

Pensées

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Revue étudiante canadienne de philosophie

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McGill University
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Pensées

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Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the sixth volume of *Pensées: the Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy*. It is the mandate of *Pensées* to display some of the excellent philosophic works of Canadian undergraduates and to provide both a standard and a resource for writing undergraduate philosophy papers. All those involved in the production of *Pensées* hope that students, teachers, and philosophers will benefit from this journal in their pursuit of knowledge.

Volume 6 presents a revival and renewal of *Pensées*. The contents of this journal include the thoughts of teacher and philosopher Maurice Lagueur and the work of three students. It is my hope that future volumes of this journal will continue to cast light on new ideas and provide inspiration to those who take the time to question their surroundings and have the tenacity to search for answers.

This year, *Pensées* chose to report on Quebecois philosopher Maurice Lagueux and his path through philosophy. He has demonstrated commitment to philosophy by pursuing questions in diverse fields of study: first in that of history, then economics, and more recently the discipline of architecture. After years of research, writing, and teaching, he has kept alive a passion for philosophy that many of us may be kindling now in our undergraduate studies.

Furthermore, this volume reinstates the bilingual tradition of *Pensées*. For this reason, the transcript of our interview with Lagueux is available in both French – the original language of the interview – and English.

Je suis heureuse d'avoir réanimé et rehaussé *Pensées Canadiennes* cette année. Grâce aux efforts de nos rédacteurs bilingues, nous publions un entretien mené en français avec le professeur et philosophe Maurice Lagueux. Toutefois, je suis navrée que cette édition n'inclut pas d'article francophone. J'encourage donc les étudiants francophones ou ceux parmi les anglophones rédigeant en français de soumettre leurs articles pour notre prochaine édition à pensees.canadiennes@gmail.com.

Nous voulons poursuivre dans cette voie bilingue pour le prochain numéro, en continuant de bénéficier des apports des cultures anglophones et francophones. Cette double approche enrichit non seulement nos contributions, nous permet également de présenter deux approches philosophiques complémentaires dont la réunion est propre au Canada.

Starting this year, *Pensées* displays cover art and chapter illustrations. With this

addition, *Pensées* reaches out to those who might still judge a book by its cover, and encourages them to conduct a more complete consideration of its contents.

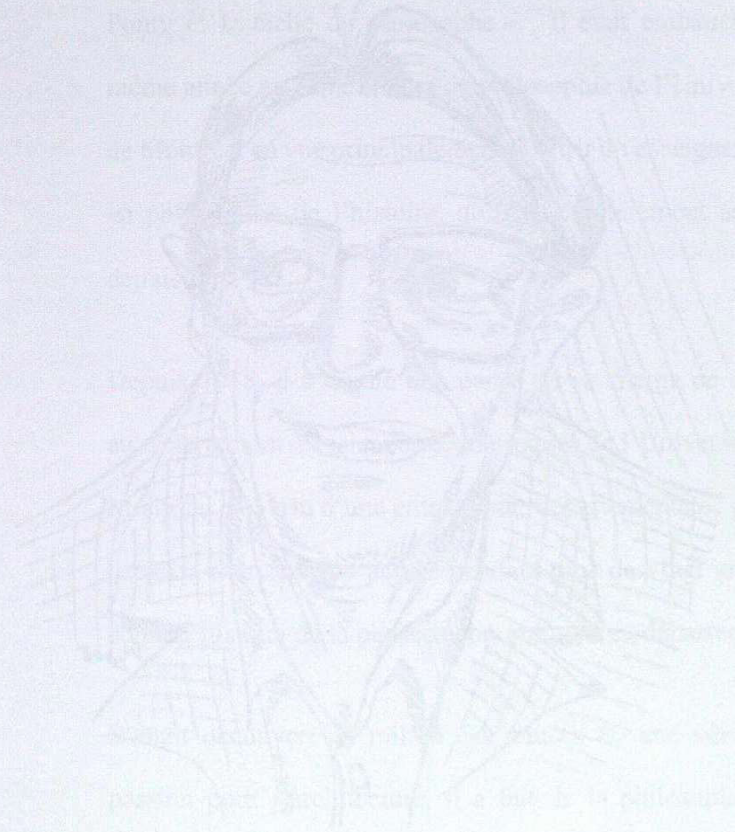
In selecting the essays published in *Pensées*, our editors looked for original works that evoked interest and debate. On the basis of these assessments, graduate students and professors further reviewed the best papers. The three papers selected for publication were recognized for their clear exposition of ideas and coherent argument. In the essay "Ethics, Evolution and Primate Society," Tessa Bruce-Brown argues for utilitarian morality, which she defends through an examination of the hierarchical structure of ape societies. In the essay "The Place of the Modern Museum within Art's Historicity of Life," Iwa Nawrocki provides insight into the modern museum and its relationship to art. In the essay "How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?" Margot Strohming compares theories on fiction by both Kripke and Currie to provide a more comprehensive understanding of authorship.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the production and success of *Pensées*. Foremost are 5 editors I was fortunate enough to work with, and who were as enthused as I was to reestablish *Pensées* as a distinguished journal. Iwa Nawrocki, thank you for providing the idea and supplying the initiative to add art to the cover and chapters of *Pensées*, broadening interest and appeal. Stephanie Latella, you were instrumental in the final phase of editing student papers and you were always available to help in all facets of journal production despite scholastic obligations. I look forward to next year's *Pensées*, confident that it will thrive in your hands.

Tessa Blanchfield, Elizabeth Shurcliff and Rebecca Tuvel, thank you for your constant support throughout the assembly of this journal: I particularly appreciate your commitment in helping establish a new foundation for *Pensées*. Although not an editor, Téo Leroux-Blackburn, your know-how allowed me to navigate the sponsor system with relative ease; your help was crucial in financing this journal.

I am honored, along with the editorial board, to present the new *Pensées*, revamped. I encourage students from across Canada and Canadian students abroad to collaborate in the growth of *Pensées* and assist in the publication of next year's edition. I invite all interested to send their papers, comments and suggestions to pensees.canadiennes@gmail.com. I hope you find *Pensées*, Vol. 6, an engaging read.

Brittany Johnson
Editor-in-Chief
Montréal, 2007





Un entretien avec Maurice Lagueux

Biographie: En 1965, Maurice Lagueux a complété à l'Université de Paris, sous la direction de Paul Ricœur, un doctorat de 3e cycle en philosophie intitulé « Merleau-Ponty et la tâche du philosophe ». Il était embauché la même année au département de philosophie de l'Université de Montréal en vue principalement d'offrir un enseignement en philosophie de l'histoire, qu'il a régulièrement assuré depuis lors.

Depuis 1978, il a donné une partie de sa charge de cours au département de sciences économiques de l'Université de Montréal en vertu d'une entente interdépartementale. C'est dans ce cadre qu'il a assuré pendant plus de vingt ans un cours d'histoire de la pensée économique à ce département.

S'étant découvert au milieu des années 80 une véritable passion pour l'architecture, il a fait de la philosophie de l'architecture au cours des années 90 un troisième champ de recherche à côté de l'épistémologie de l'économie et de la philosophie de l'histoire. Il continue aujourd'hui de publier divers articles dans ces trois domaines.¹

Pensées Canadiennes : Quel rôle attribuez-vous à l'histoire dans l'investigation philosophique contemporaine ?

Maurice Lagueux : Quand on parle d'histoire, on peut penser soit à l'histoire de la philosophie, soit à l'histoire générale. Pour ce qui est de l'histoire de la philosophie, je ne dis rien de neuf en rappelant que c'est quelque chose d'éminemment important pour pouvoir philosopher soi-même ; ce que les penseurs du passé ont pu faire est évidemment de nature à nous aider considérablement dans une recherche qui, à certains égards, est apparentée à la leur. Il reste cependant que l'histoire de la philosophie n'est pas la philosophie. Si l'on ne faisait que de l'histoire de la philosophie, il n'y aurait pas de philosophie qui se ferait. Donc la philosophie, c'est autre chose. L'histoire en général, est aussi un domaine, parmi bien d'autres, qui peut se prêter à la réflexion d'un philosophe. Je pense qu'il y a, en particulier, trois types de questions qui sont posées : « Qu'est-ce qui est en train de se passer dans l'histoire ? », pour la plupart des philosophes classiques de l'histoire, c'est la question à laquelle il s'agissait de répondre. On peut aussi se demander comment on s'insère dans cette histoire ; il y a beaucoup de réflexions qui ont porté là-dessus. Et on peut aussi s'interroger sur la façon dont les historiens font l'histoire. On peut par conséquent développer une épistémologie de l'histoire. Il s'agit alors d'une réflexion sur ce qu'est la pratique des historiens qui est réputée nous procurer une connaissance de l'histoire.

PC : Vous venez d'évoquer la philosophie de l'histoire en tant qu'elle est pratiquée par les historiens. Dans *Actualité de la philosophie de l'histoire*, vous avez choisi de traiter de philosophie spéculative de l'histoire. Ma question portera sur le sens de faire de la philosophie spéculative de l'histoire actuellement. Dans votre livre, vous vous adressez aux problèmes de la philosophie spéculative de l'histoire devenue moins populaire, mise de côté. Je voulais vous demander si la philosophie spéculative de l'histoire présuppose un « focus » anthropocentrique, un « focus » sur l'agir humain et, quelque part, sur l'humanité en tant que telle, et moins sur les forces extérieures comme le faisaient des conceptions antérieures de l'histoire. Ce que je voulais vous demander, c'est si aujourd'hui vous trouvez un moyen de mettre en dialogue les facteurs humains et les facteurs extérieurs, surtout maintenant que nous confrontons activement les problèmes environnementaux reliés au réchauffement de la planète. Ces problèmes contribuent-ils à influencer la perception que nous avons de l'histoire, portant à une conception où l'humanité doit faire face à des forces extérieures et non plus qu'à des forces humaines (parmi lesquelles les forces de l'esprit humain) ?

ML : Deux choses, d'abord : je n'exclus pas du tout que des facteurs autres que l'homme puissent contribuer à la réponse à la question de savoir « ce qui est en train de se passer » dans l'histoire. Vous faites allusion à l'environnement, à un problème qui se pose à nous tous. Je pense qu'il est certain que l'on ne peut pas l'ignorer quand on se pose la question de savoir « ce qui est en train de se passer ». Maintenant, dans mon livre — peut-

être est-ce ce qui vous a intriguée quelque peu — la thèse principale est que la philosophie de l'histoire est quelque chose qu'on ne peut pas éviter, même si bien des penseurs, que je cite au début du livre, ont dénoncé la façon dont, dans le passé, les philosophes ont essayé de répondre à cette question. Il n'y est pas question de savoir ce qui va se passer ; il n'y a personne qui est prophète, les philosophes pas plus que les autres ; mais il est question d'essayer de comprendre quelque chose dans ce qui est en train de se passer actuellement. Il y a des philosophes qui ont répondu à cette question, mais plusieurs ont dénoncé cette entreprise. Tout ce que je dis c'est que, pour le meilleur ou pour le pire, on continue — qu'il s'agisse de sociologues, de philosophes ou même d'historiens, ou encore de gens qui s'intéressent à ces questions et qui s'intéressent aussi, entre autres choses, à l'environnement — de répondre d'une certaine façon à des questions comme celles auxquelles les philosophes, dans le passé, ont cherché à répondre. Certains d'entre eux l'ont fait en invoquant, comme Hegel, une conception qu'on pourrait qualifier de métaphysique en un certain sens ; mais, en ce qui me concerne, il s'agit simplement de voir jusqu'à quel point ces auteurs ont cherché à comprendre ce qui est en train de se passer et ce qui s'est passé au cours de l'histoire. Hegel se réfère à des historiens, à des faits historiques, auxquels il apporte une interprétation différente de celle à laquelle on est habitué. J'ai beaucoup de réserves sur la plupart de ses conclusions, mais je voulais essayer de montrer que c'est là un genre d'activité auquel on ne peut pas échapper et qu'il n'est pas nécessaire d'être philosophe pour s'engager dans cette voie là. Il y a bien d'autres personnes qui l'ont fait.

Je n'ai aucunement la prétention de proposer une philosophie de l'histoire de mon crû. Je me consacre davantage, pour ma part, au troisième type de philosophie dont je parlais tout à l'heure, c'est-à-dire à l'épistémologie, à la discussion du travail des historiens. Mais, comme j'avais à examiner la philosophie spéculative de l'histoire dans le cadre de mon enseignement, j'ai pensé qu'il était intéressant et utile de montrer de quel genre d'activité il s'agit.

PC : Dans l'architecture et les questions d'éthique, quelles sont les questions qui vous intéressent le plus ? Dans quelles directions pointent-elles principalement ?

ML : J'ai surtout essayé de montrer qu'il y a des questions éthiques qui se posent et que la plupart des architectes s'intéressent à ces questions à leur façon. C'est un thème très important. Pour ma part, ce qui m'intéresse là-dedans, c'est de voir comment les questions éthiques qu'on évoque quand on parle d'architecture sont d'une certaine façon différentes de celles qui se posent dans les autres arts, parce que l'architecture s'impose à tous. À Montréal, vous n'êtes pas obligés d'aller à la Place-des-Arts pour entendre un concert, ni au musée pour voir des peintures, mais vous êtes constamment au milieu des immeubles que les architectes ont construits. Alors en ce sens là, les architectes, d'une certaine façon, vous bousculent, vous imposent une certaine façon de voir, une certaine façon de vivre et c'est là une question d'ordre éthique. Évidemment, ce ne sont pas les architectes seuls qui sont en cause. Il y a des responsables politiques et des entrepreneurs qui décident, mais il reste que l'architecte a une certaine responsabilité. Des questions

éthiques se posent donc ; par exemple, on a souvent évoqué le fait que des immeubles conçus par des architectes très réputés ont engendré des résultats catastrophiques. Certains grands immeubles d'habitation en hauteur ont même favorisé une culture du crime ; dans certains cas, on s'est plaint de l'anonymat qui régnait dans ces bâtiments où on a logé des gens qui, en hiver, devaient souvent franchir de vastes espaces dans le froid et le vent. Souvent, ces conditions ont rendu difficile la formation de communautés du type de celles qui se créent dans certains villages ou dans certains quartiers. On est rarement parvenu à recréer une vie communautaire, ce qui a parfois donné lieu à un mode de vie qui a engendré divers dégâts allant jusqu'à la criminalité. On peut penser aux banlieues de Paris ou à certains centres-villes en Amérique. Donc les architectes ont une certaine responsabilité, ne serait-ce que parce qu'ils ont proclamé à une certaine époque que ce type de bâtiment répond mieux aux besoins humains parce que la lumière du soleil pouvait pénétrer par plusieurs fenêtres ou pour diverses autres raisons. On le voit donc, des questions éthiques se posent.

Pour ma part, ce qui m'a intéressé, c'est de voir si la problématique de l'éthique et de l'architecture est semblable et parallèle à celle que l'on rencontre dans d'autres domaines. Il me semble qu'il y a quelque chose d'assez particulier à l'architecture, bien qu'ici encore il faille faire bien des réserves, comme j'ai essayé de le faire dans mon texte sur ce sujet. Ce qui est particulier à l'architecture devient clair quand on oppose cette situation à celle que discute la bioéthique, qui s'intéresse au domaine bio-médical où les questions éthiques ont pris une importance toute particulière. Il y a, à mon avis, une différence très nette entre ces deux cas. En biologie,

on se heurte à d'importantes questions éthiques engendrées par les travaux des biologistes et des médecins. Avec le développement de la génétique moderne, toutes sortes de questions éthiques se sont posées. Or, je dis que ces questions éthiques sont externes à la biologie, car le biologiste peut très bien dire, «ça, c'est pas mon boulot» ; cette attitude ne l'empêchera pas d'obtenir un prix Nobel, même s'il dit «ces questions-là, je les laisse à d'autres, les spécialistes de l'éthique s'en occuperont, c'est pas mon problème». Par contre, un architecte ne peut pas dire ça, il ne peut pas dire qu'il fait seulement de beaux bâtiments, parce que la qualité d'un bâtiment est indissociablement esthétique et éthique. Il doit donc répondre lui-même aux questions éthiques. Le bâtiment doit être tel qu'il satisfasse le mieux possible les besoins réels des occupants et des passants, sans quoi on va conclure que c'est un échec ; on pourra refuser à l'architecte des prix d'architecture parce qu'il a construit un immeuble mal adapté aux besoins, même si on admet qu'il s'agit d'une œuvre belle. Donc éthique et esthétique sont indissociablement reliés en architecture. Ainsi, je me suis intéressé à la question de savoir jusqu'à quel point la situation est différente dans le cas de la science, de la biologie en particulier et aussi de la physique bien sûr. La situation n'est pas la même en physique également ; un physicien n'est pas un moins grand physicien parce que son œuvre a pu contribuer au développement de la bombe atomique ; ça n'a rien à voir. Mais l'architecte sera jugé moins bon si son œuvre entraîne des conséquences sociales fâcheuses.

PC : Dans l'art, on identifie souvent une problématique éthique dans le contrat entre le romancier et le lecteur, le cinéaste et le spectateur. Cette problématique semble être moins prononcée dans les arts plastiques, qui n'imposent pas au spectateur l'expérience d'une « réalité » donnée autant que le font les romans et les films. Ça serait plutôt dans la littérature et le cinéma que les problèmes éthiques sont plus évidents à cause de l'impact réfléchi que ces arts ont sur leur auditoire – un impact dont le romancier et le cinéaste doivent demeurer conscients. Je trouve que nous sommes beaucoup moins portés à voir la peinture et la sculpture comme proposant nécessairement une réflexion sur la réalité que dans le cas de la littérature ou du cinéma, des formes d'art qui semblent beaucoup plus ancrées dans une réalité vécue, une réalité dans laquelle nous pouvons nous reconnaître, et donc à travers laquelle nous sommes plus portés à accepter la vision de l'artiste.

ML : Je pense que vous avez raison. C'est intéressant que vous fassiez la distinction entre les arts comme le roman et le cinéma, et les arts proprement visuels comme la sculpture et la peinture. Moi, j'ai voulu la faire surtout entre l'architecture et les autres arts, parce que, me semble-t-il, il demeure beaucoup plus radicale dans le domaine de l'architecture. Vous ne pouvez pas y échapper. Vous pouvez ne pas aller au cinéma, vous pouvez ne pas lire de romans, mais vous ne pouvez pas échapper à l'architecture, à la fois comme quelqu'un qui vit dans un bâtiment ou comme simple passant. Par exemple, vous êtes ici à McGill dans un bâtiment que vous pouvez apprécier ou pas en fonction de vos goûts esthétiques, mais aussi de vos exigences

éthiques. Je ne veux pas nier ou rejeter la thèse de ceux qui soutiennent qu'en art on rencontre un problème analogue. Je pense plutôt qu'il y a une différence de degré qui fait que le problème ne se pose pas de la même façon dans les divers arts. De plus, il y a beaucoup plus de désaccords quand on a affaire aux autres arts. Par exemple, un auteur se réfère au film *Triumph of the Will* de Leni Riefenstahl, qui donnait une image positive de Hitler, et le dénonce même si on l'a trouvé génial sur le plan cinématographique. Là-dessus, les critiques sont partagés et sont loin d'être tous d'accord pour dire qu'un cinéaste doit nécessairement répondre à des exigences éthiques. Tandis qu'en architecture, je pense qu'il y a très peu de gens qui diraient que l'architecte peut construire un immeuble qui engendre une certaine déprime chez les passants pourvu que cet immeuble ait une qualité esthétique d'un certain point de vue. Mais il reste qu'il faut discuter ces questions qui sont des questions franchement philosophiques.

L'architecture pose certains problèmes qui n'intéressent pas forcément les architectes, mais qui ont un intérêt philosophique. Par exemple, je me suis intéressé à certains concepts que les architectes utilisent, des concepts comme le fonctionnalisme, le formalisme, l'organicisme en constatant qu'ils étaient souvent utilisés par les architectes dans des sens très variés et peu cohérents. C'est là une question philosophique sur laquelle on peut réfléchir. Donc, ce n'est pas tant que l'architecture apporte des choses au philosophe en temps que philosophe, mais c'est qu'elle pose des questions assez intéressantes pour les philosophes, comme d'ailleurs toutes les autres disciplines en posent. Enfin, c'est le propre des philosophes de s'attaquer à ce genre de question.

PC : Ma question porte sur la relation que vous évoquiez entre la philosophie d'une discipline et la discipline elle-même, surtout en ce qui concerne l'économie. Vous avez écrit beaucoup sur la philosophie de l'économie, et dans *L'agent économique : rationalité maximale ou minimale* vous notez que les économistes ne parlent pas beaucoup des questions ontologiques. Ils ne se demandent pas, par exemple, si leurs théories sont ancrées dans la réalité. Est-ce donc la tâche du philosophe de ramener les économistes aux questions ontologiques ?

ML : Ça dépend de ce que vous entendez par réalité. En un sens, les économistes sont beaucoup plus près des problèmes concrets et réels que ne le sont les philosophes. Je ne dirais pas que c'est le devoir des philosophes de faire ce que vous dites, mais, comme partout, il y a des questions qui se posent. Quand vous demandez comment il faut interpréter les conclusions des économistes en termes ontologiques, on a là une question qui se pose en particulier — et je m'intéresse beaucoup à cette question — à propos de ce qu'on appelle la *Folk psychology*. Celle-ci tient au fait que les économistes utilisent des concepts imprécis désignant des états intentionnels, comme ceux de préférences, et d'attentes qui correspondent respectivement aux concepts de désir et de croyance. Or ces concepts-là, plusieurs philosophes ont souligné qu'ils ne sont pas des concepts qui, pour employer une expression d'Alexander Rosenberg, tailleraient « la nature aux joints », c'est-à-dire qui correspondraient exactement à des réalités naturelles bien précises. La question que vous me posez est clairement une question philosophique. Il y a bien certains économistes qui s'intéressent à ces questions là — on les retrouve d'ailleurs plus souvent dans les congrès d'histoire et de

méthodologie de l'économie que dans des congrès d'économistes en tant que tels, encore qu'il y a des spécialisations et des croisements comme ceux dont je parlais tout à l'heure. Donc, il y a des économistes intéressés par cette question-là, mais c'est certain qu'il s'agit d'abord d'une question philosophique ; alors il y a des philosophes de l'économie qui se sont intéressés beaucoup à la neurobiologie et à la physiologie, en se demandant si ces concepts psychologiques qu'utilisent les économistes peuvent être remplacés par des concepts plus satisfaisants du point de vue scientifique, et si ça peut entraîner des conséquences du point de vue économique. Évidemment, cette réflexion philosophique est loin de donner des résultats bien tranchés. J'ai un ami philosophe, qui connaît bien l'économie, et qui, à propos de ce genre de questions, reprochait à un autre philosophe d'en discuter en termes philosophiques et non pas scientifiques. Il s'agit pourtant d'une question proprement philosophique, car un économiste peut être respecté hautement et faire un excellent travail sans que sa réputation d'économiste soit affectée par le fait qu'il ne veuille pas s'intéresser à ces questions philosophiques. Mais un philosophe de l'économie qui se contenterait de dire qu'il n'est pas intéressé par ces questions-là ne serait pas considéré comme un bon philosophe sur ce plan, et sa réputation en serait affectée. On revient à ce qu'on disait tout à l'heure : les questions proprement philosophiques sont des questions qui obligent à penser avec cohérence tout ce qui leur est pertinent. On a un bel exemple ici où on a des données biologiques sur le cerveau et où on a des analyses très intéressantes et très instructives développées par les économistes, qui invoquent des concepts qui se raccrochent mal aux premières. On ne voit pas toujours

comment on peut faire le lien, d'autant qu'on retrouve là une vieille question philosophique concernant la connexion de l'esprit et du corps. On le voit, tout ça est une question philosophique qu'il faut penser avec une certaine cohérence. Il y a des philosophes très respectables qui vont adopter des positions tout à fait opposées sur ces questions. Certains peuvent même en arriver à estimer que le type de psychologie qu'invoquent les économistes est ce qui convient et que cette approche est tout à fait respectable, et cela en discutant et en rejetant les arguments de ceux qui supportent la thèse opposée. Il y a des philosophes qui, au contraire, vont rejeter tout ça, et vont même «éliminer» ces concepts-là, ou vont s'efforcer d'en rendre compte en expliquant les expériences de croyance et de préférence à partir d'arguments basés sur la biologie. Alors on peut adopter chacune de ces positions, mais je ne pense pas que l'on fasse de la science en le faisant ! Et quand je parle de cohérence et de rigueur, ça ne veut pas dire qu'il y a une unanimité. Vous êtes en philosophie, vous êtes bien placés pour savoir qu'on ne peut absolument pas parler d'unanimité chez les grands philosophes les plus respectables. Mais je pense qu'on peut toujours parler d'un effort de cohérence qui requiert un type de rigueur différent de celui des scientifiques. Des questions ontologiques se posent si c'est à ça que vous faites allusion, et ce sont là des questions proprement philosophiques.

PC : Quel effet votre intérêt pour la philosophie a-t-il eu sur le cours de votre vie ?

ML : D'abord, je pense qu'il faut distinguer la philosophie comme carrière et la philosophie comme attitude. C'est vrai que la philosophie est une

profession qui fait que j'ai pu passer ma vie, pendant quarante ans, à enseigner et à être payé pour faire un travail philosophique en essayant de le faire le mieux possible. C'est donc une carrière et, en ce sens-là, le fait de pratiquer ce métier affecte effectivement la vie, mais la pratique d'autres métiers peut l'affecter aussi. Mais comment la vie est-elle affectée par une carrière philosophique ? D'abord, on ne peut pas séparer la vie de la philosophie. *Ce n'est pas pour rien que j'ai décidé de faire de la philosophie. Tout comme vous, qui êtes en philosophie parce que vous avez décidé de faire de la philosophie, c'est que j'avais déjà, comme vous, une certaine passion pour les questions philosophiques.* Si je disais que la philosophie affecte ma vie parce qu'elle m'amène à poser des questions de ce type, je pourrais aussi dire que c'est l'inverse qui joue et que c'est parce que j'avais la tendance à poser des questions d'un certain type que j'ai été amené à pratiquer la philosophie. Vous voyez dans quel sens je dis qu'il faut distinguer la philosophie comme carrière professionnelle et comme une sorte de manière de vivre, de réfléchir et de penser à certaines questions.

Même si j'avais choisi, comme j'y ai pensé à un moment donné, de devenir physicien ou de m'engager dans une autre carrière, j'aurais probablement soulevé des questions philosophiques, mais ça n'aurait pas été aussi facile de les poursuivre comme je l'aurais souhaité. D'autre part, tout ça explique un peu que je me sois intéressé à l'histoire, à l'économie et à l'architecture. C'est que, comme je le disais tout à l'heure, un philosophe, c'est quelqu'un qui ne pratique pas une science en particulier mais qui recherche une certaine cohérence entre ces diverses expériences. Il ne s'agit pas de prétendre qu'il voit ça de plus haut. C'est plutôt que différents thèmes

l'intéressent et qu'il peut choisir de s'intéresser à certaines questions à leur propos parce que ces questions ne sont jamais étrangères à la philosophie. J'aurais sans doute aimé faire un travail de physicien, mais j'aurais alors cessé d'être philosophe pour mieux entrer dans ce monde-là. Par contre, je peux toujours m'intéresser à la physique, à la biologie, à l'architecture ou à la peinture et m'interroger philosophiquement sur les rapports qui existent entre ces disciplines. C'est un peu ce que j'ai été amené à faire.

Interviewers

Jeremy Delman

Iwa Nawrocki

Rebecca Tuvel

Brittany Johnson

Elizabeth Shurcliff

Endnotes

¹ www.philo.umontreal.ca/prof/maurice.lagueux.html

An Interview with Maurice Lagueux

Biography. In 1965, Maurice Lagueux finished his doctorate of philosophy under the supervision of Paul Ricoeur at the University of Paris. His thesis was entitled “Merleau-Ponty et la tâche du philosophe (Merleau-Ponty and the Philosopher’s Task).” Lagueux was hired that same year by the philosophy department of the University of Montréal to teach philosophy of history.

Since 1978, he has taught in the Economic Sciences department of the University of Montréal while continuing to teach a course on philosophy of history through an interdepartmental agreement. It was in this field that he taught a course on the history of economic thought for over 20 years.

In the mid-1980s, he discovered a genuine passion for architecture. Over the course of the 1990s he taught classes on the philosophy of architecture in addition to his courses on the epistemology of economics and the philosophy of history. He continues to this day to publish various articles and books in these three disciplines.

Pensées Canadiennes: What role do you attribute to history in contemporary philosophic investigation?

Maurice Lagueux: When we speak of history, we can speak either of the history of philosophy or of history in general. I add nothing new concerning history of philosophy by reminding that it is something eminently important in being able to philosophize for oneself. What past philosophers have found in their search for answers can obviously provide great help in a search that, in certain respects, is similar to our own. However, history of philosophy is not philosophy. If people only read and wrote about history of philosophy, philosophizing would never take place. Thus, philosophy is something else. History in general is also a field amongst many others that the philosopher can reflect upon. I think three types of questions are being asked: "What is happening in history?" – which was the question most classic philosophers of history were working on answering. We can also ask ourselves how we fit into history – there have been many thoughts on this. And we can also ask in what way historians make history. Consequently, we can develop an epistemology of history. Therefore, it is necessary to think about what it is that a historian does that is supposed to provide us with a knowledge of history.

PC: Just now you mentioned philosophy of history as it is practiced by historians. In your book, *Actualité de la philosophie de l'histoire (Philosophy of History Today)*, you address the issue of speculative philosophy of history having lost in popularity, having been set aside. Does speculative philosophy of history presuppose an anthropocentric focus, a focus on human agency

and, in a sense, on humanity itself, rather than the focus on external forces that has characterized earlier conceptions of history? Is it possible today to find a way of establishing a dialogue between human and external factors, especially now that we actively face the environmental problems related to global warming? Do these problems contribute to shaping our perception of history, leading to a conception of history according to which humanity would have to confront external rather than human forces – the force of the human spirit, for instance?

ML: Two things – first, I do not exclude at all that factors other than man can contribute to answering the question of knowing "what is going on" in history. You are alluding to the environment, to a problem that poses itself for all of us. I think that we can certainly not ignore it when we ask ourselves the question, "what is going on?" Now, in my book – maybe this is what has intrigued you somewhat – the main thesis is that philosophy of history is something that we cannot avoid, even if many thinkers, whom I cite at the beginning of the book, denounced the way in which philosophers in the past have tried to answer this question. It is not a question of knowing what will happen; no one is a prophet, not even philosophers, but the point is to understand something in what is currently going on. There are philosophers who have offered answers to this question, but many have denounced this enterprise. All I am saying is that, for better or worse, we continue – whether we are sociologists, philosophers, historians, or even just people who are interested in these questions and who are interested also, among other things, in the environment – to answer in a certain way these questions to which philosophers in the past have tried to provide answers. Many of

them did so by invoking, like Hegel, a construct that we can qualify as metaphysical in a certain sense; but, as far as I am concerned, it is simply about understanding how such authors have tried to understand what is going on and what has gone on in the course of history. Hegel refers to historians, to historical facts, to which he brings a different interpretation from the one we are used to. I have reservations about most of his conclusions, but I wanted to try to show that this is a kind of exercise from which we cannot escape and that it is not necessary to be a philosopher in order to tackle this project. There are many others who have done it. I don't pretend to offer a philosophy of history of my exclusive design. For my part, I instead dedicate myself to the third type of philosophy that I was discussing earlier, that is, to epistemology, which consists in the discussion of the work of historians. But, as I had to examine speculative philosophy of history in the framework of my teaching, I thought that it would be interesting and useful to show what type of activity it is.

PC: What questions interest you specifically in philosophy of architecture and ethics? In what direction are they generally headed?

ML: I have mostly tried to show that there are ethical questions that are put forth and that most architects ask themselves these questions in their own way. This is a very important issue. What interests me is to see, because architecture imposes itself on everybody, in what way these ethical questions that come up when we speak of architecture are different from those put forth by other art forms. In Montreal you do not have to go to the Place-des-Arts to listen to a concert, nor must you go to a museum to see paintings. However,

you will necessarily be subjected to seeing buildings designed and built by architects. In this sense, architects invade your space by imposing upon you a certain way of looking at things and a certain way of living, which is a question of ethical order. Obviously, the architect is not the only cause of all this. Politicians and entrepreneurs make decisions, but the architect has a certain responsibility. This is how certain ethical questions come to be. For example, it has often been put forth that some buildings designed by reputable architects have engendered catastrophic results. Certain large high-rise housing complexes have even encouraged a culture of crime; in certain cases, people have complained of the anonymity, which dominates these buildings where, in winter, inhabitants must often go long distances in cold and windy spaces. Often these conditions make it impossible for communities such as those found in certain neighbourhoods or small towns to form. People rarely succeed in recreating a type of community lifestyle and instead the lifestyle created leads to various types of problems, sometimes even crime. We may find examples of this phenomenon in Parisian suburbs as well as in the downtown areas of certain American cities. Therefore architects have certain responsibilities, if not just because at a certain moment they declared that a building was best suited to provide for human needs, because sunlight could enter the living area through more windows or for many other reasons. So we can see that ethical questions are being put forth.

What interests me is to see if the problems of ethics and of architecture are similar and parallel to those we encounter in other fields. It seems to me that there is something very particular to architecture. Of course this statement should be nuanced, which is what I have tried to do in my writings on the

subject. What is so particular about architecture reveals itself when we compare it to the discussion of bioethics chiefly concerned with the biomedical domain where ethical questions take on an altogether particular importance. According to me, the differences between the two are cut and dry. In biology, we run up against important ethical questions generated through the work of biologists and doctors. All sorts of ethical questions have been put forth due to the development of modern genetics. Now, I say that these ethical questions lie outside of biology, because the biologist can easily say, "these questions don't concern my work." This attitude will not keep her from winning the Nobel Prize, even if she says, "I will leave these questions to others; specialists of ethics will deal with them; it is not my problem." On the other hand, an architect cannot say this. She cannot say that she will make only beautiful buildings because the quality of a building is necessarily both aesthetic and ethic. Therefore, she must provide answers to ethical questions. In order for a building to be considered a success, it must satisfy the needs of its occupants and of passers-by. An architectural prize may be denied to an architect on the grounds that a building was ill adapted to the needs of its residents, even if there is no question on it being a beautiful piece of art. Thus the ethic and the aesthetic are indivisibly linked in relation to architecture. At what point does the situation become different in the case of science? And more specifically in the cases of biology and physics? The situation is not the same in physics; a physicist is not any less great because his work contributed to the development of the atomic bomb; that has nothing to do with it. However, the architect will be deemed less good if his work brings about adverse social consequences.

PC: In art, we often identify ethical questions in the contract between the author and the reader, the director and the spectator. This seems to be less the case when dealing with visual arts, which, unlike novels and films, do not necessarily impose upon the audience the experience of an alternate "reality". Ethical questions appear more clearly in literature and in cinema due to the reflective impact that these forms of art have on their audience – an impact that the novelist and the director should always remain conscious of. I find that we are much less inclined to interpret painting or sculpture as offering a reflection on reality. In contrast, we tend to approach literature and cinema as forms of art that are more solidly anchored in the reality we experience, in a reality with which we can identify, and through which we are accordingly more inclined to accept the vision of the artist.

ML: I think you're right. It's interesting that you make the distinction between arts like literature and film, and properly visual arts such as sculpture and painting. Personally, I prefer to distinguish between architecture and other arts, because it seems to me that philosophical questions are more radical in the domain of architecture. They cannot be escaped. You can choose not to go to the movies, or not to read novels; but you cannot escape architecture, whether you live in a building, or are simply walking past one. For example, you are here at McGill in a building that you can like or not, depending on your aesthetic tastes, but also on your ethical demands. I don't want to negate or reject the thesis of those who maintain that in art we encounter a similar problem. I think, rather, that there is a difference of degree, that the question does not pose itself in the same way for different forms of art. Moreover, there are many more disagreements when we deal with other

arts. For example, an author might refer to the film *Triumph of the Will*, by Leni Riefenstahl, which gives a positive image of Hitler, and denounce it even if it is deemed excellent in terms of cinematography. On that topic, critics are equally divided. They are far from all agreeing that a filmmaker must necessarily answer to ethical demands. In architecture, however, I think that few people would argue that an architect can construct an edifice that produces a certain depressed feeling to passersby on the grounds that this edifice has some kind of aesthetic quality. These outright philosophical questions must be discussed.

Architecture raises certain questions that don't necessarily interest architects, but are interesting philosophically. For example, I've taken a closer look at concepts used by architects such as functionalism, formalism, and organicism. I observed that these concepts are not used coherently by architects, and that these concepts can have various meanings. This is a philosophical question on which we may reflect. In sum, it is not so much that architecture offers something to philosophers as such, so much as it is that architecture raises questions that are interesting enough for philosophers to reflect upon, in the same way that many other fields do. It is in the philosopher's nature to tackle these types of questions.

PC: My question pertains to the relationship you were mentioning between the philosophy of a certain discipline and the discipline itself, particularly in the case of economics. In *L'agent économique: rationalité maximale ou minimale*, you observe that economists tend to shy away from ontological questions. For instance, they do not ask themselves whether their theories

are rooted in reality. Is it then the task of the philosopher to bring the economist back to questions of ontology?

ML: That depends on what you mean by reality. In a way, economists are a lot closer to real, concrete problems than are philosophers. I wouldn't say that it's the job of philosophers to do what you say, but, as always, questions come up. When you ask how to interpret the economists' conclusions in ontological terms you have a question that arises in particular – and it's a question I'm very interested in – concerning folk psychology. This is due to the fact that economists use imprecise concepts designating intentional states, like those of preferences, and expectations, that correspond respectively to the concepts of desire and belief. Now, many philosophers have underlined that these concepts do not, to use Alexander Rosenberg's expression, fit "nature to the joints" (i.e. correspond exactly to specific natural realities). The question you raise is clearly a philosophical question. There are certainly some economists who are interested in these questions – they are often found in history and methodology of economics conferences rather than in conferences on economics as such, although there are some specializations and crossovers similar to those I was referring to earlier. So, there are some economists interested in this question, but it's certainly more of a philosophical question; then there are philosophers of economics that come to be very interested in neurobiology and physiology, wondering if the psychological concepts that economists use can be replaced by concepts that are more satisfying from the scientific point of view, and such a replacement could have economic consequences. Obviously this philosophical reflection is far from giving clear-cut results. I have a philosopher friend quite familiar

with economics who, concerning this kind of question, criticized another philosopher for speaking about economics in philosophical terms rather than in scientific ones. Nonetheless the question is a properly philosophical one, since an economist can be highly respected and do great work without his reputation as an economist being affected by the fact that he doesn't want to concern himself with philosophical questions. But a philosopher of economics not interested in these questions wouldn't be considered a good philosopher on this score, and his reputation would be affected. We are back to what we were discussing earlier: properly philosophical questions are the questions that force us to think coherently about everything that is pertinent to them. We have a good example here where we have biological data about the brain and we have some very interesting and very instructive analysis developed by economists, which invoke some concepts that correspond poorly to the first ones. We don't always see how we can draw the connection, especially with the old philosophical question concerning the connection between mind and body reappearing. We can see that this big philosophical question requires to be thought through coherently. Very respectable philosophers will adopt opposite positions on these questions. Some will even say that the type of psychology economists refer to is the correct one and that this approach is completely respectable, and this by way of discussing and rejecting their opponent's arguments. There are philosophers who, on the contrary, will reject all of that, and will even eliminate these concepts, or will strive to account for the experiences of belief and preference thanks to arguments based on biology. So one can adopt any of these positions, but I don't think that one is being scientific

in doing so. And when I talk about coherence and rigor that is not to say unanimity is reached. This is philosophy, you are in a good position to know that we absolutely cannot talk about unanimity in dealing with the great and most respectable philosophers. But I think that we can still find an effort at coherence that requires a type of rigour different from that of scientists. Ontological questions arise if that's what you are alluding to, and these are properly philosophical questions.

PC: What effect has your interest in philosophy had over the course of your life?

ML: First, I think one must distinguish philosophy as a career from philosophy as an attitude. It is true that philosophy is a profession that has made it possible for me to spend my life, these past forty years, teaching and being paid to engage in philosophical work, while trying to do it as well as possible. Thus, it is a career, and in this sense, this occupation affects life, but so do other occupations. How is life affected by a philosophical career? First, we cannot separate life from philosophy. *It was not perchance that I decided to pursue philosophy. Just like you, who are in philosophy because you have also decided to pursue it, I already had a certain passion for philosophical questions.* If I said that philosophy affects my life because it brings me to ask such questions, I could also say that the reverse is true, and that it is because I had the tendency to ask questions of a certain kind that I found myself practicing philosophy. You see in what sense I mean that one must distinguish philosophy as a professional career from a certain way of life, of reflecting on and thinking about certain questions.

Even if I had chosen, like I considered at one time, to become a physicist or to take on another career, I would probably have raised philosophical questions, but it would not have been as easy to pursue them as I might have wished. Moreover, all this somewhat explains how I became interested in history, in economics, and in architecture. As I was saying earlier, a philosopher is someone who does not practice one science in particular, but who searches for a certain coherence between various experiences. It does not consist in alleging that the philosopher sees things from higher up. Rather, it is that certain themes interest him and that he can choose to concentrate on certain questions about them because these questions are never foreign to philosophy. There is no doubt that I would have liked to pursue the work of a physicist, but I would have then ceased to be a philosopher in order to better enter that particular area. On the other hand, I can always be interested in physics, in biology, in architecture, or in painting, and philosophically interrogate myself on the links that exist between these disciplines. In a way, that is what attracted me.

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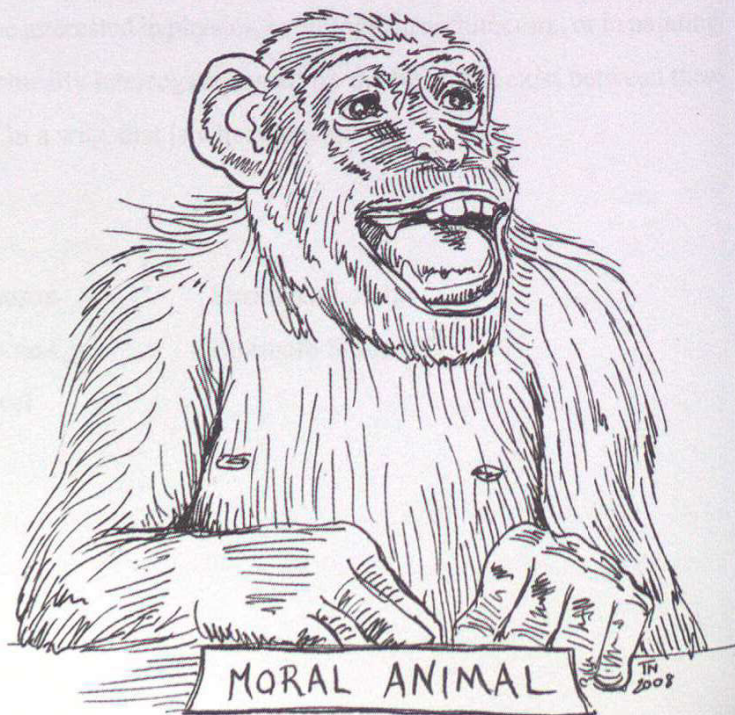
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Ethics, Evolution, and Primate Society

Frans De Waal examines some environmental factors in ape dominance styles in "Good Natured: the Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals". He says that "according to socioecologists, who look to the natural environment to explain social dispositions, the optimal condition for the evolution of egalitarianism is dependency on cooperation combined with the option to leave the group." It seems very likely that similar environmental factors must have played a role in the development of human hierarchies and the ways in which they are expressed and protected. Given how closely related we are to chimps, an examination of their hierarchical structures and of the factors affecting their development could well provide us with significant insight into our own societies. Furthermore, the literature on morality and its development in humans and other primates raises some interesting questions about what morality is exactly, and how we should understand its relation to our evolutionary history. An examination of some of the positions on this issue, in combination with some of the many factors important to the functioning of



primate, and especially chimpanzee, societies, may help us to come to an agreement on what the best definition of morality is, and what the process of finding that definition may do for us.

Morality is a difficult thing to define. A slight nuance in our definition of it can make for some very different outcomes, philosophically speaking. People like Ruse and Joyce have argued that morality is a useful fiction – an illusion. Joyce states in “Darwinian Ethics and Error” that “there do not really exist *any* categorical requirements binding our actions, enjoining cooperation and proscribing defection. It’s all an illusion which, in evolutionary terms, has served us very effectively.”¹

The question that I would put to these philosophers is, “What is the illusion we are experiencing based on?” The moon seems to be larger the closer it is to the horizon. This is an illusion that is quickly dissipated, as I know what makes this appearance false, and what would be needed in order for it to be *true*. In fact, it is possible for me to experience an illusion based on anything that my senses can detect – our senses certainly show us the world in anthropocentric terms, but we still believe that there is something in the outside world, which our senses provide information about. Our moral senses are just as grounded in our evolutionary history as our physical senses; and while both allow us to make anthropocentric judgments, the fact remains that our inclinations to make such judgments can contribute substantially to the development of a more general and less anthropocentric engagement in the world. Thus, while we may deny that we are experiencing the world just as the best science might describe it, we will not deny that there is something we are sensing, and that we are capable

of sensing things. It seems odd, then, to declare that our five familiar senses are right or wrong in given circumstances, and have that claim be meaningful and determinable, but at the same time insist that our *moral* senses are always wrong. For there to be an illusion of something, surely there must be a *reality* of that something as well, or at least the *possibility* of a reality of that something.

What would a truly ‘existing’ morality entail? In order to be able to say that we are wrong about morality, or deluded, or suffering from an illusion, surely we must be able to say what it would mean for us to be right about it, and neither Joyce nor Ruse seem to offer a satisfactory explanation of this. Without it, I cannot see how they hope to offer a meaningful defense of their position. Furthermore, as Stingl argues in “All the Monkeys Aren’t in the Zoo: Evolutionary Ethics and the Possibility of Moral Knowledge,”² rather than postulating an error theory, “it is simpler to suppose that mental representations with moral content arose as direct cognitive and motivational responses to independent moral facts.”³ He notes that the moral behavior of chimps seems to be very similar to ours, if somewhat less nuanced – one would be surprised indeed to see an ethical debate between two chimps, but such debates are common among humans (and even among non-philosophers, for that matter!). Chimpanzee morality is relatively static, and based entirely in their evolutionary history: “the rules that guide their behavior are part of the real world of chimp interaction that evolution has created for them.”⁴ It would be very strange to claim that chimps were wrong about their moral ideas, if we can really call them ideas. Why should it not be equally strange to say this of human morality? Stingl does note

that "part of what makes the error theory plausible for humans but not for chimps is that we are able to change our moral codes in ways that chimps cannot."⁵ But does this necessarily mean that "moral knowledge might be possible for chimps, but not for us?"⁶ After all, even though our morality is far more complicated than that of chimpanzees and other apes, it is strange to claim that human morality is the result of some completely different process, and that thus chimps can have a moral system that is not the result of some error, but we cannot. We are, after all, very closely related to the other apes, and it seems at best uneconomical to ascribe different causes to similar behaviors. Stingl suggests that "morality itself seems to pertain to well-functioning social groups, the members of which have reached a certain level of cognitive development."⁷ This applies both to humans and to our primate cousins – although we may be in some ways more advanced (at least in terms of our language use, the complexity of our societies and technologies, etc.) than they are, there are clearly great similarities between us (similarities which I will make use of later in this paper).

In the end, Stingl concludes that there really is a moral matter of fact, and that it lies in the *justification* of harm. It is not that all harms are morally wrong, but that those that are unjustified are. The moral facts are basically what we would expect them to be given our intuitive judgments, and "we ourselves have evolved the capacity not only to recognize such facts, but to feel it imperative to do something about them."⁸ This is a strong, and I believe, most likely correct argument for a certain sort of moral realism.

Also on the side of some kind of moral realism are philosophers like Harms. In "Adaptation and Moral Realism," he argues "that, if you

believe that morality is an adaptation, then you ought to believe that there [are] objective standards that apply, and that there is a distinctly *moral* kind of truth."⁹ According to him "truth of a signal just is the fact that the signal now stands in the kind of relation to the world which explains the historical contribution to fitness of the signaling system."¹⁰ Thus, whether a moral claim is true or false depends on the process of natural selection in which that claim has been either good or bad for our fitness – this is what will give us an objective standard by which to judge such claims. Harms makes the interesting comparison between moral language and types of signaling used by other animals that can easily be declared true or false. "There are true and false bee dances, true and false monkey warning cries, and if there is the kind of adaptive history we began by supposing, then there are [objectively] true and false moral statements/imperatives."¹¹ The question here, again, is to know how we determine what it is that makes a moral statement true or false. It seems to me, rather, that moral claims and their significance are more complicated than bee dances, and that determining their truth and falsity must be as well. However, in the end I find Harms' position far more satisfying than that of Ruse's or Joyce's, and with some further examination, I expect to come to a similar conclusion.

Some philosophers have suggested that humans have evolved to see community welfare as the highest good, notably Robert Richards, whose position is examined by Stingl and Collier in "Evolutionary Naturalism and the Objectivity of Morality." To sum up, they describe his position as the following:

We have evolved so that the function of moral activity is to achieve the greater communal good. Thus moral activity is justified by its contribution to this end, and we have a practical reason to act morally.¹²

Richards himself states in "A Defense of Evolutionary Ethics" that "each heart must resound to the same moral chord, acting for the common good."¹³ While this is quite poetic, Stingl and Collier point out that it does not really clearly establish that these ends we have evolved to aim at are *moral ends*.¹⁴ Community welfare is a practical end, and there are ways to achieve or improve it that we almost certainly would not advocate as morally good. Richards attempts to sidestep this problem by defining morally good actions as those that benefit the welfare of the community. However, this does not seem to fix the problem – if the community as a whole would benefit from the occasional punishment of an innocent person, would that action become morally right? I think that very few people would be willing to bite that bullet, which is so often aimed at strict utilitarians.

The question that Collier and Stingl ask is, "Why should we suppose that what we have evolved to mean by morality has anything more to do with morality itself than the fact that we have evolved into creatures with certain sorts of ends?"¹⁵ Richards' position is similar to Ruse's, in that they both hold that morality is the result of evolution, and that there is no objective morality beyond the selective processes that created it. Stingl and Collier point out that the major problem with this view is "that other species, or indeed, the human species, might have evolved with a different morality, so there may be no general moral principle, even [though] there are many species capable of morality."¹⁶ They call this the 'Metaphysical Worry,'

and say it "is either something that must be swallowed, in which case there is a capricious element in morality and there may be equally justified yet inconsistent moralities, or else it is a serious problem, and the theories that do not resolve it are unacceptable."¹⁷ They propose that there *is* some objective morality that we can discover through empirical research, and that

knowledge of evolutionary theory and adaptive processes allows us to speculate about what our moral instincts might have been, had our morality evolved more optimally. This, in turn, allows us to formulate (still as a process of empirical discovery) what general moral principles might apply to optimally evolved, intelligent, social creatures.¹⁸

Thus, morality is something that we can investigate outside of the processes that produced it, and that isn't necessarily totally contingent. One intriguing idea here is that, if we wish to improve our understanding of morality in ourselves, we might turn to our close cousins – chimpanzees, bonobos, and other primates – to help us consider what sorts of rules and social structures would work best for a species like ours.

De Waal notes that many ape relationships are based not on coercion, but on persuasion – while there are, of course, dominant chimps that hold more sway than others, there is also interest in maintaining good relationships:

Although coercion and the threat of force are very much a part of primate [including human] relationships, the ropes tying individuals together would fray quickly indeed if these tendencies were not held in check.¹⁹

The same pattern can readily be seen in human relationships – while it would be quite easy for many people to coerce me into doing their bidding, as I am somewhat smaller than average and not particularly aggressive, it

is far more common for a person to rely on rational means or the bonds of friendship if they want my cooperation. Certainly if they want to be able to *rely* on my cooperation, this is the approach to take; because, if they were to use coercive force to ensure my cooperation, I would definitely not make a very reliable ally. Some studies strongly suggest that the same holds true for apes, particularly chimpanzees. While they (and we) certainly do our fellow beings significant damage from time to time, we manage, for the most part, to avoid the sort of directly injurious physical expressions of dominance found in many other species. De Waal states of chimps that "it is precisely because they *can* throw overboard all inhibitions that their usual restraint is so impressive."²⁰ I believe that the same can be said for humans, and that this tendency may be tied in both species to what we refer to in ourselves as morality. This is obviously connected to the idea of unjustifiable harm that Stingl discussed in "All the Monkeys Aren't in the Zoo" – while a dominant female could throw aside all restraint, if her actions were unjustified within the apparent chimpanzee ethical system, the other chimps would respond strongly to that breach of their moral code.

It is also interesting to note that chimpanzee leaders tend to intervene on behalf of the underdog in conflicts. As Stingl and Collier note, "alpha males who fail to prefer the underdog risk losing the support of the older females in the group."²¹ This certainly seems to show that certain actions are expected and valued in chimpanzee dominants – they are not pure Hobbesian sovereigns whose actions are taken as absolute law by the rest of the troop. They need the support of their cohorts, and must behave in certain ways to maintain that support. Arguably, we could refer to this as a sort of

chimpanzee morality. Stingl and Collier also note that, since alliances are not static in chimpanzee society, it may well be in the best interests of the dominant ape not to support his current allies exclusively: "your foe today may be your friend tomorrow."²²

In chimpanzees as well as humans, leaders cannot rule without some sort of coalition to support them. This sort of coalition-based rule is clearer among human leaders than it is among chimps, but among chimps it can rapidly become important when a leader's rule is threatened. Of course, it is not exclusively for these species that some sort of consent is needed – as De Waal points out, "Power is not an individual attribute; it is a relational one."²³ The difference seems to rest on a species' ability to form effective coalitions – a baboon king rules because other individuals recognize that he would beat them in a fight, and it does not seem to occur to them to form an alliance against him – or at least not often enough. Chimpanzee leaders rule with the support of their friends and family – losing the support of the rest of the troop would be devastating, because even if the highest-ranking chimp could beat every other one *mano-a-mano*, he could never hope to defeat a coalition: "The alpha male in a group is typically supported by allies, and alliances are always open to shifts in loyalties."²⁴ Human politicians seem to need the greatest amount of support; without allies it is utterly impossible to command a group of humans. Furthermore, allies may quickly turn against you if they come to believe that the benefits they accrue by supporting you are outweighed by those they might receive in overthrowing you – power is a delicate thing indeed in human societies. These types of social hierarchies, which structure our interactions as well

as those of other primates, may be an important starting point for morality. If your allies cannot be sure that you will treat them well and fairly, and that you will continue to do so even when their support is not immediately necessary, they will have little incentive for offering that support.

Among chimpanzees, the outcome of dominance struggles is heavily dependent on which competitor receives the most support: "depending on the amount of support each rival receives from the rest of the group, a pattern will emerge, sealing the dominant's fate if it turns out to be in favor of his challenger."²⁵ A dominant remains dominant only with the permission of those it dominates; once that permission is revoked by a large enough group, the dominant's status vanishes. This is one of the reasons maintaining good relations with one's subordinates is so important to animals like chimpanzees and humans: if the present hierarchical arrangement ceases to be beneficial to those involved, there is no reason for them to continue to accept the dominant animal's authority. If a leader who behaves in moral ways is preferred to one who doesn't, then it will certainly be in the leader's best interests to fulfill her 'oughts'.

A good deal of this echoes some things that Hobbes wrote about dominance. While his claims about individualism do not seem to be borne up by the evidence we see among our cousins, his ideas about confederacies – what we would call coalitions – and the part they play in power and dominance should certainly be looked at in this context. Hobbes wrote that, in his state of nature,

Though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the

difference between man and man is not so considerable [...]. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself.²⁶

This can certainly be seen in chimp societies: subordinates will only tolerate abuse from a dominant for so long. For example, De Waal points out that "it is not unusual for females in a captive chimpanzee colony to band together to protect themselves against an abusive male."²⁷ While the male could easily defeat one of them alone, together the females are a formidable force.

Hobbes also states that

The greatest of human powers is that which is compounded of the powers of most men, united by consent in one person, natural or civil, that has the use of all their powers depending on his will, such as is the power of a commonwealth, or depending on the wills of each particular, such as is the power of a faction or of diverse factions leagued. Therefore to have servants is power; to have friends is power; for they are strengths united.²⁸

Whether in human or chimpanzee social groups, the maintenance of social ties and the support of one's companions or subordinates can trump the power of a dominant personality or a strong body – in chimps, as in humans, hierarchical structures serve to strengthen bonds between all group members, and any member threatening this, be they dominant or subordinate, will be subject to censure.

Of course, Hobbes presupposes intentions and purposes, whereas evolution certainly does not. Evolution deals with behavior and whether this behavior contributes to or detracts from reproductive success, not whether this behavior is good or bad, right or wrong. This, of course, is where the

question of normativity begins – how do we get from ‘is’ to ‘ought’? There is always a temptation to invoke some sort of magic here, to refer back to some often dualistic, magical quality that transforms ‘is’ into the all-important ‘ought’; this must be resisted, if only for the reason that it is philosophically useless. Dualism in the end is just as much a set of descriptive claims as monism, and invoking it simply backs us into a corner on the issue of how the normative and descriptive are related. However, if we resist the temptation to invoke this dualistic sort of magic, then with a little work we can begin to come up with a coherent story about how an ‘is’ actually can become an ‘ought’. Bryson Brown begins to address this question in “Bootstrapping Norms: From Cause to Intention”. He considers normative rules as the result of “meta-linguistic reflection on the language in which we undertake and acknowledge commitments,” leading us to form normative concepts about our own actions and those of people around us.²⁹ He states,

Reflection on patterns of behavior in our object-level use of descriptive language may also lead us to apply this meta-language of rules, commitments, and so on, to it as well—that is, we may come to conceive language itself in terms of this proto-normative language [...]. [A person] crosses over the edge to full-fledged use of normative concepts when she learns to apply this meta-language of commitment to herself [...] she must have in hand inductive evidence [...] of her ability to make and act on commitments in a reliable way, as well as evidence that she can reason about both her own commitments and those of others reliably.³⁰

This account views normative concepts as arising when we develop a richer understanding of this meta-language and come to apply it to our own past actions. “As a user of this extended language, she now conceives

herself as making commitments, as distinguishing actions in accord with those commitments from actions violating them, as teaching and enforcing rules, and as pursuing various goals.”³¹ This transition is inextricably linked to evolution because of the obvious advantages of confederacy and cooperation – it also cuts down on enforcement costs, since individuals who can fully engage in such normative commitments are actually trustworthy instead of needing constant monitoring to ensure that they do not cheat. In such a context, an ability to make and keep commitments is favored. Once we have reached that stage, we can move towards an ability to talk about these things, and thus truly engage with the normative in a situation where the underlying capacities, including the capacity to talk about it, are still grounded in evolution.

Both Hobbesian philosophy and evolution seem to have focused their attention on the power of the social group to restrain certain behaviors. You have to be pretty bright not just to make alliances, but to enforce and reinforce them in order for there to be an incentive to make partnerships work, instead of collapsing when a short-term gain from defection becomes available. The female chimps that De Waal observed attacking abusive males would display very strong, undeniably negative reactions when any one among them made conciliatory gestures before they were all ready to do so, “turn[ing] all their pent-up fury against the first among them to approach the adversary to present her behind, or kiss him.”³² Hobbesian confederacies were actually somewhat harder to imagine in the state of nature he described – they seem far more plausible in situations where there are some pre-existing social relationships between the members of the confederacy. Since I do

not believe he was right about the extreme individualism he envisioned as characteristic of the state of nature – at least, not interpersonally – I believe that the sort of confederacies he imagined are even more plausible than they would be if primates were not naturally social animals. Furthermore, there is a difference between a theory in which only Hobbesian enforcements and evolution lead to effective cooperation, and one where those things also lead to normativity. In the latter view, many group members will continue to cooperate even when enforcement is highly unlikely – this would seem to be a more plausible picture of our society. When I stop at a red light at three in the morning, it is not because I am particularly afraid of getting a ticket; it is because I am willing to cooperate with my society's requirements, and thus make all of our lives a little bit easier, and safer!

In any examination of moral theory, it seems useful to note that humans are neither the endpoint nor the beginning of moral development. Thus, it is useful to examine our cousins, who may not be as 'far along' in the development of their morality as we are. An examination of the work of scientists like Frans De Waal may well lead to a more in-depth understanding of the development of our own morality, and morality in general.

One of the most telling demonstrations of how deeply ingrained morality is comes in times of stress: when a person does a moral action despite extreme duress, that person is often highly lauded. But such behavior is not entirely selfless; it can also serve an evolutionary purpose for the individual, since the maintenance of a functioning social order is usually good for all of its members. The work of maintaining that order falls not just to its dominant members, but to all members: a stable group is in everyone's best interests,

not just for humans, but for our cousins as well. Extreme altruism can be based in kin selection, or in normative commitment-keeping, the capacity for which we owe both to evolution and to having learned a certain way of talking and thinking about ourselves and each other. The mechanism is the same, but the behavior can have different meanings in different situations: in between the extremes of the purely normative and the self-regarding, we find things like sympathy-driven behavior, which may be evolutionarily rooted in kin and group-selection, but is still considered a moral behavior.

Members of a chimpanzee group do not take social tension lying down. Instead, in tense situations "submissive greetings and grooming [...] [increase] even more than aggression. Inasmuch as grooming and greeting serve appeasing and calming functions, they [...] [smooth] strained relationships."³³ These grooming acts performed by all the members of a troop act as preventive measures protecting group solidarity as well as individual social positions. De Waal made these observations in connection to a study to determine whether population density would lead to the sort of increase in aggression that some people expected to see in humans living in extremely crowded cities. I think that constraints on behavior provided by morality act as a check on problems that might otherwise arise in such tense situations, helping to maintain all-important social ties, and preventing the breakdown of the community.

For this account of the limits of hierarchy to be plausible, we must show how a subordinate position in a hierarchy could benefit an animal well enough in order to explain its support of dominants. Here De Waal posits the effects of outside dangers on the development of hierarchical

systems. In a community constantly divided by competition for resources – food, mates, and all of the other things that dominants tend to have preferential access to – an attack by outsiders or an environmental crisis could be devastating. While this threat is still a serious risk to a precariously positioned community that has a well-established hierarchy, its members might be better able to deal with the problems that undoubtedly arise. In these circumstances a community that might otherwise simply be wiped out could survive thanks to the strong social ties of a hierarchical society. De Waal says that “hierarchies distribute not only resources but also social acceptance: the one making them arenas of competition, the other holding them together.”³⁴ A subordinate may have less access to resources than a dominant, but is still better off as a member of the group, with friends, allies, and the other benefits of group membership, than she would be alone. Furthermore, the way in which subordinates are dealt with varies greatly from species to species: as De Waal notes, simply being a subordinate is not a one-way ticket to an unhappy life.³⁵ A hierarchy constrained by the need to maintain sufficient support to avoid being overthrown might be just the ticket. It is also likely that any member threatening the stability of such a tightly knit community, particularly in times of stress, would find herself bearing the brunt of the rest of the group’s disapproval.

Kin-selection is also an important factor in moral behavior. I certainly feel a stronger sense of moral obligation towards my mother than towards a stranger – in fact, most people would agree that to feel otherwise would be morally suspect. As De Waal notes, “benevolence decreases with increasing distance between people. Going against the grain of this

natural gradient meets with sharp disapproval.”³⁶ De Waal draws a ‘floating pyramid’ of altruistic obligation: at the narrowest point is the self, widening to immediate family, then community, then nation, then humanity, and finally all other life forms.³⁷

It could be argued that altruism developed largely as a means of protecting one’s kin, and thus the likelihood of one’s own genes being successfully passed on to the next generation. Any altruistic feelings we have towards non-kin are merely a side-effect of this selected-for trait – albeit a pleasant side-effect, arguably, with its own benefits for social animals. Clearly, capacities can be rooted in evolution and selected because of a particular effect they have, but subsequently used to other ends: our normative picture of moral engagement with our fellows can still have its roots in the kin – and group-selection that has helped the survival of our species.

However, this would not explain the sort of checks and balances that seem to apply to purely kin-favoring behavior. For example, there is the already-mentioned censure dominant chimpanzees face if they fail to take the side of the underdog in a fight, regardless of how close their alliance with the winning party is. The female interveners will also do so on anyone’s behalf, again, regardless of the status of, or their relationship with, the loser. Stingl and Collier also address this question in “Reasonable Partiality,” in which they note that there are gender differences in cooperative behavior: “males tend to cooperate much more on a tit-for-tat basis, whereas females base their cooperation on bonds of kinship and close social bonds, bonds expressed in part by affiliative behavior such as sitting together and grooming one another.”³⁸ The female animals in these cases do not seem to

keep a strict track of who granted a favor last, and will groom and care for each other regardless of whether there is a direct exchange at the time. This is a broader form of reciprocity that may have the same ultimate effect, but that has a different tonality since no accounts are kept. While Stingl and Collier agree that we have clearly and logically evolved to favor our kin, they note that there must be balances on this sort of partiality, due to the fact that it is on occasion tragically counterproductive:

If each of us reasons in a partial way and tries to act directly on our obligations to do what is best for our own children, for example, we may each do worse in fulfilling this obligation than if we had reasoned more impartially. In this way, impartiality can function as an important mechanism for furthering or protecting moral values arising from relationships of partiality.³⁹

While partiality is extremely important to species like ours, it is not foolproof. In an emergency, my instinct would likely be to protect my kin, but given the wrong set of circumstances – for example, if I am in a good position to help your kin, but in a bad position to help my own, while you are in a good position to help mine, but also in a bad position to help your own, if I attempt to help my own kin and you yours, we are both likely to fail – this instinct might prove fatal for my kin.⁴⁰ Sometimes, then, impartiality can be the best way to protect our partial interests, especially when there is a good chance of that impartiality being reciprocated. In the right circumstances the ‘ends’ of kin selection might be better served by more flexible and less selective forms of altruistic behavior. This, again, is helpful in building a capacity for true normative impartiality: evolution has given us the basic

capacities and inclinations, but we have built morality on top as a system that attempts to generalize and refine our moral attitudes and actions, making them coherent. If you think of morality as a rational system instead of just gut instinct and tendencies, though it may be these instincts that make us receptive to moral language and rules, then it seems that we must instruct children on it in much the same way we teach them language. Drilling language lessons with an infant is not nearly as effective as just talking to and interacting with that infant; language acquisition is natural, and the framework for it is already in place. The same may be true of morality.

Primates are social animals, and our morality has evolved as a result of shared social nature. Stingl and Collier are almost certainly on the right track when they say that “this evolution is imperfect, and subject to cognitive correction through consideration of what would be optimal for our sort of creature.”⁴¹ It will obviously be difficult; how, after all, can we decide what’s morally best for us? I think it might be relevant to examine the parallel between our physical and our moral senses. Huck Finn was raised to accept slavery as moral, or at least as not immoral, but this bad theory was overwhelmed by a human understanding of Jim. Just as one believes the truth of one’s eyes over the matter of whether a hairy fellow is Bigfoot or just in need of a good shave, one believes the truth of one’s moral senses over the matter of whether or not a person can be owned. I believe it is possible to improve our moral ideas; as things stand, moral concern, like size, seems to diminish with distance. I may cringe at my neighbor’s poverty, but I do not find it too difficult to ignore the starvation of millions of people in Africa, people who are just as worthy of moral consideration as the people who are

Endnotes

- ¹ R. Joyce, "Darwinian Ethics and Error," *Biology and Philosophy* Volume 15 (2000): 715.
- ² Michael Stingl, "All the Monkeys Aren't in the Zoo: Evolutionary Ethics and the Possibility of Moral Knowledge," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Supplemental Volume 26: 245-265.
- ³ Ibid.: 245.
- ⁴ Ibid.: 249.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.: 253.
- ⁷ Ibid.: 258.
- ⁸ Ibid.: 264.
- ⁹ William F. Harms, "Adaptation and Moral Realism," *Biology and Philosophy* Volume 15 (2000): 701.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Michael Stingl and John Collier, "Evolutionary Naturalism and the Objectivity of Morality," *Biology and Philosophy* Volume 8 (1993): 51.
- ¹³ Robert J. Richards, "A Defense of Evolutionary Ethics," *Biology and Philosophy* Volume 1 (1986): 292.
- ¹⁴ Stingl and Collier, "Evolutionary Naturalism and the Objectivity of Morality": 51.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.: 54.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.: 55-56.
- ¹⁹ Frans De Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 191.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 194.
- ²¹ Michael Stingl and John Collier, "Reasonable Partiality from a Biological Point of View," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* Volume 8 (2005): 16.
- ²² Ibid.

- ²³ Frans De Waal, 98.
- ²⁴ Stingl and Collier, "Reasonable Partiality from a Biological Point of View": 16.
- ²⁵ De Waal, 100.
- ²⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 74.
- ²⁷ De Waal, 205.
- ²⁸ Hobbes, 50.
- ²⁹ Bryson Brown, "Bootstrapping Norms: From Cause to Intention," in *Engaged Philosophy: Essays in Honour of David Braybrooke*, eds. Susan Sherwin and Peter K. Schotch (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 362.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 362-363.
- ³¹ Ibid., 363.
- ³² De Waal, 205.
- ³³ Ibid., 198.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 103.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 212.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 213.
- ³⁸ Stingl and Collier, "Reasonable Partiality from a Biological Point of View": 16.
- ³⁹ Ibid.: 18.
- ⁴⁰ Imagine that a predator leaps into a clearing. My child is across the clearing from me, but is next to you. Your child is far from you, but close to me. If I attempt to save my child and you yours, they will quite possibly both be killed, but if I grab your child and you mine we can save them both.
- ⁴¹ Stingl and Collier, "Evolutionary Naturalism and the Objectivity of Morality": 59.
- ⁴² De Waal, 218.

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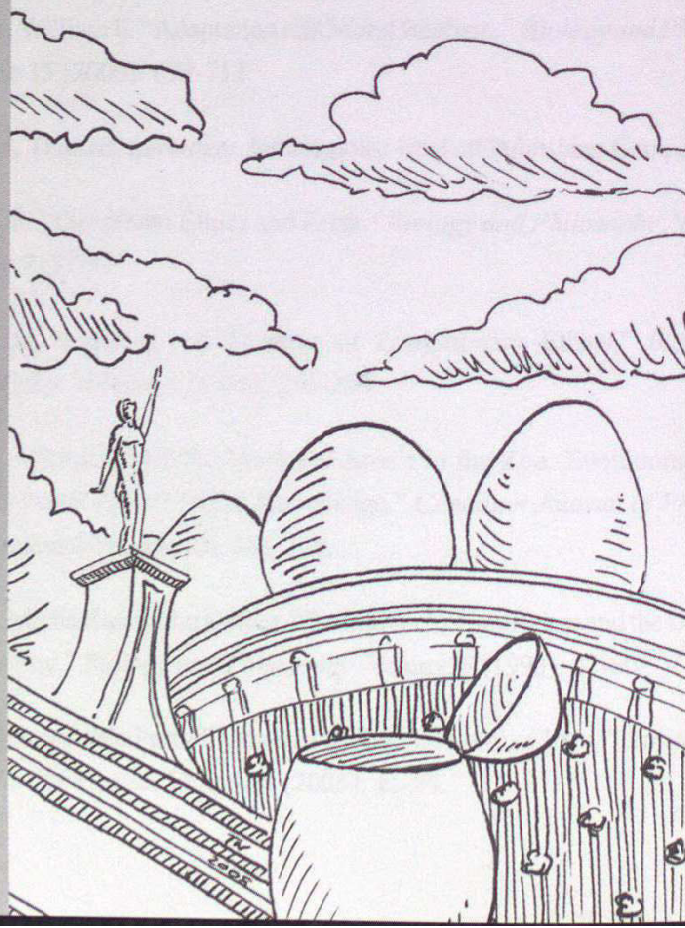
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The Place of the Modern Museum

within Art's Historicity of Life

In "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between two possible historicities of art: a historicity of life found in art itself and a historicity of death established by the Museum. Because Merleau-Ponty associates the Museum to culture rather than to art, he sees it as static. As such, it is antithetical to the dynamic true history of art. Because the Museum, which he believes constitutes a form of art history, only understands artworks as historical *events*, it is only concerned with art retrospectively. However, while institutionalized art ceases to be art and becomes culture for Merleau-Ponty, he sees artworks themselves as positive institutions. Because art opens up a field of possibilities for subsequent creation it looks towards the future; it is an *advent*. Despite Merleau-Ponty's negative assessment of the traditional Museum, I believe that his positive view of art as an institution can be extended to two forms of the modern museum: the museum as a work of art, represented by the Teatro-Museo Dalí in Figueres, and the dynamic museum – the museum of contemporary art as exemplified by the New York Museum

of Modern Art. In that it constitutes art itself, the 'museum as art' can take its place within art's historicity of life. However, there is a sense in which the experience of the true history of art, which corresponds to the history of expression through art itself, through a single work of art, is limited to the artist. In contrast, since it parallels art's active manner of being, the dynamic museum renders the living historicity of art accessible to the public, thus allowing the actualization of art's worth through the relationship of the artwork with the spectator, in which artistic expression can acquire significance.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes art, which affects a break from habitual ways of thinking, from culture, which encompasses the sum of pre-given meanings used within a society. Art "recreates and transforms"; it is creative expression that frees itself from all canons.¹ Because in creating art, "execution" – producing an artwork – precedes "conception" – conceptualization, which requires applying existing concepts – the artist must bracket culture by suspending pre-given meaning in order to create art. The reorganizing of existing concepts and images merely produces a work that falls into the category of culture. In contrast, creating an artwork² requires taking up and going *beyond* culture.³ Culture can determine one's beliefs and perceptual habits.⁴ Therefore, the artist must create within a self-imposed cultural void, an a-cultural state. New meanings cannot be found in the totality of human thought; they do not "*exist*" anywhere yet. Rather, in that they are produced by "reason which contains its own origins," they originate solely with the artist who, according to Merleau-Ponty, has to break with the meanings⁵ she had herself once used to create works of art in order to produce a new artwork.⁶

Together, the artist's vision of the world, her early works, and the entire artistic past, present her with a *tradition*.⁷ In turn, by further creating new meaning, the artist herself founds an artistic institution⁸ that contributes to the expansion of the existing tradition.⁹ Insofar as remembering and taking an *interest* in this tradition enables the artist to both recognize and break with it, the awareness of her origins represents a creative possibility for her.¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty associates this self-awareness founded on remembrance to the positive historicity of art. It is in the artist's tradition that cultural products retain value. They are taken up in the creation of new meaning and thus "come to life again" through artistic creation. Merleau-Ponty does not see artistic creation as a mere reorganization or transformation of pre-existing concepts. The artist's awareness of her tradition is what ultimately allows her to recognize the old meanings it provides her with, so that she can break with them and create new meaning. Every completed artwork can thus be taken up and "metamorphosed" in the creation of a new one. Because breaking with old meanings calls for their reinterpretation, every work of art is "an open field" of investigation in which the artist can find meanings that can then be taken up and moved beyond. Moreover, every artwork is also potentially "a new organ of human culture," a means to achieving artistic expression. All art moves beyond the past, beyond culture, towards the future. It is in this movement that it calls for a corresponding metamorphosis in future art, for future artists to take this art up in turn as cultural meaning and produce new artworks.¹¹ Merleau-Ponty believes that because all artists share in this artistic undertaking, in the effort of expression, there is a single artistic task, a constancy in the artistic endeavor¹² that links

all artists together and determines the unity of art.¹³ Because each artist “revives, recaptures, and renews” the entire undertaking of art in each new work, Merleau-Ponty defines the historicity found in art itself – that is, the true history of art – as a dynamic historicity: the historicity of life.¹⁴

Art’s historicity of life is found in the artist at work because in her creative effort she links past tradition to her own artistic endeavor.¹⁵ Therefore, individual works of art do not constitute separate *events*. An artwork being an event would imply that it had been created in isolation from art as a whole. Therefore, it could only be integrated retroactively into the single task Merleau-Ponty ascribes to art, through a connecting principle that would link it to other independent artistic events. Thus, if artworks constituted events, the artistic order would necessarily be external to art; it would not reside in the creative effort itself but rather in its retrospective interpretation. Instead, Merleau-Ponty understands works of art as *advents*. Since it is a human gesture, an individual human means of expression, each artwork “is both a beginning and a *continuation*” it is not “finished” and therefore it is not temporally limited as events are.¹⁶ Seeing as it represents a part of a unified artistic effort, the value of the artwork thus “exceeds its simple presence.”¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty claims that “the meaning of the expressive gesture” upon which the unity of painting is founded is “in principle a meaning in genesis.”¹⁸ In that it adds a new meaning, – which constitutes a creation of meaning and therefore a genesis that can be taken up in future art – to past meanings, the artwork modifies the project of art. Furthermore, the working out of a problem in art reveals other problems that in turn have to be addressed; the world always presents itself to the

artist as “to be painted.” The artistic project can never be completed, so each artwork also contains within itself the imperative that future art be created.¹⁹ As such, art is eternally forward-looking; it requires the perpetual creation of new art.²⁰ Because it sets the stage for future artistic expression, an artwork represents a “promise of events” which Merleau-Ponty defines as an *advent*.²¹

According to Merleau-Ponty, it is due to the unity of art that all artworks can ultimately be placed in a Museum. However, the historicity that the institutionalization of art produces is negative because the Museum brings art a necessarily retrospective consciousness of itself.²² Merleau-Ponty argues that insofar as each era imposes “its concerns and perspectives” upon art, the decision as to which artworks are to be placed in any given Museum is necessarily based on misinterpretation because it is judged according to a given canon. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty accuses the Museum of “externality.”²³ He believes that its perspective can only ever be one that is foreign to the artistic project because, as non-art (not a work of art in itself), the Museum cannot participate in it. Thus, it is because the Museum detaches the work of the artist from life, from his artistic effort (his gesture), that it produces a historicity of death.²⁴

In this sense, the traditional Museum is necessarily static. Because the Museum severs artworks from that which confers their dynamism onto them – the ongoing creative effort of the artist in which art is found in its pure state – the Museum exhibits them as distinct events in art history. It transforms “efforts,” dynamic expression, the perpetual movement towards the creation of art, into “works”: static, finished events. According to

Merleau-Ponty, the inadequacy of the Museum lies in this incapacity to reconcile individual works of art and art itself. So long as they make up the artistic project, artworks retain their significance as art; they represent part of a larger whole or, rather, of a larger movement: art as manifest in the creative effort of each individual artist.²⁵ In contrast, the artworks which are institutionalized in the Museum and thus taken out of their wider context become separate and unrelated art historical events.

According to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the two possible historicities of art, participation in the artistic project constitutes a means to accessing art's historicity of life. Conversely, it is a relationship of externality to the history of expression that produces the historicity of death. Seeing as involvement in art correlates with the experience of the positive historicity of art, artists can easily access the historicity of life. But does it follow that only artists can experience the living historicity of art? Is art merely a "silent and solitary experience," or in Cézanne's words, a "personal apperception"?²⁶ Merleau-Ponty associates participation in the artistic project to the *interest* in past art which allows the artists to take up old meanings so as to produce artwork that creates new meaning.²⁷ However, Merleau-Ponty also attributes *interest* to the spectator's experience of an artwork. Whereas the recognition of her tradition is necessary to the relationship of the artist to art, Merleau-Ponty claims that this awareness is not essential for the spectator to see a work of art; the viewer can do this "without tradition."²⁸ By producing an artwork, the artist opens a "passage" to her world. Merleau-Ponty claims that the existence of this passage makes it possible, for instance, for the innkeeper at Cassis to feel interested in

Renoir's *The Bathers* and, by means of this interest, experience Renoir's world through the artwork he created.²⁹ However, not everyone can, like the Cassis innkeeper, experience *The Bathers* by coming upon Renoir painting on the beach. Then where is this experience of art to take place?

There is a sense in which art *has* to open itself to the public. In itself, a work of art is expression. However, being expression alone constitutes an insufficient condition for an artwork to be accomplished – what we understand as 'completed'. Ultimately, to be accomplished a work of art must reach a viewer that will experience the artist's gesture through this work. In the spectator's seeing and interpreting the artwork, the artist's expression takes on significance.³⁰ Only then is her artwork complete. Thus, the proof that a creation is in fact an artwork, its worth, resides in the approval of an audience.³¹ This communication between the product of the artist's vision and the spectator can take place in the Museum.

Nevertheless, there remains the problem of the Museum's establishing a historicity of death. The Museum makes art static and deprives art of its "active manner of being," hence transforming an *advent* – an artwork – into an *event* – a mere work that belongs to the category of culture.³² However, does Merleau-Ponty's view of the Museum's historicity of death necessarily lead to the condemnation of *all* Museums? Is it really impossible for Museum to participate in art's living historicity and must it therefore always remain external, if not in outright opposition, to art's true history of expression? I believe that Merleau-Ponty's criticism of the Museum cannot account for all modern Museums. Though I recognize that his theory of the Museum

certainly applies to traditional museums, I nevertheless believe that modern Museums can stand up against his critique.

The Teatro-Museo Dalí, conceived and designed by Salvador Dalí, is the world's largest surrealist object.³³ Seeing as it constitutes Dalí's personal artistic expression, it can be considered a work of art. The façade of the building features Dalíesque decorations such as his signature eggs. However, the eggs are not merely ornamental elements. Like in the case of one of Dalí's paintings, every section of the structure of the Teatro-Museo Dalí is planned by the artist. Therefore, what could be seen as merely decorative in fact represents a necessary portion of a larger whole without which the meaning of the artwork would not be what it is. The furniture, the individual paintings and sculptures, the hangings and the courtyard with Dalí's *Rainy Cadillac* in its center, all form a part of a larger work of art. Dalí designed much of the furniture himself, such as the Mae West room, in which the furniture, when viewed through a round concave glass pane, reveals the face of Mae West. Dalí also redesigned the rest of the museum to fit his artistic vision; thus it corresponds to a component of the artwork. Because it gathers individual works of art in a single space it could be seen as a Museum; however, the Teatro-Museo Dalí also represents the unified creative effort of an artist. As such, it can take its place within art's historicity of life.

Though the Teatro-Museo can be considered art, it remains an isolated work of art. While it allows the spectator to experience an individual artwork, it does not lead to her experiencing *art*. According to Merleau-Ponty, the interest a viewer has in an artwork allows her to experience it

as art.³⁴ This experience, however, is limited to that one artwork. The viewer cannot, in that sense, experience "art." Because, by taking up old meanings in her creative effort, the artist can access a tradition, which encompasses her early works and the entire artistic past, she can experience art.³⁵ However, seeing as the spectator does not participate in creation, she lacks the means to achieve such an experience. Therefore, it would seem that the experience of the true history of art through a single artwork is limited to the artist. In light of this, the Teatro-Museo Dalí could not enable an audience to experience art. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether some other form of non-traditional museum could achieve this.

Today, whereas artworks from anywhere between the prehistoric era to the Impressionist era are placed in what Merleau-Ponty would consider traditional museums, the artworks that range from those produced by the post-Impressionists to the ones that are being created by the artists of today are placed in museums of contemporary art. Not only are these museums non-traditional architecturally, the very ideology that underlies them breaks with the one underlying Merleau-Ponty's Museum. I believe that contemporary museums, such as the New York Museum of Modern Art, can parallel art's active manner of being and thus render the living historicity of art accessible to the public.

Art itself is ever-expanding. Because of this the historicity found in art itself is a dynamic, living historicity. According to Merleau-Ponty, the artistic project aims at resolving the problems of art through the production of masterpieces. The masterpiece is an artwork that temporarily resolves the problems in art. As such, it constitutes a culmination of the universal artistic

effort. However, an artwork only remains a masterpiece so long as no later work of art takes it, too, up in the creation of new meaning and acquires the status of masterpiece. Then, whereas it comes to represent an "earlier attempt" at resolving the problems in art, the first masterpiece becomes a landmark of the progress of art.³⁶ The traditional Museum is static because it only contains artworks that have, due to the forward movement of art, become landmarks. Its collection only represents a closed section of the history of art; one that is severed from the *movement* that characterizes the single artistic project. Thus, because it separates past art from both present art and the art of the future, thus failing to represent the succession that takes place in art, the traditional Museum cannot reflect the true history of art.

The contemporary museum essentially differs from the traditional model in that it is dynamic. Glenn D. Lowry, director of the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) voiced the need for maintaining a relationship between MoMA and emerging art. He claims that ceasing to collect contemporary art was "never a serious possibility" for the Museum. Furthermore, in refusing to cut contemporary art off from earlier art, "the earliest and the most recent works in the collection," he recognizes the importance of the interaction between past and present art. Because of this, the layout of the MoMA is "open-ended." Architect Yoshio Taniguchi provided a "double height, column-free space" that would allow for new art to be continually incorporated into the Museum.³⁷ Therefore, the MoMA succeeds in emulating the movement that characterizes art itself. By allowing the spectator to experience masterpieces alongside landmarks, its

exhibits recreate the succession and forward thrust of art.

Moreover, the MoMA optimizes the experience of art for the spectator. Merleau-Ponty accuses the traditional Museum of being "official and pompous."³⁸ In contrast, modern Museums either tend towards being artistic efforts themselves, or non-Museums. The former trend is exemplified by the Museums that, through their creative architecture, can be themselves considered works of art – the Teatro-Museo Dalí and, with its sweeping aluminum exterior, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, are examples. In the latter, the Museum becomes a non-Museum through the lightness or, at the extreme, the "disappearance" of its architecture. The MoMA falls into this category.

According to John Updike, the structure of the MoMA is "delicately balanced between presence and absence."³⁹ In designing the MoMA, Taniguchi aimed at and succeeded in making the architecture disappear. The walls of the Museum float, they are dematerialized. Taniguchi achieved this effect by placing quarter inch wide black gaps along the tops and bottoms of all the walls and pillars. This creates the effect of non-space, of anti-structure; nothing is solid or grounded and, consequently, the architecture never imposes itself upon the spectator. It disappears. This recession of the architectural structure of the MoMA allows for the art to emerge. The museum's artworks are more than fore-grounded; by forgetting the architecture, the viewer experiences the sensation that she is solely surrounded by works of art. Furthermore, because the MoMA uses thin, natural bamboo to exhibit its artworks, just as the artworks are not framed by walls, floors and ceilings, they are not set in heavy, ornamental

frames. The overall effect is that of a pure experience of artwork where the spectator is free from the often oppressive presence of the Museum.

Finally, it is through a spectator's experiencing an artwork that it acquires significance and thus becomes accomplished. A Museum allows for this communication between artwork and viewer to take place. Therefore, the Museum benefits not only art's audience but also art itself. Seeing as most people cannot afford to collect art and because running into a Renoir painting on the beach is not an everyday experience, Museums provide access to art that would otherwise be limited to a select elite. Today, the Museum has moved away from the Museum Merleau-Ponty condemned. Because the Contemporary Museum parallels art's active manner of being, it provides the public with access to the living historicity of art and further contributes to the actualization of art through the spectators' conferring meaning to the artworks they see, thus allowing them to become accomplished works of art.

Endnotes

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," in *Signs*, translator Richard McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 59, 48.

² Merleau-Ponty claims that it is not sufficient for an object to be aesthetically pleasing for it to be a work of art: "art is not imitation, nor is it something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste": Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense and Non-Sense*, translators Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 17-18.

³ Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 18-19.

⁴ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 48.

⁵ Merleau-Ponty primarily deals with the meanings in painting, which are perceptual: "Indirect Language," 75.

⁶ Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 19.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 59.

⁸ Merleau-Ponty uses "institution" (which I believe is analogous to the Husserlian *Stiftung* - foundation or establishment) in reference to the artwork - the manifestation of the artist's style - to signify that it is dynamic, in contradistinction to constituting a mere object, a work that falls into the 'culture' category, for instance, which would be static: "Indirect Language," 59.

⁹ Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 13; Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 53, 67.

¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty also seems to imply that it constitutes an exigency; the artist's tradition demands that she take it up creatively: "Indirect Language," 59-60.

¹¹ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 59, 72.

¹² Merleau-Ponty claims that the artistic effort is universal. Therefore, "different cultures become involved in the same search and have the same task in view." Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty specifies that the unity of art is not that of a Hegelian spirit, of an order external to art itself that determines its project: "Indirect Language," 67, 69.

¹³ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 60, 62, 68-70.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 68; emphasis added, 75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, translator Carleton Dallery, translator (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1964), 189.

²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 69-70, 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

²² *Ibid.*, 59-60, 62.

- ²³ Ibid., 80.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 60, 63.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 62-63.
- ²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 19, 13.
- ²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 60.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 63.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 51-52.
- ³¹ Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 25.
- ³² Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 179.
- ³³ Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation. "Teatro-Museo Dalí." *The Three Museums*. 2004. URL: <http://www.salvador-dali.org/eng/fmuseumus.htm>.
- ³⁴ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 63.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 59.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 48.
- ³⁷ John Updike, "Invisible Cathedral: a Walk through the Modern," *The New Yorker: The Critics* (8 November 2004) URL: <http://www.newyorker.com/critics/atlarge>
- ³⁸ Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language," 62.
- ³⁹ Updike, 1.

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How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?: The Place of Fictional Names in a Theory of Reference

Theories of reference either identify names with definite descriptions, or make a point to distinguish the two. They accordingly come in two varieties; the theories of Friedrich Frege and of Bertrand Russell exemplify the first kind, while Saul Kripke's "causal or historical" theory of reference,¹ echoing John Stuart Mill's, falls into the second. These theories primarily consider reference in actual discourse. In actual discourse, the speaker intends to refer to the world; that is, language is used to make assertions. But what about reference in fictional discourse? The intention to refer to something does not guide fictional discourse: the speaker uses names for persons and kinds regardless of whether these persons or kinds exist. In the unpublished lecture on "Existence: Vacuous Names and Mythical Kinds" (1972), Kripke argues that fictional discourse is not relevantly different from actual discourse on the question of whether its names are just definite descriptions. Kripke treats *fictional names*, or names referring to proper names and historical kinds in a story, just like the proper names and historical



kinds of actual discourse in the sense that none of them can be formulated as definite descriptions. They are, as he writes, "rigid designators."

Fictional discourse seems to deserve examination on its own terms. Stories, or fictional narratives, have a feature that historical narratives lack: they are incomplete. For example, the number of Lady Macbeth's children is never mentioned within *Macbeth*. By contrast, when we read a biography – even when it fails to mention the number of children the subject had – we trust that there is a determinate number. Gregory Currie has used this observation to defend a version of the view that fictional names are definite descriptions. How we come to settle the issue of narrative incompleteness is a problem for philosophy of fiction but not for philosophy of science; accordingly, the decisions about the theories of fictional reference and of actual reference are at least partly independent of one another. I imagine a possible reply to Kripke's main argument in "Existence," in accordance to Currie's theory of fictional reference. As will be seen, such a reply requires a discussion on the cases in which sentences like "**Holmes** might never have done the things described in the stories" cannot express propositions.

In "Existence," Kripke uses a hypothetical libel suit to claim that fictional names cannot function as definite descriptions. Suppose a person fits every description attributed to a character in a work of fiction. Furious at what appears to be an invasion of privacy, the person sues the author. However, the plaintiff and the author exist in no historical connection to one another; that is, the character resembles the plaintiff, but only by sheer coincidence. Kripke relies on our intuition, which I do not dispute, to conclude that the libel suit is unwarranted because the author did not

intend to represent the plaintiff.² Kripke wants to say that the description theorist is stuck identifying the character with the plaintiff.³ Yet, does the description theorist have to concede this?

Nevertheless, the description theorist may respond that the plaintiff has many properties that the character lacks. Only the plaintiff decides to sue the author after reading the fictional work, after all. In fact, even when a fictional work imparts that, say, the character (like Lady Macbeth) had children, this does not necessarily mean that this character had a *specific* number of them. This leads us to consider a structural feature specific to *fictional* narratives: namely, narrative incompleteness. According to narrative incompleteness, there is nothing about the story beyond what is in the text. In this respect, fictions are like beliefs or formal theories. David Lewis has pointed out this aspect of the analogy between beliefs and fiction; the fictional text only imparts the existence of Lady Macbeth's children within the story while the number is left indefinite, just as "Someone may have a belief that we would express as an existential quantification, without his believing any substitution instance of the quantification."⁴ Likewise, a formal theory may decide whether a universal statement is true without deciding whether an instantiation of that universal is; logicians refer to this as ' ω -incompleteness.' Nothing requires the description theorist to concede that the properties enumerated in the fiction are the properties essential to the plaintiff's identity as him/herself.

Narrative incompleteness demands that we treat the content of a fictional text *T* as the existence of every fictional name in the fictional story

F (e.g. x_1 =Sherlock Holmes, x_2 =Watson, and so on, for F =Holmes story):

$$1) \exists x_1 \dots \exists x_n [F(x_1 \dots x_n)]$$

More than this, though, we may even begin to wonder whether every property of the character is indeed shareable by the nonfictional plaintiff. The fictional character seems to have an additional property: the property of being reported by some storyteller in the story itself. Many philosophers of literature claim that this is a legitimate, if undersold, property, of characters. For Currie, there is an additional character in the story, the *fictional author*, who reports the activity of every other character in the story, and the plot that unites them.⁵ As a result, Currie suggests replacing the first "Ramsey sentence" with a more complicated one, which affirms the existence of a fictional author in the story:

$$2) \exists x_1 \dots \exists x_{n+1} [F(x_1 \dots x_n \text{ and } x_{n+1} \text{ is responsible for the text } T \text{ and } T \text{ sets out } x_{n+1}'\text{s knowledge of the activities of } x_1 \dots x_n)]$$

This can be abbreviated as

$$2') \exists x_1 \dots \exists x_{n+1} [F'(x_1 \dots x_{n+1})]$$

because the relation the other characters (x_1 through x_n) have with the fictional author (x_{n+1}) is part of the story itself, now called F' .⁶

To clarify, the fictional author is never the author and only occasionally the explicit narrator but, rather, is the teller who is privy to all of the information about the fictional world contained in the text. In other words, there would be no text T if it weren't for the presence of the fictional author reporting it. On this account, T is the set of beliefs of this "reliable, historically situated agent" concerning the events narrated:

Because the teller—the fictional author—is a fictional construction, he has no private beliefs, no beliefs that could not be reasonably inferred from text plus background. His beliefs are not discovered by a reading (a rational and informed reading) but *constructed* by it.⁷

Thus, the analogy between narrative and belief-related incompleteness is more than an analogy; narrative incompleteness is one form of belief-related incompleteness.

At the same time, some details of a fictional story are not explicitly stated. For example, we may think it reasonable to presume that all of the characters in a realistic text like *Macbeth* are human. Currie allows this by acknowledging that a fictional author

cannot, of course, tell us everything he knows that is relevant to his story—it would take too long and the attempt would dissipate our interest. But he knows that he does not need to tell us everything. He can rely upon a shared background of assumptions, telling us only those things that deviate from or supplement that background, or those things that belong to background and that he feels the need to emphasize.⁸

The humanness of *Macbeth's* characters is not a property only to be speculated upon as a result of narrative incompleteness; rather, the property is rightly inferred by the ideal reader, who is "perfectly informed, retentive, and rational."⁹

Some worries may linger as to whether every story contains a fictional-author character for the reason stated above: although a text's reading recovers the fictional author, this character is rarely, if ever,

explicitly named. Fictional authorship is most obviously needed in texts narrated unreliably, but it is present in any fictional text. As an example, consider Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), which features Charles Kinbote, the paradigmatic unreliable narrator. Although our reception of John Shade's poem is mediated through Kinbote's preface and commentary, Kinbote's contribution seems to in turn be mediated by another, invisible character. The title page labels *Pale Fire: A Novel*, although Kinbote certainly did not take himself to be novelizing; rather, he considers himself a literary critic placing Shade's poem within its proper historical context. The reader understands that Kinbote's context is not at all appropriate, however. The collision between his commentary and an independent, standard reading of Shade's poem forces us to evaluate Kinbote as unreliable in his judgments. Whenever our reading is ironic or otherwise that we take what we read with a grain of salt, we need an additional character to fully describe the story. This is similarly evident in drama. The characters in a play are not just the *dramatis personae* listed in the contents; there seems to be an observer over and above the other characters, who gives us the play's story. In a reliably narrated story like the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, on the other hand, the fictional author could simply be the explicit narrator, Watson. This will be the case where we can both infer that the narrator is recording the events in the form of this story, and the reader is given to interpret the story just as has the narrator.¹⁰

Kripke does not attack a position like Currie's because it is unlikely the existence of such a proposition even occurred to him. But the Kripkean needs to address a more sophisticated description theory of fictional

reference than the one he does in the above thought experiment. As I have tried to show, a more sophisticated version need not even include a fictional author for Kripke to be wrong, but if we want to account for fictions with unreliable narrators, we will need this additional complication. Not only does the plaintiff have more properties than his fictional counterpart by narrative incompleteness, but this fictional counterpart has a property—his relation to the fictional author—that the plaintiff cannot possess even in principle. Once Kripke's primary argument collapses, it appears that very little evidence in his "Existence" essay is left standing.¹¹ Kripke formulates a pretense principle, which he takes as self-evident, but this reveals his own bias in favor of a causal theory of fictional reference. The pretense principle states: "One is pretending or imagining that the conditions for reference are satisfied, and this is in some sense derivative then on the standard case in which the conditions for reference really are satisfied."¹² He goes on to add that "Part of the pretense is these names are names just like ordinary names, that ordinary conditions for reference are satisfied, even though in fact they are not."¹³ Kripke is pretty much assuming, then, that fictional names are rigid designators, just like their analogues in actual discourse. And his suspicions are confirmed as soon as he raises the thought-experimental libel suit, or other examples—all of which ignore the possibility of an additional if usually implicit character in the story, the fictional author. Kripke commits this error again when he claims that only within a causal theory of reference could we say that the mythical kind of *unicorn* is not just the conjunction of descriptions constituted by *albino*, *winged horse with a horn jutting out from its forehead*.¹⁴ But the description theorist, armed with the *fictional-author*

concept, can say that were s/he to discover a horse with the above properties, s/he would not conclude to having found a unicorn, because a unicorn has a relation to a fictional author in a given story about unicorns, and the horse in the world does not, and indeed cannot. Kripke's characterization of fictional reference as "derivative" is telling because the "Existence" essay refuses to deal with fiction on its own terms, and to consider the possibility that stories have a peculiar structure so that reference to its names and events functions differently.

Finally, I would like to elaborate, and even refine, Currie's proposal that a character like Holmes, as represented by the text, is just the collection of every attribute ascribed to him over the course of the story. We have seen that the story can be encapsulated by the following Ramsey sentence,

$$\exists x_1 \dots \exists x_{n+1} [F'(x_1 \dots x_{n+1})].$$

Take Holmes as the first character in this quantification (x_1). Given the existence of every other character in the story, Holmes is just the definite description (abbreviated as ' λ ') attributed to Holmes:¹⁵

$$3) \text{ Holmes} =_{df} \lambda x_1 \exists x_2 \dots \exists x_{n+1} [F'(x_1 \dots x_{n+1})]$$

or, more simply,

$$3') \text{ Holmes} =_{df} \lambda x F^{\#}(x).$$

Similarly, the fictional author of a *Holmes* story has a definition here just like any other character. With this definition at hand, we can now ask what to make of the following two sentences¹⁶:

- 4) "Holmes" is the proper name of (the character) **Holmes**, and
- 5) **Holmes** might never have done the things described in the stories.

By substitution, the description theorist needs to argue that these sentences amount to

4') "Holmes" is the proper name of $\lambda x F^{\#}(x)$, or the definite description ascribed to **Holmes** on the basis of the stories, and

5') $\lambda x F^{\#}(x)$ might never have done the things described in the stories on his account. (4') and (5') don't seem to capture what (4) and (5) are trying to express, respectively. What they are trying to express is something like the remark about a historical character like **Saul Kripke**; in actual discourse, it makes sense to say both that

6) "Saul Kripke" is the proper name of **Saul Kripke**, and

7) **Saul Kripke** might never have done the things described in his biographies.

And because we refuse to identify **SK** with any definite description on a causal theory of reference, these are quite different from, say, a definite description of what **SK** happened to achieve in the actual world. His parents may have decided to name **Saul Kripke** the less biblical, more mundane 'John.' **SK** may have decided to go into mathematics rather than philosophy. We still seem to be referring to **Saul Kripke**. Thus, (6) and (7) are distinct from

6') "Saul Kripke" is the proper name of $\lambda x A^{\#}(x)$, or the definite description of what **Kripke's** properties in the actual world, and

7') $\lambda x A^{\#}(x)$ might never have done the things described in his biographies.

But this line of argument only applies to actual discourse. On Currie's definition of fictional names, he is left with no choice but to argue that (4)

and (5) are empty propositions; that is, it makes no sense to ask whether a character could have done things other than s/he in fact did in the story-world.¹⁷

Currie's verdict on (4) and (5) is sound, but it fails to account for why readers are tempted to make these kind of statements. This is clearer in a less radical example, where a reader of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* demands, "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" Active readers, especially literary critics and directors staging the play, have sought an answer to this question. Macduff remarks that Macbeth has no children, but other passages indicate that at one point Lady Macbeth bore children. The status of this detail in their family history is thought to provide insight into the Macbeth couple's motivations. What is a reader doing when s/he asks and answers a question which is left undetermined by the text? I suggest that s/he is participating in a revision of the received story *F* into a more detailed version, call it *F*^o. Thus the so-called reader has co-authored a text *T*^o when s/he answers such a question. Currie is correct in asserting that given the text (by which he means the text *T*), the question of "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" is nonsensical because of the text's incompleteness on this matter; the reader knows that Lady Macbeth had children, but cannot know how many. Still, if Currie adopted the explanation given here, he could better address the concern that his theory here "clashes with intuition," as he admits that it does.¹⁸ Once we allow this case of co-authorship, in which Shakespeare is still the dominant author, the door is opened to more drastic overhauls of a story. For instance, a reader could challenge Doyle and say that *Holmes* might never have done the things described in the

stories. But if s/he does this, s/he is re-writing the story, and ascribing a new set of definite descriptions to *Holmes*, rather than affirming Kripke's causal theory of reference. So, proposition (4) becomes possible so long as we shift our discussion to a revised story *F*^o. Proposition (5) is an instance of proposition (4) where just one description changes—namely, the character's proper name. For example, the creative reader chooses to rename *Holmes* "Smith" in his/her revision, just as Lady Macbeth may be given a stillborn child.

Thus, Currie's account is marred by only considering examples of fictional stories crafted by a single author. Although he concedes at the beginning of *The Nature of Fiction*'s Chapter 4 that his account of fictional names can be extended to co-authored stories, Currie does not attempt this extension and certainly fails to mention it where it is needed—in his discussion of readers who attempt to patch over spots of indeterminacy, as in the examples of *Macbeth* and the *Holmes* stories above. In particular, it appears that stories that are co-authored by entire communities—what is often referred to as myth or folklore—may run into some problems on Currie's account. Recall the example of the unicorn I gave above. When I delineated it as an *albino, winged horse with a horn jutting out from its forehead*, I did not have any particular text in mind. Rather, I was building on a conception of unicorns drawn from anecdotes on the myth of the unicorn, which is spread by word-of-mouth and by various children's stories. Defining the relevant body of a text is a formidable challenge and will need to be overcome for anyone wishing to discuss folklore in the same manner as other fictions, which are centered on one (the quarto edition of *Macbeth*) or

even on a fixed set of texts (the *Holmes* stories in a certain edition). Indeed, Kripke also dodges this problem by assuming that the fictional text is readily identifiable. Even though he calls his kinds *mythical*, and discusses unicorns, they are in fact treated as fictional, as fictional names and mythical kinds exist “provided the appropriate works of fiction have been written”; which works are appropriate is left unanswered.¹⁹ For any theorist of fictional reference, the extent to which myth and folklore can be adapted to fiction needs to be addressed. Because this problem equally arises for either theorist, it is not a strike against Currie when compared against Kripke. Currie’s account of fictional reference is still valuable because it reminds someone wedded to Kripke’s causal theory of reference that fictional names require treatment on their own terms, and indeed appear to demand the equipment of definite descriptions owing to their narrative incompleteness.

Endnotes

¹ Throughout, Kripke’s theory of reference is referred to as *causal*, even though he often refers to the links in the referential chain as “causal or historical” in *Naming and Necessity* and in the “Existence” essay focused on here. The distinction is not relevant to my purposes here, and I do not require commitment to them as causal; this is simply shorthand. Keith Donnellan, for example, supports a view of the links as being historical but not causal in his “Speaking of Nothing.” To be fair to Kripke, I should also clarify that I am using ‘theory’ in a looser sense than Kripke does; the Kripkean may wish to call these two ‘pictures’ or ‘accounts’ of reference, since *Naming and Necessity* does not actually commit to defining reference by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions (especially 93-97).

² Saul Kripke, “Existence: Vacuous Names and Mythical Kinds,” *Oberlin Philosophy Colloquium* (April 1972): 11-12.

³ *Ibid.*: 12

⁴ Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 74-5.

⁵ Currie, 75-6. My discussion follows Currie closest, but earlier literary theorists have posited versions of his fictional author. In Chapter 3 of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), Wayne Booth elaborates upon an “implied author.”

⁶ Currie, 154-155.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Currie appears to always want to postulate a fictional author over and above the explicit narrator, even if s/he is reliable (123). But it may be unnecessary to postulate a fictional author in stories with explicit, reliable narrators. In the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, it does not make sense to posit a character who recorded the story by having access to Watson, who in turn has access to the other characters like Holmes because the beliefs attributed to him and Watson can be the same. This disagreement seems to turn on whether we think that the reader’s interpretation of the story will ever coincide exactly with the narrator’s. I think this is possible, but Currie may not.

¹¹ Of course, my discussion only considers independent reasons for considering fictional names and kinds as definite descriptions. Some of the reasons Kripke gives for his picture of reference may be importable into a picture of *fictional* reference. Beyond the reasons discussed here, Kripke does not offer further suggestions.

¹² Kripke, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵ Currie, 160.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁹ Kripke, 14.

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Biographies



Tessa Bruce-Brown wrote this paper in her penultimate year as an undergraduate at the University of Lethbridge. Her interests include ethics, feminist theory, and philosophy of science (particularly biology). She is currently working on a MA at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Iwa Nawrocki graduated McGill in 2007 with a Joint Honours degree in History and Philosophy. Writing her paper for a course on philosophy and art inspired her to make art the focus of her undergraduate philosophy thesis. Iwa aims to pursue graduate studies in Latin American History, but plans to get better acquainted with the region before she takes the plunge.

Margot Strohming completed her undergraduate studies at McGill in April of 2007. She wrote her contribution as a term essay for her first course on the philosophy of language. Margot is currently teaching in Grenoble, France, and hopes to return to the English-speaking world in the fall of 2008 as a graduate student in philosophy.

Tina Nawrocki, native of Poland, is a self-taught local artist. She began her artistic journey at the age of twelve when she first took up oil painting. Since then, she has showcased her work in several solo and group exhibitions. Her passion for art has pushed her to explore various mediums, including pen and ink, charcoal, and animation. She is currently working in Montreal as a flash animator for children's websites.