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Episteme aims to recognize and encourage excellence in undergraduate philosophy. The journal offers students their first opportunity to publish philosophy and boasts examples of some of the best work currently being done in undergraduate philosophy programs around the world. It is our hope that Episteme will help stimulate philosophical dialogue and inquiry among students and faculty at colleges and universities.

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All submissions undergo a process of blind review and are evaluated according to the following criteria: quality of research, depth of philosophical inquiry, creativity, original insight, and clarity. Final selections are made by vote of the Editors and the editorial board.

Please see the Call for Papers at the back of the journal for information on submitting to our next volume.

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A Life Well Lived is a Life Completed: A Heideggerian Account of a Good Life

Rosalie Looijaard

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I. Introduction

Heidegger determines the average everydayness of his concept of Dasein as follows: “entangled-disclosed, thrown-projecting being in the world, which is concerned with its ownmost potentiality in its being together with the “world” and being-with-with others” (175). In simpler terms, this means that as human beings, we are primarily concerned with living up to our own potentiality given the possibilities accessible to us, and we seek to do so in solidarity with the world and the people around us. Heidegger thus describes the necessity for us to reach our true potentiality to live a good life, but does not give us a clear account of how to achieve this.

In this paper I will deduce a practical account of a life well lived in which we achieve our ownmost potentiality from Heidegger’s ontology. I argue that under a Heideggerian ontological view, a life well lived is a life completed, in which there is authentic being-towards-death marked by peace with the prospect of death. Authentic being-towards-death can be achieved through the sufficient fulfillment of one’s ownmost aspirations. These aspirations can be fulfilled by taking an active and resolute stance within one’s existential possibilities, thus giving us an account of a practical and attainable theory of a life well lived.

First, I will define and interpret some crucial Heideggerian terms I will be using throughout the paper. Then, I will lay out the relevant parts of Heidegger’s ontology, which will form the foundation for my argument. In particular, I will begin by explaining where Dasein initially finds itself in the world, and how it relates to itself and others. I will then explain how this state of Dasein shows us what Dasein needs to act on to live well. Then, I will outline Dasein’s relationship with death and anxiety, and how peace with the prospect of death is necessary for completion. Then, I will elaborate

on what I mean by fulfilling aspirations, as well as how it relates to authenticity. Heidegger's notion of authenticity will be central to my argument, precisely because Heidegger intended for authenticity to be value-neutral, and previous notions of a "good life" have often been entangled in moral judgements, such as Aristotle's concept of human flourishing as *Eudaimonia*, which requires being a virtuous person. Instead, authenticity and completion are value-neutral. Next, I will give my account of completion and how it can be attained. Lastly, I will briefly consider plausible objections to my argument as well as some practical implications of my argument for the field of ethics.

II. Defining Terms

Heidegger's philosophy relies inherently on his use of the German language, and as such English interpretations of his word choices vary. I will thus explain why I opt to use the original German for some of his terms in lieu of English translations, and the particular interpretations of these terms I will adhere to. Before I briefly do this, I will give the relevant interpretation of *Dasein*; a core concept of this paper and Heidegger's work and one that has been left almost universally untranslated to maintain its meaning.

There exists significant debate as to how the entity that *Dasein* designates should be understood, but for my argument the most important component of *Dasein* is the description it gives us of human persons and their activity in the world. Thus, I will use Haugeland's interpretation of *Dasein* (as reiterated by Rouse) as my working definition: *Dasein* is a way of living that embodies an understanding of being (Wrathall 206). The components that are most relevant to my argument are as follows: *Dasein*'s essence lies in its existence, meaning that its own existence is of crucial concern to it; it is inherent to *Dasein* to always be concerned with its own being (Heidegger 41, 185). Furthermore, *Dasein* always defines and understands itself in terms of the possibilities that it is (Heidegger, 44).

As stated, I will utilize some of Heidegger's original German terms in cases where there exist significant differences between scholars on what terms to use. Most notably are *Befindlichkeit* and *das Man*. *Befindlichkeit*, typically translated as state of mind, affectedness, or disposedness, is the term Heidegger

uses to describe where Dasein finds itself in the world. It is closely related to the concept of being-in-the-world, which denotes Dasein's existence as inherently and inseparably being part of the world and its environment. *Befindlichkeit* will be explored more in-depth in section VI, and since there is a lack of scholarly consensus regarding its most accurate translation, I will opt to use the original German throughout this paper.

Das Man has been translated as "the They," "the anyone" and "the One." Dreyfus gives a compelling argument for using "the One," as Heidegger's original concept was not meant to only denote "the other," but rather social norms: "one pays one's taxes (Dreyfus 158). On the other hand, "the They" is often used to emphasize the external societal pressures and norms that are being put on Dasein and Dasein's potential to become lost in "the They." Both translations are criticized for failing to capture the full meaning of *das Man*, which Heidegger intended to denote an abstract conceptualization of humanity's social reality that Dasein itself is also part of. Throughout this paper, I will thus opt to use the original German *das Man*. There will be a handful of other Heideggerian terms throughout the paper, but their definitions are less complex and will thus be defined when relevant.

III. Being-in-the-World: *Befindlichkeit* and *das Man*

I will now give the relevant aspects of Heidegger's being-in-the-world and its relationship with *das Man* to illustrate the initial state of Dasein from which it must act out its life. According to Heidegger, the most basic level of the world in which we carry out our lives is fundamentally a meaning-filled context, and everything in it exists in reciprocal interdependence to us (Guignon & Pereboom 192-195). Each individual person's life is made their own by where they find themselves, their *Befindlichkeit*. We are thrown into a pre-existing environment that is filled with possibilities. In *Befindlichkeit*, Dasein finds itself confronted with its current, future, and past possibilities; it reveals what situation we were thrown into (Heidegger 238). I argue that we as human beings receive our sufficient conditions for completion from this nexus of possibilities. This nexus of possibilities is anxiety inducing. Dreyfus explains this sort of anxiety in *Befindlichkeit* as the idea that "social action now appears as a game which there is no point in playing since it has no intrinsic meaning" (180). The "meaning of life" might

almost seem like an illusionary conspiracy made up by society if Dasein loses itself in das Man. In order to feel complete, Dasein needs to authentically project itself towards some sort of social action or role that Dasein cares about and thus experiences as meaningful. If Dasein's social actions and roles seem meaningless and pointless, Dasein will not feel complete. Dasein's anxiety can thus be dissipated by searching within the existential - practically attainable - possibilities to find those towards which Dasein is authentically projected.

With this basic ontology of Dasein's initial existence, we can begin to examine what Dasein needs to find fulfillment before we identify a path to achieve said fulfillment. I am using "fulfillment" here as a measure for completion, as the average person will often describe having lived a life well lived as having lived a fulfilling life. As stated earlier, one of the core characteristics of Dasein is that it cares about its own being. Dasein is also characterized by the need to do and undertake practical actions. I thus deduce that Dasein needs to engage in activity projected towards something it cares about to feel fulfilled. I will henceforth refer to what Dasein cares about and seeks to engage in projected activity towards as aspirations, for the sake of brevity.

To understand how Dasein can find its aspirations among the existential possibilities, we first need to take a look at Heidegger's concept of the self. Heidegger's definition of the self (or selfhood) is different from many traditional conceptions of the self (e.g. as psychological identity). Wrathall states that for Heidegger, the self is a disclosive function that an individual acts out (66). This particular individual has "specific projects, dispositions, skills, and practices" that determine how the world shows up for them and how they act in response: we are thus continuously influenced by das Man, and rarely our ownmost self (Wrathall 66). For most people, it will thus be difficult to find one's self within society. Dasein's self as a particular is often dispersed, and sometimes lost, in das Man (Heidegger 258). Dasein typically primarily understands itself in terms of norms that were decided by das Man (Wrathall 643). Das Man maintains itself in its everydayness by remaining in the ontic, factual realm, and only concerns itself with beings as objects, rather than ways of beings, staying within preconceived boundaries of social norms. Regardless, it is impossible to exist completely separate from das Man due to the nature of Dasein

as being-in-the-world. It is thus crucial that Dasein finds itself within das Man. Dasein will derive a significant amount of its roles and interpretations of what it means to be human from das Man (Dreyfus 158), but to truly feel complete, I argue that Dasein must find among these roles the role that is grounded in authenticity and the self, rather than only in das Man. This requires that Dasein is shown to itself in its possible authenticity while it is lost in das Man (Heidegger 258). As stated earlier, the self is a disclosive function, and if the self is a disclosive function, then it is pivotal in disclosing aspirations among the existential possibilities.

IV. Being-towards-Death and Anxiety

If this disclosure lies in the self, but the self is also inseparably tied up in das Man, then we must show the self can nonetheless disclose its ownmost aspirations. The key to this lies in anxiety. As stated in the previous section, anxiety arises when we are confronted by the vast amount of possibilities. In Heidegger's analysis of anxiety, we learn that anxiety reminds us that our time is limited for our lives are finite, and we are ultimately responsible for our actions and thus in control of our own potentiality-for-being. Anxiety makes us aware that we have this responsibility to shape our own life before we are faced with death. Anxiety confronts Dasein with its freedom for authenticity of its being as a possibility. In doing so, anxiety shows Dasein its conditions for authenticity: it makes one aware of how one is (Heidegger 182). The conditions of authenticity will be explored further in a later section.

We must thus first carefully lay out the role of death before we can get into the functional use of anxiety. Heidegger states that "death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-Being in which the very Being of one's own Dasein is an issue. In dying, it is shown that mineness and existence are ontologically constitutive for death" (Heidegger 247). In other words, Death is the moment in which our existence becomes finalized, and in this finalization, our own being and our own life becomes an issue for ourselves. We are always aware of the impending nature of death. We are always being-toward-death, and this reveals to us our own potentiality-for-being. In death, Dasein is manifested as everything it ever was, is, and ever will be. Heidegger gives us a succinct definition of the ontological concept of death to keep in mind as we wrestle with its role: "as the end of Dasein, death

is the ownmost, non relational, certain, and, as such indefinite and insuperable possibility of Dasein" (248). Death is inevitable and yet unique to every individual. It sums up Dasein's life in its totality, and as such death is Dasein's ownmost possibility.

It is important to note that by death, Heidegger does not simply mean physical and biological death. Thomson points out Heidegger's distinction between "demise" and "death" by explaining that demise is the ordinary physical death and complete annihilation of experience that we typically think of, and that death is the existential phenomenon that implicitly shapes our experiences with demise (Wrathall 218). It is death as this existential phenomenon that gives us this anxiety, for it marks our eventual inability to change anything about our existence.

The mindset of a person who has not had a life well lived but faces death is laid out by the character Inez in Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit*: "One always dies too soon- or too late. And yet one's whole life is complete at that moment, with a line drawn neatly under it, ready for the summing up. You are- your life, and nothing else" (Sartre 24) Whether peace with the prospect of death is present or not, one recognizes that life is complete when death occurs, in the sense that it has ended and nothing can be added to it. It is completed in the sense that it has been finalized: concluded and exhausted. However, completion as I use the term throughout this paper entails a certain satisfaction and peace. Completion is something that can be achieved before death, that entails that there is nothing left one aspires to be or have.

To further understand this, and to play into Heidegger's emphasis on everydayness, we can examine an analogy. There is a more everyday manifestation of anxiety similar to that which we have towards death. Take the dynamic between wake and sleep. At the end of a day well lived, it is often easy to go to sleep. At the end of a day not well lived, the prospect of ending the day by sleeping is often filled with anxiety. You might consider the day wasted, and feel anxious that you did not do or be everything you aspired to do or be with the time allotted to you in the day. This is akin to the anxiety we feel in being-towards-death. The key difference between this everyday manifestation of anxiety and its total manifestation is final, barring concepts of reincarnation, there is no more

time that comes afterwards that matters for the totality of one's life. The anxiety surrounding death is thus much greater than that surrounding sleep, but they are of a similar kind. Anxiety also entails feelings of unsettledness that mark that there is something missing or disturbed, detaching Dasein from its own being-in-the-world, which is integral to its very being. The perseverance of this anxiety until the point of death is an obstacle to Dasein's ability to live a life completed. However, anxiety is first necessary to identify what matters most to Dasein. Anxiety causes a breakdown that reveals to Dasein its own nature and that of the world around it. It thus reveals that Dasein has no control over what already is, thereby revealing that Dasein is dependent on a pre-existing public environment that it had no hand in producing (Dreyfus 177). Nonetheless, it must find in this pre-existing environment those existential possibilities that it can make its own. By accepting anxiety, Dasein can respond to the situation it finds itself in.

I argue that by accepting and responding to this anxiety in being-towards-death that Heidegger describes, Dasein will be able to project itself to what matters to it; its aspirations. When Dasein does this, anxiety will diminish and completion in the absence of unfilled aspirations and thus peace with the prospect of death can be achieved. This is also what differentiates peace with the prospect of death from a death wish or suicidal idealization. When life feels complete, we are filled with a sense of peace and tranquility. When we wish to die or have suicidal ideations, we are instead filled with anxiety, hopelessness, or emptiness. The anxiety that has been present throughout life is still there in suicidal idealization, but diminishes in peace with the prospect of death. To find this peace then, we must examine what fulfills Dasein. Inherent to Dasein is that it cares about its own being and will project itself towards what matters to it. Without something that matters to it and that it can act towards, Dasein is reduced to a passive, antithetical version of itself.

V. Authenticity and Aspirations

In section II I noted that Dasein seeks to undertake projected activity towards that which it cares about: that what Dasein cares about through projected activity I refer to as aspirations. I also briefly noted in section IV that anxiety reveals to us our aspirations, and I will now give a more complete account of what constitutes our authentic aspirations and how we

go about acting to fulfill them. As human beings, we throw ourselves into social roles that reflect what matters to us: "In throwing myself into the life of a scholar or a brewer, I respond to what matters, what is significant or important, in this way of life. Dasein's being matters to it, and so it is called by its being to its being" (Wrathall 206, 138). Our aspirations are thus often tied to social roles and projects we seek to fulfill because we care about them in our being. It is important to differentiate these aspirations from social roles or projects we seek to fulfill for some external reward: such as social expectations rooted in *das Man*, or financial prospect. Through this differentiation, we can also identify what our ownmost authentic aspirations are. Our authentic aspirations are those that do not come solely from *das Man*.

Before I give an account of authentic aspirations, I will briefly interpret Heidegger's notion of authenticity itself more closely. It is important to note that Heidegger avoided making explicit value judgments and intended for his notion of authenticity to be largely amoral. As such, it is difficult to reconcile authenticity as being essential to a good life, a concept often inherently associated with happiness, virtuosity, and other value judgments. However, I aim to avoid this problem by supposing authenticity as a prerequisite for completion, a value-neutral concept. It is then merely the case that a life well lived constitutes a life completed, in the sense of contentedness, rather than moral-adjacent judgments such as a good or bad life.

Authenticity is best explained in contrast to inauthenticity. To be authentic, Dasein must avoid facticity. Facticity is the aspect of inauthentic Dasein which suggests that what Dasein already is, is an established fact. For example, if one is employed in a certain career, then that is an established fact for them, marking a sort of unalterable state. Dasein is thus inauthentic when it is completely swallowed up and determined by *das Man*. To become authentic entails taking responsibility for one's own existence and not falling into *das Man*. This requires adjusting one's comportment in correspondence to authenticity. This does not necessarily mean changing careers (although it can), but can mean changing how one comports oneself towards one's career. Authenticity entails seizing the roles one has in society and making them one's own in the Heideggerian sense of *Eigentlichkeit* - owning oneself.

Authentic aspirations then are the existential possibilities that Dasein, through anxiety, identifies as being its ownmost. Dasein needs to take a resolute stance towards its existential possibilities and project itself into its ability-to-be. Calling upon Heidegger's emphasis on doing, aspirations are then fulfilled by engaging in activity. To illustrate my account of authentic aspirations, take the example of a person who aspires to become a painter. They want to paint for painting's sake. They do not want to paint simply because society tells them painting is valuable, or will make them rich (these can be secondary motivations, but should not be the primary reasons for the aspiration). The painter encountered art in the vast array of existential possibilities and identified this, through anxiety as noted in section IV, as one of their ownmost authentic aspirations. This aspiration is then fulfilled by doing and taking responsibility for their actions. They need to actively and physically handle the paint and the brush. They can only fulfill their aspiration to be a painter by picking up the tools and engaging in the actions of a painter. By seizing upon this particular possibility that they have found and engaged within their *Befindlichkeit*, they can achieve fulfillment and move towards completion. Completion is thus marked by a fulfillment of aspirations and peace with the prospect of death. However, fulfilling all of one's aspirations can be near impossible. For completion, one only needs to fulfill a sufficient amount of existentially possible aspirations, meaning that they fulfill those aspirations most important and most accessible to them. Other aspirations must be distanced from. If you aspire to become a painter, but you are severely allergic to all forms of paint, you must distance yourself from this aspiration and identify an existentially possible aspiration to fulfill instead - this may be a different form of artistry, or a different kind of aspiration altogether.

It is also not the case that one must only work towards their authentic aspirations. Oftentimes, engaging in other aspirations and obligations is necessary to function within society. What matters is that alongside these extrinsic actions, one acts towards the fulfillment of their own aspirations. Otherwise, Dasein will simply become stuck in *das Man*. This is reflected in how we often characterize working a dead-end job simply to survive as an unfulfilling existence. The need to make money and stay afloat in society is rarely part of our authentic aspirations. Regardless, this is necessary for us to survive in the

current state of our society, but it does not ultimately determine completion and will thus not ensure we feel we have lived our lives well. By focusing too much on the necessary means we need to survive, we fall deeper into *das Man* and cloud our perception of our own aspirations. The painter might never be able to fully fulfill his aspiration to paint if he becomes stuck in the notion that he needs to make money to survive and focuses solely on this by, for example, taking an office job. However, the painter might feel a lot more comfortable in this office job making enough money to survive even if it means not fulfilling their own aspirations. As Heidegger points out, *das Man* is comforting, and functioning in it and with it is necessary for our survival, but remaining solely in *das Man* will not diminish our anxiety towards death. The painter will still feel a much more unsettling existential anxiety in the office job, preventing him from finding peace with the prospect of death. Thus, our need to survive in *das Man* and our need to fulfill our own aspirations need to be balanced. However, our anxieties towards the former will seem almost frivolous in the face of death, and thus ultimately will not matter nearly as much for our ability to feel peace with the prospect of death.

In order to attain a life completed, one thus needs to (a) disclose, take responsibility for, and act towards one's ownmost authentic aspirations, and (b) distance oneself and let go of all other and not existentially possible aspirations. When this is done, a lack of unfulfilled aspirations is what evokes the feeling of peace with the prospect of death and marks a life well lived. It will not seem like death has come too soon, or too late. Instead, the person who experienced a life well lived is in a sense ready to face death.

VI. Completion

I have unpacked the relevant parts of Heidegger's ontology and its implications, and have given my account of aspirations. I will now give a brief overview of my account of the necessary conditions for completion and my account completion itself. What constitutes completion will be different for each individual, as each person's life is made their own through the terms of their *Befindlichkeit* as outlined in section III. However, we can nonetheless outline a generalized path towards completion. The necessary condition for completion is that *Dasein* feels peace with the prospect of death. This is

achieved by the sufficient fulfillment of aspirations. Dasein finds itself as being-in-the-world, on the edge of falling into Das Man (or alternatively, already having become lost in Das Man). Regardless of its initial position, Dasein will find itself surrounded by possibilities and will experience existential anxiety. It must project itself towards the existential possibilities, and Dasein's anxiety will reveal to it what it cares most about. In revealing that which Dasein cares most about, its ownmost aspirations will be disclosed as well, as these aspirations will be rooted in that which Dasein cares about. Once these aspirations are disclosed, Dasein can take a resolute stance towards them. This resolution entails making authentic choices that seek to fulfill Dasein's aspirations. In fulfilling its ownmost aspirations, Dasein will achieve a sense of completion, and anxiety will dissipate. This completion of aspirations and absence of anxiety will lead to a feeling of peace with the prospect of death. Once Dasein is content and at peace with its own manifestation of totality as death, Dasein is authentically being-towards-death. Under Heidegger's ontology, a practical characterization of a life well lived can thus be summed up as a life completed, in which death simply marks the totality of an ownmost authentic existence, made up of the fulfillment of aspirations through resolutely making sufficient authentic choices. When Dasein feels a serene peace with the prospect of death, this is thus a consequence that its ownmost aspirations have been fulfilled, and its existence has reached totality - completion.

VII. Objections and Responses

One might object that a value-neutral conception of a life well lived is inherently flawed, as within a society living well also entails ethical conduct towards others and thus being an ethically "good" person. This is also implied by Heidegger's statement that Dasein's ownmost potentiality is also determined in its being-with with others (175). To this I respond that my account does not rule out that one should also strive to be a moral person in regards to other's potentiality-for-being. As such, the conditions I outline for a life completed are necessary, rather than sufficient. Someone may fulfill all of their aspirations for their own potentiality-for-being, but still feel anxiety towards death, due to moral faults they made throughout their life. In fact, Heidegger's ontology similarly implies that we have certain ethical obligations in respecting other's potentiality-for-being, but outlining these is outside of

the scope of this paper.

Another plausible objection is that aspirations may be volatile, or someone may have bad aspirations. To the latter, a similar response can once again be given that Heidegger's ontology implies that we should respect others' potentiality-for-being. To the former, aspirations are to an extent contingent, in that they depend on the environment in which one finds themselves. Dasein's aspirations will always be dependent on the available existential possibilities and the way that Dasein is socialized. I also account for the fact that someone can lose the notion that their life is complete by uncovering a new possibility, and thus the prospect of life ending too late rears its head, and anxiety returns. Regardless, by virtue of being ownmost to Dasein, authentic aspirations will not be volatile to the point that they change so often that they inhibit Dasein from finding sufficient fulfillment. Dasein need not fulfill every single aspiration it ever had and ever will have, but simply enough to attain peace with the prospect of death, and thus a sense of completion.

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Illusionism on the Brink of Disillusionment

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Abstract

Distilling a theory of “qualia”—with at least some degree of consensus—has been a grand point of contention in the philosophy of mind since the term qualia were introduced. In this paper, I will focus on one area where qualia realists and anti-realists come to head-to-head; how does philosophy sufficiently account for qualia’s constitutive property of “intrinsic subjectivity”? First, I will summarize David Chalmers’ meta-problem to contextualize this aspect of the qualia debate. Second, I explain how Keith Frankish’s theory of “illusionism” is a tenable solution to resolving the meta-problem from an anti-qualia realist perspective. Yet, when it comes to addressing qualia’s constitutive feature of intrinsic subjectivity, illusionism faces an insurmountable obstacle due to its methodological commitment to third-person empiricism. I argue the preceding point by analyzing how illusionism confronts two challenges: (1) Philip Goff’s real-acquaintance hypothesis, accompanied with Goff’s theory of panpsychism; (2) a modern adaptation of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “private language” thought experiment. My purpose is to argue that Frankish’s theory of illusionism is ill-equipped for dealing with these philosophical challenges.

Introduction

The term “qualia” is referenced in a wide range of philosophical arguments which maintain the elements of conscious experience that cannot be reduced to neuroscientific explanation. The classic definition of qualia refers to the intrinsic, subjective, and ineffable components of conscious experience (Frankish 2012, 2-3). The subjective component is “what-it’s-like” to undergo a conscious experience, emphasizing the subject’s direct access to their own conscious experience. Qualia realists claim that even if we provided the most sophisticated neuroscientific explanation of our conscious experiences, this would fail to encapsulate qualia (Nagel 1974, 435). Therefore, qualia are irreducible as such.

The philosopher Keith Frankish defends the potential for third-person empiricism, such as developments in neuroscience, to “explain away” the ontological reality of qualia. In response to the qualia realist’s convictions, Frankish claims they are cast under a cognitive “illusion” that qualia properties exist. For example, he argues that the claim qualia are accessed via “introspection” will eventually be explained as a cognitive illusion (Frankish 2016, 12-13). In this sense, Frankish respects that qualia realists claim that it “feels like” there are qualia properties, but he denies their ontological existence.

The aim of my paper is to show how Frankish’s proposed method for explaining away qualia through neuroscience hits a dead-end when attempting to dismantle qualia’s constitutive property of intrinsic subjectivity. The crux of my argument is that Frankish’s commitment to third-person empiricism ultimately prevents him from directly addressing the definition of intrinsic subjectivity. My paper will show how this problem emerges in two different contexts. First, I will show how Frankish’s theory of illusionism faces against Philip Goff’s “real acquaintance hypothesis” and panpsychism, wherein the property of intrinsic subjectivity plays a central role. Second, to further drive the point that qualia’s property of intrinsic subjectivity is irreconcilable for illusionism, I will be re-imagining Wittgenstein’s famous “private language” thought experiment from a modern perspective. Lastly, I will present and respond to a potential counterclaim by Frankish, in which he defends his treatment of qualia realism for being compatible with David Chalmers’ meta-problem.

Qualia & the Meta-Problem

A discussion about qualia in the 21st-century seems to always begin with reference to Chalmers’ seminal hard problem—how philosophy can account for conscious experience if our scientific understanding of the functional, dynamical, and structural properties of the brain cannot? (Chalmers 1995, 200). Chalmers’ critics note that his phrasing of the hard problem is misleading because he relies on the a priori stipulation that brain processes and conscious experiences are ontologically distinct. As a result, Chalmers problematically dismisses the sizable literature arguing that our gaps in theories of consciousness will be overcome through advancements in neuroscientific research (Schier & Carruthers 2017). With respect to that hypothesis, many anti-qualia realists prefer the qualia-neutral perspective

Chalmers adopts in the phrasing of his meta-problem: “why do we ‘feel’ that qualia exist?” Unlike the hard problem, the meta-problem does not insinuate that qualia properties must necessarily exist in order to address the discrepancy between our scientific understanding of brain processes and our conscious experiences. At the same time, Chalmers’ meta-problem maintains that qualia realist arguments—such as the introspective claim that qualia exist—must be reckoned with in any theory of consciousness. To the advantage of both qualia realists/anti-realists alike, embarking on the meta-problem will either: (a) shed light on how to navigate the hard problem, or (b) illuminate an avenue for a neurophysiological explanation that thoughtfully addresses qualia realist concerns (Chalmers 2018).

Qualia & Intrinsic Subjectivity

According to Chalmers, anti-qualia realism’s response to the meta-problem requires a robust explanation for qualia realists’ long-held intuitions. My paper will zero in on Chalmers’ metaphysical intuition that consciousness is intrinsic to an individual’s subjective experience (Chalmers 2018). According to Chalmers, the metaphysical intuition is indebted to René Descartes’ argument that I can doubt all the external relationships in the physical world, but I cannot doubt the fact that I am conscious. Therefore, the datum I can be most certain of is the fact that I am conscious (Descartes 1641).

We can see Descartes’ legacy in contemporary theories claiming that qualia are “intrinsically subjective.” To claim a property is “intrinsic” means that its existence can be grasped independently from all other extrinsic properties. Attributing the feature of “intrinsic” to subjective qualia properties implies that qualia must necessarily be grasped by the subject directly via first-hand experience (Langton & Lewis 1998). Qualia theories of this kind draw upon Bertrand Russell’s insight into the limitations of the material sciences—which are restricted to structural-functional explanations—for its inability to explain intrinsic natures (Russell 1927). Inspired by Russell’s views, Chalmers states, “the problem [referring to the hard problem] is hard precisely because it is not a problem about the performance of functions (Chalmers 1995). The problem persists even when the performance of all relevant functions are explained.” Positing that “qualia are intrinsic” resolves Chalmers’ hard problem that our structural-functional brain

processes fail to account for subjective experience since qualia serve the role as a “missing puzzle piece” that is non-structural-functional. Simultaneously, the qualia-as-intrinsic hypothesis addresses Russel’s concern that structural-functional relationships as described in the material sciences cannot account for intrinsic natures.

The qualia-as-intrinsic hypothesis may lead to two distinct ontologies: a branch of Russellian monism claiming that qualia are the only intrinsic properties of substances; a branch of Cartesian dualism postulating that physical substances have non-experiential intrinsic properties of which we may have no knowledge, alongside experiential intrinsic properties of which we can be certain of (i.e., one’s conscious experience) (Menon & Siddarth 2017). The qualia realist perspectives discussed in this paper opt for the first.

The Illusionist Position

Frankish’s theory of “illusionism” agrees with Chalmers’ claim that anti-qualia realists must provide a neuroscientific explanation for why qualia theories are so pervasive. The important difference is that illusionism insists that qualia properties are not “real” in an ontological sense of the term (Frankish 2016, 14). The illusionist approach is motivated by the success of third-person empiricism in dissolving our fallacious convictions about the natural world. When using the term “third-person,” I am referring to neurophysiological explanations that analyze qualia from a perspective that is external to the subject of experience. Looking back at the history of science, there is a strong case to be made for conducting science from a third-person perspective. Most notably, the shift from first-person empirical methodology, such as Aristotle’s Ptolemaic worldview, is what allowed invaluable paradigm shifts as Galileo’s Heliocentric worldview (Goff 2020).

In the following analogy, I will bolster Frankish’s conviction that adopting a third-person perspective when investigating qualia is advantageous. Now, imagine that you are looking out towards the horizon of the desert. In the far distance, you believe that you see a pool of water. Perhaps to your surprise, a physicist comes along and explains to you how your eyes are actually fooling you. They explain how when sunlight passes through two layers of air with distinct temperatures, the two air masses collide and appear like a mirror. Thus, the supposed

“lake” is actually a reflection of the sky above. This fascinating optical illusion is called “mirage” and is essentially analogous to how illusionists hypothesize about qualia. Because we are so radically misled by our immediate, perceptual representations of the natural world, how are we to be certain about our first-person intuitions about qualia-as-intrinsic? Frankish doubts the epistemic reliability of qualia impressions, like how Descartes considered that an “evil demon” could be deceiving his impressions of the external world. Thus, Frankish proposes that theories of consciousness should be informed by neuroscience, such that our theories of consciousness are no longer “radically at odds with that of the physical sciences” (Frankish 2016, 24).

The Panpsychist Challenge

My first criticism is that illusionism’s reliance on third-person empiricism does not adequately address the qualia realist belief that subjects of experience have inherent access to the nature of qualia. To provide a concrete example of the impenetrability of the qualia realist’s argument, I will be examining a qualia theory posed by Philip Goff, a contemporary qualia realist.

According to Goff’s “real acquaintance hypothesis,” individuals have direct, epistemic access to the intrinsic nature of qualia in virtue of “being” in an experiential state (Goff 2015, 3). For instance, Goff believes that one cannot be in the state of pain and not have epistemic access to the essence of pain. Therefore, the experience of pain is the essential property of pain and constitutes the “real definition” of pain. In Goff’s real acquaintance hypothesis, we see the influence of Descartes’ argument that one can doubt the external referent of experience—such as the neurophysiological basis of the pain experience—but we cannot doubt that we are having a conscious experience (Menon & Siddarth 2017, 411). In the same way, Goff claims that simply being in an experiential state of pain allows one to grasp the intrinsic nature of that state.

I will be considering ways that Frankish could possibly respond to Goff’s “real acquaintance hypothesis” based on the information he provides (Goff 2015, 3). First, Frankish might be tempted to refute that only subjects with “introspective mechanisms” possess the capacity to have perceptual illusions of qualia (Frankish 2016, 14). In this sense, Frankish’s refutation relies on cases where our perceptual faculties cause misleading misrepresentations of the nature of the world (e.g., the

mirage). The problem is that analyzing a human's capacity for introspection from a cognitive perspective does not reach the heart of Goff's claim about intrinsic subjectivity. Goff argues that consciousness arises simply from "being," allowing for a direct acquaintance to the intrinsic nature of one's subjective experience through simply having that experience. Notably, there is nothing contained in Goff's view that necessitates any particular process involving the brain whatsoever (e.g., the capacity for introspection, mental representations, goal-directed behavior, etc.). Rather, according to Goff's formulation, any "subject"—in a very broad sense of the term—has the capacity for intrinsic subjectivity (Goff 2015, 10). Goff's "real acquaintance" hypothesis puts pressure on illusionism since its prioritization of first-person empiricism is antithetical to Frankish's commitment to third-person empiricism.

Goff's particular perspective on qualia can be broadly categorized under the umbrella term "panpsychism." In brief, panpsychism encompasses a large sum of theories throughout the history of philosophy. Pansychist views profess that consciousness is fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world. The most contentious element of panpsychism is the claim that inanimate objects are conscious. Panpsychists will go as far as claiming "thermostats are conscious," an assertion that challenges how we colloquially use the term "conscious" in association with human cognition (Chalmers 1995). I will omit a detailed history of panpsychism because it is irrelevant to my following point about illusionism's inability to adequately address panpsychism's principles according to the merit of its' own methodology.

Although Frankish's addressment of panpsychism is brief, I argue that it shows an important way that illusionism fails to sufficiently address the essential components of qualia directly. Frankish simply claims that the neuroscientist's inability to vindicate their assertions—such as thermostats having conscious experience—is justification for accusing them of fabricating a "fiction" (Frankish 2016, 32). Here, Frankish's justification is problematic because it is antithetical to his anti-first-person intuitional approach. Supposedly, the key advantage of relying upon third-person neuroscientific explanations is to overcome the fact that our introspectively derived impressions about our conscious experiences are systematically misleading. After all, Frankish's argument relies

heavily on the assertion that our attitudes towards theories of consciousness cannot rest on superficial attitudes about what theories of consciousness ought to be like. Instead, we ought to be persuaded by the theory that is the most “rationally compelling” (Frankish 2016, 37). With respect to that rationale, it is hypocritical for the illusionist to fight the panpsychist intuition by merely retorting their own intuition that anti-qualia realism can rely on advancements in neuroscience. The hypocrisy lies in the fact that, instead of relying on his methodology to dismantle “intrinsic subjectivity” as a cognitive illusion, Frankish seems to merely protest that intrinsic subjectivity is not a conveniently discernable concept for the purpose of neuroscientific research.

According to my analysis, the qualia realist who holds intrinsic subjectivity would have the upper hand against Frankish in the panpsychist debate. When the qualia realist claims “intrinsically subjective,” they are not only making a case about the ontology of qualia, but they are also simultaneously designating the constraints on how philosophy can accommodate qualia in a scientific worldview. From that perspective, de-bunking qualia realism is not a matter of acquiring a more detailed understanding of cognitive mechanisms, as Frankish would hope (Frankish 2016, 37). Adhering to the definition of “intrinsically subjective,” a qualia realist would say that even if a neuroscientist were to provide the most complete, neurophysiological explanation of our conscious experience, they would be failing to grasp his point about that conscious experience is necessarily grasped by the subject’s first-person experience, and not by any other means (Goff 2017, 7). To that extent, Frankish’s hands are tied, unless he is able to provide a neuroscientific account about why panpsychists are being systematically deceived about their beliefs that thermostats are conscious.

I argue that even if Frankish attempted to directly address the component of intrinsic subjectivity, his proposed explanation would fail to be compelling compared to the panpsychist. Recall, for illusionism to prevail against qualia realism, the anti-qualia realist must explain why our conscious experiences seem to have an additional quality that feels to be “intrinsically subjective” but is actually an illusion. Frankish generally addresses the challenge of explaining our perception of qualia in neuroscientific terms as the “illusion problem.”

When speaking of the illusion problem, Frankish provides a general schema for how philosophy can interpret the qualia realist's claims about the nature of conscious experience. When the qualia realist insists upon the ontological distinctiveness of consciousness, Frankish insists they are deceived by systematic illusions caused by their perceptual faculties. He uses the term "quasi-phenomenal property" as a place-holder term for the cognitive process underpinning the qualia realist's beliefs about qualia (Frankish 2016, 16). For example, when qualia realists claim that their visual experience of red has the property of "phenomenal redness," the illusionist says that physical quasi-phenomenal properties "trigger" introspective representations of phenomenal redness. In other words, the qualia realist's perception of phenomenal redness is an illusory perception that subsists on top of their perceptual visual experience of red.

What is significant is that Frankish's construal does not consist of showing how quasi-phenomenal properties are real. Rather, Frankish merely posits that when the qualia realist claims that they have "direct access" to the nature of qualia, they have no way of knowing that what they are referring to is a quasi-phenomenal property. Essentially, Frankish's accusation can be summarized in the following question: how would the qualia realist know the difference between a phenomenal property (i.e., qualia) or a quasi-phenomenal property if they are cast under an illusion? (Frankish 2016, 9-20).

I agree with Frankish's accusation that the anti-qualia realist would not be able to tell the difference if a quasi-phenomenal property is triggering their beliefs about qualia rather than a phenomenal property. However, that same logic can be used against illusionism as well, as Frankish himself cannot prove that quasi-phenomenal properties are causing systematic illusions about qualia. To that extent, the qualia realist's argument that actual qualia are what cause beliefs about qualia are relatively more parsimonious. In comparison, the illusionist would have to make concessions to explain why our cognitive mechanisms cause us to have systematic illusions about non-existent qualia. Frankish makes no concrete attempt to address this problem of why we would have systematic illusions about the nature of our conscious experience.

The Private Language Conflict

In my preceding argument, I showed that Frankish does not

provide a compelling case that qualia's constitutive property of intrinsic subjectivity can be explained as a cognitive illusion. In order to close the case that Frankish could not in fact pin-down intrinsic subjectivity on any other account, I will be re-imagining Ludwig Wittgenstein's infamous "private language" thought experiment (Wittgenstein 1953, §244-§271). My purpose in this endeavor is to provide a convincing case that Frankish cannot simply rely on advancements in neuroscience to provide a coherent neuroscientific explanation of qualia's intrinsic subjectivity as an illusion.

With reference to the "private language" thought experiment, let us imagine that a neuroscientist enters a room full of philosophers, each holding a box that cannot be opened. In order to make some sense of the situation, the philosophers agree on the assertion, "there is something called a 'beetle' inside of my box." As the neuroscientist is a staunch adherent to third-person empiricism—over and above all—she believes that the philosophers cannot prove that there are "beetles" inside of any of their boxes. After reading Frankish, her game-plan is to discover the complex array of neural correlates that underpin the philosopher's "beetle" illusion. Her trusted tool is the fMRI machine, as hopefully, that will allow her to map the philosopher's first-hand reports about "beetles" onto their brain activity. Assuming she succeeds in finding these neural correlates, perhaps then the philosophers will concede that their "beetle" is nothing more than a complex array of neural firings.

Unfortunately for the neuroscientist, her enterprise is precluded by the philosophers' definition of what beetles are. As she attempts to analyze the neural correlates of the philosopher's belief propositions, the content of the philosopher's first-hand reports proclaims that she cannot possibly see what lies inside the various boxes. Specifically, her problem is that the philosophers have agreed this concept is "intrinsically subjective"—analogous to how philosophers conceive of qualia as exclusively accessible to the subject of experience. What exactly can the neuroscientist find the neural correlates of then? The challenge for the neuroscientist is that her only vehicle of explanation is the fMRI machine, but that does not equip her with the capacity to make a philosophical argument that third-person empiricism should be trusted over and above the philosopher's claims. If her research program is under the supervision of Frankish, then her mode of explanation

is restricted within the bounds of what neural correlates can explain.

Of course, many philosophers have given strong theoretical arguments against the beetle-in-the-box dilemma that support Frankish's convictions, but they do not rely on specific neuroscientific evidence whatsoever. Most infamously, the anti-qualia realist, Daniel Dennett, claims the beetle-in-the-box problem justifies canceling the "language game" altogether. Specifically, Dennett proclaims that qualia—like the beetle—has derived its meaning based on how it has been constructed via philosophical argumentation (Dennett 1998, 4). His interpretation scathingly undermines qualia's "intrinsic" quality because language is inherently relational (i.e., extrinsic). On this basis, we can eliminate this concept from our ontology because we have no objective, third-person proof that qualia exist.

Unlike Dennett, Frankish does not outright dismiss the qualia realist's feeling of qualia's intrinsic subjectivity. He claims that, despite qualia not being "real," our intuitions about qualia substantially reflect how our cognitive mechanisms evaluate conscious experience (Frankish 2016, 15). When confronting Chalmers's meta-problem, Frankish believes that the anti-qualia realist must explain why the qualia realist holds the principle of intrinsic subjectivity from a neurophysiological perspective. Frankish is determined to confront such qualia concerns because, quite obviously, Dennett's dismissal thirty years prior was unsatisfying for the qualia realists. In fact, philosophers continually re-imagine thought experiments like the "beetle-in-the-box" as a justification to push qualia realism more aggressively. They might consider, "if public language is extrinsic and relational, then how will I ever determine if what I refer to as a "beetle" is the same as yours?" According to qualia realists, questions about intersubjective experience are important and worth pursuing. Yet if the qualia realist claims the subject's privileged access to their own qualia ultimately bears the truth of the matter, then the neuroscientist is blocked from offering further insight.

Illusionism & The Meta-Problem

Although I maintain that illusionism fails to address qualia's constitutive component of intrinsic subjectivity, there is an advantage to Frankish's willingness to accept qualia's

constitutive features in his argument. Particularly, when facing Chalmers' meta-problem, illusionism seems like the most agreeable anti-qualia realist position. Unlike Dennett who dismisses the epistemic reliability of the qualia realists' claims, illusionism thoughtfully considers the constitutive features of qualia as described by the qualia realist. Frankish achieves this common ground by willfully accepting the core arguments like Chalmers' metaphysical intuition. Returning to my mirage analogy, Frankish does not simply tell the person standing in the desert: "you do not actually see a lake in front of you because your experience does not exist as such." Instead, Frankish argues that there ought to be a robust, causal explanation that does justice to the verisimilitude of the subject's conscious experience of the mirage.

Since Frankish conveys a non-dismissive attitude towards qualia realism beliefs (e.g., qualia are irreducible), Chalmers says that he would identify as an illusionist if he was forced to pick another position (Chalmers 2018, 8). Appealing to qualia realists is integral because, quite obviously, they are the ones who need convincing. To be clear, I am not implying that Chalmers is the righteous authority who gets to make the final call about which solution to the meta-problem is ultimately "right." Rather, I am identifying a key explanatory advantage of illusionism in its ability to advance the discussion by agreeing with the qualia realist's definition. In this sense, Frankish could refute my argument by claiming that it is unsatisfactory for anti-qualia realists to dismiss the qualia realist's reports about what their conscious experience feels like at face value. Frankish voices this motivation in his response to his fellow anti-qualia realists (e.g., Nicholas Humphrey, Peter Mandik)—as he argues that anti-qualia realists present an "inclusive attitude" towards the qualia realist's claims about the nature of conscious experience (Frankish 2016, 16).

In response, I argue that Frankish's "inclusive attitude" is also his greatest shortcoming, as he is unable to explain how his methodology can penetrate the concept of intrinsic subjectivity. Frankish's whole theory of illusionism is based on the premise that neuroscience may eventually explain our beliefs about conscious experience (Frankish 2016, 16). Since Frankish does not have a neuroscientific explanation for why qualia realists believe that qualia are intrinsically subjective, he must rely on his intuition that qualia are not causing these beliefs. To that

extent, his response is equally as unscientific and unfounded in third-person empirical evidence as the qualia realist position that he criticizes. In other words, Frankish's own perspective on qualia-as-intrinsic is not substantiated by the neuroscientific explanations which he holds as the golden standard for theories of consciousness.

Conclusion

In summary, I argue that Frankish's theory of illusionism is ill-equipped for dismantling intrinsic subjectivity as a constitutive component of qualia. First, I explained the history of the qualia realism debate and why Frankish is compelled to confront Chalmers's metaphysical intuition that qualia are intrinsically subjective. I argued that Frankish's illusionist methodology fails to properly address qualia's component of intrinsic subjectivity in two different contexts: Goff's theory of panpsychism, a theory of consciousness that holds intrinsic subjectivity as a core feature, and my re-imagining of Wittgenstein's "private language" thought experiment.

Ultimately, Frankish's fatal error is his willingness to accept whatever qualia intuitions are thrown upon him and to merely rely on advancements in neuroscience to address them. The tragic fate for anti-qualia realism is that advancements in neuroscience may eventually provide substantive explanations for every other constitutive feature of qualia (e.g., ineffability, irreducibility). Nevertheless, the illusionist's explanation for intrinsic subjectivity will always seem like it is missing the point of what "intrinsic subjectivity" truly means.

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The Axiology of Panpsychism

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to argue that panpsychism entails the value of everything. The argument is supported through an axiological analysis of the value of consciousness demonstrating that consciousness is intrinsically valuable. Moreover, if consciousness is intrinsically valuable then it follows that any entity with consciousness must then be intrinsically valuable in virtue of possessing it. Thus, under the posit of panpsychism (i.e., consciousness is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of nature), all of nature must be valuable. In this paper, arguments for and against the value of consciousness are considered, outlined, and discussed. From there, an axiology of panpsychism is argued for wherein the most primitive entities to the most sophisticated systems are valuable. Finally, some implications and prescriptions are considered.

1 Introduction

The intuition that the cosmos is intrinsically and wholly valuable is deeply entrenched in much of how we describe our everyday observations about the world. For instance, when we marvel at the intricacies and peculiarities of fundamental particle physics, or are captivated by large-scale planetary motion, the valuable aspects of nature appear pervasive. The symmetry and order of the cosmos, which appears beautiful to us, makes it difficult to withhold the conviction that it is intrinsically beautiful, and hence valuable. Nevertheless, there is no consensus as to whether or not this intuition is consistent with reality. I aim to address this by using theories of panpsychism as the foundation from which to build an axiological model of our world.

At the outset of this paper, to lay the groundwork for an axiology of panpsychism, we must first understand three of its central aspects. First, panpsychism is the thesis that consciousness is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of reality (Seager, 2020). Second, axiology is a broad discipline of inquiry that investigates values; their nature, variety, and interrelationships (Drob, 2011). Third, consciousness, which

is commonly defined as “the subjective quality of experience” (Chalmers, 2007). When combined, the axioms upholding theories of panpsychism and theories of consciousness have powerful implications for either a value-laden or value-less axiology, contingent on whether or not consciousness itself is valuable. While a variety of literature has argued that consciousness is not only valuable, but intrinsically valuable (Siewert, 1998; Kriegel, 2019; Seager, 2001), others have argued that consciousness is less valuable than we think, or potentially value-neutral (or value-absent) (Lee, 2018; Levy, 2014; Kahane and Savulescu, 2009). Hence, if the value-laden theorists are correct, this suggests that, under the thesis of panpsychism, the cosmos itself must be value-laden. However, if the value-less theorists are correct, then the reverse would hold.

In considering the positions, I argue that the contentions against the intrinsic value of consciousness do not carry weight when framed correctly. I aim to demonstrate that consciousness is not only valuable but intrinsically valuable. Using the paradigm of the panpsychist, the intrinsically valuable nature of consciousness entails the intrinsic value of all entities.

In defending my view, I first examine reasons to believe that consciousness is or is not valuable. Here, I differentiate phenomenal consciousness (i.e., “there is something that it is like” to have that subjective experience) (Nagel, 1974) in particular, from access consciousness (i.e., the ability to access cognitive events such as memories or skills) (Block, 1995). The argument I forward for the value of consciousness is directed at phenomenal consciousness in particular although access consciousness can give us some insight into the axiological significance of consciousness. Second, I lay out the arguments against the intrinsically valuable nature of consciousness and refute them in turn by suggesting that they misunderstand the role of phenomenal consciousness in the world. I will also be differentiating intrinsic value (i.e., good ‘in and of itself’) from instrumental value (i.e., good ‘as a function of what it can do’) (Schroeder, 2016).

Ultimately, using the foundation of my prior conclusions, I describe the relationship between the value of consciousness and the axiology of panpsychism. Here, I outline how theories of panpsychism have developed over the years, why they have been posited, and if they can be made consistent with other

modern theories of consciousness. Last, I will extrapolate how the intrinsically valuable nature of consciousness would fit into our picture of reality via the application of a panpsychist paradigm, extending to a ubiquitously valuable picture of nature itself.

2 Axiology and Phenomenal Consciousness

2.1 Value: Intrinsic and Instrumental

Value entails evaluative properties such as “goodness, badness, having such-and-such amount of utility, having so-and-so degree of well-being, the better-than relation, and so forth” (Cutter, 2017). Axiology, the study of value, comprises three main branches—epistemic, aesthetic, and moral value—and questions associated with the relationship between these branches and the aforementioned evaluative properties. Finally, value can either be intrinsic or instrumental.

Intrinsic value defines something as valuable, “in its own right” (Zimmerman & Bradley, 2019). That is, something that is intrinsically good is “non-derivatively good” (Zimmerman & Bradley, 2019) in that the goodness of the thing is grounded in itself—therefore, its goodness is reflexive. It differs from instrumental value in that if something is instrumentally good, its goodness is derivative i.e., its goodness is grounded in something other than itself.

To clarify, let us consider a potentially ambiguous value discussed by Zimmerman and Bradley (2019), namely, ‘health,’ and see whether it is better defined as intrinsically or instrumentally valuable (or both). Let us assume that we think health is intrinsically good, in the way that Zimmerman and Bradley do, what would that mean? Well, it would be something to the effect that health is intrinsically good for the person who possesses it i.e., it seems in the best interest of the person, let’s say “John” to value being healthy (Zimmerman & Bradley, 2019).

While the value of health may be sufficient to explain why someone engages in a behavior, such as exercise, to enhance or protect their health. Health, even in this case, does not necessarily seem to be intrinsically valuable because the supposed intrinsic value of health is completely reliant on instrumental reasons for valuing it i.e., health serves the instrumental purpose of enhancing quality of life.

Suppose both John and Jane have illnesses that cause them to be bed-ridden for weeks. The illness prevents John from traveling to his dream destination; therefore, he evaluates the illness as 'intrinsically bad'. Jane, to the contrary, receives the attention and care that she has always sought as a result of the illness; therefore, Jane evaluates the illness as 'intrinsically good'. The value assigned to health in this example, I argue, is actually derivative in that it is derived from the evaluative perspective of the person making a value judgment. Moreover, health is valuable for John because health is perhaps necessary for him to act on his surroundings, enjoy his life, engage in social activities, and so forth, whereas for Jane lacking health is perhaps necessary to receive attention and care. While in most cases health is evaluated as good, there are exceptions such as Jane's case. Moreover, all of the functions that health facilitates are instrumentally valuable. Thus, health seems to be contingent on something other than the 'state of being healthy' to determine its value. The value of health is contingent on the evaluative perspective of the subject making the value judgment. That is, if health did not have instrumental value or someone to evaluate the value of health, then health would not be valuable because its value is contingent on it serving an external purpose for the subject. Hence, health is instrumentally valuable, not intrinsically valuable.

With these considerations in mind, we are now in a position to ask whether or not consciousness is better characterized as an intrinsic and/or instrumental value and determine if it features the necessary axiological aspects.

2.2 The Axiological Value of Phenomenal Consciousness

The axiological value of access consciousness may seem self-evident i.e., it allows us to use knowledge to benefit our lives, to use moral judgment to build relationships with others, to live good lives, and to feel pleasure through aesthetically appreciating the world around us. With that said, let us consider if phenomenal consciousness features the necessary axiological aspects. That is, is phenomenal consciousness epistemically, aesthetically, or ethically valuable?

One way to envisage whether or not phenomenal consciousness has value is to imagine removing it. A common philosophical way of doing this is through the zombie thought experiment (Siewert, 2002). Imagine yourself duplicated via some kind of

science fiction duplication machine. The person that comes out of the duplicator has all of the same physical attributes, the same abilities, the same psychological makeup, but it is missing one crucial feature, their conscious experience. For example, while asleep, we still have a phenomenally conscious experience in that we can be conscious of dreams, yet your zombie twin would have no such experience. They have fully intact access consciousness e.g., memory retrieval, prediction, etc., but no phenomenal consciousness of the ordinary perceptual content we are accustomed to derived from sensation. To be clear, the qualitative part of any typically sensory experience e.g., appreciation of taste or touch, is part of phenomenal consciousness. Now ask yourself, would you comfortably trade lives with your duplicate? Intuitively, it seems that taking on the life of your so-called zombie twin is akin to non-existence. Why is that? It seems there is something here that makes our phenomenally conscious experience valuable that is separate from its instrumental cognitive functions.

Cutter (2017) argues that consciousness has axiological significance in that “the existence and character of conscious experience in a world (or in one’s life) makes a difference to the overall goodness or badness of the world (or the overall goodness or badness of one’s life)”. Hence, if the phenomenally conscious experience makes a difference to the goodness or badness of the world, then it follows that consciousness plays some role in determining the axiological significance of any given feature of the world.

2.3 Objection to the Value of Consciousness and Reply **One objection to this line of argumentation is made by Levy (2014),**

“My zombie twin has a point of view. He sees the world from a particular perspective, in an attitude-infused way. Indeed, his idiosyncratic take on things is identical to mine...he is inclined to say that he values these things, and I am inclined to agree with him”.

To respond, I grant that the zombie twin has ‘a point of view’ in that they can interface with their environment. However, that point of view is not phenomenally conscious and therefore is not ‘attitude-infused’ which is necessary for my zombie twin to

value things.

On the evaluative-attitudinal account of desire and will, “goodness shows up as an aspect of the desire’s attitude, of how the desire presents what it does, rather than as an aspect of its content, of what the desire presents” (Kriegel, 2018). For instance, when observed, my zombie twin and I seem to desire chocolate because we ask for chocolate. However, the difference is that my zombie twin has a belief that chocolate’s goodness ‘presents as true’ whereas to me, chocolate merely ‘presents as good’ as a result of my attitude towards chocolate (Kriegel, 2018). Therefore, my desire for chocolate reflects my implicit attitude towards it, where their desire reflects their beliefs about it. My attitude is a phenomenal feature of my conscious experience where my beliefs are a cognitive feature. Another way to think of this is that my attitude toward the chocolate is ‘full’ whereas my zombie twin’s attitude toward the chocolate is ‘empty’ because my zombie twin has no presentation or justification for how the chocolate tastes.

If you understand ‘a zombie twin’ the way Levy construes, you might as well be reflecting on what it would be like to have an actual twin or a replica. To be clear, a zombie twin, hypothetically, would only be able to act on stimulus inputs from the external world and respond with the requisite behavioral output, analogous to a super-sophisticated automaton, via its access conscious experience. While the zombie twin would make decisions identical to your own, it is on the basis of cognitive representations—it is not consciously aware of its decisions in the traditional, phenomenal sense. Hence, there would be “nothing it is like” to be your zombie twin.

3 The Intrinsic Value of Consciousness

3.1 Phenomenal Consciousness and Intrinsic Moral, Epistemic, and Aesthetic Values

In this section, I will discuss arguments supporting the intrinsic moral, epistemic, and aesthetic value of consciousness. To begin with, Siewert (1998) argues that the zombie thought experiment demonstrates that not only do we intrinsically value our own phenomenally rich sensory and cognitive lives, we also value others’ possession of phenomenal consciousness (Siewert, 1998). That is, consider the following thought experiment where you have one of three choices: (1) Others having the phenomenally

rich conscious life we expect and hope them to have with all of the phenomenal properties we normally experience such as color, emotion, and pleasure; (2) Their zombified existence with all the access, or non-phenomenal benefits such as planning and calculating; or (3) Their being destroyed and replaced by a zombie twin. He argues that if you view persons as irreplaceable, as a function of them being phenomenally conscious, then there is a way in which we “regard phenomenal consciousness as essential to personhood” (Siewert, 1998) or as I am construing it, ‘personal identity’ or ‘subjectivity.’ Moreover, on some moral accounts, personhood (i.e., personal identity) is required for moral value. So, the argument is as follows,

P1: Phenomenal consciousness is a necessary condition of personhood

P2: Personhood is a sufficient condition for intrinsic moral value

P3: If personhood is intrinsically morally valuable, then some property of personhood gives it intrinsic moral value

Using abduction,

C: Phenomenal consciousness gives personhood intrinsic moral value

To highlight the moral intrinsic value of consciousness, Kantian Deontology situates personhood at the center of moral consideration because persons are able to ‘set their own ends’ i.e., they can have interests that are important to them. In having interests, persons can set ends for themselves which gives them dignity (i.e., inherent, inalienable rights) (Kant, GM, 4:429). Hence, dignity presupposes personhood and personhood presupposes phenomenal consciousness. Kriegel (2020) argues that the ground of dignity is precisely phenomenal consciousness.. I argue, adding onto Siewert and Kriegel, our understanding of personhood, dignity, and phenomenal consciousness indicate that they are all inextricable. Thus, Kriegel states, “on the emerging view, an entity exacts respect and merits treatment as an end just if it is a phenomenally conscious creature”. Concisely, any entity with

phenomenal consciousness has moral value.

Next, the epistemic intrinsic value of consciousness is argued by Bourget (2017) where he puts forward his phenomenal theory of epistemic grasping. To define, the theory argues: "To occurrently grasp P is to have a phenomenal experience with P as content" (Bourget, 2017). Our phenomenal experience allows us to 'grasp' the content of a proposition. That is when we are given the proposition, 'the sun is 1,300,000 times bigger than the Earth,' we grasp Q and not P. To grasp the P of the proposition, we need the help of a representative model such as an apple seed vs. basketball (Bourget, 2017). Therefore, grasping is one way in which consciousness is intrinsically epistemically valuable because it gives the subject "presentational phenomenology whereby the subject seems to be aware of the truth-maker of P" (Kriegel, 2020). To illustrate, your zombie twin cannot experience 'grasping' due to their lack of phenomenal consciousness, hence any assertion that they 'grasped' the proposition 'the sun is 1,300,000 times bigger than the Earth' would be false.

Last, the aesthetic intrinsic value of consciousness, Kriegel argues, can be arrived at through contemplation of the "so-called explanatory gap between phenomenal consciousness and the rest of the natural order, a certain intellectual type of awe descends on us" (Kriegel, 2020) akin to the experience of the sublime. Hence, if in contemplating its own nature, consciousness induces awe, and "being a fitting object of awe is the mark of the sublime" (Kriegel, 2020), then consciousness is intrinsically aesthetically valuable.

3.2 Criticisms of the Intrinsic Value of Consciousness and Responses

3.2.1 The Argument from Moral Responsibility

To begin, let's consider the argument of two opponents of the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness, Savulescu and Kahane (2009). They argue the following with respect to individuals experiencing a locked-in state,

"The totally locked-in brain-damaged patients we are now considering have no capacity for communication, no external agency, and at most only limited (and completely passive) perceptual input... Their lives have gone very badly since entering this state and

if it continues unaltered, may go on being very bad. It is far from obvious that such lives are still worth living. If so, then even if using fMRI we can establish that brain-damaged patients still enjoy phenomenal consciousness...terminating these patients' lives might be morally required, not merely permissible."

Savulescu and Kahane (2009) refer to access consciousness as sapience i.e., the degree to which we as humans can behave / act on our desires and will. While it may be true that patients experiencing locked-in syndrome would prefer to end their life rather than to continue their phenomenally conscious experience due to a lack of sapience, in some cases, it may be morally required to terminate their life as a way to alleviate their suffering. This demonstrates a case where consciousness has lost its instrumental value, not its intrinsic value. That is, in cases such as these, the instrumental value of a conscious agency is made null by the locked-in state.

Moreover, the state could demonstrate too intense a burden to continue living as a result. However, this line of argumentation does not demonstrate that phenomenal consciousness is not valuable since being in a locked-in state diminishes the instrumental value of consciousness, not its intrinsic value. Consciousness's intrinsic value lies in its ability to ground the value of other things (including, I argue, itself), positively or negatively. Insofar as the locked-in patient is conscious, they can still ground the value of pleasant or unpleasant music, for example. In other words, if phenomenal consciousness did not ground value, then I would be indifferent to my condition (in the locked-in state) altogether.

Additionally, it is important here to accurately characterize the experience of locked-in patients. Damasio (2000) during clinical research asked patients subsequent to coming out of the state to report on their experience. The majority of locked-in patients described the state as "tranquil or calm" (Damasio, 2000). On the negative end, an autobiography written by a locked-in patient during the state using only eyeblinks indicated that the state caused them to experience a plethora of emotions ranging from sadness to disappointment to frustration (Bauby 1997) but never expressed suicidal sentiments.

3.2.2 The Argument from ‘The Philosophers Hell’

Kriegel (2019) states that if we consider hedonism the central moral account, “we only need to add that pleasure and pain contribute to well-being in virtue of their phenomenology to obtain intrinsic prudential value for phenomenal consciousness”. From here, a criticism is put forward by Lee (2018) which relies on hedonic valence. He states “when the philosopher in Hell thinks about the axiology of consciousness, they might be drawn towards neither the positive view nor the neutral view, but instead the negative view, according to which consciousness is intrinsically dis-valuable”.

One contention is that pain is instrumentally valuable in giving us information about the world but is intrinsically dis-valuable since its hedonic value is negative. Here, I hold that the phenomenally conscious experience of pain can either be instrumentally valuable or dis-valuable, depending on the epistemic value it confers and our ability to act on that epistemic information. That is, if the pain is informative, then it is instrumental. If pain is uninformative, then it is not instrumental. Nevertheless, in both cases, the phenomenally conscious experience of pain retains its intrinsic epistemic value and its intrinsic moral value even if it loses its intrinsic aesthetic value. That is, we still ‘know something about the world’ and we still ‘know something about the difference between right and wrong’ in virtue of the experience even if there is nothing intrinsically aesthetically valuable, or pleasurable about being phenomenally conscious in hell. Importantly, I grant that the displeasure combined with the lack of instrumentality may make it preferable to be unconscious than conscious in hell. So, I agree with Kriegel that hedonic valence, while important to value, is not its sole determinate.

4 An Axiological Model of Panpsychism

4.1 Historic and Contemporary Theories of Panpsychism

Panpsychism’s origins begin in a prehistoric animist (i.e., all objects have spirit) worldview. However, from that origin, panpsychism can be found in the traditions of Greek philosophers (e.g., Aristotle argued “all existing things...seek [their] own special good...” (Skrbina, 2005)) and onwards to modern conceptions (Skrbina, 2005). I argue the depiction of panpsychism as ‘occurring through the ages’ adds credence to the impact of panpsychism on modern thinking.

To demonstrate, intermediate to ancient and modern philosophy, Cavendish, a 17th Century renaissance philosopher, argued for an ontology nearly indistinguishable from that of most modern panpsychists. In her *Observations*, she argues that ubiquitous reason is necessary to explain the variety and orderliness of the natural world. That is, she argues “I believe there is sense and reason and rational knowledge, not only in all creatures but in every part of every particular creature”. Hence, she argues “all parts of Nature, even the inanimate, have an innate and [fixed] self-knowledge, [and] it is probable that they may also have an interior self-knowledge (Cavendish, 1655/1991)” (Skrbina, 2005). Thus, the Reason that Cavendish attributes pervasively throughout nature is that which animates and organizes it. I argue that if we presuppose panpsychism, nature’s basic Reason as attributed by Cavendish is akin to its fundamental conscious property.

Goff, a current-day proponent of panpsychism argues that the view’s plausibility lies in its ability to solve two distinct modern philosophical problems i.e., the hard problem of consciousness (‘how can the firing of neurons give rise to qualitative experience e.g., color?’) and the problem of the intrinsic nature of matter (‘what explains the intrinsic nature of fundamental particles?’) (Barrientos, 2021).

Goff argues that panpsychism has determinate answers to both of these problems. In response to the first problem, he argues that our brains and conscious states emerge together as a result of combinations of billions of basic conscious particles assembled in the right way (Goff 2017) due to the dispositions of the particles to organize in that particular way. Furthermore, he argues that panpsychism can explain brains as consciousness manifested i.e., the brain as a consciousness producing physical piece of matter is the way that it is because of the organizing dispositions that the more fundamental parts or particles have. Moreover, he argues that this is the explanation that best fits the criteria of Occam’s razor because it adheres parsimoniously with our scientific narrative of how the world works. That is, in response to the second problem of the intrinsic nature of matter, Goff states,

“...the only thing we know about the intrinsic nature of matter is that some of it— the stuff in brains— involves experience...we either suppose that the intrinsic nature

of fundamental particles involves experience, or we suppose that they have some entirely unknown intrinsic nature... On the former supposition, the nature of macroscopic things is continuous with the nature of microscopic things. The latter supposition leads us to complexity, discontinuity, and mystery. The theoretical imperative to form as simple and unified a view as is consistent with the data leads us quite straightforwardly in the direction of panpsychism" (Aeon, 2019)

Parsimony leads us to an interpretation of nature that has consciousness as a fundamental feature of matter since at least some matter, namely brains, have consciousness. If that is the case, we need some explanation for how that occurs. Panpsychism, I argue, provides a plausible and parsimonious explanation for the existence of consciousness.

4.2 Objections to Panpsychism and Solutions

Contemporary objections to Panpsychism are typically depicted by the following series of retorts i.e., it's 'contrary to common-sense', 'how do basic conscious 'simples' combine to create complex consciousness?', and 'what a 'conscious subject is' is arbitrary'. Here, I will discuss these objections and outline some responses.

The argument against common-sense states that it is counter-intuitive to attribute consciousness to things such as rocks and tables. That is, Goff (2019) writes, "common sense tells us that only living things have an inner life...panpsychists deny this datum of common sense. According to panpsychism... an electron has an inner life". To many, this provides a strong reason to deny panpsychism. However, Goff responds that common sense has often led us astray. For example, other common-sense theories have been proven incorrect such as the geocentric model of the universe, Newton's theory of gravitation, or naïve set-theory. Additionally, Roelofs (2019) argues that it is possible to reconcile panpsychism with our 'great chain of being' (GCOB) intuitions. That is, we can trust GCOB if we are using it to paraphrase about consciousnesses that are close to ours such as a dog being more like us than an ant, for example. Hence, panpsychism does not discount all of our intuitions about consciousness.

The next problem facing panpsychism is the combination problem. The combination problem asks, how do subatomic particles join together to form consciousness? One solution to this problem is the fusion view forwarded by Mørch (2019) (and by Seager (2010)). Mørch writes that the fusion view of mental combination is “when micro-or proto-conscious entities come together in the right way, they fuse...together to form a single unified consciousness”. Moreover, “the new macro-consciousness thereby replaces the original micro- or proto-consciousness...before fusion, the particles of the brain were each individually realized by their own micro-consciousness, but after fusion, the same particles become jointly realized by a single macro-consciousness instead.”. Hence, the combination problem can be solved by positing fusion conditions for complex consciousness.

Finally, there is the arbitrary conscious subjects’ problem. That is, where do we “draw the line” when attributing consciousness/subjecthood to various entities? Are there micro subjects that form macro subjects? Or is everything conscious in the same way? Well, as noted above, it seems like the fusion solution is able to solve this contention. Nevertheless, another solution ‘Combinationism’ forwarded by Roelofs (2019) argues that, “all elementary particles are associated with incredibly simple experiences, whose structure is no more complex than the structure of those particles’ physical properties”. Hence, at the most foundational level, what exists there can be considered a micro-subject. Similar to the fusion account, the micro-unity hypothesis (MUH) supposes, “...when two subjects are related in the relevant way, their experiences become unified...”. Thus, consciousness becomes more complex as a function of specific combination relations.

To conclude, as quantum science advances and our understanding of what it means for something to be fundamental changes, so too does our conception of what consciousness would look like at that level. For example, emerging theories such as field panpsychism (Horne 2020) aim to account for new developments.

4.3 The Axiology of Panpsychism

The intrinsic value of consciousness and panpsychism, I have argued, entails the value of all beings—from the most fundamental entity whether that be micro entities such as

quarks or fields to macroscopic combinations of those entities such as brains or planets. In this picture, value is pervasive insofar as everything has consciousness as its intrinsic nature, even if that consciousness is not complex, and consciousness has intrinsic value. Given the arguments I have previously forwarded, taken together, they provide an axiology of panpsychism. That is, consciousness is intrinsically valuable in that it has the requisite moral, epistemic, and aesthetic axiological features. Consciousness is morally intrinsically valuable because phenomenal consciousness is the ground of dignity and dignity is intrinsically morally valuable. Consciousness is epistemically intrinsically valuable because it can be a truth-maker for a proposition *P*. Consciousness is aesthetically intrinsically valuable because it can reflexively appreciate the beauty of its own existence as well as the experience of pleasure. Thus, consciousness possesses all the requisite axiological components.

5 Implications and Future Directions

The axiology of panpsychism appears to lead to significant ethical implications regarding our interaction with other entities. In this section, I will only be scratching the surface of these implications since the central aim of this paper was to outline how panpsychism leads to the pervasive value of all entities without merely taking it for granted. That being said, some implications include consequences for Great Chain of Being intuitions, ethical consumption, and potentially existentialism.

With respect to GCOB intuitions, if we accept combinationism or the fusion view of panpsychism, then we can accept that there are gradients to conscious experience because complex consciousness is a result of specific relations between micro conscious parts. If those relations do not obtain, then the conscious parts remain rudimentary. Therefore, we can continue to suppose that rocks are not conscious in the way that animals are conscious, and so forth.

So, Roelofs (2019) states that, “insofar as panpsychism conflicts with the GCOB intuition, it seems to undermine one major rationale for ethical vegetarianism or veganism” which seems altogether an extreme implication. Nevertheless, Roelofs argues that panpsychists may grant moral status to all beings, in the way that I have. He states,

“the moral reasons [against interference] are usually outweighed by those provided by the hedonic, conative, and epistemic experiences of animals. That is, they might say that it is morally better not to kill a plant than to kill one, but that animals need to sustain their richer sort of life justifies killing plants for food.” (Roelofs, 2019)

The sentiment that Roelof forwards here is consistent with my line of argumentation. The axiology of panpsychism does not need to conflict with ethical veganism/vegetarianism because what makes something conscious in increasingly morally important ways is the way in which the fundamental conscious subjects combine and the justification for interference by beings with complex consciousness.

While the previous suggestions seem to not offer any prescriptions for how we ought to engage with the world—I think there are important implications for our relationships with other entities. In accordance with Mathews (2003), “if not only human beings but other self-realizing systems, or selves, including the world-as-a-whole, are understood as subjects rather than as pure objects, then perhaps encounter should be seen as the appropriate mode for relating with the world at large”. Thus, from an existential perspective, cultivating an attitude of accepting and appreciating reality as it is will engender respect and sympathy toward it. Moreover, in traversing our surroundings through encountering, it is not to simply project human qualities into everything (Mathews, 2003), but we ought to see entities as they are and respond to each appropriately as a unique locus of experience.

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Was Meinong Right About Negative Existentials?

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Introduction

This paper explores Quine's solution to the problem of negative existentials. First, Russell's theory of descriptions shall be explained as an original solution to this problem. Next, it will be explained how Quine utilizes Russell's theory and expands it to apply to all singular terms within a language. Finally, it shall be demonstrated that Quine's solution is not a descriptive solution, but a normative solution. As such, to argue against the plausibility of his solution involves disputing his normative methodological considerations. The paper shall conclude by explaining the pros and cons of a modified Quinean solution against the solution he objects to in "On What There Is".

The Problem of Negative Existentials

To understand the problem of negative existentials, one must understand the principles that govern the theories of meaning employed by philosophers like Frege, Russell, and Quine. The problem arises due to an inherent tension among these principles. The first principle is that of compositionality:

[ComP] If two expressions have the same reference, then substitution of one for the other in a third expression does not change its reference¹.

In [ComP], 'expressions' refers to both individual syntactic units like words, as well as complete expressions like sentences. Thus, the substitution of a word *x* in a sentence *S* with an equivalent reference results in no change to the meaning of neither the word nor the sentence. This relies on a further assumption surrounding the foundation of meaning:

[ToM] Meaning consists wholly in the reference of expressions.

If [ToM] is true, then one can derive two further principles:

¹ Zoltán Gendler Szabó, *Problems of Compositionality* (Routledge, 2013), 7.

[ToM-W] The meaning of a word consists in its ontological correlate.

[ToM-S] The meaning of a sentence consists in its truth-value².

From these principles one can derive an absurd conclusion. Consider a sentence of the following form: 'There does not exist an object x.' If, as [ComP] states, the meaning of a sentence is determined by the references of its constituent parts, then the referent of 'x' will provide meaning to the sentence in which it is contained, thus providing the truth-value to the sentence. If no constituents in the sentence have a reference, then the sentence cannot have meaning and (by [ToM-S]) cannot have a truth-value. This is *prima facie* incorrect: a rational agent would not believe that a sentence of this form has no truth-value, let alone has no meaning.

The problem then becomes how one avoids this undesirable absurdity while retaining the principles one deems as intuitively correct for all other cases.

Russell's Solution: The Theory of Descriptions

Russell draws attention to a distinction between grammatical form and logical form. He argues that although it may be the case that a certain expression in a sentence serves as the subject (or singular term) grammatically, it need not be the case that it serves as the subject (or singular term) logically. Russell gives an example of the sentence, 'All men [humans] are mortal'. Grammatically, 'all men' serves as the subject of this sentence; however, to determine the truth-value of this sentence, one must derive its logical form. Thus, he argues the correct logical form is: 'If x is human, then x is mortal'³. Therefore, the subject is no longer 'all men', but is instead the variable x whose domain ranges over all possible objects in the world.

Drawing attention to the distinction between grammatical and logical form, Russell argues that one can dissolve the problem of negative existentials. In such sentences, though an expression may serve grammatically as subject, it does not do so in its logical form. The sentence, 'There does not exist an object x', has

² The justification of this assumption is outside the scope of this paper; however, for justifications, see: Gottlob Frege, "On Concept and Object," in B. McGuinness ed., *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 193.

³ Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting," *Mind* 14, no. 56 (1905): 480.

a logical form that does not treat the object under consideration as the singular term. Suppose the object under consideration is 'Pegasus'. The logical form of the sentence, 'There does not exist a Pegasus', would have the following logical form^{4, 5}:

$$\sim(\exists x)[(Pegasus(x) \wedge (\forall y)(Pegasus(y) \Rightarrow x = y))]$$

Thus, as in the universal quantifier example above, the subject of this sentence is the variable x that ranges over all objects in the domain under consideration (the external world for Russell).

Understanding negative existentials as having this logical form entails that the truth of such a sentence is no longer dependent on the reference of some singular-term 'Pegasus', but rather, upon the existence of some object x that is contained under the concept of 'Pegasus'. Therefore, one can hold the stated principles without deriving the problem of negative existentials.

Quine's Adoption

The analysis posed in the introduction of "How does Quine solve the problem of negative existentials" is, strictly speaking, a nonsensical question. Unlike Russell, Quine seems to reject [ComP]: "[...] truth values seem to attach to singular statement only conditionally upon existence of the named object... there would seem, under ordinary usage, to be no way of adjudicating the truth values of 'Pegasus flies' and '~Pegasus flies'; the nonexistence of Pegasus seems to dispose of the question without answering it."⁶ This position is the same as Gottlob Frege's⁷. Despite (as shall be shown) adopting the Theory of Descriptions and, in a sense, providing a 'solution' to the problem of negative existentials, this is simply an unintended by-product of a larger intent: to advance a normative program of eliminating singular terms from one's language⁸. This normative component will be crucial in the

4 Sentences of this form are called 'definitive descriptions'.

5 It should be noted that, strictly speaking, the usage of 'exist' as a predicate is not possible for Russell's system of philosophy. He proposes the principle of acquaintance to avoid the issues that come with admitting a concept like 'existence'. For simplicity's sake, and because it has no impact on the thesis of this paper, I ignore this issue.

6 Lenny Clapp, Marga Reimer, and Anne Spire, "Negative Existentials," in Jeanette Gundel and Barbara Abbott ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Reference* (Oxford University Press, 2019): 13; W. V. Quine, "Meaning and Inference" in *From a Logical Point of View: Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Harper & Row, 1963), 165.

7 Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Harper & Row, 1973), 185.

8 The normative component of Quine, especially his naturalized epistemology, is acknowledged by himself: W. V. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 19-20; Lenny Clapp, Marga Reimer, and Anne Spire, "Negative Existentials," in Jeanette Gundel and

objection posed to Quine's 'solution' at the end of this paper.

Having acknowledged the nature of Quine's motivations, one can now see that his solution is indirect at best, but that it can be loosely considered a solution with qualifications. A brief historical exposition will serve to provide a clearer picture of Quine's motivations in the elimination of singular terms.
 Quine Against Meinong or Wyman

In "On What There Is," Quine engages with an imagined interlocutor by the name of "Wyman." This interlocutor is meant to represent the thoughts of Meinong, who famously drew a distinction between existing and real objects. Meinong held that, though something may not be 'real', it can still be present within one's conceptual scheme by 'existing'⁹. Thus, though no real object is a 'gold mountain', an object falling under the concepts 'goldenness' and 'mountainhood' still 'exists'. According to Meinong, to reject this is to be "prejudice[d] in favor of the actual."¹⁰ Meinong's motivation in proposing his "jungle" is to provide an ontology that meets the natural intuition that every thought has a corresponding object associated with it¹¹. This also provides a solution to the problem of negative existentials: the 'unreal objects' may not be 'real', but they are still able to be referents of sentences in virtue of their existence in one's ontology.

Quine proposes multiple arguments against this perspective; however, most are ultimately unsuccessful because they beg the question against Meinong. For example, Quine argues that Meinong's jungle entails that there must exist contradictory objects. If every conceivable combination of properties has a corresponding entity (existing or not), then there are naturally logically-contradictory objects: "Can we drive Wyman now to

Barbara Abbott ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Reference* (Oxford University Press, 2019): 13-4.

9 There are, of course, multiple ways to formulate this view. This formulation differs from Quine's in "On What Matters"; however, I believe this formulation is simpler for the paper and it in no way changes Quine's motivations or arguments against the Meinongian view.

10 Terence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects* (Yale University Press, 1980), 18; A. Meinong, "The Theory of Objects," in R. Chisholm ed. *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

11 Though outside the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that this follows from Meinong's adoption of Brentano and Husserl's notion of intentionality: the thoughts in a rational agent's mind have a certain relationship with the external world wherein all thoughts are targeted towards an object. To make sense of this intentionality, there must be some object thought about.

admitting a realm of unactualized possibilities?¹² This might strike Quine as absurd *prima facie*; however, Meinong has no qualms with such a result:

Naturally I cannot in any way evade this consequence: whoever once has dealings with a round square will not be able to stop when faced with a square or some other sort of object which is simultaneously round and not round. But one will also, as far as I can see, have weighty reasons hereupon to take the initiative: the principle of contradiction is to be applied by no one to anything other than to reality and possibility^{13, 14}.

Thus, Quine's objections to Meinong cannot be posed without begging the question against Meinong; the conclusions deemed absurd by Quine are not deemed absurd by Meinong and followers, and Quine gives no reason why such a position is absurd.

Similarly, Quine argues that Wyman's usage of 'exist' is unfair: it merely pushes the problem of negative existentials back a step. Yet, having clearly recognized the distinction between 'exist' and 'real', one can recognize that this does actually solve the problem as properly constructed. Meinong's proposal would only be inadequate if he argued that existing, unreal entities were not capable of functioning as referents to singular terms as stipulated by [ComP]. Yet, as stated, this is not an absurdity for Meinong: the entire motivation of such a broad, rich ontology is to provide such unreal entities the ability to function as the ontological correlates of such singular terms.

As such, these objections against Wyman (Meinong) are ruled question-begging. The primary question then becomes: why prefer Quine's solution to Meinong's?

Quine's Solution

Quine adopts Russell's Theory of Descriptions and broadens its scope. Rather than treating only non-referring singular terms as functioning as definite descriptions, he argues that all singular terms within a language function this way. His reasons

12 W. V. Quine, "On What There Is" in *From a Logical Point of View: Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Harper & Row, 1963), 4.

13 Terence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects* (Yale University Press, 1980), 31.

14 I take for granted this reading is correct. There do exist other interpretations of Meinong that do not entail this conclusion. See: *ibid*.

for doing so rest on methodological principles like economy and Ockham's razor. He wishes to reduce the cardinality of the set of all existing objects in one's ontology¹⁵. By treating all singular terms as definitive descriptions, one no longer needs to hold that all such terms have a unique ontological correlation that exists in the world. This would greatly reduce the number of entities contained within an ontological framework.

Quine's Solution vs. Meinong's Solution

Having established that Quine's objections are inadequate against Meinong's presuppositions, one must inquire as to the undesirability of these presuppositions. At the heart of Quine's philosophy is a vehement adherence to Ockham's razor: to minimize both the number of kinds of entities, as well as the number of individual entities within a given kind¹⁶. Assuming Ockham's razor is a desirable methodological principle, one can press Meinong on the fact that it violates this principle. Yet, one must also recognize some glaring flaws with Quine's own solution.

First, Quine's solution does not seem to provide a clear method of revealing the logical form of sentences that contain indexicals ('I', 'this', 'my', 'there', etc.). Thus, how does one reveal the logical form of 'This cup is red'? Quine's speculative solution is radically inadequate: it rests on translating 'this' into 'there', which is still an indexical preposition¹⁷. It is outside the scope of this paper to consider if there is some other way to correct this deficiency, but it is certain that Quine never provided any solution of his own.

Secondly, it is unclear how one is to translate a singular term into a definite description. For example, take the proper name 'Aristotle'. What definite description would correspond to this proper name? One possible answer would be 'The student of Plato'. However, this is still quite ambiguous: there have been multiple students of Plato. Perhaps instead one gives the description 'Writer of Nichomachean Ethics'. If meaning is inherently tied to understanding the references of expressions, as Quine thinks it is, can someone mean the

15 W. V. Quine, "On Simple Theories of a Complex World," in *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays* (Random House, 1966), 242.

16 Ibid.

17 W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (The M.I.T. Press, 1960), 163; Lenny Clapp, Marga Reimer, and Anne Spire, "Negative Existentials," in Jeanette Gundel and Barbara Abbott ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Reference* (Oxford University Press, 2019): 12-3.

referent of 'Aristotle' even if they are not aware of one of the unique definite descriptions of him and instead know only the ambiguous description 'The student of Plato'¹⁸?

The strongest objection to Quine, as noted by Clapp, Reimer, and Spire, is that the interpretation of singular terms all being definite descriptions is explanatorily inadequate¹⁹. When one asserts 'The sun is hot', it is unintuitive to suggest that one is actually asserting 'There exists an arbitrary object such that it is a sun, and any other arbitrary object that is a sun is the first arbitrary object, and it is hot'. Russell's solution seems to work in part because it is explanatorily adequate: it is not unintuitive to suggest unreal entities are spoken of in this manner. To extend this translation to all singular objects seems absurd.

Yet, crucially, Quine would agree; descriptively, his theory is bunk. However, this is of no concern because Quine's project here is prescriptive and normative and not descriptive: Quine is not interested in why we judge some occurrences of negative existentials to be true; rather, Quine is proposing a revision of natural language which will enable us to discuss the ontological question of what there is without having to face the problem of negative existentials²⁰.

This is why it was stated that Quine's solution is not really a solution at all in the original sense of the question. It is not a descriptive solution; however, it is a solution that could work if a group of language users adopted it as a true reflection of human thought while providing utterances containing singular terms.

With this crucial qualification in mind, I suggest we create a new position that encompasses Russell's solution in the form of the Theory of Descriptions, with the normative principles Quine utilizes (question-beggingly) in his objections to Meinong. Thus, we abandon Quine's conception of eliminating singular terms altogether and restrict ourselves to merely unreal objects; yet, we make as our primary motivation Ockham's razor as Quine does (and arguably as Russell does too). We shall call this

¹⁸ Problems like these have motivated many philosophers to abandon a descriptive theory of proper names and to adopt Kripke's causal theory. It is of course possible to provide many amendments to answer the objection posed; however, the thrust is clear. Any response requires weakening Quine's original thesis.

¹⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁰ Ibid., 14.

worldview Quine2.

It should be noted that there can be no resolution in this paper; a methodological dispute takes far greater than eight pages, and there can be no clear decider between Meinong's and Quine2's solutions. In conclusion, all that can be provided is a summary of what each view entails. It is up to the individual philosopher to determine which normative considerations are considered more valuable.

Meinong's solution works: no contradictions arise on the presuppositions that are adopted. Such presuppositions, however, may be seen as undesirable by other philosophers. These include: an extremely expanded, though powerful, ontology; a commitment to the existence of logically contradictory entities; and, arguably, a departure from common-sense thought on the usage of 'existence'.

Quine2's solution arguably does not work: there are multiple objections that must be resolved before one can definitely say that it does. These include the problems of indexicals (as used in negative existentials), and the problem of ambiguity (as applied to negative existentials), among others not covered in this paper. Its largest benefit is an extremely economical and reduced ontology.

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