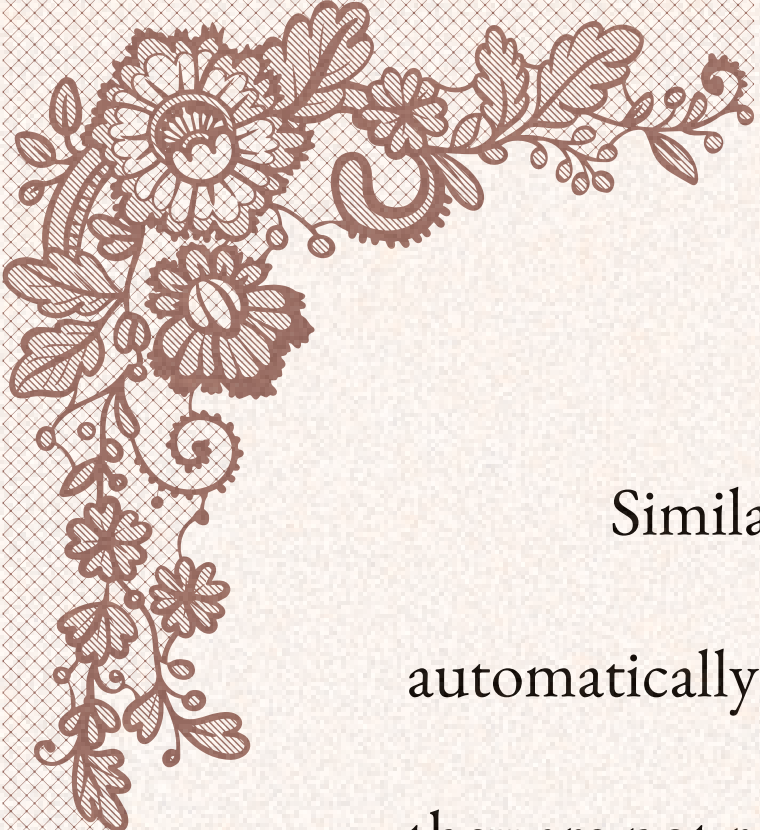
due to the equivalence of $p \supset q$ and $\neg p \vee q$.

For example, while the sentence “If [you] stop! Then turn around!” may sound a bit strange, it makes more sense when converted to the following: “Don’t stop, or turn around!” Even if p and q aren’t substantively related, it is possible to interpret the material conditional between them. For example, “If [you] stop! Then take out the trash!” can be converted into “Don’t stop, or take out the trash!” which still makes sense.

- The biconditional operator, when placed between two imperatives, simply means that the commands are equivalent: for example, $[p] \Leftrightarrow [q]$ would represent something like the equivalence between “stop!” and “don’t move!”

The real difficulty when defining a system of Deontic logic that uses both indicatives and imperatives is making sense of combinations of both types of sentences. This raises various problems. First, I am not sure what to make of sentences such as $p.[q]$ or $p \vee [q]$, the English equivalents of which would be something like “the stoplight is red, and stop!” or “the stoplight is red, or stop!”. The difficulty arises when attempting to negate such statements, in deciding whether the negation should apply to one or both of the constituent statements. To me, the following are equally unintuitive ways of negating a sentence such as “the stoplight is red, or stop!”:

- “It is not the case that the stoplight is red, or stop!”
- “The stoplight is red, or don’t stop!”
- “It is not the case that the stoplight is red, or don’t stop!”



Similarly, I do not know how to treat statements such as $[p] \Leftrightarrow q$ beyond considering them automatically false. Joaquin also gives no indication as to how he would deal with these cases, and since they are not relevant to the three axioms of Deontic logic he uses in his paper, I leave these questions for further consideration.

For the purposes of my analysis, I focus on the material conditional between an indicative and an imperative, since this is present in the first axiom. There are two cases: $[p] \supset q$ and $p \supset [q]$. To me, $[p] \supset q$ does not make sense, since the imperative on its own can give no information on whether or not it was complied with, so it cannot imply any sort of indicative consequence. The truth value of this sentence would then only depend on q , which defeats the purpose of even combining q with an imperative antecedent.

The more interesting case is $p \supset [q]$, which corresponds to English statements such as “If the stop light is red, then stop!” which do make sense intuitively. While it would be straightforward to allow the same material conditional as in propositional logic between p and $[q]$, this raises several problems. First, would the negation of such a sentence apply to p only, $[q]$ only, or both of them? For example, which of the following is the correct negation of the “If the stoplight is red, then stop!”:

- “If it is not the case that the stoplight is red, then stop!”
- “If the stop light is red, then don’t stop!”
- “If it is not the case that the stoplight is red, then don’t stop!”

To me, none of these statements is clearly more correct than the others. Trying to clear up this confusion by converting the conditional to a disjunction and using DeMorgan’s Law leads to the



following:

$$\neg(p \supset [q]) \rightarrow \neg(\neg p \vee [q]) \rightarrow p. \neg[q],$$

Interpreted in English, it would read “The stoplight is red, and don’t stop!” which runs into problems described previously.

For all of the reasons stated above, I think it is useful to define a version of $\supset$ that can connect an indicative antecedent with an imperative consequent to produce another imperative, though a conditional one. I denote this new operator by using the symbol “/”. It has the same meaning and is used in the same way as $\supset$, except for one important difference - the negation of $p/[q]$ is defined as follows:

$$\neg(p/[q]) \equiv (p/\neg[q]).$$

Using the above example again, the negation of “If the stoplight is red, then stop!” is defined to be “If the stoplight is red, then don’t stop!”

Now I will address the question of whether this framework allows imperatives and their combinations with indicatives to be assigned truth values. While I do not think that it makes sense for standalone imperatives, such as “Wash the dishes!” or “Clean your room!” to be truth-functional, I do think it is possible to work with them in a truth-functional context through defining operators that first convert them into indicatives. The first way to do this is to use the O operator, which, as Joaquin argues, accepts only imperatives, and I add, turns imperatives into indicatives of the form ”this

imperative must be satisfied.” For example, $O(\text{Clean your room!}) \rightarrow [\text{Someone}]$ is obligated to clean their room, which could be true or false, depending on the state of the world.

However, I think that in order to represent the Gentle Murderer Paradox more accurately, another imperative-to-indicative operator is needed. Accordingly, I define the operator \$, which converts imperative statements to statements of fact, which can then be assigned a truth value based on whether or not the imperative was complied with. For example, the \$ operator would convert the command $[\text{Wash the dishes!}]$ to the indicative statement “The dishes have been washed,” which is truth-evaluable. While both of the examples above were given in impersonal form, it is possible to interpret both as applying to particular people, for example

$O(\text{Amanda, clean your room!}) \rightarrow \text{Amanda is obligated to clean her room.}$

$$(\text{Amanda, wash the dishes!}) \rightarrow \text{Amanda has washed the dishes.}$

Next, using the two newly defined operators, I attempt to revise the formulations of the Deontic axioms D1, D2, and D3 in terms of both indicative and imperative statements. Joaquin’s original modification of the second axiom, which he calls D2,* reads as follows when rewritten using the new notation:

$(D2^*) [p] \supset [q] \Rightarrow O[p] \supset O[q].$

While Joaquin does not explain why this is the best way to rewrite D2, I agree that it is better than the original statement. $(D2) (p \supset q) \Rightarrow (Op \supset Oq)$, which doesn’t make sense for

two separate reasons: the fact that O is applied to indicatives, and the fact that indicative statements entail statements about obligations. While I think that Joaquin should have done more work in either defending or attacking this modified version of D2, I will accept Joaquin's D2* in my regimentation for the sake of showing that it does not solve the problem in the way he thinks it does.

I now focus on revising D1, the original statement of which was (D1) $O(p \supset q) \supset (p \supset Oq)$. Under my new framework, this does not make sense since the O operator is applied to the indicatives $p \supset q$ and q . I propose the following modification: (E1) $O(\$[p]/[q]) \supset (\$[p] \supset O[q])$.

Since $\$[p]/[q]$ is defined to be an imperative, while $\$[p]$ and $O[q]$ are indicatives, this modified version of E1 doesn't face the same problems as the original D1. Also, though it is not particularly relevant, D3 can be rewritten as follows: (E3) $O([p]) \supset \neg O\neg([p])$.

Having modified the three principles of deontic logic to accommodate imperatives, I use these axioms to regiment the Gentle Murderer Paradox again, being careful with the scope of the operators that I apply. Let r represent the imperative sentence "Smith, kill Jones gently!" and s represent the imperative "Smith, kill Jones!" Recall that the original two assumptions were,

(A1) All kinds of murder are forbidden.

(A2) In a case where murder is unavoidable, murdering someone violently is worse than murdering someone gently.

From (A1) and (A2), we have,

Step 1. $O(\neg[s])$



Step 2. $O(\$[s]/[r])$

From Step 2, using E1:

Step 3. $\$[s] \supset O[r]$

By assumption:

Step 4. $\$[s]$

From this assumption and Step 3, using modus ponens, we derive:

Step 5. $O[r]$

Since any form of murder, gentle or otherwise, is still murder, the imperative "Smith, kill Jones gently!" entails the imperative "Smith, kill Jones!":

Step 6. $[r] \supset [s]$

Then, by D2,*

Step 6.5. $O[r] \supset O[s]$

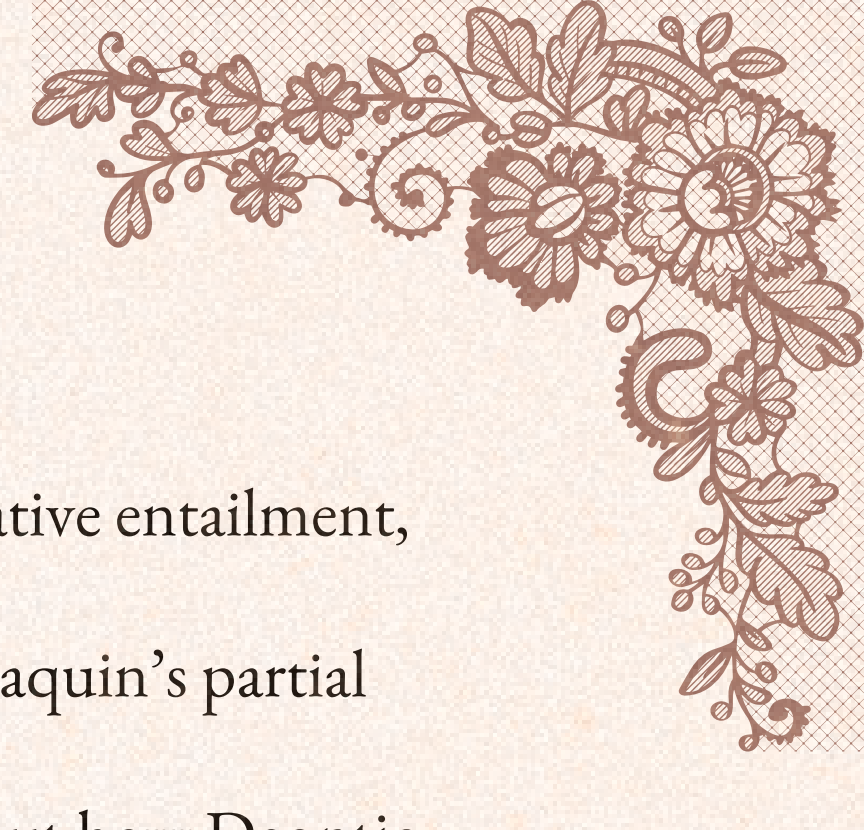
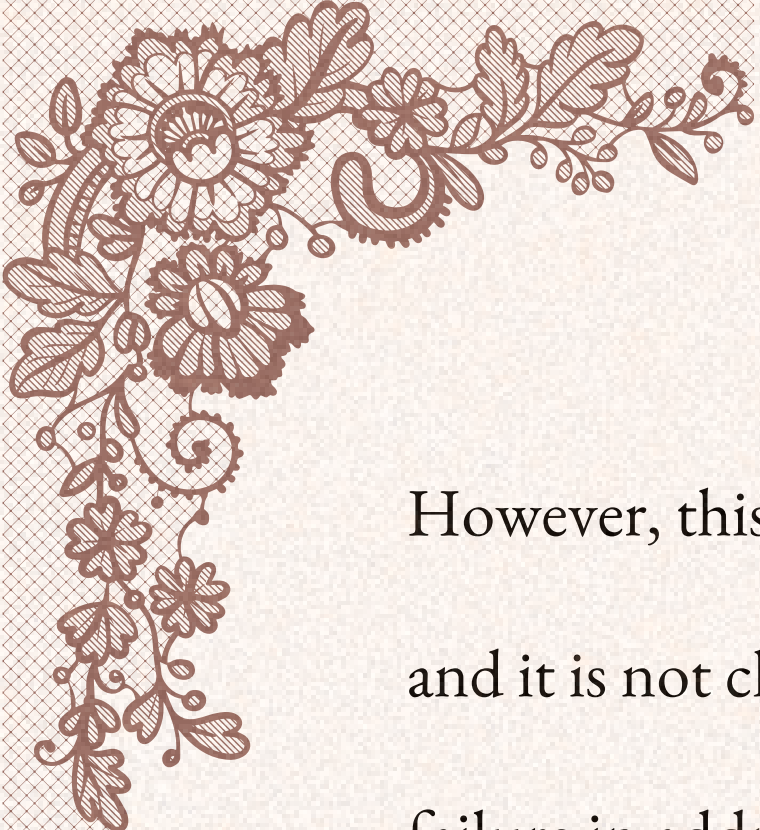
From Steps 5, 6.5, and modus ponens:

Step 7. $O[s]$

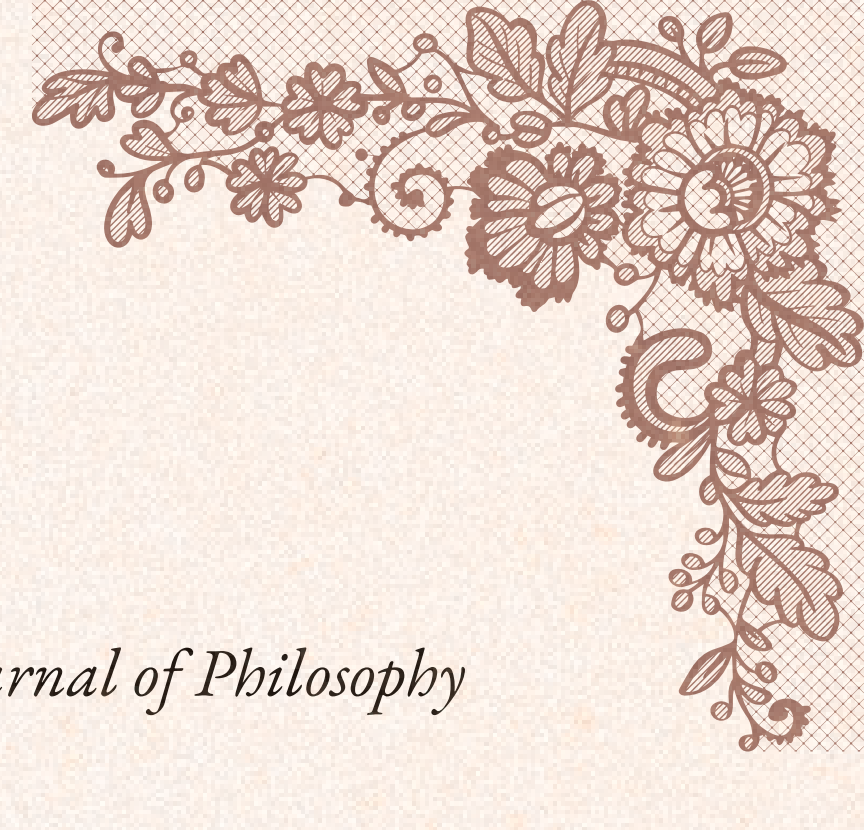
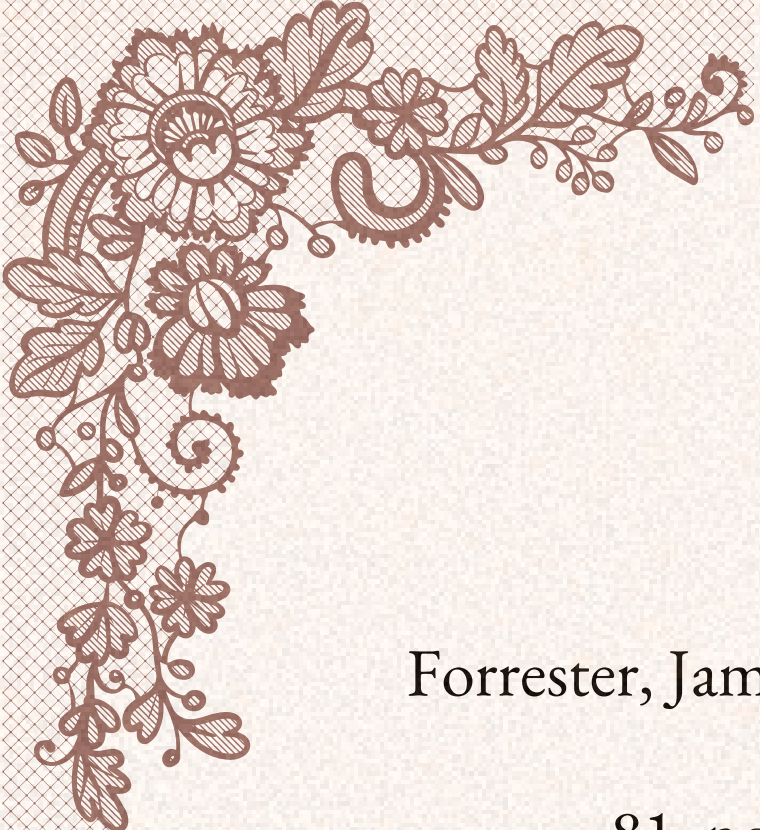
Finally, taking 7 and 1 together, we see that the contradiction returns! Step 8. $(O[s]).(O(\neg[s]))$.

Thus, I have shown that Joaquin's proposed solution to restrict the scope of O to only imperatives and rewrite the principles of Deontic logic accordingly does not solve the Gentle Murderer Paradox after all. As it turns out, when stated in terms of imperatives and when the corresponding new rules are used, the paradox remains.

In conclusion, I think that Joaquin is correct that the paradox is properly formulated in terms of imperatives, and he takes a step in the right direction by rephrasing D2 in terms of imperatives.



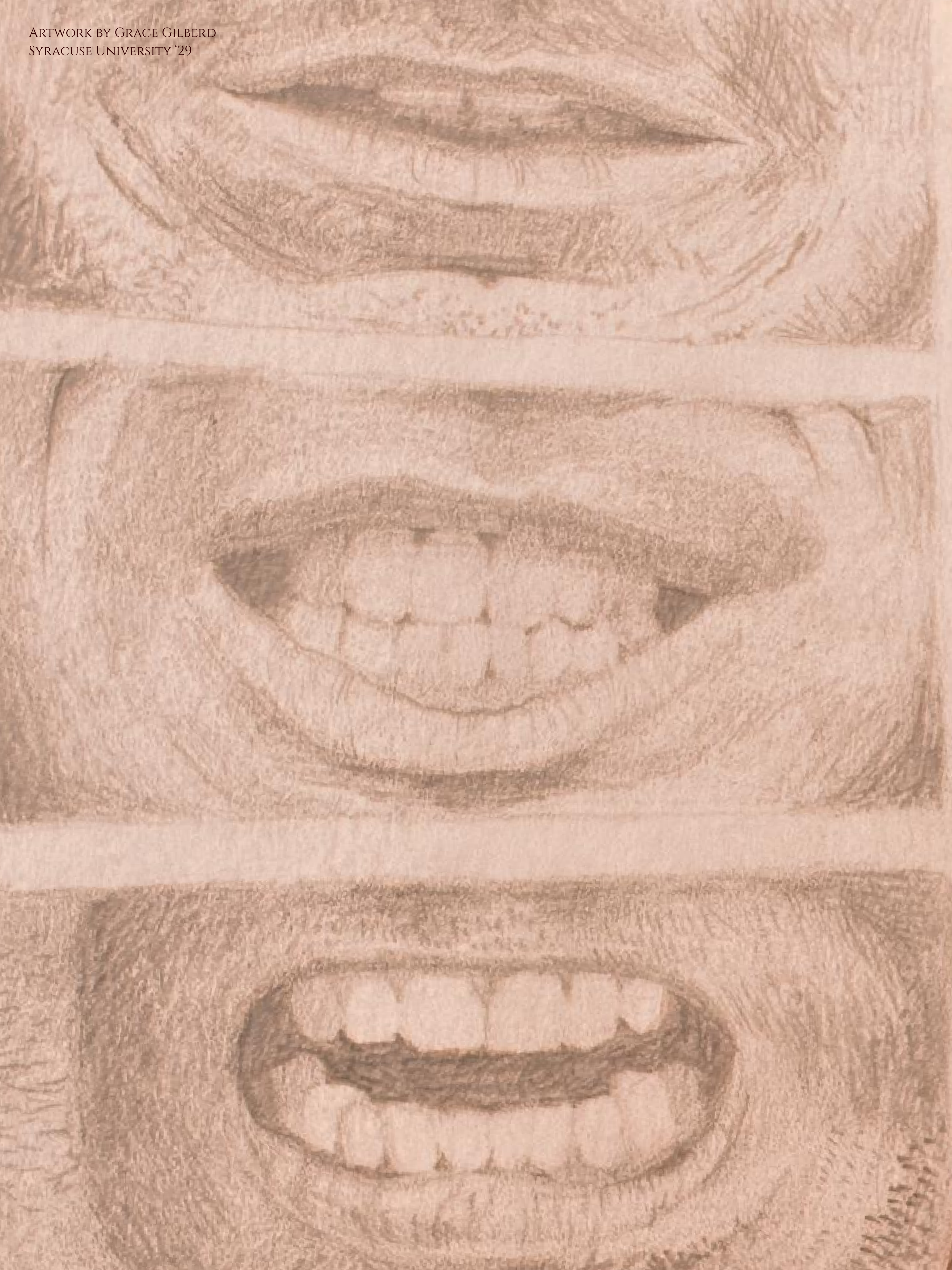
However, this only partially solves the problem, as D1 also contains indicative imperative entailment, and it is not clear why he fails to address this and only focuses on revising D2. Still, Joaquin’s partial failure in addressing the objection in the riposte raises many interesting questions about how Deontic logics should properly define combinations of indicative and imperative statements, which are important to consider. My proposed method is far from the perfect solution to this question, though it provides a clear way to show that Joaquin fails to satisfactorily solve the Gentle Murderer Paradox, making his proposed “simplest solution” not so simple after all.



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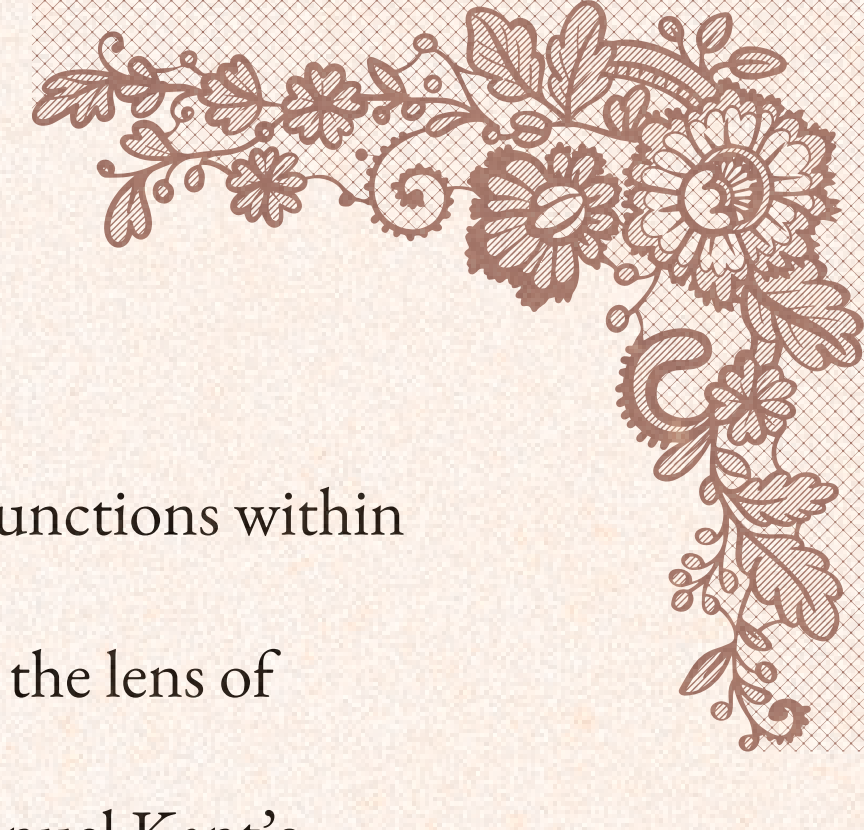
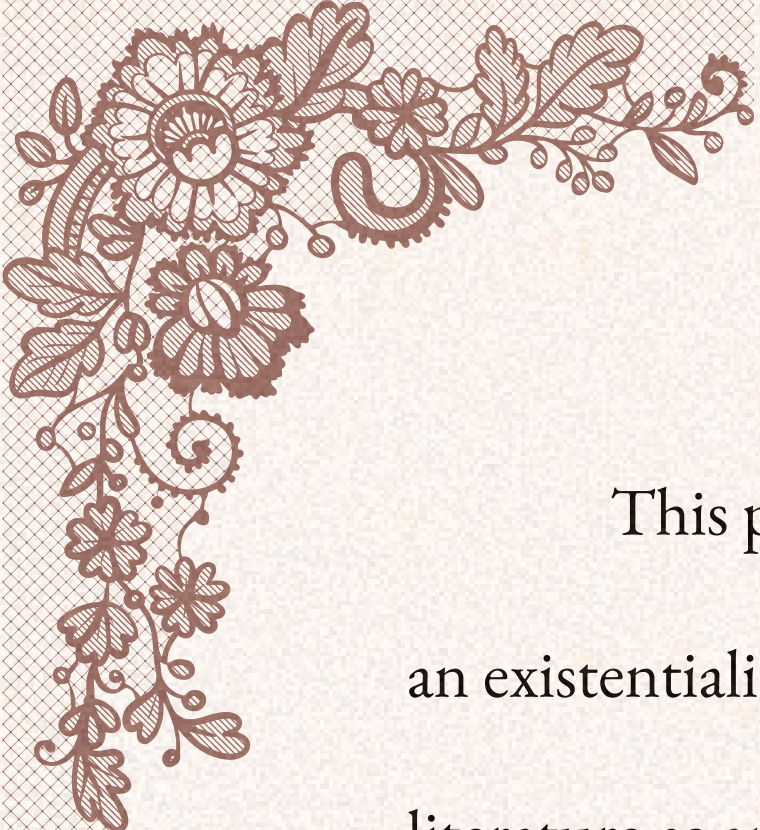


Sartre, Camus, and Kant:
Subjectivity and the Philosophy of Literature
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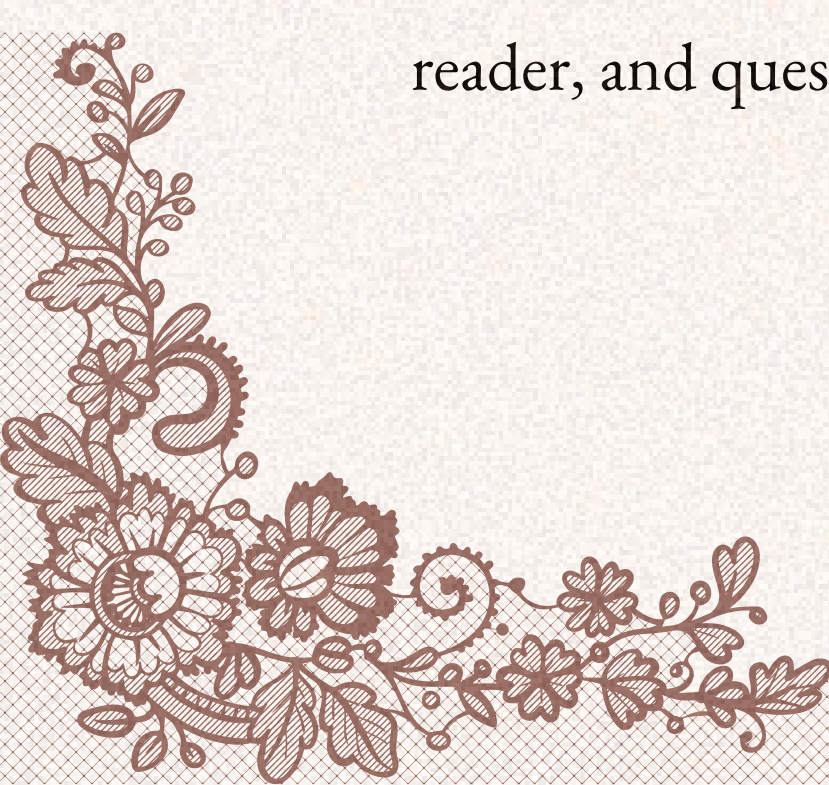
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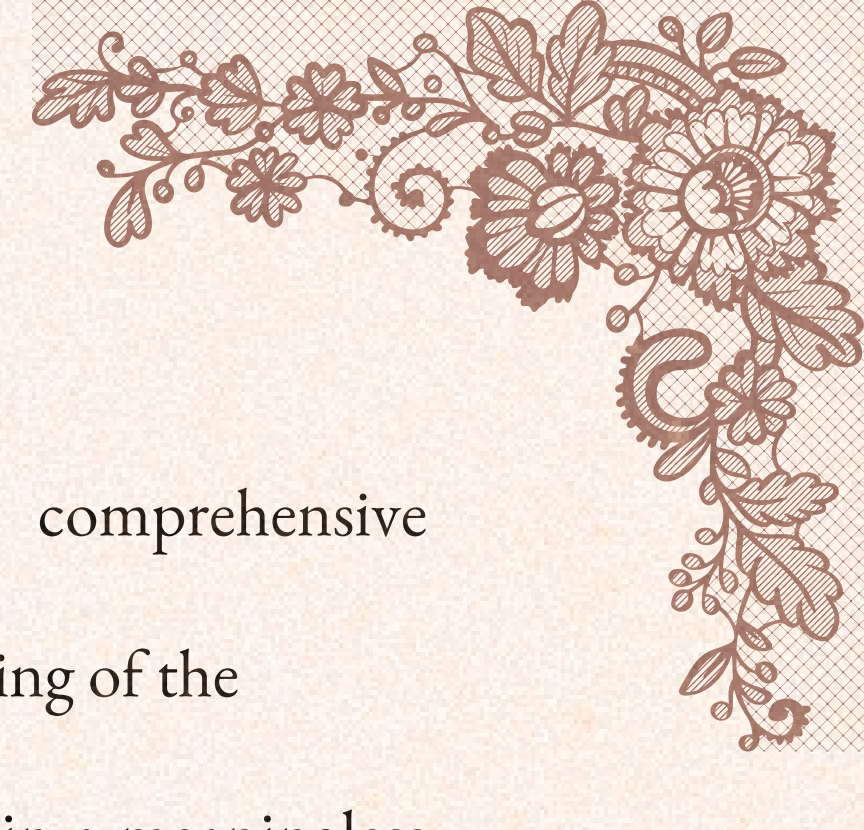


This paper aims to develop a better understanding of the way the subjective functions within an existentialist philosophical perspective. In particular, it will approach this through the lens of literature as an artistic focus. This paper will provide evidence for its claim that Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* provides support for the subjective nature of literature as thought of by Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Questions focused upon include: Can Kant's understanding of a middle ground help push back against relativism? Is there something that can be accepted on behalf of Sartre and Camus, or must it be rejected because of their commitment to the subjective? These questions, in addition to the paper's thesis, are quite relevant, as literature is a prominent tool used by existentialists to convey philosophical thoughts, and literature—like existentialism—has faced many questions about its subjective nature over the years. An overview of the philosophical frameworks and ideas held by Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus will be given, then the paper will transition to a critique by Roland Barthes. Following the critique, an example of a novel that exemplifies existentialist thought and provides evidence to push back against Barthes will be presented. Lastly, some aspects of Immanuel Kant's theory regarding aesthetic judgment will be introduced and discussed in relation to the framework that supports the subjective nature of existentialism. While doing so, the paper will also briefly revisit Barthes's critique, putting it into conversation with Kant.

Existentialist Theory of Literature

The use and importance of literature within the philosophy of existentialism have been discussed at length. French philosophers Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus are two prominent figures who utilized literature to convey their philosophical beliefs, and their use reveals to us an existentialist theory of literature. The role of literature, interactions between author, work, and reader, and questions of meaning are all aspects that underscore their theories. This paper intends



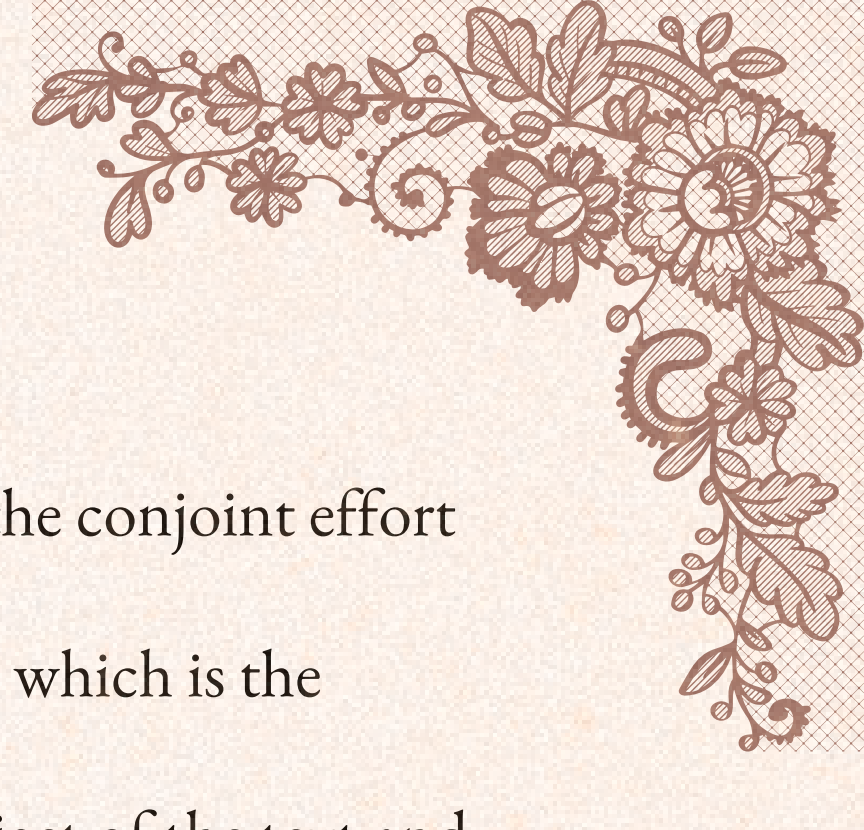


to lay out each philosopher's perspectives on art and literature, providing a comprehensive foundation for the critique that will be addressed later. Jean Paul Sartre's understanding of the world emphasizes the idea of existence before essence, that humans are placed within a meaningless world and must create their own meaning. This meaninglessness creates freedom for humans. They have no fixed nature; instead, their nature centers on how they will utilize this freedom.¹ Art is seen as a tool to make meaning. In *What is Literature?* Sartre argues that prose writing is intrinsically communicative; in other words, it directs language out towards others and the world. Sartre's existentialist theory of literature begins with the belief that writing is not a neutral aesthetic act but rather an action-oriented one, as literature exists within a realm of human freedom: What aspect of the world do you want to disclose? What change do you want to bring into the world by this disclosure? The 'engaged' writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change. He has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of Society and the human condition.²

Meaning arises from disclosure, from drawing attention to a situation and making it visible as unjust, absurd, or oppressive. Once an author discloses something, the reader is no longer ignorant of it; there is a call for judgment and action. Prose has instrumental value by organizing reality and pointing things out; writing intervenes in how the world is interpreted. Sartre believes the writer must accept and acknowledge the consequences, the change that occurs through revealing and act/write responsibly. This is in part because there is no way to create an "impartial picture;" every description comes from a perspective, and each perspective is shaped by values and choices. The "engaged" writer, and by extension the reader, is committed to the possibility of transformation, creating meaning, and

¹ Deranty, Jean-Philippe. *Existentialist Aesthetics*, 2025.

² Sartre, Jean Paul. *What Is Literature?* 23, (1947).



expanding a shared cultural consciousness. Diving deeper into this, Sartre says, “It is the conjoint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind. There is no art except for and by others.”³ There is the physical object of the text and the subject of the reader’s consciousness, and both are necessary for literature. The author writes signs, structures, and intentions into the world, and while the text has its own structure (ex. grammar, syntax, narrative structure), it is inert without the reader’s consciousness. It is the reader who actualizes the text. Meaning is shared, not possessed, as it rises from intersubjective interactions.

Albert Camus’s approach to the idea of a meaningless world differs slightly from Sartre’s, but there are many similarities in the way Camus views art and its role. To Camus, the world’s indifference and lack of meaning are not something worth trying to explain; it is absurd to try to find meaning where there is none.⁴ He believes humans should face life clearly and honestly, aware of their finite nature and mortality, but to refuse resignation. Refusal, or rebellion, can take the form of revolt, solidarity, or artistic creation, for example. This idea, central to Camus, pushes against and simultaneously affirms the limits of human capacity, control, and knowledge.⁵ Humans continue to act, create, and care despite limits. Artistic creation in particular is an area Camus discusses in depth in his work *The Rebel*. Here he posits that “artistic creation is a demand for unity and a rejection of the world.”⁶ A negotiation occurs within art when elements of reality are presented, and others are excluded, rejecting the world in some sense.⁷ The intentional choices of what to include or not include are not escapism from reality, rather, Camus sees it as an attempt by humans to confront their

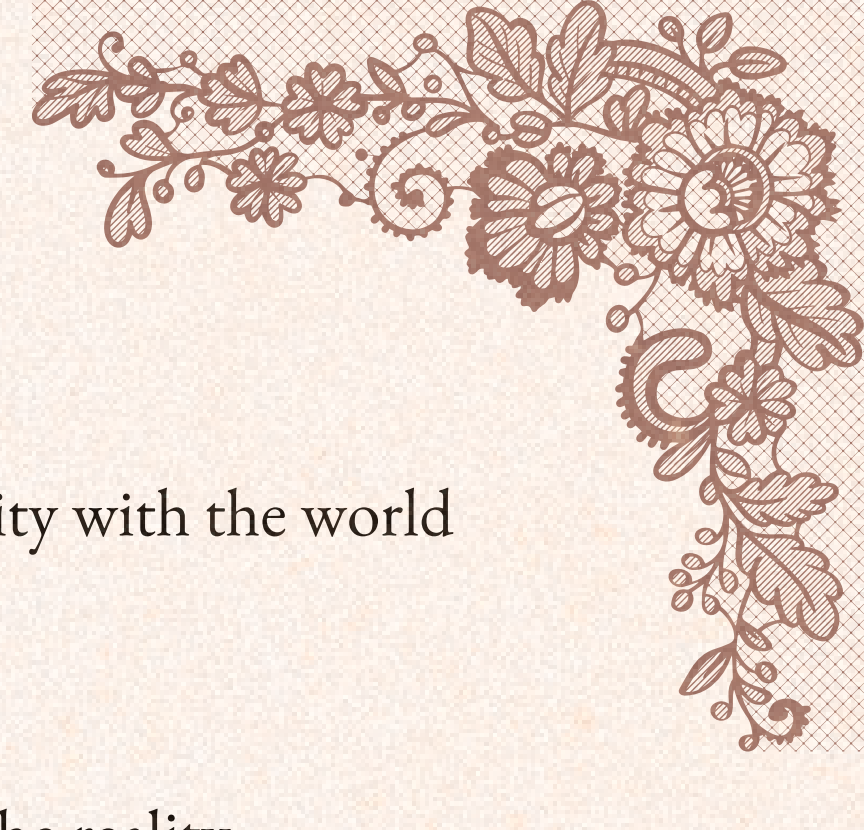
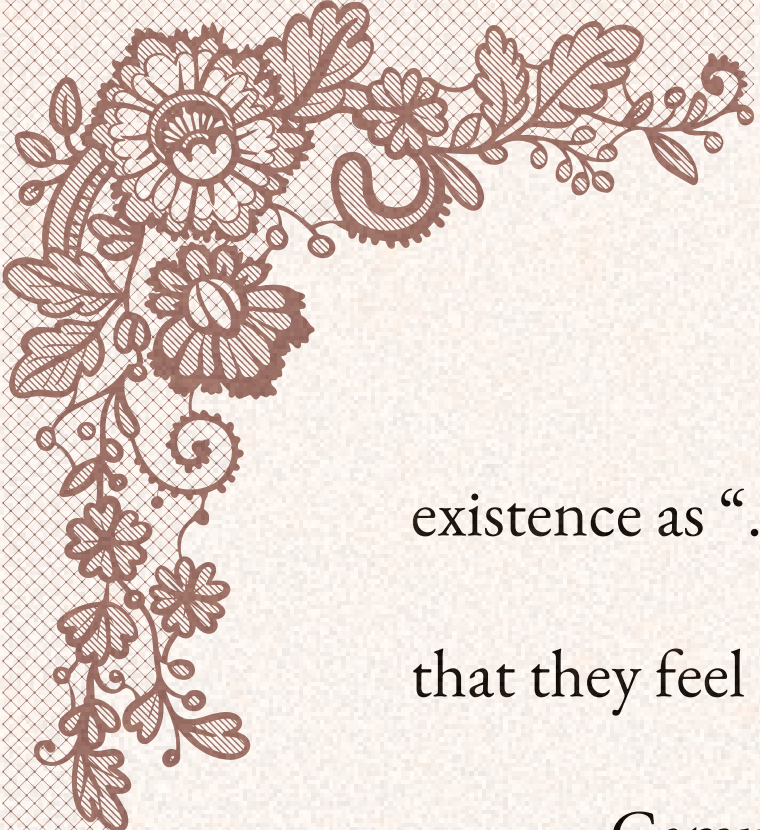
³ Sartre, Jean Paul. *What Is Literature?* 43, (1947).

⁴ Aronson, Ronald. “Albert Camus,” 2011.

⁵ Sharpe, Matthew J. “Creation Corrected: Philosophy, Rebellion, and Literature in the Work of Albert Camus,” 10, (2023)

⁶ Camus, Albert. *The Rebel*, 253, (1951).

⁷ Sharpe, Matthew J. “Creation Corrected,” 7, (2023).



existence as “...estranged citizens of the world...” and grapple with the longing for unity with the world that they feel constantly.⁸

Camus believes art’s role is to unify. By speaking “...of what all know and of the reality common to us all,” which includes “...the sea, rains, necessity, desire, the struggle against death,” the artist can use their work and speak to others.⁹ Furthermore, he draws attention to “creation corrected,” in which particulars from our world are reshaped, charged with universal significance, and placed into new, imagined worlds as a medium of communication.¹⁰ Literature is imbued with “...the particulars of lives, experiences, and choices,” which takes philosophy “...out of the empyrean of universals and into the particular realm where human beings strive, long, act, and suffer.”¹¹ In Camus’s view of literature, the author is humanized, and one can see how important interactions between author and reader are in meaning-making. The author is not providing an explanation of the world, of what concrete meaning might exist; they are describing and experiencing that which cannot be explained.¹² One may notice Camus has an understanding similar to Sartre’s claim that writing is not neutral. The type of description Camus values is one with an ethical charge. Providing an audience with the truth of the human experience encourages rebellion and change, underscoring that literature is not passive.

Death of the Author

A problem that arises through this theory is the emphasis on subjective authorship. Does this dependence on the subjective make literature arbitrary or unstable? Roland Barthes’s essay “The

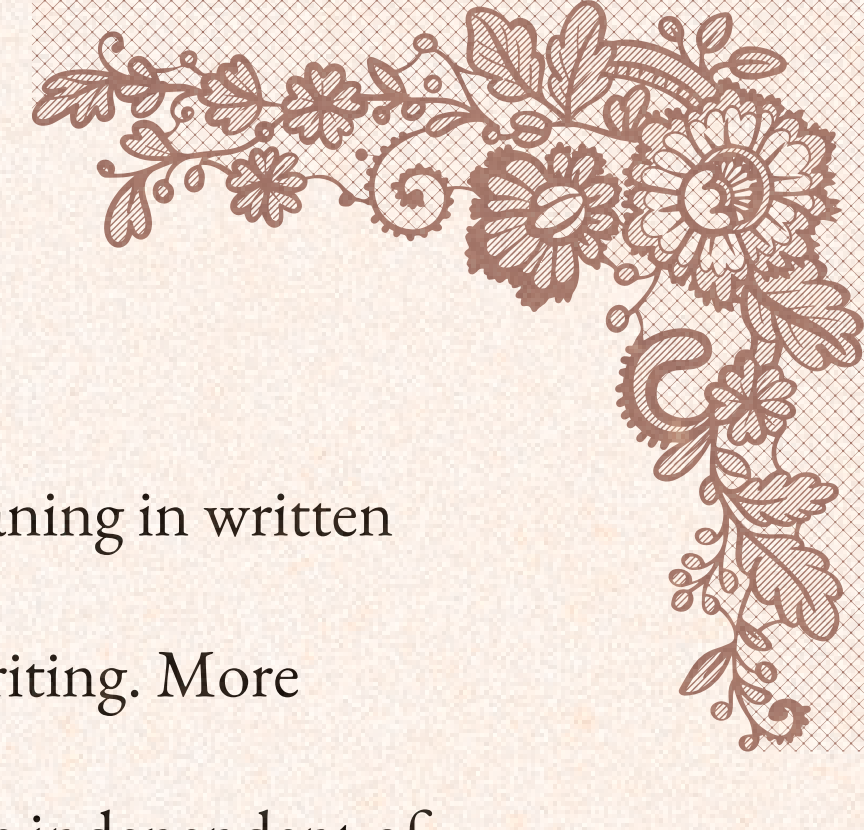
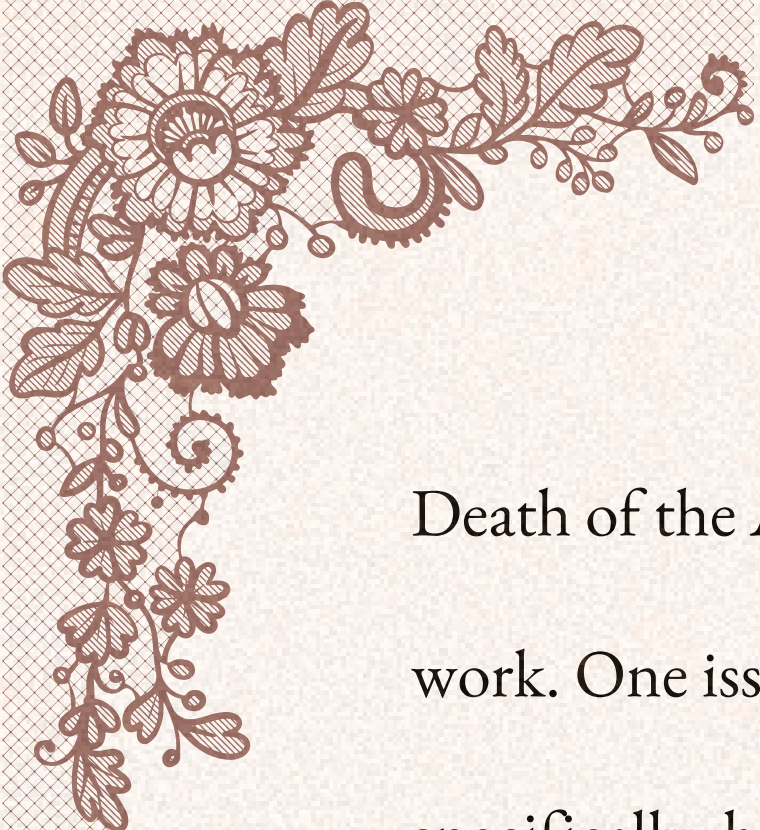
⁸ Camus, Albert. *The Rebel*, 260, (1951).

⁹ Camus, Albert. “Create Dangerously.” In *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 258 (1961).

¹⁰ Sharpe, Matthew J., “Creation Corrected,” 10, (2023).

¹¹ Sharpe, Matthew J., “Creation Corrected,” 4, (2023).

¹² Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 94, (1955).

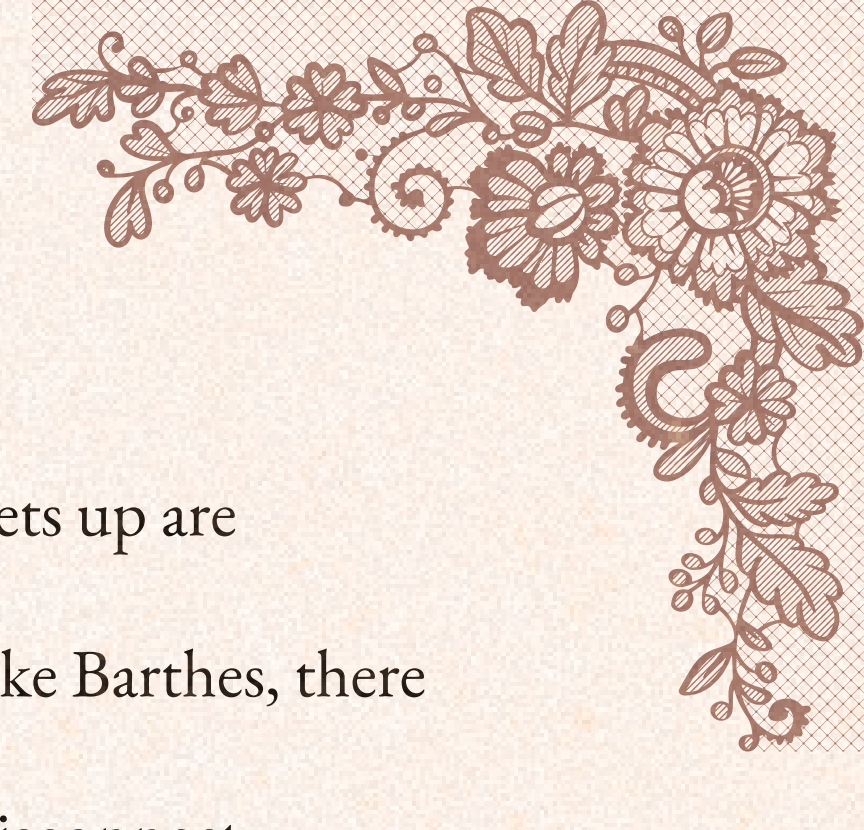
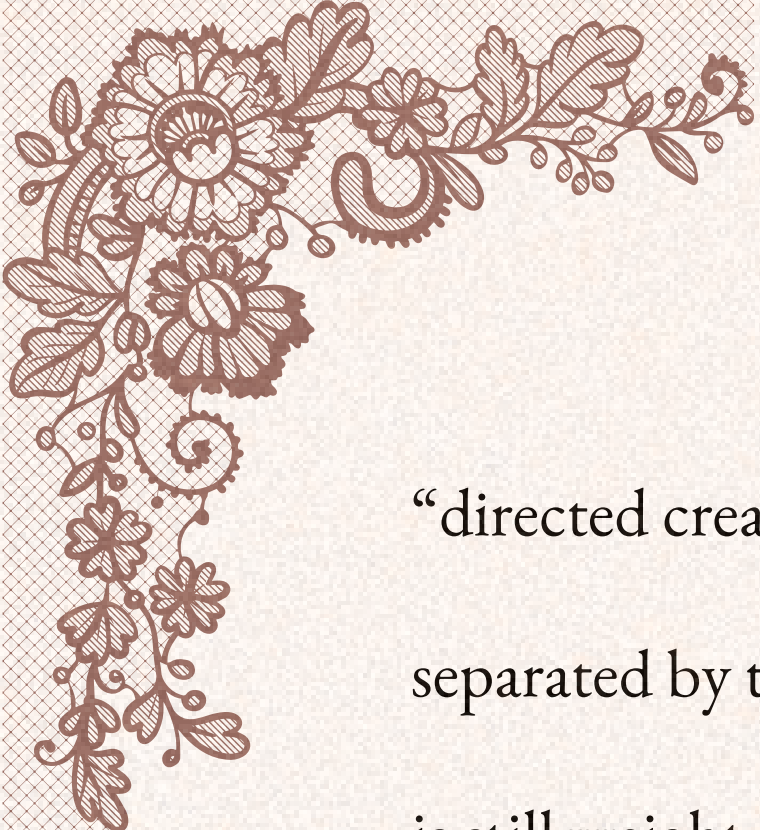


Death of the Author” tackles this by analyzing the author’s role and the origin of meaning in written work. One issue Barthes acknowledges is a seeming lack of originality that exists in writing. More specifically, he discusses originality as evidence for his claim that language and text are independent of the author. A distinction is made between “the Author” and “the writer,” where the Author is traditionally seen as the origin of meaning, while the writer is not the master of meaning. Instead of emotions or personal experiences creating meaning, Barthes views language as a system, an “enormous dictionary” of prior text.¹³ The intertextual nature of writing is paramount as he argues that “the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture,” and this multi-dimensional aspect of text prevents an author from communicating a single “theological” meaning.¹⁴ This challenges the subjective aspects brought to light by Sartre and Camus, since there is neither an ethical address nor a shared human situation. Whereas the existentialists view literature as a means to convey truths or disclosures about the world and human experience and thus derive meaning, Barthes holds that meaning arises from the impersonal nature of language. This stance is exemplified in his discussion about the role of the reader as “...a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted.”¹⁵ Barthes sees the reader as a function in the process of meaning-making. The text contains multiple meanings and has many interpretive “paths,” and it is up to the reader to gather them and understand their plurality, not derive a direction or singular understanding. An interesting connection between Barthes and Sartre is that Sartre acknowledges the author’s limited authority, which emphasizes the reader’s role in a way similar to Barthes. Sartre talks about how reading is

¹³ Barthes, Roland. *The Death of the Author*, 4, (1967).

¹⁴ Barthes, Roland. *The Death of the Author*, 4, (1967).

¹⁵ Barthes, Roland. *The Death of the Author*, 6, (1967).



“directed creation,” that an author can only guide the reader as “...the landmarks he sets up are separated by the void. The reader must unite them; he must go beyond them.”¹⁶ Unlike Barthes, there is still weight given to the author's intention, but the acknowledgement of a similar disconnect between author and reader, aka “the void,” makes this comparison much richer. The disconnect Barthes focuses on is one between author, text, and reader where “...the voice loses its origin.” This occurs when language is no longer instrumental, such as a command or testimony in court, and instead becomes intransitive.

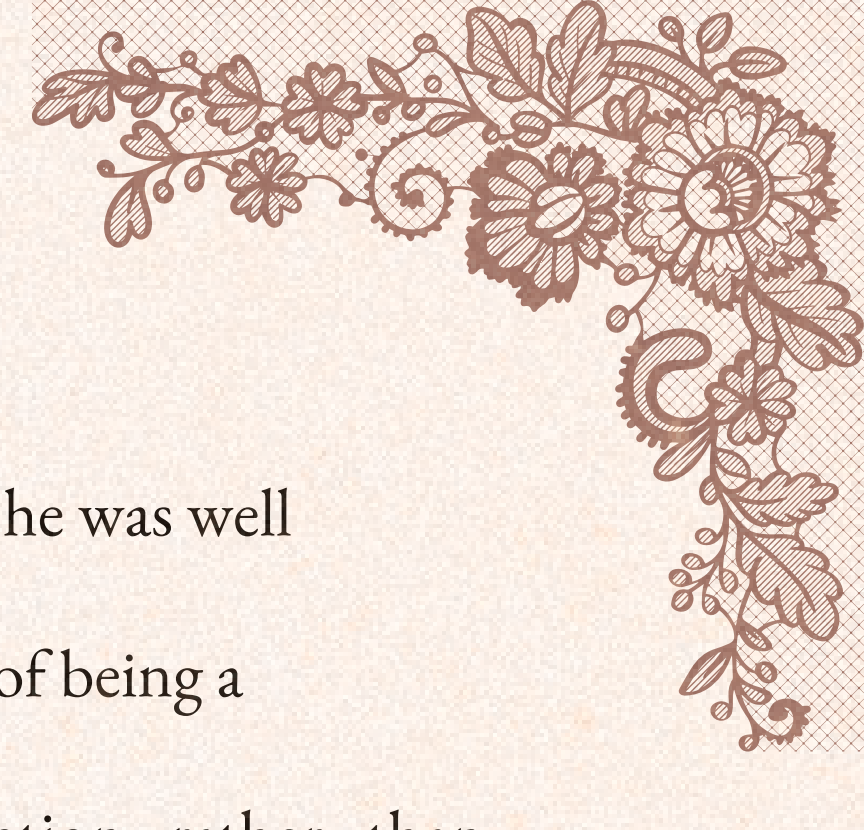
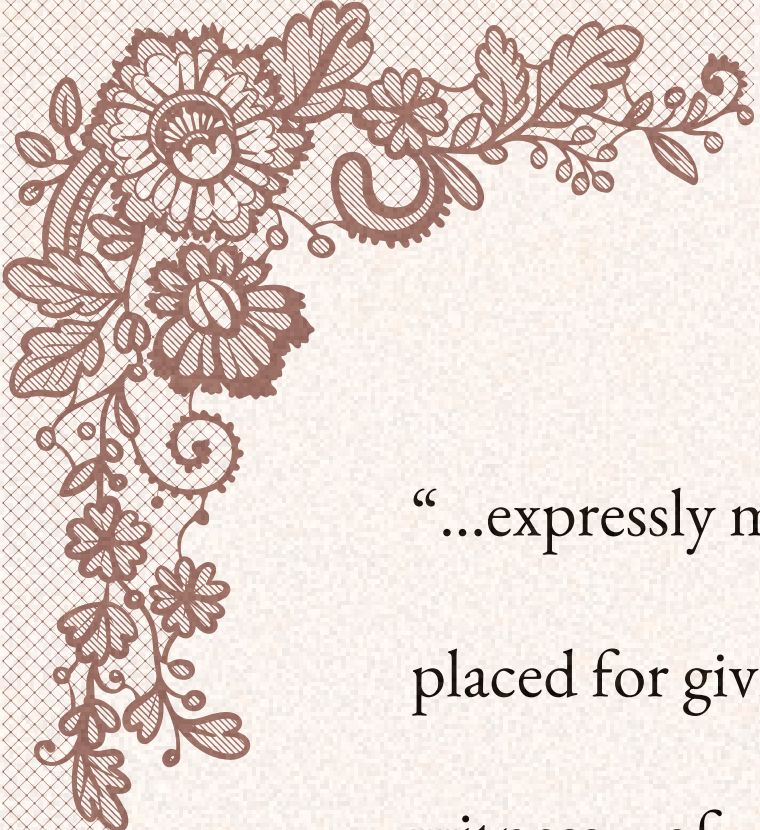
When language stops acting on the world directly, the structure of the signs overrides any authorial intent, and meaning is thus not fully under anyone's control. Camus, in particular, is in tension with this, as the author's human nature is done away with under Barthes's perspective. How can a work be truly appreciated or coherently understood without the historical or personal factors that influenced a work's creation?¹⁷ Furthermore, are there constraints on how the text can be interpreted if the author's intended interpretation holds no weight? What distinguishes a good interpretation from a bad one?

Art Example

An example of a work of literature to examine using these different perspectives and frameworks is *The Plague* by Albert Camus. The novel centers around the French city, Oran, as it fights off a plague and faces a citywide quarantine. It follows a handful of characters as the plague worsens in their town. At the end of the novel, after many deaths and other unfortunate occurrences, Bernard Rieux, a physician, reveals himself to be the narrator of the story. He makes note that he

¹⁶ Sartre, Jean Paul. *What Is Literature?* 45, (1947).

¹⁷ The Third Citizen. “The Death of the Author: Why Your Interpretation Is the Only Truth That Matters?” 2025.

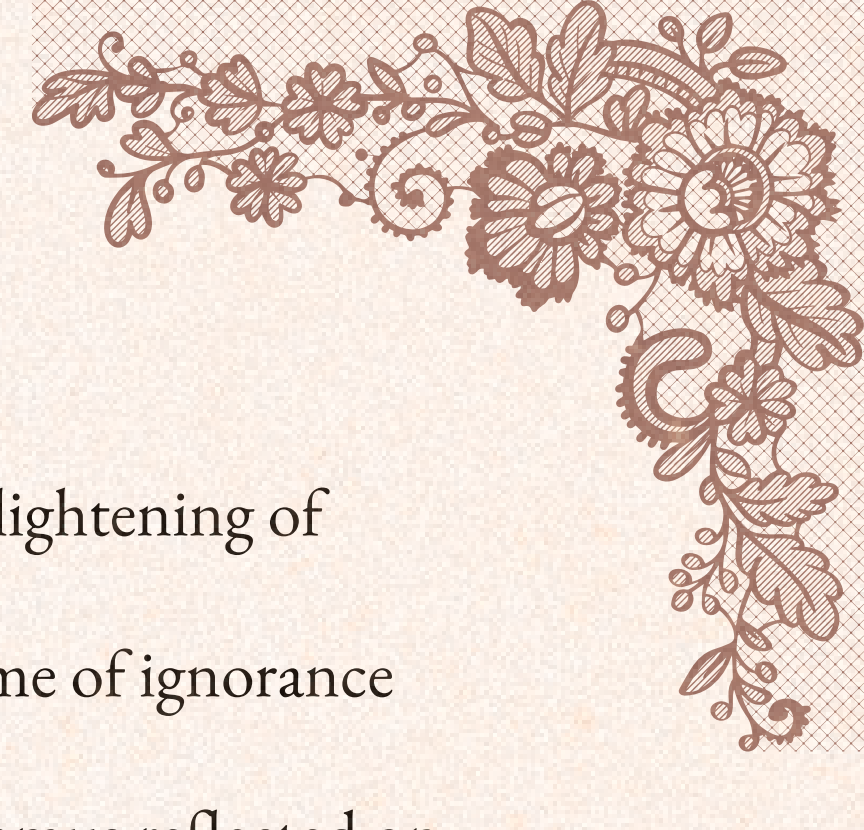
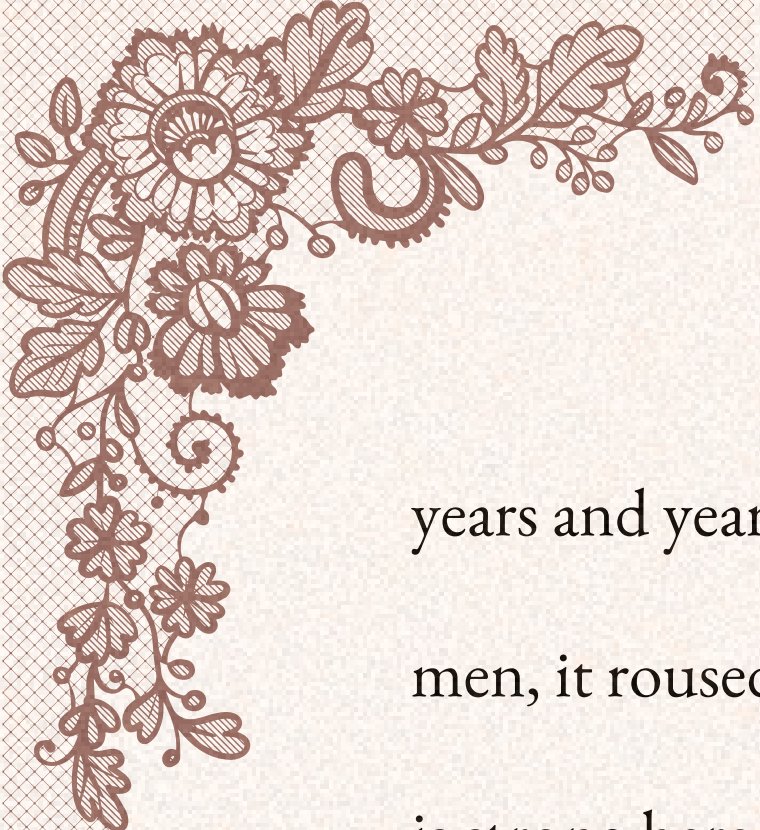


“...expressly made a point of adopting the tone of an impartial observer,” and that “...he was well placed for giving a true account of all he saw and heard.”¹⁸ This echoes Camus’s idea of being a witness, of describing a situation and revealing significance through description rather than explanation. Within this description lies an ethical charge: a call for the reader to take in what has been described and understand the moral responsibility they have to act. Even further this can be connected to Sartre and his disclosure, “...so that some memorial of the injustice and outrage done to them might endure; and to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise.”¹⁹ This account of a plague-stricken town, the wins and the losses, the futility humans have in the face of a plague, is used as a testimony to combat moral indifference. Now that ignorance is no longer an option, the reader is given the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of responsibility, of rebelling, and of solidarity, and to take action in any way they see fit. *The Plague* is an interesting example to use in conversation with “The Death of the Author” as it is transitive. The testimonial aspect, despite its appearance at first glance to be literature with no direct action to the world, proves that there is more to be taken from this than simply interplay between symbols and structures. The most significant aspect of *The Plague* is its situation within the history of France and the life of Albert Camus. It is an allegory for the German occupation of Southern France and its subsequent separation from Algeria.²⁰ More personally, this occupation separated Camus from his wife and mother. Themes of illness and exile played a huge role in both his actual life and in the novel’s reflections. There is much to be said about the very end of the novel, specifically: “...that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for

¹⁸ Camus, Albert. *The Plague*, 246, (1947).

¹⁹ Camus, Albert. *The Plague*, 251, (1947).

²⁰ Judt, Tony. “A Hero for Our Times,” 2001.



years and years...and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it roused up its rats again and sent them forth to die in a happy city.”²¹ The theme of ignorance is strong here, as the issues of dogma, conformity, compliance, and cowardice that Camus reflected on through the metaphor of the plague never truly disappear, no matter how much a person’s ignorance might lead them to believe.²² It is through this literature that Camus conveys a strong message about the human condition. He acknowledges that these issues are cyclical and, by doing so, opens the door for readers to develop their understanding of actions to combat them. While Barthes has a valid understanding of how language works as a cultural cohesion, it would be a great disservice to say that readers of *The Plague* are unable to pick up on the impact of the subjective nature that underlies its creation.

Kant and His Framework

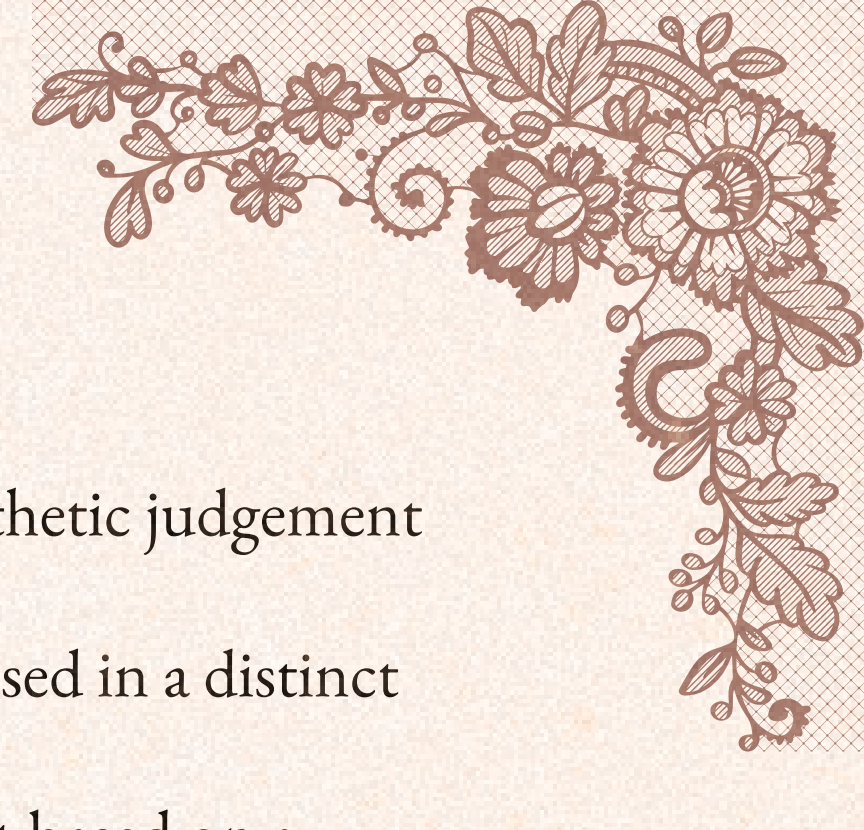
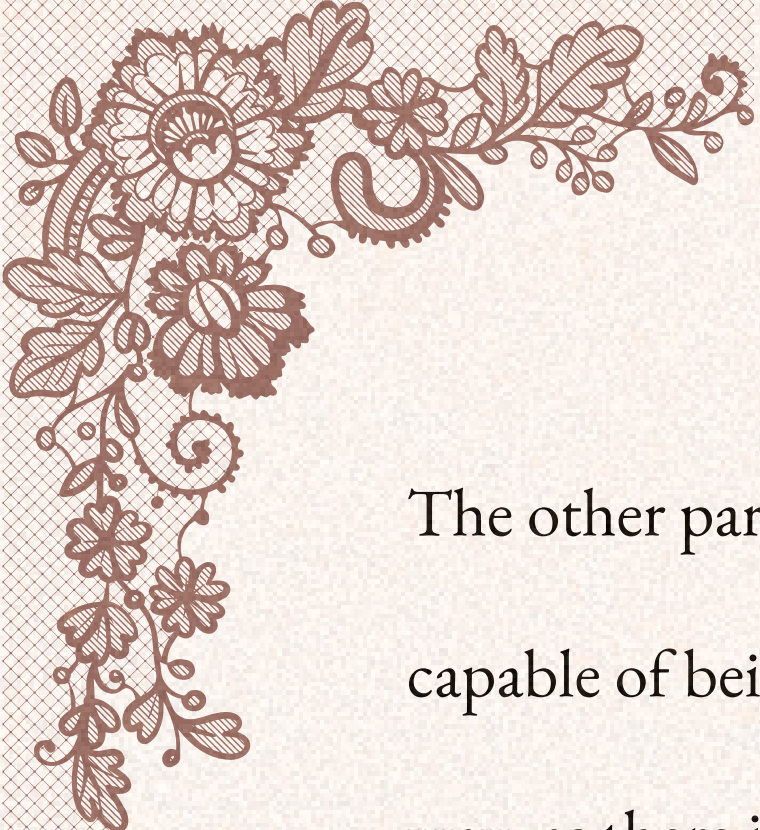
The conflict between existentialist subjectivity and Barthes’s anti-authoritarian theory, in tandem with the literature example, reveals a deeper philosophical question: how can meaning be normatively binding without being objectively determined? This section will introduce Immanuel Kant and—using his *Critique of Judgment*—explore his framework that mediates between subjective experience and objective validity. In doing so, this paper aims to prove that the subjective nature of existentialism and its theory of literature can be supported by Kant’s structure, in addition to pushing back against Roland Barthes’s criticism in “The Death of the Author.” Part of Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgement focuses on the fact that its “determining ground cannot be other than subjective.”

²³ Here, subjective is understood as personal, influenced by personal views, experiences, or background.

²¹ Camus, Albert. *The Plague*, 252, (1947).

²² Judt, Tony. “A Hero for Our Times,” 2001.

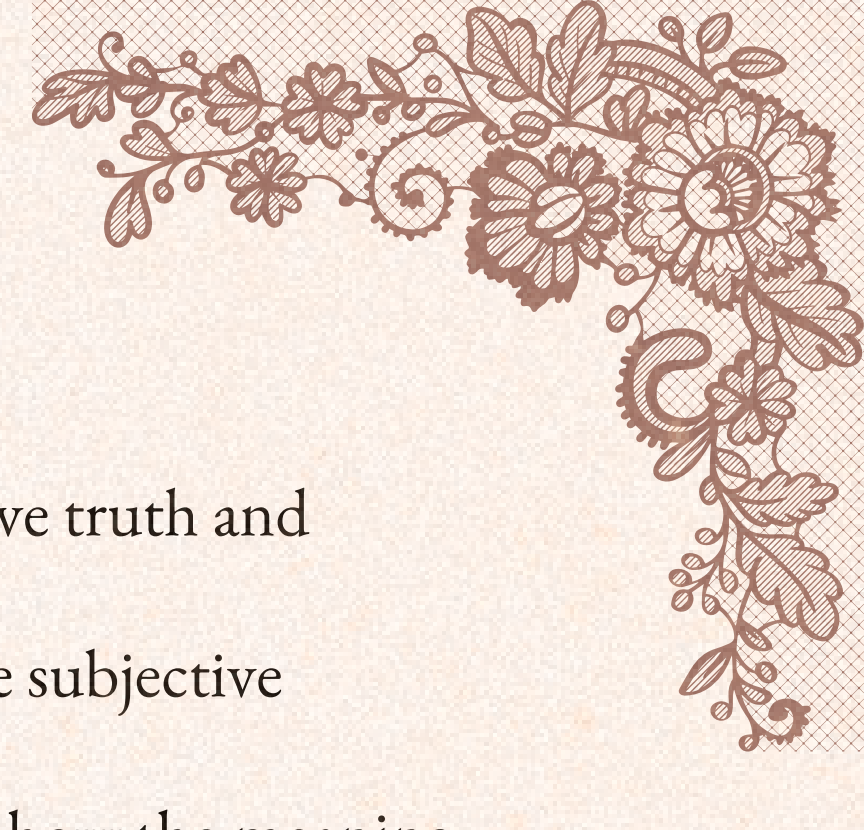
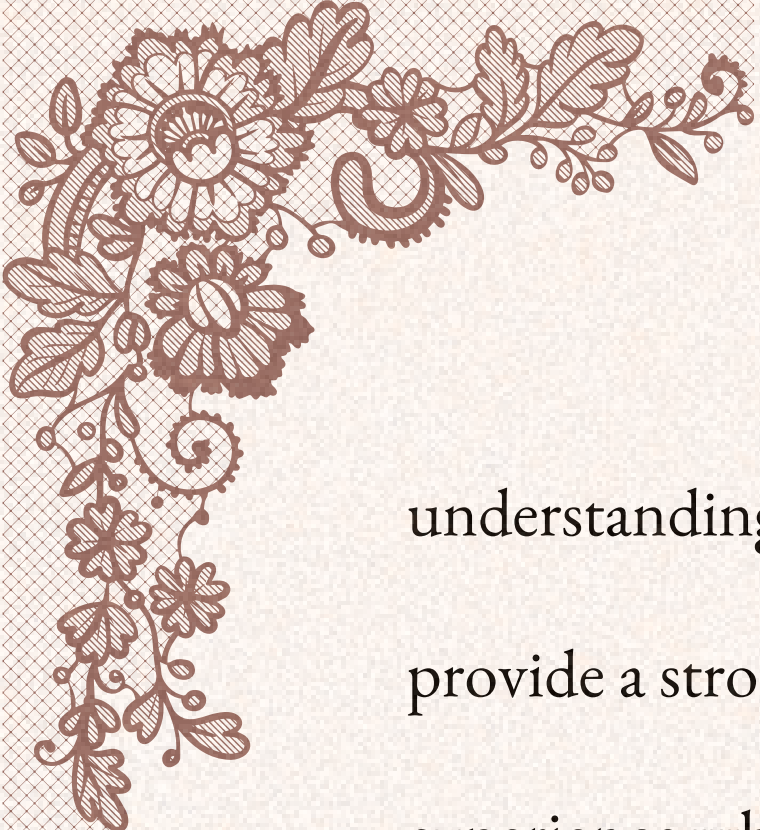
²³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, §1, 35, 2007.



The other part is concerned with a subjective universality, “...the possibility of an aesthetic judgement capable of being at the same time deemed valid for everyone.”²⁴ Universal validity is used in a distinct way, as there is the expectation that others ought to agree with an aesthetic judgement based on a shared human response being triggered. Kant makes the normative claim that the judgment of taste does not “...postulate the agreement of everyone,” rather, it “...imputes this agreement.” Despite not being able to demonstrate that everyone must agree, a person speaks as if others will or should agree, inviting others to assent and highlighting the capability of shared judgment. This differs from something being objective or conceptually demonstrable and leans more towards intersubjectivity, which is communicable and norm-forming. One can draw parallels between Sartre and Camus in how they approach the act of writing literature. For Sartre, the way he discusses the act of disclosure is similar to this invitation to assent, as the author speaks with the intention that everyone will agree and should take action based on his words. Camus’s author in the role of the witness echoes the invitation, since the author aims to reveal the truth about the human condition or to make a value judgement based on a subjective experience that is likely also a shared one. Further exploring Kant’s framework, the concept of a “sensus communis” or common sense is another aspect that could be connected to the existentialist perspective. Here, this common sense is described as “...a faculty for judging that in its reflective act takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of everyone else...to weigh its judgement with the collective reason of mankind.”²⁵ In Kant’s perspective, the creation of norms is focused on shared human faculties. This addresses the issue of subjective experiences or understandings being taken as objective truths, which is crucial when discussing the creation of meaning. Literature can create norms of understanding and thus ethical engagement. Through Kant’s

²⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*, §8, 47, 2007.

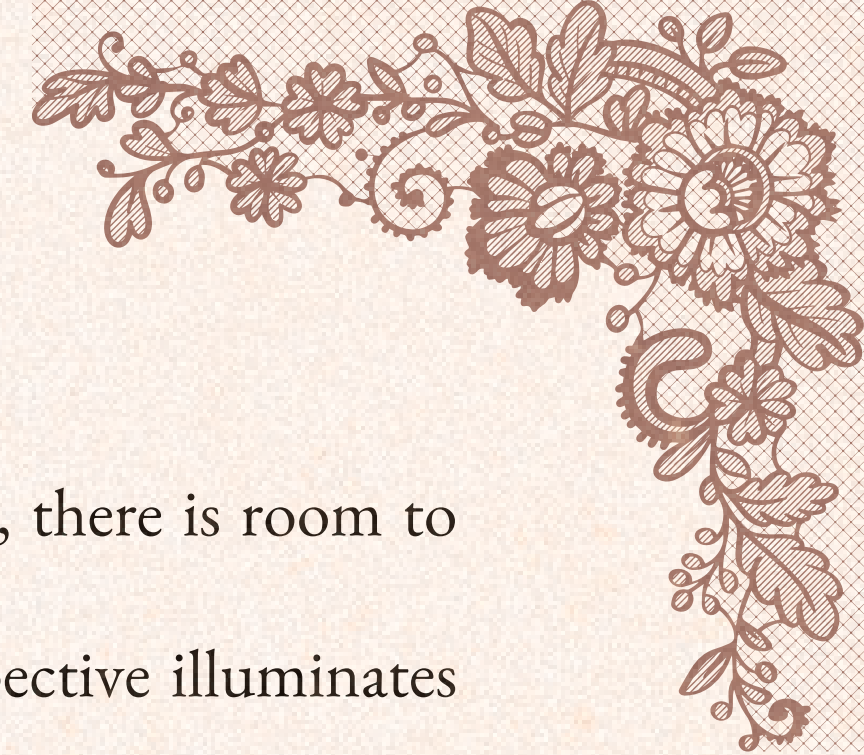
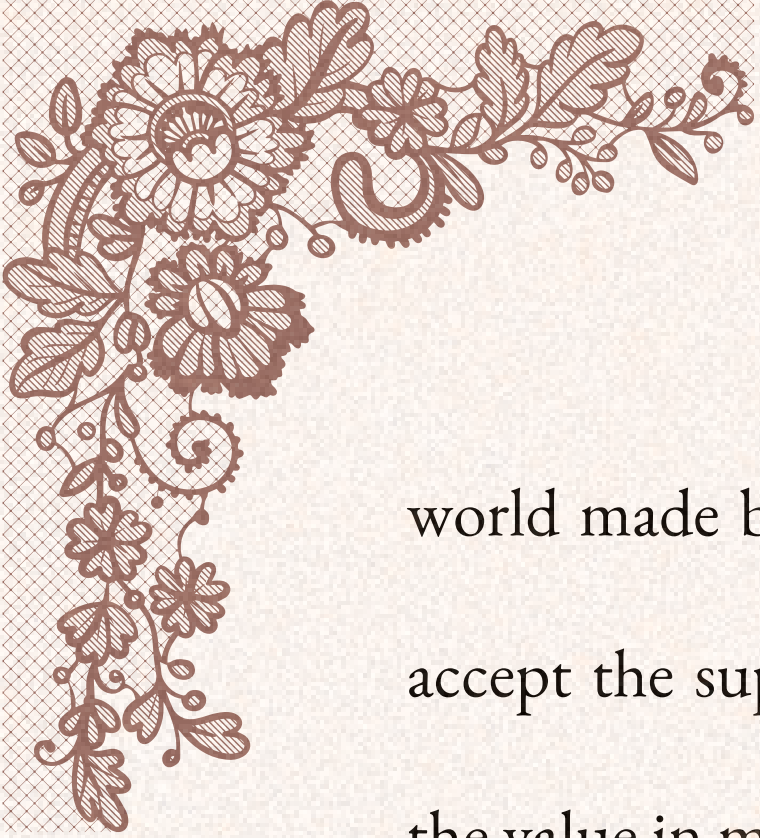
²⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*, §40, 123, 2007.



understanding, one can see how a shared common sense can act in place of an objective truth and provide a strong foundation for creating norms and meaning in a way that honors the subjective experience while avoiding absolute relativism. Roland Barthes's argument focuses on how the meaning within literature is directly tied to the words, signs, and structures. He rejects the author's subjective influence and instead derives meaning from the multi-dimensional and cultural aspects of language. This understanding of language is intersubjective; the rules and meanings of the symbols and signs that exist are sustained by cultural agreement and consensus over history. One can see how the Author's subjective experience is able to hold weight in relation to literature. By invoking aspects of their psychology, history, or other factors, the Author can trigger a shared human response. Barthes is also interesting to put into conversation with Kant, as a challenge to subjectivity is raised. While Barthes argues against authorial subjectivity, he relies on language and cultural codes characterized by intersubjective normativity. Thus, judgments that are subjective in origin can nonetheless claim universal communicability through shared human faculties. This bodes well for existentialism and the existentialist theory of literature, as the framework prevents it from requiring objective foundations and from collapsing into arbitrariness.

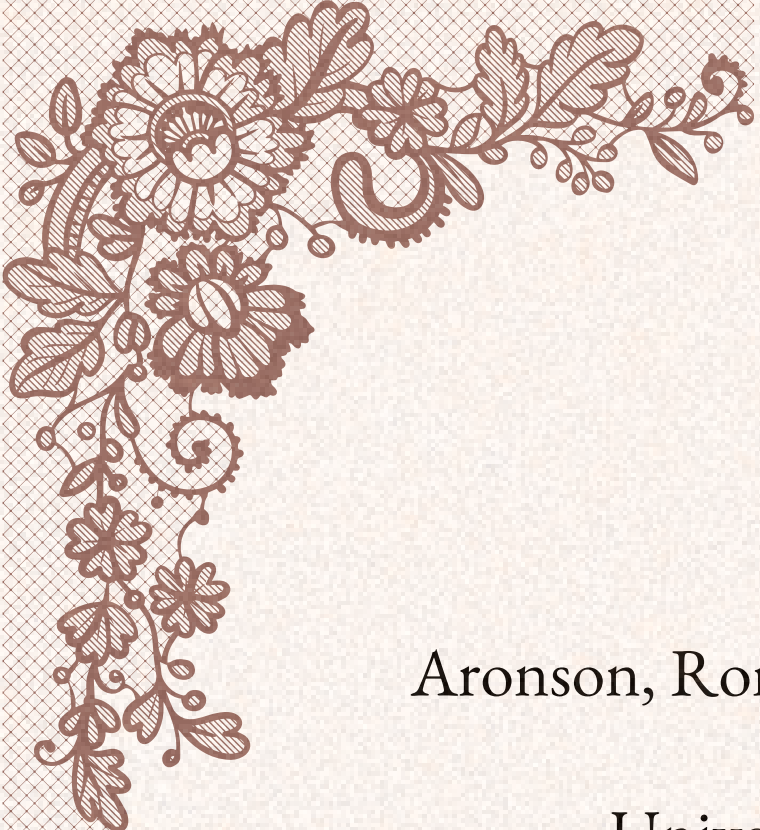
Conclusion

While Kant is not an immediate name associated with Sartre and Camus, there is an interesting thread linking them through their understanding of the subject and its power. The idea of a middle ground, as formulated by Kant, proves useful in addressing one of the most significant problems in existentialism. It is through this unlikely connection that one can develop a better understanding of how literature functions from a subjective perspective. While aesthetic value judgments are not identical to the meaning emphasized by Camus and Sartre, the judgement of the

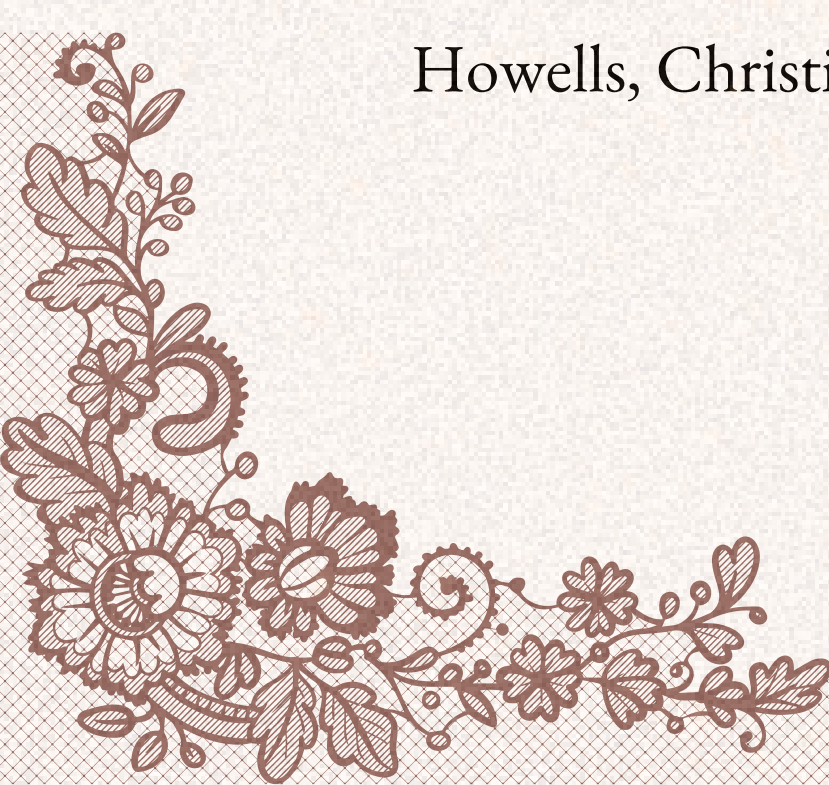


world made by the existentialists seems to parallel that of aesthetics. Because of this, there is room to accept the support offered by Kant on behalf of Sartre and Camus, as Kant's perspective illuminates the value in meaning found through subjective experiences. Although Barthes brings up an interesting concern in his essay, his theory fails to fully confront the robust intersubjectivity found in the culture of language and how it connects to the subjectivity of the author, which weakens his stance since it lacks the interconnectivity among reader, text, and author.





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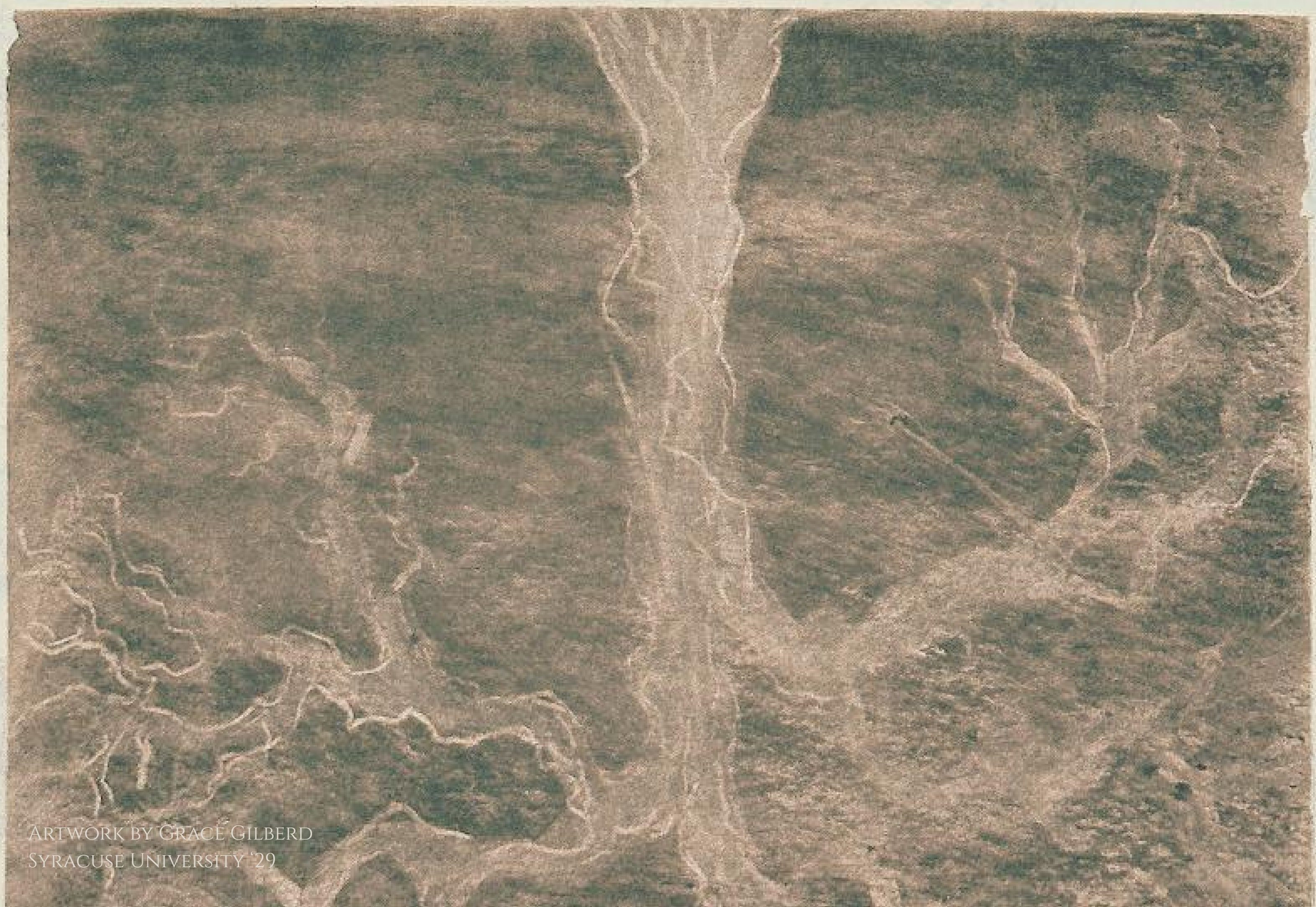
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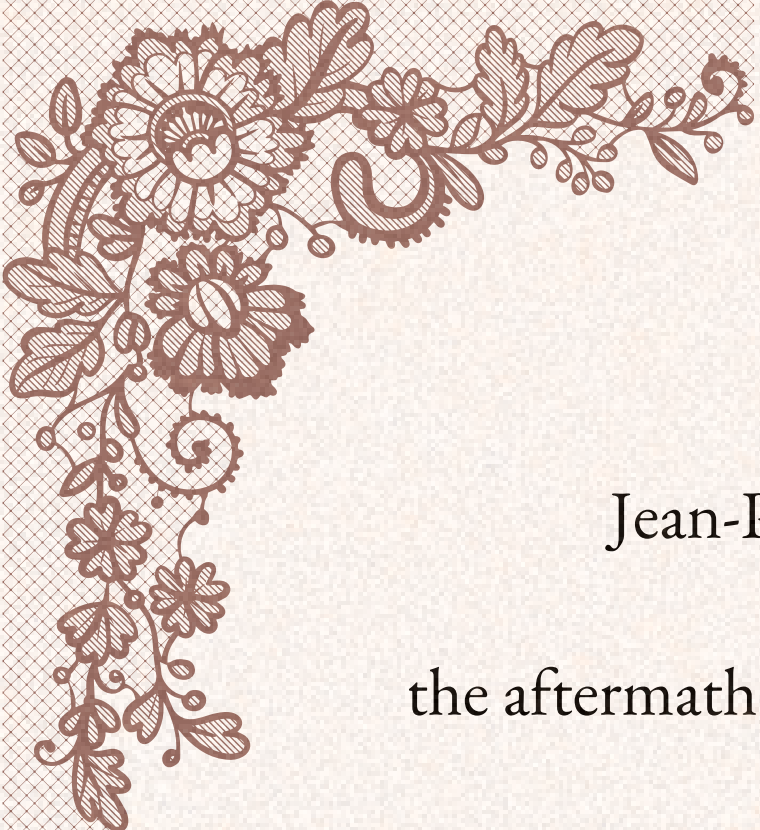


Sartre and The Look
William Clark
Northwestern University

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
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Artwork by Chloe Rhodes - Savannah College of Art & Design



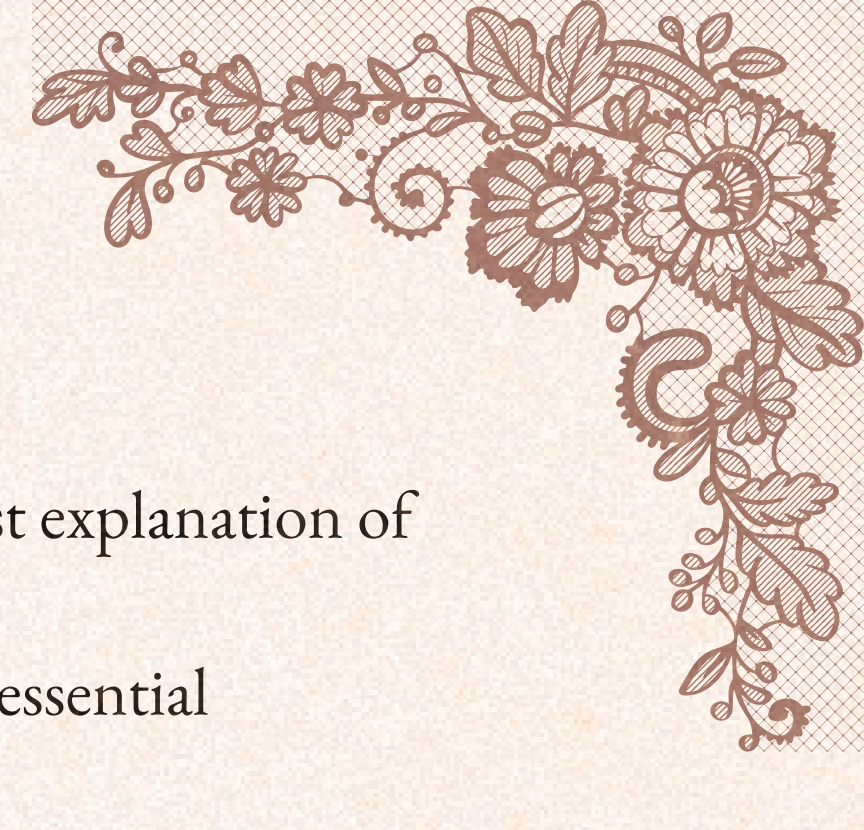
Jean-Paul Sartre is often considered one of the leading figures of the existentialist movement in the aftermath of World War II, being credited as one of the thinkers that pushed this new branch of philosophy to the forefront of cultural discourse. He is famously known for the quote from his play *No Exit* that “Hell is other people,”¹ which is often seen as a quote that encapsulates his entire existentialist project. On its own, this quote can be interpreted in a multitude of different ways, reflecting the complex relationships between humans that defines the human condition; however, through understanding Sartre’s concept of “The Look”² and how that defines interpersonal relationships between all members of humanity, the true full meaning of this quote becomes even more apparent and profound. With this understanding of what Sartre identifies as “The Look,” one can come to truly understand the significance behind the idea that “Hell is other people,” which can then finally lead to the question of how humanity could possibly rise above the existential problem that Sartre presents in his works and take solace in the reality that this phenomenon places humanity into.

As established, the preliminary step to fully understanding how “Hell is other people” is first understanding the basic idea behind what Sartre outlines as “The Look.” Explored in *Being and Nothingness*, this phenomenon is the realization that other people do not exist as mere objects in the same way a table, for example, exists as an object in relation to one’s own perspective and that there is a “...spatiality which is not my spatiality...which flees from me,” within all other members of the human race.³ Simply stated, this is the understanding that each person has their own perspectival experience of the world that is entirely different from our own, viewing the same physical objects—such as the

¹ Sartre, *No Exit*, 47, 1944.

² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, 254, 1943.

³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 254, 1943.



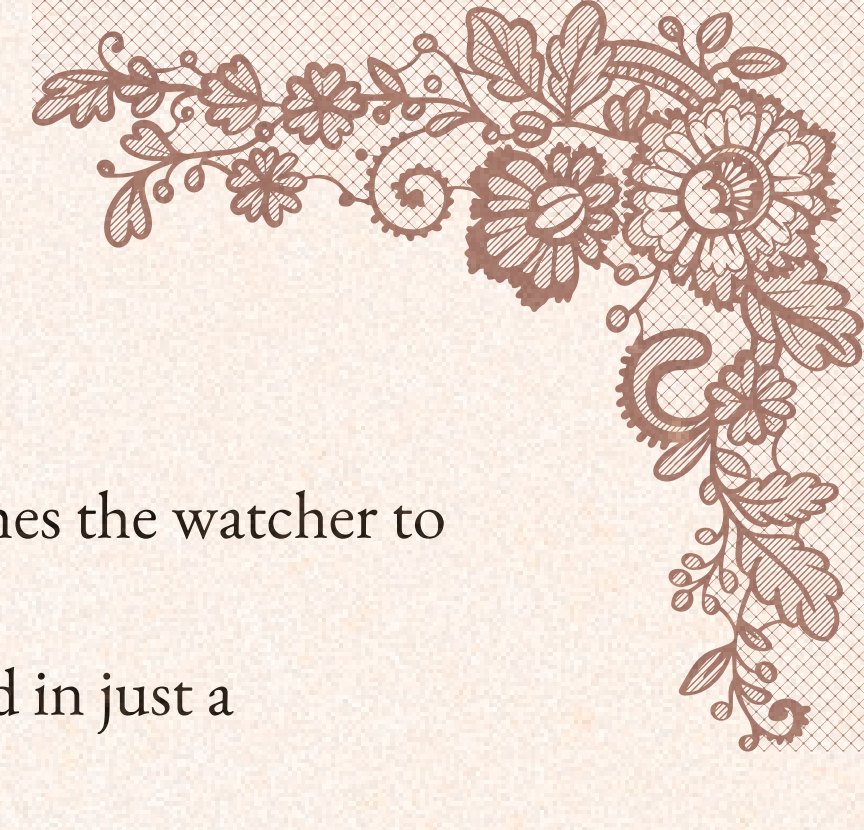
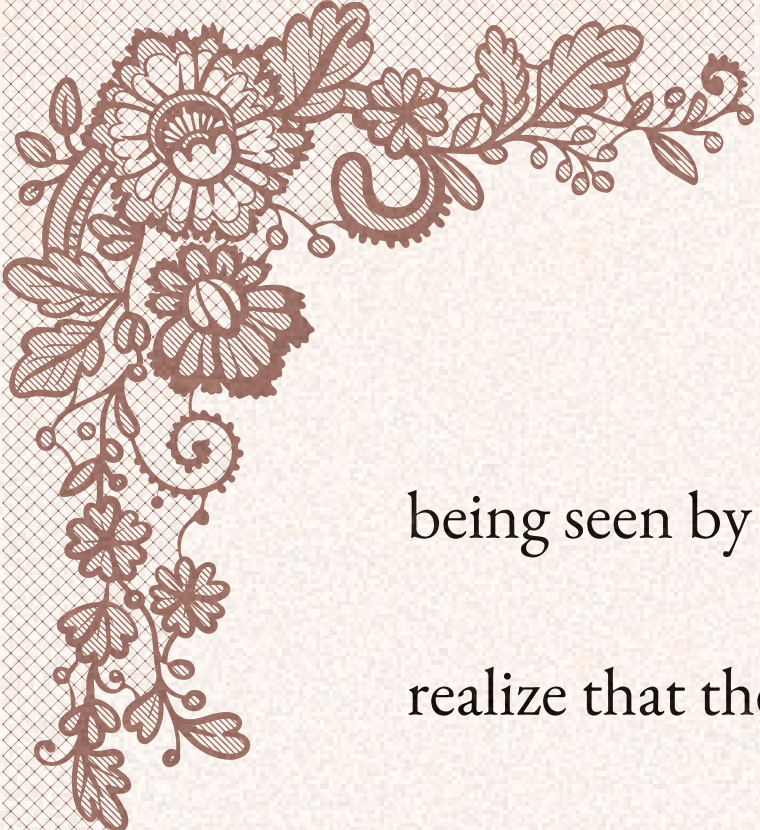
aforementioned table—in a completely different relation than we do. This simple first explanation of this concept highlights the individuality of human experience that Sartre claims is an essential component of human existence and that exists in fundamental separation from another person’s perspective. To further expand this idea, Sartre explains that “[one’s] universe is an object for the Other-as-object,” and that “[one] cannot be an object for an object,” proving that this must require that every other human being exists as a subject in the same way that an individual knows that they do.⁴ Essentially, Sartre is arguing that since a person can identify that they hold their own perspective, that allows them to see that they can exist as relative to another’s perspective, and thus this other person must hold the same ability for subjectivity that they do. In this manner, this basic first element of “The Look” fundamentally proves that each person has their own subjectivity that they view the world with.

The next important component of understanding “The Look” is how this basic understanding of it changes our perception of our own self. To explain this idea, Sartre uses the example of someone looking through a keyhole, being so focused on a conversation being spied upon that one reaches a “...level of a non-thetic self-consciousness.”⁵ What this means is that, as the person looks through the keyhole, they are completely absorbed by their course of action to the point that in that moment they exist completely unaware of themselves as a subject and are instead fully focused on the action of spying upon the others. “The Look” is then invoked when the watcher realizes that someone is seeing them spying, forcing the watcher to “...exist as [themselves] for [their] unreflected consciousness” as an “irruption of the self.”⁶ In essence, in this moment the watcher is forced to comprehend how they are

⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 257, 1943.

⁵ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 259, 1943.

⁶ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 260, 1943.

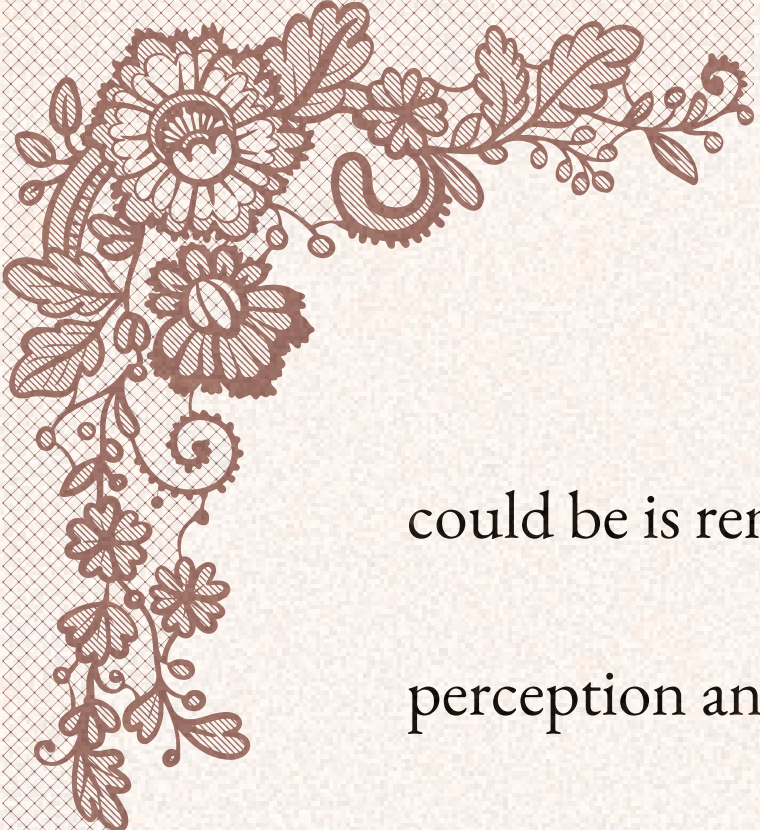


being seen by the person who catches them spying and this comprehension then pushes the watcher to realize that they exist as more than the action that they had been completely engrossed in just a moment prior. In this way, “The Look” forces one to realize that they exist beyond their own subjective consciousness, and that the simple act of being viewed by others exposes oneself to realize parts of their existence that may have been hidden from them.

With these two facets of understanding “The Look,” one can now move forward to understand what Sartre truly meant when he expressed that “Hell is other people,” through how the unique perspective of another person allows them to have fundamental control on how an individual is seen and understood to exist. This idea is directly espoused by Sartre when he described the “The Look” as something that defines “...the very stuff of my being” through the “...unpredictable freedom of the other.”⁷ In this, Sartre asserts that since each person is established to have their own unique perspective of the objects in the world and since these perspectives can expose one to unknown aspects of their own being, “The Look” presents an existential dilemma where each person is seen and interpreted within the individual perspective of another person. One can never have full control over how they exist to others in this manner and, as such, are incapable of having full control over their complete existence. This idea is further expanded when Sartre explains that “the Other’s look” is the “...solidification and alienation of my own possibilities.”⁸ With this addition, since a person is to others only as what they are perceived to be, this perception defines them. One’s own freedom of what they

⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 262, 1943.

⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 263, 1943.

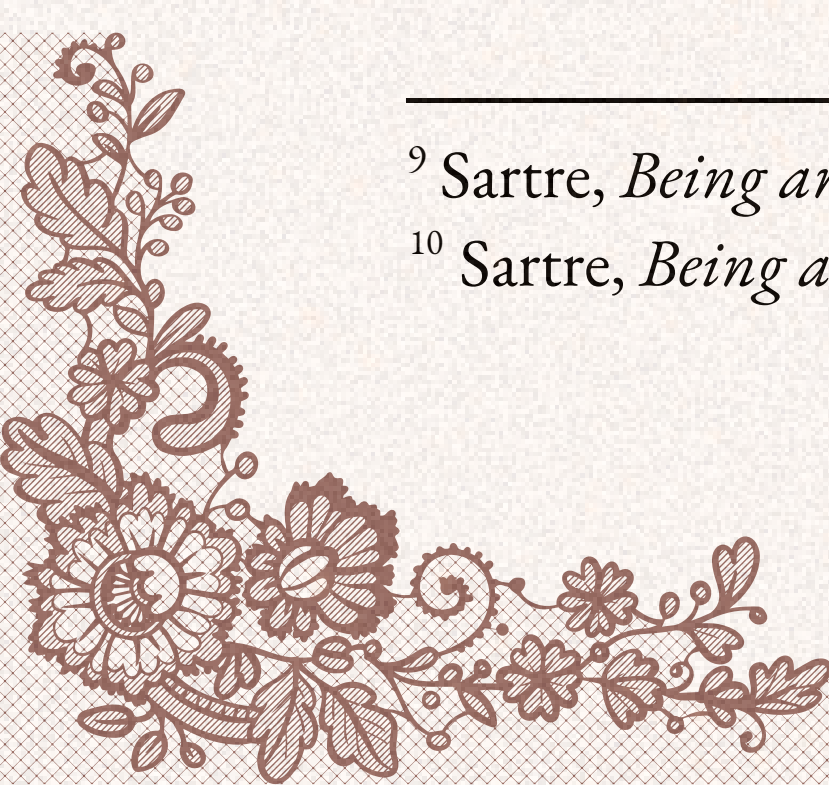


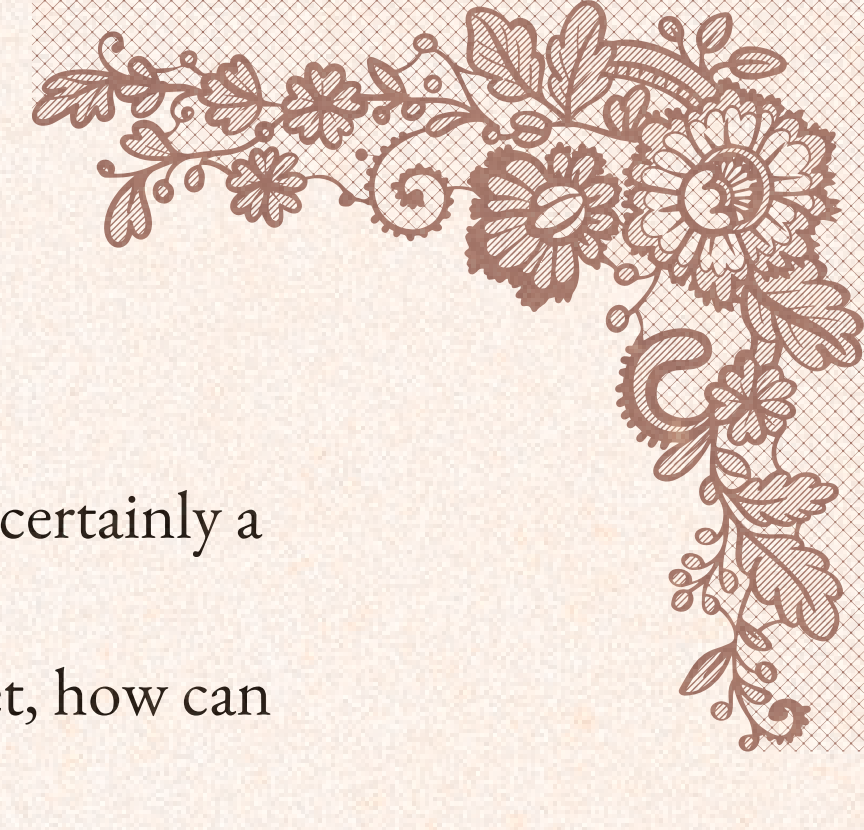
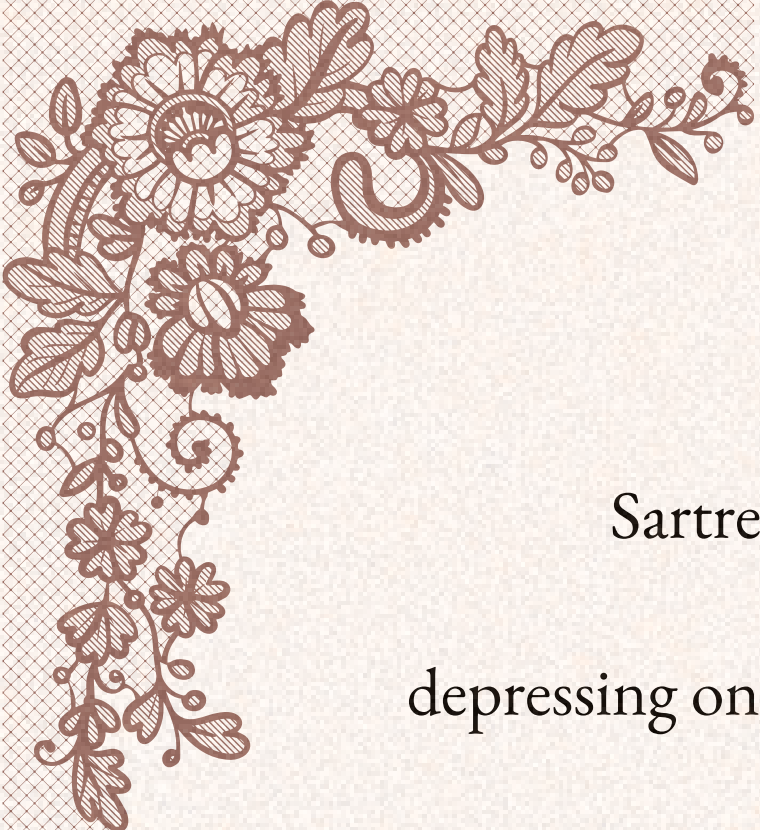
could be is removed from them, thus they must be aware of their existence as separate from their self perception and removed from their possibility.

This sheer level of control that the Other can have upon the existence of one's self is in turn why Sartre labels "Hell as other people," as one becomes unable to truly understand their existence in the subjectivity of the Other. For Sartre, when one is subjected to "The Look" they experience the "...death of [their] possibility" for the way that it has "...[become] an instrumentality" to the action of the Other.⁹ Essentially, as one is viewed by someone else, they are now prevented from being only as they perceive themselves and understand that this self perception is only a tool for how they form themselves in relation to others. Sartre further describes this as understanding that one's "...possibility becomes a probability which is outside of [them]."¹⁰ In a similar manner to the person looking through the keyhole before being viewed, an individual can imagine themselves as acting or being whatever they wish to be, but once they are viewed by another they must evaluate these possibilities as entirely relative to the actions and a perspective of the Other. "Hell is other people" because they limit what one can be, they push a person to be unable to effortlessly and entirely become their possibilities, and they force a person to comprehend their existence as something outside of themselves. In this, all that is unknown and not understandable about our own existence is a result of not being able to view ourselves in the way that others can, that "The Look" of others reveals to ourselves the limits of our possibilities; and as such, others embody all the miseries of our existential existence.

⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 264, 1943.

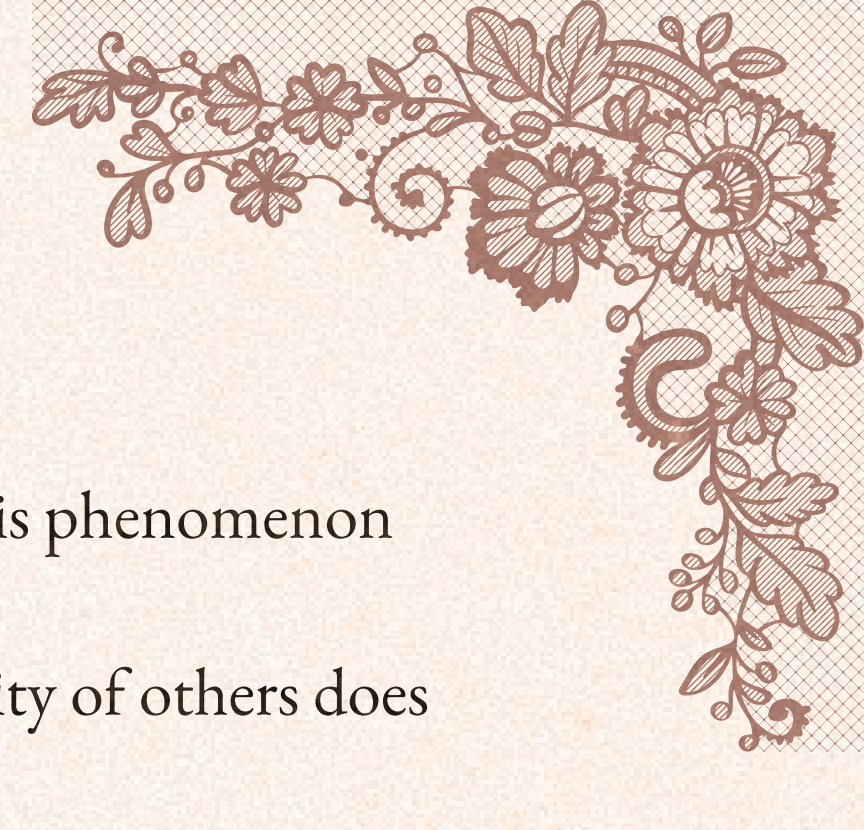
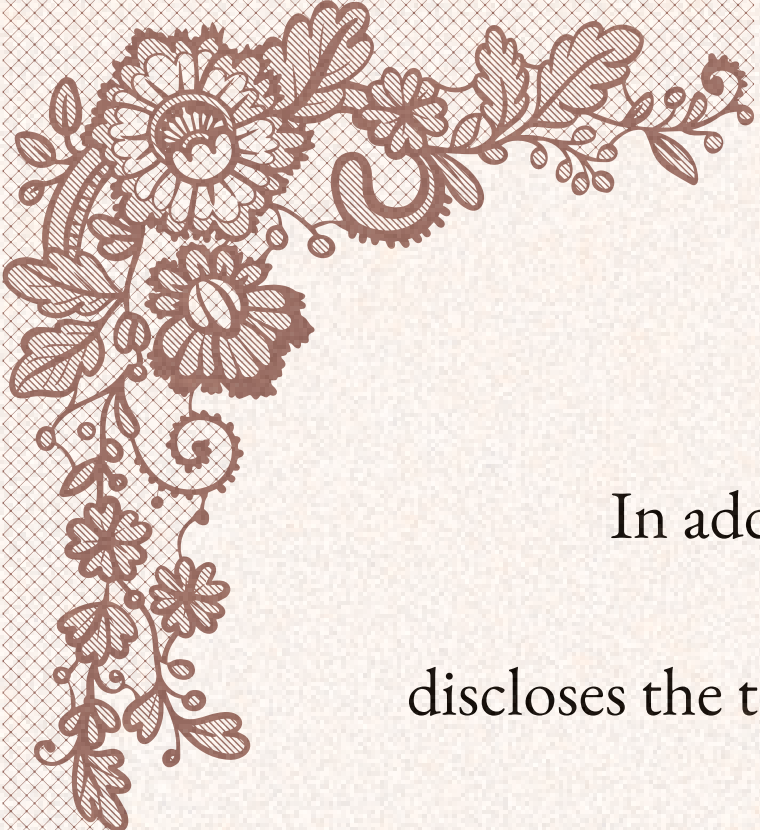
¹⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 265, 1943.





Sartre's conclusion of "The Look" and this idea that "Hell is other people" is certainly a depressing one, presenting an existence that is entirely out of our own control; and yet, how can human existence be removed from our control if there is an individual consciousness that is native to all human nature? To achieve his conclusion, Sartre claimed that this existential problem leaves humanity "...as 'slaves' in so far as we appear to the Other."¹¹ He asserts that, since we are all unable to reach our full perspectival possibilities, humans are entirely subjected to the wills and freedoms of the others around them. However, this idea seems to dismiss a primary notion that is involved in the phenomenon of "The Look." As established, when the person who is peering through the keyhole is fully submerged in their action and removes themselves from their own subjectivity, they are existing as a full extension of their consciousness. They exist outside the subjective world that "The Look" brings upon them, which is why the sudden appearance of a person catching them spying is such a powerful moment for Sartre to explain this phenomenon. This action implies that there are circumstances where one's possibilities and freedom are entirely disclosed to them, that they can act as completely independent of the subjectivity that they view the world from; therefore, how can it be that each person can experience this full individuality and yet still be completely enslaved to the subjectivity of others? This simplicity of "The Look" must entail that there are moments in the human experience where our existence is at least somewhat self determined, which stands in opposition of Sartre's claim that all humans are entirely enslaved to the perception of others. If his claim is correct, these moments of pure self consciousness cannot exist.

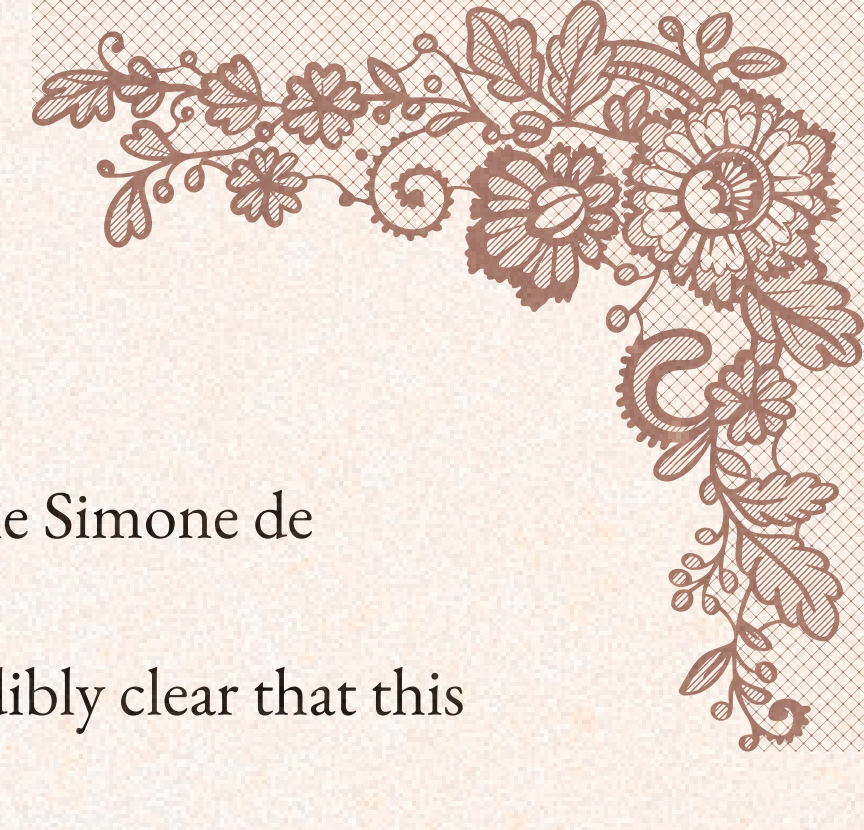
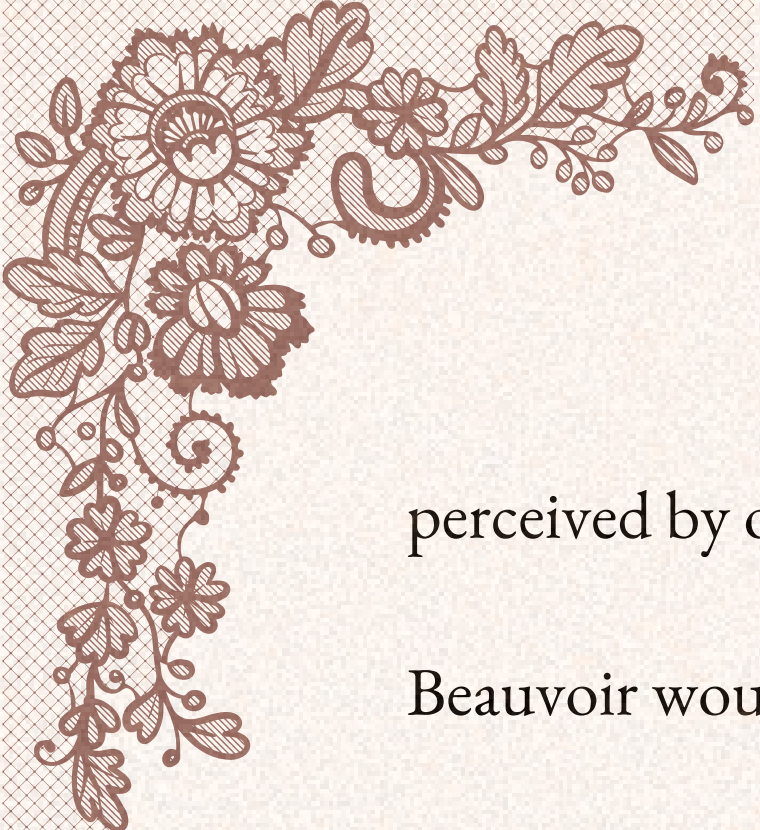
¹¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 267, 1943.



In addition to this seeming inconsistency, Sartre also presents the way that this phenomenon discloses the tangibility of the world, which seems to suggest that, while the subjectivity of others does present us with an uncertain existence, it simultaneously allows an understanding of the tangible world that would allow a person to influence how they are perceived by others. To this effect, Sartre describes that the Other “...is temporalized by my own temporalization” and that the Other “...[gives] my time a new dimension.”¹² This pictures a converse relationship between the individual and the Other, where the understanding of time between them depends on their view of one another as subjects. Without this Other, the human experience would lack an understanding of what it means to exist within time beyond themselves. With this regard, being placed into time from one’s subjectivity to others allows the individual to now regard their possibility and freedom in a progression of experiences. While the Other may limit one’s possibilities for how they define one’s existence in a given moment that limits their freedom, the Other simultaneously gives them a temporal existence to realize these possibilities and allow them to become something else. Instead of viewing others as hell, depriving one of their ability to be what they would like to be, the individual can instead seek to apply their freedom in a way to change their perception and appearance to others, using the limitation placed upon them as something that they can impact, though not necessarily fully control.

In these ways, it is clear that while Jean-Paul Sartre was not incorrect in proclaiming that “Hell is other people,” this does not need to serve as a depressing limit to our existential existence as he suggested, but instead as something that can be overcome through fully understanding the complexities of “The Look.” We can appreciate the relative existence that we are given through being

¹² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 267, 1943.



perceived by other people and how this accentuates our own self consciousness. While Simone de Beauvoir would go on to argue similar ideas in her existentialist works, it seems incredibly clear that this positive aspect of existentialism can exist within Sartre's own works. In this way, Sartre's depressive picture of existentialism can instead be transformed into a way for humanity to appreciate the fundamental way that the Other impacts our being. After all, no man is an island and no person can ever live truly separated from the Other, therefore why not embrace this facet of our existence?



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A Quiet Platonism in Aristotle's First Mover

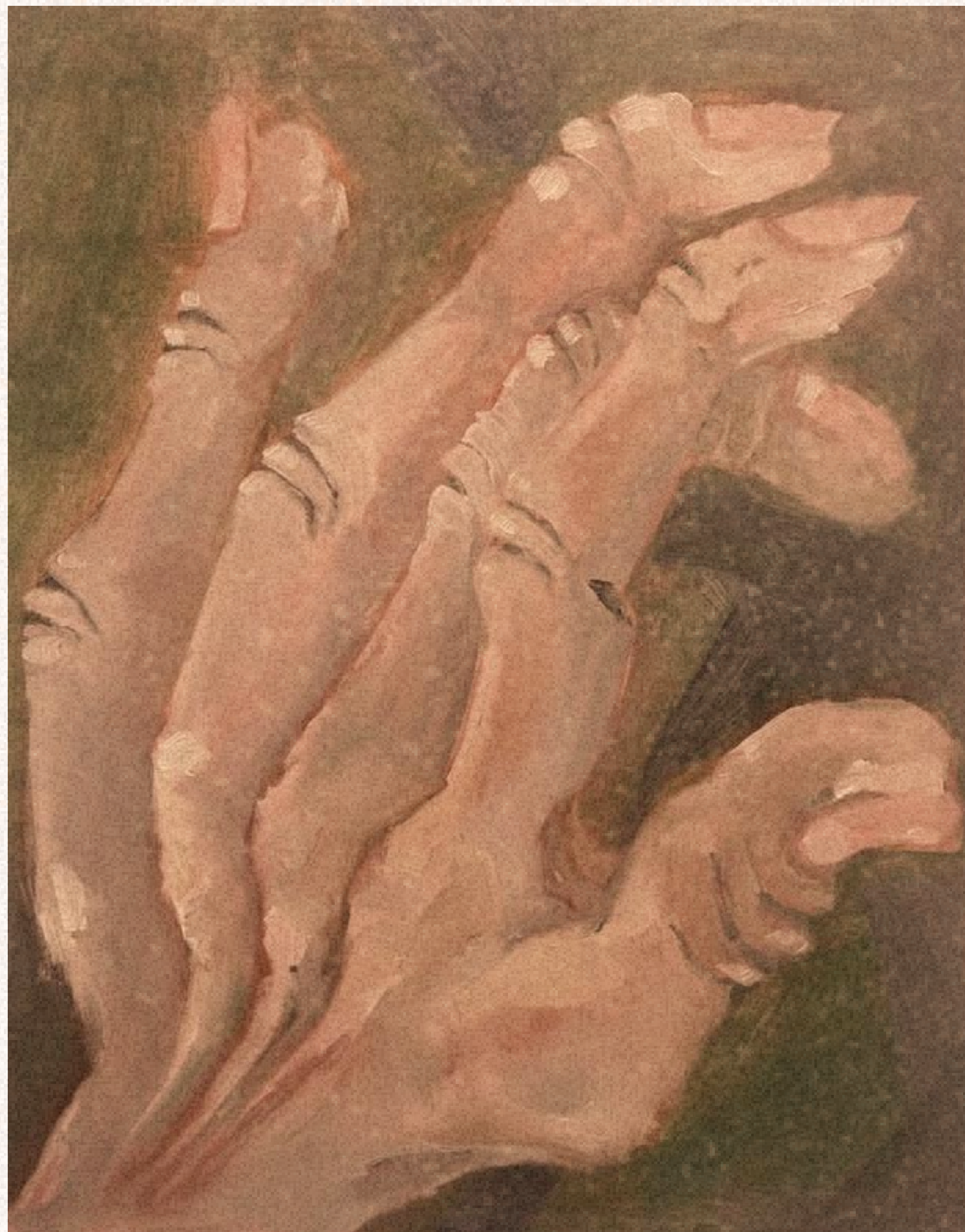
Heidi Bert

University of Utah

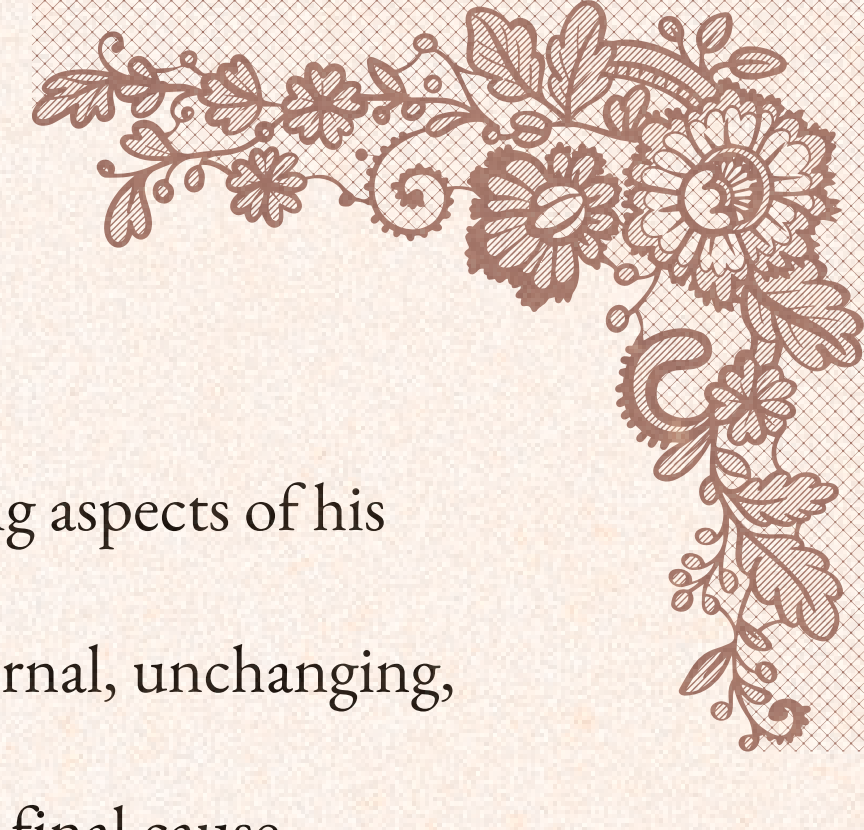
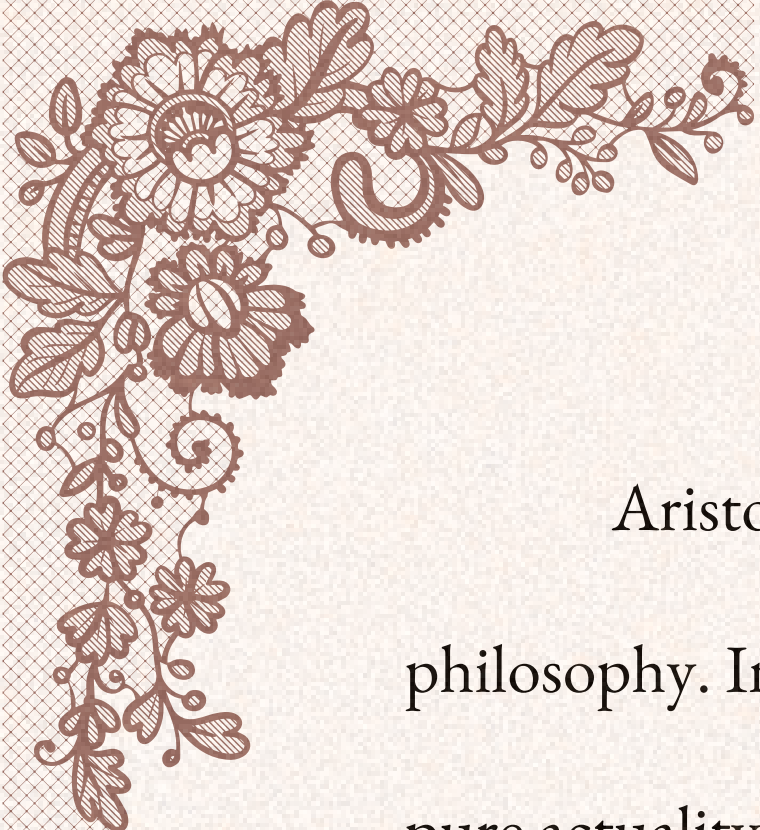
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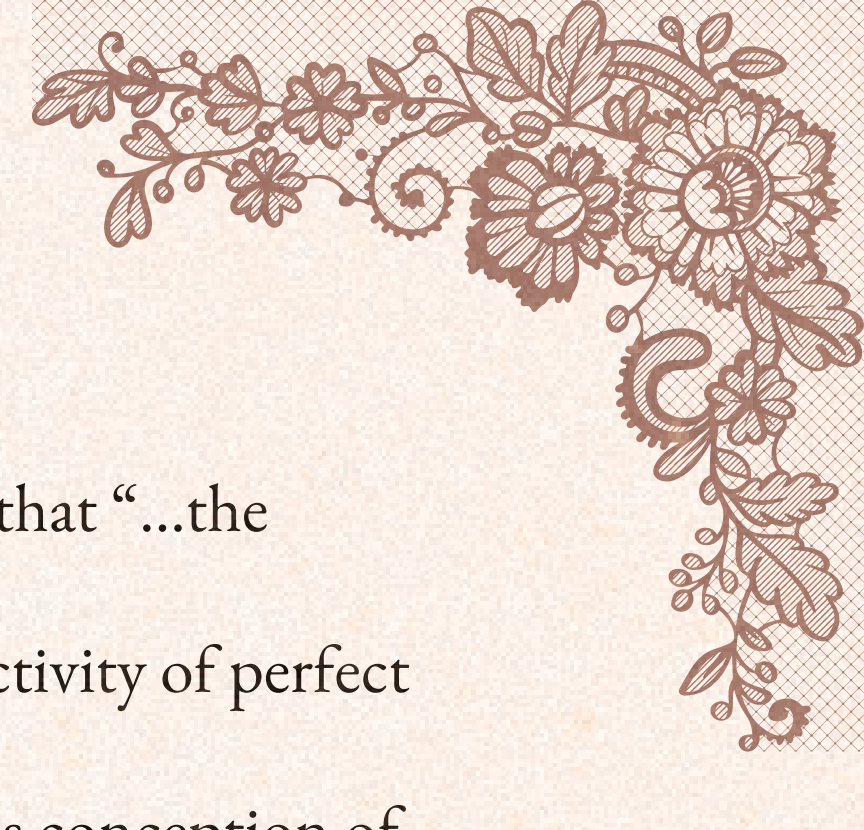
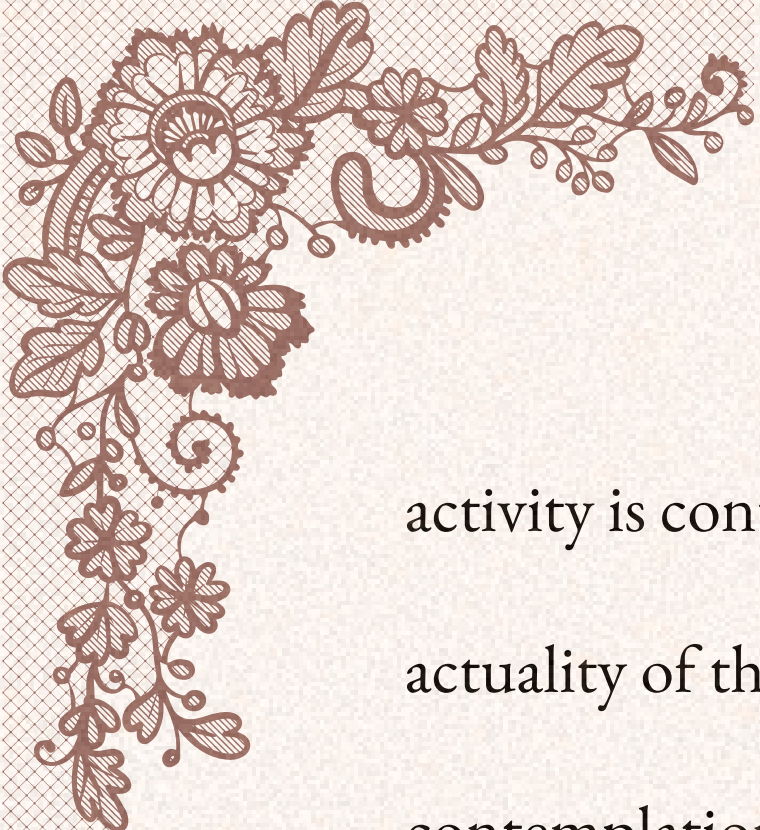


Aristotle's account of the divine in the *Metaphysics* is one of the most puzzling aspects of his philosophy. In these chapters, Aristotle develops a picture of the highest being: an eternal, unchanging, pure actuality whose entirety is pure contemplation. This God of his functions as the final cause, moving all things through being the object of desire and thought. Yet, as Aristotle distinguishes this divine intellect from human intellect, a deeper question arises about their relationship. This is especially given Aristotle's presentation in both *De Anima III* and *Nicomachean Ethics X* that the noblest human life is one that participates in divine activity. These passages help me see a tension between Aristotle's account of participation in the divine and his critique of the Platonic forms. Aristotle rejects Plato's forms as separate and static, yet his account of the first mover ends up looking suspiciously Platonic. To what extent does Aristotle really break from Plato, or does his account of contemplation reintroduce a participation in the divine that makes him, in a way, Platonic? By examining divine thought, human nous, and the role of contemplation, I argue that Aristotle's account of human contemplation and divine activity preserves a fundamentally Platonic structure, despite his explicit rejection of the forms.

“All men by nature desire to know.”¹ In Aristotle's *Metaphysics XII*, especially sections seven and nine, he discusses his idea of “the first mover” along with the nature of divine thought. This ‘first mover,’ or as many secondary scholars label the ‘unmoved mover,’ is introduced as the first principle of all motion and the highest form. This divine substance is pure actuality, the perfect object of desire and thought, an eternal being which “...produces motion by being loved, and it moves the other moving things.”² This actuality is linked with nous, the highest form of intellectual faculty, whose

¹ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Vol. 2), (Princeton University Press, 1984), *Metaphysics I.1*

² Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, *Metaphysics XII.7*



activity is contemplation (the act of which is most pleasant and best). Aristotle states that “...the actuality of thought is life,”³ expanding his connection between divine life with the activity of perfect contemplation. As only the divine is worthy of being its own object, this results in this conception of God as the living, eternal actuality, whose continuous self-contemplation gives the highest and most pleasant form of life. He writes, “And thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same.”⁴ This self-reflective contemplation of God establishes Aristotle’s first mover as a living activity that is the happiest and best form of existence, making the unmoved mover an explanation for order and motion in the cosmos. *Metaphysics XII.9* deepens the thought of the nature of the divine thought by expanding on what Aristotle said in *XII.7*, that the divine life is continuous activity of self-contemplation, writing that, “Therefore it must be itself that thought thinks.”⁵ The first mover is both thought and the object of thought. This account brings me to how human thinking relates to divine activity.

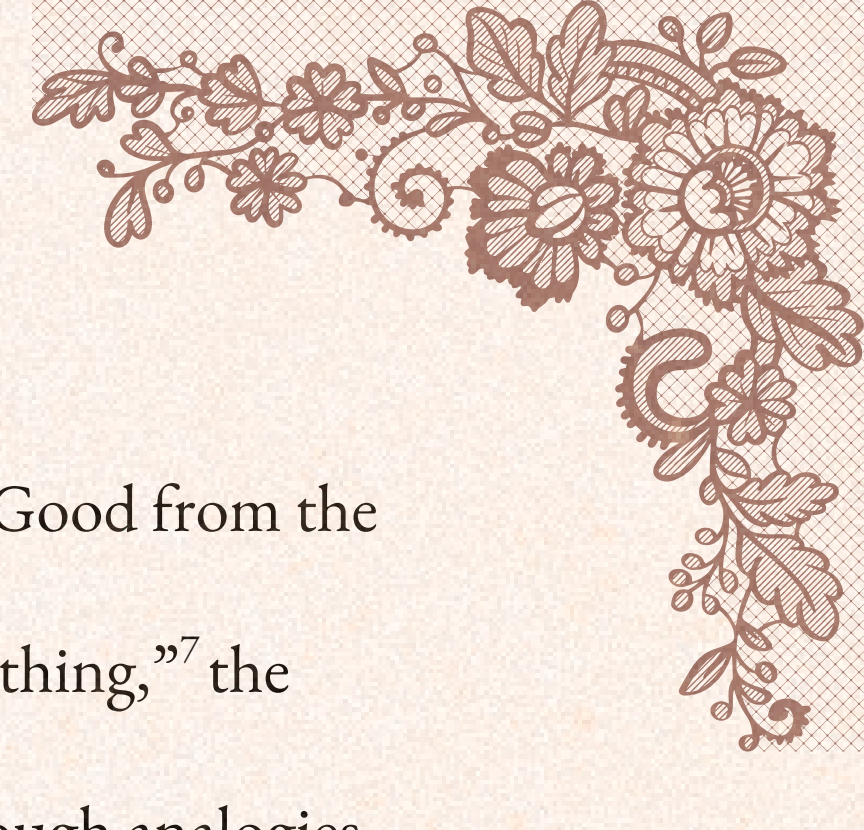
In *De Anima III*, Aristotle dives into human and divine thought by explaining how the highest form of intellect, nous, contains both passive and active elements. The potential, passive, nous remains in possibility and receives all intelligible forms while the purely actual nous is always actual, separable and impassable. Because “...actual knowledge is identical with its object,”⁶ when nous is purely actual, it performs the same activity that is the nature of divine thought. Through engaging in our highest form of intellect, the activity of purely actual nous, we momentarily perform the same

³ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*

⁴ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*

⁵ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, Metaphysics XII.9*

⁶ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Vol. 1), (Princeton University Press, 1984), *De Anima III.5*



kind of activity that God is, participating in the divine. Recalling Plato's form of the Good from the *Republic VI*, through the Socratic dialogue, this form is presented as "...the most real thing,"⁷ the highest object of knowledge. For Plato, genuine knowledge is only of the forms. Through analogies like the sun analogy, which portrays the good to the intelligible world as the sun is to the visible world, and the line analogy, which regards the division between the natural and intelligible world, Plato presents the Good at the top of the intelligible realm. Humans can reach toward this level through theoretical reasoning, but we can never become a form.

Even without the use of a form, Aristotle displays an ascent that reaches a single highest principle. While Aristotle's eternal being is not a form, to me it almost resembles the top of the line, the ultimate object of thought, pure actuality. Certain elements that both Aristotle and Plato use to describe their respective metaphysical systems share many similarities that make me see an echo of a Platonic aesthetic in Aristotle's first mover. Plato describes the Good as "...the cause of all that is correct and beautiful,"⁸ the highest object of knowledge which gives intelligibility to all other forms. Meanwhile, Aristotle's first mover "...is a living being, eternal, most good,"⁹ an object of desire and thought. Both principles serve as the highest realities of intellect, to which rational activity is directed. What makes the first mover seem most Platonic, to me, is the role of contemplation. For Plato, one can strive to grasp the good through genuine knowledge; for Aristotle, the parallel emerges when humans engage in our highest form of intellect. Through *theoria*, our potential intellect becomes actual and briefly participates in the activity of the first mover. Our contemplation mirrors divine thought, constructing a structure of

⁷ Plato, Cooper, John. M., & Hutchinson, D. S., *Plato: Complete Works*, (Hackett Pub. Co., 1997), *Republic VI*

⁸ Plato, Cooper, John. M., & Hutchinson, D. S., *Plato: Complete Works*, (Hackett Pub. Co., 1997), *Republic VII*

⁹ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*



participation that resembles the Platonic ascent toward a form.

Despite the structural similarities I see in comparing Aristotle's depiction of the first mover and Plato's forms, I still find instances where Aristotle strays from a Platonic aesthetic. Plato's Good is contemplated but never engaged with, a static form untouched by human activity. While humans can approach the form through engaging in philosophical conquest, we do not "become" the form or take part in its being. Aristotle's divine being, however, is a living *energeia*, whose very essence is activity. Aristotle's God is not a static being, but rather an activity that becomes the model for thought itself. Importantly, Aristotle expresses that we can briefly share in this activity. He writes, "And thought itself thinks because it shares the nature of the object of thought...so that thought and object of thought are the same."¹⁰ In contemplation, we perform the same activity that the divine principle is. While Plato's Good is only approached, with the first mover, we can "become" it. This is where I see Aristotle's greatest departure from Plato; his first mover is not only contemplated, but can be momentarily lived. Through the examination of divine thought with human nous, I see that Aristotle does not fully stray from the Platonic structure he critiques. His first mover echoes Plato's form of the Good, and the act of contemplation displays a participation in the divine that resembles a Platonic ascent toward the knowable realm. The emphasis on divine activity helps bring to light bits of a Platonic element, even if it was not the intent. Aristotle creates a theology that presents a divine actuality that moves the world by being the source of intellectual contemplation, drawing all things toward it. Yet this movement illuminating the activity of thought keeps a Platonic scaffolding, even if faint. In this sense, Platonic ideas quietly weave through Aristotle's vision of the first principle, even while reshaping the structure of his theology into something his own.

¹⁰ Aristotle, & Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*

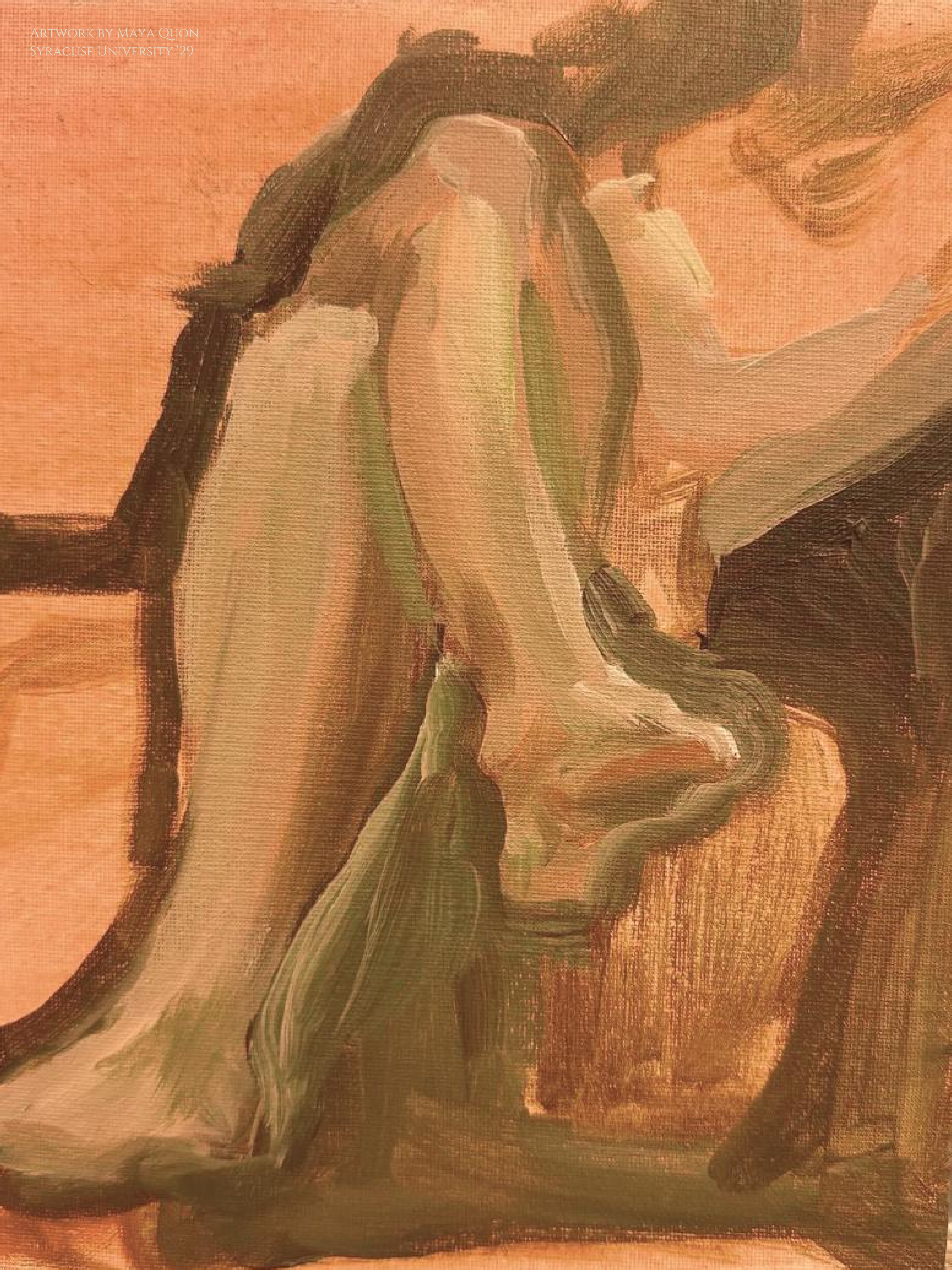


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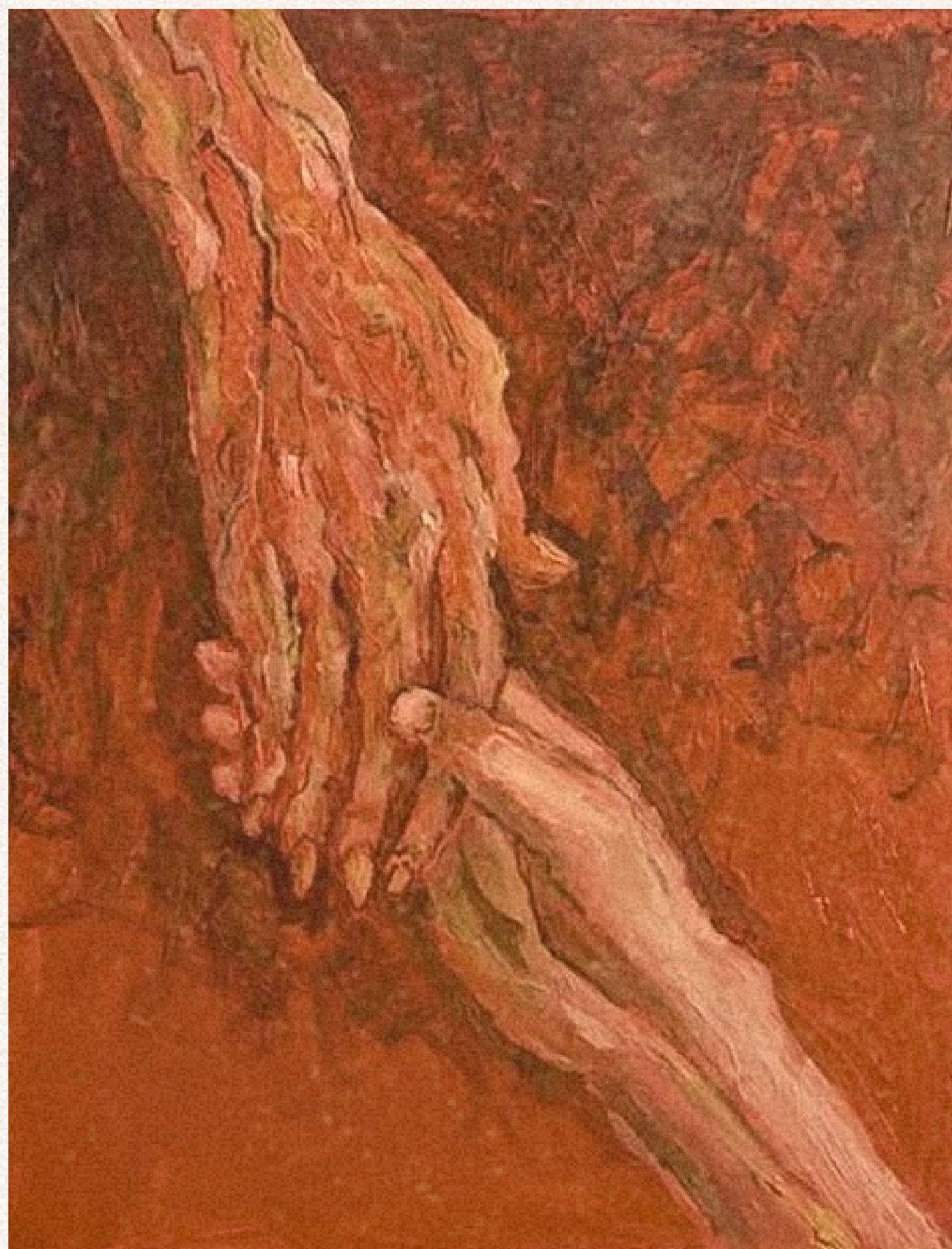
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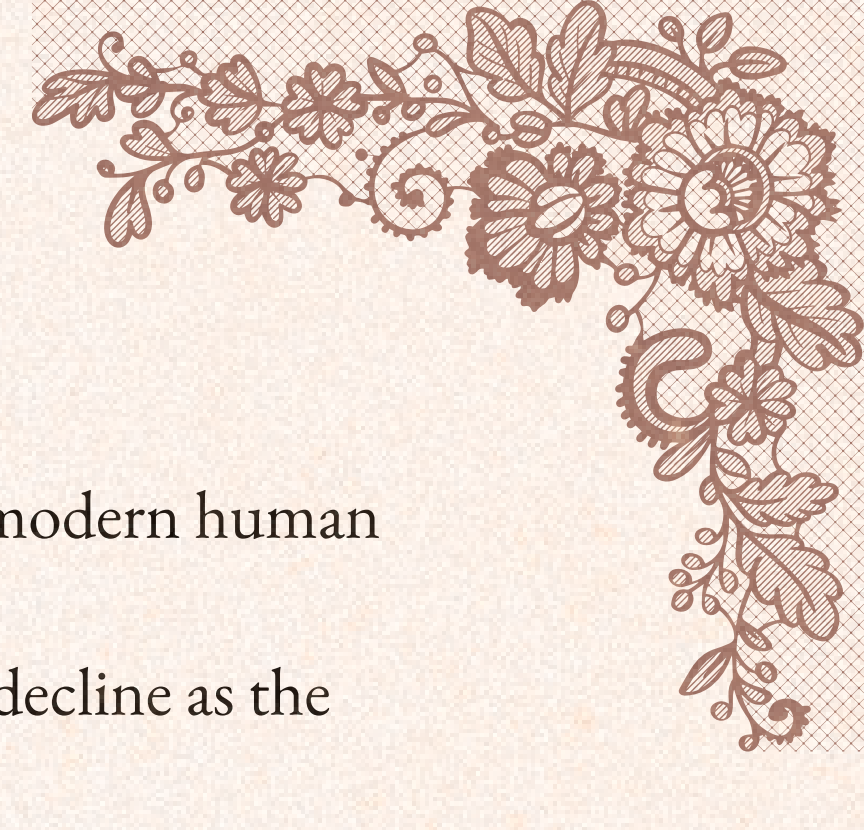
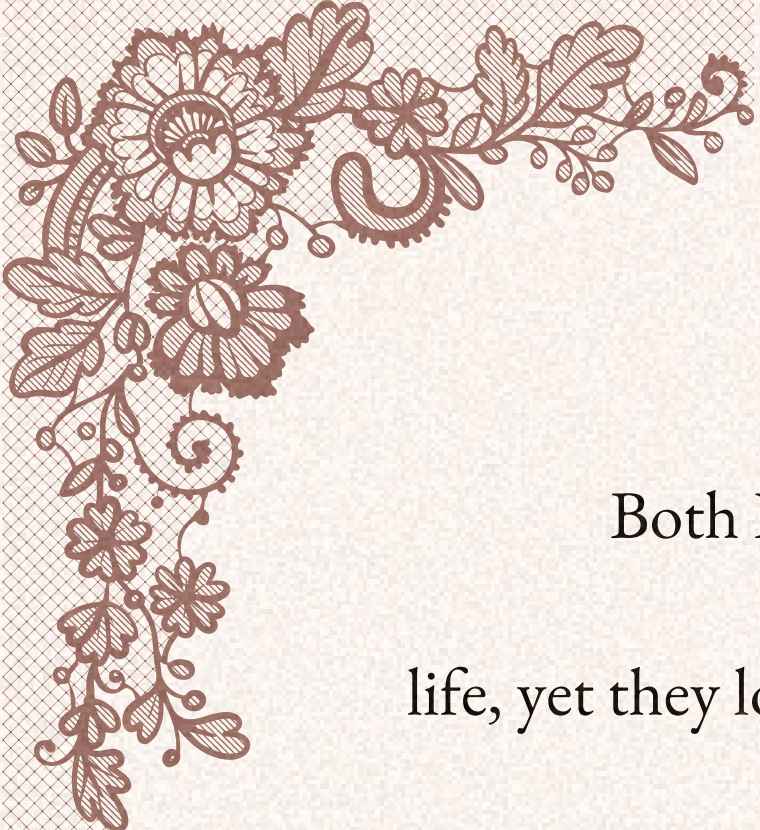


Nietzsche, Marx and the Human Decline
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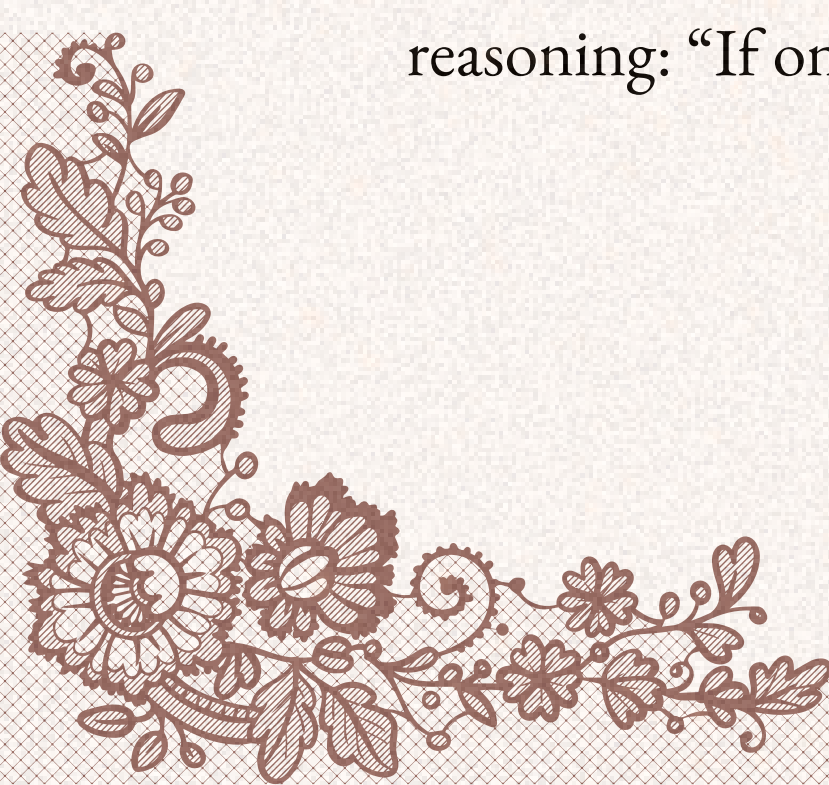


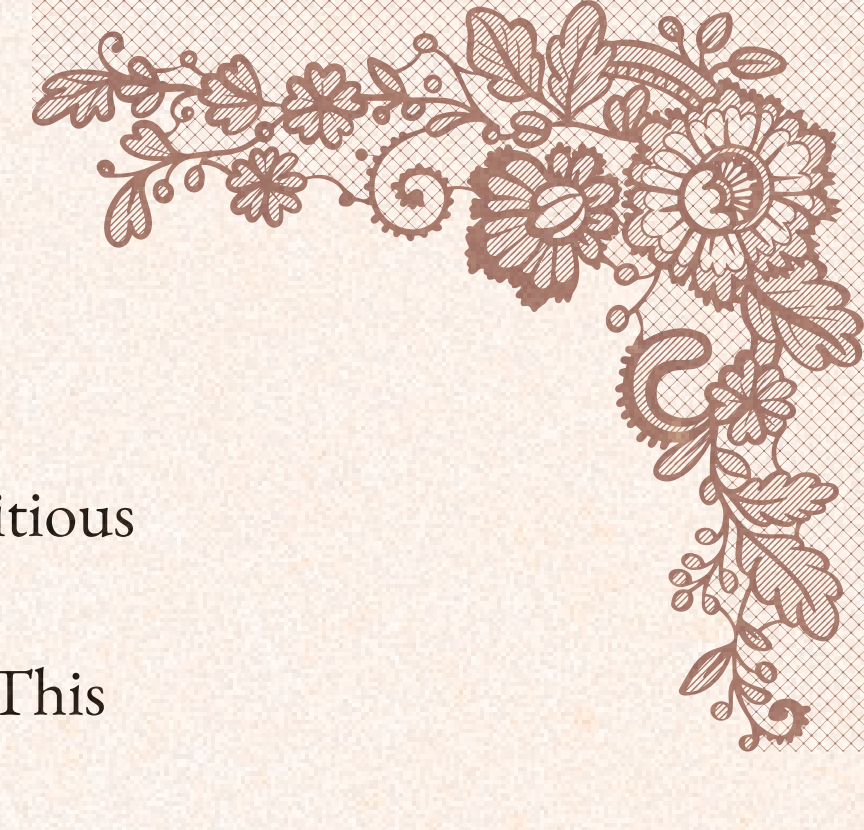
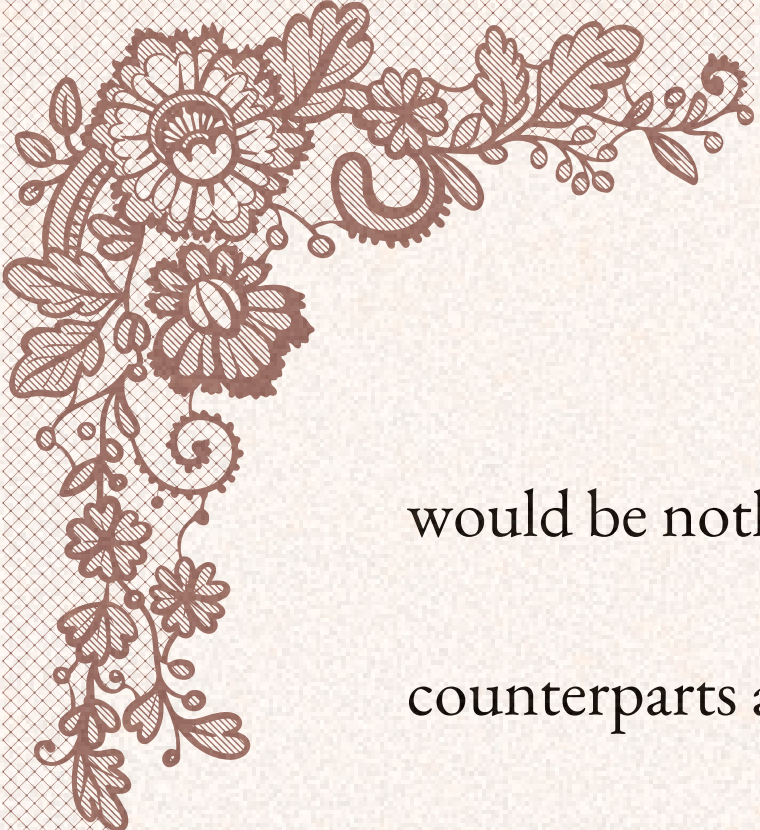
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Both Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx diagnose a form of degeneration in modern human life, yet they locate its source in radically different places. Nietzsche understands this decline as the triumph of reactive values—what he famously calls the “slave revolt in morality”—which suppresses life-affirming creativity and culminates in the figure of the “last man.” Marx, by contrast, situates human degradation not in morality but in material conditions, arguing that private property and capitalist production alienate individuals from their labor, their species-being, and one another. This essay argues that although Marx’s materialist critique successfully exposes Nietzsche’s “will to power” as an interpretive framework rather than an empirical explanation, this does not undermine Nietzsche’s project. On the contrary, Nietzsche’s genealogy aims precisely to reveal the value-laden character of all philosophical explanations, including Marx’s own materialism. By examining Nietzsche’s account of the will to power and slave morality alongside Marx’s theory of alienated labor, this essay contends that Nietzsche offers a uniquely valuable insight into the moral prejudices underlying modern thought—an insight that survives and advances Marx’s response rather than being refuted by it.

First and foremost in order to understand the significance of the slave revolt for Nietzsche one has to first have an idea on what role human desires have in analyzing humans as a whole. Nietzsche contends that philosophers’ claims to “disinterested contemplation” are not neutral investigations of reality but are shaped by underlying moral prejudices. In aphorism 34 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, he observes that the pursuit of “honesty” and “impersonality” is motivated by human drives, not objective reasoning: “If one wanted to do away with the ‘apparent world’ entirely...then at the very least there





would be nothing left of your ‘truth’, either.”¹ Both these ‘truths’ and their more fictitious counterparts are born from the same source: the desires and drives of human beings. This demonstrates that philosophical argument is never detached from the values and desires of the philosopher; moral prejudices function as a hidden engine behind purportedly rational claims. Nietzsche then extends this insight in aphorism 36, experimenting with the idea of the “will to power” as the fundamental causal force in human thought and action. A system which unifies these desires (or “will” as he prefers to say) and the material world. Even though he refuses to degrade the material world into being only an appearance, or depict the will to power as this metaphysical principle-cause-of-all, he still identifies it as being in “the same level of reality that our emotions have.”² By refusing to demarcate between the emotional/spiritual world (heaven, as Marx might argue) and physical realities (earth), he is able to argue the hypothesis that the main causal power in work in human life is this “will.” Assuming that only a will could affect another will, and that it is one’s will that determines what kinds of effect they have on their environment and on themselves, the only primary cause left must be the will.³ The significance of identifying will and later on the will to power as the fundamental causal principle is that it lets Nietzsche use this concept to experiment with analyzing the human life process as a whole.

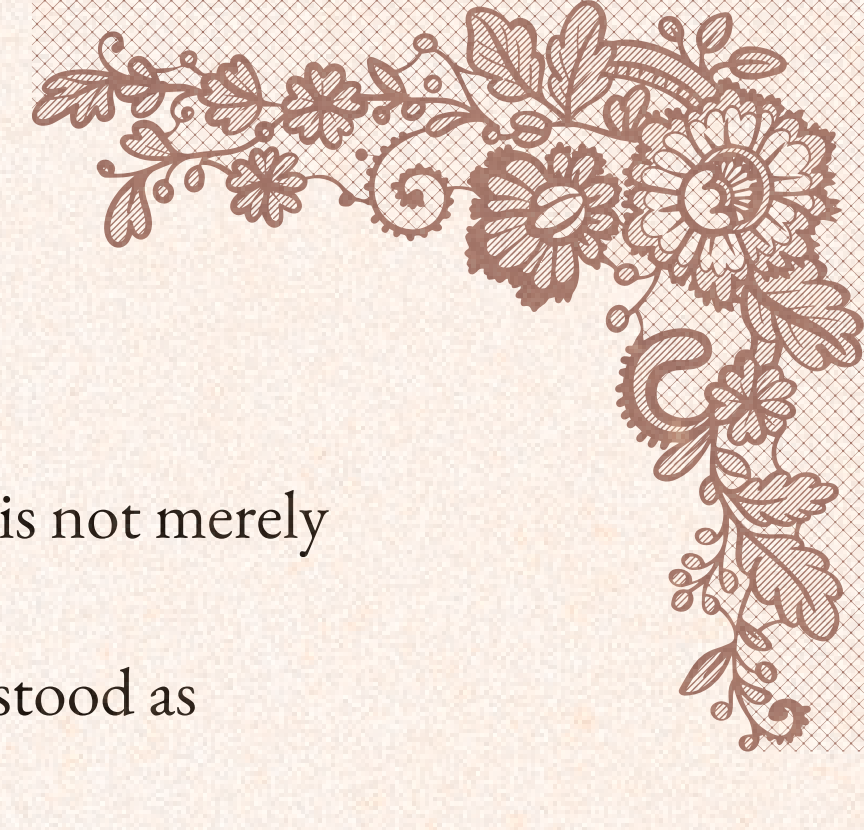
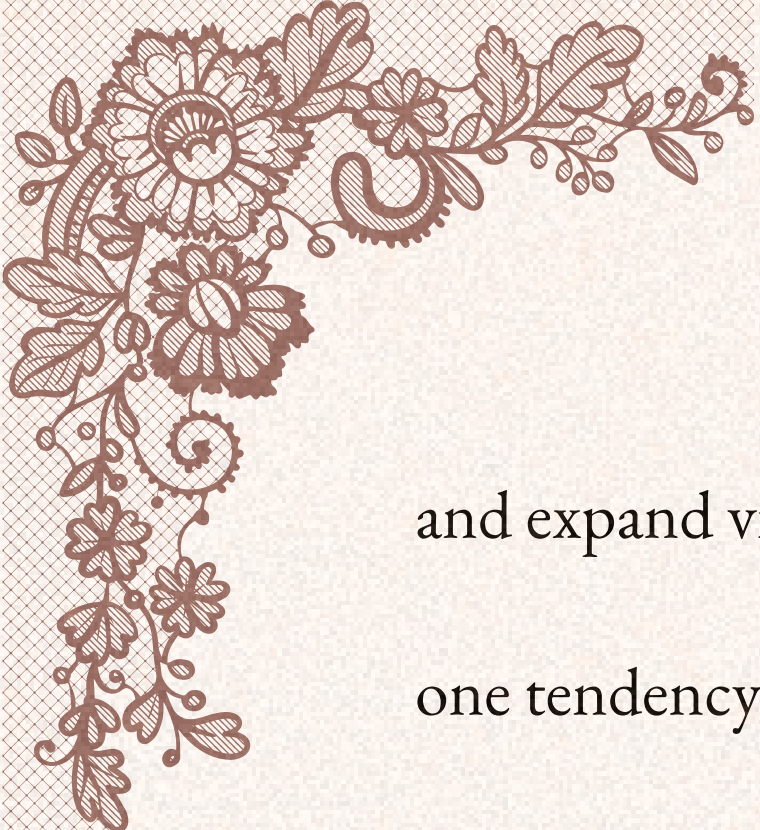
According to Nietzsche, to live is “forcing one’s own forms on others.”⁴ It is to push oneself in front of others and to make what he is made out of as the prominent form for all. It is to dominate

¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 34, 1998

² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 36, 1998

³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 36, 1998

⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 259, 1998

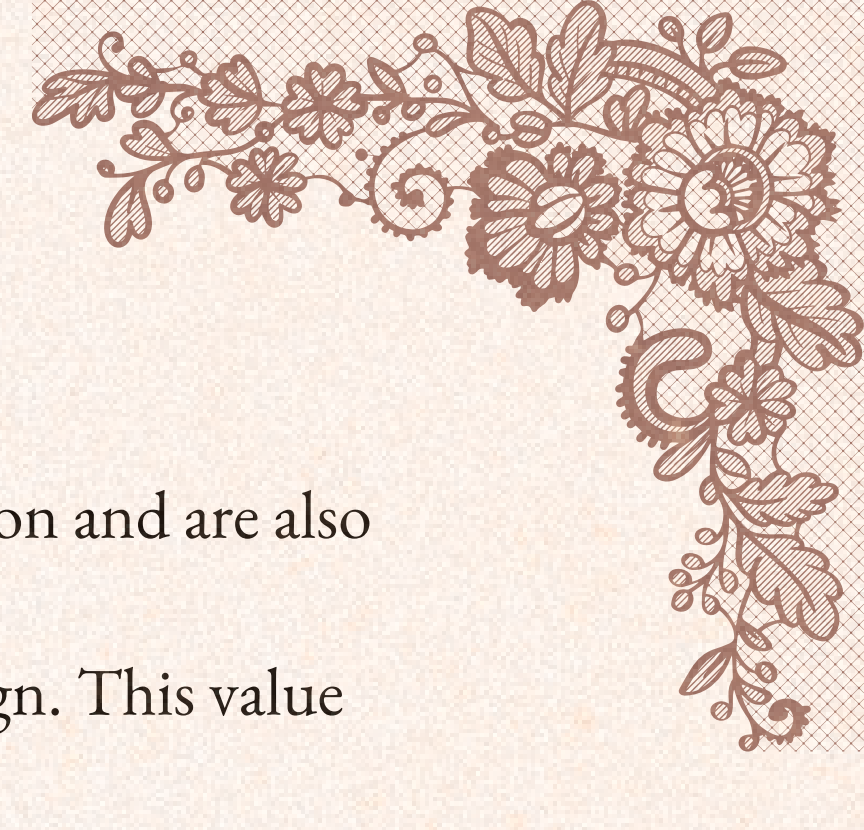
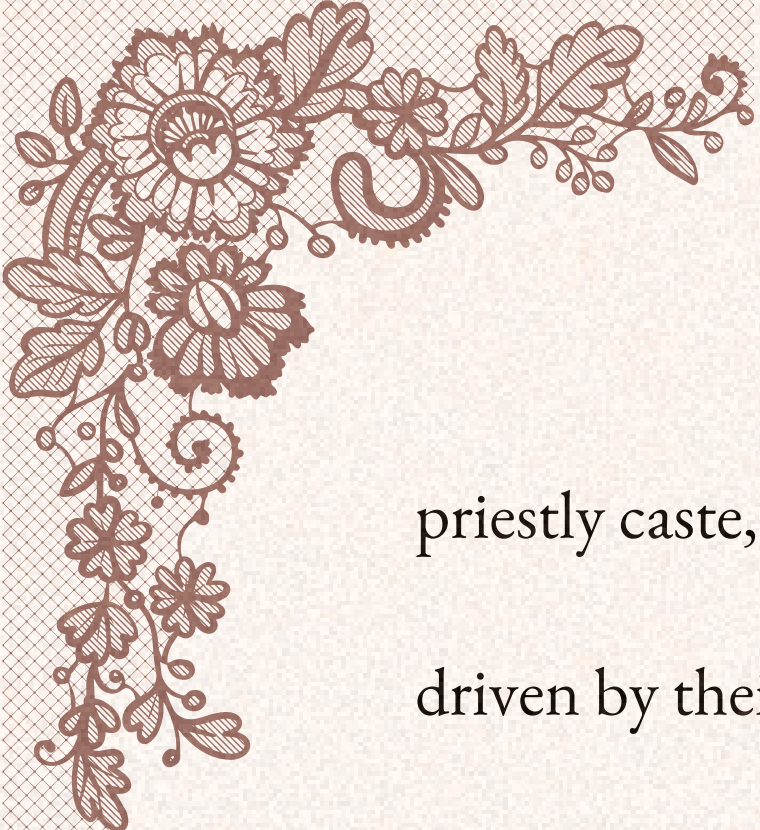


and expand via creation. It is critical to observe that, for Nietzsche, the will to power is not merely one tendency among others but a fundamental principle through which life is understood as persisting and affirming itself. As author Lawrence Hatab demonstrates in his book *Nietzsche's 'On the Genealogy of Morality': An Introduction*, life-affirmation for Nietzsche necessarily involves affirming the existence of opposition, since struggle and resistance are conditions of vitality rather than obstacles to it. Only through this opposition is one able to state they are alive.⁵ Thus Nietzsche rejects any appeal to utility in explaining the origins of morality, arguing instead that moral valuation emerges from acts of self-affirmation that distinguish the self from what is foreign or other. This affirmative act of valuation—by which a group defines itself as “good” in contrast to what it is not—can be understood as an expression of what Nietzsche calls the will to power, not merely as domination, but as the capacity to impose meaning, form, and value upon the world. It is this will to power of the noble caste that gave birth to what Nietzsche calls “noble values.” The noble caste/the strong identified what they were as being the “good” and what was “not them” as being the “bad,” the “inferior.”⁶

The people who lack this capability of value-creation—who are aptly portrayed as sheep on page 13 of *On the Genealogy of Morality*—are depicted as being the slave caste. Here the slave caste is depicted to be a people of conformists, a people who refuse to leave what is familiar to them and push their own boundaries to express and expand themselves. Nevertheless the slave morality, even though it is named after them, is not born out of the slave caste, but instead by the priestly caste. The

⁵ Hatab, “The Will to Power” in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, 346, 2019

⁶ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 2, 1998

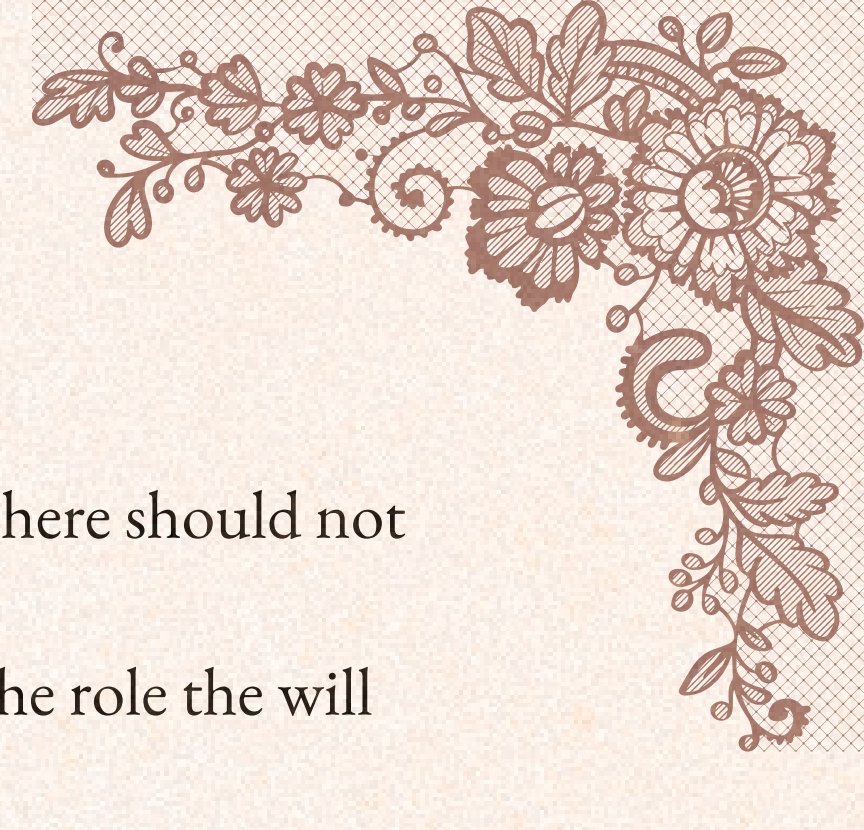
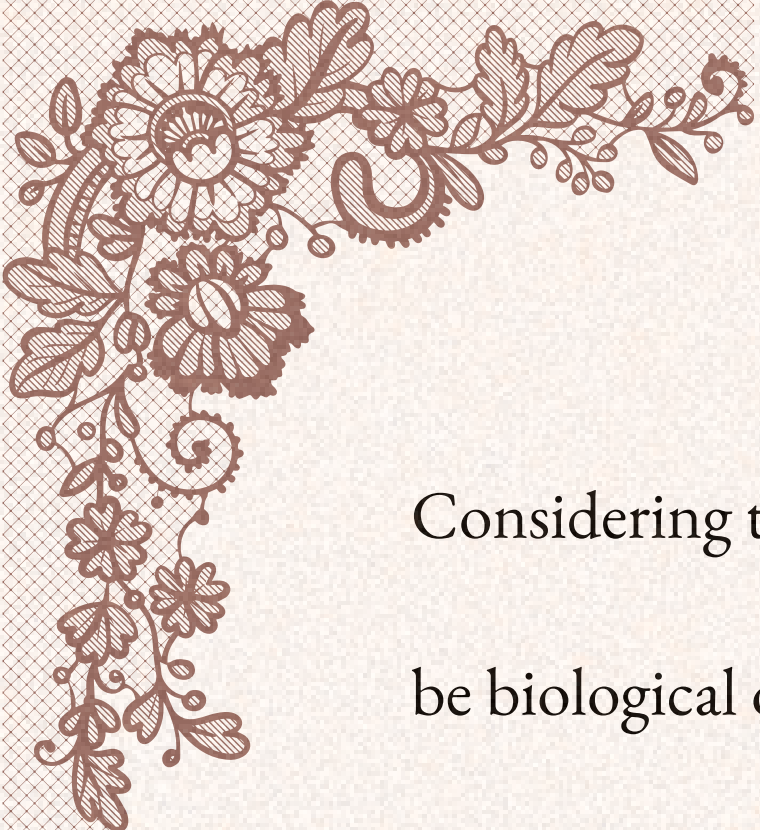


priestly caste, much like the knightly-aristocratic caste, has the power for value-creation and are also driven by their will to power to expand and affirm themselves in the face of the foreign. This value creation is born from a quality of the spirit, the quality of possessing the ability to affirm themselves, their desire for power. This desire to express themselves can be seen as the proof of the priestly caste's noble status. Nevertheless in many cases the priestly caste is simply subordinate to the knightly-aristocratic caste in terms of power, due to their weak physicality. Thus in order to obtain true power from the knightly-aristocratic caste the priestly caste form their own valuation system that directly opposes the valuation system of the knightly-aristocratic caste. A valuation system which tokens the meek as the good and the strong as evil or sinful. Even though both valuations systems comes forth from the same drive, the will to power, “the knightly-aristocratic value judgements have as their presupposition a powerful physicality” what the priestly caste has is hate; overflowing, endless hate with calculated patience, which in turn births a reactionary valuation system: the resentment valuation.⁷ Even though slave morality is born out of a will to power of the priestly caste, the fact that the reactive attitude of the system resonates with the conformist nature of the slave caste begets the ire of Nietzsche’s criticism.

The problem begins as the creative expansion of the “noble values” is opposed by the resentment valuation. Even though the manner in which this resentment valuations oppose and contradict can be seen as a creative action much like that of the knightly-aristocratic caste, what is born out of this “creative action” is defined by Nietzsche as being the “regression of humankind.”⁸

⁷ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 10, 1998

⁸ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 11, 1998



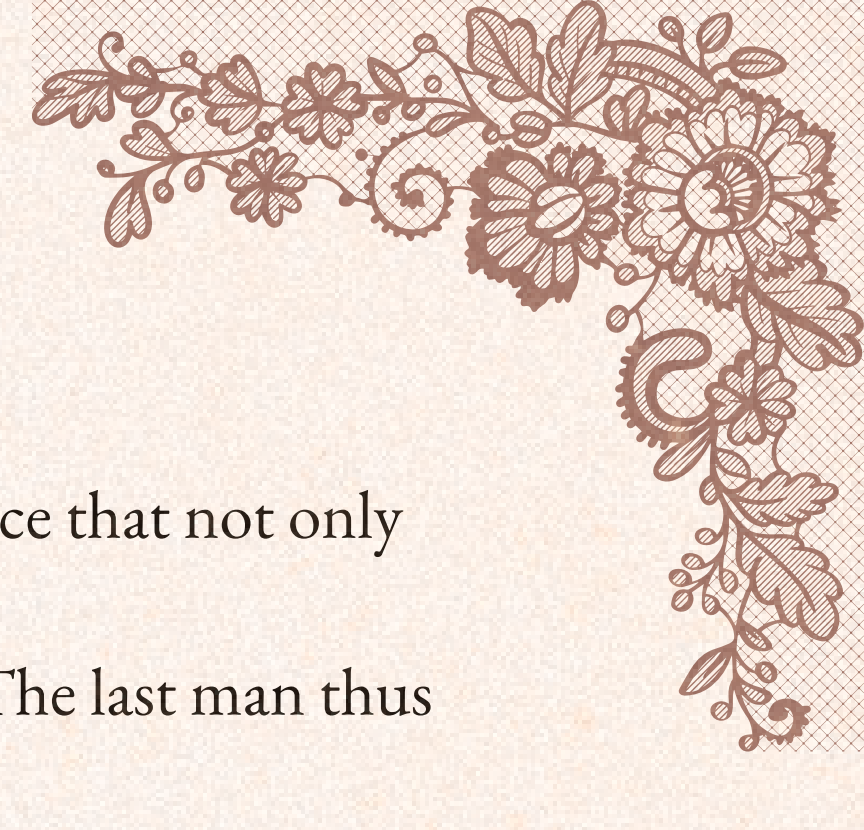
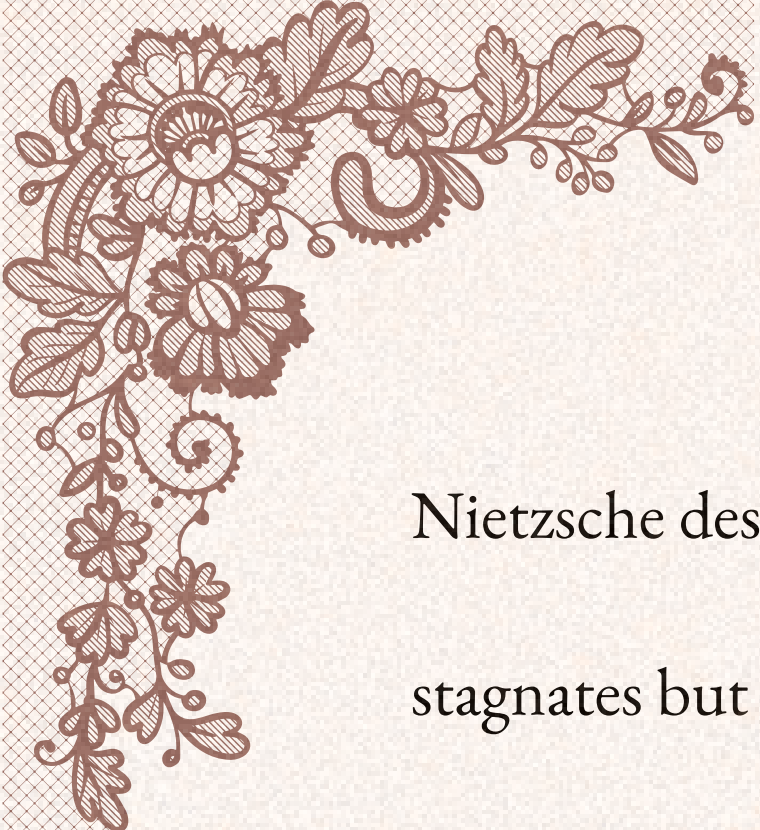
Considering that this is a genealogical analysis based on valuation systems, regression here should not be biological or anthropological; instead, slave morality should be seen as inhibiting the role the will to power has on human life. Suddenly the desire to take up space, to expand on others, to show strength upon adversity is morally condemned. Rather than self-affirmation, what is promoted is to conform to the masses. Confirmation of the inability of the slave caste/ meek to “say yes” to themselves. This valuation system reveals a central hypocrisy of the priestly caste: while striving for power through moral revaluation, it simultaneously condemns the very drive that enables its historical success. As Hatab notes, any doctrine that rejects the will to power undermines the conditions of its own emergence as a product of struggle among conflicting forces.⁹ What concerns Nietzsche, however, is the consequences of such a valuation system. What slave morality does is to tame the “blond beast [into a house cat].” It inhibits the ravaging of the birds of prey.

Even though slave morality frames this violent “exploitative” nature of the noble caste as being a negative trait, for Nietzsche this could not be further from the truth. For Nietzsche exploitation is not a sign of decadence but instead demonstration of the will to power.¹⁰ For him, struggle, subjugation, and overcoming are constitutive of life rather than deviations from it. The parable of the “last man” demonstrates what a conformist society with a diminished will to power would look like: a society that comes to despise exertion itself and becomes content with stagnation rather than expansion or overcoming.¹¹ Such a society is composed of a mass that works only for its own entertainment and remains indifferent to anything beyond this narrow horizon. This condition, which

⁹ Hatab, “The Will to Power,” 337, 2019

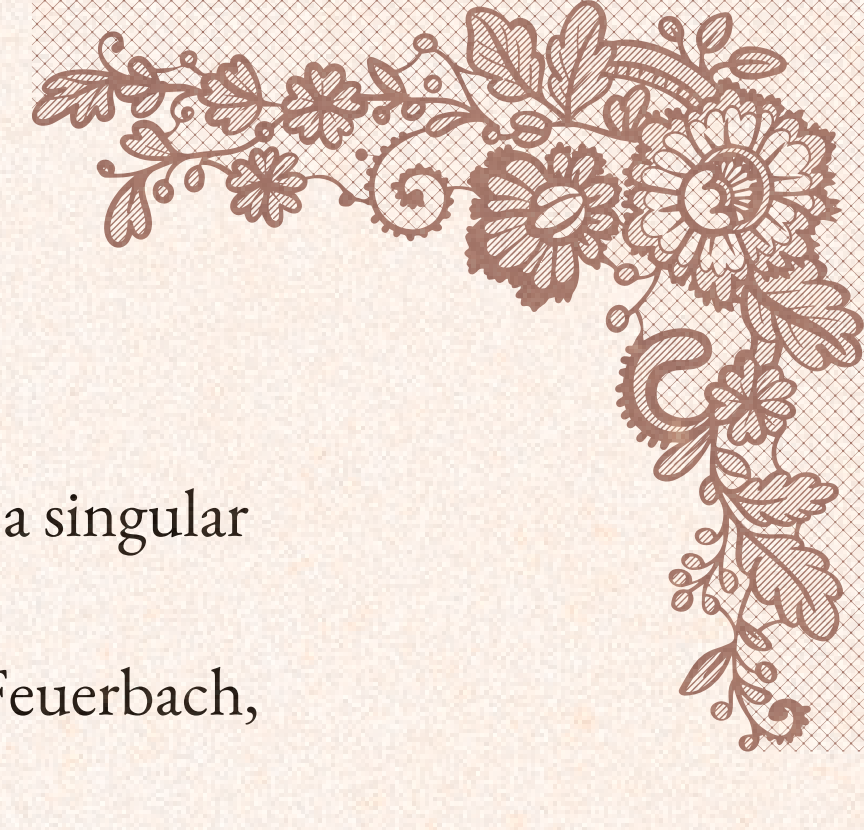
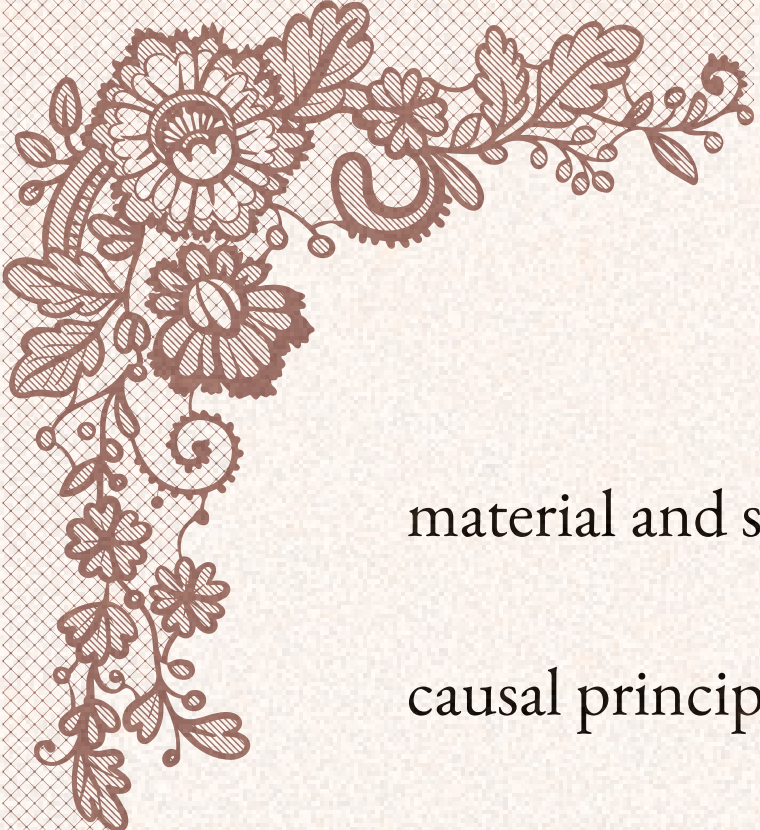
¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 259, 1998

¹¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 11, 1978



Nietzsche describes as “most contemptible,” represents a life-denying form of existence that not only stagnates but comes to value its own stagnation as a source of security and comfort. The last man thus embodies the cultural endpoint toward which slave morality tends: a form of life that has lost its capacity for self-overcoming.

Marx would not deny that Nietzsche’s genealogy identifies a genuine form of stagnation or impoverishment in modern human life; however, he would reject Nietzsche’s explanatory framework. From a Marxian perspective, an analysis grounded in human drives such as the “will to power” remains fictional or abstract, because it fails to account for the material conditions within which human beings live and act. For a long time, according to Marx, the theoretical and the physical aspects of human life have been seen to be divided, where they treat ideas (heaven), values, and consciousness as primary while neglecting the material and social realities (earth) that give rise to them. Even though this criticism of a separation of “earth and heaven” is specifically aimed at German philosopher Feuerbach, as Nietzsche refuses to perceive the two as being separate, its methodological force can also be applied to him. While Nietzsche explicitly rejects metaphysical essences, in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* the will to power functions as a generalized explanatory principle for historical and moral development. For the genealogical analysis made by Nietzsche to have relevance to the material world it is critical for the will to power to stay as the central cause, as the manner in which the slave revolt occurs is via the will to power of different groups (the knightly-aristocratic and priestly castes) reacting to each other. From a Marxian perspective, this methodological move parallels Feuerbach’s abstraction of sensual human existence into an explanatory essence, substituting psychological dynamics for



material and social realities.¹² Marx would argue that such a system where there exists a singular causal principle, such as the will to power for Nietzsche or “religious sentiment” for Feuerbach, can only exist in an abstraction of the historical process. That in reality there exists no solid will to power in each and every individual, instead what can be referred to as “will to power” is itself a social product; that is, something formed through historical and material social relations.¹³

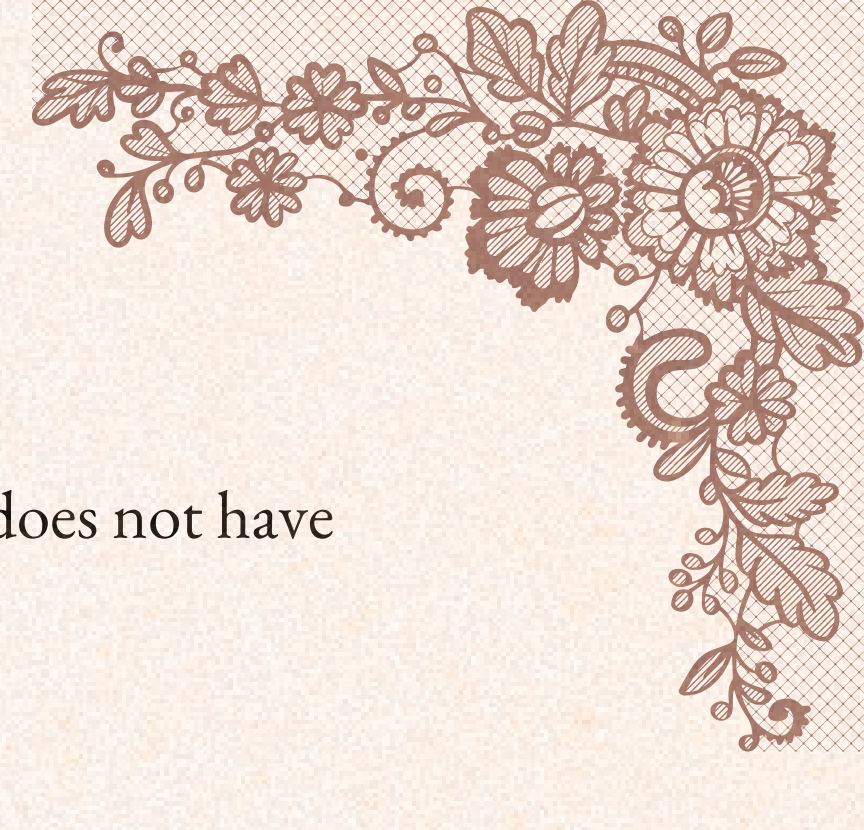
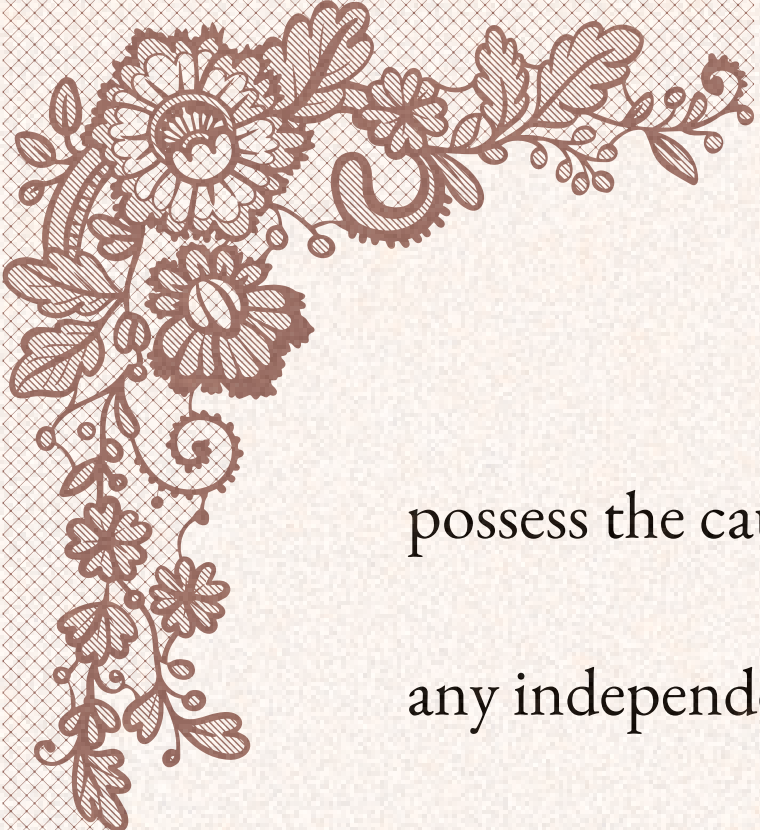
Simply put, according to Marx what Nietzsche does is put the chicken before the egg. To argue that the will to power can be defined as the central cause for all physical events between humans, while Marx argues that the egg comes before the chicken, that it is physical realities themselves that create what Nietzsche argues as the will to power. From a Marxian perspective, Nietzsche’s critique of slave morality is another form of interpretation. Nietzsche identifies a psychological and cultural “illness” (ressentiment) and proposes a spiritual “cure” (philosophers of the new age). However, Marx argues in Thesis VIII that “All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice.”¹⁴ By focusing on the “will” as the primary mover, Nietzsche remains in the realm of theory, which Marx considers a “mysticism” that obscures the real, sensuous activity of human beings.

Instead of perceiving a rancid value-creation system (slave morality) being the root cause of the circumstances in the “Last Man,” Marx would term it as another symptom born out of a material cause. According to Marx, value-creation (or morality as he would put it) does not

¹² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 169, 2000

¹³ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 169, 2000

¹⁴ Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, 169, 1845



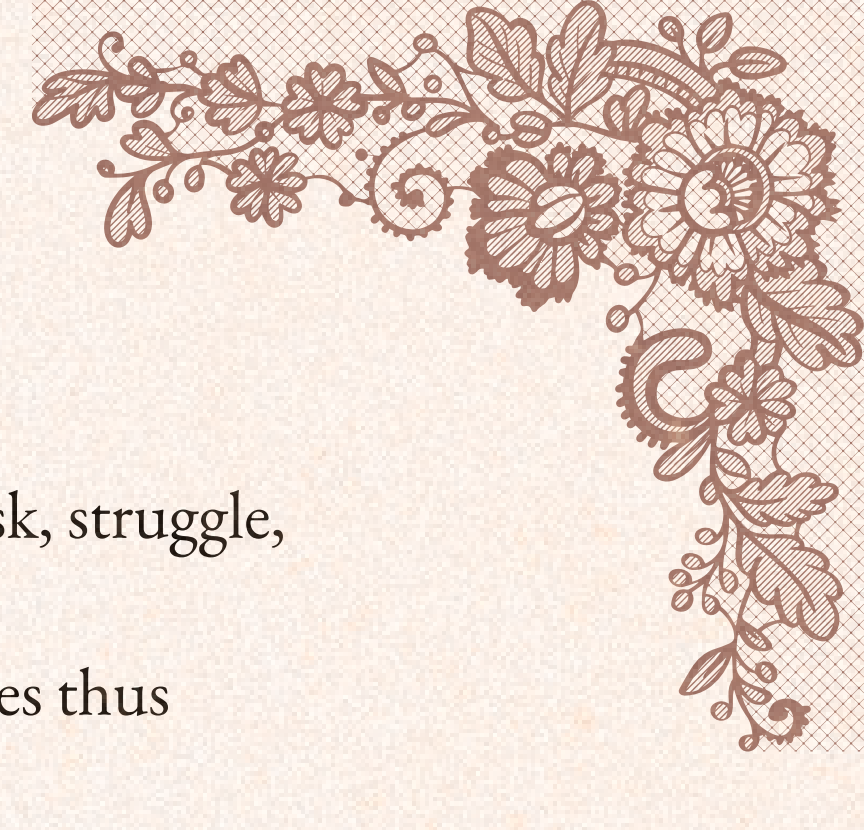
possess the causal power to create a stagnant society. He would argue morality alone does not have any independent primary causal powers at all. Material reality—especially mode of production—on the other hand determines the nature of the individual.¹⁵ Thus in order to understand the “existence of living human individuals,” Marx sees it as a must to center an individual’s capability to express themselves or, in his words, their means of production in his analysis. It is not the strength of one’s spirit, whether or not one is able to harness the will to power, which is the main demarcating characteristic between classes, but one’s grasp on their means of production.¹⁶ When an individual does not work for his own means but instead is compensated for his work, when an individual works for another’s private property, he is alienated from his own labor.

Even though alienation from labor is depicted to cause four other different alienations along with it—alienation from the product, the process, one’s “species-being,” and other humans—the most striking result is a literal reversal of human and animal functions.¹⁷ Individuals live a life where they are stripped of freedom in every aspect of their lives except for the most primitive aspects, such as drinking, eating and procreating. Labor, however, which should be the uniquely human expression of “species-being” (conscious, creative transformation of the world and labor in general), is reduced to a mere means of physical survival. This “animalization” of human existence directly parallels Nietzsche’s depiction of the last man, whose horizon of

¹⁵ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 62, 2000

¹⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 41, 2007

¹⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 42, 2007



value contracts to comfort, security, and entertainment, and who comes to despise risk, struggle, and self-overcoming. What Nietzsche diagnoses as a cultural triumph of reactive values thus appears, from a Marxian perspective, as the predictable outcome of a material environment that systematically strips individuals of the conditions necessary for creative, affirmative activity. In this sense, the last man is not the cause of social stagnation but its psychological and moral expression: a subject whose diminished will is produced by alienated labor rather than freely chosen through resentment alone.

At first glance it seems only logical to argue that Marx's rebuttal of Nietzsche's dependence on the will to power holds strong, and that he is also able to account for the stagnation of people while staying firm in empirical facts. That Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* is a mere interpretation which falls short of bringing any kind of "change," as Marx would demand.¹⁸

Nietzsche would argue for the same, that his own analysis is a mere interpretation,¹⁹ as he himself would frame his own dependence to the will to power in his genealogy of morality as a part of an experiment.²⁰ Rather than explicitly prescribing for a moral revolution (even though there is an implicit call for it), he simply traces the origins of morality, and demonstrates how the concepts of "good" and "evil" evolved,²¹ which highlights the moral prejudices of philosophers of his era.²² Yet to simply refer to his critique of slave morality as an "interpretation" and dismiss it wholly would be indicative of what Nietzsche criticizes. For Nietzsche the time of men who were unaware of their

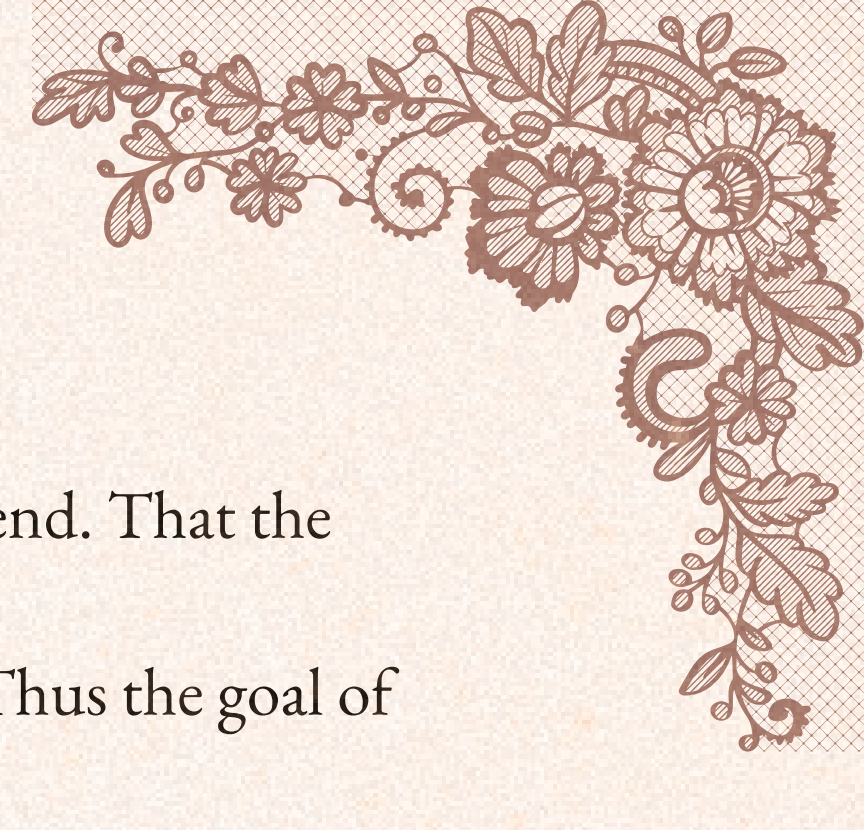
¹⁸ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 170, 2000

¹⁹ Hatab, "The Will to Power," 345, 2019

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 36, 1998

²¹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 1, 1998

²² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 34, 1998



own biases and how these biases affected their own conclusions needs to come to an end. That the new age requires people not chained to these values but the ones who created them. Thus the goal of his depiction of slave morality was not to indoctrinate his readers with his conclusions, but instead demonstrate how a moralist reached conclusions, for he argues that it is necessary for these new philosophers to be moralists (as well as dogmatists, critics, historians, et cetera) in order to understand these biases and move beyond them.²³

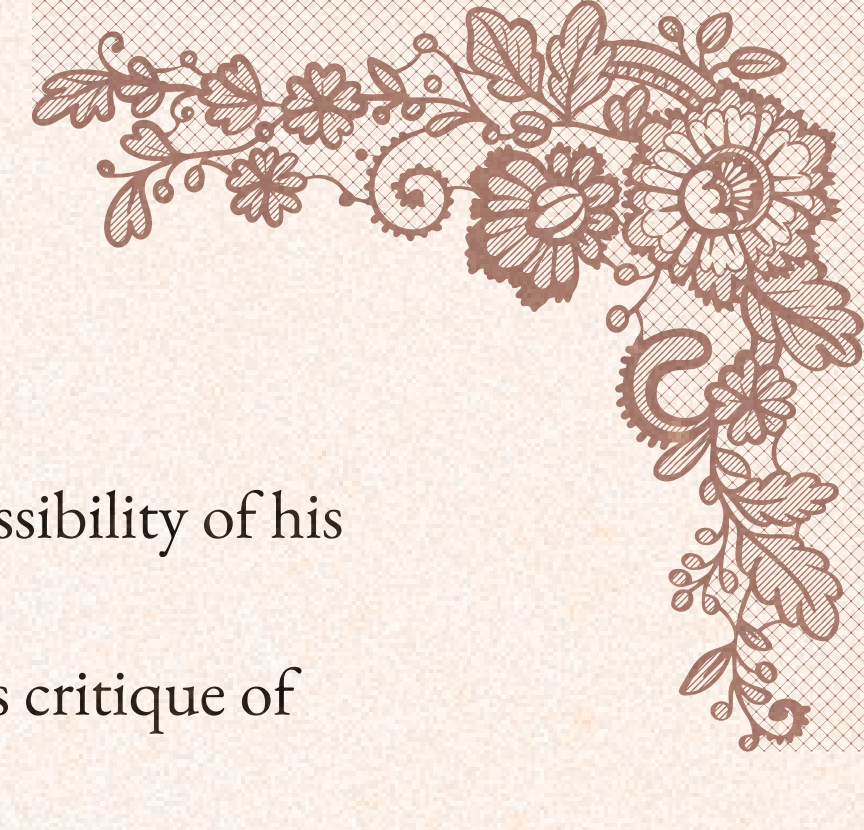
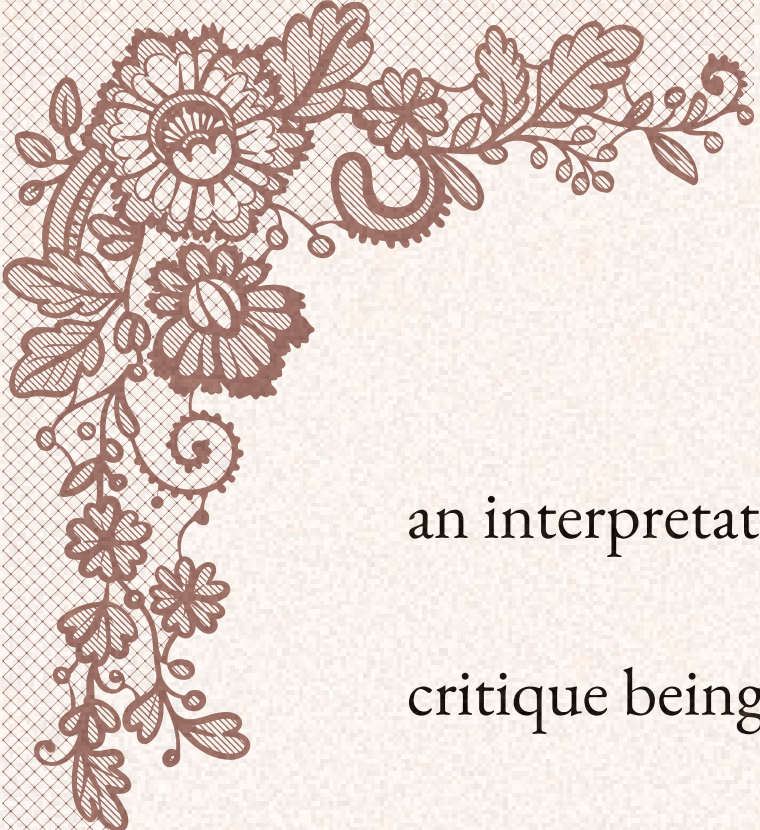
Nietzsche would argue that Marx's dependence on mode of production as the fundamental shaper of humanity is "naive"²⁴ because it assumes that "material conditions" are a foundational, objective truth rather than a specific, value-laden interpretation. As Hatab argues, the will to power is not a single metaphysical force or empirical cause but a pluralistic framework for interpreting life as a dynamic field of competing forces, perspectives, and valuations. Within such a framework, no explanation—including Marx's appeal to material conditions and modes of production—can claim a neutral or final standpoint. For Nietzsche, the claim that history can be "verified in a purely empirical way"²⁵ is itself a "will to truth"—moral justification for imposing stability, certainty, and objectivity upon a world that resists all such grounding.²⁶ Thus, while Marx critiques philosophers for only "interpreting" the world, Nietzsche would counter that Marx's own "empirical reality" is an unacknowledged interpretation—one that seeks to "tyrannize" nature and history by forcing them into a teleological narrative of class struggle. Thus when Marx identifies Nietzsche's argument being

²³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 211, 1998

²⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 34, 1998

²⁵ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 61, 2000

²⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 2, 22, 1998



an interpretation he does not undermine Nietzsche's argument as a whole, for the possibility of his critique being fictitious does not take away from Nietzsche's main claim that both his critique of slave morality and Marx's critique of labor division are born from the same kind of value driven prejudice, that they are both "interpretations."



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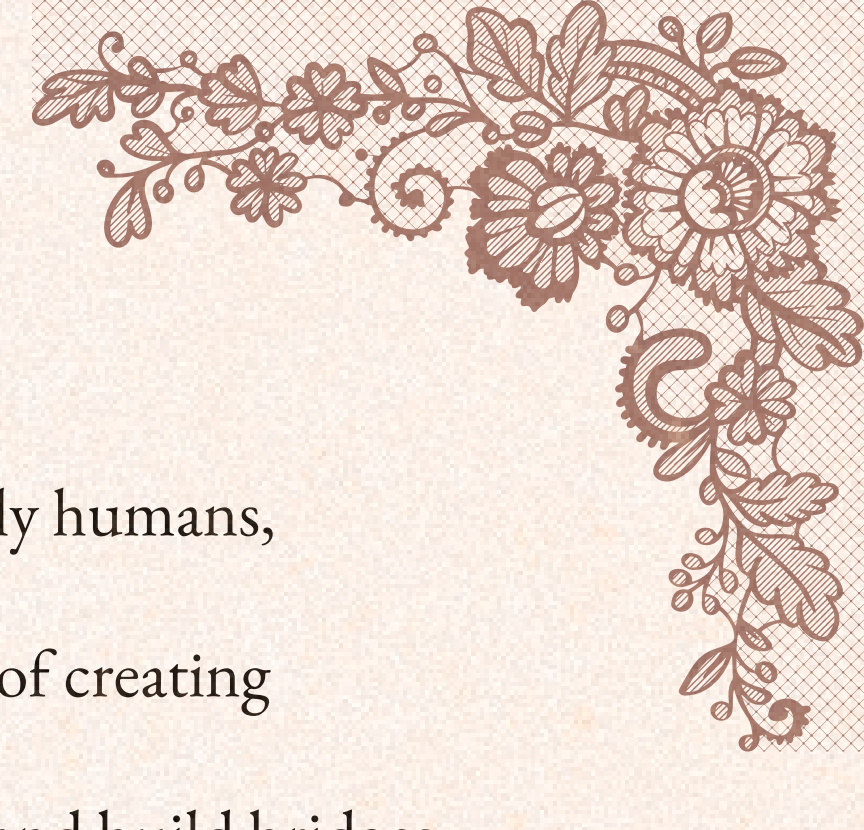
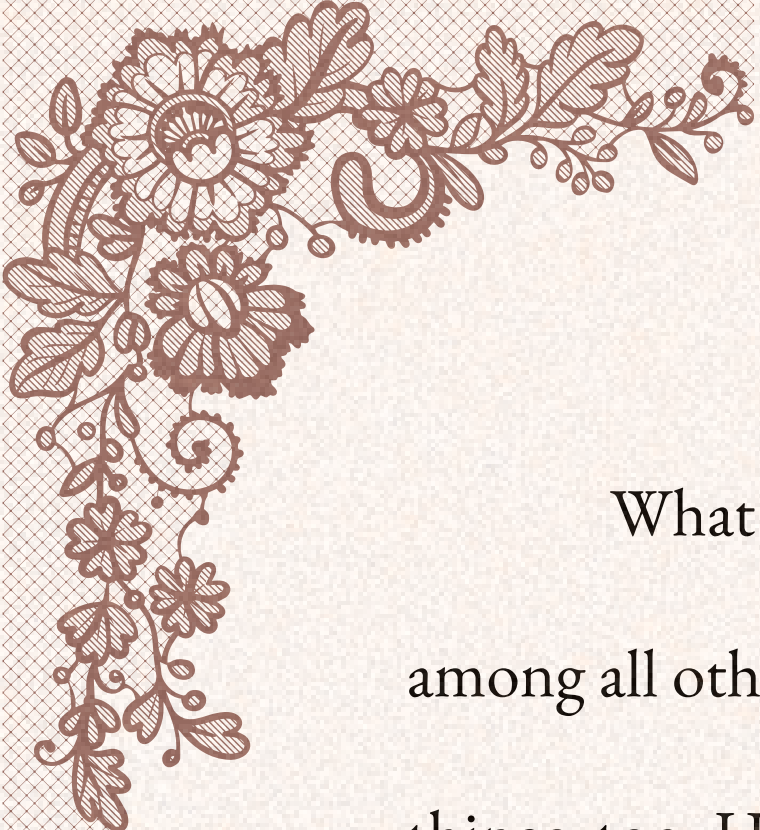
Let's Get Creative!
A Phenomenological Perspective of AI Creativity
Antar Figueroa Canales
University of Toronto

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
Syracuse University
Edition ϕ ; Issue III



Artwork by Esme Jablonsky - Syracuse University





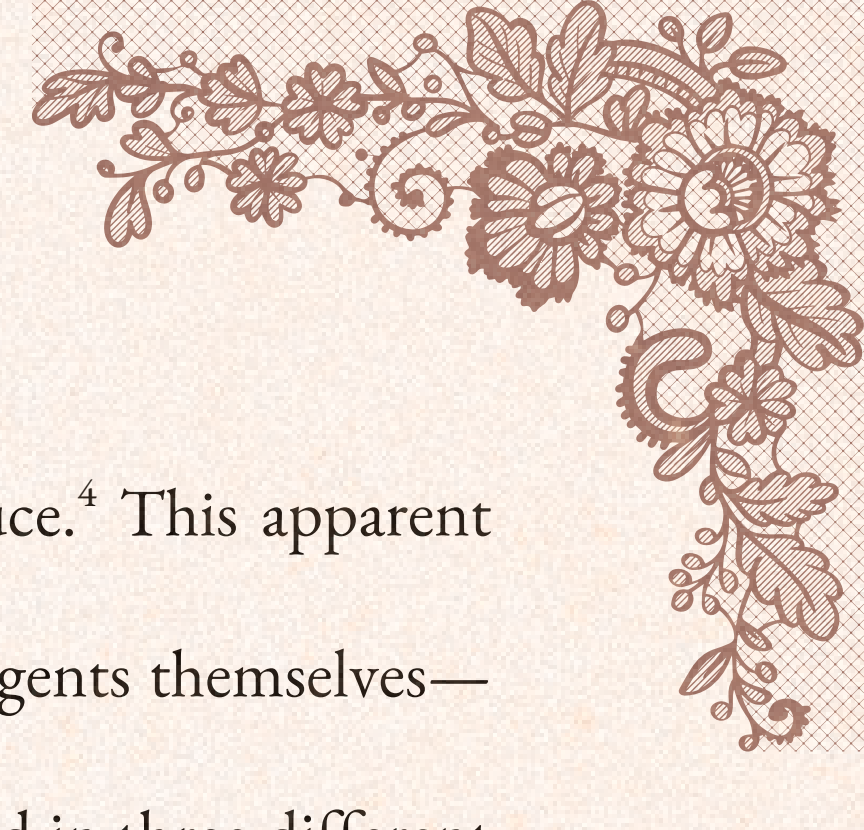
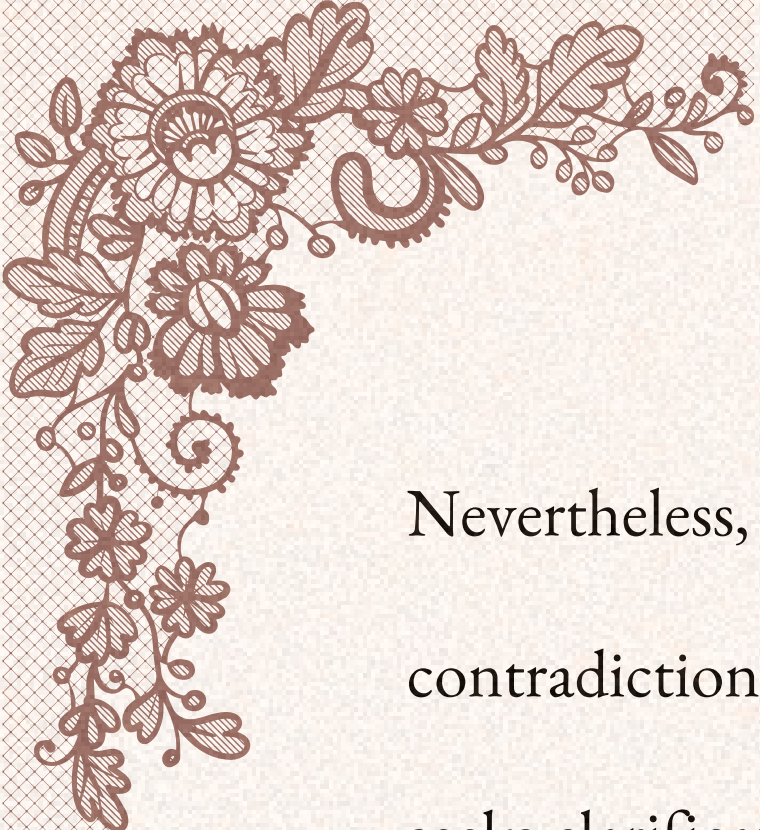
What makes creativity human? For centuries, the answer seemed obvious: only humans, among all other creatures, choose those things they create. Other animals are capable of creating things, too. However, they built things by way of their instincts. A beaver cannot go and build bridges instead of dams; it is just not in its nature. Humans, on the other hand, can create things depending on their environmental necessities. Humans choose what to build according to what they need (artifacts), and our needs change over time. This is Kant's view in *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*. He argued that humans were capable of producing things according to the context in which they were situated. The fact that no other being could do so was enough evidence to prove humans were the only beings with “freedom of will.”¹ However, contemporary technological developments are challenging what appeared to be an irrefutable human trait. No longer are they the only beings capable of producing different artifacts; an artificial being has become capable of doing so, as well.

Machine Deep Learning, and more specifically, Large Language Models (LLM), have introduced a series of systems that can appear to show creative capacities upon some request in the form of a prompt. Something is asked of the system in writing, and with some overtly complex, probabilistic formula, the system deduces what the answer to such a prompt would be. These systems do not have any intentionality towards their answers; they do not understand neither the questions being asked of them, nor the answers being given.² Due to this, LLMs cannot be said to act in the world exercising their intentions like humans do; they are not agents in the traditional sense.³

¹ Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace*, 3, 2017.

² Shanahan, Murray. *Talking About Large Language Models*. 2022.

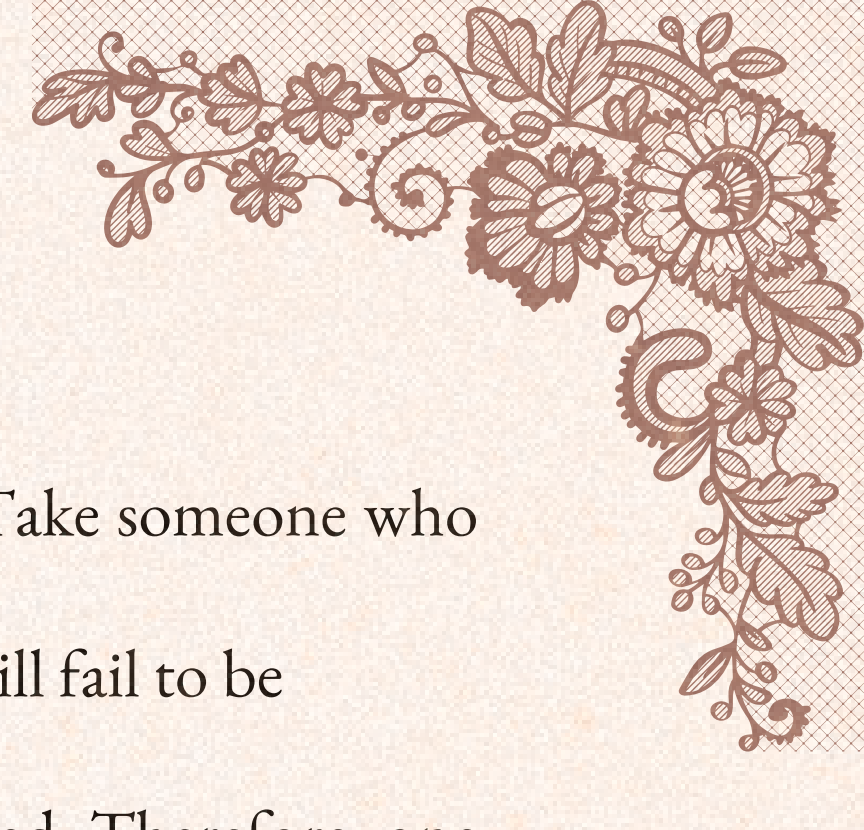
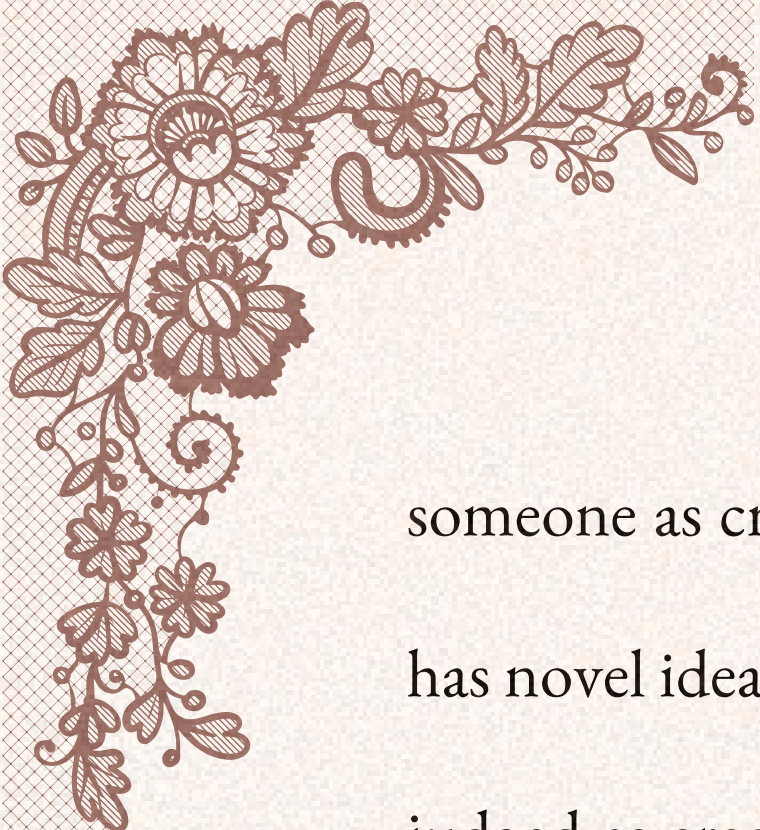
³ Schlosser, Markus, "Agency", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2019.



Nevertheless, they exhibit apparent creative capacities in the responses they produce.⁴ This apparent contradiction—that LLMs can produce creative outcomes without being creative agents themselves—seeks clarification from either side of the contention. This clarification can be tackled in three different realms. The first is an ontological perspective, which considers what is actually creative in reality. The second is an attributional perspective, one that formulates some criteria to judge if something is creative or not. Most of the work on artificial creativity is done on the attributional level, where AI enthusiasts take some presupposed criteria for creativity and apply them to AI-generated things. This way, one is supposedly shown the creative power of AI—that the contradiction is true, and an agent is not required to show creativity. This paper will examine the contradiction from a third perspective, which has not been properly explored, regarding how something appears as creative to us. For this, how one builds their judgments of creativity by a historical inference will be first examined. Subsequently, the way AI disrupts such historical inference will be shown, leading to the unreliability of our senses as methods of judging creativity. Finally, I will give two solutions to our phenomenal problem: accept AI as creative or look for creative ways to preserve human-made art.

What does it mean to say something is creative? From a subjective standpoint, something is called creative according to some sort of novel characteristics that are perceived. Individuals tend to apply this concept to people, processes, or objects. When a person is judged as creative, it is usually because they have shown some sort of creative output or creative process. John Doe is creative because he writes fiction; Jane Doe is creative because she multiplies numbers in unusual ways (arriving at the same answer by a different process). For one to acknowledge John or Jane Doe as creative, one must have access to the objects or processes that they are producing or performing. It is conditional to judge

⁴ Tigre Moura, Francisco. “Artificial Intelligence, Creativity, and Intentionality: The Need for a Paradigm Shift.” *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 336 (2023).



someone as creative only if the actions they are performing appear creative as well. Take someone who has novel ideas in his mind but never communicates them in any way. That person will fail to be judged as creative because no one will have access to those things that must be judged. Therefore, one judges the creativity of someone according to the things they make. This means that the creativity of the things being created precedes the creativity of the persons themselves. In that case, one has to ask how those things (processes or objects) are judged as creative. Prior to AI, this used to be relatively easy. An object was perceived as something that could only be authored by human projects (artifacts), and then some attributional criteria was used to say if it was or it was not creative. The simple fact of looking at a written story, poem, or any other artifact presupposed the existence of a human behind them. This was because nothing else could author them. There was no other conscious or non-conscious being that could possibly do what humans used to do. Artifacts were human-only endeavors. However, this is not the case anymore. Artificially fabricated artifacts are the reason for this.

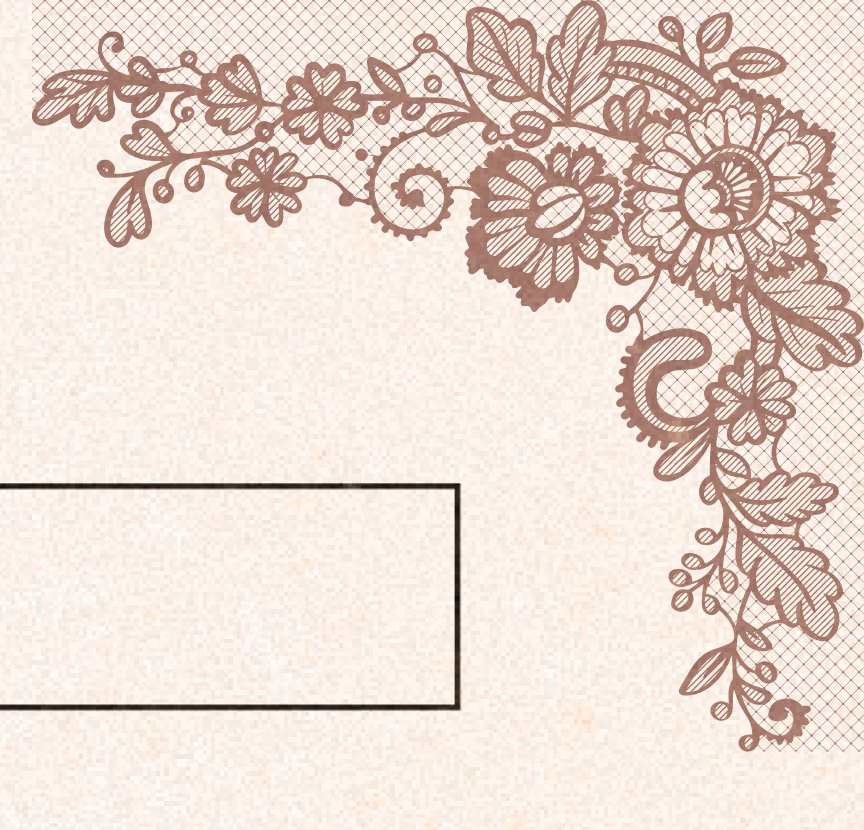
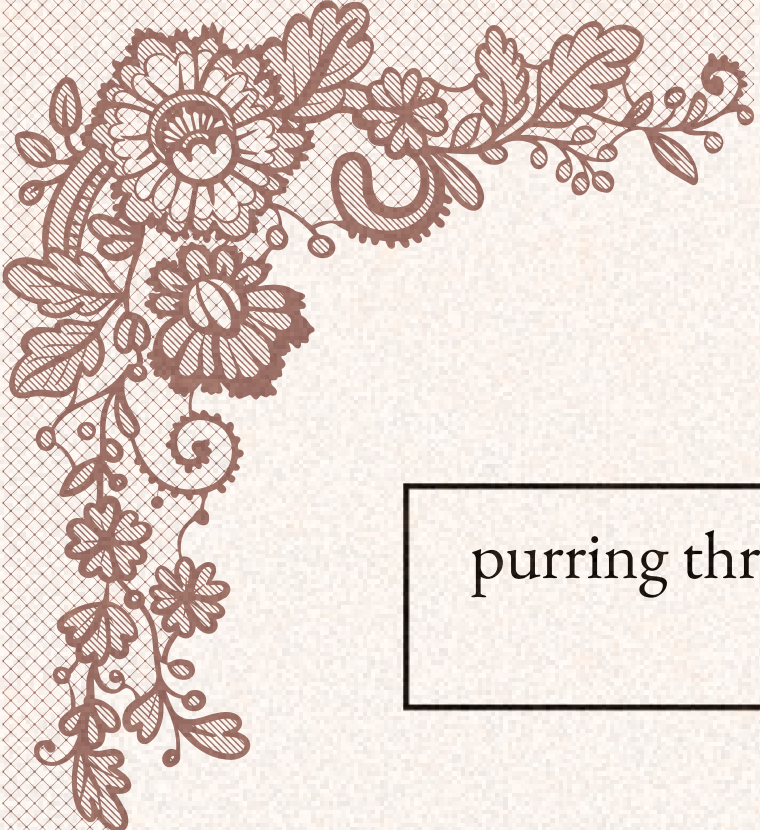
Often called “synthetic media,” these artificially generated images, videos, audio, or written responses are defined as content produced by AI-tools such as Machine Deep Learning.⁵ With the introduction of synthetic media, those artifacts that were previously thought of as human-only enterprises turn into something capable of being produced by non-conscious systems. This is not to say that humans are unnecessary for the production of those artifacts. A human mind, seemingly, still has to ask the AI to do something in the form of a prompt: writing a poem or composing some piece of music. AI is not autonomous, and therefore does not choose what it creates. In this sense, intentions are still exercised over the artifacts being generated. However, the processes in which the

⁵ Porter and Machery. “AI-Generated Poetry Is Indistinguishable,” 2024.

artifacts are produced cease to be a human-only endeavor. Recall the example of John Doe from above; John may ask the AI to produce some work of fiction about a specific topic. He will be responsible for the generated story, but he will not be the writer anymore. He ceases to do the action of writing, and all that conveys it—writer’s blockage, hours of editing, and so on. Can the resultant artifact (John Doe’s story) continue to be referred to as a human-only endeavor? I propose it should not. This is because the production of an artifact is inevitably linked to the process of its creation. John Doe’s fiction story is linked to some intentional being. One who not only chooses what the story will be about, but also performs the necessary processes to carry it out. However, these processes are not directly experienced by humans most of the time. One does not have access to the editing of books, the countless rewriting sessions, or the experiences that shape the story. Instead, these processes are inferred from past habituation; the experience of artifacts that are associated with a human doing them, and with that, the due process a human must endure to accomplish it is inferred. This inferred association was the reason previous judgments of creativity worked. Experiencing an artifact was presupposed by the human process related to the production of that artifact. This inference is broken with the introduction of synthetic media. What is human made cannot be differentiated from what is not. This may sound unconvincing to readers if they are overconfident about their discriminatory capacities over AI-generated artifacts.⁶ Allow me to show you the following two haikus and ask: which is human and which is AI-generated?

Rain on the window— the cat curls beside the lamp,	Coffee gone cold again— I watch the steam from my mug
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⁶ Gilbert, “People are overconfident about spotting AI faces,” 2026.



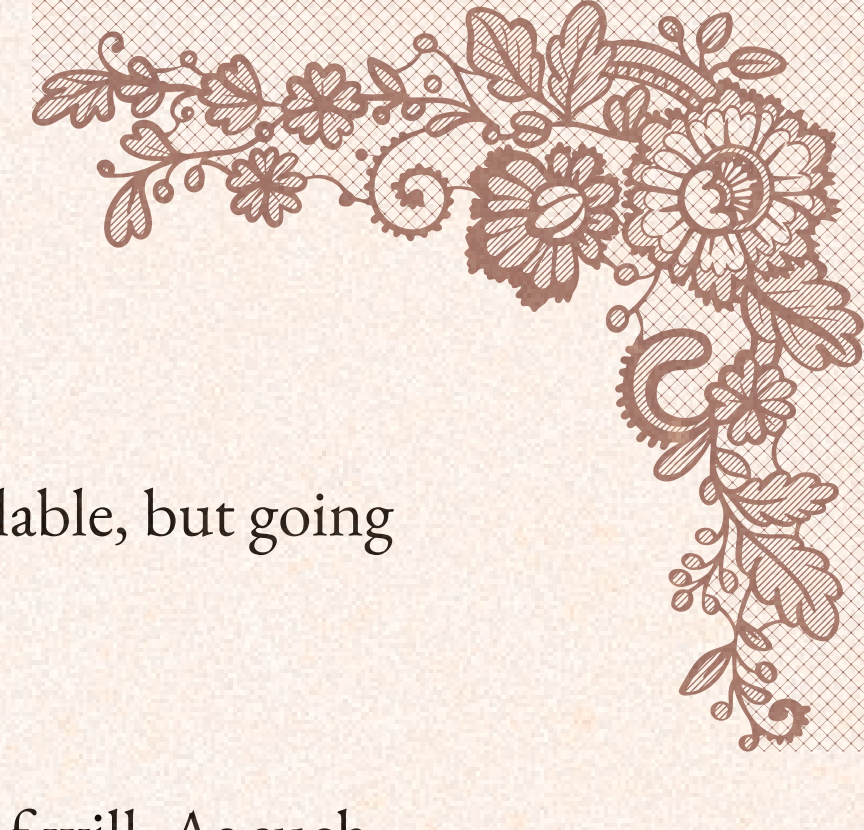
purring through thunder.	write ghosts on the glass.
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The answer to the above Haiku answer is a trick question: both are AI-generated. If you got the answer correct, then this paper may not be for you.

This thought-experiment may sound banal. However, the real-world has encountered many such instances in the past few years. Take, for instance, the award-winning story written by artificial intelligence in Hong Kong. At the time the competition was taking place, judges and the general public praised the novella until it was revealed that it was written using artificial intelligence. Boris Eldagsen did a further sociological experiment, generating an AI image that won a prestigious photography competition in Germany. Individuals are slowly becoming incapable of⁸ differentiating synthetic media from that made by humans.⁹ For this reason, previous creative judgment mechanisms, the ones that inferred an association from artifacts to human production, became unreliable. If one cannot trust what they immediately perceive in order to judge creativity anymore, then what can they do?

Future actions will depend on where society stands regarding the startling contradiction that AI is not an agent while being creative. If the contradiction is endorsed, then the definition of creativity only has to extend to encompass those things created by non-conscious systems. The importance of the creation process will cease to exist, and now value will only be abstracted from the piece itself—back to the attributional perspective. This is the AI-enthusiast path. As a consequence, art will not be human anymore; it will be merely an algorithmic possibility. In order to resist such a

⁷ Annio and Choi, “AI Helped Write Her Book,” 2024.
⁸ Kolirin, “Artist Rejects Photo Prize,” 2023.
⁹ Porter and Machery. “AI-Generated Poetry Is Indistinguishable,” 2024.

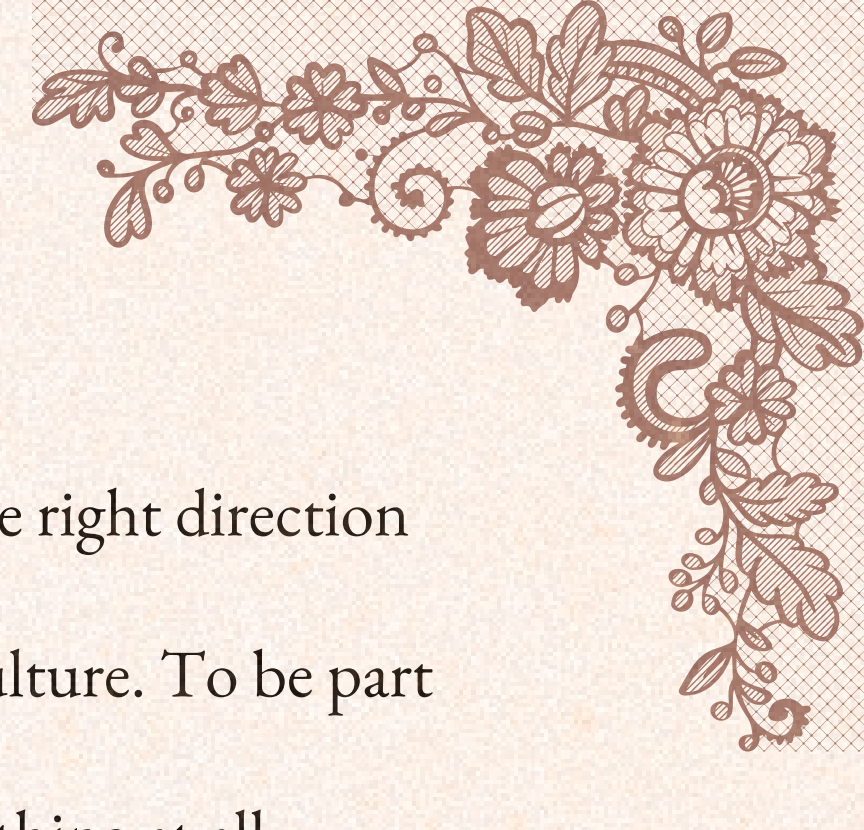


contradiction, a better way to judge creativity is needed. A solution is not readily available, but going back to Kant may lead one in the right direction.

Kant proposed that artifacts were possible because humans possess freedom of will. As such, humans find themselves contextually motivated to fabricate artifacts. Experiencing the discomfort of rain led humans to use their freedom of will to fabricate umbrellas. Experiencing boredom led humans to fabricate music. All the experiences that shape human life have led them into exercising their freedom of will to create things. However, freedom of will must be expressed. Due to this, expression is the reflection of what humans are experiencing. First, humans must experience discomfort from the rain before thinking about making an umbrella. Humans then needed to experience boredom before thinking about making music. Thoughts are the processes by which humans realize what they want or need to create. Thought is valuable to them because it shows them why those fabricated objects are important. A painting of a sunset is valuable in the creative sense because it filters nature through the human mind—through memory, emotion, and choice. These are the manifestations of the thought process that make the painting valuable, (i.e. the phenomenological experience of another mind). The creativity lies not in the scene but in the seeing, and all that it implies. This is what should be celebrated: the process of a human mind situated within the world.

Inferences have to change from associating artifacts with manufacturing processes to associating artifacts with human thought. This is partially done already. When a piece of art is experienced, the object or the way it was brought about is not the only thing being experienced. A thought that connects individuals to the mind of the author is experienced, as well. However, making such connections requires time and context. The intentions and purposes of artistic endeavors are only realized when objects are analyzed closely, where a proper analysis is only realized when the





cultural context of the piece is known. The reason why this is an important step in the right direction is rooted in AI being incapable of situating itself within the social world deemed as culture. To be part of the social world, one has to experience that social world. AI cannot experience anything at all.

Unfortunately, this solution may only be temporary and very hard to implement. On one hand changes would have to be made to patterns of artistic appreciation: from consumption to analysis. On the other hand, possible advancements in synthetic media will be capable of emulating cultural contexts, leading to the same judgment problem that was previously discussed. As explored prior, perceptual and inferential tools are incapable of combating this phenomenon. This paper will present the reader with no definite solution. Perhaps the solution is not one to have. It belongs to artists, audiences, and the culture that is collectively built. Maybe individuals will learn to attend more carefully to context, to the stories behind artifacts, and to the traces of human struggle that cannot yet be simulated. Maybe creativity will transform into something else entirely, and new words will be needed for what is valued. I do not know, but the question is now ours.

Let's get creative.



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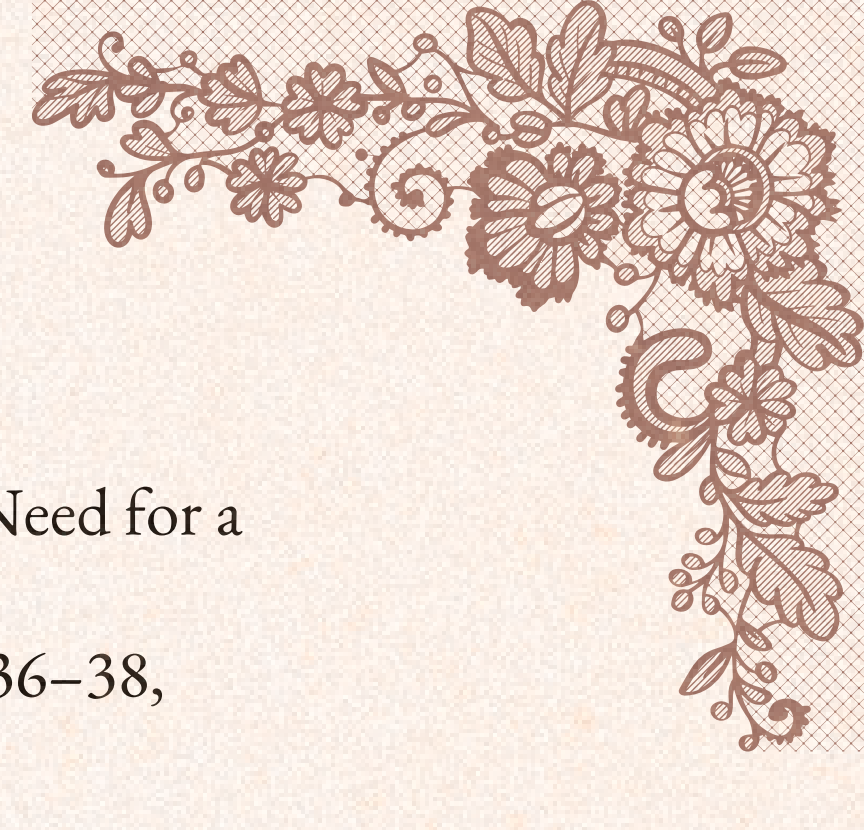
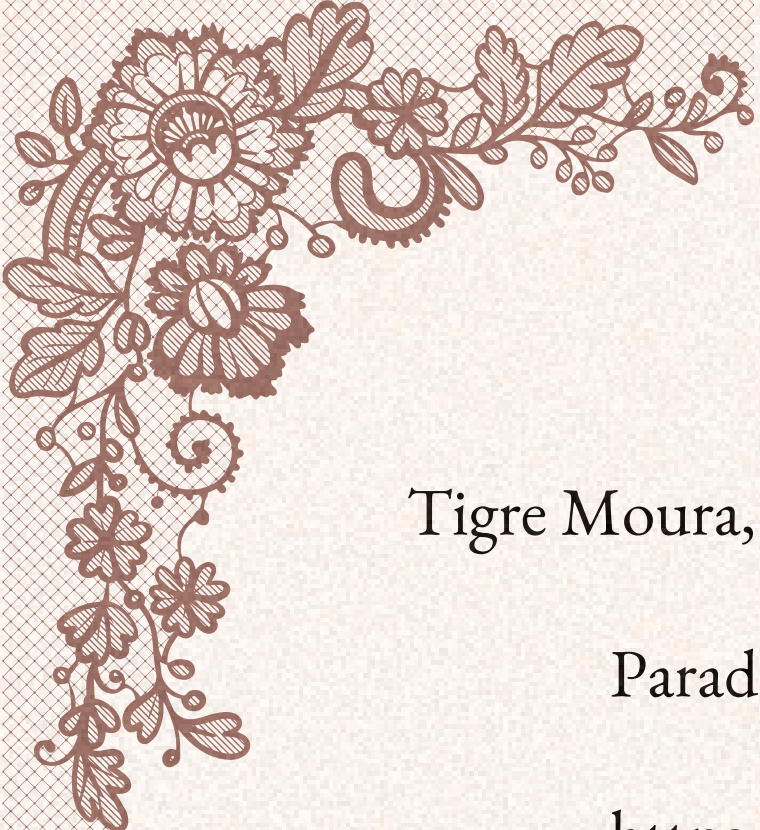
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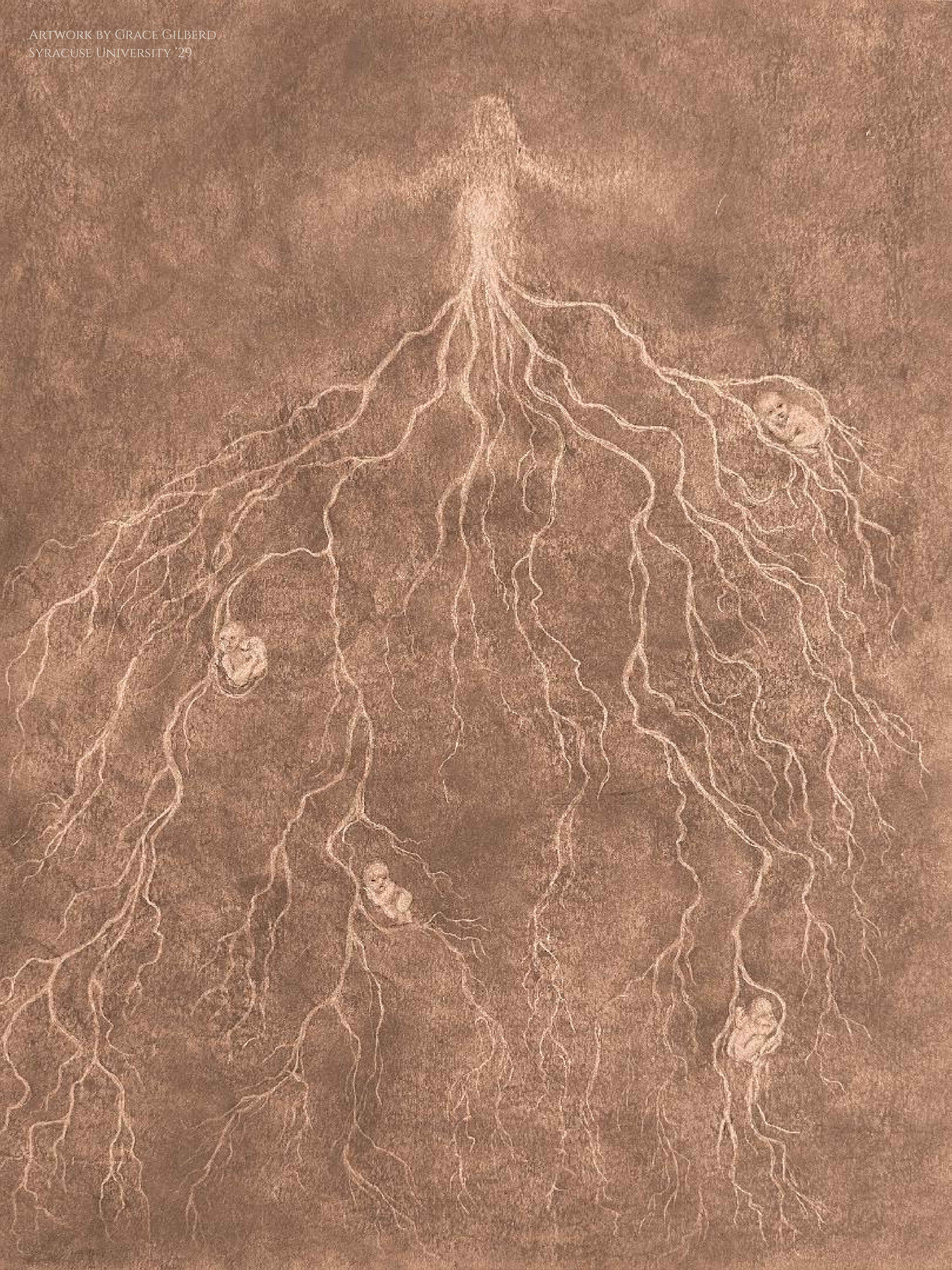
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The Synthesis of Liberty
Cameron Edwards
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Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
Syracuse University
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Artwork by Esme Jablonsky - Syracuse University





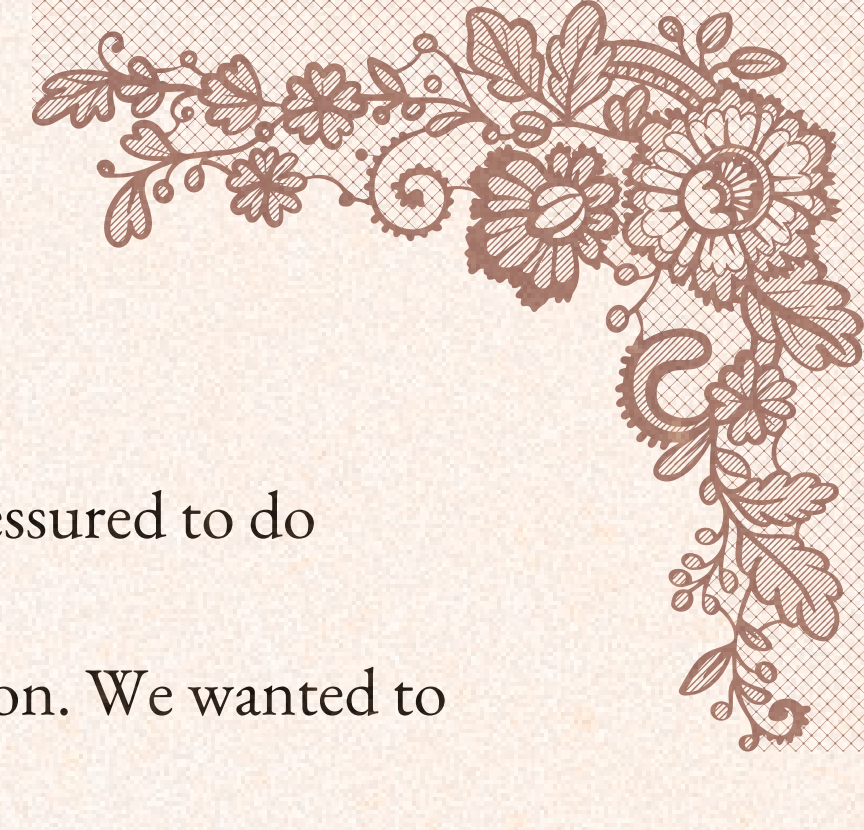
Introduction

There were usually four of us, and we would sit in front of a camera and take turns reading the script on the teleprompter. We called it “The Morning Show.” Teachers were supposed to play the live video for their students in class in place of standard PA system announcements when school started in the morning. One thing said every day was the Pledge of Allegiance.¹ We always had it at the end of our monologue, and we would stand up in unison and place our right hand over our hearts and recite the verses, an oath I knew for as long as I could remember. I’ve started this paper off by sharing a specific story from my high school experience. I was a member of the student media club in high school. We made the yearbook, provided live play-by-play commentary for boys and girls basketball games, and did live announcements before school every morning. These live announcements started with the onset of COVID-19 and were one of the few consequences of the pandemic I am grateful for. We were inspired to start these live announcements during the lockdown of 2020. Those media club members are still some of my closest friends today.

One day, we decided to take the Pledge of Allegiance out of our script. We students, along with the media club advisor, agreed that it would be more entertaining for ourselves and everyone else in the school if we changed things up a bit. Most fellow students I talked to said they didn’t even watch it most days. We wanted more engagement from the school and desired a fresh start

This, however, was not received well by school administration. We thought, or at least I did, that this would be a light-hearted change that no one would even watch anyway. Consequently, we were forced to put it back in, and we added a disclaimer that everyone was welcome to pause for a

¹ Pledge of Allegiance, U.S. Code 4 § 4.



moment of reflection if they did not want to say the pledge. This way, no one felt pressured to do something they did not want to. We were not trying to anger the school administration. We wanted to enjoy providing news and announcements to our classmates. And we did. From that day forward, our creativity shined in our delivery of the morning news to our school.

Beyond the surface, this story has to do with liberty. Not only does the pledge end “. . . with liberty and justice for all,”² but any individual reciting or not reciting the verse is expressing their freedom to do so. The United States was founded on these ideals of liberty and freedom, and I think failing to exercise those ideals is unfair to our founders. Liberty as I know it has to do with personal freedom and taking actions that will itself lead to more personal freedom. It involves actions such as voting in elections and otherwise exercising the rights that people before us fought for. By this, I mean the American Civil War specifically, but also other wars fought by Americans, as well as unofficial “wars,” or other acts of violence that had the notion of fighting for rights. Another example is the fight for civil rights in the 1960s. Expressing liberty does not have to be grand, and it can certainly come in modest places, such as taking the Pledge of Allegiance out of the announcements at school. To me, people express their liberty all the time. We constantly make our own decisions, like what job to apply for or how much effort we desire to put into writing a paper.

But actually reflecting on history, I don’t know what liberty means. There are many different ways of thinking about liberty; for instance, there is the American Indigenous influence of liberty and

² Pledge of Allegiance, U.S. Code 4 § 4.



the freedom of action,³ the decolonial mindset of liberty being something that can be acquired through the establishment of a post-colonial state,⁴ and the many ways that European Enlightenment thinkers viewed liberty. Enlightenment thinkers like Thomas Hobbes,⁵ for example, first proposed the idea of the social contract, a concept regarding liberty that Jean-Jacques Rousseau⁶ later expanded upon.

Hobbes' liberty is described as the absence of external impediments. Locke says that natural rights, like what was mentioned in the Declaration of Independence are innate to every individual. For Hobbes, the social contract is necessary to avoid the chaos that comes with the state of nature. The social contract is something every person must "sign" so that order is kept in the world. This question of liberty also relates to the topic of decolonization because it may seem that liberty is the result of decolonization.⁷ These differing conceptions of liberty give rise to the query this paper will attempt to answer: Given different conceptions of liberty, how should we understand liberty so that it best applies to our own lives?

The view this paper will argue for is that a balanced understanding of liberty requires holding both a modern, individualistic view of freedom and what we will see as "the Indigenous critique" of liberty in conversation with one another. My argument for this begins by discussing an opposing view to European culture.

Indigenous Critique of European Culture

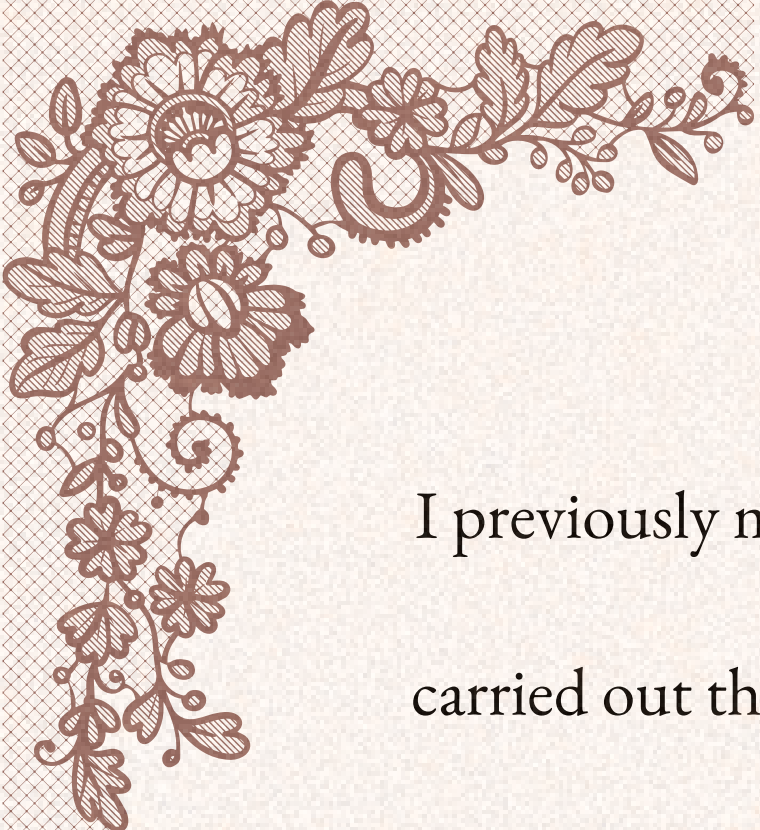
³ Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 2021

⁴ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, 2016

⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1991.

⁶ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 2017

⁷ Jansen and Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History*, 2017



I previously mentioned that there exists an American Indigenous critique of how the Europeans carried out their government and politics. As we can see, there is a major aspect of liberty that has its roots in North American Indigenous culture. In *The Dawn of Everything*, anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow argue for the reality of an Indigenous critique of European ideals. They say that Indigenous thinkers were among the first to question European inequality and arbitrary rule.⁸ This led to a rejection of the European political hierarchies and confusion over the rigidity of European social structure. For example, freedom was often limited because the institution of monarchies and aristocracies meant power and authority were concentrated in small elite groups. The way many European states used to carry out government did not promote representation for all.⁹

Liberty as Europeans see it is not necessarily the most holistic context to view it through. That version is idealized and not relevant in every situation, failing to consider every individual in a society. Instead, as argued by Indigenous thinkers, what is relevant to every person is having a relationship to the earth and one's community. Through figures like the Wendat statesman Kandiaronk, the authors of *The Dawn of Everything* show how Indigenous societies practiced forms of freedom rooted in communal decision-making, mutual respect, and autonomy from coercive powers. These ideas challenged European visitors, who were struck by the contrast between Indigenous self-governance and the rigid class systems of their own nations. This "Indigenous critique,"¹⁰ as the authors call it, pushed European philosophers to rethink what it meant to be free:

⁸ Graeber and Wengrow, "Wicked Liberty," in *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 2021

⁹ Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 2021

¹⁰ Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 2021

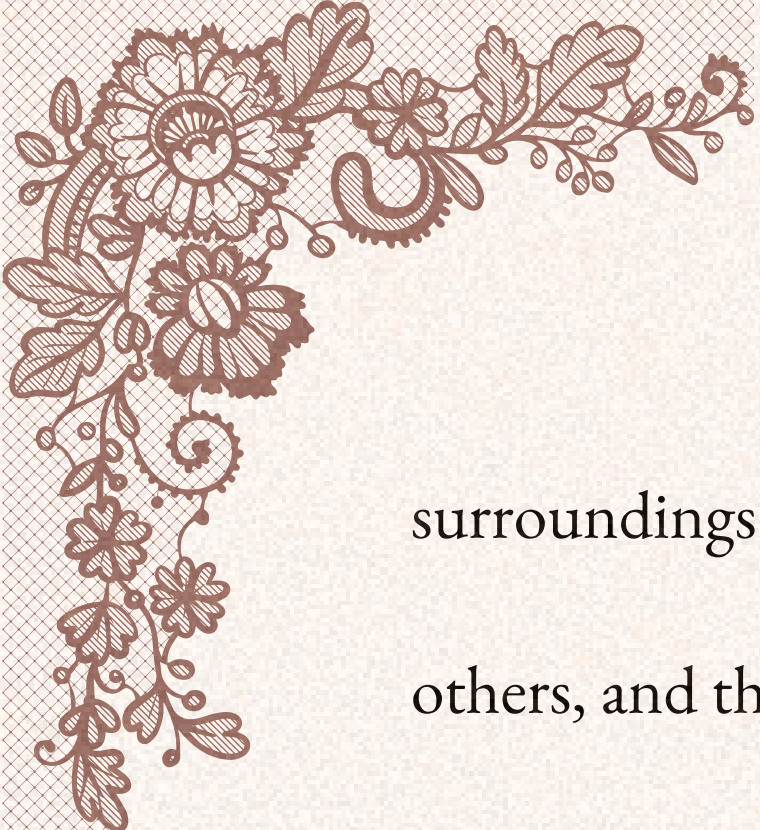


If we ask, not “what are the origins of social inequality?” but “what are the origins of the question about the origins of social inequality?” (in other words, how did it come about that, in 1754, the Académie de Dijon would think this an appropriate question to ask?), then we are immediately confronted with a long history of Europeans arguing with one another about the nature of faraway societies: in this case, particularly in the Eastern Woodlands of North America. What’s more, a lot of those conversations make reference to arguments that took place between Europeans and Indigenous Americans about the nature of freedom, equality or for that matter rationality and revealed religion—indeed, most of the themes that would later become central to Enlightenment thought.¹¹

The Indigenous Americans were certainly curious in how they thought about social inequality. They were willing to push against the European way of thought and challenge the social systems they had in store, which to me is a way of expressing liberty. And, on the other side, in a way this European intellectual mindset is hypocritical because many people viewed Indigenous Americans as less civilized, and therefore not as smart. In claiming these ideas of liberty for themselves, the Europeans admitted to their own intellectual weaknesses.

Furthermore, existing European forms of government could be seen as rigid compared to how many Indigenous societies functioned. The Indigenous view of liberty included three main parts, all of which are practical in nature: the freedom to move away or relocate from one’s

¹¹ Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 2021



surroundings (the “principle of mobility”), the freedom to ignore or disobey commands issued by others, and the freedom to shape entirely new social realities.¹²

Graeber and Wengrow develop the principle of mobility throughout *The Dawn of Everything*. They discuss seasonally shifting social structures in societies along the American East Coast and highlight how the ability to relocate prevented any governing structure from becoming permanent.¹³ Thus, mobility acted as a direct check on domination. Authority was limited because people could just leave if they wanted to.

The groundwork for the second principle of Indigenous liberty, the freedom to ignore or disobey commands, appeared in some cultures; notably, in societies where influence depended on charisma, generosity, or persuasion rather than enforceable authority. Graeber and Wengrow’s discussion of “play kings” (temporary leaders in Indigenous societies like the Wendat) and ritual authority among early Eurasian and Indigenous North American groups demonstrates that even when leaders did exist, obedience was optional and revocable.¹⁴ This shows the ability of individuals to withdraw cooperation entirely, reinforcing that disobedience was structurally protected and sometimes even encouraged.

The Indigenous concept of a freedom to shape new social realities was the most unclear form of freedom to me at first. *The Dawn of Everything* states that many societies did not have fixed political forms but alternated between entirely different ones depending on things like season or ritual cycle. By focusing on societies around and on the Great Plains, Graeber and Wengrow note

¹² Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 503, 2021

¹³ Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 2021

¹⁴ Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 131, 2021



that people experienced completely different political orders at different times of year. These political orders were sometimes hierarchical, sometimes radically egalitarian, and by design they could step between them. The authors note, when talking about the Plains Indians, that “not only did they dismantle all means of exercising coercive authority the moment the ritual season was over, they were also careful to rotate which clan or warrior clubs got to wield it: anyone holding sovereignty one year would be subject to the authority of others in the next.”¹⁵ Graeber and Wengrow also highlight the urban center of Teotihuacan, a former Mesoamerican city, where shifts in architectural and political style reflect society-wide experiments with different social realities.¹⁶ Individuals had the freedom to form new social realities at their leisure because of the unique ability to disobey commands and be mobile. The first two forms of freedom serve as steppingstones for the third one to occur.¹⁷

All of this contextual history and anthropology is helpful because it shows us a trend in Indigenous societies and how liberty came to fruition within them. Liberty was not always a specific concept with fixed definition and applications but instead had many practical forms that were displayed with action.

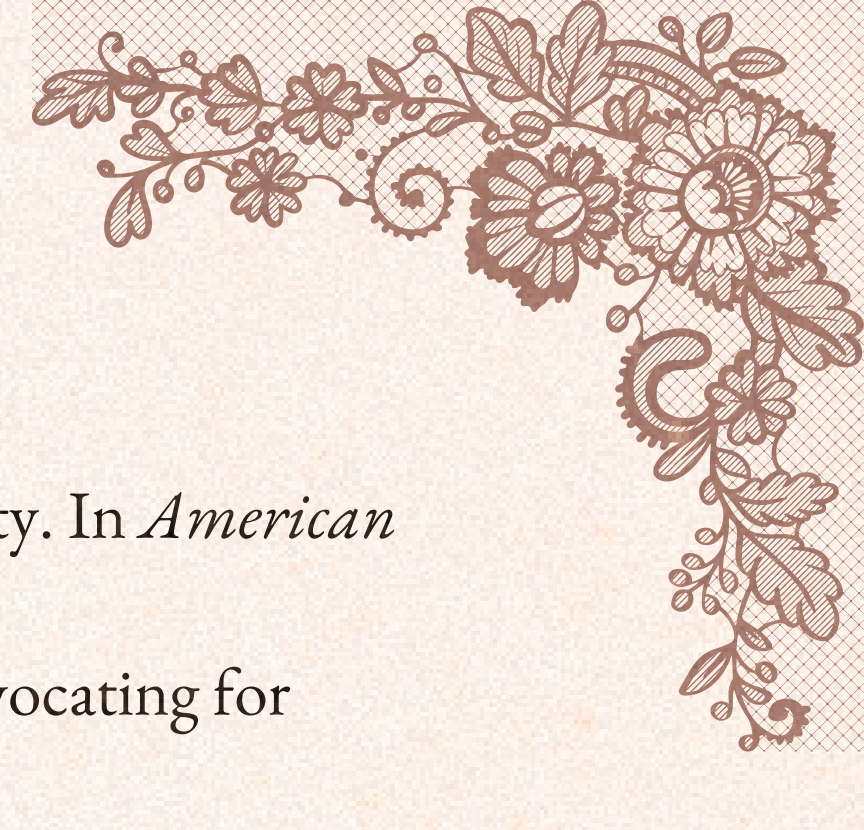
Liberty as Part of the Enlightenment

Exploring how Indigenous peoples often viewed liberty gives us one piece of the puzzle, but to complete the puzzle, we will turn to how liberty was a part of the European Enlightenment period. I want to note here that dates are not exact, but I will use mid-17th century to late 18th

¹⁵ Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 110, 2021

¹⁶ Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 328-345, 2021

¹⁷ Graeber and Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty,” 503, 2021

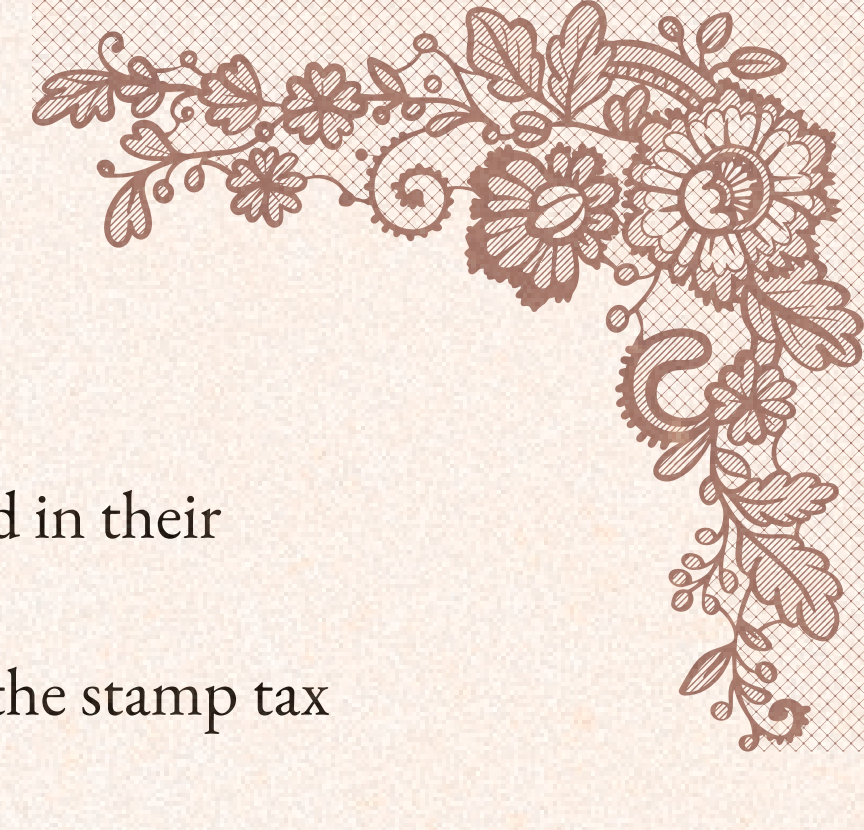
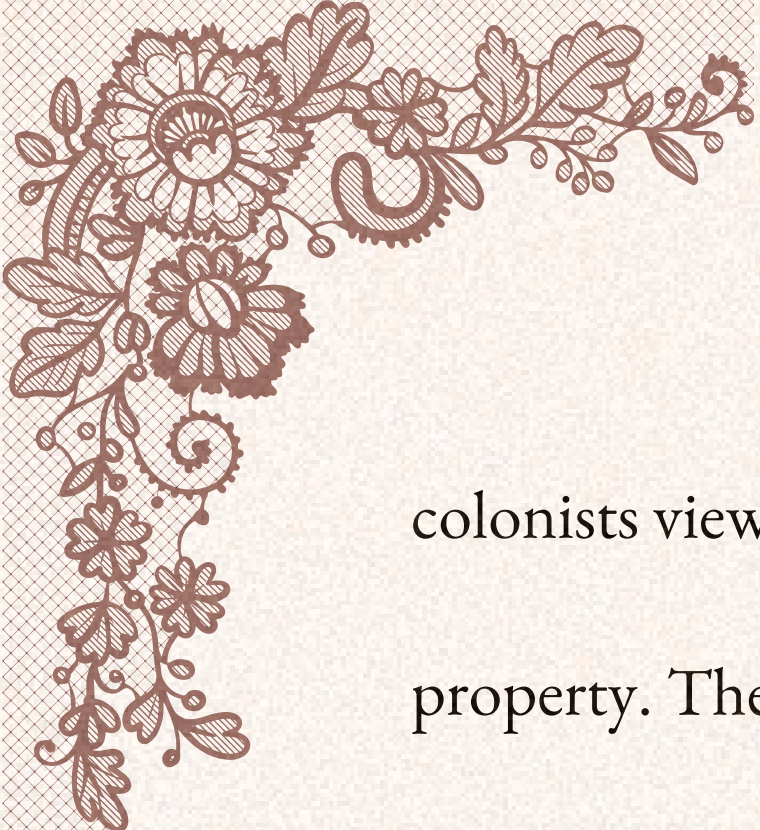


century for general boundaries. One view of liberty is that it was reliant upon property. In *American Revolutions*, historian Alan Taylor mentions that many colonists, especially those advocating for revolution, viewed liberty and property as going hand in hand.¹⁸ Property was certainly a hot topic for Enlightenment thinkers, and the colonists seemed to take it literally. John Locke famously wrote about the natural rights of “life, liberty, and property,” in *The Second Treatise of Government*, which he published in England in 1690. It is ironic that one of the most influential works of political and social theory that inspired the Patriots originated in the nation they gained independence from. This idea of “property” could mean different things, like owning land, other people, or even simpler things such as tools. Land was important because it could lead to greater wealth and representation, as any voting that did happen usually only included white landowning men.¹⁹ One theory from philosopher John Locke is the labor theory of property, which he spells out in *The Second Treatise of Government*. He claims that through application of labor, an individual can justify taking common property to be their own private property. Since one owns their work according to this structure, and their work contributes to acquiring the property, it is now their own.²⁰ To start off, I think it goes without mentioning how flawed this logic is. If that is true, then anything that is public property can be taken at any time if someone puts in the necessary labor for it. It is quite comical to think about being put into practice today. Despite this, it appears to be a big part of Locke’s philosophy that many colonists took at face value. Another aspect of property that seems just as obvious in the history of the American Revolution is the taxation by the British Empire. American

¹⁸ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, 2016

¹⁹ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, 2016

²⁰ Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, 1690



colonists viewed this as a threat to liberty since they believed that money was included in their property. The 1765 Stamp Act was one of the final straws for the Patriots: “Instead, the stamp tax horrified the colonists, who were suffering from a postwar depression in trade.”²¹ Any threat to material possessions, land, or money seemed like a threat to personal liberty.

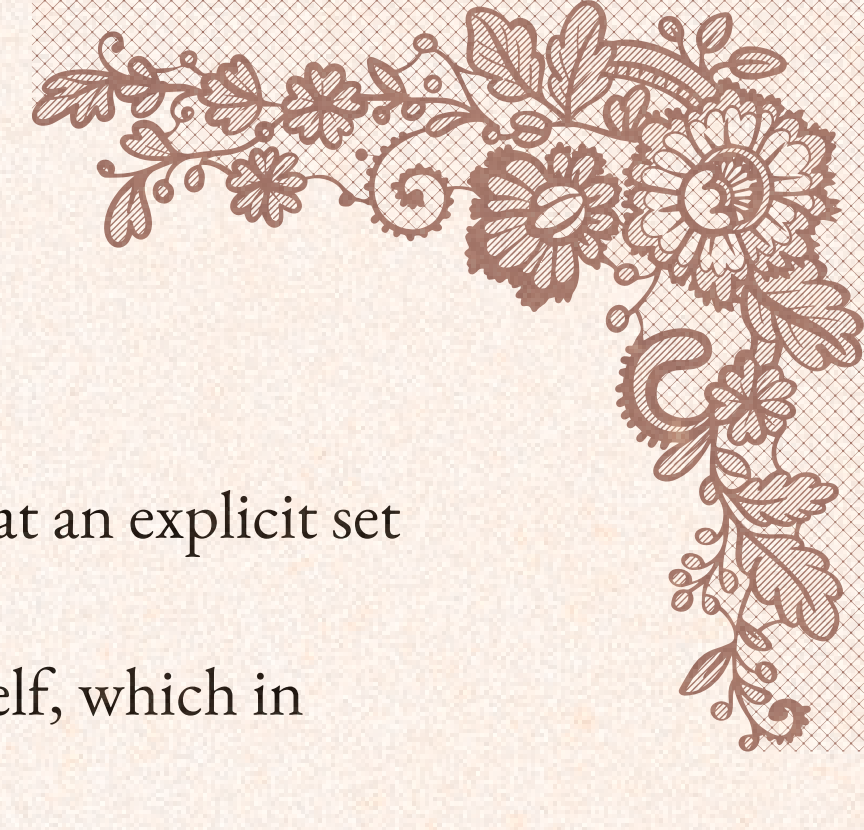
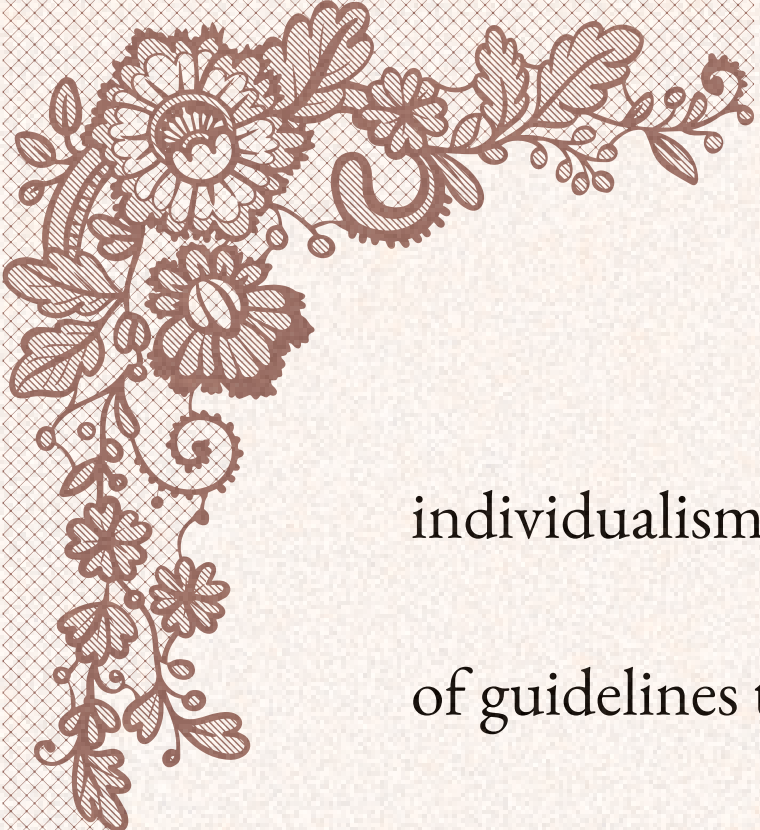
In our survey of liberty so far, it seems like the emphasis on the individual has yet to really come to light. I certainly began writing this paper with the assumption that liberty has to do with the freedom of the individual. I had a notion of liberty being about pursuing personal freedom before writing this paper. This conception is not gone, but rather amendments have been made to it. I elaborate on this in the next section. We have seen how liberty was viewed in a colonial state and at a time of revolution, but we have yet to touch on liberty in a decolonial state.

Historians Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel frame decolonization as the process of globally redefining political structures.²² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a treatise on human rights drafted by the United Nations in 1948, contributes to “globally redefining political structures.” What better way to globally redefine political structures than declare human rights for everyone, as the UDHR did? The mid-20th century was a very consequential time, especially after a world-altering beginning to the century with two world wars. Things needed to be fixed, and the UDHR helped set the groundwork for decades of decolonization. “The three post-1945 decades distinguish themselves as the core period of imperial demise.”²³ I think

²¹ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, 2016

²² Jansen and Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History*, 2017

²³ Jansen and Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History*, 35, 2017

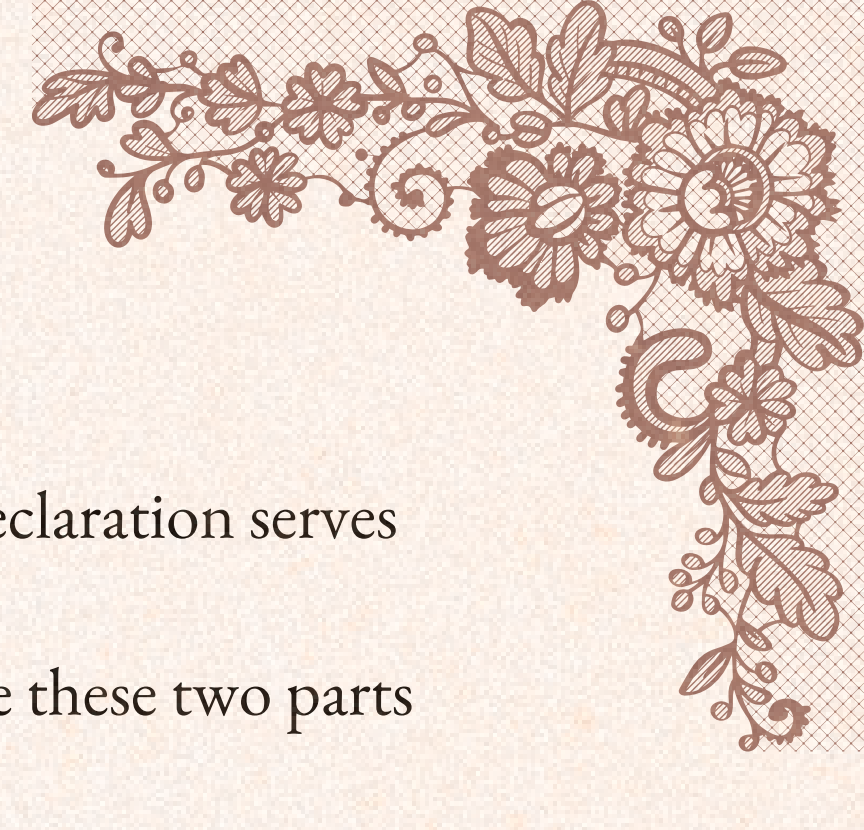
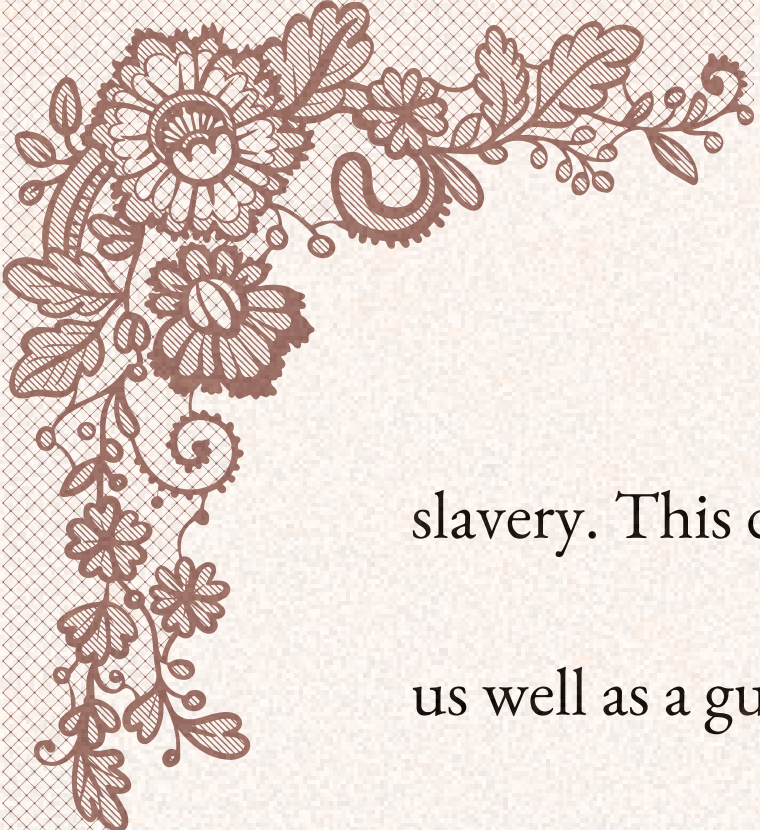


individualism and decolonization go together in this context. It would make sense that an explicit set of guidelines that apply to all humans globally contributed to a heightened sense of self, which in turn accelerated decolonization through the struggle for liberty.

During this argument, you might think of a claim in opposition to mine. In that regard, I will now discuss a possible objection to the argument. After analyzing my claims and evidence so far, one might ask: How do you explain the disconnection between the conception of liberty at the time of the American Revolution as opposed to what it has come to be, now that we have individual human rights? In this respect, I will note that liberty at the time of the founding of the United States was a term applied to households instead of individuals. There was not really a sense of self that would apply to anyone beyond the landowning man, so there was not really any “individual” at all. The American Revolution’s rhetoric of liberty and independence did not apply equally to everyone. It was primarily the elite colonists who benefited from the revolution’s outcomes, as they usually were the heads of households, which also included the women, children, and slaves within them. Households may have desired greater liberty through the acquisition of more property as a single unit, but the voice of every person was certainly not always heard.²⁴ To address the other half of the objection—how individual human rights fit into it—let us look at the UDHR. Article 4 dictates, “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited.”²⁵ The glaring contrast here between the UDHR and Enlightenment notions of liberty is that the UDHR provides a better defined and more inclusive definition of a person; that none can be subjected to

²⁴ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, 2016

²⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948

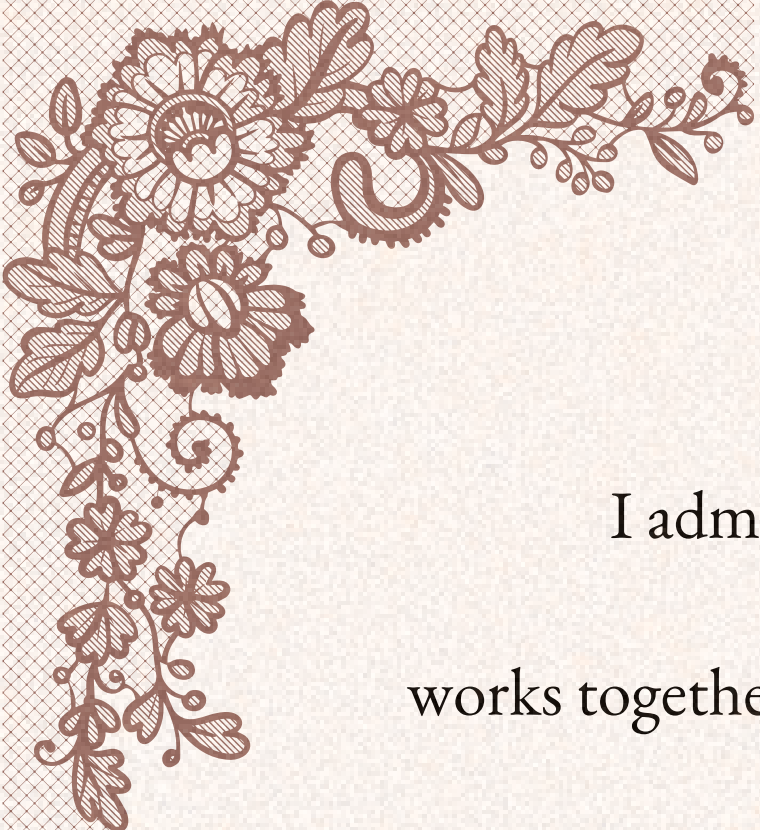


slavery. This declaration is meant to apply to everyone, and literally everyone. This declaration serves us well as a guide that explicitly states the rights that every human being has. To relate these two parts of the objection, the view that possession of property is the way to determine liberty is flawed because it does not apply to every single person. But now, since there is a more deliberate and discerned view of what human rights mean, we can state with greater confidence that liberty in the modern day is about personal freedom. But how exactly can you make your own conception of liberty? With this, I will now turn to the last step in this argument.

What I Think Liberty Should Mean and Why

Throughout this paper, I have drawn on historical examples to get a better grasp of what liberty ought to mean. Things were unclear to me before because I was trying to sift through different texts and different conceptions and views of liberty. Looking at these other views on liberty helped me draw my own conclusions and figure out a definition for myself. In drawing these connections between differing views, liberty should be focused on the individual. To me, liberty should mean having the freedom to be yourself. This can take many forms, and there are aspects of both the Indigenous view of liberty and how liberty came to be because of the Enlightenment period that should be included in a modern definition of freedom.

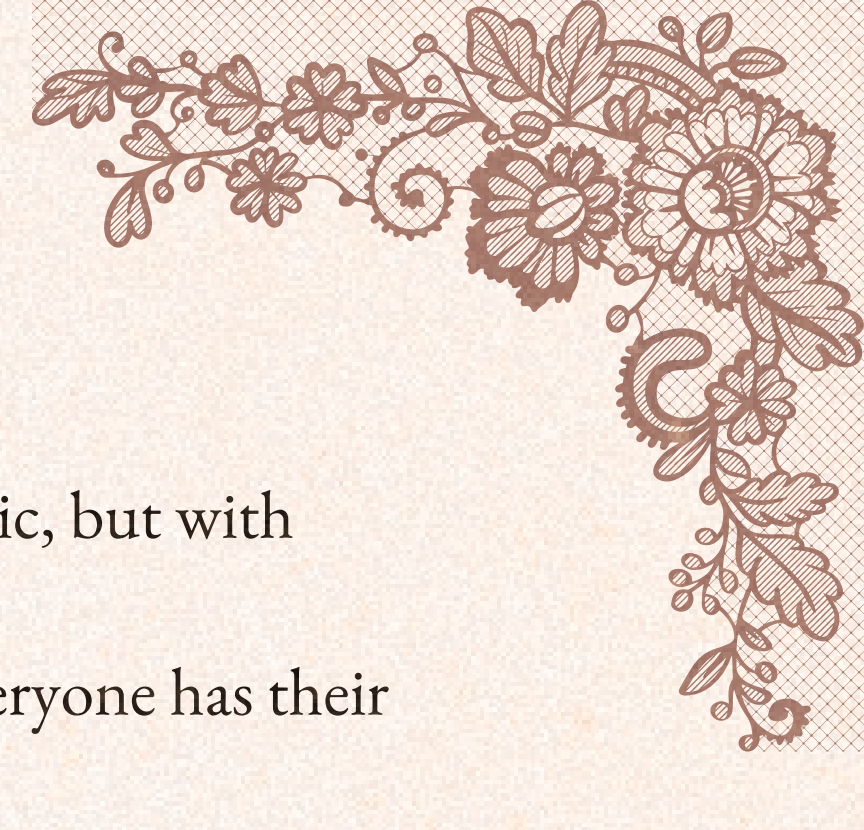
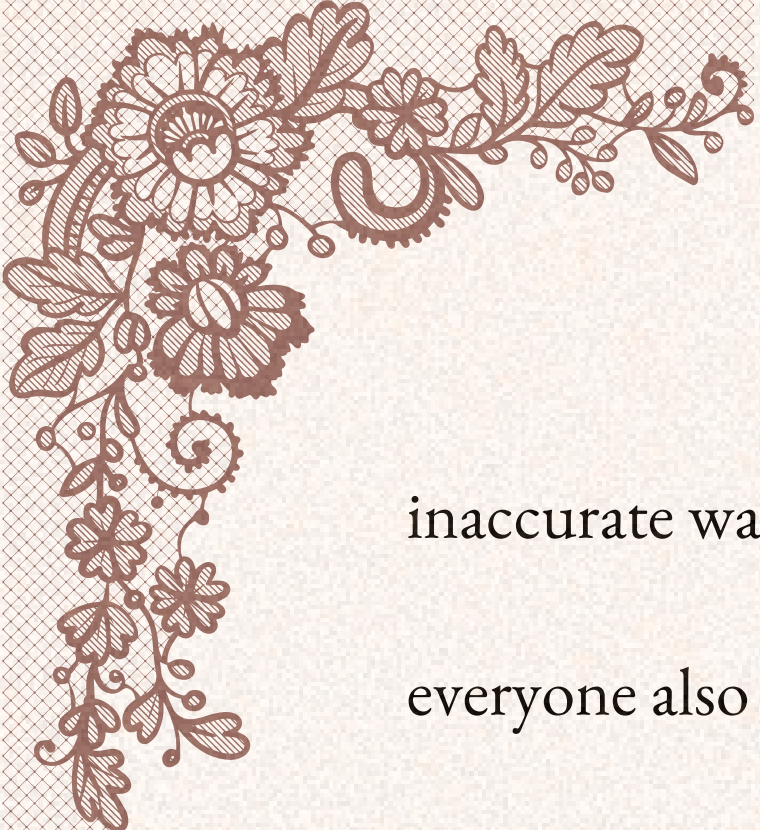
Liberty should matter to people. It should be apparent to you that liberty matters to me. Not to tell you how to live your life or what you should value, but having liberty should be one of the intrinsic goals for a lot of people. We should focus on the things we ourselves can control and not worry about the intangibles.



I admire how the Indigenous view of liberty emphasizes a pluralistic aspect where everyone works together to help each other. It is communal in that sense. In helping others achieve greater liberty, the individual is also achieving greater liberty. I like the fluidity of it. I will put myself into that way of life for a moment: If I am not content with my authority figures, I can challenge them and face minimal negative consequences, if any at all. That system allows me to move about and establish my own form of government and politics if I desire to do so. If I want to, I can make my own social system.

This may lead you to ask me, what have you mentioned previously that should not be part of liberty? Although I have not mentioned violence directly in this paper, I do not think it has any place in the formation of liberty other than to say it does not belong. I think many problems that are solved with violence can be resolved with better communication. Some of the Indigenous societies Graeber and Wengrow discussed in *The Dawn of Everything* had acts of violence in place in their customs and traditions. Not only that, but groups like the Wendat were warlike, and fighting other Indigenous groups was just a common thing to them. Some violence might be necessary, say in a life-or-death situation, to achieve greater personal liberty. But generally, hindering the liberty of others through violence defeats the whole point to me. To me, liberty does not depend on material possessions and certainly not about property, as the greed that comes from that does not necessarily allow others to achieve their goals. As can be seen in the British colonial society, “the colonial land system favored speculators and governors at the expense of Indians, who lost the land, and settlers, who had to rent or buy their new farms.”²⁶ Liberty depending on property is not fair to everyone, and is an

²⁶ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, 68, 2016



inaccurate way to decide effectiveness. To sum it up, liberty ought to be individualistic, but with everyone also working together. Like running a cross-country competition, where everyone has their own race to compete in, but there is still a team score based on points from the top finishers on each team. Liberty, to me, should be individualistic, fluid, cooperative, and meaningful, all in the pursuit of freedom. As a suggestion to you, reader, determine for yourself what liberty means to you and take action to pursue that.

Conclusion

To conclude, I will circle back to the personal anecdote from the introduction with this new knowledge of the Indigenous critique. In expressing our liberty and taking out the Pledge of Allegiance, we as a media club were making our own critique of a traditional cultural norm that was in place. The lack of engagement from the rest of the student body was discouraging. There had to be change, and the Pledge was one consistent thing.

We were individualistic in our goals because we wanted “The Morning Show” to be fun again for our individual enjoyment, but also communal, as we thought increased engagement would benefit everyone. We were not violent about it, and it certainly did not concern property. Although not as gripping an example as the Indigenous critique, this was still a way we got to reflect our liberty. It was certainly powerful that we made such a small change and it was immediately stomped it out. I am proud of this story because I did something I wanted to do, and it had no harm on anyone else. I did it with other people too, and that made it so much more powerful. Finding a strong community of people is so important to me. As we arrive at the conclusion, I leave you with something to ponder: What practical action can you regularly take to pursue greater personal freedom?



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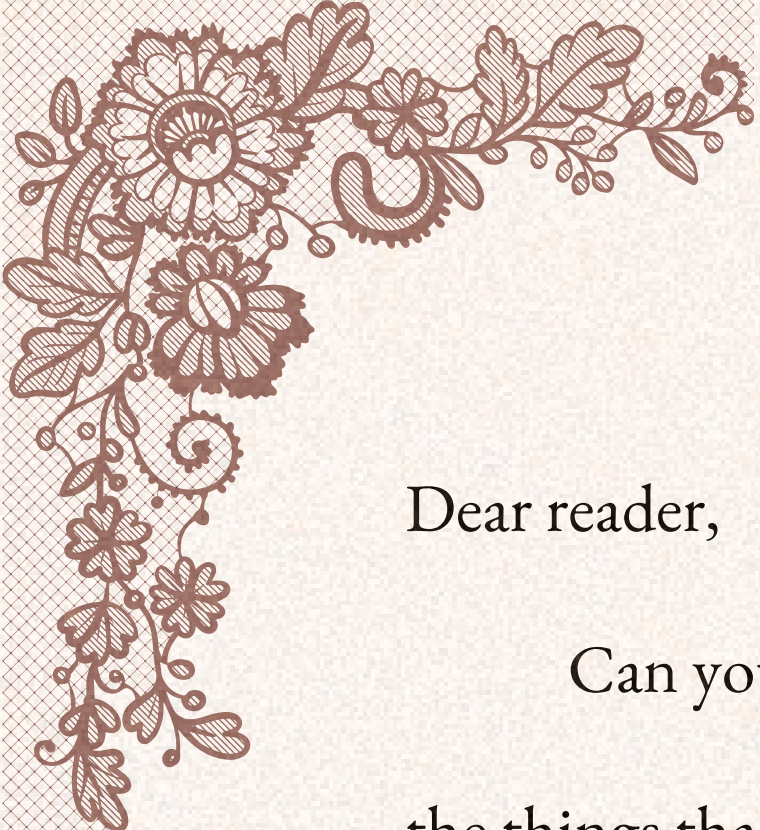
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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY '27

What Cannot Be Imagined:
Hume's Missing Shade of Blue
and Its Implications for AI
Shakila Movassaghi
University of California, Berkeley

Aurantium Undergraduate Philosophy Journal
Syracuse University
Edition ϕ ; Issue III



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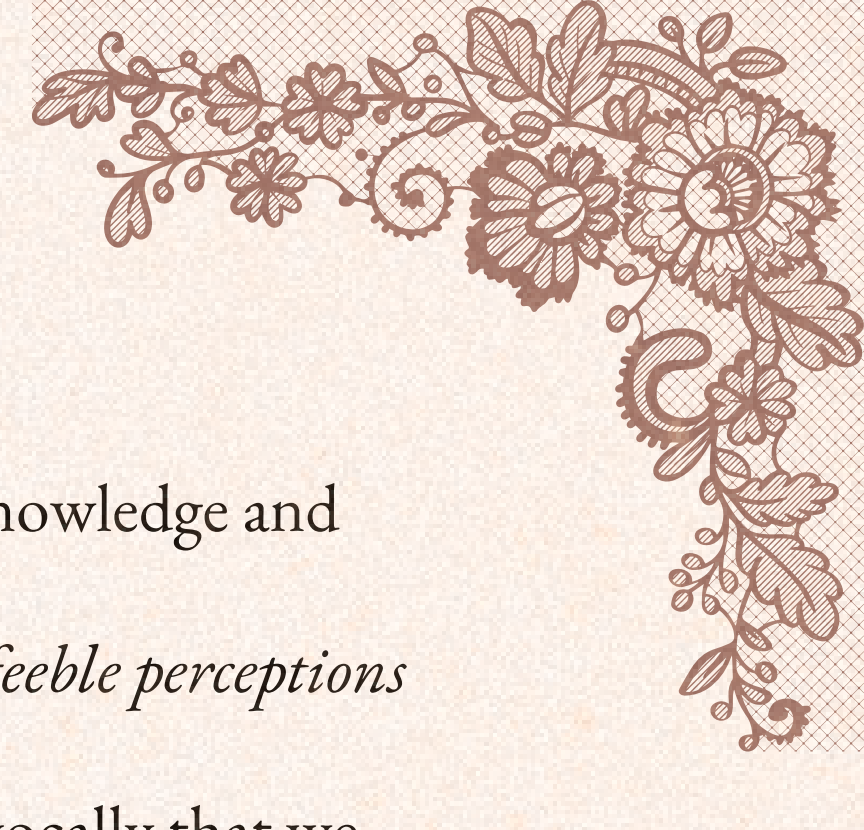
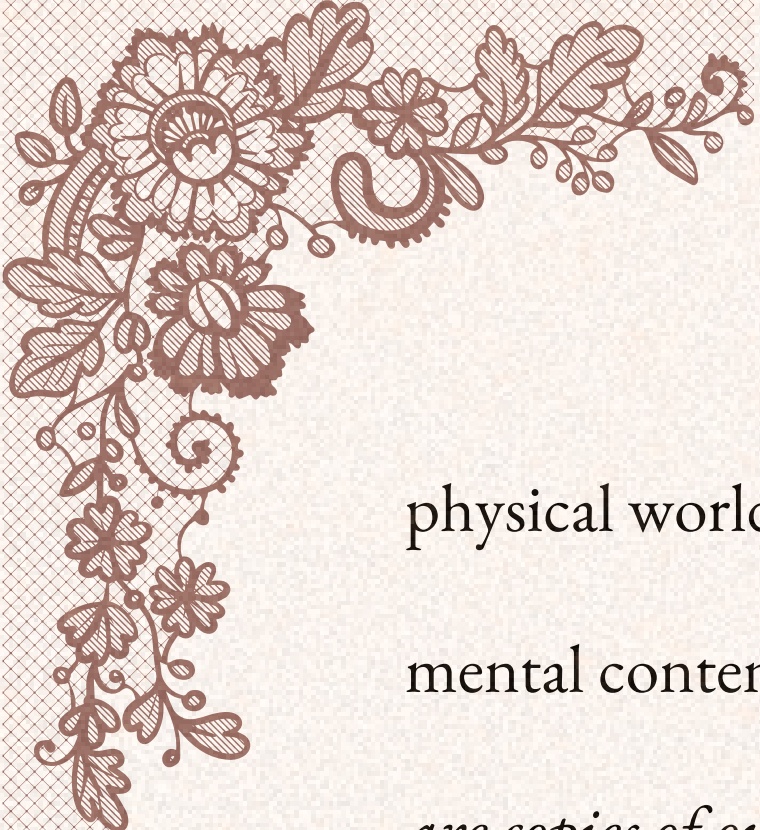
Dear reader,

Can you imagine something entirely novel? This feels like an incoherent thought. Think of all of the things that do not exist—there is necessarily an infinite amount. Yet, everything we can imagine involves a combination of what we have already encountered. Some have wondered what it may be like to encounter entirely novel objects. Can we even imagine it? Theoretical physicist Michio Kaku attempted to explain how we might, from our three-dimensional world, try to imagine a four-dimensional world. He writes, “...if we were peeled off our three-dimensional universe and hurled into the fourth dimension, we would find that common sense becomes useless. As we drift through the fourth dimension, blobs appear from nowhere in front of our eyes. They constantly change in color, size, and composition, defying all the rules of logic of our three-dimensional world. And they disappear into thin air, to be replaced by other hovering blobs. If we were invited to a dinner party in the fourth dimension, how would we tell the creatures apart? We would have to recognize them by the differences in how these blobs change.”¹

Kaku attempts to imagine something we have not experienced, yet it is nearly unfathomable and has to be explained through concepts we already recognize: blobs, color, dinner parties. In more analytic attempts, mathematicians have long pondered the visualization of a “hypercube” or tesseract, a cube experienced in 4 dimensions. However, even these concepts are described using impressions of two- and three-dimensional space. What we can imagine depends on what we have already interacted with.

This idea is reflected in David Hume’s “Copy Principle.” Hume’s Copy Principle holds that all of our ideas (imaginings) can only arise from impressions (things we have experienced in the

¹ Kaku, Michio. *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey Through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and the Tenth Dimension*. New York: Oxford University Press (1994).



physical world). At the heart of Hume's philosophy is empiricism, the view that all knowledge and mental content arises from sensory experience. As he puts it, "...*all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions.*"² This is a radically empiricist position; he posits unequivocally that we can have no novel, rational ideas outside of our sense perceptions and experience from the world. In other words, we cannot imagine something we've never encountered. He acknowledges that we can conceive of non-existent and complex abstract ideas, such as a "golden mountain" or a pegasus, but only through "...*compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing...*" the "simple ideas" derived from impressions.³

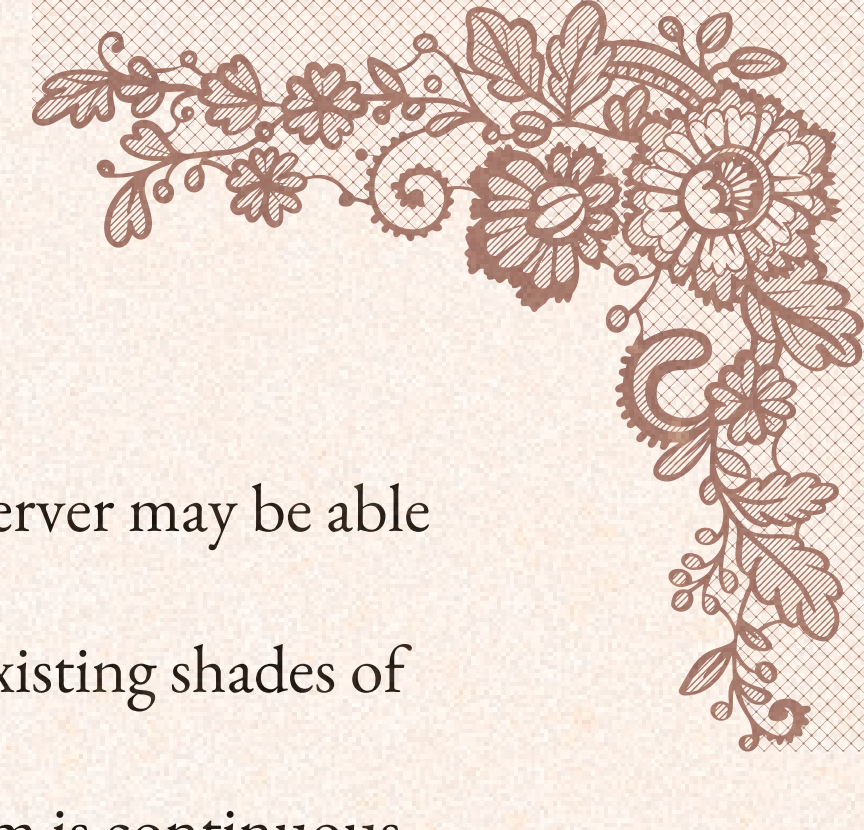
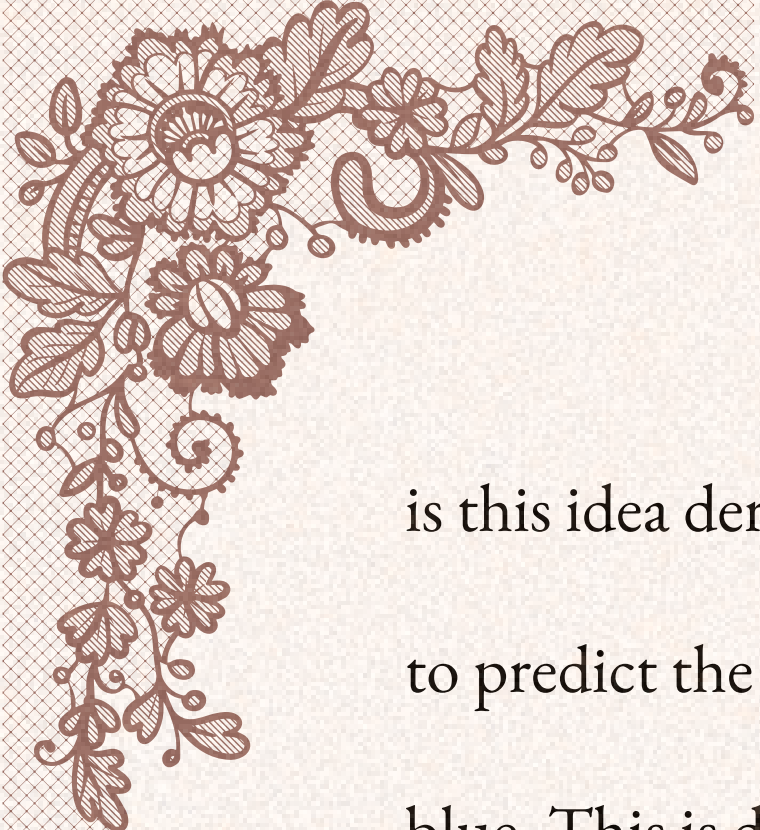
Hume, too, wondered whether we can conceive of an entirely novel idea, offering the perplexing thought experiment known as the Missing Shade of Blue (MSB) case.⁴ He asks us to imagine a person who has experienced every shade of blue except for one. If presented with a continuous gradient of blue shades arranged from the darkest to the lightest, with only the missing shade absent, Hume suggests that the person might be able to form an idea of the missing shade, despite never having had a previous impression of it. At first glance, this appears to be a case in which the mind generates an idea of a color without a direct sensory experience of it. If this is true, it would contradict his Copy Principle, which claims that all ideas are necessarily derived from prior impressions. However, the MSB case only serves to further Hume's point.

Hume tells us to evaluate ideas through the Copy Principle by asking, "From what impression

² David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.5.

³ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 1.1.1.

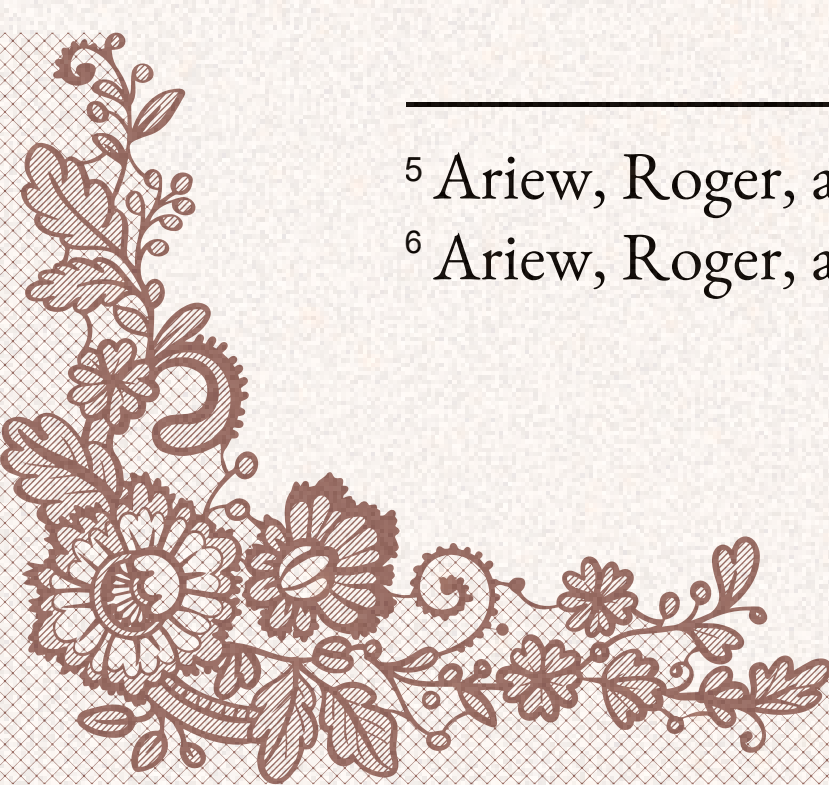
⁴ Ariew, Roger, and Eric Watkins. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. Hackett Publishing Company (2009), 540.

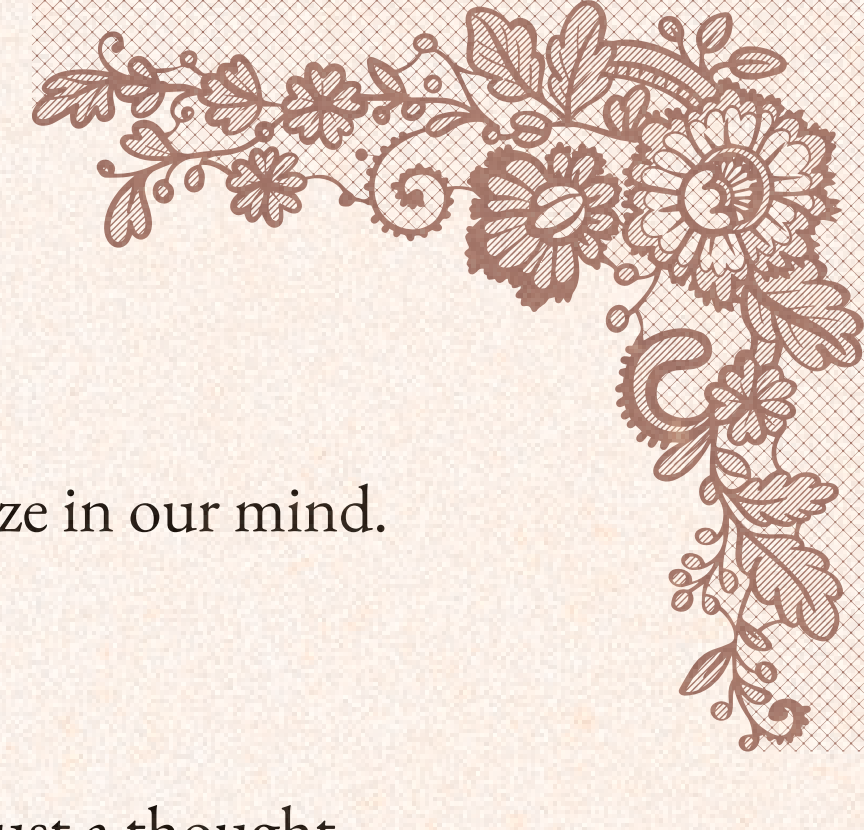
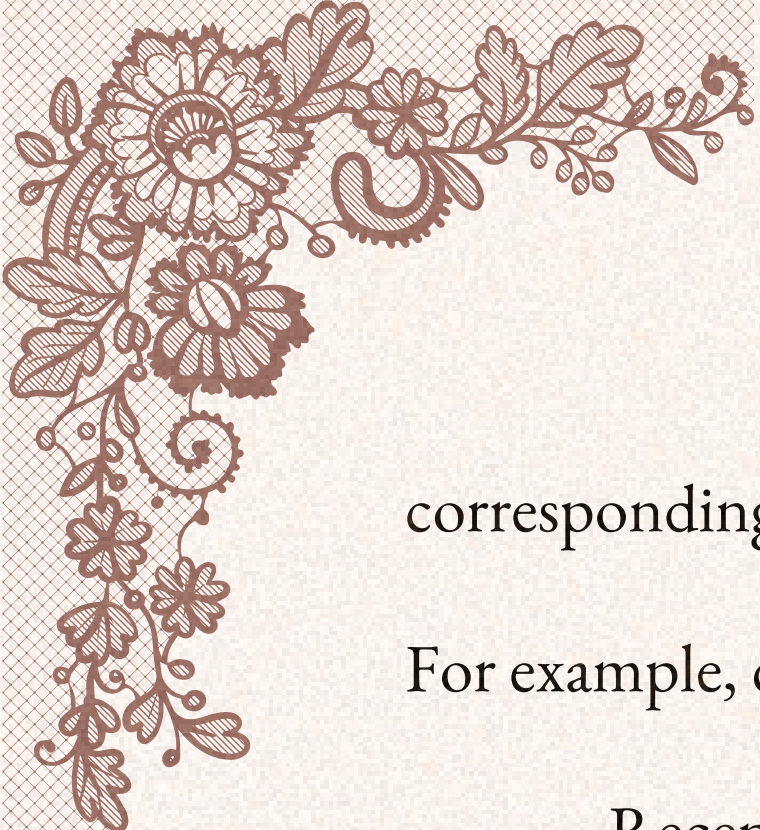


is this idea derived?”⁵ In the case of the “missing” shade of blue, it is apparent the observer may be able to predict the unknown shade because she already has some sense perception of the existing shades of blue. This is due to the nature of a spectral idea. The notion of hue in a color spectrum is continuous, so the missing idea is closely adjacent to experienced impressions. The mind is filling in a gap through prediction of a pattern, not creating a novel idea of a color. He notes the importance of spectral gradation when he observes that, although each shade is different from the next, “it is possible by the continual gradation of shades to run a color insensibly into what is most remote from it.”⁶ In the specific scenario, color hue varies along a continuous, predictable dimension. Notably, many other sensory qualities do not operate on a continuous spectrum in which you can “fill in” or predict a missing component between two others in this way. For example, there is no obvious “in-between” taste for two flavors, no clear missing note between two distinct scents. But with continuous qualities, such as temperature, volume, or color hue, gradation functions distinctly. For example, imagining a hotter heat source does not produce something we classify as a different phenomenon in the way a darker shade of blue is classified as a different color. If a musical note is louder in volume, we can predict how it will sound if it was lowered, but we do not classify it as a different note entirely. In the case of the Missing Shade of Blue, the color is clearly predicted from the combining of our existing impressions of blue, patterns, hue, gradation, lightness, and darkness. If the subject of our experiment was missing any one concept of those sense impressions—if she had no concept of patterns for example—she would not be able to predict the color. “Filling in” an empty tile on a conceptual pattern of color is not equivalent to a novel idea. A true counterexample to the Copy Principle would have to include an idea that is “simple” (not a combination of prior impressions), for which we use no

⁵ Ariew, Roger, and Eric Watkins. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, 541.

⁶ Ariew, Roger, and Eric Watkins. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, 540.





corresponding impressions to understand, and yet one which we can still conceptualize in our mind.

For example, could we imagine an entirely new color?

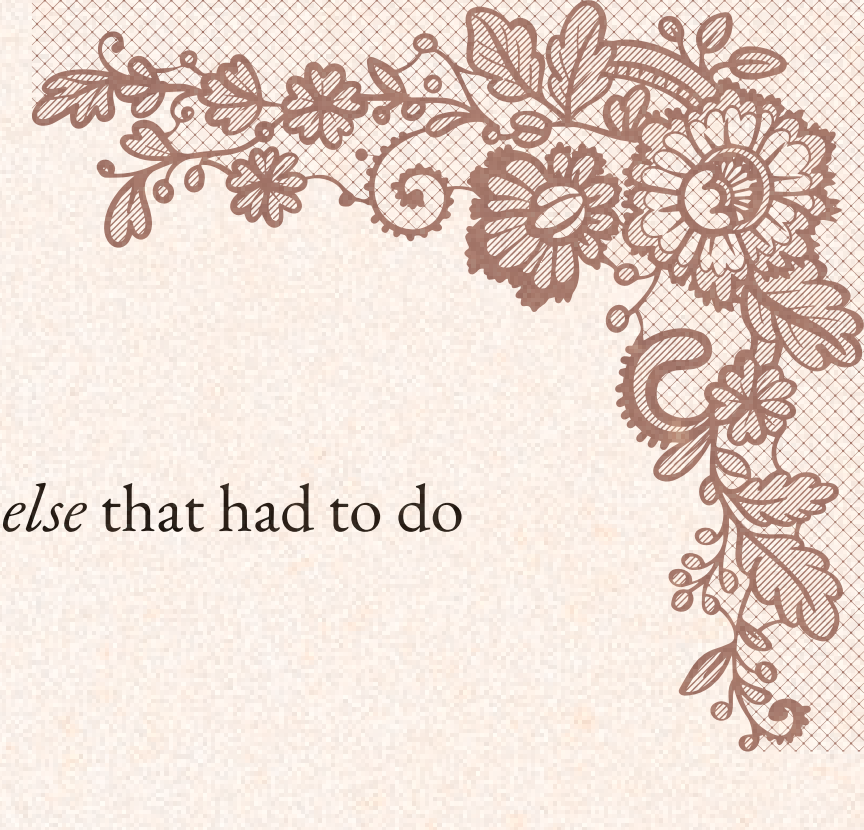
Recently, this case has come to be a potential real-life experience rather than just a thought experiment. Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley have discovered a new color, “olo,” which is perceived by stimulating specific cone cells in the retina with a laser in a way that ordinary light cannot do. This case offers a vivid analogy for what a real counterexample to the Copy Principle might look like: if others could conceive of olo through description alone, then perhaps we can form novel ideas without direct impressions. Of the five people that have experienced an impression of olo, they report it as “unlike anything they can describe.”⁷ When attempting to place this new color, the perceivers have described it as “...a profoundly saturated teal...the most saturated natural color was just pale by comparison...”⁸ and “...blue-green of unprecedented saturation.”⁹ Even in the case of the new color, they have to use words of impressions we already have to even try to get close approximations.

Still, no description seems to suffice to produce the actual idea of olo without the corresponding impression. Such cases underscore that the mind can extrapolate within a framework of known impressions, but it cannot produce a genuinely new simple idea without interaction. Therefore, Hume was not only right to dismiss the MSB, but contemporary research on color perception continues to support his conclusion, leaving the Copy Principle intact and even reaffirmed. If we trust the testimony of people who have, for the first time arguably in history, seen a new color, then the answer to our first question is: no, we cannot imagine a new color. So, if we have not encountered

⁷ Andersen, Ross. “The ‘profound’ Experience of Seeing a New Color.” (*The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 2025).

⁸ Hashemi, Sara. “Scientists Say They’ve Discovered a New Color—an ‘unprecedented’ Hue Only Ever Seen by Five People.” *Smithsonian* (2025).

⁹ Manke, Kara. “Scientists Trick the Eye into Seeing New Color ‘Olo.’” *CDSS at UC Berkeley* (2025).



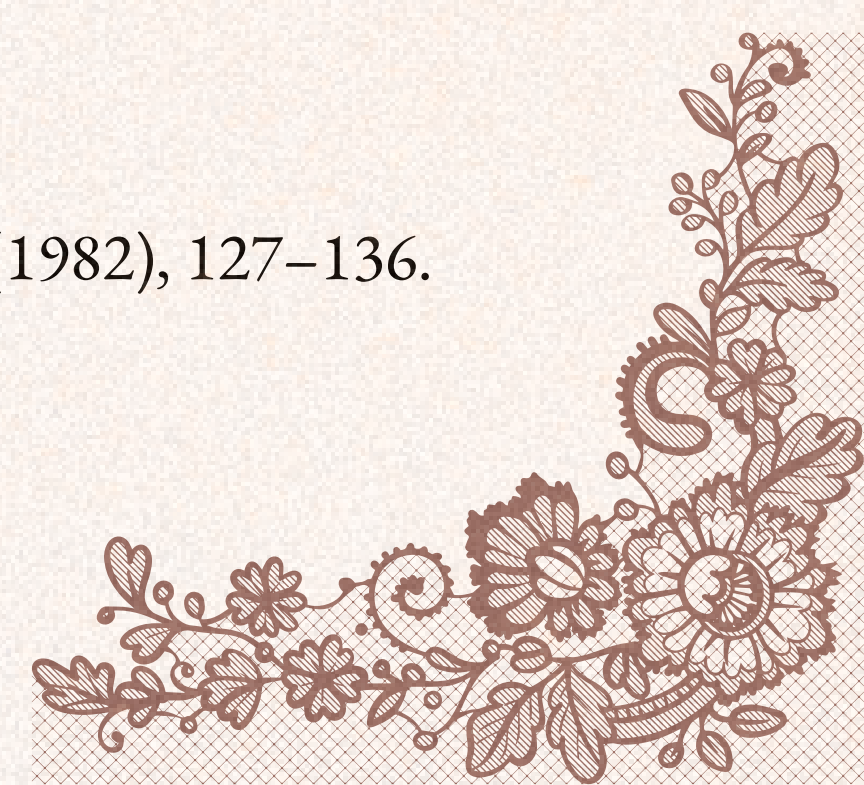
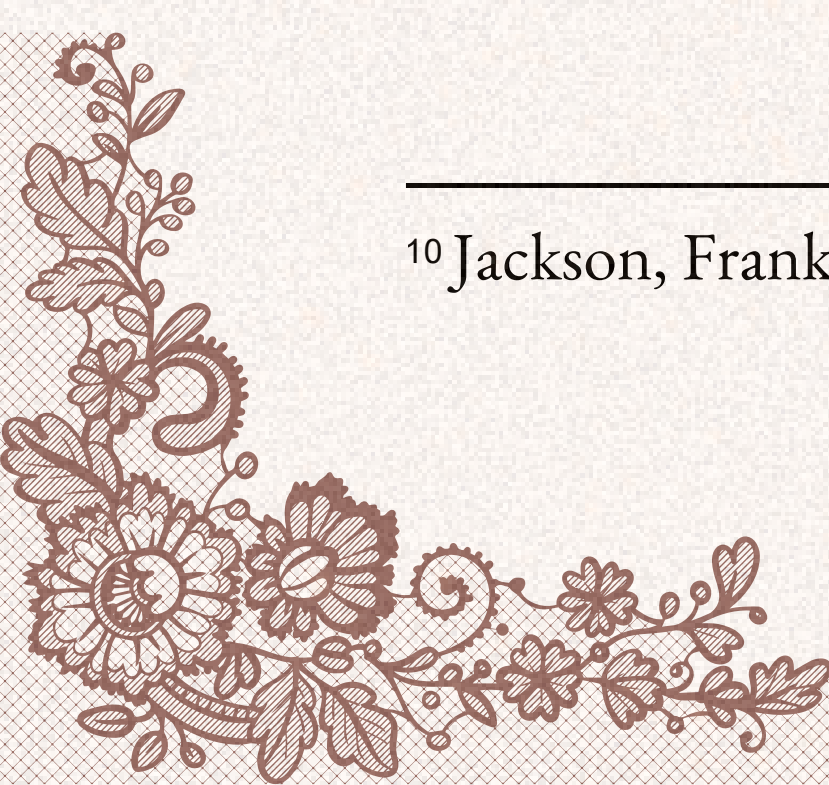
something then we cannot imagine it—but what about if we encountered *everything else* that had to do with it?

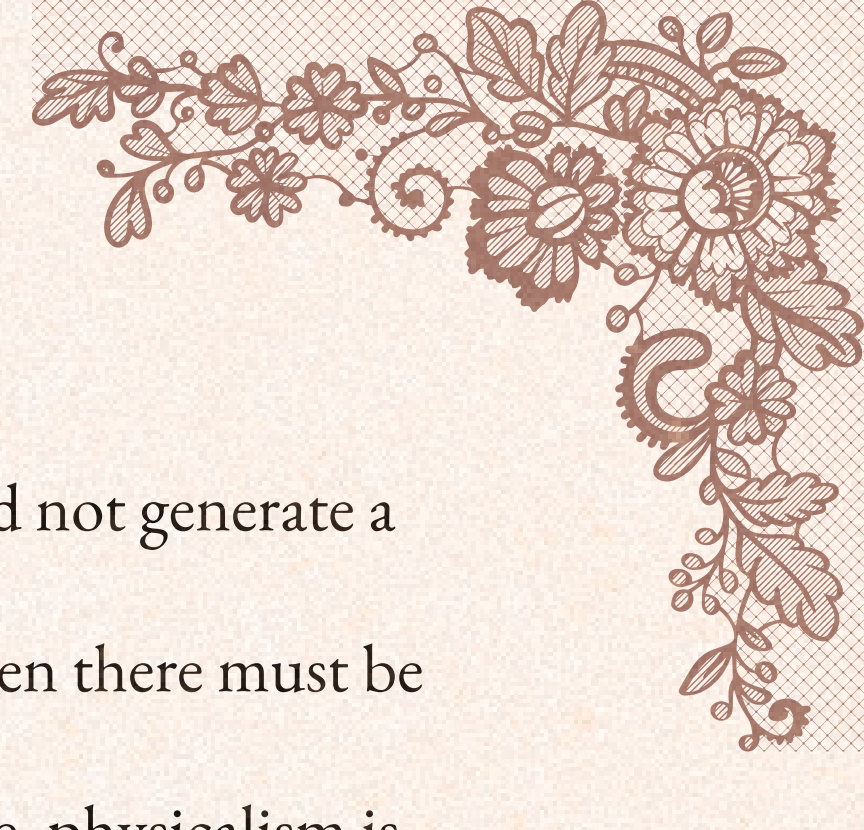
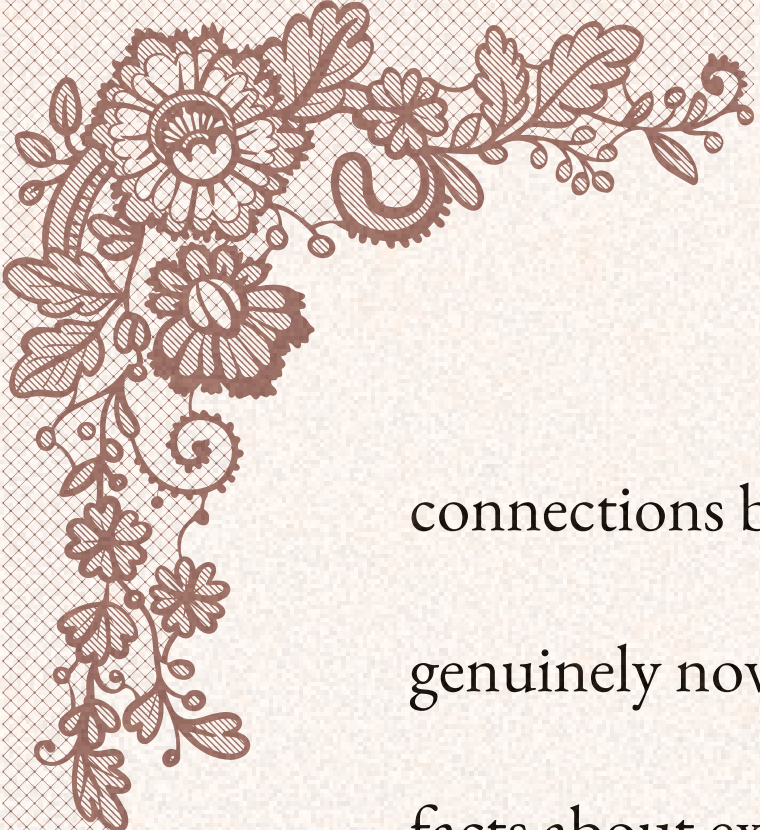
Mary's Room and Anti-Physicalism

Consider “Mary’s Room,” a thought experiment introduced by philosopher Frank Jackson in 1982.¹⁰ Imagine the scientist “Mary” who has spent her entire life in a black and white room. Mary is an expert in the science of color vision. She knows every conceivable fact about “red” and how humans perceive color, from the wavelengths of light to the processes in the retina and brain. Yet she has never actually seen color herself. The crucial question is this: when Mary finally leaves the room and sees the color red for the first time, does she learn something new? Or has she somehow already formed the simple idea of “red” without building it from impression?

Jackson’s answer is yes, Mary learns something new when she encounters red, and this is the core of what he calls the “knowledge argument” against physicalism. Physicalism is the view that everything that exists, including mental states and consciousness, is ultimately a physical process. On a physicalist account, the mind is entirely reducible to brain states, neural processes, and other material facts. If physicalism is true, then Mary, who knows all the physical facts about color vision, should already know everything there is to know about red. However, Jackson argues that she does not—that upon leaving the room, she gains new knowledge, specifically the knowledge of what it is “like” to see red. This kind of subjective, first-person experience is called a “quale” (plural: qualia). If you agree that Mary has learned something new, then that means knowledge is necessarily related to direct experience, to qualia, within the world. Her ‘knowledge’ without an impression, would not actually be knowing redness, rather just knowledge of the words we associate with red, and the statistical relationships and

¹⁰Jackson, Frank. “Epiphenomenal Qualia.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32, no. 127 (1982), 127–136.





connections between them. Without the sensory impression of color itself, they could not generate a genuinely novel concept of a color. If Mary gains new knowledge upon seeing red, then there must be facts about experience that are not captured by physical facts alone. And if that is true, physicalism is false.

The most prominent objection to this argument comes from Daniel Dennett, who argues that Mary, if she truly knows all the physical facts about color vision, already knows what it is like to see red.

¹¹In Dennett's view, our intuition that she learns something new is a misleading bias. If Mary truly gains no new knowledge upon leaving the room, we would expect her reaction to seeing red for the first time to be one of complete indifference—after all, she already knows everything about it. This is not the reaction we would predict, nor one that seems plausible, and the recent case of olo makes this even more pertinent. Recall that the five people who have experienced olo cannot adequately describe it to those who have not, despite being scientifically literate perceivers with full command of color vocabulary. If complete descriptive and physical knowledge were sufficient for genuine understanding, we would expect them to be able to convey olo through language alone, yet they cannot. This seems more aligned with Jackson's intuition: a person in possession of every relevant fact is still unable to transmit the experience itself.

This undermines the idea that propositional knowledge—knowledge that can be stated in language and passed between minds—is the only kind of knowledge there is. Jackson's argument suggests that there is a category of knowledge that is experiential: knowledge that can only be acquired through direct sensory encounter with the world. This is precisely what Hume meant by impressions in the Copy Principle, and it is precisely what Mary lacks until she steps outside.

¹¹Dennett, Daniel C. *Consciousness Explained*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company (1991).



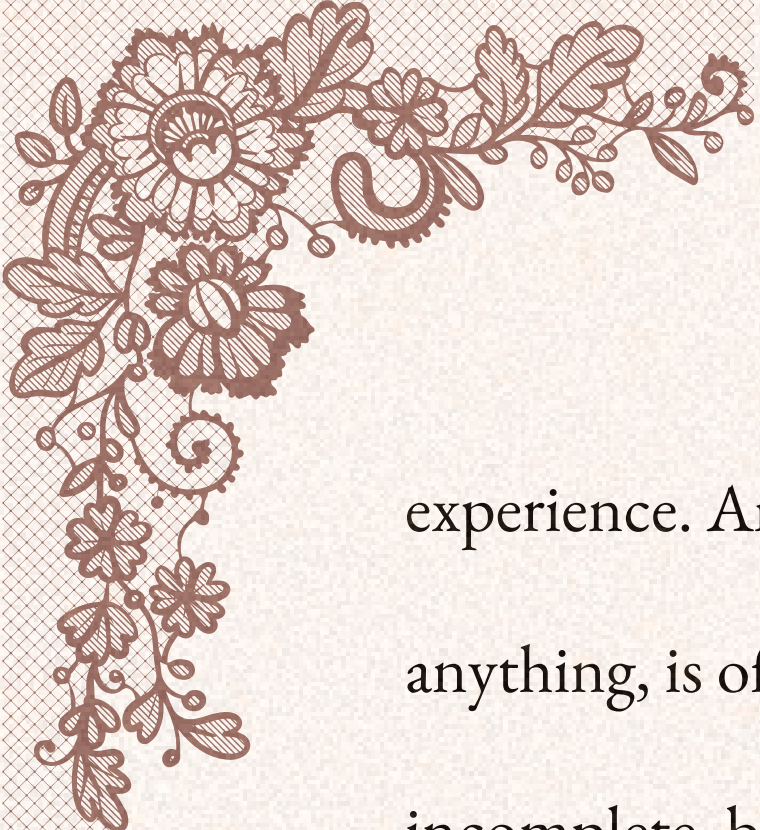
What does this mean for “minds” that cannot “experience”?

Mary’s Room has been used as an analogy for the exact “experience” of LLMs like ChatGPT. Like Mary in her room, an LLM has access to an immense amount of descriptive knowledge, all of the data on the world wide web. It can process every written fact about red, its physical properties, and its cultural associations. It can generate sentences that use the word “red” correctly in almost any context. But crucially, it has never had the sensory impression of “red” itself. The “knowledge” of an LLM is limited to patterns in text and the statistical relationships between words and phrases, without any capacity for phenomenological experience. Just as Mary cannot truly know what red looks like until she steps outside her room, an LLM cannot form an understanding of “red” beyond the words it manipulates. Without the sensory impression itself, there is no genuine concept of color. Can AI truly understand color? Or is this type of phenomenological experience precisely the difference between human ‘thought’ vs the statistical associative linguistics that an AI uses to imitate ‘understanding?’

Novel Experience as Uniquely Human

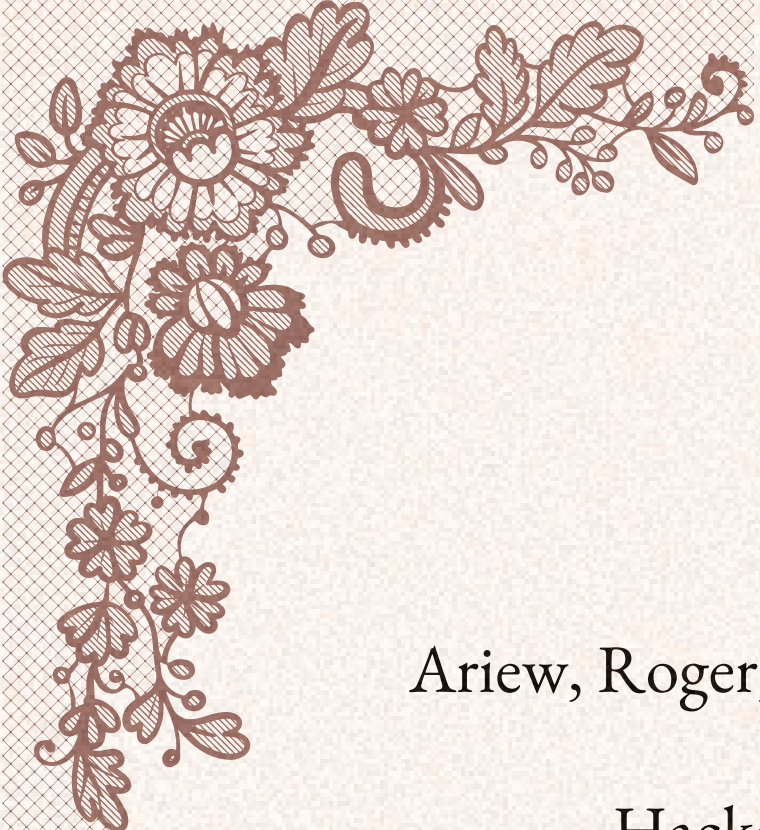
Ultimately, Hume’s Copy Principle and Jackson’s knowledge argument supplemented with the old discovery, converge on the same conclusion: novel ideas require impressions, and impressions are experiential. They cannot be fully conveyed through language alone, and they cannot be constructed from statistical patterns in text. This has significant implications for how we understand artificial intelligence, particularly in the case of LLMs. Novel cognition requires novel sense perception, and in this respect, it remains uniquely human.

Physicalism holds that mental states, including understanding and imagination, are reducible to physical processes. However, if qualia are real and irreducible, and if ideas depend upon prior impressions, then there exists a form of understanding unavailable to any system lacking phenomenal



experience. An LLM is such a system. The knowledge an LLM possesses about color, or about anything, is of a fundamentally different kind from the knowledge a human possesses. It is not simply incomplete, but it is categorically different no matter how much it grows. This is why the conclusion is not merely that LLMs lack certain capabilities which may evolve, but it is that they lack the conditions for a particular kind of human intelligence altogether.

None of this is to say that LLMs are not remarkable, or that their outputs are not useful, or even that they cannot do things that look a great deal like thinking. Without experience, though, they cannot actually *have* a thought; they cannot have intelligence. This suggests a fundamental limit in the bounds of artificial intelligence.



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THE RED SPLATTER,

DONE ON THE COMPLETED PRINT, BREAKS THE CONTROLLED FRAME AND INVITES A NARRATIVE BETWEEN THE TWO PRINTS. AN OLDER WORK, THIS PIECE SIGNIFIES AN EARLY ITERATION OF HOW MY WORK DEPICTS MENTAL ANGUISH THROUGH PHYSICAL INJURY.





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IS A NEW YORK BASED OIL PAINTER AND MIXED MEDIA SCULPTOR IN HER THIRD YEAR AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, PURSUING HER B.F.A IN STUDIO ARTS. HER WORK IS INSPIRED BY HER OWN EXPERIENCES WITH ABUSE, TRAUMA, AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY.

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