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Nous nous devons de penser, pas de rêver
We owe it to ourselves to think, not to dream
– Vincent Van Gogh

Dialectic has once again decided to take on essays from all different areas of philosophy. To give our readers a taste of a bit of everything, and to broaden the scope of our journal. This term’s edition touches upon a few different subjects, from the disagreements between Camus and Sartre, to mathematical causation.

Our first essay discusses the various moral criteria involved in the analysis of the actions of Cambridge Analytica, Facebook, and GSR before the scandal erupted. Laureline Herz concludes that at least two mandates were violated, that the scandal can ultimately be claimed as a case of political corruption and that analysing it as an instance of a relational injustice helps to identify the different agents involved and the different mandates they were attached to.

In our second paper, Sam Dickson discusses the causal nature of mathematical objects. He outlines various components and arguments in the field of mathematical philosophy, using mathematical constraint to bring him to the conclusion that mathematical objects are indeed causal.

Our third essay provides an analysis of surrealist thought in the short story Terminal beach by J.G. Ballard. Edward Potts discusses the similarities and differences between the surrealist works of André Breton and Ballard himself, arguing that the two writers used the ideas of Sigmund Freud to synthesise the world of dreams with reality.

Vincent Van Gogh in correspondence with his brother, trans. E. J. Paisley
A look through the relationship and subsequent fall out between Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, Jonathan May tackles the definitions of philosophy versus literature. The two being extremely difficult concepts to define, an analysis of the overlap between one and the other provides interesting food for thought.

Another approach to the philosophy of art, Isabel Mitchem uses the concepts developed by Georges Bataille on eroticism and transgression to demonstrate the importance of works of art to destroy social taboos. Subversive art has become more and more popular since the end of the ‘art for art’s sake’ attitude of the 19th century. Now, art plays an important role in society and even in politics.

Finally, Amy Clayton proposes a unique take on the subject of animal testing. Without committing ourselves to the task of proving the existence of animal rights, she discusses the practicalities of animal testing and concludes that any effort to minimise the use of animals in laboratory testing should be applied, but the practice cannot be rightly banned outright until the scientific community have developed suitable alternatives.

Eleanor Jane Paisley
Editor
Cambridge Analytica Facebook GSR scandal: is it a case of corruption? A relational analysis

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A data scandal between Facebook and Cambridge Analytica (CA) in March 2018 revealed that the latter had harvested the personal data of Facebook profiles of over 80 million people without their consent. The personal data was then used for political advertising purposes, all thanks to an app created by Global Science Research (GSR) The affair is frequently debated and described as problematic, but never as a case of corruption. Yet it could be, as many elements seem to indicate; for example, Chris Wylie, former Research Director at CA is described as a whistleblower by major media outlets, and the notion of whistleblowing is connected to acts of corruption (Ceva and Bocchiola 2019). There also seems to be a lack of accountability from the institutions' officeholders, as they put the blame onto the others. So, is the CA-Facebook-GSR scandal a case of corruption?

This essay will be attached to a relational perspective. It will therefore focus more on data use rather than on the political consequences of the scandal. Under this perspective, the relevant agents and mandates attached to them need to be identified. In this essay, I will defend the position that many agents did violate at least two mandates, namely Facebook's terms of service and the FTC 2011 consent decree, and that the scandal can thus be claimed as a case of political corruption. Ultimately, therefore, analysing the scandal as an instance of relational injustice clarifies the different agents involved and the different mandates they were attached to.

1. Cambridge Analytica, Facebook and GSR

CA was a consulting and data analysis company, which had Alexander Nix as its CEO and was funded by conservative American billionaire Robert
Mercer and Trump's campaign chief executive Steve Bannon. The consultancy is mostly known for its services for Trump's 2016 campaign.

Aleksandr Kogan is a data scientist at Cambridge University and the co-founder and co-director of GSR. He created GSR in May 2014 with an associate, Joseph Chancellor, after a meeting with Christopher Wylie, who worked for Strategic Communication Laboratories Elections (SCL) and was CA's Research Director. GSR harvested and processed Facebook data in a commercial deal with SCL, the parent firm of CA.

GSR developed a survey application called ‘thisisyourdigitallife’. Through this app, around 200,000 users were paid $3 to $4 to take a personality test and agreed to have their data collected for academic use. However, Facebook's application programming interface (henceforth ‘API’) from 2006 to 2015 allowed GSR's app not only to collect the personal information of users who agreed to take the survey, but also the personal information of their friends. Therefore, when one agreed to take the survey on GSR's app, they granted Kogan and Chancellor access to data about them and about their friends as well.

Chancellor and Kogan provided CA with a copy of the data. The project's aim was to create voter profiles based on Facebook users' online behavior in order to enhance tailor-made political-ad targeting. Effectively, CA:

\[\ldots\] married the data set to US voter files, which include both demographic information and voting history. \[\ldots\] Cambridge Analytica was able to match at least thirty million Facebook profiles to voter files \[\ldots\] Tying the voter files to the user profiles would have enabled Cambridge Analytica to target advertising inside Facebook with exceptional precision.  

(McNamee 2019: 185)

Both Kogan and Chancellor knew they sold the data for CA's political campaigning purposes. Chancellor eventually left GSR and worked for Facebook, beginning November 2015. By then, GSR had acquired the data of millions of Facebook users. The app was merely promoted as a personality quiz that would be used by Cambridge University researchers for academic purposes. Therefore, the people who granted the app access to their data did not know it
would be used to aid any political campaigns – nor, of course, did their friends, whose data was also harvested.

Eventually, CA purportedly stopped its activities in May 2018. Chancellor left Facebook in September 2018; both Kogan and Nix are, since December 2019, under a consent decree with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). And it was in December 2019 that the FTC asked Facebook—regarding the violation of the FTC 2011 consent decree – to pay a $5 billion settlement.

### 2. Political corruption

Corruption is usually described as the ‘abuse of power by a public official for private gain’ (Miller 2018). Nonetheless, this definition is limited. Certain cases of corruption do not involve a public official, such as the example of abettor ‘[bribing] a boxer to 'throw' a fight’ (Miller 2018). Classic examples of political corruption are bribery, nepotism and the private financing of electoral campaigns. Corruption is not necessarily a matter of illegal acts and is not always economic in nature. It might also be judicial, political, and so on. Finally, not all immoral acts are acts of corruption.

In contemporary discussions of the concept, political corruption is generally conceived as a property of institutions. One of the most popular view of political corruption is the institutional view, which takes corruption to be the property of a system. For Lawrence Lessig, institutional corruption is:

> [...] manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence [...] that undermines the institution’s effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including [...] weakening either the public’s trust in that institution or the institution’s inherent trustworthiness.

(Lessig 2013: 2)

For institutionalists, individual corruption does not matter politically and in order to see if an institution is corrupt, what the institution produces must be analyzed. Hence, political corruption is wrong only when it produces certain negative consequences.
However, this account of political corruption might overlook certain instances of corrupt individual behavior. Occasional cases of bribery or nepotism – a public official hires his husband without looking at the qualifications of the other candidates – might be considered as too isolated and sporadic to cause disruptive mechanisms that would make the institution unable to fulfill its purpose. But considering these cases merely as problems of personal corruption risks overlooking the political salience of these individual acts. Such cases indeed are inconsistent with political ideals such as impartiality and social equality, which do not only concern individual morality but the social and political stage as well (Ceva 2019).

The relational theory of political corruption proposes a solution in order to normatively assess these cases as political corruption. The approach takes institutions to be interrelated systems of roles. There is therefore no institution outside of its officeholders' actions. The rationale is the following: by entering an institution, an individual enters a role. Consequently, she acquires special powers which gives her specific rights and duties; and any individual must exercise their rights and duties in accordance with the terms of their power mandate. Emanuela Ceva (2019: 124) characterizes political corruption as ‘a kind of publicly unaccountable use of an entrusted power of office’. For the relational theory, corruption therefore happens when a public official does not keep up with their power mandate and acts outside of it in a publicly unaccountable way. Ceva's definition of political corruption will be used in this essay.

Indubitably, the way responsibility is attributed in relationalist accounts essentially differs from institutionalist accounts. While institutionalists defend that institutions must be called responsible for corrupted acts, relationalists assert that responsibility must be attributed to officeholders who failed to act in a publicly accountable way. Furthermore, an official's corrupt act will not be assessed as personal corruption but as political corruption, since they act within an office role, under a power mandate. An act of corruption is a moral wrong under a relational perspective because it is the violation of a normative status. When officeholders fail their mandate, they ipso facto cause a relational injustice because they fail to give an account of their conduct which is responsive to the status they have. Corruption is wrong in itself, because it is unjust (Ceva 2019).
Undoubtedly, individuals acted for and under the name of certain companies. This essay will therefore adopt a relationalist perspective, that is, corruption as a relational injustice. The main task is then to identify who are the relevant officeholders and mandates in this story.

3. A relational analysis of the case

As institutions are interrelated systems of roles, Facebook is Zuckerberg in relation with all the members of the team that took decisions and had a role in the misuse of data. The principle applies for both GSR and CA as well. This, however, raises a question: how should we account for responsibility? Even if, being Facebook's CEO, Zuckerberg is the easiest example of a relevant officeholder at Facebook, he is probably not the only official to be held accountable. One of the main investigations of this section will be to specify which agents are the relevant officeholders to take into account. Another central investigation will be identifying the relevant mandates, as the various policies are evasively mentioned in articles.

Also, should Facebook users be considered, in this case, as relevant officeholders? A relationalist would probably answer that, insofar as they are users of the website, they also are members of the organization. Indeed, when one subscribes to Facebook, they agree to the terms of service and the privacy policies put in place. They have a name and acquire a few institutional capacities as a Facebook user. In this sense, they are also part of the story.

Intuitively, the terms of service that both Facebook and GSR set forth might be identified as relevant mandates. Besides, in 2011, Facebook entered into a consent decree with the FTC ‘to settle an eight-count complaint about material misrepresentations to users with respect to privacy’ (McNamee 2019: 188-89). Since 2011, therefore, it seems that Facebook's officeholders are under another mandate, embodied by this decree. The spirit of the settlement clarified that Facebook had the obligation to secure its users' privacy and their data (FTC November 2011). Facebook also had to:

A. clearly and prominently disclose to the user ... (1) the categories of nonpublic user information that will be disclosed to such third parties, (2) the identity or specific categories of such third parties, and (3) that
such sharing exceeds the restrictions imposed by the privacy setting(s) in effect for the user; and
B. obtain the user’s affirmative express consent.

(FTC 2011)

Given this information, it seems clear that Facebook officials, in many respects, did not act according to the letter and spirit of the decree. First, it required explicit and informed consent from the users before their data was shared to third parties, which we know did not happen. Also, Facebook's application programming interface (API) was not secure enough with regards to users' friends' data. Facebook officials, moreover, did not take the right measures in 2014 and 2015 when they learned that the data was shared to a third party. Officials at Facebook did ask the relevant parties to delete the data at the time, but they did not verify whether that was effectively done. Mike Schroepfer, Facebook's chief technology officer since 2013, also admits that they were not proactive in reading and verifying whether GSR app's Terms of Service were consistent with Facebook's:

[Schroepfer] could not say whether Facebook read the terms of use for all apps allowed on the site before changing its policy ... “I can’t say we never read them. I think it wasn’t a requirement that we read them”

(Romm 2018).

One could claim that Facebook's commitment to respect and enforce the spirit of the decree was not better in 2014 than it was in 2011. Consequently, officials at Facebook violated Facebook's own terms as well as the FTC 2011 Consent Decree.

GSR app's terms and conditions were also misleading: it did not well indicate how the personal information gathered by the app would be used and only mentioned the academic purposes, and not the fact that it would be sold to a political firm:

We use this Application to (a) provide people an opportunity to see their predicted personalities based on their Facebook information, and (b) as part of our research on understanding how people's Facebook data can predict different aspects of their lives.

(GSR 2014)
Kogan and Chancellor's endeavor in the story were thereby inconsistent with Facebook's terms of service, which specified that developers should ‘have a privacy policy that tells users what user data [they] are going to use and how [they] will use, display, share, or transfer that data’, and that they ‘will not use, display, share, or transfer a user’s data in a manner inconsistent with [their] privacy policy’ (Facebook 2014). Also, by selling data to a third party and by not making sure it was deleted when asked, GSR's officials did not respect Facebook's terms for developers (ibid.).

When the scandal erupted, Paul Grewal, vice president and Deputy General Counsel of Facebook, wrote a statement which put responsibility on Kogan and CA only (Grewal 2018). Facebook also suspended Kogan and CA from its website, for violating the terms of service. But what about Chancellor? When he left GSR he had already collected most of the data with Kogan. Yet, the statement singles out Kogan. This is problematic inasmuch as it silences part of the story. Grewal and Facebook officials could thereby be accused of not respecting transparency requirements from the FTC Consent Decree.

Finally, the data set formed the essence of CA's business, but Facebook's terms of service did not allow for its commercial uses. CA's officeholders therefore also violated the terms in question.

Many officials did not respect the spirit and letter of the mandates they were under. We may infer that each officeholder mentioned in this story acted in a publicly unaccountable way. The case at hand ultimately appears as a case of political corruption.

Conclusion

Many articles do not explicitly mention the agents that were involved in the scandal. For example, the identities of Chancellor and GSR are often omitted, such as in the Wikipedia's page of the case (Wikipedia contributors, January 2020). Additionally, most articles do not mention Facebook's terms of service, or the 2011 Consent Decree. The story is often half told, and readers cannot thereby understand what is essentially at stake within these dynamics.

By analyzing this case as a relational injustice, both knowledge of many relevant agents and knowledge of the relevant mandates were disclosed.
Facebook users who took the initial test allowed the app for academic use only, and we know the data was used for commercial purposes and sold to a political third party. Ultimately, users were deceived, and Facebook's terms of service were broken. By breaking the mandate in question, Kogan and Chancellor were not publicly accountable for their actions, and neither were Facebook's nor CA's officeholders involved in the story. They thus acted in a corrupt way. Ultimately, Facebook users' normative status was violated: GSR's, Facebook's and CA's officeholders, by not respecting the terms of Facebook's conditions nor the 2011 FTC consent decree, acted in unjust ways towards millions of Facebook users.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ("FTC")
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Mathematical causation

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1. Introduction

This essay discusses a sense in which mathematical objects are causal. I first discuss mathematical constraint as proposed by Marc Lange (2017). I move on to discuss structural equation models (SEMs) and how they are used to represent causal relationships. I then consider the interventionist theory of causation and how it is used to determine genuinely causal relationships. Finally, I consider a constraint relationship which seems straightforwardly causal and then mathematical constraint, demonstrating that they share a structure, and behave identically under interventions. I argue that this warrants the claim that mathematical constraint is causal, and therefore so are mathematical objects.

2. Motivations

Given how we talk about numbers and certain intuitions, mathematical objects seem to be non-spatiotemporal, acausal entities. Benacerraf and others have raised issues with this (Benacerraf 1973 & Liggins 2010). Given the nonspatiotemporal and acausal nature of mathematical objects, how we could know about them is inexplicable; given that knowledge of them seems impossible, there is no reason to posit them.

I want to respond by denying the acausality assumption. I agree that mathematical objects seem to be non-spatiotemporal, but I do not think this bars them from being causal. It seems plausible to suggest that mathematical objects ground the truth of certain things in the world. I argue that this grounding is a kind of causation, even though the mathematical objects are non-spatiotemporal; because they operate on the world via constraint. To use a classic example, we cannot divide 23 strawberries equally between 3 people because 23 is not divisible by 3 (23|ind3). The mathematical fact constrains the way the world can be. It restricts the possible actions Mother can take in dividing the strawberries (Lange 2017). It seems reasonable to say that this is a
grounding claim: in some sense, Mother cannot divide the strawberries thusly in virtue of the fact that 23ind3. I argue that this grounding by constraint is a kind of causation - because it shares a structure with straightforward causal relations.

In structural equation models (SEMs), the constrainers in constraining relationships occupy the same place as causes do in casual relationships, under interventionism, and so we should be willing to accept them as causal. I will discuss a basic SEM, before moving on to more complicated ones. Then, I will dig into an example which I believe demonstrates a structure shared by straightforwardly causal and mathematical constraint relationships.

3. Structural equation models and interventionism

SEMs are built to represent causal relationships. We assign values to variables and dictate some rules on how the variables interact with each other. In the simple case below of a rock hitting a window, we can see how they work:

Variables:

C: Whether Suzy throws the rock
E: Whether the window smashes

Structural equations E=C
Assignment C=1; E=1

Graphical representation:

C=1→E=1

(Wilson 2018a: 741)

C causes E iff interventions changing the value of C affect the value of E in certain ways. This is the interventionist account of causation and is more clearly developed in a number of places such as Woodward (2003). Specifically in relation to causation/grounding unity, this idea is picked up by Wilson (2018a). Wilson proposes that the way interventionism is applied to show that a relationship is causal also works in cases of grounding. For reasons of theoretical unity (amongst others) he proposes that we treat grounding as simply a type of causation, a genus of the same species as it were (Wilson 2018a).
I am quite sympathetic to this idea, although I am not entirely sure it works in all cases. For my purposes, I merely want to show that one specific kind of grounding (by constraint) is identical to one specific type of causation (again, by constraint). I will nonetheless draw on Wilson’s examples intended to show that grounding and causation are the same thing in order to build an understanding of interventionism and SEMs. Considering the model above under an interventionist treatment of causation, we can see how this relationship is causal. We determine whether C causes E by performing interventions on C – for example, preventing its occurrence – and seeing how this affects E. As Woodward states, ‘we can explain what is for a relation between X and Y to be causal by appealing to facts about other causal relations involving I, X and Y and counterfactual claims involving the behaviour of Y under interventions on X’ (Woodward 2003: 105).

Interventionist accounts of causation are a breed of counterfactual account which tend to state that a relationship between A and B is causal based on counterfactuals like ‘if A had not happened, B would not have happened’. Specifically, interventionism specifies whether a relationship between X and Y is causal based upon what would happen if an intervention on X with respect to Y took place. An intervention is a technical notion which is generally defined by four criteria.

I is an intervention on X iff:

1. I causes X;
2. I isolates X from previous causes of X so that the value of X is fixed by I alone;
3. Any path from I to some effect Y goes through X;
4. I is independent of any variable Z which causes Y and is on a path which does not go through X

(Woodward 2003: 105)

If these criteria are met, then an action can appropriately be described as an intervention and the causal relationship can be tested. If an intervention on X with respect to Y causes X, and proceeds to cause Y, we can confirm that X causes Y.
4. Structural equation models and grounding

Now that we have considered interventionism as it concerns straightforward causation and SEMs, we can look at how SEMs also represent grounding relationships. Constructing an appropriate model allows us to highlight those which are examples of a genuine dependence relation. I will not rigidly define appropriateness here as it will vary case to case. However, as an example, if we take smoking to be the sole relevant factor to lung cancer, then on interventionist treatments of causation – under the above model – smoking would not cause lung cancer. This is because in some cases, people smoke and do not develop lung cancer because of other relevant factors, e.g. genetic predisposition. Including these factors in a SEM will give us the correct result, this is where appropriateness comes in. SEMs with the structure of the Suzy case also describe straightforward grounding.

Simple: Singleton

Variables:

C: Whether Socrates exists
E: Whether the singleton set Socrates exists

(Wilson 2018a: 741)

Again, we can see how interventionism will reveal the dependence relation to be genuine through true counterfactuals like ‘if Socrates hadn’t existed, Socrates wouldn’t have existed’.

It is worth stating why interventionism has been chosen over other counterfactual theories of causation. Counterfactual accounts say if ‘if not-A then not-B’, then A caused B, but there are cases when it is also true to say that if not-B then not-A. For example, in the Socrates case, but this is not a causal or grounding relationship. The reverse case tracks the wrong relationship, Wilson (2018a: 736) refers to these as wrong-trackers. Interventionism allows us to avoid these, as Wilson states ‘the distinction between right-tracking and wrong-tracking counterfactuals is then derived in the interventionist framework from a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate causal models. Right-tracking counterfactuals are those with antecedents specifying some combination of interventions on model variables in some appropriate model, and with consequents specifying some values for other model variables in that model’ (Wilson 2018a: 738). Interventionist accounts do not reduce causation, they merely provide a test for when we can describe something as causal. In cases like that above
SEMs can also be used to map causation by omission, a classic example of which is the plant dying because it is not watered. Again, examples of grounding relations can be mapped with the same model, e.g. the set of unicorns is empty because unicorns do not exist.

Omission: Plant

Variables:

C: Whether I water the plant
E: Whether the plant dies

Structural equations E=1-C
Assignment C=0; E=1

Graphical representation:

C=0 → E=1

Once again, we can imagine interventions which would show this to be causal - perhaps putting plants in a lab setting and providing only some with water and determining which die. As mentioned earlier, counterfactual accounts tend to state a relationship as causal if it is the case that had A not happened, B would not have happened. However, sometimes the relationship between A and B is causal, even though this counterfactual is false. This is the case when there is a ‘back-up’ or pre-emptive cause, C, that would have caused B, had A not. Happily though, interventionism and SEMs can deal with pre-emption effectively.

Early pre-emption: marsupials

Variables:

C: Whether Wombat bites into the plant

there is no way to test this because we cannot ‘produce’ {Socrates} not existing as a way of producing the non-existence of Socrates, without already producing the non-existence of Socrates. Interventionism can account for and explain these tough cases in a way that simple counterfactual accounts cannot.
P: Whether Wombat swallows the plant
Q: Whether Kangaroo sees the plant
R: Whether Kangaroo eats the plant
E: Whether the plant is digested

Structural equations P=C R=\max(Q-C, 0) E=\max(P, R)
Assignment C=1; P=1; Q=1; R=0; E=1

Graphical Representation:
\[\begin{align*}
C=1 &\rightarrow P=1 \rightarrow E=1 \\
\Downarrow & \\
Q=1 &\rightarrow R=0
\end{align*}\]

It is not the case that had Wombat not bitten the plant, the plant would not have been digested. This is because Kangaroo was there to eat the plant instead. Performing interventions – such as muzzling Wombat, to see whether Kangaroo would eat the plant instead, or removing Kangaroo from the situation whilst muzzling Wombat, to see whether the plant is still digested – will allow us to determine this relationship to be causal. We can likewise use this model for cases of grounding preemption whereby one metaphysical principle trumps another (Wilson 2018a: 744).

Early pre-emption: constitution

Variables:
C: Whether my particles are arranged me-wise here.
P: Whether there is a person with exactly ten fingers here.
Q: Whether a subset of my particles are arranged me-without-a-little-finger-wise.
R: Whether there is a person with exactly nine fingers here.
E: Whether there is a person here.

(Wilson 2018a: 744-745)

My particles being arranged in this way (C) ultimately grounds the fact that there is a person here (E). Yet, it is false to say that if not-C then not-E because it could have been the case that I had lost a finger, and so that arrangement of particles (Q) would have grounded E.
5. Constraint relationships

With this understanding of SEMs, we can move on to discuss the constraint relationship. I will explain a constraint relationship which is intuitively causal, before showing that the same structure applies to cases of mathematical constraint. The example we will use is of a flowing river. One day, a tree falls and blocks the path of distributary B, resulting in the river having to carve a new path through a different distributary (A). It seems pretty obvious to say the fallen tree has caused the river to flow down distributary A, but it also seems obvious to say the fallen tree has made it impossible for water to flow down distributary B. This seems to be a constraining relationship. The tree has restricted the range of possible actions the water can take. In the strawberries example, the mathematical fact results in a certain distribution of the strawberries being impossible. The mathematical fact constrains the physical world. The cases are parallel and both seem to be equally constraining.

Constraint: river

Graphical representation:

\[
\begin{align*}
Y_x & \rightarrow Z_x \rightarrow C_x \\
X & \rightarrow Y_y \rightarrow Z_y \rightarrow C_y \\
\{X \sim Z_x\}
\end{align*}
\]

The dashed line from X to Zx represents the transitive dependence of Zx upon X, because X ultimately rules out certain other possibilities (Yy, ...YL); it is the ruling out of these other possibilities that causes Zx. We can see how this abstract structure is applicable to the river case by assigning variables.

Variables:
X: Tree falling
Yx: Distributary A open
Zx: Water flows through distributary A
Cx: Consequences
Yy: Distributary B open
Zy: Water flows through distributary B
Cy: Consequences

This is causal because interventions on the value of X will alter the value of the Y variables and this effect will remain stable across counterfactual situations. The value of the Yy variable will also affect the value of the Zx variable. In this way, X is a transitive cause of Zx. We can see this is the correct result by the fact we would readily say that the blocked distributary was the cause of the water flowing down distributary A. Interventions such as preventing the tree from falling, repeated experiments etc. would allow us to test the causal nature of this relationship. However, we can plug in variables relating to the mathematical constraint and the structure will still apply. Moreover, interventions on the same variables will result in the same effects, like so:

X: 23 is indivisible by 3.
Yx: 23 objects divisible between 3 people non-evenly
Zx: The strawberries divisible in a particular way
Cx: Consequences
Yy: 23 objects divisible evenly into 3 groups
Zy: 23 strawberries divisible evenly between 3 people
Cy: Consequences

In the river case, let us suppose we perform an intervention on X, changing its value to 0, i.e. the tree does not fall. We will see that the value of the Zy variable will change to a 1, i.e. water will flow. Equally with the mathematics case, let us suppose that 23 had been divisible by 3. Then it would have been possible to divide 23 objects evenly into 3 groups, so Mother would have divided her 23 strawberries evenly between her 3 children. The Zy variable would have changed in exactly the same way. So on an interventionist treatment, 23ind3, caused 23 strawberries to be indivisible between 3 children. Distributary B being blocked is the cause of the water flowing down distributary A in the same way that 23 objects being indivisible into 3 groups is the cause of Mother distributing the strawberries in the way she ultimately does.

Before concluding, I want to address some potential problematic differences. In the tree case we are discussing straightforward contingent matters which might easily not have held. In the mathematics case we are dealing with necessary truths: things it seems could not have been otherwise. In
In this case it is less clear that we are dealing with causation rather than another relation. We are not just talking about counterfactuals anymore; we need to discuss counterpossibles such as ‘if 23 had been divisible by 3’. However, I think that whilst the modality we are dealing with is different, the structure of these relations is the same and how they behave under interventions is unchanged. This seems more important in determining a relation to be causal; the modality can be considered merely a difference in degree rather than kind.

One might yet query how we make sense of such counterpossibles. It is easy enough to make sense of ‘if the tree had not fallen’ – we know what that world would look like; but with the counterpossible ‘if 23 had been divisible by 3’, it is less clear what that world would look like. If we change that mathematical fact then people might naturally think we have to change more of mathematics. It would cause a ‘ripple’ of changes throughout the world, making any statement about the world trivially true or false. We could make any statement about imagined interventions on mathematical facts but they would not be meaningful and would not allow us to make conclusions about that world.

Marc Lange (2019) considers this objection in response to these issues concerning a different theory. As Lange sees it, there are equally many ‘ripples’ with a lot of ordinary counterfactuals. For example, we tend to think of counterfactuals like ‘if Julius Caesar had been alive today…’ and are happy to say we can hold this fixed without changing anything. However, this is actually not the case because we can ask how it is that Julius Caesar came to be alive today. Did he time travel? Or instead: was the baby which was born and grew up to become Julius Caesar actually born in 2007? But unless he has the same upbringing (arguably impossible given how society has changed) he will not be Julius Caesar. Lange’s point is that although it might seem that ordinary

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3 It is worth justifying the appeal to counterpossibles here, as their invocation may be seen by some as a reductio of this view. Some see counterpossibles as inherent contradictions and even if they meaningful, any truth value they have is held trivially. Indeed it might be said that the orthodox view used to be to dismiss these things and only deal with possible worlds rather than impossible worlds, but this has shifted somewhat. The debate surrounding counterpossibles is lively and their use and value in philosophy is being defended in a number of places. I defer to examples such as Wilson (2018b) for a discussion of their non-triviality, Jago (2013) for a discussion of their meaningfulness and for a more full-fledged and general account, to Berto & Jago (2019). I hope this lively discussion makes the appeal to counterpossibles less initially controversial to those inclined to disagree.
counterfactuals hold with ‘everything else fixed’ this is in fact not the case (Lange 2019). All counterfactuals ripple out because the world is fundamentally connected. So criticising counterpossibles for this is weaker than intended given that it also applies to counterfactuals. In ordinarily-rippling counterfactual cases we can merely stipulate that such counterfactuals are non-trivially true or false, so this should also be available to us in the counterpossible case (Lange 2019). I think Lange has got this right. Just because a counterfactual seems simple to understand does not mean it is and just because a counterpossible seems impossible to understand does not mean it is.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the constraining relationship seems to be a genuine one which operates on the world. Furthermore, it is at least arguable that this relationship shares a structure with relationships we would ordinarily wish to describe as causal. Given this, it seems like we should conclude that constraint is a causal relationship. This means that because mathematical objects are involved in constraint relationships, they are involved in causal relationships.

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Surrealist thought in J.G. Ballard’s *The terminal beach*

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There is a distinct relationship between the fiction of J.G. Ballard and the twentieth century surrealist art movement. Whilst Ballard’s self-professed interest in surrealism lies with the painters, notably Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí, there is a rather significant yet seldom discussed congruence that he maintains with the movement’s co-founder and principal theorist, André Breton. This congruity consists in their mutually shared aim: using the theoretical works of Sigmund Freud in order to synthesise the dream with external reality through the medium of writing. It is the purpose of this paper to make this connection between J.G. Ballard and Breton as well as to examine how their methods of achieving this synthesis diverge from one another.

The first part of this essay examines Breton’s *The manifesto of surrealism* (1969), focusing on his critique of the ‘realistic attitude’ to introduce reasons for the inception of the surrealist movement itself. It will then proceed to demonstrate the way in which Breton uses Freudian concepts to develop his notion of ‘surreality’ and achieve it through the practise of psychic automatism. The second part examines J.G. Ballard’s fiction, focusing on his notion of ‘inner space’, in order to show that it relates to ‘surreality’ through its corresponding aim of achieving the aforementioned synthesis of the dream and waking reality. Furthermore, rather than engaging with the practise of psychic automatism to let the unconscious flow through, as Breton does, Ballard allegorised the Freudian concept of ‘dream condensation’ and forced the unconscious through. His short story entitled *The terminal beach* (2009) will be used to exemplify this claim.

Breton begins *The manifesto of surrealism* by identifying imagination as a force which is capable of emancipating the individual from the ‘realistic attitude’ (1969: 6) that his contemporary society had adopted. Inspired by the positivist tradition from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France, this attitude is an ideological conviction that is responsible for inhibiting one’s capacity for imaginative and emotional thought. Breton defends this notion by consulting the
literary authors Dostoïevsky and Stendhal, criticising their work for being symptomatic of this phenomenon.

For him, Dostoïevsky was an author whose stylistic techniques imbue such realism into his novels that they become wholly constituted by ‘superimposed images’ (ibid.: 7). This renders his readership unable to exercise their imagination, because all aspects of the text are accounted for by the perpetually acute descriptions that Dostoïevsky presents. Breton also criticises Stendhal for stifling the reader’s emotional thought through his over-analysis of a character’s psychological state. He notes that ‘where we really find [the character] again is at the point at which Stendhal has lost them’ (ibid.: 9). His characters become the embodiment of vigorous, spontaneous life (Pearson 1994: 242) when he does not carry out such an analysis, as opposed to them belonging to a ‘readymade human type’ when he does (Breton 1969: 9).

For Breton, this ‘realistic attitude’ established the boundaries of discursive reason to a very difficult point. The boundaries make it so that only the consideration of facts practically experienced by someone may be considered socially appropriate (Gauss 1943: 37). This results in the delegitimisation of any endeavours, practises, and pursuits that are not in conformance with socially accepted norms (Breton 1969: 10). This ideological conviction imposes a circumscription of one’s thinking capacities by confining them to a realistic framework (ibid.), which is a problematic notion for Breton, since he believed that a true, authentic scope of human thought lies beyond the realm of reason, realism, and rationality. Freud’s work was subsequently praised, because ‘the imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights’ (ibid.).

Freud’s psychoanalytic work reinforced Breton’s notion that thought can surpass the sphere in which his contemporary society had placed it. Freud’s book The interpretation of dreams was of particular importance to Breton, because it allowed him to identify the imagination with the unconscious mind, which is something that is apprehended most effectively during the dream-state (Gauss 1943: 38). As such, the wider scope of thought to which Breton endeavoured to access is one’s imaginative capacity. However, the Freudian concepts are implicit in Breton’s Manifesto, making it necessary for me to give an overview of the relevant ones.
Freud determined the psyche to be composed of three central parts: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. The Id expresses the sole purpose of an individual’s life, that of gratifying their innate, atavistic (primitive) desires (Freud 2006: 4). This portion of the psyche is unconscious, and it acts according to the pleasure principle, with no regard for social prohibitions or standards (Freud 1911: 74). The Id is also home to the memories and desires that have been repressed, due to their emotionally painful nature (Freud 1923: 24). From the Id, the Ego develops and gains mastery over the Id’s demands (Freud 2006: 2), operating according to the reality principle, ensuring that the Id is expressed in a socially acceptable format (Freud 1923: 56). Finally, the Superego works to suppress the Id’s demands, and it strives towards ensuring the Ego operates upon idealistic, rather than realistic principles. This is where the moral standards, rules and customs that we have inherited from our parents and society are contained (ibid.).

According to Freud, dreams are a process of fulfilling the Id’s desires in a manner free from moral concern and any social implications (Freud 1997: 34). Latent dream-thoughts carry the Id’s demands, and through the process of dream-work they are distorted. This procedure formulates the dream in a way that appeases the Ego (secondary processing), and results in the manifest, observable dream content appearing as a veiled projection of the unconscious thoughts that lie behind it (Freud 2006: 22).

Freud wished to analyse the manifest content of dreams in order to decipher the dreamer’s latent thoughts, which would allow him to access their unconscious processes. Breton, on the contrary, wanted to probe the mind to uncover the irrational Id (Gauss 1943: 41). For him, this would inform the surrealist quest of subverting the mind’s rational, realistic attitude, and the values that his society had ascribed to it. He argues that the unconscious is necessary in solving the ‘fundamental questions’ of life (Breton 1969: 14), in reference to the expansive capacity for thought that has been constrained by the dominant attitude of realism, and its subsequent need for liberation. The following section will examine his arguments, according to which authentic thought extends beyond the realm of realism, reason, and rationality.

Breton said that the individual is uninhibited from limitation when dreaming. Possibility is no longer a pertinent question for the dreamer, they can ‘kill, fly faster’, and ‘love to [their] heart's content’ (ibid.: 13). Rationality is not
imposed upon dream-events, regardless of their content, and because of this, one grants their experience a certain degree of infallibility; dreams cannot be repudiated, or rejected (ibid.: 2), nor can they be open to interference (ibid.: 13). This is in contrast to everyday waking reality, where the mind rationalises and limits one’s thoughts and actions, in order to appease social norms and conventions. Breton’s fundamental claim is that waking-life is not as sincere as we may have thought, and this is why he refers to it as a ‘phenomenon of interference’ (ibid.: 12) which I will now explain.

The unconscious mind has a continuous stream of thought, which is given free reign within the dream. Waking-life interferes with this continuity (ibid.: 11), because the rationality of the Ego ensures that the unconscious is not free to fully express itself, due to the socially unacceptable and emotionally threatening content and suggestions that arise from the Id. Nevertheless, the unconscious mind is still operational in waking-life, as indicated by the ‘slips and mistakes’ that it makes while in this state (ibid.: 12). An example of this is parapraxis, or the ‘Freudian slip’. This is a psycholinguistic phenomenon whereby a non-intentional word or phrase that is motivated by an unconscious thought is expressed in speech, subsequently giving evidence of the speaker’s true feelings about a matter (Fontaine 2007: 209).

It is in this sense, therefore, that conscious reality is a ‘phenomenon of interference’. It suppresses the unconscious mind’s freedom of expression in order to appease social norms, but it nevertheless continues to be operational. Breton wanted to bring the dream into waking-reality, because doing so would allow for one’s true scope of thought to be realised, and would henceforth subvert the realistic attitude, which opposes the expression of any cognitive content that it deems irrational. This brings us to the philosophical position of surrealism: ‘the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak’ (Breton 1969: 14).

Psychic automatism is Breton’s vehicle for achieving the surreal (ibid.: 26). Whilst this mode of expression encompasses various forms of artistic practise, only his preferred method of automatic writing will be discussed. Without any preconceived subject matter, the automatist must place themselves in a passive state and note down their irrational stream of thought as rapidly as possible. Theoretically, the freedom from rational control which this practise
entails will record the content of the unconscious mind, and reveal its inner operations. For Breton, this is something that is conducive to the creation of ‘the most beautiful images’ (ibid.: 37).

Synonymising beauty or the ‘marvelous’ with what is ‘convulsive’ and irrational\(^4\), Breton sought to bring forth the unconscious Id into the external world by practising automatic writing in order to produce imagery which reflects the irrational, manifest content of the dream. This would invoke suspicion, shock, and convulsion\(^5\) in society, in turn subverting the rational, realistic attitude that it promotes. Subversion would take place because the automatist is expressing thought that is free from the bounds of realism, and all the aesthetic and moral principles that could be associated with it (Breton 1969: 26).

Rather than letting unconscious thought and imagery flow onto the page without deliberation, J.G. Ballard deploys his concept of inner space and forces the unconscious through. Similar to Breton’s notion of ‘surreality’, inner space is the construction of a ‘paradoxical universe’, where the dreamworld and external reality become combined and synthesised (Ballard 2019). In his fiction, this concept is exhibited by demonstrating the ‘synthetic landscapes and plasticity of visual forms’ as being the external equivalents of a character’s psyche and its unconscious processes (ibid.). Fundamentally, it is the portrayal of a character’s psychological state through the use of particular elements of the landscape in which a story takes place. For Ballard, this operates on a level that runs parallel with surrealism, for it bears resemblance to the way in which dreams are constituted (ibid.). It is from here that the surreality in Ballard’s novel can be analysed, in relation to the various artistic and psychoanalytic points previously discussed.

*The terminal beach* revolves around a former military pilot named Traven, who is searching across the island of Eniwetok, a now abandoned military complex, for his deceased wife and son. Throughout the story, the reader examines his mental decline by the degree to which his unconscious mind has merged with the landscape. The story is told in retrospect, and at the

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\(^4\) Notion by Louis Aragon in his *Paris peasant*: “the marvelous is the eruption of the contradiction within the real” (Shattuck 1978: 22)

\(^5\) A psychoanalytic term that describes the involuntary bodily movements of hysterical patients (Baxter 2009: 8)
beginning it is noted that the ‘landscape is a state of mind’ (Ballard 2009: 590). It becomes clear that Ballard portrays this precisely by allegorising Freud’s notion of ‘dream condensation’, which deliberates his concept of inner space.

Dream condensation is the process whereby the mind constructs new ‘unities’ out of certain parts that it would have kept separate in conscious, waking thought (Freud 2006: 22). As a result of this, particular elements of the manifest dream will often represent a number of latent dream thoughts, resulting in the breadth of the manifest content becoming remarkably condensed, in comparison to the abundant material from which it came (ibid.). This is why some elements of a dream often appear to be amalgamated and composite, giving them an ambiguous and contradictory appearance. For example, we may know that this dream-figure is our brother, but he nevertheless resembles our old English teacher, and acts like our best friend.

In the story, the ‘confused topography of the island’ (Ballard 2009: 592) is perceived by Traven in the form of images of his deceased wife and son (ibid: 593). A ‘muffled drumming’ sound emanating from the waves at night are said to have merged with his memories of war and childhood (ibid: 593). This amalgamation of the landscape with Traven’s emotionally painful memories, and the mental images which they represent, is synonymous with the way in which the dreaming mind compresses, condenses and unifies its latent dream-thoughts, presenting them as singular, composite entities in the manifest dream in order to appease the censorious Ego. It is a technique conducive to the irrational imagery that is emblematic of a dream’s manifest content, signifying a connection with Breton’s notion of the marvelous.

It is through this process that Ballard forces through the unconscious. His unification of the dreamworld and external reality demonstrates a certain amount of deliberation, certainly more than Breton’s automatic writing techniques. Nonetheless, the two artists maintain a significant similarity because their work reflects the operations of the unconscious mind and produce the irrational imagery that is symptomatic of it, despite their divergence in artistic method. Moreover, in The terminal beach, Ballard’s inner space is deployed using a concept from the psychoanalytic discipline, a field of study which heavily informed Breton and the surrealist movement itself.
This paper has demonstrated that by using the Freudian notion of the unconscious mind, Breton was able to unite the dream with external reality, and create a ‘surreality’ through the practise of automatic writing. This enabled him to liberate the imagination and demonstrate a scope of thought that had been traditionally oppressed by the ‘realistic attitude’ of his contemporary society. Through an examination of J.G. Ballard’s concept of inner space, this paper furthermore argued that whilst his artistic method diverges from Breton’s, it nevertheless relates to his notion of ‘surreality’, for it aims to unify the dream with conscious, waking-life. Ballard uses Freud’s notion of ‘dream condensation’ to form this unification, which results in a forcing through of the unconscious mind. A process which is significantly opposed to Breton’s psychic automatism practises, as these allow it to flow into waking-reality without the interference of any considerable degree of deliberation, reason, or self-restraint.

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Philosophy and literature, questions and answers: a look through Sartre and Camus

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A definitive feature of philosophy is to question things. Accordingly, studying philosophy often leads to questioning what it means to study philosophy in the first place. This is not an easy question to answer, and ‘what is philosophy?’ remains one of the perennial questions of philosophy. A key part of this is how we distinguish between philosophy and literature. It is not always clear on what grounding one piece of work is categorised as philosophy with literary content and another as literature with philosophical content. An especially striking example of this can be seen in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Both wrote philosophical books, essays, and reviews on the one hand and novels, plays, and literary criticism on the other. Both were even awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Despite this, Sartre has largely been received as a philosopher who dabbled in literature, and Camus, as a litterateur who dabbled in philosophy. It is not particularly clear why this is the case, and an exploration of the two writers’ works alongside one another offers a promising platform to make more sense of what we mean when we distinguish – however subtly – between philosophy and literature.

We began by observing that a definitive feature of philosophy is to question things. A predominant source of the blurred boundaries between philosophy and literature is that literature – especially that which is found to be philosophical – shares this feature: it serves to raise questions. Analysing the differences between not only Sartre and Camus’ works but also their approaches to philosophy, I offer the view that philosophy and literature both serve to ask

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6 For some examples of these kinds of comments see (Forsdick 2007: 120), (Aronson 2005: 16), (Caroll 2007: 62). But it is not necessary to look that far: you are likely, for example, to find Camus in the literature, rather than philosophy, section of your library, and far more likely to study Sartre in a philosophy rather than a literature class.
questions, but philosophy, in contrast with literature, is typically required to offer some attempt at an answer to these.

**Philosophy sticking out like a sore thumb: Camus on Sartre**

The story of Sartre and Camus’ friendship and feud is well-known. They met in Paris during the war, recognised similar themes in one another’s work, became close friends, and had a painfully public falling out. At the time of Camus’ premature death in a car accident the two were still not on speaking terms, but towards the end of Sartre’s life, many years later, he stated that Camus was probably his last real friend. This makes for a fascinating and moving story, but for the purposes of this essay I will concentrate on their interaction before they met, when they first reviewed one another’s work. The two met in June 1943 at the opening of Sartre’s *The flies*; by this time Camus, in 1938, had already reviewed Sartre’s novel *Nausea*, and Sartre, in 1942, had reviewed both Camus’ novel *The stranger* and his philosophical essay *The myth of Sisyphus*. This is important because each of their first impressions of the other’s work reflected exactly how the world often perceives them: Sartre had reservations about Camus’ philosophy and Camus of Sartre’s literature. This provides a remarkable opportunity to explore the nuances of both positions.

To begin, I will be looking at Camus’ reception of *Nausea* (1938). In a faithfully characteristic style, he begins his review with some strong statements:

> A Novel is never anything but a philosophy expressed in images. And in a good novel the philosophy has disappeared into the images. But the philosophy need only spill over into the characters and action for it to stick out like a sore thumb, the plot to lose its authenticity, and the novel it’s life.  

(Camus 1970: 199)

He continues that, in *Nausea* ‘the balance has been broken’ and that ‘the theories do damage to the life [of the novel]’ (ibid.). Camus is appreciative of the lucid images that the novel stirs up and he is sympathetic and fond of the philosophical anguish that it expresses, but he finds that there is something out

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7 For a popular source for this narrative is De Beauvoir (De Beauvoir 1994); see also (Forsdick 2007), and (Aronson 2005).
of place about Sartre’s novel: ‘[b]oth faces of the novel are equally convincing. But taken together, they don’t add up to a work of art’ (ibid.: 200).

Sartre’s novels are indeed sometimes seen almost as guidebooks for his philosophy. Max Charlesworth describes Nausea as ‘a dramatic version of the great philosophical work, Being and nothingness’ (Charlesworth 1976: 92). An especially critical version of this view was expressed by Theodor Adorno who claimed that ‘the content of [Sartre’s] art becomes philosophy’, and that his ‘plays are vehicles for the author’s ideas’ (Adorno 2007: 181-2). Sartre himself even commented that sometimes he felt as though his ‘tome on philosophy was being narrated in the form of small non-philosophical stories’ (Sartre 2008: 10). Even taking this all into account, though, there is nevertheless a clear strength and appeal in Sartre’s novels. It is worth noting that Camus, in the same review of Nausea, states that the work contains ‘indications of limitless gifts’ (Camus 1970: 202), and he gave a more positive review of some of Sartre’s later short stories, describing their ‘great emotional impact’ (ibid.: 205). Camus’ review touches on something deeply relevant about the divide between philosophy and literature because, as his comments should make clear, it is not simply a problem of the presence of philosophical thought in literature (Camus’ novels are also, of course, expressions of his own philosophy). As Camus demonstrates, there is something hard to pinpoint about the nature or balance of Sartre’s philosophy that is not fully suited to the medium of a novel.

The limitations of human thought: Sartre on Camus

To help identify what exactly this may be, we can turn instead to Sartre’s review of Camus’ The stranger (1942). In this review, crucially, he discusses not only The Stranger, but also Camus’ philosophical essay The myth of Sisyphus (1942). Whilst Sartre was positive about The Stranger, he was critical of Camus’ lack of philosophical rigour in The myth of Sisyphus, and condescendingly comments that Camus ‘seems to pride himself on quoting Jaspers, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard whom he seems not to have always truly understood’ (Sartre 2007: 76). Sartre described the essay as a ‘philosophical translation of [Camus’] fictional message’ (ibid.: 80).

Furthermore, in a way that reflects Camus’ comment that a novel is philosophy expressed in images, Sartre wrote: ‘[w]e could say that the aim of The myth of Sisyphus is to convey the idea of the absurd, and that of The
stranger to convey the feeling’ (ibid.: 85). So, the situation is reversed: Camus sees Sartre’s novel as a translation of his philosophical message and Sartre sees Camus’ essay as a translation of his fictional message, but the reasons for this still remain unclear.

Why did Sartre like the version that conveys the ‘feeling’ whilst remaining sceptical of that which conveys the ‘idea’? The answer lies in the nature of Camus’ ‘idea’ itself and the subtle but crucial difference it has with the nature of Sartre’s ideas. Sartre observed that *The stranger*’s theme is the absurdity of the human condition, and ‘Camus merely presents something and is not concerned about justifying what is fundamentally unjustifiable’ (ibid.: 79).

This is the key observation by Sartre, and it is on this basis that we can begin to identify the issue at hand. Camus, in his work, endeavoured to communicate the feeling that human life is absurd and that there seems something paradoxical – or at least contradictory – in expressing this through a rational straightforward prose that argues this to be the case.8 Sartre captures and expresses this dynamic perfectly:

> the very fact that Camus delivers his message in the form of a novel reveals a proud humility. This is not resignation, but an outraged acknowledgement of the limitations of human thought […] The novel’s very existence is proof of the futility of rational reasoning.  

(Sartre 2007: 79-80)

The only problem for Sartre is that Camus did *not* express this view solely through literature but also put it forward in a philosophical essay. However, a philosophical essay is not, as Sartre finds it, an appropriate form for expressing the ‘futility of rational reasoning’. The fitting or unfitting nature of each writer’s philosophical and literary work is therefore a reflection of the deeper difference in the two thinkers’ views regarding the scope and ability of reason in general.

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8 If this strikes the reader as an interesting and/or plausible view, an influential example of this kind of thought is Nussbaum’s work on style as content in *Love’s knowledge*; see, for example, her comment that “certain plausible views about the nature of […] human life cannot be housed with (certain forms) without generating a peculiar implicit contradiction” (Nussbaum 1990: 8).
Camus held a far narrower view of philosophy’s ability to reach the truth and he did not believe that the deepest problems of human existence can be solved by philosophy alone. Camus himself writes: ‘[f]or the absurd man it is not a matter of explaining and solving, but of experiencing and describing’ (Camus 2000: 91). David Caroll expresses and supports this view well, writing that ‘the absurd thinker knows the limits of his knowledge’ (Caroll 2007: 55). Sartre claimed that literature should be ‘pure presentation’, and we can see how well this idea suited Camus. Crucially, Sartre’s criticisms of *The myth of Sisyphus* are based on this same principle: Camus’ opposition to explanations or solutions does not, for Sartre, make for proper philosophy – it seems, on the basis of wider reception, that most critics share Sartre’s view here. The only real ‘assertion’ in Camus’ essay is the limits of conventional or rational philosophy itself; Sartre, on the other hand, was in many ways a rigorous philosopher and a builder of (reasonably) systematic ideas. This is why his philosophy is more recognisable as ‘philosophy’.

This dynamic works in both ways, and we can therefore turn this same dynamic against Sartre on the topic of literature: Sartre’s more constructive view of rational philosophy, arguments and solutions, does not make such captivating or powerful literature. Even though Sartre attempted only to present his philosophical ideas in his literature – as opposed to arguing for them or directly displaying them to be true – the very nature of these philosophical ideas themselves are not as befitting to literature as are those of Camus. The very nature of Sartre’s philosophy is geared to arguments that make claims about the nature of the world and they are not, therefore, well suited to the medium of a novel in the same way that a less structured philosophy is not well suited to the medium of a philosophical essay.

Questions, and the potential of answers

In reference to his own writings, Sartre stated that if one writes non-philosophical works ‘while still ruminating on philosophy […] every page, every line suffers from hernia’ (Sartre 2005: 10). The distinction between philosophy and literature that I have presented is that it is not simply an issue of philosophy seeping into a novel. Instead, it relates to the significance of underlying differences in the type of philosophy itself. Sartre, unlike Camus, has a much higher opinion of philosophy’s ability to render the world comprehensible. Camus wrote extensively on the conflict between our desire for
clarity and the absurdity of the world; the only meaning offered is a lack of meaning itself. Sartre, in comparison, attempted to give structured answers to many of life’s problems, and this demonstrates his belief in philosophy’s capacity to do this. The philosophies of both writers are heavily present in their literature, but these philosophies – although they share many fundamental ideas and therefore may seem similar – are actually of an entirely different type.

This difference between the two writers can signal what could be regarded as a key difference between philosophy and literature itself: philosophy typically attempts to give, or at least explore, answers to questions, whereas literature typically focuses on illustrating and presenting questions, indirectly encouraging the reader to construct their own answers. This perspective would not only explain why ‘existentialist’ philosophers who tend to be more critical of conventional philosophy are often drawn to writing novels, it could also explain why some unconventional or reactionary philosophers, for example Nietzsche or Kierkegaard, are frequently found to be ‘literary’. Of course, both of these activities – solving problems and exploring problems – are in some sense ‘philosophical’, and in this light we can appreciate the idea that Camus’ novels have philosophical content of a different nature. Similarly, Sartre’s philosophy is not out of balance in his literature, but rather his philosophical content is of a more conventional type of philosophy than most novelists, and this simply makes it seem somewhat out of place, making it stand out more. The philosophy present in a work of literature should limit itself to a questioning stance, and, likewise, the literary content of a philosophical essay should not prevent it from offering some form of an answer.

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How can the bataillean concepts of erotism and transgression be used to understand subversive artwork?

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The French theorist Georges Bataille was a prominent thinker during the first half of the twentieth century. Working as an essayist, novelist and philosopher, he was primarily concerned with the prescient issues of his socio-political contemporary reality, broadly criticising it for its inhibiting and alienating effect on the individual. His works, such as Eroticism and the Story of the eye, posited concepts such as eroticism and transgression as remedial to this situation. This essay will explore both of these concepts and explain their respective definitions and connection to each other. These two concepts have specific meaning for Bataille, this paper will therefore elucidate their meaning in reference to his understanding. The argument which will be expressed in this essay is the assertion that using these Bataillean concepts will provide a greater and more coherent understanding of the nature of subversive artwork. This argument will be developed through close observation of individual photographs selected from the complete oeuvre of surrealist photographer Dora Maar, discussing the images using a Bataillean perspective.

Eroticism, for Bataille, is a concept which is largely understood through the terms: ‘discontinuity’ and ‘continuity,’ and the connection between erotism and death. He initially provides a loose definition that eroticism ‘[…]is assenting to life up to the point of death’ (Bataille 1986: 11). Whilst Bataille points out the ‘psychological quest’ (ibid.) of eroticism and erotic activity is not geared towards reproduction, he begins his argument by using reproduction as a demonstration of the flux between discontinuous and continuous existence. In the process of reproduction, we all exist as discontinuous beings, meaning we have a distinct self which is disconnected and separated from all other beings. In both asexual and sexual creatures, the discontinuous being splits into two, or two discontinuous beings unite, to create another being – in this moment they have continuous existence, until this second being is split from the first, or the
sexual act is over (Noys 2000: 82-83). Continuous being can be understood as unity between beings, rather than them being separate. Death is integral in this fluctuation between discontinuity and continuity, as in this moment where a new being is formed, the beings experience an instant of continuity through the ‘death and disappearance of the separate beings.’ (Bataille 1986: 14). From this it can be inferred that sexual activity is an act which pushes us towards death, namely, the death of individuality and the disconnected self.

The loss of the self, which is a quintessential feature of eroticism, is inherently violent for Bataille. It pushes us towards death, which is ‘the most violent thing’, it ‘jerks us out of a tenacious obsession with the lastingness of our discontinuous being’ (Bataille 1986: 17). This violence is what keeps us in flux between discontinuity and continuity, we are never able to achieve a completely continuous existence, rather we constantly strive to achieve this continuity through eroticism. Our erotic desires and impulses are directed toward the ‘dissolution’ (ibid.) of our selfhood and attaining a state of continuity. Eroticism is distinguished from what Bataille calls ‘animal sexuality’ through its ability to call ‘inner life into play’ (ibid.: 29), this is referring to the idea that in human sexuality, man’s consciousness is also at work; rather than purely sexual action (Pawlett 2016: 78). Erotic activity involves the questioning of oneself and one’s being – by attempting to overcome his sense of being, man is questioning himself.

The idea of taboo is inextricably tied to eroticism for Bataille. A taboo can be understood as a limit which regulates the way we behave - socially or legally: something may be viewed as iniquitous by society at large even though it is technically permissible, or it may be banned by law all together. The function of taboos is essentially to regulate both sexuality and violence or death (Noys 2000: 84). Bataille suggests that the cause of this limitation on behaviour is work. Man lives in the rational world which is work-oriented, he is encouraged to strive for efficient utility and maximum productivity, our inherent violent impulses, which revolve around sexuality and death, are not compatible with this lifestyle. Bataille argues that ‘if we were unable to repress these impulses, we should not be able to work, but work introduces the very reason for repressing them’ (1986: 41). There is no room for giving into our impulses and participating in violent or sexual acts, as these have an adverse effect on our productivity, we must limit this type of behaviour in order to maximise productivity. This idea is evident in Bataille’s assertion that ‘taboos are there to
make work possible’ (ibid.: 68). Hence, it can be inferred that work, and the subsequent taboos which it creates, is arguably what imposes a discontinuous existence upon man, causing him to be isolated and disconnected from others.

Transgression is a violation of the taboo, acting in a way which is not permissible by law. Bataille distinguishes between two types of transgression: limited and limitless. The example of a limited transgression which he provides is war. The commandment ‘thou shalt not kill’ is generally upheld and regarded as a taboo within society, however, this taboo is violated consistently and on a mass scale in the incident of war, in which acts of violence and murder are condoned. Bataille recognises this contradiction and puts it down to the influence of human emotions on urges: ‘When a negative emotion has the upper hand, we must obey the taboo. When a positive emotion is in the ascendant, we violate it’ (Bataille 1986: 64). In limited transgressions, the community organises their collective urges, which drive the transgression of the taboo, this subsequently leads to organised violence, such as war – it is purposeful and intentional, rather than purely animalistic (ibid.: 64-65). These organised transgressions and taboos are essential in the functioning of society: they allow the ‘thresholds’ set by taboos to be crossed, without damaging the taboo itself, and prevent the descendance of man into animal violence (ibid.).

Limitless transgressions are those in which ‘violence over-reaches the bounds of the taboo’ (ibid.: 66). This refers to cases in which organised transgression, which is still governed by reason, becomes accelerated by further violent urges that have become more difficult to suppress once an initial transgression has occurred, leading to further disorder – this bares closer resemblance to the animalistic violence previously mentioned. The example provided by Bataille are the actions which occur following the death of a sovereign, who may have been the ‘guarantee’ of taboos. He provides the case of events on the Sandwich Islands in the wake of the king’s death. This death supposedly gives rise to the committing of ‘all the acts looked on as criminal in ordinary times’ (ibid.), this includes arson, theft, murder and prostitution. The fact that these events are subsequent to death is important for Bataille, as death signifies the ultimate act of violence and transgression, thus people see how ‘ineffectual’ the taboos are in this moment, allowing all violent urges to be ‘unleashed’. These acts of sacrilege end when the body of the king has decayed, he no longer resembles the dead (Bataille 1986: 67). This is because there is no longer the presence of
death to symbolise the fragility of taboos that pushes people towards the fulfilment of their urges, thus they become imposed once more.

Bataille’s concepts of discontinuity and continuity directly relate to his explication of the relationship between taboo and transgression. For Bataille, the idea of transgression is vital in being able to achieve continuity. Transgression relies on taboo and vice-versa, they are codependent concepts. For transgression to occur, there must first be taboos in place to regulate behaviour so that there is something to be violated in a transgressive act. Likewise, for a taboo to exist, there must be the potential for someone to act in a way other than what these limits impose. Noys points out that these two concepts must be ‘irreconcilable’ because it is their consistent conflict and tension which ‘drives eroticism to its ultimate intensity’ (2000: 84). It is important to recognise that for Bataille, the taboo can never be overcome or destroyed, no matter how often or intensely one transgresses it: they rely on each other for their very existence and without each other, neither could operate (Bataille 1986: 40).

Whilst this explanation of Bataille’s concept of transgression revolved largely around acts of physical violence, it is important to understand how this also connects to eroticism. Since transgression is the violation of taboos, it can also be understood as a method of disconnecting from the self, which is crafted by a life of work, and achieving moments of continuity. Thus, it can be inferred that acts of eroticism can function as transgressive acts, as they too strive after continuity. Eroticism involves the death of an individual sense of being, it brings subjects together and allows them to form a unity in which they achieve a moment of continuous existence. Hence, the purpose of eroticism and transgression is symmetrical – eroticism serves as a transgressive act which violates the regulations on sexual activity imposed by taboos, it is the channelling of sexual and violent urges that cannot be utilised in labour.

Subversive artworks are those which challenge traditional notions of what constitutes art. These works came about during the period of modernism, which was roughly between 1850 and 1950, through movements such as Dadaism and surrealism. The artists and the artworks they produced during this period of modernism are regarded as the ‘avant-garde,’ it was radical in nature and had a shock value unlike any work which came beforehand. I shall be focusing on the works of French photographer and artist Dora Maar, specifically, her surrealist photographs from the 1930s and 40s. In 1929, Bataille coined the phrase
‘l’informe’ which means formlessness – this was a concept used to describe the destruction of categories and ‘knocking art off its metaphorical pedestal’ (Tate art terms). Bataille’s macabre themes of death, transgression and eroticism can be used to examine subversive artworks as they display a physical embodiment of such themes and demonstrate formlessness. It is important to mention, however, that Bataille did not align himself with the surrealist movement, after disagreements with its founder, André Breton. However, this paper’s application of Bataille to Maar’s work will be strictly focused on her photographs as examples of subversive artwork, not the works or ideas of the surrealist movement in general.

Dora Maar’s 1936 piece *Portrait of Ubu* (*figure 1*) depicts a jarred zoological specimen – the foetus of an armadillo, using a close-range style which further warps the distortion created by the glass jar and the liquid inside. This piece can easily be identified as a subversive artwork, encapsulating the theme of death and the Bataillean concept of l’informe. Prior to the modernist era, the focus of art was to imitate the beauty that was seen in the world, Maar’s piece seems almost to be doing the opposite, capturing the premature death of a creature and using a style which distorts the corpse of the foetus, making it seem even more grotesque. Through a Bataillean perspective, this piece of subversive work can be understood as a transgression of the traditions of art which are imposed by taboos. Maar is focusing on the ugly and obscene, her work is subverting the taboos imposed on artwork by representing something dark and violent – which correlates to Bataille’s understanding of the urges that humans suppress whilst living in accordance to the taboos. Death is an integral element of Bataille’s philosophy, it is what grants us continuity and tears at the

*Figure 1: Maar, Dora. (1936) Portrait of Ubu.*
fabric of our selfhood which is forged through labour. Thus, this photograph can be viewed almost as provocative, in the sense that it portrays the dead as art, it bestows importance upon death in the same way that Bataille does. Whilst Dora Maar’s work demonstrates the transgression and subversion of traditional artistic practices, the subject matter that she chooses to photograph in some of her photography can arguably be understood through another strand of Bataille’s philosophy – eroticism. I will be examining this idea through a Bataillean perspective of her untitled collage piece from 1940 (figure 2). The focal point of the image depicts a young boy holding the shirtless body of a man. He appears to be standing in a shadowy, distorted hallway whilst a semi-nude woman dressed as a centurion stands behind him. The work itself is a photo-collage, the two boys and the woman are in fact separate photographs which have been applied onto an image of the interior of a gothic building. The entire composition of this photograph is bizarre and fully captures Maar’s participation in the surrealist movement, as it seems to picture something almost out of a dream, or nightmare. She has intentionally merged these images together to form an image which overall feels peculiar to its viewer, as each element seems out of place. Her work aims to incorporate the imagery of the dream into reality, to subvert the conventional rationality of the artwork before the modernist era.

The Bataillean understanding of this image is delivered through Maar’s synthesis of sexuality and violence to form what Bataille understands as eroticism. The element of nudity, which is supplied by each of the figures in the image, provides a sense of sexuality to the photograph. But the way in which it is composed – with distorted shadows, bizarre characters, and distressed expression, gives rise to a sense of violence, which, as previously mentioned, is
inherent to eroticism. This combination of sexuality and violence will be further demonstrated through a close analysis of the image. In figure 2 the body which the boy is carrying is nude, but the way in which he is held gives the impression of a corpse, as he appears limp and lifeless with no real expression to his face. Furthermore, the woman at the back of the photograph is dressed in a sexual manner, with skin-tight fabric exposing almost the entirety of her body, but she simultaneously wears the helmet of a centurion and holding a weapon – the spear. She is adorned with objects which possess violent connotations. The photographs capture living subjects, with a certain sense of violent sexuality – whilst these subjects are alive, there is a sense of death to the image that is furthered by the deep shadows and darkness, the synthesis of which eludes to death. This mirrors Bataille’s assertion that ‘eroticism… is assenting to life up to the point of death’ (Bataille 1986: 11).

To conclude, it is clear that the concepts of eroticism and transgression connect through their shared objective – violating the taboos which aim to regulate man’s behaviour in order to maximise his productivity in a world which is consumed by labour. Eroticism essentially functions as transgressive activity: these gestures strive after continuity and a sense of community, allowing us to become detached from our discontinuous selves, which remain distinct and isolated from others. When observing subversive artwork, these Bataillean concepts provide a crucial insight into the context behind such work. Eroticism and transgression allow us to understand why an artist may incorporate the themes that make their work subversive and in addition to this, they can help us understand how and why the subversive artworks from the period of Modernism came into being.

Bibliography


Should animal testing be banned, outright?

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In this essay, I will discuss animal testing and whether morality demands such practices are banned. Firstly, some points of clarification must be made. The term ‘animal testing’ is broad, encompassing all types of animal experimentation, from cosmetic testing to medical experiments. From here on, I will exclude cosmetic testing from my discussion due to the lack of debate surrounding the morality of cosmetic testing. Using animals as subjects for cosmetic purposes is undoubtedly immoral in the modern world as new products are not fundamentally necessary to the well-being of human beings. The modern stance is that if companies must produce new products, they must avoid harmful animal experiments.

Additionally, I will exclude animal testing which does not cause harm to the subjects involved. The case for the immorality of animal experimentation rests upon the notion that such experiments involve harming animals physically or mentally. Although some animal-rights advocates argue that there is something fundamentally wrong in treating animals as subjects of experiments (vis. Peter Singer), I believe that so long as the animals’ environments are successfully mimicked and they are not made to experience pain or suffering, there is nothing immoral about harmless animal tests. So, by ‘animal testing’, I refer to tests which cause harm to those involved and aim to further medical research.

I will be arguing for Engel Jr’s ‘commonsense case’ (Engel Jr 2016: 309), which claims principles embedded in our common sense oppose animal testing and so, animal testing should be banned. To fully develop my argument I will also be looking at Cohen's contrasting view-point which argues in favour of animal testing using his premise that animals lack rights, therefore using them for our own benefits can be morally justified (Cohen 1986). Regardless of whether one is willing to accept animals into the moral community or value them equally to humanity, our practical interests favour reducing animal testing and the scientific community’s reliance on its results. Using animals as
comparative models to humans is unreliable and causes severe damage to human health as well as that of the animals involved. The positive outcomes of animal testing are not abundant enough to justify causing such harm; the amount of medical progression owing to animal testing is often majorly overstated, whilst failures go ignored to avoid public condemnation (Engel Jr 2016).

I believe that animal testing cannot be morally justified, however I disagree animal testing should be outright banned; that is, not until the alternative methods are readily available. Although testing is unreliable, it would be damaging to the scientific community to ban all animal testing immediately as this would put one of the most abundant methods of research outside their grip without a replacement. Animal research is something which scientists, governments, and the public must work towards reducing to the absolute minimum without putting a stop to research. It is important to place more focus on developing alternatives so this immoral practice can be put to rest.

Engel Jr presents three commonsense principles which he argues are at least implicitly held by everybody. For Engel Jr, a subject is ‘sentient’ if it has the capacity to experience suffering:

P1) It is wrong to intentionally harm conscious sentient animals for no good reason.
P2) It is wrong to cause conscious sentient animals to suffer for no good reason.
P3) It is wrong to kill conscious sentient animals for no good reason.

(Engel Jr 2016: 311)

From these follow a further three principles specific to the issue at hand:

P4) It is wrong to intentionally perform harmful experiments on conscious sentient animals for no good reason.
P5) It is wrong to perform painful experiments on conscious sentient animals for no good reason.
P6) It is wrong to perform lethal experiments on conscious sentient animals for no good reason.

(ibid.)
He argues that these principles follow our commonsense morality and aims to show the impermissibility of animal testing due to its inconsistency with these principles. I agree these principles should not be up for serious ethical debate.

Engel Jr’s appeal to common sense requires that the principles aren’t of an absolutist nature, since relying on distinct moral theories and absolute principles is not convincing enough. For example, P4 doesn’t hold that it is always wrong to intentionally perform harmful experiments, only that it’s wrong if there are no good reasons behind the experiments. This is what Engel Jr focuses on to establish the immorality of animal testing; his primary aim is to show that there are no good reasons behind experiments, therefore the harm, suffering, and/or death involved cannot be morally justified.

The most frequent justification provided for experimentation is that animal testing is necessary for medical progress and the pursuit of human health. This ‘ends justify the means’ reasoning on which such claims are based is acknowledged in Engel Jr’s commonsense principles as they allow for the existence of good reasons to justify animal testing. Consequently, rather than rejecting medical progress as a sufficient means to act, Engel Jr rejects the notion that the animal testing attains the level of medical progress it is purported to on the grounds that animal models cannot be equated to the human body. Three reasons can be given to explain why animal testing is unreliable:

1. The effects the laboratory environment and other variables have on study outcomes
2. The differences between animal models of disease and human diseases, and
3. The species differences in physiology and genetics.

(Akhatar 2015)

I will now explain each of these in further detail. Firstly, the artificial environments of experimentations often cause distress and abnormal behaviours in animals which affect the accuracy of test results (Morgan 2007). For example, rats, amongst other animals, suffer from contagious anxiety which can result in chronic inflammation and increased blood pressures and heart rates upon seeing other rats being decapitated (ibid.). This adds more variables to the experiments which hinder the reliability of results (Ahkatar 2015).
Secondly, scientists struggle to produce identical models of human disease in animal subjects due to the complexities of diseases. Even when successful models are produced, the differences between animal and human biology result in diseases having varied effects (Dirnagl 2006). This is the most significant factor in the unreliability of animal testing, the fact that the structure and intricacies of human biology greatly vary from that of animals. For example, scientists face difficulties in replicating human strokes, despite the implementation of specific guidelines to improve the applicability of strokes by STAIR (Stroke Treatment Academic Industry) in 1999 and 2009 (Fisher 2009). Even when a treatment effective against ischemic strokes, called NYX-059, in animals was developed, it proved ineffective in human clinical trials (Akhtar 2015; Garylewski 2007). These results can be explained by the unreliability of animal models to reproduce human physiology; for example, many animals don’t naturally develop atherosclerosis, a leading cause of ischemic stroke (Garylewski 2007).

Differences like the one above explain why over 114 potential therapies tested on animals against strokes failed in human trials (O’Collins 2006). Furthermore, even animals who have very similar DNA to human beings are not biologically similar enough to produce successful results. In 2006, 9 out of 10 successful drugs in makhak monkeys (who share 93% of human DNA), failed in human clinical studies.

The three reasons explained above demonstrate how unreliable animal testing is and explain why 96% of drugs that pass preclinical testing fail to make it into the market (Pippin 2013). Yet further evidence against the notion that animal testing is vital for medical progress can be provided by identifying the four types of unsuccessful results: false negatives, false positives, false efficacy predictors, and false inefficacy predictors (Engel Jr 2016).

Firstly, false negatives are results where a drug proves negative in causing animals harm but causes harm when given to humans. For example, from 1958-61, thalidomide was prescribed to pregnant women in the UK despite human clinical trials showing thalidomide's teratogenic effect in humans, as such harmful effects could not be reproduced in animal species (Engel Jr 2016: 313; Greek and Greek 2000). Only after thalidomide’s teratogenicity was reproduced in one breed of rabbit was it removed from the market – the rabbits were given doses 25-300 times higher than given to human beings. This reliance on animal
testing resulted in over 10,000 children born without limbs, a consequence which could have been avoided had human results been favoured (Engel Jr 2016).

False positives are results where a drug proves positive in harming an animal but is safe for humans. For example, ibuprofen causes liver failure in dogs (Gollakner 2018). This factor is damaging to human health because helpful drugs are dismissed before they reach the market due to their negative effect on animals.

False efficacy predictors are results where a drug has shown effective in curing animals but is ineffective for humans (without causing direct harm). Unfortunately, the abundance of false efficacy predictors is unnervingly high; approximately nine out of ten drugs developed in laboratories fail in human studies (Von Eschenbach 2006).

Finally, false inefficacy predictors are results where a drug has proven ineffective in animals (without causing harm) but is effective for humans, resulting in the rejection of drugs which would be beneficial to human health.

There are countless cases of these four results providing evidence that animal testing is extremely unreliable in determining which drugs are safe or effective for human beings. Not only does a reliance on animal models reduce efficient medical progression, it also causes direct harm to human health by allowing dangerous medications into the market. This challenges the general misconception that the pursuit of human health justifies animal testing; therefore, if Engel Jr’s commonsense principles are accepted, we must conclude harmful animal testing is immoral as there are no good reasons to justify the practice.

The commonsense approach emphasises the importance of moving away from animal experimentation for the sake of morality and the development of medicine. However, it seems that commonsense also implies that it would be wrong to immediately ban animal experiments without an appropriate replacement. This is because there would be no development whatsoever in the fields of medicine which require experiments on subjects. Although animal testing produces minimal positive outcomes, it seems that this is better than banning animal experiments without any alternative and there being no
possibility for positive developments. We should aim to find an alternative to using animals for medical purposes as soon as possible to minimise animal suffering and to increase the success rates of research. I believe the intense suffering involved in animal experimentation calls for a direct replacement to be made as soon as a method of equal success is developed and sufficiently available. That is, we cannot wait around until a far more successful option is available, but we must replace all animal subjects as soon as we have found an alternative so as to minimise causing harm, suffering, and death to animals for no good reason (Engel Jr 2016).

Some attempt to justify animal experimentation such as Cohen who claims animals lack rights and so experimenting on rightless subjects is justified by the benefits produced for those within the moral community (Cohen 1986). A right is defined as a claim which one may exercise against another, meaning only ‘beings who actually do, or can, make moral claims against one another’ have rights (ibid.: 865). This results in the subjects of rights being necessarily limited to human beings since animals are unable to morally praise or blame others, meaning they lack autonomy and are not part of the moral community. Not only does Cohen argue that we are justified in using animals to further human health, but that we are obliged to do so to avoid the harm that would be caused to humanity if animal testing was banned.

However, Cohen makes an unjustified leap from establishing animals’ lack rights to the claim that this justifies animal testing. Cohen’s criteria for whether or not a being has rights would reject some human beings, like the severely disabled, from the moral community, but it is undoubtedly clear that experimenting on the disabled would go against our moral compasses. As Regan argues, the morality of animal experimentation cannot purely be measured upon the benefits produced for humans as otherwise, clearly immoral experiments would have to be justified like the Willowbreck case of 1956-71 where hepatitis tests were conducted on retarded children, resulting in the discovery of the two forms of hepatitis and consequently, contributing to the development of hepatitis A and B vaccines (Regan 2014). So, it is clear that there is no necessary link between a being’s lack of rights and the moral permissibility of experimentation, therefore, Cohen fails to justify animal experimentation.
Furthermore, Singer criticises Cohen’s argument by claiming that treating animals in a way which would be condemned if done to human beings is speciesist (Singer 1946). To Singer, an animal's ability to suffer grants them interests which should be considered equally when making moral decisions. Granting higher value to one's own species is as immoral as racism or sexism since it involves favouring one’s own arbitrarily and egotistically.

Cohen's response to such criticisms is as follows: human beings are different from other animals since moral agency is ‘an essential feature of humanity’ (Cohen 1986: 866), speciesism is therefore justified on the grounds that other animals are not moral agents. Disabled human beings who cannot use their moral functions are not discarded from the moral community as they have the potential to exercise rights against others, whereas other animals lack such potential. Cohen even argues that utilitarianism requires speciesism when it comes to experimentation since to stop testing would result in great human harm (Cohen 1986).

However, it still seems more must be considered when considering the justification of animal testing than the presence of rights. Animals are sentient creatures who experience suffering and pain, phenomenons we aim to avoid when establishing moral practices involving human beings. If we avoid causing human pain then we should avoid causing other animals pain. The absence of rights does not diminish the significance of pain to the extent that we can justify causing such suffering. Cohen somewhat agrees with this by stating that animals should be treated as humanely as possible, but the benefits for human beings justifies painful experimentation on animals because of our significance as moral agents (Cohen 1986).

If, however, we accept Engel Jr’s commonsense principles (2016) concerning the immorality of intentionally harming animals for no good reason and the earlier demonstrated empirical belief that the benefits of experimentation are minimal even damaging, then Cohen’s conclusion in favour of animal testing must be rejected. This doesn't mean Cohen’s case for animals lacking rights must be rejected; one can still hold human beings as morally more significant whilst accepting the common sense argument against experimentation due to the lack of good reasons involved in causing pain and suffering for animals. Even someone who views animals as completely rightless could not justify causing needless suffering.
In conclusion, Engel Jr’s common-sense argument is the best approach to establish the immorality of animal experimentation and to challenge Cohen’s conclusion. The argument does not commit to any controversial moral beliefs, meaning anyone can accept it. Regan and Singer’s arguments, although strong, commit to the belief that animals have rights or that speciesism is intrinsically immoral. By establishing common sense beliefs that causing animals harm is only justified with good reason and then demonstrating that the reasons and successes of medical progress are greatly overstated, Engel Jr shows that experimentation is immoral. As argued earlier, this does not mean that animal testing should be immediately banned, but that we should adopt the three Rs of replacement, reduction, and refinement (Canadian Council on Animal Care 2019) until medical research can be pursued without using animal subjects. Alternatives are being produced such as the fluorescein leakage method (Peta 2019) which are more reliable and do not cause the suffering of experimentation. Developing such methods must be made a priority so medical research can be more successful and, most importantly, moral.

Bibliography


Interview with Dr Pierre-Henri Tavoillot of the Sorbonne-Université, Paris

Dr Pierre-Henri Tavoillot is a lecturer at the university Sorbonne-Paris IV and President of the International College of Philosophy, originally founded by Jaques Derrida. His work includes the study of the Enlightenment philosophers as well as modern political philosophy, particularly the art of governance. He defends a conception of philosophy which promotes open dialogue and collaboration with the social sciences. His latest book Comment gouverner un people-roi ? was listed in Le Monde as one of the 100 best books of 2019.9

1. Philosophy being such a broad discipline, how do you choose a speciality that you know you can work with? According to you, why is political philosophy important, given the number of other specialities available for research?

I appreciate the way in which Kant defines philosophy as an attempt to respond to three central questions:

1) What can I know?
Theoretical philosophy deals with the knowledge of the world.

2) What must I do?
Practical philosophy is the domain of human action, especially when human actions implicate other human beings.

3) What can I aspire to?
This is where philosophy is concerned with the meaning of life, within the limits of finite human existence. Current tendencies involve fragmenting these questions into specialisations: philosophy of science, logic, mind, ethics (bioethics, animal rights, feminism etc.), the philosophy of art, phenomenology, history of philosophy and theology. Philosophy itself suffers from the

9 An original French copy or Dr Tavoillot’s answers is available on request via the Dialectic’s editor.
developing complexity of scientific knowledge, which is more significant now than ever. However, for me it's important to bear in mind at all times the above three questions and their link with philosophy, because they are fundamental. Theory has no use unless it is put into practice, and practice is only pertinent if it can help to answer the question ‘Why should we be alive, and how can we live well?’ From this point of view, political philosophy can seem confined to practicality, but this is wrong. Political philosophy requires theory: what is society? How can we define different systems, among them democracy? Of course, political philosophy is practical, not least because it poses the political question ‘how can we live without killing each other?’ What is the ultimate goal of society? Since we can’t afford to leave out the question of ‘public safety’, why should we live together at all, to what end does that serve? Man is a peculiar animal which, unable to survive alone, never manages well living with others. Alone, he will die; in society, he will kill! Hence, it is necessary to reflect on politics and, especially these days, to reflect on democracy which to me appears not only as Churchill said, ‘the worst system with the exception of all the others’, but the best system possible.

2. Who has influenced you the most, and why were you influenced by them?

The writers who have most influenced me are the philosophers of the Renaissance, notably those of the German Enlightenment. I wrote my thesis on ‘Kant and the pantheism controversy’. This heavily metaphysical question holds a lot of evidently political weight since it fuelled the great European dispute over the French Revolution: Burke, Constant and Toqueville. I’ve also been influenced by mentors that have become friends, such as Luc Ferry, Marcel Gauchet, Robert Legros, and Gilles Lipovetsky. I’ve also been influenced by many that I have read fervently outside of specifically philosophical domains such as Raymond Aron, François Furet, Louis Dumont. All of them share the characteristic of not being constrained to one discipline or another; instead they call upon all their knowledge in order to increase the overall intelligibility of reality.

3. Can you give an example of your philosophy; be it a theory, hypothesis or an argument?
There is a ruling principle in my work: the question of adulthood. How can we best lead our individual lives on the path of existence, from the cradle to the grave? This of course consists in my work on the ethics of each stage of life (Philosophie des âges de la vie. Pourquoi grandir ? Pourquoi vieillir ? translates to ‘Philosophy of the stages of life. Why grow up? Why grow old?’ 2007).

How can we collectively manage a society? I work on this in my research into politics and the “recipe” for democracy, with the hope that it will reach its full form (Qui doit gouverner ? translates to ‘Who must govern?’ 2011, and Comment gouverner un peuple-roi ? translates to ‘How to rule a people-monarch?’ 2019). But my work is also more generally focused on modern civilisation: how does the modern adult think? Kant defined Enlightenment as the emergence of man from self-imposed immaturity. This immaturity, according to him, is the incapacity to use one’s own autonomous understanding without being led by someone else. I’m interested in further study on this subject but in the more specific context of globalisation and technological innovation, where the question has become much more complicated.

My book, The bee (and the) philosopher: The amazing journey into the hive of wisdom (English translation of L’ Abeille (et le) Philosophe: Étonnant voyage dans la ruche des sages 2015) is a bit peripheral to this subject, although it is an attempt to tell the story of the philosopher, following the way in which western thinkers have used the study of bees to understand and analyse everything: life, virtue, work, society, beauty, eternity, sanctity, ecology, economy etc. At first, this project was basically a joke between myself and my brother, who studied philosophy but is a beekeeper by trade. Twenty years on, it became a project that produced my book, which was surprisingly successful even in China, where it was translated two years ago. Over there, it turns out, they refer to us as the “bee brothers” (les frères abeilles)!

My latest work on democracy and its required political method came out of a fairly simple question, ‘who are the people?’. The response consists in

10 “Les lumières se définissent comme la sortie de l’homme hors de l’état de minorité, où il se maintient par sa propre faute. La minorité est l’incapacité de se servir de son propre entendement sans être dirigé par un autre.” Emmanuel Kant, Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ? (or What is Enlightenment? from the German, Was ist Aufklärung ?) 1784.
exploring and articulating the different possible answers before I defined what I call the “people-method”. In a few words: a democratic people is one which manages to go through four indispensable stages of collective decision making:

1. Elections
2. Deliberations
3. Decisions
4. Accountability

These are the four necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying and assuring the existence of both a people and democracy within a state or society. If any one of these stages has been omitted, the democratic people is lost. That said, there are extreme complexities and difficulties in this type of political system, since each of the four stages requires different and sometimes contradictory political methods. This is the greatest challenge of our times, including in times of crises much like the one we currently find ourselves in.

Bibliography of Dr Pierre-Henri Tavoillot’s work mentioned above

University of York Philosophy Society

University of York Philosophy Society (or YUPS) is a society which exists to explore the breadth and depths of philosophy through a variety of events, ranging from public lectures and debates to events and socials, such as YUPS games, Philsocoffee, Karaoke night, and of course Dialectic.

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