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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

It is with great honor and pride that I present to you Issue VII of *Dianoia: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College*! This year we received more than 140 submissions from North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Asia—testifying to *Dianoia*'s genuinely international appeal in attracting the finest undergraduate philosophical works from over sixty academic institutions. But before writing further about what makes this issue of *Dianoia* unique, I would be remiss if I did not first praise the tenacity and dedication of our editorial board in making the fruit of this year's labor possible amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Publishing a journal as committed to philosophical excellence, original scholarship and intercontinental collaboration poses no easy task, virus aside, so it is nothing short of a miracle that our team managed to carry on with Issue VII while simultaneously adjusting to the disruptiveness of a global pandemic; if anything, it demonstrates the astounding resiliency of *Dianoia*'s editors, and the following issue speaks for itself.

This year, our journal received the privilege to publish five wonderfully insightful and thoughtful essays on a wide range of original topics and ideas, some of which include: Aristotelian virtue ethics, epistemic injustice and artificial intelligence, Sartrean existentialism, Arendt and environmental ethics, and Heidegger on technology and the work of art. In the interest of philosophically engaging with COVID-19—a feat still quite rare in the early days of the virus—*Dianoia* is pleased to present an interview with the Joseph Chair in Catholic Philosophy and current Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Boston College, Dermot Moran, speaking on the pandemic and its assorted effects on everyday life. As a final note, you will find on the front cover Nicolae Grigorescu's *Andreescu à Barbizon* (1879) and on the back cover Isaac Whitehead's *In Milford Sound, West Coast, New Zealand* (1878). When combined, Grigorescu and Whitehead's masterpieces illustrate a picture of the magnificence of crude nature and the necessity of reconsidering the ethics of consumption—a theme called to mind by one of this year's essays entitled: "Human (and) Nature: Using Arendt to Reconcile Models of Environmental Ethics."

In light of all of these new developments, *Dianoia*'s resolve in fostering intellectual debate and dialogue remains preserved once more; that being said, none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the extensive base that comprise the journal's friends, patrons and advisors. First and foremost, I would like to thank my executive editorial board—who I am lucky to consider as much as friends as fellow collaborators—Ethan Yates, Weitao Liu, Lauren White and Nicholas Arozarena, and our phenomenally-resourceful and dedicated Graduate Advisor, Peter Klapes, who helped make my transition from managing-editor to Editor-in-Chief smooth and

worry-free. I extend a heartfelt thanks to our faculty advisor, Fr. Ronald Tacelli, S.J., for his steadfast support and continual encouragement from the journal's inception in 2011 to its current form. We also are greatly indebted to the Boston College Philosophy Department—particularly the efforts of its Chair, Dermot Moran, both for his sagacious advice and his resounding alacrity in agreeing to an interview with our journal—as well as the Institute for the Liberal Arts and its Director Mary Crane, for their financial and legal support. Department administrators Paula Perry and Sarah Smith deserve a great word of thanks for their help in scheduling meeting spaces for the journal, and also for their essential expertise and unwavering advocacy on the journal's behalf. Lastly, I would like to thank the wonderful efforts of our multi-talented graphic designer Gregory Kacergis, without whom the present work would be impossible; or at least, not nearly the aesthetical masterpiece that it is today (we wish him all the best professionally and cannot express how much his presence will be missed). We also thank here the countless others whose work have made *Dianoia* what it is over the years, and you the reader, for your invaluable support and patronage of our journal. We wish you, your families and friends, health and safety as we continue the fight against COVID-19, and look forward to seeing you again in Issue VIII.
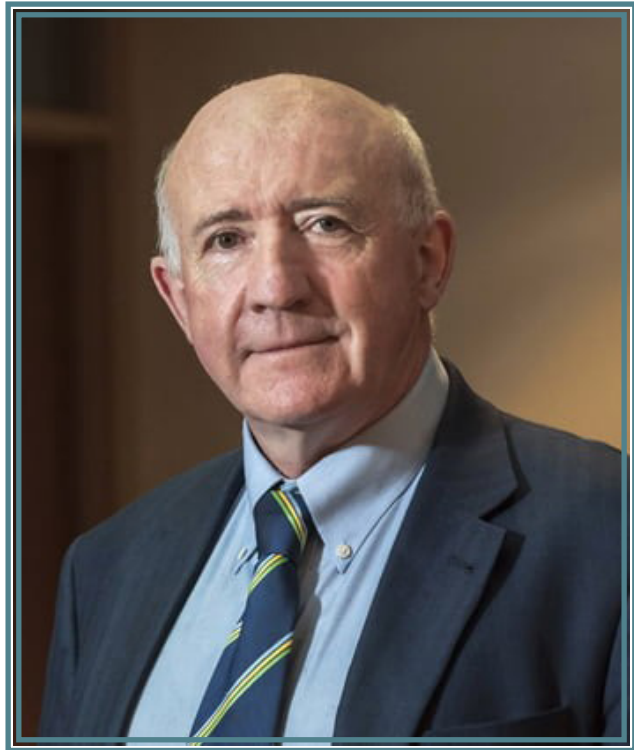
All the best and happy reading!

Sincerely,

Noah Valdez, Editor-in-Chief

INTERVIEW WITH DERMOT MORAN
The Joseph Chair in Catholic Philosophy

Dianoia conducted an interview with Dermot Moran, the Joseph Chair in Catholic Philosophy and current Chair of the Department of Philosophy. Joining Boston College in 2017 after serving as the Gadamer Visiting Professor in 2015, he is currently the President of the International Federation of Philosophical Studies/Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie (FISP) and Founding Editor of 'The International Journal of Philosophical Studies' (1993). Moran's research areas include medieval philosophy (especially Christian Platonism) and contemporary European philosophy (especially phenomenology), and he is the author of nine monographs, fifteen edited books, and hundreds of journal articles and book chapters.

Dianoia: Could you describe what phenomenology is and say a little about its founder Edmund Husserl?

Moran: Well first of all, I always emphasize that phenomenology is an approach rather than a strict method. Edmund Husserl, who is the founder of phenomenology and the *Logical Investigations* (1900), really wanted a strict method and a method that would underline all the other sciences. It would be a scientific method to beat all scientific methods, that was his idea. And of course, his famous slogan was "back to the things themselves" since he wanted a descriptive science that describes how our consciousness encounters the world in the manner that it presents itself. It was meant to be a transparent description of our experience in its full richness, but his methodology was very much contested even by his own students (*e.g.* Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and others), so his bracketing method, his method of pure description evolved. So I rather see phenomenology as still having this attention to the rich detail of our experience, but there are many different methodologies within an overall approach. But the overall approach is anti-speculative, anti-theorizing and just staying with the experiences, or phenomena in the broadest sense. So for example, how we experience an art object, how we interrelate with others in the life-world, these are all things that we need to describe in—as Husserl would put it—an unprejudiced manner.

Dianoia: What's the distinction between Husserl's pure phenomenology and what came with his followers in developing existential phenomenology, and who are some of the figureheads of each group?

Moran: Husserl had a huge number of very loyal followers, especially in the early phase, and they're often called the realist phenomenologists since they wanted to have phenomenology as a kind of realist description of the world; they really tried to overcome pre-judgment and prejudice. But once you have Heidegger coming along—the founder of existential phenomenology—he's the thinker that says there's no such thing as pure description, that all description is interpreted, and thereby gives a hermeneutical or interpretive phenomenology. But he also wanted to expand Husserl's interest in the body and consciousness, i.e. the body and the subject, to a

much broader interest in concrete human existence. That's really what inspires Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir to take up this notion of existence. *Dasein* literally means existence. So Heidegger is saying phenomenology is an analysis of *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world, that becomes translated by the French as a description of our concrete existence. So I would say that you could find a lot of that in Husserl, especially in the later Husserl. And yet, it's very difficult to tell whether Heidegger's influencing Husserl or if it's the other way around since both were in daily contact for ten years. Heidegger didn't publish much and Husserl didn't publish much from 1917 to 1927 so we only have their notes, and consequently, it's hard to tell. But both of them start moving more and more to the idea of historically-invented being-in-the-world, which is also limited by time since it is finite—so we are finite beings located in a specific situation. Right now we are in the middle of the 21st century, so that alters our engagement in the world. So those factors, that being-in-the-world shapes our encounter in the world and means that there's no pure and direct, unmediated experience. Experience is always mediated by our beliefs, customs, habits, practices and so on. That's the big shift I think.

Dianoia: You mention "philosophical bracketing" or the *epoché*—how might we apply this and other phenomenological tools to everyday or quotidian phenomena?

Moran: Well, I think Husserl himself picked it up from the ancient skeptics, and he sees it as an archetypal philosophical practice, and the practice is that of withholding assent. That's how the skeptics saw it. When you have two propositions that both seem to be true, let's say the Democrats are doing a good job in handling the environment, and on the other side is, the Republicans are doing a very good job in keeping the economy open. These are not exactly contradictory, but they are two opposing views. And when you are faced with that, the ancient skeptics thought that in the absence of confirming evidence for one or the other we should withhold assent. So Husserl thinks that broadly speaking the *epoché* is a bracketing, or withholding of assent or a withdrawal of commitment, and that means we can take a much more detached look at our own experience. So that's the really key point—he thinks that we need to take the non-participating observer stance to our own experience, and I think we can all benefit from that. Standing back from our immediate engagement with things, and then trying to take a stance above our experience and look at it. This is the job of the transcendental spectator, and even though other philosophers like Heidegger rejected the idea of a transcendental ego, they still are engaged in that kind of 'sideways look on at our own existence.' When Heidegger says that most of our existence is caught up in everydayness, how do you know that unless you kind of step out of that experience and are looking at it from another perspective? So I think yes, the phenomenological *epoché* is a practice of disengaging from our immediate tendencies, beliefs, affirmations, confirmations and of adopting a much more non-engaged scrutiny of our experience with the hope that it will yield a lot more genuine

evidence.

Dianoia: In light of the coronavirus outbreak, how does our perception of the virus shape its impact on the world in both a social and political sense, and how might the phenomenological reduction (or any other phenomenological concepts) bring clarity to public discourse?

Moran: I've been thinking about that a lot because I actually have spent time in Wuhan—I was a visiting professor there three years ago, and have very good friends there who have given me firsthand information about their lives and about the changes in their lives. I think initially people in the West thought about this as a local problem in China, and there was a lot of misinformation initially; for example, that COVID-19 was no worse than the common flu, or that some would build immunity to it, but in fact it's ten times more deadly than the seasonal flu. Furthermore, for the flu there's a vaccine, but for COVID-19 there's none. And so the authorities were very slow in moving forward, it was like a tidal wave starting in China and Korea, and then showing up in Italy, Spain, France and then the UK and America. So each country had time to see what was happening, and quite honestly, they should have moved earlier. But what it does show, and I think this is really from the phenomenological point of view, is that first of all we live in one common technological world. I mean this was a virus that was spread by air travel, this was spread by people using airplanes, and so, this was highly mobile because our societies are highly mobile. Secondly, it's been interesting to see that many of the things that we thought belonged to our everyday life we just took so much for granted (so this a good example of the *epoché*). So we just took all of normal life for granted, completely. In other words, we are living in the natural attitude and we just assume things like public transport and restaurants being open, being able to visit friends, all of those things we just took for granted. And our everyday life that we thought was so boring and uninteresting is really vital. And we're all missing it now, and so this is a chance for us to realize that this supposedly inauthentic everyday natural life that we had isn't just always there, but is a fragile human construct that's threatened by things like this global pandemic. So we have to be very careful to guard our social realities, and to make sure that they come back. There's big debates about opening public parks because people that live in crowded conditions don't have public spaces to exercise in. But you also don't want the public parks to be crowded, so there's a fine balance to be drawn. But the reason parks were brought in during the 19th century was to provide people who lived in cramped urban conditions with public spaces to get exercise, to get fresh air and all of these things. I've started teaching Camus' *The Plague*, and I had forgotten until the virus came along how Camus had extraordinary foresight and described exactly the situation that we're in currently. I'll just read you a small passage from *The Plague*, "once plague had shut the gates of the town, they had settled down to a life of separation, debarred from the living warmth that gives forgetfulness of all. In

different degrees in every part of the town, men and women had been yearning for a reunion, not of the same kind for all, but for all alike ruled on it. Most of them longed intensely for an absent one, or for the warmth of a body, for love, or merely for the life and habit that they had endured. Some, often without knowing it, suffered from being deprived of the company of friends and from their inability to get in touch with them through the usual channels of friendship (*e.g.* letters, trains, and boats)." That's kind of a short description of the loss of the everyday social contact that this brings, that Camus describes extraordinary well, and that the only response—the response of the doctor—is to do your job, to face up to your responsibilities and to try and do your part in restoring this human life as best as we can.

Dianoia: When we eventually do return to normalcy, what lasting effects do you think that the coronavirus and social distancing will have on society?

Moran: I've been reading Giogio Agamben's book *The State of Exception*, and it was written after 9/11 in 2005, and it was about the various forms of political and social control brought in allegedly as emergency circumstances, which become part of the new normal. And I was also reading Slavoj Zizek's new book *Pandemic!*, and it says a lot of the same things that as philosophers we have to be careful of. It's certainly true that many things are introduced as emergency measures and then they never go away again. The classic example is income tax—introduced as an emergency measure during the civil war to pay for it, and it's never gone away because this was a great way of extracting money from the people. And one of the things that worries me most, and it's always a two-edged sword, is that modern technological means of social control, which are largely done by using your phone's geolocation, are being used very widely in China to monitor people's movements. And yet, the good part of this is that it stops people who are in contact with the virus from spreading it any further. Google and Amazon are posing a similar thing here, so that you could get a text in the morning saying that you had been in contact with someone who had the virus and then you should quarantine. But in China it's gotten to the point where they have to scan codes when they go into different buildings or when they go into certain streets, and you could be locked out if you're on the list of people that's been exposed. So you suddenly go into a society of total control, and that's terribly worrying from the point of view of social and political liberties. But again, we have to face that all this information is out there, and if they wanted, the people running the Zoom platform could tell that the three of us are on their app now, extract what exactly we're talking about, and they could even locate us from our phones—all of that information builds up. But virus tracing efforts need that information, so this is that double-edged sword that Heidegger talks about concerning technology—it's created the framework inside which we live. We just have to be very careful that we know the essence of this technological enframing, and until we know what it's doing to us in the long-term, we won't really be able to get the right attitude towards it.

Clearly we can't just be Luddites, but we also can't blend completely into the security state as Agamben calls it. The long term impact will be this idea of the security state and 'the state of exception' that Agamben discusses. On the other side, we have to be aware of the people that are protesting any kind of a lockdown and gathering with their second amendment rights and their guns to say "nobody's going to tell me what to do" (that's a pretty American phenomenon by the way). But it is an example that comes from a deep-seated suspicion of anything having to do with the state, whether it be anarchist or libertarian in nature. The state is always repressive for these groups, so I think that at the end of the day we have to go somewhere in-between these two ideologies. It does raise all kinds of issues about political phenomenology, and this will lead us as a final point, it makes us focus on the nature of the life-world and how the life world is being mediated and structured by technological infringement. And they're surely the central issues that Husserl and Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty were talking about. From that point of view I think phenomenology is totally relevant to our discussions today.

Dianoia: You're an active member in mediating the dialogue between continental and analytic philosophy. Can you explain the difference between these two camps?

Moran: Well I wrote an article on it one time saying that "Our Germans Are Better Than Your Germans," because the origins of analytic philosophy are german-speaking philosophers like Carnap or others in the Vienna Circle. I say German because they spoke in German, wrote in German, they were either in Germany or Austria. Carnap, Schlick and the Vienna Circle generally moved into America and influenced others like Quine and A.J. Ayer. Analytic philosophy then grew out from that breed of German scientific thought of the 20th century whereas Husserl and Heidegger influenced people like Gadamer, Arendt, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir, Kristeva and the more European thinkers that you tend to associate with continental philosophy. So I don't like the terms continental and analytic, but I do think there are different tendencies between thinkers of the 20th century, and what split them politically was the war— this much is clear. Phenomenology became associated with Nazi Germany though Heidegger, and actually, a lot of the Vienna Circle people were Jews who had fled the Nazi regime, so they were very hostile not just to Nazism, but to anything that they thought was associated with it—and that included Heideggerian phenomenology in particular. But in the 21st century, we have to realize that both methods are really intersecting; in fact, cognitive science these days is a mixture of both continental and analytical methods. And also it's a lot to do with people's interests. If you go back to Aristotle and Plato, Plato wrote dialogues, which were very literary products, and Aristotle wrote these more textbook style lectures. And that's interesting too, continental people tend to be more interested in the arts and literature, and analytic philosophers often want to be piggybacking on science, mathematics, logic and so on. So I don't like it when people think that one is better than the other, and I do

think they cover different aspects of the human experience. So I like to see room for both, but of course, as we know, because of the very complicated forms of technical language that have developed in the traditions, there's very little genuine dialogue between them and I've been at it for a long time. In the end, I decided that what's been going on are parallel conversations. So rather than people talking to each other, they're talking about each other in parallel conversations, and that's about as best as we can do.

Dianoia: Another one of your areas of specialization is medieval philosophy—what initially attracted you to the subject and can you fathom a scenario wherein it would be in dialogue with phenomenology?

Moran: I was really trying to write a dissertation on Heidegger for my PhD in 1976 when he died, and everybody said that there was this massive *Gesamtausgabe* of collected works coming out, and that it was supposed to be the second part of *Being and Time* with all of these manuscripts making current Heidegger research impossible. So now we've had one-hundred volumes of *Gasamtausgabe* and I'm not really sure it's changed all that much because people still read *Being and Time*! But at the time I wanted to work on Heidegger, and when he died, my supervisor said I shouldn't really work on him. I had a background from my undergraduate days in medieval philosophy, and I knew Heidegger had. So I said I want to work on a Heideggerian theme (*viz.* the forgetfulness of being in the history of philosophy in the medieval period) and that's what led me to Meister Eckhart. I discovered that one of Eckhart's sources was John Scottus Eriugena, on whom I eventually wrote my PhD. So, in lots of ways, I was kind of emulating Heidegger (who wrote on Thomas of Erfurt for his Habilitation) and writing about a medieval scholar and trying to answer contemporary questions. Of course, it made me kind of an object of suspicion both by the Heideggerians and the Medievalists, so it was hard for me to keep these two different pathways of research open and in dialogue with each other. A lot of the medieval people were philologists and classicists who really didn't want to talk about anything after the Middle Ages, or bring in any ideas from Hegel or Heidegger, or whoever. And similarly, phenomenologists wanted to talk about contemporary issues, and didn't want to talk out the history of philosophy. But it's changing, Jean-Luc Marion is an example of someone who's written on both as well, or Claude Romano who was here this past semester as our Visiting Gadamer Professor. ◆

Conducted on April 20th, 2020.

VIRTUE, SILENCING, AND PERCEPTION[1]

ABHI RUPARELIA

Over the course of several influential articles, philosopher John McDowell describes the practical reasoning of the virtuous agent using an appeal to his distinctive perceptual abilities.[2] McDowell argues that when such an agent deliberates about a course of action, he never sees any conflict between the demands of virtue and other competing non-virtuous considerations, because for him, the requirements of virtue *silence* the other competing reasons for action. This conception of "silencing" greatly puzzles modern scholars and has in recent years generated a vast amount of literature on the subject.[3] While the idea itself seems to be aimed at providing an understanding of Aristotle's account of virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter referred to as the *Ethics*), McDowell offers a novel characterization in that he takes virtue to be some sort of superior perceptual capacity. Therefore, the aim of this essay is to critically analyze the notion of "silencing" as a condition or requirement for attaining virtue. To achieve this, I begin by briefly laying out Aristotle's description of virtue in the *Ethics*. Second, I reconstruct McDowell's understanding of virtue and

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1 I would like to thank Nancy Schauber, Karin Boxer, Will Reckner, Geoff Goddu, Javier Hidalgo, and Jackson LeViness for their helpful comments and insights on earlier versions of this paper.

2 McDowell "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" (1978), "Virtue and Reason" (1979), "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics" (1980).

3 Kieran Setiya "Is Efficiency a Vice?" (2005), Susan Stark "Virtue and Emotion" (2001), Jeffrey Seidman "Two Sides of Silencing" (2005), Karen Stohr "Moral Cacophony: When Continence is a Virtue" (2003), Anne Margaret Baxley "The Price of Virtue" (2007), Denise Vigani "Virtuous Construal: In Defense of Silencing" (2019), Neil Sinhababu "Virtue, Desire, and Silencing Reasons" (2016), R Jay Wallace "Virtue, Reason, and Principle" (1991), Garrett Cullity "The Context-Undermining of Practical Reasons" (2013), Sarah Broadie "Ethics with Aristotle" (1993), Attila Tanyi "Silencing Desires" (2012), Simon Blackburn "Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning" (2001), and Charles Starkey "On the Category of Moral Perception" (2006), among others.

what he takes to be the virtuous agent's decision-making process. Third, I provide two interpretations of this "silencing" ability that have gained popularity in recent literature. Finally, I argue that neither interpretation is satisfactory because they (i) leave gaps in understanding the virtuous agent's decision-making process, and (ii) go against the nature and the description of virtue as laid out in the *Ethics*.

Aristotle on Virtue

In Book VII of the *Ethics*, Aristotle begins by laying out the four following character types: continence, virtue, incontinence, and vice.[4] Continence and virtue are generally regarded as good and praiseworthy, but the former is less admirable than the latter. Similarly, incontinence and vice are considered to be base and blameworthy, but the former is less so than the latter. For our purposes, we are primarily concerned with virtue and continence.

In the *Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between the virtues of thought and the virtues of character. He considers the virtue of character to be some type of disposition resulting from habituation. He thinks that such a virtue does not *arise* in us naturally; rather, we are, by nature, able to *acquire* it.[5] He further claims that we, as humans, already possess the capacity to become virtuous; however, in order to actualize this capacity, we need to activate our virtues. He explains this process of "activation" using the example of crafts (*e.g.* in order to become a skilled painter, we need to activate this skill by practicing painting habitually). Similarly, in order to become brave or just, we need to start by performing brave or just actions.[6] In Book II, Aristotle provides us with what appears to be a definition of virtue:

> Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative
> to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason
> by reference to which the prudent person would define it.[7]

This definition points to two important characteristics about the nature of virtue: 1) For Aristotle, virtue represents a mean between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency. Take, for instance, the virtue of courage. This virtue straddles a middle ground between recklessness (excess) and cowardice (deficiency). 2) For Aristotle, there is an important connection between prudence and virtue. That is, he takes prudence to involve some sort of deliberation in accord with reason, and based on this, understands virtue as the state involving correct reasons where correct reasons are those in accordance with prudence.[8]

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4 *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VII, 1145a15-1145b20; in addition to these, Aristotle also considers heroic or divine virtue as a condition of character. However, such a virtue is primarily attributed to Gods. Hence, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

5 Ibid, Book II – 1103a15-1103b25.

6 Ibid, Book II – 1103a15-1103b25.

7 Ibid, Book II -1107a1-5.

8 Ibid, Book VI – 114b20-30.

The case of continence is slightly more complicated than virtue. The continent person is similar to the virtuous person in that he always chooses and performs the actions in accordance with rationality and reason. Nonetheless, such a person possesses base appetites and is often tempted by them (and pained by their deprivation), but chooses not to give in. In other words, the continent person is someone who performs virtuous actions, but who finds them difficult, or has to struggle with competing inclinations.[9] In contrast, the virtuous person acts with ease and without a need to overcome competing inclinations.

Furthermore, the continent person stands in opposition to the incontinent person, who, because of the weakness of his will, proceeds to give in to his base desires. Such a person's will is overpowered by his desires, causing him to act against reason.[10]

Again, it is important to remember here that while the continent person acts in the same manner as the virtuous agent, the fact that he allows himself to be tempted by competing considerations suggests that he is, in some sense, morally deficient.

McDowell's Conception of Virtue

McDowell is primarily concerned with what constitutes a virtuous agent and separates him from the incontinent or the merely continent person. Since these are also the questions that Aristotle mainly concerns himself with in the *Ethics*, McDowell follows in Aristotle's footsteps by beginning with the Socratic thesis that equates virtue with knowledge and uses it as a base to develop a more sophisticated account of virtue. He first considers the case of the non-virtuous agent as the incontinent person, and then moves on to the non-virtuous agent as the continent person.[11] For McDowell, virtue is a sort of perceptual capacity. He thinks that there is a fundamental difference between the perceptions of the virtuous agent and the merely continent/incontinent agent. This difference is primarily what separates the virtuous person from the other two, and largely accounts for his nature.

McDowell's discussion on virtue as a type of knowledge is dependent upon his characterization of the latter as an ability to "get things right."[12] What he means by this is the ability to anticipate the needs/expectations of the situation and to act accordingly, which he calls "reliable sensitivity."[13] He further introduces the concept of "deliverances" of the reliable sensitivity and says that "[deliverances of reliable

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9 Ibid, Book VII – 1151a30-115b20.

10 Ibid, Book VII – 1151b21-1152a5.

11 When referring to the "non-virtuous" agent, McDowell appears to be pointing solely at the incontinent and the continent agents. This goes against Aristotle, who takes the continent, the incontinent, and the vicious person to be non-virtuous. Hence, it is not entirely clear, based on his paper, why McDowell does not understand the vicious agent to be non-virtuous. Perhaps one possible explanation might be that he does not consider the vicious person a moral agent at all (which is consistent with Aristotle), and hence ineligible for his discussion on agency and virtue.

12 McDowell "Virtue and Reason," Pg. 331.

13 Ibid, Pg. 331-32.

sensitivity] are cases of knowledge; and there are idioms according to which the sensitivity itself can approximately be described as knowledge."[14] By these lines, McDowell appears to suggest that the virtuous agent subscribes to some version of moral particularism, in that he understands the needs of a situation as dependent upon his perception of it rather than his deductive application of codifiable moral principles.[15] He uses the example of a kind person to explain this, who *knows* what it is like to face a situation that requires him to be kind, independent of any reasons or justification for acting kindly. In this sense, such a sensitivity is a type of *perceptual* capacity.[16]

Yet, McDowell notes an apparent problem in equating this perceptual knowledge with virtue:[17] a non-virtuous person's perception of a situation appears to match precisely the perception of a virtuous agent, yet, the former does not act in the same way as the latter. As he rightly notes:[18]

> But if a perception which corresponds to the virtuous person's does not call forth a virtuous action from this non-virtuous person, then the virtuous person's matching perception – the deliverance of his sensitivity – cannot, after all, fully account for the virtuous action which it does elicit from him.[19]

This problem leads McDowell to think that there is something that he seems to be missing in his analysis of the virtuous person.

Part of this gap left by the problem above is addressed by Aristotle, who argues that the reason why the non-virtuous incontinent agent does not act in the same manner as the virtuous agent is because the former is affected by *akrasia*, or 'weakness of will'. While ideally the perception of a non-virtuous (incontinent, in this particular case) and a virtuous agent should be the same, in reality, the incontinent agent's perception is "clouded" or "unfocussed" by a "desire to act otherwise."[20] To understand this notion better, compare an akratic agent with someone suffering from a cataract. A cataract patient's vision will be clouded, in the literal sense of the word, causing difficulties in viewing everyday objects and situations that would otherwise be clearly visible to the normal eye. Similar to this, the akratic agent also suffers, *metaphorically*, from a type of *moral* cataract, preventing him from identifying or choosing the right choice in a given situation. This account of *akrasia* works well for McDowell because it fills the gap left in the previous paragraph by treating the perception of an

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14 Ibid, Pg. 332.
15 Nancy Sherman's "Aristotle's Ethics: Critical Essays" (Pg. 11).
16 McDowell "Virtue and Reason," Pg. 332.
17 Ibid, Pg. 333.
18 Implicit within this problem is Aristotle's view that perceptual sensitivity is motivation enough for an agent to act upon this sensitivity. See NE 1147a20-35.
19 McDowell "Virtue and Reason," Pg. 333.
20 Ibid, Pg. 334.

incontinent agent as *different* from the virtuous agent. This "difference" results from the incontinent person's failure to act virtuously because of the "defectiveness" in his reliable sensitivity (where this defect is a direct outcome of his akratic nature).

Having discussed the case of the non-virtuous incontinent agent, McDowell moves on to the non-virtuous continent agent. He rightly notes that for Aristotle, continence is distinct from virtue, but just as problematic as incontinence. This problematic nature arises because if someone needs to deliberate and to overcome a temptation to act otherwise, in a situation that demands of him that he act according to, say, temperance or courage, then he is simply continent, and not virtuous. On its face, it seems like a trivial difference; after all, why should the fact that the agent deliberated about a decision (or that he was tempted by a non-virtuous consideration), before going on to choose the right consideration, make him any less virtuous? McDowell claims that this question stems from a misunderstanding of the nature of virtue. That is, if we are to understand that the virtuous agent arrives at his judgment as to what he should do by weighing the right and the wrong reasons for action, and ultimately favoring the right one, the difference between continence and virtue becomes non-existent. Consequently, we should not understand the virtuous agent's ability to make decisions as a weighing of reasons.[21] But if that is true, how, then, are we supposed to make sense of the decision-making process of a virtuous agent?

The truly virtuous agent, McDowell argues, does not *override* or *outweigh* the reasons to act contrary to his reliable sensitivity, but **silences** them.[22] This notion of silencing, and its difference from overriding or outweighing, is of great importance to McDowell's characterization of virtue. What *exactly* does this idea of silencing mean is a topic to be discussed in detail in the next section. For now, we are left with an important question: "How can one have a view of a situation in which considerations which would otherwise appeal to one's will are silenced, but nevertheless allow those considerations to make themselves heard by one's will?"[23] In response, McDowell resoundingly claims that one *cannot* view a situation in which non-virtuous considerations are silenced, and yet, are simultaneously heard by one's will. This demonstrates that it is wrong to think of the continent person as fully sharing the virtuous person's perception of a situation.

What is Silencing?

We now come to the most important part of the paper, namely the act of silencing itself. There are two standard interpretations of the act of silencing in contemporary literature: rational silencing and motivational silencing.[24] As far as *rational silencing*

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21 Ibid, Pg. 332.
22 Ibid, Pg. 332.
23 Ibid, Pg. 335.
24 Note that this dual-aspect interpretation is not McDowell's own. Rather, the interpretation is credited to Jeffrey Seidman (2005), who understands McDowell's account as involving two different versions of the act of silencing.

goes, it can largely be explained in cognitive terms, and deals with an agent's beliefs about action in accordance with reason. Textual support in McDowell for this type of silencing is as follows:

> [T]he relevant [ethical] reasons for acting, on occasions when they co-exist with considerations that on their own would be reasons for acting otherwise, as, not overriding, but silencing those other considerations—as bringing it about that, in the circumstances, they are not reasons at all.[25]

I interpret these lines to mean that when a virtuous person is faced with the choice between different moral considerations, there are two possible ways in which he can perceive a situation: a) the non-virtuous considerations are silenced such that they stop being reasons for acting at all; therefore, such non-virtuous considerations stop being *considerations* (morally speaking, that is) at all and b) the competing non-virtuous considerations are *moral* considerations, as far as the agent is concerned; nonetheless, they are so implausible, in that they go against the virtuous nature of the agent, that his will silences them and he never takes such considerations seriously—let alone chooses them.

Under the type-a view of rational silencing, since the competing non-virtuous considerations are silenced, they stop being *moral* considerations. As a result, what the agent sees before him are some sort of non-moral considerations that exclude the need for application of normative principles. Hence, they will be irrelevant or meaningless to the agent, at least insofar as the situation at hand requires of him to make a moral judgement.

 To understand the latter view of rational silencing, it might be helpful to compare silencing with Gary Watson's distinction between mere desires and the desires that we *value*.[26] Take, for instance, Watson's example of the mother who has a sudden urge to drown her bawling child in the bath. This is a *mere* desire that the mother does not *value*. Hence, such a desire is not even taken seriously by the mother. Take, on the other hand, my desire to excel in my classes in order to become a better philosopher. This is an end that I truly and sincerely value. Hence, if we approach the type-b version of rational silencing from the lens of desiring and valuing, it becomes clear that the virtuous agent's will silences the non-virtuous considerations such that the agent does not really *value* a consideration that goes against his virtuous nature.[27]

All in all, the virtuous agent acting under both types of rational silencing will take himself to suffer *no genuine losses* in foregoing non-virtuous considerations.[28]

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25 McDowell, "The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics," p. 102.
26 Watson (1975), "Free Agency."
27 Ibid.
28 There is, however, an exception to this – the so-called "tragic cases," where the agent has no other acceptable course of action available; Seidman Pg. 70.

The second type of silencing, known as *motivational silencing*, entails that if a non-virtuous consideration is motivationally silenced by an agent's will, the agent will not be *tempted* to perform the wrong action. It is, however, not the case that the virtuous person would not like or obtain pleasure from the considerations that he does not choose. To explain this further, McDowell uses the example of a man who is faced with the dilemma of whether or not to sleep with his friend's wife.[29] Here, it is not the case that the virtuous person's libido will be undemanding or that he will not enjoy the act of sleeping with someone. On the contrary, the virtuous agent is just as human as the next person. In fact, under the right circumstances, he would happily indulge in an act of sexual gratification available to him. However, in the current situation, "his clear perception of the requirement [of virtue] insulates the prospective enjoyment… Here and now, it [prospective enjoyment] does not count for him as any reason for acting in that way."[30]

Both types of silencing, according to Seidman, go hand-in-hand for McDowell. That is, owing to the fact that there are no genuine losses on the part of the virtuous agent in failing to choose the non-virtuous reasons under rational silencing, none of the agent's motivational energies are enticed in favor of non-virtuous considerations under motivational silencing.

Objections and Responses

My first objection to McDowell's argument (and Seidman's interpretation in turn) is concerned with the way in which the two types of rational silencing function in relation to the virtuous agent's perception. I shall address the type-b rational silencing first: if we are to understand the type-b rational silencing as the difference between merely desiring an end, and valuing that end, we run into conceptual problems about the notion of silencing in general. That is, the very process of *valuing* an end over merely desiring it involves the process of deliberation on the part of the virtuous agent, such that he assigns a higher degree of importance to the end he values, compared to the end he desires. If we are to understand *this* practice as "silencing," such a practice turns out to be pretty similar to the act of *overriding* or *outweighing* reasons. Hence, under the value versus desire model, the difference between silencing and overriding is not entirely clear. Therefore, the type-b rational silencing is unsatisfactory.

Under the first type (*i.e.* competing non-virtuous considerations stop being moral considerations), if we are to accept rational silencing as construed, then we cannot praise the virtuous person for making the right choice competing non-virtuous considerations will not appear to the agent of type-a rational silencing as considerations *at all* (but even if they do, they will be meaningless to him). Hence, the only "choice" that the agent's perception comes across, is the virtuous one. Strictly speaking, then,

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29 McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" Pg. 27.
30 Ibid, Pg. 27.

the agent does not actually perform the act of choosing. In making such a claim, I take it for granted that choice, or being able to choose, requires there to be more than one consideration available to the agent. Indeed, the way that choice is intuitively understood, it involves some sort of decision-making on the part of the agent. And for the process of decision-making to work, competing options must exist so as to account for such a process. As a result, if the virtuous agent's perception views only one option as the potential course of action, he does not actually *choose* – rather, he *accepts* the given state of affairs as they manifest before him. Additionally, it is also not as if the agent could *refrain* from acting, insofar as refraining constitutes a "choice" for the agent, because both Aristotle and McDowell take the perceptual sensitivity of a virtuous person to be motivational. Hence, there can be no situation, barring any physical constraints, where the agent *fails* to act on the deliverances of his perceptual sensitivity. Thus, the agent does not really have a choice other than acting virtuously.

To understand my objection better, consider the following analogy: Imagine that there are four courses of action available to a virtuous person in making a decision. Behind option one, the person sees the action that appears right (virtuous) to him under the particular circumstances; the other three options, however, lead to different (non-virtuous) actions, but cannot seem to be chosen by the virtuous person because those three options cease to exist as potential courses of action. Hence, while the person's will can still acknowledge the presence of these non-virtuous paths, so to speak, his will would not *register* them as paths.[31] Consequently, the agent does not even consider them as options because they cannot be acted upon in that particular situation. Thus, if the agent is successful in choosing the right option in this manner, it would hardly make sense to attribute to him the highest level of praise, that Aristotle and McDowell confer upon him, for his choice. This is because the right option was not *chosen* by the agent; rather it was taken for granted by him, as the only manner in which he could act - *there was literally no other way he could have acted*. The situation turns out to be different in case of the continent agent, in that he *has* a choice – namely the other competing non-virtuous options that he is *tempted by*, but *chooses* not to act upon them. As a result, the continent person is considered praiseworthy to the extent that he manages to overcome his inclinations to act otherwise and chooses the virtuous action.

Now, based on the analogy above, if we are to accept that a virtuous agent making a choice in this manner deserves some, but not such a high degree of, praise, and if one of the primary differences between a virtuous agent and a merely continent

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31 The difference between acknowledging something and registering it is slight, but important, nonetheless. I can acknowledge the presence of a human figure walking towards me from a mile away, but it is only after it comes closer that my brain can register it as John. Analogously, the virtuous agent may perhaps acknowledge the existence of non-virtuous considerations – he might know that they exist – but he surely does not know what they are. And in the absence of such crucial information, he may lack the appropriate resources to act upon them.

agent is the *level* of admiration that each receives then, it follows that there is no real difference between the virtuous and the continent agent as far as praise goes.

A potential counter-argument to my objection stems from the view that it is not the act of *choosing* one of the four options that one praises in a virtuous agent; instead, it is the ability of his perception to create a situation where non-virtuous options cease to be options at all. Furthermore, since this ability is achieved through the process of rigorous training, habituation, and transforming oneself from being merely continent to virtuous, it follows that this training is what turns out to be actually praiseworthy. In response, I argue that if we are to praise the agent for his disposition – the hard work he put into becoming virtuous – we are latching on to his past achievements. These achievements, while significant, are nonetheless irrelevant to the situation in question. Indeed, would it not seem counterintuitive to hold on to the one (and potentially the only) achievement someone has ever had (in this case, training), and to keep on praising them for a lifetime for simply acting in accordance with their training?

Perhaps one may respond here that it does not seem so counterintuitive; after all, we regularly praise Olympic swimmers and chess grandmasters for their training, and regard it perfectly appropriate to do so. But such a response misses its mark because the training involved here is not in the right sense—being able to act morally is not akin to being able to hold one's breath underwater for several minutes. Perhaps my point about the counter-intuitiveness of the scenario can be better understood with an example: if you witnessed our virtuous agent saving a child from drowning, would you rather praise him for his present actions, or for the hundreds of hours he spent in studying Aristotle and learning to become virtuous (not to mention his upbringing), that eventually led him to save the child? The former seems far more likely. Owing to these concerns, I find McDowell's conception of rational silencing unsatisfactory.

My second objection, directed at motivational silencing, is concerned with how McDowell and Seidman characterize the virtuous agent: McDowell's standards for virtue—the ability to not get tempted by competing considerations and to silence them—are too high and too stringent for ordinary human beings to uphold. As mentioned earlier, McDowell's account of the virtuous agent is mainly inspired by Aristotle's account in the *Ethics*. There, however, Aristotle advertises virtue as something that can be acquired by a normal moral agent though habituation. McDowell's agent, on the other hand, appears to be some sort of super-human because his ability to silence is truly incredible. As Seidman rightly notes, it is one thing to argue that a virtuous agent does not take himself to have a good reason to sleep with a friend's wife; however, it is another thing to claim that such a person does not even *think* of such a possibility.[32]

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32 Seidman, Pg. 76.

Returning to our discussion of the virtuous person as a type of 'superhuman,' take, for instance, the slightly more obvious case of facing the enemy in a war. Seeing as the enemy is at the gates, you, the courageous soldier, march forward to the battlefield despite knowing that you are heavily outnumbered and unlikely to succeed. In this case, going by McDowell's characterization, the idea of fleeing from the battle would not even *occur* to you. In fact, the thought of not seeing your family or loved ones ever again does not bother you, even for a second, in the face of duty. Is the virtuous agent, then, so righteous and perfect that the idea of performing a non-virtuous action never occurs to him? Does such a man only dream chaste dreams? As it stands, only full-fledged asceticism seems to fulfill the requirements of such a virtue. How can we then expect a normal individual to attain such a high level of moral piousness? Simon Blackburn rightly echoes these claims in *Ruling Passions*. He says:

> The elements of the virtue tradition that ... [should] be jettisoned are those that rhapsodize over the special nature supposedly belonging to virtuous persons, such as their special immunity to temptation, or the way in which their virtue 'silences' all their other dispositions. For it seems to turn out that this god-like nature belongs to nobody, and represents an ideal to which nobody can approximate.[33]

Quite plausibly, then, McDowell's standards for virtue are unreasonably high. This, however, is not to say that it is *impossible* for a normal individual to possess the ability of motivational silencing. In some, albeit very narrow cases, individuals *do* exhibit such a capacity. Take a politician campaigning for an office. If this person is reasonably sane, the idea of having his opponents killed does not even *occur* to him. Similarly, in my desperate attempt to win the cricket match, the idea of smashing the head of the opposite team's bowler does not even *occur* to me. In this sense, the politician and I exhibit motivational silencing and are not tempted by the competing considerations of murder and assault. Nonetheless, there is a very narrow spectrum of cases where individuals exhibit such a behavior. To expect them to exhibit such a capacity in *all* their decisions, *throughout* their lives, would surely be asking too much of them. It is simply not how normal individuals think. Hence, McDowell's conception of motivational silencing also turns out to be unsatisfactory. Neither interpretation of silencing turns out to be satisfactory because both of them leave several gaps in our understanding of virtue and go against the description of virtue as propounded by Aristotle in the *Ethics*. ◆

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33 S Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*, Pg. 37.

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THE EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE OF
EX CONTRADICTIONE QUODLIBET

SHERRY TSENG

The principle of *ex contradictione quodlibete* stipulates that from contradiction, all propositions follow. From this, all explode into triviality; hence, the aversion towards contradiction. However, our social selves are mired with inconsistency and contradictions and identities built on a spectrum. The assumption of triviality from contradiction in formal logic makes it such that the contradictions found within natural language on our social identities equally trivializes those contradictory aspects, and thereby, inflicts an epistemic injustice.

I argue that if natural language is to be formalized, then there exists a moral imperative to defer to paraconsistent logic, specifically in cases of linguistic inconsistency relevant to aspects of social identity. The conditionality of the claim proves important: I do not defend the assertion that natural language *can* be formalized—that is a philosophical and technical anthology in its own right. Rather, I would like to undertake the normative project of highlighting what I take to be a necessary condition for the formalization of natural language. The argument is as follows: the rejection of inconsistency denies the expression of social experiences lying outside the binary. It presupposes a singularity of social experience, and in assuming this, inflicts epistemic injustice. To a further extent, this jeopardizes social justice and political freedom via its hindrance to the dialogical basis of democracy. In its acceptance of inconsistency without triviality, we ought to accept paraconsistent logic, understood under a larger framework of logical pluralism, as a strong antidote to the harms outlined above.

The urgency of this demand emerges from the significant overlap between formal and Boolean logic with the implications of the former largely carrying over to the latter. The premises of big data and artificial intelligence, grounded in Boolean logic, have their linguistics subsumed under natural language processing (and thereby formal logic). This trend persists even as developments in the field have shifted from rule-based algorithms to statistical models and vector representations. Through its adoption of formal logic's views on inconsistency, the future of technology has then rendered itself vulnerable to these aforementioned harms, and by way of algorithmic learning, will only experience its problems perpetuated and compounded further.

The essay begins in §I with an introduction of epistemic injustice and its associated harms, of which I specifically focus on illocutionary silencing. With these conceptual resources, §II demonstrates how the assumption of triviality as a consequence of contradiction inflicts epistemic injustice in the form of illocutionary silencing. §III continues by offering a positive solution in the form of paraconsistent logic, and though accounts of this form of logic are wildly disparate—tied only by the common thread of non-explosion—I believe that this one thread is a moral commitment necessary to make.

§I Epistemic Injustice

Introduced by Miranda Fricker (2007), epistemic injustice is an injustice arising from dissimilarities in individual and collective epistemic resources. Fricker then proceeds to divide this into two camps: testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.

1. *Testimonial Injustice:* "wherein a speaker receives an unfair deficit or credibility from a hearer owing to prejudice on the hearer's part." (Fricker 2007, 9)

Patricia Williams, a professor at Columbia University Law School, demonstrates a paradigmatic case of this in her book *The Alchemy of Right and Race*, wherein she recounts a personal, anti-black, racist experience. Yet, upon retelling this event, she would often disbelieve herself—a consequence perhaps in no small part attributable to the prejudicial stereotypes of African Americans as "liars" or "paranoid," consequently leading Fricker to discern that she has suffered an instance of testimonial injustice.

2. *Hermeneutical Injustice:* "wherein someone has a significant area of their social experience obscured from understanding owing to prejudicial flaws in shared resources for social interpretation." (Fricker 2007, 148)

Sexual harassment is a common example of this second form of epistemic injustice. Prior to its conceptualization, many of those victimized lacked the epistemic resources

to articulate their experiences, which were then previously rendered unintelligible. Instead, their discomfort would be 'interpreted' as overly prudish or lacking in sense of humor, henceforth exemplifying a hermeneutical injustice.

Of note here is the distinction between hermeneutical and testimonial injustice in the collectivity of epistemology. In the hermeneutical form, the injustice arises from a deficit in the *shared* pool of knowledge, whereas in testimonial form, the injustice may be rooted in a singular repository of it. In the example given for the hermeneutical, society lacks the conceptual resource of sexual harassment itself—an absence that points to a structural and collective inequity in epistemology. Conversely, in the case of testimonial injustice, Williams's example does not causally trace (at least necessarily) to a flaw in a shared resource, but instead, may be attributable to one individual's racist beliefs and attitudes. And still, the two forms are nonetheless deeply intertwined: the hermeneutical may lead to the testimonial and the testimonial may be a manifestation of the hermeneutical. What follows from these injustices are harms of both an epistemic and pragmatic nature. The excerpt below focuses on one harm of illocutionary silencing, as proffered by Rae Langston:

"If you are powerful, you sometimes have the ability to silence the speech of the powerless. One way might be to stop the powerless from speaking at all. Gag them, threaten them, condemn them to solitary confinement. But there is another, less dramatic but equally effective way. Let them speak. Let them say whatever they like to whomever they like, but stop that speech from counting as an action…" (Langton 1993, 299)

Illocutionary silencing is the refusal to admit a proposition's illocutionary force, or that which is constituted by the words themselves.[1] It nullifies the performative force of the words, disallowing the utterances from passing on their intended meaning, thus following from epistemic injustice's emerging inequities. In the case of Williams, her attempt to describe this racist encounter was negated—her words stripped of their force in invoking a case of discrimination. Similarly, the inability to articulate a grammar for sexual harassment may count as a form of silencing insofar its conceptual deficit precludes the description of the experience. Furthermore, the reactions to circumlocutionary attempts to do so effectively impedes the victims' ability to promulgate those experiences, and resultingly, commits the injustice (whether testimonial or hermeneutical) all the same.

To conclude, epistemic injustice is the sort of injustice that emerges from differences in epistemic stature. For the remainder of this paper, I use this as the pedagogical framework to make sense of the injustice enacted by classical formal logic and its insistence on consistency.

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1 For more on this, see Austin's How to Do Things With Words (1962)

§II *Ex Contradictione Quodlibet*'s Epistemic Injustice

In a keynote lecture delivered at the 8th Annual Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference in 2009, writer and trans-bi activist Julia Serano stated, "[t]here is simply no more effective way of hurting me than trans-invalidating me." In what follows, I argue that the consequence of triviality from contradiction clears the path to such harms of invalidation through its enactment of epistemic injustice.

But first, a brief note on the specifics of *ex contradictione quodlibet*. While the path from contradiction to triviality may differ, one such form famously derived by David Lewis takes the following structure:

"Suppose   P and not-P

Then   P   by Simplification,

whence   P or Q   by Addition,

                  not-P   by Simplification again,

and finally   Q   by Disjunctive Syllogism."

According to this argument, any statement *Q* follows from the premise of *P and not P*. Some may object to this proof in that entailment needs to do more work than simply truth-preservation: it also needs to retain some meaningful connection or relevance between the two propositional statements. Regardless of how one argues *ex contradictione quodlibet*, the central point remains: contradiction explodes into triviality.

It is important to take note of what the definition and consequences of what it means to be trivial, the first of which being that triviality could be taken as entailing everything. This, however, draws from the principle of *ex contradiction quodlibet*, proving to be circular reasoning at best, and because of this, cannot be taken freely as the definition. Second, triviality is that which is uninteresting or insignificant. Essential to this definition is the assumed goal of logic and epistemology to uncover truths, or, at the very least, proximate truths about the world. There are certain propositions more interesting than others and the rejection of contradiction from *ex contradictione quodlibet* implies the undesirability of triviality. For the remainder of this paper, I adopt this latter definition.

Having adopted this understanding of triviality as 'that which is uninteresting or insignificant,' it is now possible to move on to the discussion of inconsistency's intertwinement with epistemic injustice—beginning with an example of gender queerness. Consider the following statement:

(A) I am a girl.

(B) I am not a girl.

Let's say that Alex utters these two statements in response to a question asking them to identify their gender. Alex identifies as genderqueer.[2] To them, both (A) and (B) are true.[3] Given how they identify, Alex is both a girl *and* not a girl.

By formal logic's adoption of *ex contradictione quodlibet*, however, Alex's utterances make it such that each and every statement can follow. They are all trivial, and thus, devoid of importance. From this, epistemic injustice then enters into the picture. With their speech now made trivial, Alex's credibility as a knower and their ability to make significant contributions to the conversation on genderqueerness is cast out, thereby constituting a case of testimonial injustice. It is also arguable that Alex also experiences hermeneutical injustice since the mutually exclusive gender binary does not provide the conceptual resource to capture Alex's experience of gender, and on this count, their social experiences are effectively obscured.

The path to illocutionary silencing is not far off. In this case, Alex's illocutionary act is the very proclamation of their gender identity as a girl and not a girl. In keeping with *ex contradictione quodlibet* and its aversion towards triviality, only one of these two statements can be true, which of course has the negative consequence of disallowing their entire illocutionary force. By having their proclamation fall upon deaf ears, Alex experiences both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, and thus, becomes silenced.

Despite however much the act of silencing in itself is negative, the scope of these harms extends even further with repercussions for both social justice and political freedom. Concerning social justice, when one silences the speech of the powerless, they favor a specific form of discourse—that of the powerful. This perpetuates the further marginalization of the powerless through the determination of what sort of gender proves significant, which nullifies Alex's own words as unimportant given their contradiction. On this account, epistemic injustice is a manifestation

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2 This is understood in the sense that their gender identities are maintained by some combination of masculinity and femininity, or neither.

3 For the remainder of this paper, I will assume Alex identifies themselves using the pronouns "they/them/theirs." It may change, of course, and this is by no means an assumption that all genderqueer people need use such pronouns.

of social injustice stemming from the rendering of the powerless as the speechless. Furthermore, taken as a collective, the experiences of all those who identify as genderqueer are similarly silenced, paving the way for injustice to affect an entire social class of people like Alex.

Concerning political freedom, Fricker makes this a point in referencing Phillip Petit's contestability criterion. He states that a functioning deliberative democracy needs to meet the three conditions for contestation, which include: a "potential basis for contestation," a "channel or void available by which decisions may be contested," and a "suitable forum in existence for hearing contestations."[4] Being illocutionary silenced, however, disables speakers from contestation. Because Alex's identity was not taken as it was intended in meaning, the immediate jump to the consequence of triviality as stipulated by *ex contradictione quodlibet* strips Alex of their ability to contest this conclusion. From this, they are excluded from securing a certain threshold of political freedom, which Petit stipulates as necessary for a deliberative democracy.

What does this mean for technology?

Returning to my original motivation, the basis of this paper resides in the substantial overlap between formal logic and the logic underlying computer science and artificial intelligence. It is this overlap and the permeation of technology into nearly every crevice of our lives that lends an urgency to my demand to attempt a rectification, or at the very least, acknowledgment of the inflicted epistemic injustice of *ex contradictione quodlibet*. In particular, by accepting formal logic as prior to other epistemic sources, as technology so often does, its stance on contradiction—that triviality necessarily follows—then holds the power to dictate our understanding of the world. By taking the principle as an authority on truth, the ontological may end up following the logical. Our social constructions of the world would be determined by a framework strictly adhering to a dichotomous binary, such that it creates a world where genderqueerness would not exist *a priori*.

In taking into account how the field makes sense of this, it is important to note that recent developments in the field have increasingly shifted from rule-based algorithms to statistical models; in particular, vector semantics have exploded in popularity in building computational models of language.[5] This largely consists in word association: for example, the definition of the word "bank" is determined depending upon whether the sentence contains words alluding to the likes of "money" or "river." Following this, that the bulk of the two formalized propositions of (A) and (B) are

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4 Pettit, 186-187.
5 For a brief overview on how vector semantics works, see the following: https://medium.com/@ram.analytics1/an-introductory-notes-on-vector-semantics-tf-idf-model-and-a-toy-implementation-9046198bf7d and https://web.stanford.edu/~jurafsky/li15/lec3.vector.pdf

identical indicates that they are on the same broad topic of someone being something. Much like the case with many other prepositions and conjunctions, the "not" is not always captured in building the meaning of the proposition.[6]

While negation systems have not become all-around powerful enough to build the meaning of the proposition on their own, the scope of this paper applies to cases on the margins of error where the negation of "not" *is* able to be captured (the choice of which made on account of the fact that the field is headed in that direction). Yet, as I have argued, accommodation of negation in a formal setting leads to instances of epistemic injustice.

§III The Solution: Paraconsistent Logic

To the above, I believe that paraconsistent logic is a strong contestant as a positive solution to the formal infliction of epistemic injustice, its defining characteristic being its rejection of *ex contradictione quodlibet*. Since its inception, a number of influential strands have emerged. For example, among the first was Stanislaw Jaśkowski's discussive logic, where truthfulness is determined by the totality of assertions posited by a single subject. Graham Priest's "Logic of Paradox" introduced a three-valued logic, the third being both true and false, and Newton Da Costa presented logics of formal inconsistency (isolating the instances of inconsistency), which has since been expanded upon by many others, such as Walter Carnielli and Marcelo Coniglio. For the remainder of this section, despite citing several of these logics as solutions to the problems of epistemic injustice, I would like to remain indifferent on which of these specifically proves most favorable.

To reiterate, the problem with *ex contradictione quodlibet* is that it assumes Alex's utterances, technically contradictions in formal logic, do not matter. Priest, however, maintained that inconsistent theories did not necessarily lead to triviality, citing Bohr's theory of the atom. Alex's utterances of (A) and (B) are not inconsistent, but from the standpoint of the listener, it would absurd to argue that this then makes their statements insignificant—if anything, it is the conjunction of the two that makes their speech *especially* relevant.

One might object here, pointing to the goal of logic to approximate the truth. What I have presented may appear as circular in that Alex's gender identification indicates a non-trivial, but inconsistent theory. Yet, the existence of a non-trivial, but inconsistent theory is also what allows Alex to identify the way that they do. To this,

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6 For applied progress in the field, see: Mehrabi, Saeed et al. "DEEPEN: A negation detection system for clinical text incorporating dependency relation into NegEx," Journal of Biomedical Informatics 54 (2015): 213-219 and Wu, Stephen et al. "Negation's Not Solved: Generalizability Versus Optimizability in Clinical Natuarl Language Processing," PLOS One (2014), accessed from https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0112774

I take on the assumption that gender identity is something that is self-promulgated rather than externally imposed, well within the right of an individual to proclaim as theirs as it fosters a knowing self-consciousness capable of validating their own experience.[7]

Counter to classical first-order logic, paraconsistent logic can accommodate the contradiction to uphold the significance of Alex's words. For example, the many-valued logics Priest proposed gives space to inconsistent and non-trivial theories. The truth-value of "both true and false" creates a third dimension of truth-evaluation that keeps the relation from exploding into triviality. The consequences of this for Alex are substantial: by not having their words trivialized, their words are therefore legitimized. The admission of inconsistency erases the inherent bias within the traditionally binary logical system that obscures their social experience. This, in turn, deflects the harms of illocutionary silencing and the formal inflictions of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.

Still, one might consider another potential interpretation of the apparent paradox posed by Alex's utterances of (A) and (B)—namely, what if this is just a matter of language? The epistemic injustice would not be located in the words themselves, but in linguistic conflation. In the case of Alex, one might argue that their utterances of (A) and (B) reflect a variation in the sense of the term "girl" itself, with one being biological and the other social.

While this may be so, the concern assumes a direct causality where thought is prior to language, and hence, the knowledge of two distinguishable senses proves sufficient enough to cast aside this juxtaposition, This, however much it would reconcile the problem, cannot be freely granted. Work in philosophy, linguistics and psychology demonstrates the profound influence of language on thought, whereby some like Donald Davidson, for example, claimed that belief states emerged from public linguistic interaction such that thought and language work in tandem. Psychologist Lera Boroditsky argues further that grammatical gender strongly sways the descriptive attributes of an object,[8] which when taken with Davidson's thesis, strongly suggests that linguistic resources may affect our cognitive understandings. The same can be said of formal resources: as mentioned earlier, the priority of formal logic may lead to an embedding of the binary into our cognitive framework.

In fact, the linguistic aspect might compound the problem of epistemic injustice in formalized language, not even admitting a difference in the biological and the social senses. By way of the formal properties of the term "girl," the biological sense

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7 This derives from strands of the Kantian tradition emphasizing self-knowledge and self-conception.
8 See: Boroditsky, Lera, "How Does our Language Shape the Way We Think?" accessed from https://www.edge.org/conversation/how-does-our-language-shape-the-way-we-think

is inherently conflated with the social, which may result in further iterations of the harm (if not also a further narrowing of the hermeneutical resources).

To this, paraconsistent logic may again play the role of a remedy. Admission of (A) and (B) as contradictory, but non-trivial, allows for both the biological and social senses to hold true. The use of adaptive logics, for example, which offers severance to contact, accounts for internal inconsistency within a single subject. By adapting to different situations, the word "girl" takes on different meanings according to contextual clues and background knowledge, such as Alex's intentions and the very idea of gender queerness. By this, it allows for both senses to be true, but also admits the term in the same sense with respect to the context of an expanded knowledge of genderqueerness.

I have made the claim that paraconsistent logic offers a fruitful response to the challenges posed to formal logic by inconsistent, but non-trivial theories and linguistics. But it is possible to take the argument even further: not only does paraconsistent logic do such work, but it also proves necessary in order to properly convey meaning in formalized language. All of this is to say that the logic itself must not dictate meaning, but rather that, meaning must lead to its formalization. The fact that inconsistency permeates our world must be reflected in formalized language. Applications of paraconsistent logic are growing in data and knowledge bases (Grant 2000), isolating inconsistent material so as to simultaneously admit the two nodes of inconsistency. However, interest in such must be acted upon for the purpose of retaining meaning and preventing epistemic injustice.

One last point to be made on my argument: formal logic as it applies to natural language fails *normatively*, but not necessarily, formally. From the standpoint of logical argumentation, classical first-order logic does indeed succeed. Furthermore, it must also be noted that it does not inflict epistemic injustice in all cases: when *I* utter (A) and (B), one is necessarily true and the other necessarily false *on the basis of how I identify my gender identity*. Classical formal logic succeeds in my case. However, its failure to represent Alex's social experience according to that by which they identity indicates that we *ought* not to take it as an omniscient authority over truth.

The argument I have set forth here is not meant to discredit the standing of formal logic in its entirety, but rather, to elucidate its futility under certain contexts. The claim is meant to provide a normative approach to opening the door to logical pluralism. First-order logic need not be discredited in its totality, but its scope *should* be limited in its application and its position ceded to other logical systems (*viz.* as paraconsistent logic).

Concluding Remarks

In this essay, I have shown that paraconsistent logic serves as a positive solution to the epistemic injustice and associated harms inflicted by classical formal logic in its insistence on *ex contradictione quodlibet*. In particular, because formal logic stipulates a mutually exclusive true-false dichotomy, application of it effectively invalidates speech and information. In cases of genderqueerness, this leads to serious threats in our abilities as epistemic agents as well as in the broader picture of social justice and political freedom. That paraconsistent logic may be a promising logic proves so on account of its acceptance of inconsistency without the consequence of triviality, and its ability to represent the actual character of propositional meaning in a formalized language. As the future of AI is intrinsically bound to formal logic, the consequences of epistemic injustice will only become more evident and tangible lest we adopt some form of paraconsistent logic and adhere to logical pluralism. Accordingly, our fundamental view of formal logic must be tweaked and reevaluated in light of the normative and moral concerns presented previously. ◆

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SOUND AS SILENCE:

Nothingness in the Music of Anton Webern and John Cage

CHENYU BU

> When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in an eternity before and after, the little space I fill engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces whereof I know nothing, and which know nothing of me, I am terrified. The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me.[1]
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> —Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since the rise of modern science, the world has no longer been experienced as an 'enchanted garden,' where nature was meaningful and governed by intrinsic value-filled orders. Evoked by this disenchantment with the world, the senses of loneliness and homelessness are well-captured in French philosopher Blaise Pascal's writings, which—centuries later—are escalated further by existential ideology's disenchantment with being. In *Being and Nothingness*, inspired by the question concerning being raised in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Sartre presents nothingness as the foundation for being and the origin of its nihilation, *i.e.* the non-being. The experience of nothingness makes possible being's encounter with its non-being through the consciousness of freedom. The realization that there is nothing other than the nothingness separating being from non-being is the source of forlornness—anguish[2] in Sartre's terminology—inherent to being itself.

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1 Blaise Pascal, and Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Pascal's Pensées; Introduction by TS Eliot*, (EP Dutton), 1958.
2 Charles B. Guignon, and Derk Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 325.

The notion of the silence of the infinite space invoked by Pascal, however, sheds light upon a broader interpretation of Sartrean nothingness beyond the paradigm of being; namely, to the world of sound. In this essay, I extend the notion of nothingness to silence in contrast with sound and discuss silence as an act of expression and artistic interrogation in contemporary classical music. I propose beginning our discussion with a reconstruction of Sartre's deduction for nothingness through a regressive course of arguments that traces back to being's relation to the world. From there, I provide an exposition of sound based on the concept of a total sound-space[3]—bound by our pure auditory experience while silence as the non-being of sound originates from Sartrean nothingness. I then distinguish between absolute and relative silence, being primarily concerned with the latter, and further explicate the relation of sound to silence as analogous to that of being to non-being. Observing, of course, that varying techniques in music approach silence differently, I focus specifically on contemporary repertoires and analyze the role of silence in the third movement of *Five Pieces for Orchestra* by Anton Webern and *4'33"* by John Cage as an embodiment of nothingness in the sound-space.

2. NON-BEING AND THE ORIGIN OF NOTHINGNESS

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre introduces his discussion of being with the recognition that being—as the totality "man-in-the-world"[4]—is a synthetic relation between *man* and *world*.[5] This relation can only be established in the being by a self-interrogating question,[6] but even the question presupposes both "a being who questions and a being [that] is questioned,"[7] and an expected reply from the being in question of either an affirmation of yes or a negation of no (hence, the question itself permits the possibility of a negative reply).[8] In the case of being, such a negation would imply the objective existence of a non-being, that is, an absence of a synthetic self-relation between being and the being-in-the-world, be it non-knowing with the interrogative attitude, non-existence of a transcendent being, or the non-being of limitation.[9] The permanent possibility of non-being conditions the inquiry about being by limiting its reply (*i.e.* being *is* but *nothing* outside of being, and is, therefore, encompassed with non-being).

The negation is not merely a quality of judgement following a pre-judicative attitude, but rather, a consequence of the apprehension of nothingness that always appears

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3 The phrase "total sound-space" refers to John Cage's discussion of sound: John Cage, *Silence: lectures and writings*, (Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 9.

4 Charles B. Guignon, and Derk Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 310.

5 Ibid, Pg. 310.

6 The term "being" here refers to Heidegger's Dasein in *Being and Time*, i.e. the being to whom the meaning of being is concerned: Charles B. Guignon, and Derk Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 216-217.

7 Guignon and Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, 310.

8 Ibid, Pg. 310.

9 Ibid, Pg. 311.

within the limits of expectation.[10] For instance, a café is full positivity by itself, but when Sartre enters it with the expectation of meeting Pierre there only not to find him, the café recedes into nothingness as the undifferentiated ground in his search for Pierre.[11] In seeking Pierre out, Sartre adopts the attitude of interrogation in expectation of one reply of two possibilities; that is, the presence or the absence of Pierre such that nothingness is not subjective, but rather, a "real event" objectively grounding the negation. Therefore, nothingness is the origin and foundation for the negation.

The negation presupposed by the question concerning being necessitates the objective existence of nothingness. Nothingness, however, is neither *causa sui*—since it does not nihilate itself—nor derived from being (which in its own right possesses full positivity and lacks structure, thereby making it non-relational to nothingness). From this deduction it follows that nothingness originates only from the being for whom the nothingness of being remains in question.[12] In the state of self-detachment, the being whose questions could nihilate nothingness in relation to himself disassociates from the causal series, and then nihilates himself from nothingness anticipating the possibility of non-being from its own being.[13] In other words, nothingness comes to things through their own being, which then, logically, means that their nothingness must belong to them.

3. SILENCE AS NON-BEING OF SOUND

Given that being is such that nothingness comes to the world as the origin of its own non-being, a parallel relation can be reasoned to the auditory world, wherein nothingness can be elicited from sound as the origin of silence. To begin with, sound exists as a particular relation to the total sound-space, bound by our pure auditory experience. The relation of a particular sound to the sound-space is defined by five specific determinants: frequency (pitch), amplitude (loudness), overtone structure (timbre), duration, and morphology (how the sound begins, goes on, and dies away).[14] Since even one alteration of at least one of the five determinants changes how sound is perceived, the relation of sound to the sound-space must be fluid. Therefore, sound could be regarded as a continuum within the total sound-space for which the five determinants are limited by our own sense of audibility.

Now that sound has been presented as a relation to the sound-space, a question concerning sound—corresponding to the question concerning being—could be formulated as follows: is there any five-determinant combination that can determine

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10 Ibid, Pg. 313.
11 Guignon and Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, 316.
12 Ibid, Pg. 319.
13 Ibid, Pg. 320.
14 John Cage, *Silence: lectures and writings*, 9.

a particular sound in relation to the sound-space? Following the deduction, the question itself permits a reply that entails the possibility of a negation: no, such a relation does not exist. What gives rise to such a negation is *silence, i.e.* the sound lacking the five-determinant relation to the sound-space. In the auditory world, this negation implies the objective existence of silence, and it thus follows that sound encompassed with silence in that sound—as a continuum— is defined by its (changing) relation to the sound-space (but nothing outside of it). Hence, silence is the *non-being* of sound with three possible forms: the non-being of knowing if a relation exists, the possibility of non-being of the sound in question, and the non-being of limitation.[15] As previously discussed, a negation is not simply a quality of judgement, but a consequence of the apprehension of nothingness due to the limits of expectation.[16] Therefore, silence, as the negative reply to the question concerning sound has its origin and foundation in Sartrean nothingness.

From here, I would like to pause the regressive deduction to distinguish between two types of silence: absolute silence and relative silence. Silence characterized by the lack of relation seems to imply an absence, or the non-existence of the five-determinant combination, which is the clearly defined opposite of the presence or the existence of such without any quantifiable parameter, which in turn, could scale the "level of existence". Therefore, silence as the lack of relation to the sound-space seems to be dialectically absolute. In reality, however, we cannot perceive any such sound as *absolute silence*. Even if one enters into a sound-proof or anechoic chamber, he can still hear at least two kinds of sound produced by himself: his nerve's systematic operation and his blood's circulation,[17] which both have their own relations to the sound-space—"[t]here is always something to listen to."[18] However, we do perceive silence, or the absence of perceivable sound on various occasions; for example, at a concert between two movements of a symphony, or simply when we enter a quiet library from a busy street. At those moments, no sound from the five-determinant relation comes into the presence of our auditory experience (at least temporarily) because the sounds presented to, and expected by, us—the orchestra or the street sound—disappear, and the sounds outside of our expectation have not yet come into our awareness. It is not difficult to notice that the brief pause of the orchestral sound between movements is filled with the audience's breathing, or perhaps the rustling of clothes, and even a quiet library might be filled with the sound of air flow produced by the ventilation system. Just as the room tone in a movie scene, these sounds normally fall into the background of our unconsciousness where we fail to map them into the sound-space by the five-determinant relations and take them as the silence—the lack of relation to the sound-space. The notion of *relative silence*,

15 I made a reference to Sartre's characterization of three types of non-being: Guignon and Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, 311.
16 See note 10 above.
17 John Cage, *Silence: lectures and writings*, 13.
18 Samuel Beckett, *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, (New York: Grove P, 1967), 35/155.

therefore, describes sounds that we are unaware of, all of which characterized by the absence of a perceivable relation to the sound-space whereby they manifest themselves as silence in our auditory experience. Note that any sound categorized as relative silence always has the potential, given that we are able to adjust our expectation and actively hear it, to become sound to our ears with its own relation to the total sound-space. Since it is the relative silence that we hear as silence, the rest of this paper only concerns itself with relative silence.

Given that silence has its origin and foundation in nothingness, nothingness must objectively exist in order to make our apprehension of silence possible. Similar to the case of being, I argue that nothingness comes into the sound-space as the origin of silence, or of the non-being of sound, precisely through sound itself. On one hand, silence cannot be derived from sound. It would be inconceivable that a particular sound of full positivity in its five-determinant relation at the same time maintains in our awareness a representation of silence as its non-being.[19] The notion of (relative) silence asserts that silence by nature has the potential to possess a relation to sound-space as a continuum. As a result, every heard sound becomes based on a subjective situation constructed essentially by the relationship between sound and another sound (*i.e.* the sound of relative silence, rather than an objective situation where sounds are the negative of silence or vice versa[20]). One should be able to think of sound "without considering it negatively,"[21] that is to say, sound is not conceived as an absence or nihilation of silence. Rather, a particular sound is heard against its (relative) silence in that our perception distinguishes it with the full positivity by our awareness of it. This distinction asserts that we cannot both perceive and be unaware of a particular sound; ergo, it is non-relational to silence, or to its non-being.

On the other hand, silence is not *causa sui*. The property of "nihilating itself"[22] cannot be granted to silence because silence cannot be perceived alone—we always *listen* to something whose existence as a continuum establishes our expectation, such as the sound of our nerve's system operation and the blood's circulation in an anechoic chamber. Even when all sounds actively heard by us suddenly disappear, what has blended into the background of silence immediately emerges in our awareness as the new continuum in the sound-space. Therefore, a sound that recedes to silence, as soon as it is left by itself, will be heard as the sound of full positivity with a specific relation to the sound-space. The interrelation of sound and silence can be considered bi-directional, where silence allows sounds to appear, yet, at the same time depends on the presence of sound to remain its non-existence to our perception.

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19 I made a reference to Sartre's argument that non-being is not derived from being: see note 12 above.

20 "Subjective situation" and "objective situation" are the phrases used by John Cage in the discussion of silence: John Cage, *Silence: lectures and writings*, 14.

21 Eric De Visscher, "'There's no such thing as silence...': John Cage's Poetics of Silence", in *Interface* 18.4 (1989), 259.

22 Guignon and Pereboom, *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, 318.

This "symbiosis of opposites"[23] can be simplified to the fact that something requires nothingness in order to appear and that nothingness requires something in order to maintain its nothingness. The deduction reveals that silence is neither derived from sound nor self-caused, and it follows that nothingness as the origin of silence must be embodied in sound itself as a potential or possibility of becoming its non-being (*i.e.* the silence).

4. SILENCE IN WEBERN, FIVE PIECES FOR ORCHESTRA, III AND CAGE, 4'33"

In modernist music repertoires, silence is considered to be state of "a sonic and/or conceptual ideal"[24] to which a work aspires. The purity, complexity and fragmentary in the sonic state of silence becomes a new compositional focus. Drawn by the perishability of sound and the proximity to nothingness that is feared and simultaneously aspired to, in silence, modernist composers aim to achieve such a state through musical languages. Now given that silence as the non-being of sound has its origin and foundation in Sartrean nothingness, in this section, I discuss the approach to silence in contemporary classical music; specifically, in the third movement of *Five Pieces for Orchestra* by Anton Webern[25] and *4'33"* by John Cage[26] as a way of evoking an experience of Sartrean nothingness.

In his works, Anton Webern appeals to nothingness not by patches of quietness gapped in rests and pauses as the Classic and the early Romantic composers do, but rather, in relying on musical means to evoke the sense of silence as in the third movement of *Five Pieces for Orchestra* (which depicts a mountain vista). With the dynamic marking *pianississimo*,[27] the opening Campanella[28] creates a sense of stillness, which swells with the shimmering sound made by mandolin, guitar, harp, and celesta. Each individual tone in the opening sound's chromatic cluster[29] is struck repeatedly or rolled on strings, and creates in effect a sustained, yet vibrating sonority.[30] Since all but one of the tones of the cluster are a semitone apart from each other, the sound creates a seemingly chaotic silence, but accurately conveys the sound of nature and the serenity residing in the mountain. The violin enters later with a slightly louder dynamic playing a fragmented four-note melody, which is then echoed by a muted

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23 "Symbiosis of opposites" is a phrase Deborah Weagel uses in the discussion of Cage's notion of silence: Deborah Weagel, and John Cage. "Silence in John Cage and Samuel Beckett: 4' 33" and "Waiting for Godot"." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 12 (2002), 6.

24 David Metzer, "Modern Silence," *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2006): 333.

25 Anton Webern, "Sehr langsam und ausserst zart", track 15 on *Webern: Passacaglia / Symphony / Five Pieces*, Ulster Orchestra, Takuo Yuasa, Naxos 8.554841, 2001, compact disc.

26 John Cage, "4'33"", track 14 on *CAGE, J.: Primitive / In a Landscape / A Room / Variations I / Waiting / 4' 33" / Dream / Suite for Toy Piano (Happy Birthday John!) (Cage, Sacchi)*. John Cage. Floraleda Sacchi. Amadeus Arte AAP12001, 2012, compact disc.

27 Musical term, meaning "very very softly".

28 A percussion instrument, meaning "little bell".

29 Musical term, referring to a chord made of several tones in a pitch class.

30 David Metzer, "Modern Silence," *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2006): 340.

horn. As the echo fades away, the previous sonority of stillness gradually converges to silence. The rest of the movement is a continuation of the dwindling of soft sonority with the nothingness. Webern creates the sounds that appear to be fragile in the beginning—with their softness and extreme instability due to the semitones—but as they keep vibrating as the only sound in the piece, we hear them struggling to escape from silence before finally give in. In this piece, the silence is heard with sonic density. The musical means used by Webern to capture the quality of silence become interpreted as stillness, softness, hush, and fragmentation.[31] When something elicits nothing, silences itself becomes the act of expression itself.[32] Webern's piece (1913) premiered much earlier than the publication of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), but it demonstrates at the very least that the once clear distinction between sound and silence had already been blurred well before the French philosopher's investigation of the phenomenon. Retrospectively, Webern's approach to silence through sound could be regarded as a way to evoke the nothingness that Sartre later systematically derives from his notion of being. As a proximity to nothingness, the dwindling soft sonority in the music can easily fall out of our awareness along with silence, but they could always be dissected from silence by its constantly vibrating and changing texture. However, whether it is heard as sound or silence, the nature of the sound itself does not change, since it either possesses or has the potential to possess the definite five-determinant relation to the total sound-space. Therefore, this particular piece by Webern alludes to the later recognition that nothingness as the origin of silence comes from nowhere else but sound itself.

Silence, as realized in later modernist styles, transcends from an act of expression to an attitude of interrogation. John Cage, for example, was the first composer who sought the state of pure silence in his works, and his legendary piece *4'33"* (1952)[33] does not contain even a single note—ushering in four minutes and thirty-three seconds of essential silence as its title indicates. In the text *Silence*, Cage makes a distinction between the intentional and unintentional sound.[34] For a listener, what we traditionally regard as *intentional* is the sound heard with a particular relation to the sound-space, while what regarded as *unintentional* we are unaware of (and it consequently recedes into silence). The sound made by the orchestra at a concert according to the notes on music sheets is the intentional making, while the other sounds, for instance, breathing and clothes rustling, are the unintentional. In *4'33"*, by excluding the instrumental sounds that are normally conceived as intentional, Cage alters the audience's expectation by switching the unintentional sound in the surrounding environment to the intentional—he invites the silence into our auditory

31 Ibid, Pg. 334.
32 Ibid, Pg. 336.
33 The title of this work is the total length in minutes and seconds of the performance. At Woodstock, N.Y., August 29, 1952, the title was 4'33" and the three parts ware 33", 2'40", and 1'20". It was performed by David Tudor, pianist, who indicated the beginnings of parts by closing, the endings by opening, the keyboard lid. However, the work may be performed by any instrumentalist, or combination of instrumentalists and last any length of time.
34 John Cage, *Silence: lectures and writings*, 14.

experience as sounds. Since silence cannot be perceived by itself, the audience are encouraged to listen actively to those sounds that might otherwise be silence for them. Here, standing on the borderland between sound and silence, Cage captures their structural alteration by being conscious of their intimate relationship, thereby demonstrating the relation between being and non-being. Just like the consciousness of being, the consciousness of sound in this piece suspends the presupposed distinction between the intentional and unintentional sound, and in that act, the supposedly unintentional sounds that once were the non-being of sound are now made aware by us and determined by their specific relation to the sound-space as the new continuum in our auditory experience. Since there is nothing that separates sound from silence, as illustrated in this piece by Cage, nothingness slips into the cleavage introduced by the suspension of consciousness. The notion of nothingness, then, elucidates the (non-)identity of silence with sound: silence is the being of sound, in the mode of not being it.

5. IMPLICATION

What are the implications of the abstract dialectic of nothingness in the world of sound to our auditory experience in daily life? Can the interplay between sound and nothingness go beyond the notion of silence? I would like to offer some preliminary sketches to answer these questions in this final section.

In the history of western music, silence has never been equal to sound until the rise of modernism in the early twentieth century. The moments of silence in music had been generally considered as "supposed non-sound", which inevitably served as the backdrop against which 'real sound' could be presented and dissected.[35] Those silent moments in music tend to be experienced as expressive quietness; for example, the tense pauses in the opening measure in Haydn's *String Quartet*, Op. 76, No. 5 "Finale," or the quiet stillness in Introit of Berlioz's *Requiem*. Later, as composers gradually shifted away from the conventional musical elements—such as harmony, melody, or texture—that the classical and romantic period exploited, music was taken to a broader sonic aspect, where silence as the previously supposed absence of expressive utterances became an act of expression itself. With the realization that sound is inseparable from silence, modern composers began to welcome silence in their works. As the boundary between sound and silence is blurred, so does the boundary between what is music and what is not—from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* to Schoenberg's twelve-tone theory to the later serialism led by Boulez. Composers constantly challenged these originally absolute binary distinctions, all of which arguably relate to the existential notion of nothingness, which derived an even broader implication: there is nothing separating something from nothing. As a result, in terms

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35 David Metzer, "Modern Silence," *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2006): 336.

of our own auditory experience, music seems to become an arbitrary limitation to how we perceive the sound in the world. Cage describes music as "an organization of sound,"[36] but what is organization? When we contemplate the question, it seems that everything could be an organization; for example, nature, industry, society, and therefore, anything could be heard as music—as Cage writes himself:

> Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. The sound of a truck at fifty miles per hour. Static between the stations. Rain. We want to capture and control these sounds, to use them not as sound effects but as musical instruments.[37]

All sounds, including "noise," are music. The notion of noise, however, has not been mentioned or discussed in this paper. It is not normally active in our perception because it is too disturbing to be aware of constantly, so it lacks a definite relation to the sound-space, (at least for most of us). At the same time, it is not part of relative silence either because we might find it disturbing even if we are not completely aware of it. Thus, "[n]oise is the last thing that separates us from silence."[38] Given the analogy between the dialectic of being and nothingness and that of sound and silence, an interesting topic left for future discussion might be centered around the notion of noise (an unescapable element from our normal auditory experience) and how it fits into this essay's conceptual scheme of sound and silence, relates to Sartre's understanding of nothingness, and whether or not there is a defining quality to noise such that it does not fall into pure value judgement. ◆

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36 John Cage, *Silence: lectures and writings*, 3.
37 Ibid.
38 David Metzer, "Modern Silence," *The Journal of Musicology,* vol. 23, no. 3 (2006): 369.

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HUMAN (AND) NATURE:
Using Arendt to Reconcile Models of Environmental Ethics

CAROLINE GILLETTE

INTRODUCTION

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt implicitly oscillates between two paradigms that relate the human to nature. Though she neither acknowledges the presence of multiple paradigms nor their apparent contradiction, she alternatively depicts man as part of, and separate from, nature. While these two depictions seem necessarily to conflict, Arendt finds both equally viable and essential to her project. This paper attempts to use the coexistence of these two man-nature paradigms in *The Human Condition* as a model to reconcile a similar tension between two useful—but equally contradictory—man-nature paradigms in Christian environmental ethics.

BACKGROUND

Many scholars of environmental philosophy have previously written on the unique manner in which Arendt understands the relationship between man and nature. Paul Ott holds that Arendt subscribes to a nature-culture dualism, which, he argues, allows humans to honestly acknowledge the inherent opposition between man and nature and to begin to seek a balance between the two (though this author argues that he underestimates the moments of nature-culture monism in Arendt's work).[1] Anne Chapman takes Arendt's earth-world and natural-human dichotomies at face

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1 Paul Ott, "World and Earth: Hannah Arendt and the Human Relationship to Nature," *Ethics, Place & Environment* 12.1 (2009): 1-16.

value and derives an ethics of environmentalism from them.[2] Peter Cannavò, noting moments where Arendt imbues nature with dignity and meaning, extends her wish for the durability of different environments to include the most natural aspects of the human artifice.[3] Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves identifies similar tension between the role of nature in Arendt's critiques of modernity, though he does not extend the tension to her conception of humans in general.[4] Yet, despite all of these examples and the knowledge of this author, Arendt has never been used specifically to analyze theological models of environmental protection.

ARENDT'S *NATURE-MAN* PARADIGM

In one paradigm in *The Human Condition*, Arendt portrays man as inherently part of nature. She calls the earth "the very quintessence of the human condition" and men "the children of nature."[5] The status of man as natural is neither an unhappy accident nor something to overcome, since Arendt bemoans the idea of humans forgetting or leaving nature all together. Her anxiety over modern man's growing alienation from nature frames the book, which in turn, also frames this essay insofar as it uses her understanding of man's relationship with nature as the *natural man* paradigm.

While adhering to the *natural man* paradigm, Arendt cites several ways in which modern man has erroneously convinced himself that he is a distinct and separate entity from nature. For instance, with the development of more abstract fields of mathematics, man prefers to think of natural concepts in the theoretical plane—as if they are something man can only grasp with his mind. As a result, man sees the earth as a third party observer, "from a universal, astrophysical viewpoint, a cosmic standpoint **outside nature itself.**"[6] He believes he holds the same relationship to the earth as anything else in the cosmos, never acknowledging the special relationship that he possesses with it as a species—amongst many—that depends on the earth for its existence. She has similar concerns about the development of modern science, of which "earth alienation became and has remained [its] hallmark" as it became more mathematically-based.[7] She worries that "the modern *reductio scientiae ad mathematicam* has overruled the testimony of nature as witnessed at close range by human senses."[8] That is, science has the same problem as math: it ceased to be a tool to understand what we learn about nature sensually, and has instead become more authoritative about reality than actual nature. Not only does Arendt reject this

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2 Anne Chapman, "The Ways That Nature Matters: The World and the Earth in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Environmental Values* 16, no. 4 (2007): 433-445.

3 Peter F. Cannavò, "Hannah Arendt: Place, World, and Earthly Nature," In *Engaging Nature: Environmentalism and the Political Theory Canon*, ed. Peter F. Cannavò, (Cambridge: MIT, 2014), 253-269.

4 Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, London; New York: Routledge,1994.

5 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2018), 2.

6 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 265, emphasis mine.

7 Ibid, Pg. 264.

8 Ibid, Pg. 267.

view since man can "observ[e] natural phenomena as they were given to him,"[9] but she also concludes that man sees nature firsthand through his senses because he is inextricably in and of it.

The legacy of the Age of Exploration merely compounded these effects further, since mapping the earth made it seem smaller—literally removed man from it—since much of cartography's poetic propriety takes place in the air.

> "The fact that the decisive shrinkage of the earth was the consequence of the invention of the airplane, that is, of leaving the surface of the earth altogether, is like a symbol for the general phenomenon that any decrease of terrestrial distance can be won only at the price of putting a decisive distance between man and earth, of alienating man from his immediate earthly surroundings."[10]

By mapping the corners of the globe, man set up a dichotomous relationship wherein he was the actor and the earth the acted-upon. Moreover, once he finished, rather than realizing how dwarfed he was by its stature, the earth instead became small to him since by man's own hand he could now see the whole structure at once. It no longer seemed like all-encompassing environment; thereby, leading humans to once again think of the earth from a third-person perspective.

Arendt cites a few examples to demonstrate that this earthly alienation has generally saturated modern humans'—not just scientists' and explorers'—view of their nature, referring to two particular ways in which these "earth-bound creatures … have begun to act as though [they] were dwellers of the universe."[11] First, one can see the results of man no longer believing he is of the earth through what he says about space travel. Humans reacted to the successful launch of Sputnik as if it were the first step toward a jailbreak, referring to their continued existence on the earth as "imprisonment."[12] The sentiment that mankind is somehow temporarily "bound to the earth" until it can happily free itself reveals man's entirely new understanding of his place in the universe.[13]

The second piece of evidence that Arendt cites alludes to man's desire to make humans 'not of nature' in the literal sense, referring to the role of bioengineering in order to create life through eugenics, in vitro fertilization and gene editing. Man would not want to do this if he did not already believe that he was not of nature; he is simply making it literal. She specifically states that the "desire to escape from imprisonment to the earth" shares a motivation with the desire to mix 'frozen germ plasm from people of demonstrated ability under the microscope to produce superior

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9 Ibid, Pg. 265.
10 Ibid, Pg. 251.
11 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3.
12 Ibid, Pg. 1.
13 Ibid, Pg. 2.

human beings,' and 'to alter [their] size shape and function.'"[14] Yet, it is important to take note that Arendt objects to any form of man playing God when it comes to the process of humans 'entering the world' because she believes it essential that man remain a part of nature.

Arendt's reason for periodically championing an understanding of man as a part of nature and at other times lamenting his loss of that understanding—remains in her view of humankind—as ultimately inseparable from the earth. She writes that, "earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice."[15] Despite what they might believe, humans are not dwellers of the universe, and the fact remains that they need the earth to survive. It is not clear whether maintaining earthly nature would remain important if, for example, another planet was found with an environment similar to earth's, but as for now, this planet remains irreplaceable.

THE *OPPOSITIONAL MAN* PARADIGM

And yet, the idea that the earth's environment is irreplaceable appears to be contradicted elsewhere in the text. In another passage, Arendt states that artificial environments are just as good, if not better. When discussing the creation of the artificial human realm, she says:

> "In addition to the conditions under which life is given to man on earth, and partly out of them, men constantly create their own, self-made conditions, which, their human origin and their variability notwithstanding, possess the same conditioning power as natural things"[16]

If that is the case, it begs the question of what would be the problem with living in an entirely artificial environment? If humans could survive in a biodome on another planet, it would not just have the capacity to shape the human condition, it would have the exact same conditioning power as the earth does now. Man, then, should be able to exist independently of nature and should be understood as such.

In fact, there are many passages in *The Human Condition* that imply a man-nature dichotomy. In this second Arendtian paradigm, man is inherently separate from, in opposition with—and most importantly—dominant over nature. The problem with modernity in this paradigm is not that humans are too artificial, but that they are too natural. Especially in Arendt's labor-work-action model, the very definition of 'human' depends upon distinguishing it from 'natural.' The remainder of this essay

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9, emphasis mine.

will refer to this understanding of man's relationship with nature as the *oppositional man* paradigm.

While subscribing to the *oppositional man* paradigm, a 'natural man' becomes a contradiction in terms throughout her discussion of labor since Arendt defines it as the "the most natural and least worldly[17] of man's activities" because it does not lastingly convert nature into anything.[18] Its products are consumed and disposed of, but nature's metabolic process remains unaltered. Meanwhile, a person primarily occupied with labor she terms an *animal laborans*, which means "only one, at best the highest, of the animal species which populate the earth."[19] Putting these facts together, if one is primarily engaged in a natural activity as opposed to worldly activities, one does not even fit the definition of human—one is an animal.

Humans, by contrast, are engaged in work and action, both of which imply some degree of artificiality. Work "provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all-natural surroundings,"[20] as it is the process of converting nature into something durably useful to humans. It is particularly concerned with creating the public realm, which Arendt specifically says "is not identical with the earth or with nature."[21] It is only in the public realm—not in nature—that action can take place, and only outside nature, then, that man can exist *qua* man since a life without speech or action "has ceased to be a human life."[22] Bearing this in mind, the 'human' cannot be fully defined with reference only to nature as there must be some reference to the artificial in order to fill out properly the requirements. In a mock Venn diagram, the circle labeled 'humans' is not contained within the circle labeled 'nature' as would be the case in the *natural man* paradigm.

Moreover, the language Arendt uses to depict the relationship between man and nature at times implies not just separation, but also open antagonism. Arendt describes the process of converting nature into something artificial as always having an element of "violation and violence."[23] *Homo faber*, a human employed with work or action,[24] apparently does not just act in a realm separate from nature, but "conducts himself as lord and master of the whole earth," unlike the not-fully-human *animal laborans* who is a servant to it.[25] Moreover, *homo faber* "has always been a destroyer of nature,"[26] since to be fully human, man cannot simply be in charge of nature—which he could do as part of nature—he must 'attack' it. But nature does not remain passive

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17 Note that 'worldly' to Arendt, is the opposite of 'earthly,' parallel to the dichotomy of 'artificial' and 'natural.' It generally means 'pertaining to the human artifice created by work.
18 Ibid, Pg. 101.
19 Ibid, Pg. 84.
20 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.
21 Ibid, Pg. 52.
22 Ibid, Pg. 176.
23 Ibid, Pg. 139.
24 Ibid, Pg. 136.
25 Ibid, Pg. 139.
26 Ibid.

in the face of this 'attack,' for it "forever invades the human artifice, threatening the durability of the world and its fitness for human use."[27]

Rather than simply relieve humans of the above-described problems modernity poses in the *natural man* paradigm, while adhering to the *oppositional man* paradigm, Arendt identifies a completely different problem with the modern period. Seemingly contradicting her initial concerns with modern science and its ilk, in the *oppositional man* paradigm modern humans have almost become too natural. They are not distinct enough from nature since everyone is an *animal laborans* who "acquiesce[s] in a dazed, 'tranquilized,' functional type of behavior."[28] These jobholders do not 'act' in the Arendtian sense, and they—like animals—do not use action to distinguish themselves from each other, but rather, to "abandon [their] individuality."[29] Modern human society, then, is a society of animals based upon this framework.

THE STEWARDSHIP MODEL AND *OPPOSITIONAL MAN*

The above-described contradictions between the two modes of thought contained in *The Human Condition* mirror the conflict between two theological models of ecological responsibility vying for dominance. It might seem inappropriate to draw from Arendt to attempt to solve a theological debate, yet *The Human Condition* does not reject theism, but only insists that it address questions whose answers would not be affected by the existence of a god. Arendt distinguishes between 'the human condition' and 'human nature' as the latter would presuppose a human purpose, and therefore, a creator. She only makes claims about the former, which concerns the condition in which humans happen to find themselves, given that they do exist.[30] Nonetheless, while the discussion that follows concerns models that are theologically derived, the academic debate over them concerns which one is the more practically effective in addressing the ongoing ecological crisis (the theological justification of each is not typically challenged). Taking aside the question of whether each model is valid from a theological standpoint and considering only their relative efficacies, Arendt's work is as appropriate as anyone else's in considering what to do with these two seemingly contradictory positions.

The first and more traditional theological model is less antagonistic than Arendt's *oppositional man* paradigm, but shares with it a view of man as a third-party dominant over nature. Based in The *Book of Genesis*, the stewardship model holds that humans should protect nature because it was given as a service to them by God. It is in their best interest for nature to thrive, and as a check to humanity's shortsightedness, the model holds that humans have dominion over nature but not over God since their wills are subordinate to His for the earth.

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27 Ibid, Pg. 100.
28 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 322.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid, Pg. 10-11.

Pope John Paul II articulates the stewardship model best, as it pertains to environmental protection, in the papal encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. He affirms man's reign over nature, claiming that man is "superior to the other creatures placed by God under his dominion," but reminds his church that "man must remain subject to the will of God."[31] That is, having dominion over the earth does not mean that humans can do whatever they please. They must consider the divine will, which, presumably, desires the preservation of nature so that it may continue to benefit the future generations to come. Accordingly, "development cannot consist only in the use, dominion over and indiscriminate possession of created things and the products of human industry" but rather man must remember that he is created in God's likeness.[32] He must have the same concern for what is in his dominion as God has for what is in God's— humankind.

Many have criticized this model because the human obligation to protect the environment is derived from humankind's role as nature's divinely appointed (yet anthropocentric and paternalistic) caretakers, but not due to any special dignity that nature has in and of itself.[33] Even if humans were the perfect stewards—and they certainly are not—some argue that viewing nature as subordinate to and in service of humanity inevitably leads humans to exploit it.[34] There is no obligation in this model to protect nature in ways that are not eventually useful to man, because nature's value is a consequence of its service to man, leading many environmentalists to prefer a model that views nature as valuable in its own right.

COMPANIONSHIP MODEL AND *NATURAL MAN*

Another theological model that satisfies this desire—the companionship model— echoes Arendt's *natural man* paradigm in that it takes man as existing within nature as one part of it. Pope Francis can be understood to be speaking from this viewpoint in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, wherein he criticizes human development of technology "according to an *undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm*."[35] He states that,

> "This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation."[36]

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31 John Paul II, Encyclical on the Social Concern *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 Dec. 1987) §29, at The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_

32 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §29

33 Robin Attfield, "Environmental Sensitivity and Critiques of Stewardship," in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*, ed. Berry, R. J. (London: T&T Clark, 2006). 76.

34 Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993). 107.

35 Francis I, Encyclical on Care for Our Common Home *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015) §106, at The Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_Enciclica-laudato-si.ht

36 *Laudato Si'*, §106.

This argument is strikingly similar to Arendt's. Pope Francis also worries that modern science makes one falsely believe that nature is something one can grasp and act upon as a third party, expressing concern at believing "empirical science provides a complete explanation of life, the interplay of all creatures and the whole of reality," rather than bypassing nature in its quest for the truth about reality.[37] He would have mankind remember that it exists *within* nature.

Michael and Kenneth Himes articulate their version of this model—which they call a companionship model—in their book *Fullness of Faith*. They also reference Genesis as their biblical source but point instead to the creation of Eve as evidence that man was created to exist in relationality to nature; that is to say, not in complete isolation. Seeing as how God loves all of creation, it is not just other humans that are worthy of being related to; nature is an end in and of itself that is loved by God. Therefore, humans should not consider nature as an 'it' to be acted upon, but rather, they should consider themselves as a part of nature and in mutual companionship with all of its creatures.[38] Humans should protect the environment not out of self-interest, but out of love for creatures as ends within themselves.

Though this model avoids depicting nature as a tool, the problem with this model is its practicality as universal empathy is difficult for most people to conceptualize and consequently to actualize. The stewardship model has problems, but self-interest remains far more efficient. The environmental crisis will have disastrous, lasting effects if drastic policy changes are not made in the coming months and years, and now there is not enough time to rely solely on the hope that humans will realize and become committed to all beings in nature.

BUILDING A SYNCRETIC MODEL AND CONCLUSION

Fortunately, using *The Human Condition* as a model, one can hold these two paradigms simultaneously, without interpreting one as rendering the other invalid when they contradict. Arendt neither acknowledges the apparent tension between her two models, nor does she dwell at length on how they coexist. The best textual resource available for parsing out the relationship between the two paradigms, however, can be found in the prologue when Arendt states that, "[t]he human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and *through life* man remains related to all other living organisms."[39] That is, Arendt does not take the human as one self-contained concept that must fit into a single relational structure with nature.

This possibility becomes more vivid when one considers that *homo faber*, at times, labors. Although *animal laborans* is not human because of his natural activity, his lack

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37 *Laudato Si'*, §199.
38 Himes and Himes, *Fullness of Faith*, 109-110.
39 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2, emphasis mine.

of humanity remains so because he is *primarily* engaged in labor—not that he labors at all. As such, homo faber does not cease to be fully human when he stops acting for a moment to eat a meal—he is alive, he sleeps and he does many natural things, but he is still homo faber and is still fully human. Accordingly, man straddles the natural and artificial—he is of nature in some aspects, but separate from it in others. We can simultaneously know by virtue of the fact that we are alive, that we are of nature, and that we have the capacity to create and to act in the world that we are not natural.

Similarly, using tools provided by Arendt, one does not have to choose between the stewardship and companionship models of justification for preserving the environment, but rather, one can understand the relationship between man and nature to be twofold or piecemeal. Man can exist in relationality to, and be of, nature while still being its steward. In believing both to be true, man is forced to find a balance between self-interest and empathy, wherein the drawbacks of each model are balanced out by the presence of the other. More can be done quickly in the realm of environmental protection if humans can be motivated simultaneously by a belief that a healthy environment is beneficial to them and by another belief that all the creatures within nature are humanity's companions. ◆

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ART, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRUTH
in the Thought of Martin Heidegger

FELIPE DANIEL MONTERO

In mythology, autochthones (from the Ancient Greek αὐτός "self," and χθών "soil"; i.e. "people sprung from earth itself") are those mortals who have sprung from the soil, rocks and trees. They are rooted and belong to the land eternally.[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

In his "Deromanticizing Heidegger," American philosopher Don Ihde attempts to denounce some arbitrary stances in Martin Heidegger's thought in order to propose a philosophy of technology purged of what he deems the philosopher's romantic, and implicitly Nazi, preferences. Ihde begins in stating: "A century after his birth, two very contrary statements can be made concerning Martin Heidegger: First, in a significant sense, he is surely one of the most important founders of the philosophy of technology […] Second, we all also know that he joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party and remained with it through the war […] My question is this: Is there something at the very heart of Heidegger's thought that makes both of these contraries possible?"[2] The aim of this present work attempts to answer Ihde's question following a close reading of Heidegger's public speech "Memorial Address"

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1 Josine H Blok. "Gentrifying Genealogy: On the Genesis of the Athenian Autochthony Myth." In *Ancient Myth. Media, Transformations and Sense-Constructions*, 251–75. Edited by Ueli Dill and Christine Walde. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 261.

2 Don Ihde, *Heidegger's technologies: postphenomenological perspectives*, (New York, Fordham University Press, 2010), 74.

(*Gelassenheit*).[3] If we assess the rest of Heidegger's works in light of this speech, then it is possible to reach a systematic understanding of the relationships that exist between art, technology and truth in Heidegger's thought. In turn, this analysis specifically allows us to appreciate what aspects of Heidegger's philosophy lead him to his so-called romanticism and the consequent error of subscribing to Nazism. Finally, this essay also explains how, in the words uttered ten years after the end of the war, Heidegger himself managed to offer an alternative to fascism so as to confront the threats of modern technology.

II. THE CONCEPT OF EARTH: PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON HEIDEGGER'S ROMANTICISM

Many of Martin Heidegger's works, such works as "The Origin of the Work of Art," or "The Question Concerning Technology," are filled with a romanticization of German country life that remains implicitly related (at least it is hard to argue otherwise) to Heidegger's involvement with Nazism. And yet, this supposed romanticization does not result from a mere ideological preference, but rather, is grounded in the very concept of a homeland (*Heimat*) or a home ground (*heimatlicher Boden*) consequently employed in Heidegger's "*Gelassenheit*" (*n.b.* both of these concepts approximately correspond to what in "The Origin of the Work of Art" he refers to as 'the earth').[4] Heidegger concludes through his phenomenological explication of the work of art that the essence of the work is the strife between earth and world, and that "[w]hat thus happens in the strife […is] the inauguration of the open in the struggle between the unconcealed and the concealed, the coming-out of hiding and deception—this self-contained event is the happening of what we call truth."[5] The making of a work of art produces the earth, comparable to the sound in music, the words in literature or color in the visual arts. Nonetheless, we cannot reduce the earth to such isolated concepts as 'matter' or 'the sensuous' since Heidegger conceives of it as the opaque aspect of beings, which resists being brought to the clearing of intelligibility. In opposition to the earth, the world is that which is opened by the work. Earth and world, then, describe two different dimensions of intelligibility: the opaque, or that which resists interpretation (concealment), and the world as "revealing," or the transparent aspect of entities. Art as "the becoming and happening of truth"[6] manifests then when the earth—as that which closes upon itself—becomes brought to the open of the world in the strife instigated by the work; that is, in the tensional relationship established between what there already is and the elusive aspect of the receding earth.

3 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking.: a translation of Gelassenheit*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1959)
4 Iain D. Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 110
5 Martin Heidegger, "Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks: Erste Ausarbeitung" *Heidegger Studies Vol. 5* (1989): 5-22.

The original text reads: "Was so in der Bestreitung geschieht: die Eröffnung der Offenheit des Widerstreits von Unverborgenem und Verborgenem, das Herauskommen von Verdeckung und Verstellung, — dieses in sich gefügte Geschehen ist das Geschehen dessen, was wir Wahrheit nennen."
6 Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 71.

Despite the alleged ontological complexity of Heidegger's concept of 'earth,' he still can claim that, "[w]e notice that a work of art has flowered in the ground of our homeland. As we hold this simple fact in mind, we cannot help [but remember that] at once […] during the last two centuries great poets and thinkers have been brought forth from the Swabian land. Thinking about it further makes clear at once that Central Germany is likewise such a land, and so are East Prussia, Silesia, and Bohemia."[7] Given these statements, it seems like we must concede to Ihde that Heidegger's romantic tastes are intrinsically linked to his nationalist ideology and represent a great obstacle not only for the philosophy of technology, but also for his aesthetics (including his concept of truth). Nonetheless, this pivot too hurriedly dismisses Heidegger's thought, which can be corrected if we approach his critique of modern technology from the horizon of his remaining corpus.

As stated earlier, Heidegger claims that the essence of the work of art takes place in strife, which itself hosts the occurrence of truth as unconcealment. In "The Question Concerning Technology," the essence of technology as enframing (*Gestell*) is characterized as modernity's hegemonic mode of unconcealing. In this way, art and technology are revealed as diametrically opposed modes of unconcealment or truth, and as Ihde points out—concerning the latter—Heidegger has the tendency to oppose a 'good' technology to a 'bad' one. What characterizes the good technology is its artistic dimension as a result from art not yet being distinguished in its particularity from the rest of technology, as is the case in Greek philosophy—where the concept of *techné* is understood as encompassing the *poiesis* of fine arts since the artist is not distinguished from the artisan. Yet, Ihde understands that Heidegger's distinction has its grounds in subjective preferences; in particular, a nostalgia for traditional modes of production and an ecological awareness that rejects those technologies that "provoke" (herausfordern) nature. In "*Gelassenheit*", Heidegger claims that in order to face the threats that modern technology poses, "[w]e can use technical devices as they ought to be used."[8] Phenomenology (methodologically speaking) precludes this type of normative claims because it must be descriptive. Although we might conclude that in this speech Heidegger betrays his arbitrariness by uttering explicitly normative claims, there are still, nonetheless, many sufficient arguments to doubt this deduction. In the next section, I initially expound Heidegger's characterization of the provocative mode of unconcealing as derived from a more original one, and secondly, offer an interpretation of Heidegger's project in "*Gelassenheit*" that emphasizes the non-normative grounds of his statements. In both of these cases, the original/derived distinction grounds Heidegger's preferences. These must be understood as stemming from a purely phenomenological basis that does not allow itself to be tainted by subjective tastes or a normativity incompatible with the phenomenological method.

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7 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking.: a translation of Gelassenheit*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1959), 47.
8 Ibid, 54.

III. BEYOND ROMANTICISM: THE TRANSCENDENTAL ARTWORK

In the "Question Concerning Technology," after a brief detour through the traditional conception of technology as a means to an end, and a reinterpretation of Aristotle's concept of causality, Heidegger formulates the essence of technology as the *Gestell*, or "enframing". The *Gestell* marks one of the epochs in Heidegger's depiction of the history of western metaphysics, which just as the Idea was for Plato, is the way in which being announces itself to us in our times. What characterizes our epoch is that the *Gestell* interpellates us to unconceal the totality of beings as "stock" (*Bestand*) in the manner of a provocative order or solicitation (*herausfondernde Bestellen*).[9] Discerning what exactly Heidegger considers to be the particular characteristics and limits that enable us to distinguish the provocative mode of unconcealment from non-provocative ones represents a tough exegetical challenge. Why exactly does the hydroelectrical dam on the Rhine provoke Nature whereas the temple does not? In this respect, Ihde opposes Heidegger's description of the Greek temple in the "Origin of the Work of Art" to that which J. Donald Hughes offers in his *Ecology in ancient civilizations*. While Heidegger offers a highly romanticized depiction of the temple, Hughes emphasizes the environmental impact that one can see around the Acropolis. Hughes also mentions how even Plato witnessed these concerning ecological transformations when he visited various temples devoted to the guardian spirits of streams, which had already dried out by his time. Nonetheless, these counterexamples suffer from two defects. First, the contrast between these examples results from Heidegger's stance that we must understand the work of art in the context of the world that is opened up by it. It is then justified to offer a romanticized depiction of the temple since only in this way can we offer an account of its original situation in which the temple properly functions as a work of art. The two examples offered by Hughes depict works whose worlds have already closed. Second, we must concede to Ihde that Hughes' examples demonstrate how the damage done to nature is not something exclusive to modern technology. However, this does not mean that Greek technology provoked nature in a Heideggerian sense. What concerns Heidegger is the complete hegemony of a certain way of approaching beings that threatens to take over all other possible modes of unconcealment. We must take into account that even if the ancient Greeks could be said to have damaged nature just as much as the English did in the times of Francis Bacon, the difference between the two of them— and of unique interest to Heidegger—is how from a certain historical horizon nature can be seen as something to be dominated, which is clearly incompatible with the Greek conception of *physis*.[10]

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9 Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 17.

10 In more analytical terms, the distinction is not quantitative but qualitative. It does not refer to a measurable difference in ecological damage but rather to a change in humanity's relation to nature. The type of comparison that Ihde makes rests in the type of thinking that Heidegger is criticizing, that is, the calculative mode of thought that hopes to settle all questions by way of empirical obervations and measurements.

The ultimate danger that the *Gestell* represents is that all modes of unconcealment would be redirected to that of provocation. This would signify the end of meditative thinking and the total hegemony of what Heidegger terms the calculative mode of thought. Heidegger claims that the *Gestell*, which becomes pervasively evident in our times with the advent of such technologies as the nuclear bomb, began operating and developing itself long ago—being the root of modern science's instrumental character and understanding of nature in terms of measurable extension. In this way, Heidegger worries that the only possibility that would remain for man would be "of pursuing and pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering (*Bestellen*), and of deriving all his standards on this basis. Through this the other possibility is blocked, that man might be admitted more and sooner and ever more primally to the essence of that which is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence his needed belonging to revealing."[11] In the language of *Being and Time*, man would fall into an improper mode of existence in which he would no longer understand himself from himself, and, remain oblivious to his own essence as a consequence of understanding both nature and himself in terms of stock (*Bestand*). Ihde admits that "Heidegger does not simply outright condemn modern technology—its essence, enframing, is simultaneously a revealing of the world and an openness." In spite of this, Ihde dismisses the danger that Heidegger warms us of by introducing the following question: "In short, all of nature, including the human being, will be seen as reduced to a vast resource well (*Bestand*) – but the question then is: for who, or for what end?"[12] However, if we properly understand Heidegger's stance that the *Gestell* grounds an epoch of our understanding of beings, then it does not result from any human will or in favor of any human interests. In this respect, Heidegger's stance regarding the hegemony of the *Gestell* can be compared to Michel Foucault's description of power relations. Instead of the traditional models of power vested in a source of authority, an individual figure or within a particular group, the microphysics of power do not respond to any such central source; instead, oppressed individuals reproduce within themselves these same structures biopolitically.[13] The following quote from Heidegger's "*Gelassenheit*," thus, takes on the following relevance: "these forces, since man has not made them, have moved long since beyond his will and have outgrown his capacity for decision[s]."[14]

Another aspect of Heidegger's romanticism remains in his nationalism as a form of the concept of 'home ground,' which specifically protrudes in "*Gelassenheit*." In relation to art, Heidegger asks "does not the flourishing of any genuine work depend upon its roots in a native soil? […] does man still dwell calmly between heaven and earth? […] is there still a life-giving home-land in whose ground man may stand

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11 Martin Heidegger, *The question concerning technology, and other essays*, (New York, Harper Perennial, 2013): 26.
12 Don Ihde, *Heidegger's technologies: postphenomenological perspectives*. (New York, Fordham University Press, 2010), 81.
13 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 26.
14 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking.: a translation of Gelassenheit*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1959), 51.

rooted, that is, be autochthonic?"[15] These concepts lend themselves easily to an interpretation that relates Heidegger's thought immediately back to his involvement with Nazism, but this issue is far more complex. The concept of earth is the result of a phenomenology of the work of art and his phenomenology—as is the case for the phenomenology of "equipment" towards the beginning of *Being and Time*, which focuses exclusively on the artisanal mode of production—takes the thematic entity under description from the perspective of a primitive experience. In this way, we can say that Heidegger's phenomenology of art, although seeking to arrive at the essence of art as such, focuses on a model of art in which the production of beautiful objects is not yet distinguished in its particularity from the rest of technological production. In this manner, there seems to be a radical difference between the Greek temple as studied in the "Origin of the Work of Art" and the example of Van Gogh's painting "A Pair of Shoes" offered in that very same text. While the essence of the work of art as strife must be descriptive of all forms of art, it seems that the Greek temple is limited to the world of the Greeks, whereas Van Gogh's painting properly reveals to Heidegger the essence of art as such. Iain Thomson claims that "in Van Gogh's painting—the strange space which surrounds these shoes like an underlying and yet also enveloping atmosphere—one can notice that inchoate forms begin to emerge from the background but never quite take a firm shape; in fact, these shapes tend to disappear when one tries to pin them down."[16] In this manner, Van Gogh's painting can be said to reflect the structure of the type of strife that Heidegger deems the essence of the work of art.

Meyer Schapiro famously objected to Heidegger's interpretation of Van Gogh's painting as nothing but a subjective projection of his own romantic preferences, since the shoes that the painting depicted were Van Gogh's own—those of a city man, and not, as he states, those of a countrywoman. Most Heideggerians would claim that Schapiro misses the important aspects of Heidegger's example; namely, the ontological depth sought in the phenomenological description of the work. While I partially agree with this rebuke, the fact that Van Gogh painted his own shoes[17] acquires utmost importance precisely because it means that we are facing an ontological work that reflects on its own being—a transcendental art[18] that reveals

15 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking.: a translation of Gelassenheit*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1959), 47-48.

16 Thomson, Iain D., "Heidegger's Aesthetics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/heidegger-aesthetics/>.

17 Van Gogh's painting then doesn't reveal the world of the country woman but the world of the artist. Here we have an opposition between the two modes of reading the concept of earth. If we take the shoes to be those of the German country woman, we read the earth as soil (in a way reminiscent of the Nazi slogan "blood and soil") whereas if we take them to be the artist's, we are confronted with the concept of earth as that dimension of inteligibility that resists totalitarian closure. I'd venture to claim that Van Gogh's painting could only reveal art's essence to Heidegger in so far as it expresses the artist's relationship to the earth which involves a constantly renewed attempt to seize those fleeting instants that are worthy of being immortalized in the artwork. Derrida seems to be pointing in this direction on *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* and also on *The Truth in Painting*.

18 There is much to develop and further enquire in regard to this concept since the reflexive character of modern art is an extensive phenomenon. I recently came upon a book by literary critic Robert Alter named "Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre," which sees in the Quixote not only the birth of the novel, but also the archetype that contains all the self-reflexive exercises that later novelists will explore and exploit (with the

the conditions of its own possibility. This kind of art differs altogether from what one could deem pre-transcendental art, such as the Greek temple, or any other work of art previous to Cervantes' revolution in putting forth his highly reflective Don Quixote—comparable to that started in philosophy twenty years later by Descartes in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*.[19] We can say, without departing too much from Heidegger, that a work of pre-transcendental art is a sensible manifestation of the spirit of a community or, in less Hegelian terms, that it consolidates its ethno-political identity by providing a tangible foundation for its political organization. Nonetheless, we can only claim that this is art's function because of Heidegger's radical claim that the temple founds the Greek world in the sense of a cosmovision, opening the historical horizon of intelligibility for their understanding of beings. As Heidegger says, "Standing there, the temple first gives to things their look, and to men their outlook on themselves."[20] While the temple's essence is the strife in which the earth is brought to the clearing of human intelligibility, Van Gogh's painting reflects the strife itself, as his broad brushstrokes abandon the defined lines of realism and evoke the elusive and receding aspect of the earth. In this way, we can appreciate the link between Heidegger's aesthetics and nationalism, since as long as an explicit distinction between transcendental and pre-transcendental art does not arise, the concept of 'earth' remains tied to that of a 'home ground' and autochthony. Heidegger's "*Gelassenheit*" functions as an exhortation for thinking about a new autochthony that would allow us to dwell properly in the midst of the irreversible changes brought through modern technology.

Releasement (*Gellasenheit*) is the attitude that Heidegger proposes as that which we need to assume in order to face the threats of modern technology. In "The Experience of Technology: Human-Machine Relations," Ihde states that "there is a 'technosphere' within which we do a good deal of our living, surrounding us in part the way technological artifacts do literally for astronauts and deep sea investigators."[21] Despite his romanticism, Heidegger similarly observes that, "[f]or all of us, the arrangements, devices, and machinery of technology are to a greater or lesser extent indispensable. It would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend on technical devices."[22] Given that we depend on the world of technology or the technosphere, releasement means saying "yes" to modern technology, remembering, however, that

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exception of those who subscribe to literary realism). Furthermore, an interesting dialogue can be opened with Danto's philosophy of art since his periodization of the history of art responds to the degree of self-consciousness evidenced by artists. Danto distinguishes between pre-art and Art, the latter corresponding to the epoch in which artists as the makers of beautiful objects are distinguished from artisans. The infamous claim of the end of art precisely refers to the epoch in history, the 20th century, where art itself becomes philosophical as it explicitly poses the question, "What is art?"

19 We could also mention here another exponent of the Spanish renaissance: the painter Velazquez, known for his self-portrait Las Meninas and his extensive depiction of mirrors.

20 Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

21 Ihde, D. *Technics and praxis*, (Dordrecht, D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1979), 14.

22 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking.: a translation of Gelassenheit*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1959), 53.

the essence of modern technology insofar as it compels us to understand nature merely as a quantitatively measurable reserve of resources (including what we deem the "human resources") threatens to redirect all modes of unconcealment to that of provocation. Since this would signify a fall into an improper mode of existence as we stop reflecting upon ourselves to understand humanity merely in terms of stock, releasement simultaneously has to say "no" to the pervasiveness of the *Gestell*: "We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature."[23] This saying yes to the unavoidable character of technology acknowledges that "a profound change is taking place in man's relation to nature and to the world. But the meaning that reigns in this change remains obscure."[24] Given this opacity in modern technology's essence, the openness to mystery becomes the other part to Heidegger's solution to face the dangers of the *Gestell*. With this openness, Heidegger simultaneously recognizes the imperative to accept the inevitable while humbly admitting that his limitations as a man of a past generation preclude him from imagining how man can dwell properly in the time of the *Gestell*. Insofar as "mystery" is defined by Heidegger as that which shows itself at the same time as it conceals itself, the openness to mystery is the way in which we keep meditative or self-reflexive thought alive by staying in the realm of truth as unconcealment. It is worth noting how the mystery to which we remain open evokes the concept of earth, for one of Heidegger's main contributions to philosophy is his stance that humans first and foremost understand the world through the manipulation of tools and the production of works. Thus, thought as openness to mystery and art are identified—as in Nietzsche's stance that art is the properly metaphysical activity of man or Danto's claim that the defining trait of 20th century art remains its philosophical character since it explicitly poses the question "What is art?"

V. CONCLUSION

Releasement and openness to mystery "grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperiled by it. Releasement toward things and openness to the mystery grants us a vision of a new autochthony, which someday even might be fit to recapture the old and now rapidly disappearing autochthony in a changed form."[25] The lost rooting that Heidegger denounces is not simply the subordination of meditative thinking to calculative thought: the hegemony of modern technology brings about the shortening of all distances in space and time, the erasure of all localisms as a result of globalization. As Ihde claims, "[t]he dramatic space shots of Earth from the moon or a satellite are very un-Heideggerian precisely because they place Earth at a distance

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23 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on thinking: a translation of Gelassenheit*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1959), 54..
24 Ibid, Pg. 55.
25 Ibid.

from Earth-as-ground. But they are also irreversibly part of the postmodern view of Earth-as-globe, with a very different sense of what constitutes our 'home'."[26] As this essay demonstrated, Heidegger recognizes this irreversible aspect of the profound changes in humanity's relation to nature and the world and exhorts us to *think* so that we can build a "home" in the technical world. In this regard, Heidegger's thought is closer than ever to the spirit of Kant's philosophy: not only does he offer a critique of the illegitimate claims of the science of his time that threaten to warp and destroy human freedom, but he also calls upon us to understand our dwelling within the world in cosmopolitan terms. ◆

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