PHAROS.

WINTER 23/24

JUSTICE: A SELFISH VIRTUE?

POEM ON ROUSSEAU

EDITORIAL INTERVIEWS



THE (IL)LEGITIMACY OF CONSITUTIONAL MONARCHY

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JUSTICE: A SELFISH VIRTUE?

Introduction:

The question of whether justice is truly a selfless virtue – motivated only by the concern for others, rather than oneself – is an ongoing debate that has troubled philosophers for centuries. The essay assesses whether justice is a selfish virtue among individuals, before asking the same question of institutions – as institutions are themselves groups of individuals, we cannot begin an account of justice in institutions without first providing an account for their constituent parts. It argues that when considering individuals, it is clear that not only can truly selfless acts exist, but just acts (and so the virtue of justice) are most convincingly explained by selfless reasons. Whereas, when considering institutions, clearly acts can at least sometimes be explained by selfish motivations.

Throughout the essay, the conception of justice as an act which can be committed both by individuals, as well as groups of individuals, will be analysed. Here, justice is conceived as those acts which seek to – and are successful in – achieving a fair outcome, for the advantage of the other party. For brevity, this initial conception of justice will not be developed further, and instead we will use the venerable philosophical method of calling things that look and sound like ducks, ducks (that is, to assume that we are able to distinguish between selfish and selfless, and just and unjust, without involved philosophical reasoning). However, further amelioration will be found over the course of analysing when and where which acts are and are not just. Additionally, it is important to note that this essay takes the act of justice to be synonymous with the virtue of justice. Whilst many philosophers of the past have discussed the tracking of moral character on moral worth, this essay maintains simplicity to focus on the core of the analysis by assuming that individuals and institutions which possess the virtue of justice must definitionally act in just ways.

Some ideas are simplified for concise analysis – in particular Arthur Schopenhauer, in which his argument about non-egoistic acts of "freely willed justice, pure loving kindness and real noble-mindedness" is taken to be interchangeable with an argument about the virtue of justice (1840:189). Whilst Schopenhauer's argument about justice is far more nuanced and complex, it is impertinent to flesh out this position in full. We must also note that whilst John Rawls doesn't explicitly defend his theory from a position of selflessness or altruism – instead, he argues that altruism as a social value is unreliable, due to its 'imperfect distribution' – underlying his account of just acts is still a contention that such acts are at least not explicitly selfish (which is the question of our investigation).

As such, the essay begins by asking the

TRULY JUST ACTS ARE CHALLENGING TO RECONCILE WITH SELFISH MOTIVES

question of whether non-egoistic, selfless acts can exist among individuals – as it is impossible to speak of justice as being anything other than selfish, if such acts do not exist. The question of whether individuals can have selfish motivations in performing just acts is then assessed (in another way, the essay establishes whether justice is purely a selfless virtue or not). Having critically discussed justice for individuals, this essay will consider the virtue among institutions – that is, whether just institutions act under the influence of selfish or selfless motivations.

1. The virtue of justice in individuals.

a) The existence of selfless acts.

First, we consider the nature of justice within individuals. Here, the philosophy of Schopenhauer is of particular relevance; Schopenhauer mounts a significant case for the true selflessness of just acts which are purportedly non-egoistic. Before we can assess this motivation, however, we must critically evaluate whether we can even speak of truly non-selfish acts in the first place.

Schopenhauer explains that a non-egoistic act is characterised by "freely willed justice, pure loving kindness and real noble-mindedness", and that the incentive behind it is "the ultimate ground of morals" (1840:189). Non-egoistic incentives are opposite to egoistic incentives, in which, "seeing the countless individuals...in a practical respect, takes himself alone as real", making one's pleasure the primary goal (1840:191). Acts of the moral kind then, for Schopenhauer, are acts of freely willed justice and loving kindness, motivated by an incentive which places others as the primary aim. For example, a rich man returning the lost belongings of a poor man, even though no one is around to witness it (1840:186).

A psychological egoist, however – believing that all acts have a self-interested, egoistic motive – may argue that whilst appearing to be of moral value, such acts are still motivated by personal gain: be that "belief in a future recompense", better standing in their community, or just to feel better about themselves (and so egoistic)(1840:185). Schopenhauer recognises this; "a considerable portion of actions done from loving kindness...occur out of ostentation" (1840:185). Yet, he maintains there are acts of the kind described, and takes the case of Arnold von Winkelried, "who embraced as many enemy spears as he could" in battle, sacrificing himself to save his men (1840:196). In this case, it is indeed difficult to see how egoism can be the motivation, since the act leads to the destruction of the self (whilst according to egoism, the act is done in the interest of the self).

However, Friedrich Nietzsche (1878) offers a powerful counter: the action is still egoistic, since Winkelried's action had as its end the escape from a distressing emotional state, and not the wellbeing of his comrades, despite leading to his sacrifice. He writes: "all he is really concerned with, therefore, is the discharge of his emotion; to relieve his state of tension he seizes the spears of his enemies and buries them into his own flesh" (1878:74).

On the face of it, it appears that egoism has an answer for everything. Schopenhauer admits: "there is always...the possibility that an egoistic motive had influenced the doer of a just or good action", yet still maintains that to propose egoism as an explanation here is incredulous (1840:138). This is convincing – though Schopenhauer doesn't deny the possibility that Nietzsche could be correct, but instead suggests that the likelihood is incredibly low. Without dismissing him, it does indeed seem that Nietzsche's critique is more dogmatic than realistic – aiming at proving egoism at all costs, rather than the more reasonable explanation of a selfless act. This is especially questionable due to the difficulty of imagining cases where the horror of battle can be worse than ending one's life, potentially able to span many more decades of pleasure in the future.

It is unsurprising then, that the concept of psychological egoism has not conclusively been established in science either; Sober and Wilson (1998), for instance, conclude that pure psychological egoism does not naturally occur in humans, or many other animals for that matter. Whilst it is impossible to ever know what is inside another's mind, it seems undeniable that in certain cases, non-egoistic incentives are the most convincing explanations.

We cannot conclusively dismiss the case of egoism – but likewise, the psychological egoist cannot categorically eliminate selflessness as the cause for just acts. Many would rightly agree with Cartwright (2012), who argues that psychological egoism "seems suspect, given the elastic and fungible nature of its explanations" (2012:351).

b) The existence of selfish yet just acts.

Having established the likely existence of selfless acts, we need to ask whether acts of justice are motivated by concern for oneself, or of others. In approaching this, it is perhaps best to take the counterfactual, and locate the question that would disprove Schopenhauer:

can any act of justice be explained by selfish motivations? If this isn't the case, then we will be able to categorically deny the statement – at least among individuals' acts – that justice is a selfish virtue.

At the foundation of his argument, Schopenhauer explains that "no action can happen without sufficient motive", and unless a stronger counter-motive exists, the action must happen (1840:198). Further, "each motive has a relation to well-being or woe" of a subject (1840:198). This produces three incentives for action: egoism, a desire for an agent's own wellbeing; compassion, a desire for another's weal; and malice, a desire for another's woe. For an act to be just, and thus hold the "stamp of moral worth", such acts must express a loving kindness for humanity and freely willed justice (1840:199). Here Schopenhauer argues that egoistic incentives do not meet this criteria – "egoism and moral worth of an action totally exclude one another" – since egoism aims at an agent's own wellbeing and moral actions aim at another's (1840:198). Only in regarding others can a sense of loving kindness of humanity be expressed – something that is obviously eliminated in cases of egoism (e.g., Nietzsche's previous interpretation of Winkelried's sacrifice). Notably, just acts cannot be explained by the incentive of malice either, since this aims at the woe, rather than wellbeing, of another. In this way, the remaining incentive is compassion, since it is focused on the wellbeing of others, at least initially seeming to meet the criteria of moral value.

To protect his argument from elimination, Schopenhauer elucidates his notion of compassion. He argues that the reason that compassion is able to override counter-motives of egoism and malice is that "I directly suffer along with him, feel his woe as otherwise I feel only mine, and so will his well-being immediately" (1840:200). In this way, compassion allows one to feel the suffering of another, and act to relieve that pain as if it were an egoistic incentive. Metaphysics of this aside, we can understand compassion as requiring some degree of identification between the individuals, such one can truly feel sympathy with the other, and "share the suffering in him, in spite of the fact that his skin does not enclose [their] nerves" (1840:166).

This identification has led some to argue that compassion is another form of psychological egoism, whereby one acts to relieve the suffering of another as if it were his own, because it is his own; Dale and Jacquette (2005) argue that "when I witness the sufferings of another person I am in a sense really seeing myself in pain", so the proceeding action from compassion is "a disguised form of egoism" (2005:230). Schopenhauer, however, is very clear that "he is the sufferer, not us: and it is precisely in his person, not ours that we feel the pain...we feel his pain as his, and do not imagine it is ours" (1840:203). This is convincing, since at the phenomenal level, the individuation of persons is clearly a reasonable assumption – not least as if it were not, then the meaning of ego itself would be radically different to its usage here (as there would only be a single 'self' to act in interest). However, Dale and Jacquette do raise the interesting point that in feeling the pain of the other, I still feel some pain, and so in relieving myself, my act is another form of egoism, not of selfless justice.

Here, it is prudent to distinguish between 'feeling' and 'sharing' pain – in the former, we do the bare minimum to relieve our suffering, but in the latter, we act to relieve the primary source of the suffering, located in another person. For instance, a poor man walking past a homeless person on the street may feel sympathy for them, yet walk past – doing the bare minimum to relieve themselves of the pain – in which case they are merely feeling the pain. However, if they stopped to help the homeless person, perhaps to buy them food or offer them shelter, they would be doing far more than is necessary to relieve only themselves of the pain from compassion, and therefore acting against the egoistic rationality proposed. The outcome of one's own suffering being relieved is the same in either case, though in the latter – where suffering is shared – egoism cannot explain why the poor man acts with loving kindness and justice. As a result, egoism and selfishness is again an incomplete explanation of the incentive that forms the basis of genuine acts of justice.

In this way, not only can we see that acts of genuine selflessness most likely exist, but also that in such cases of helping the homeless person – that is, of cases of acts of freely-willed justice – it appears nearly impossible for selfish incentives to convincingly provide a full account of why individuals act in this way. Given this unsatisfying explanation, it seems far more coherent to adopt Schopenhauer's account of the virtue of justice – as one underlined by compassion and a genuine care for others, as if they were ourselves.

2. Justice in institutions

a) The virtue of justice

However, it would be a limitation of this investigation if simply stop at the virtue

of justice at the level of the individual. In the modern era, justice is more often expressed on local, national, and even international levels. Be this through redistributive programs of national governments, or the development goals of international NGOs; whilst formed from individuals, we cannot assume that institutions are merely the sum of their parts. Thus, an investigation into justice in these bodies is required; specifically, whether it is possible for a just institution to act selfishly in the execution of its functions. It is far beyond the scope of this work to engage in extensive analysis to determine whether most institutions act in this way or not, however.

Here, the philosophy of Rawls is of particular use. Rawls (1971) argues that institutions are themselves formed from a certain kind of justice. He explains that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought". For Rawls, social institutions provide "a way of assigning rights and duties...and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation" (1971:3-4). It is this idea which is central to Rawls' approach – that society ought to be organised in such a way as to create a fair outcome for all members, and that social institutions ought to be the means to achieve this end.

Notably, Rawls is not contending that any particular end should be of equality, but instead that it should be fairness. Unequal distributions can be justified, as long as it is "to everyone's advantage" (1971:13). The final state of society, then, may be unequal, but it is only the end of social institutions, in essence, to give individuals the freedom to choose the kind of lives they want to live. For instance, in his 'thin' theory of the good, Rawls argues that the distribution of primary social goods is one such issue which is governed by the principles of justice – primary goods being those goods including human rights, access to housing, healthcare, education, and other things of that ilk. In many ways, this conception of justice is not dissimilar to the Modern Liberal notion of 'equality of opportunity', which is adopted as justification for many social welfare and healthcare systems, globally.

Whilst clearly possessing contemporary relevance to institutions, the most important element for this account is not merely Rawls' conception of just acts, but his justification for such redistribution (we have already seen his motivation behind this as the 'advantage for all'). Crucially, Rawls believes that such a distribution of resources in society is not explicitly selfish – that is (to borrow from Schopenhauer), to act in one's own advantage above others – given his thought experiment, the 'Veil of Ignorance'. Rawls asks us to imagine a theoretical circumstance, in which we are subject to a 'double ignorance'; that is, firstly an ignorance of social position (of race, class, health, intellect, etc), and secondly of a conception of the good (of our own interests and beliefs once we are in society). Once in this veiled 'original position', he asks us (a population of people) to collectively decide on the design of a society of which we would happily live. Since we are ignorant of where we will end up, Rawls argues that we will rationally choose one in which the social goods and benefits of society are distributed to everyone's advantage; people would not risk living homeless or poor, even if you could by luck be born into a high class, for instance.

On the other hand, Rawls himself does suggest that individuals in the original position act with a certain degree of selfishness, since it is in their rational self-interest to pick a society in which they have the best chance of being guaranteed a basic safety net. The assumptions about the risk-seeking or risk-averse nature of individuals aside, this selfishness clearly amounts to less than in the egoistic counterargument – and in Rawls' case, this selfishness would not reasonably suggest that he is arguing that his social institutions are 'selfish' in providing care for the poor (at least by his account alone). In fact, as was apparent in Schopenhauer's case, just acts may vary in degree of selfishness, as comparing giving some money to a homeless person and dedicating one's life to helping the homeless, reveals. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that any person will act with some level of selfishness in almost all their actions, but that this does not deny clearly selfless actions of their title on account of a slight element of selfishness (which may more clearly be named 'self-preservation' than egoism).

This aside, the structure of Rawls' overall argumentation is largely convincing – it is indeed the case that if many people we not assured of where in society they would be born, they would choose a far fairer outcome for all. In many ways, this explains why it is often those at the top of society who, since they have already attained their social position, are most resistant to redistribution (and vice versa to those who have attained a marginalised or disadvantaged social position).

However, whilst this point makes up

the substance of Rawls' argument, it seems that ignorance of the conception of the good is still a strange condition to suppose. That is, whilst it is somewhat challenging to imagine oneself outside of our own race, class, intellect, or even bodies, it seems near impossible to also imagine being in the original position without any beliefs at all. How then, would it be even possible to have a conception of 'fairness' or 'justice' without any normative grounding or ideological framework to weigh up competing factors? Rawls' theory suggests that the idea of the 'good' can be 'thinned' out to just be a means for everyone to realise their own ends (whatever they are) – yet this evaluation is itself a form of ideology and cannot be taken as a neutral position within the original position. In this way, it seems to me to be largely untenable to hold the second condition of ignorance – both for the aforementioned reason, as well as that a 'social contract' for these institutions in practice would be invalid if people agreed to it without social position and an ignorance of the good (so is limited in justifying already-existing institutions). This critique was notably made by Robert Nozick, in his in 1974 work, "Anarchy, State, and Utopia".

The purpose of this critique is not to immediately prove social institutions act in selfishly just ways – but to allow the presence of pluralism within the original position. That is, if the second ignorance is assumed, we can see that there is general homogeneity among people in their position; by contrast, if people are no longer ignorant of their normative groundings and ideological frameworks, then it is plain to see there is now a pluralism of competing ideas and values. This is a key criticism mounted by Williams (1985), who argues that Rawls assumes a unified consensus about what justice is and how it should be achieved in the original position – while a more robust theory should account for the pluralism actually present in society.

This point is crucial, since if we allow for pluralism within Rawls' veil of ignorance, then it is no great assumption that distinct groupings around beliefs and values will emerge. So, given a certain question over the design of society, those individuals who share common or similar normative groundings and/or ideological frameworks may come to a common 'accept' or 'reject'. In this case, we may see an emergence of majority and minority interests within the original position. Whichever method Rawls' society would take to decide the design of society, this would involve overruling the will of some groupings in the original position. Given this assumption, we begin to see the cracks in Rawls' account.

b) The mechanism of justice in institutions

To fully answer the question of our investigation, we need to establish whether it is possible for institutions themselves to express a will – beyond just the individual wills expressed by its members. This assumption is justified; in the modern world, whole companies, governments, and charities are talked of as being more than just a collection of their members (and so, for instance, critique can be placed on 'Google' as a whole, or 'the British government'). Furthermore, it has been codified in foundational documents (constitutions, memorandums of association, etc.) that institutions maintain a certain purpose or mission, and – whilst shaped by the will of its members – that this 'will' exists with a liability on the concept of the institution in cases where actions go wrong (e.g. how it 'makes our country look bad' or it 'reflects badly on the company'). If we cannot talk of a 'collective will' in this way, then it would be practically impossible to talk about the actions of institutions at all, since to do so would involve a calculation of the aggregate of all the views of the governing structures and members (i.e., its constituent parts). We can also contend, then, that if there is such thing as a 'collective will', that there must also be a 'collective selfishness' – i.e., when one acts in its own will, over and above the will of another.

Before continuing, it is important to note that we are only arguing about whether such a societal design – and thus action by social institutions – is conceived of as selfish or not, not on account of its justice. This delineation is made on the grounds of 'means' and 'ends'. Put

FOR INDIVIDUALS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW TRULY JUST ACTS COULD EVER BE MOTIVATED BY EGOISTIC, SELFISH INTERESTS.

simply, it seems reasonable given the accounts thus far, that to act to the advantage of another's ends is just, but to act in another's means (or 'will') is selfless. To clarify, take the example of a group of poor farmers in Southern USA. Perhaps a social institution in this case (say, the federal government) decides to urbanise the villages the farmers live in, and remove their fields of crops with housing, hospitals, and schools. This draws on Rawls' 'difference principle' – that social institutions ought to eliminate inequalities which do not work to the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society.

In this case, we can see that the act is just – that is, it acts to the advantage of all in the area. The farmers' 'ends' – their material condition, including wealth – have indeed improved. However, opposition may still be levelled if this development was undertaken without the consent of the farmers; whilst the action remains just, clearly the will of the farmers – that is, their will as to whether they want the project to go ahead or not (irrespective of its outcome) – has been placed below the will of the social institution. Thus, if the institution itself can indeed have its own will, then the 'means' of acting in one's own will and essentially violating the will of the subject, is to act selfishly (i.e., to place one's will above another's). This provides us with a counterargument to Rawls' account: a circumstance in which an institution can act justly, yet selfishly.

c) Conclusions of institutional justice, a and b

Therefore, to prove the possibility of at least one instance in which just institutions can be selfish, all we must do is assume that collective selfishness can exist at an institutional level. Once we do, it is plain to see – given the huge pluralism that exists in many Western nations – that at least one group's will shall, in any particular decision, be overruled by the will of another group. In these real cases, it can be seen that no matter how just the action taken is, it is still necessarily a case of selfish action, as the will of the institution is acted on by the institution, regardless of the will of the affected parties. Though perhaps in some ways reductive (ignoring, for instance, the different ways institutions attempt to account for different interest groups and achieve compromise), it nevertheless demonstrates the principle that justice on the institutional level can be a selfish virtue.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, then, we can see that for individuals, it is difficult to see how truly just acts could ever be motivated by egoistic, selfish interests. This is derived from both the possibility of truly selfless acts, as well as the impossibility of truly just selfish acts. Whilst it cannot ever be categorically proven – as Schopenhauer admits, "in experience only the deed is given every time, while the impulses are not open to view" – selflessness remains the best explanation of the phenomenon of freely-willed justice (1840:196).

In contrast, on the level of institutions, we can see that despite the nature of its constituent parts, it becomes nearly impossible – when dealing with groups of people – to eliminate the possibility of any particular just act from being selfish. That is, the will of a social institution can (and often does) require to make its own will supreme over others – even if to do so is to act fairly, and to the advantage of the overruled group. Here, it is not necessary to prove that all just acts by institutions must be selfish, but just that it is sometimes a selfish virtue.

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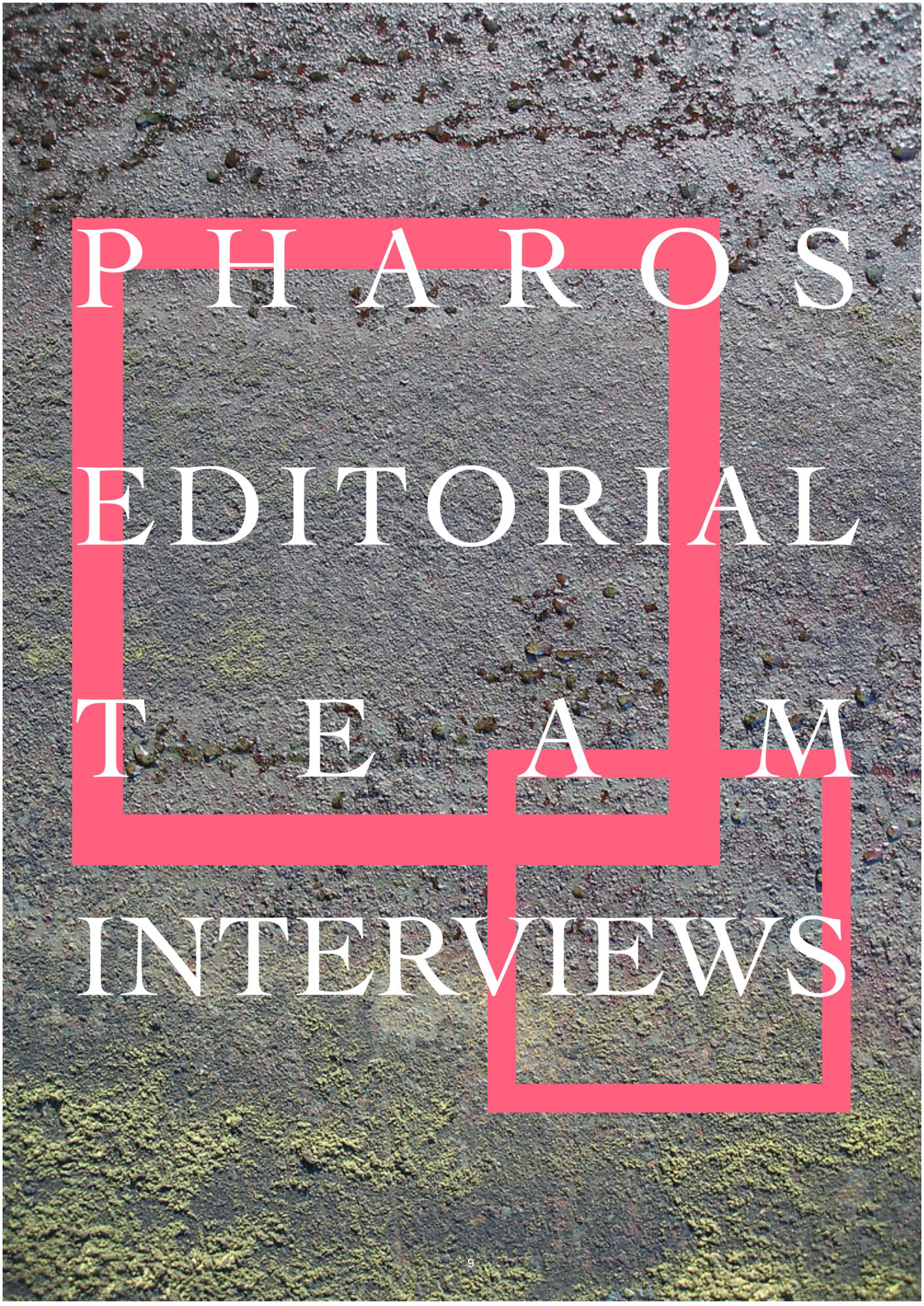
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PHAROS
EDITORIAL
TEAM
INTERVIEWS

Juliette, Editor-in-Chief, Pharos Magazine



1. Could you tell us more about your journey to Pharos and your interest in Philosophy? What prompted you to join the magazine?

My journey to Pharos has been a very natural one. It was intertwined with a passion for philosophy and also a desire to meet like-minded people who share that same passion. It presented above all an opportunity to be part of a community: to share our thoughts on philosophy, different perspectives and ideas, which I really liked.

2. Could you introduce yourself to our readers? What's your academic background, what are your interests and hobbies outside of work?

My name is Juliette, I am Editor-in-Chief of Pharos. I was Deputy Editor last year when I first joined. I'm a second year student studying PPE tripartite, so I kept all three subjects. Besides philosophy, which I love, I enjoy reading, travelling, dancing, and spending time in nature.

3. What aspects of philosophy do you find most interesting and could you give certain examples why?

I enjoy the exploration of ethics. I think ethics is something you see in everyday life - it asks good questions, such as "what is the good life", "what is the moral life", "how should we act", "what is wrong"... This year I took a module called the Philosophy of Evil which explores the difference between good and evil. I think ethics is really interesting and it's my favourite part of philosophy because you can apply it to your everyday life.

4. What do you appreciate about Warwick's approach to teaching philosophy - what do you think they do well?

I think Warwick enables us to take two approaches to Philosophy. First is an academic approach where we can do our own readings and our own research - especially in seminars. Then, with Pharos, we have our really personal approach to philosophy where we can research and write about what we personally like about philosophy.

5. What are your favourite things about Pharos magazine? What are some of the elements of the magazine that appeal to you and motivated you to want to become Editor-in-Chief?

Apart from the wonderful executive team I am working with, I think I was just looking for a community - a community to work with, discuss or debate with. I love Pharos's ability to make philosophy accessible to everyone. Any students, even if they're not studying philosophy can submit anything they like such as articles, short stories, poems, songs - so it really makes philosophy accessible to everyone, because everyone has their personal view on philosophy. That is what I love about Pharos.

6. Could you tell our readers more about how you hope to make Pharos more accessible to wider audiences?

For example, in Week 7, we are going to hold a writing clinic. Everyone can come to meet the Pharos exec and PhilSoc exec, and just write together, share ideas and come up with new ideas. We're probably going to hold an event with debate society - any societies that want to collaborate with us are welcome to get in touch!

7. If you could share one message with our readers to condense your ideas for Pharos into one line what would it be?

I'd say just don't be scared. Don't be scared to send in submissions and please feel free to contact us to ask questions or discuss ideas. We're very friendly!

8. What do you hope to accomplish this year as Editor-in-Chief of Pharos?

As I said before, I really want to expand Pharos's reach - to make it accessible to everyone and not just philosophy students. I think last year we really focused on philosophy, PPE, PPL students - but I think this year we'll reach out and expand to physics students, economics students and more. Philosophy is everywhere - it's in art, everyday life and it's attached to everything and anything.

9. Is there any one philosopher that you resonate with most, something they thought that you sort of identify with?

That's a very hard question. At the moment, I am immersed in quite a few pieces from a French philosopher called Andre Comte Sponville. He has a very stoic approach to philosophy, and a very realist approach. Some might say that he is pessimistic but I find him realist. Even though I am quite optimistic, I find his approach to philosophy very interesting. For example, he seeks to love life as it is and not as it should be. He believes that we shouldn't be disappointed in things, because we shouldn't have expectations of people and actions. I find it reassuring to think that everything that will happen, happens for a reason, and that sometimes things are out of our control and we just have to live with it.

10. Would you say that you are more partial to stoicism as a school of thought?

I wouldn't say that I am a stoic, but it's definitely interesting and it kind of reassures me about life and what happens in life that is out of our control. I find it's a good framework to take life as it is and not be concerned too much with what is out of our control.

11. How do you apply philosophy to your daily life?

Again, a hard question. I don't think I really apply philosophy to my daily life, rather I seek to live philosophically - I reflect and ask myself questions often. I think it's common among philosophy students that we tend to overthink a bit so, everything I do, I kind of think about the meaning of it. It adds both confusion and clarity to my life. I love reading new philosophy and new authors that I didn't know. I think I take a lot of philosophy theories and bring them to my life to make my life my own. Don't live by one philosophy!

12. What do you think is the most important thing anyone studying philosophy should take away from it?

I think it's about figuring out who you are and what your role is in life. To figure out life and yourself. Hopefully it reassures people that to have questions about life is normal and okay. I think it's also to build a community of people who think and are aware of life. If I had to choose one word to describe Philosophy students it would be curious!

(This interview has been lightly edited for clarity)



Ph.

Ben Long, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Pharos Magazine



1. Could you tell us more about your journey to Pharos and your interest in philosophy more generally? What prompted you to join the magazine?

I found out about Pharos somewhat organically in first year, through online newsletters and through word of mouth via the department and a friend. I applied to become interview coordinator in my second year, then after I did that I got promoted to Deputy Editor, where I am now. My interest in philosophy grew quite organically as well. Again, I'm a PPE student so I came into my degree thinking I'd be interested in politics, I hadn't really done philosophy before. As the years have gone on, I've discovered I'm actually a philosophy student trapped in a PPE program. So again, really just organically discovering things.

2. What do you think it is about philosophy that appeals to you?

The disregard for the empirical! (laughs). In all seriousness, I don't gel with empirical reasoning, real-world applied stuff. I like high theory. So that sort of pushes me away from certain aspects of politics and especially economics.

3. Stepping out of academics for a second, what are your interests and hobbies, what do you do in your spare time?

I enjoy reading, generally. Mainly philosophy to be fair. I enjoy some novels.

4. What are you reading currently?

Right now I'm reading a novel called Concrete by Thomas Bernhard. Which is this relatively short novel about this Austrian writer who, via stream of consciousness, complains for 200 pages. There's relatively little plot; he just complains and talks about how sad his life is.

Outside of philosophy and reading, I'm a massive coffee snob. Yes, I grind my own beans. My friend purchased me a coffee syphon for my birthday, which is like a boiling flask with an alcohol burner underneath, and then it goes up into a chamber and it creates a vacuum pressure and the coffee drips down. It looks like something out of Breaking Bad.

5. What aspects of philosophy do you find most interesting and could you give certain examples why?

Epistemology is a field I find most interesting. In terms of questions in epistemology, probably questions to do with answering skeptical challenges, and also questions which talk about, in a sort of Kantian sense, the limits of our knowledge, the bounds of our knowledge. A good example, I guess, would be if you think about Wittgenstein's treatment of external world skepticism in his collected notes called On Certainty. G.E Moore tried to deliver a common sense refutation of external world skepticism, and his proof went like this: "Here is one hand; here is another. QED". Wittgenstein has interesting things to say about why exactly that proof doesn't work in regards to how certain propositions, whilst they look like empirical propositions, can't be falsified. In fact you can't even generate empirical evidence against certain propositions like this.

6. So it's sort of going down a sort of Bertrand Russell, what are the limits of knowledge, school of thought?

Yeah, I mean it's sort of a general - before Russell right, it goes to Hume before Kant, and it goes to Locke. It's one of those fundamental questions, which I think sort of echoes throughout the rest of philosophy. I don't think you can do meaningful metaphysics until you sort of have some sort of clue on what claims you can actually have to know about things. Getting some of the epistemological foundations right is key to doing meaningful philosophy in my opinion.

7. What do you appreciate about Warwick's approach to teaching philosophy? What do you think the department does well in particular?

I think that the department is very good in terms of the variety of modules that are on offer at the undergraduate level, and the choice that you have: you've got political theory modules; modules in aesthetics; continental philosophy; metaphysics. But also just in terms of how passionate the lecturers are. The modules are tailored to and focused on the lecturer's interests. So you can see the interest the lecturers have in the content, in the readings. The variety and the passion within how

the department teaches is definitely a big selling point.

8. If you could share one message to the readers of Pharos what would it be?

I'd say that the essence of Pharos is probably to get involved. If you're reading it, that's great. Now write something. It's a good way to sort of develop your thinking outside of the context of your modules, without the pressure of getting a grade or mark. You'll have the pressure of a submissions editor, but it's definitely less pressure than in a purely academic context. Getting involved is the main ethos that we'd go for.

9. Can you tell readers more about how you hope to make Pharos more accessible to wider audiences?

What we're trying to do, especially, is increase outreach on social media for one in terms of sort of events too. I know we have an event lined up for the end of term - which I'm not going to spoil here - but when you hear about that, come to that. And just sort of push publications to come online as well. Get stuff out there. Get people to engage with it.

10. Is there any sort of one philosopher, or rather a few - let's say 3 - that you resonate with in terms of their thought? Feel free to be as obscure as you want.





I'll put in first for David Hume. Not necessarily because I agree with all of his conclusions, but I think No.1 he's a great writer. He's very clear, especially for the period in which he was writing. And also, as I said, he's concerned with the limits of our knowledge and not just thinking about how we know this or that. Also, without Hume there'd be no Kant.

Let's then go for an obscure contemporary philosopher. I'll go for Stephen Hetherington, an Australian philosopher. He has a very interesting theory on what knowledge is. He calls it knowledge practicalism which is roughly the idea that knowledge is not an augmented belief or what Timothy Williamson would call the most general prime factive mental state. What he thinks is that knowledge actually is some form of cognitive ability. So knowledge of a proposition P is essentially just knowledge of how to do various P related things. My knowledge that I'm in this room right now is reducible to my knowledge of how to describe that I'm in this room and my knowledge of how to process visual data, which tells me that I'm in this room; my knowledge of how to act in an appropriate manner along the lines of I am in this room etc. And with that comes several of the conclusions that if knowledge is an ability you can know things better or you can know things worse, which has interesting im-

Ph.



plications for an anti-skeptical argument.

And then we'll go to a third. Let's say Kant. Mainly because I appreciate the way that Kant argues. I'm very interested in transcendental arguments as a form of philosophical argumentation so we'll go with Kant purely for the structure of his thought which is very interesting. But I'd say that his writing, unlike Hume, has a lot to be desired. He could have done with a few essay support sessions to clarify his thoughts a bit (laughs).

11. What do you hope to accomplish this year in your role as Deputy Editor?

Again, just to sort of help grow the magazine, get more submissions in, publish more submissions, increase outreach and stuff like this. I think we're on a good track in terms of what we're doing, so just sort of ploughing ahead and getting more people involved I'd say is the main goal.

12. How do you apply philosophy to your daily life?

By overthinking everything. I'll try and give you a better answer.

Critical thinking is key. You're always encountering arguments, you're encountering claims in the news, everywhere all the time, so just that general mindset is very helpful.

I'm not a big fan of a particular philosophy as a way of life. I'm not particularly a proponent of that. I think it's more of an intellectual tool which enables you to think better and sort of cut through noise.

13. So you don't think philosophy should be used as a guide to life as it were?

There are certain aspects of philosophy which are action guiding or should be action guiding such as ethics. Ethics sort of is there to give the rough framework. You can get pretty far with common intuition but it doesn't take you all the way.

What I am more against is the self-help-ification of philosophy. You go into Waterstones and there's a billion and one books about how to apply Marcus Aurelius's Meditations to your company. It just seems very inauthentic to me. I think philosophy should be primarily a pursuit which enables you to assess claims and arguments rather than assuming that you wake up, read your Seneca and everything's really clear for you.

14. What do you think is the most important lesson anyone studying philosophy should take away from it?

I'd say probably intellectual charity. I think it's very easy, especially when you're reading stuff, to think you have a pre-formed conception of what someone's going to say, and you sort of dismiss it out of hand or as you're reading or listening you're thinking of ways to debunk or disprove it.
That's not helpful in terms of having clear thoughts. So I'd say intellectual charity. Most people that you're going to encounter, especially if you're doing a philosophy degree at Warwick, aren't stupid. They may have an argument which you think goes wrong somewhere, but they're not stupid.
Being charitable and really trying to understand what they're trying to say is a skill that's useful for academics and also good for life in general if you want to be someone who's at least relatively well-liked.

(This interview has been lightly edited for clarity)

REFLECTIONS

Tyler Minnich

1.

With any method of doubt I conduct comes the acknowledgement that I cannot doubt that doubting takes place: I doubt, therefore I doubt–tautology for the subject 'I'.

2.

In his Meditations, Descartes begins the first argument for the existence of God with the proposition that something cannot come from nothing; the argument concludes that the idea of God thought by 'I' must come from God– but from what the idea of nothing? I ought to ask myself: can nothing come from something? Can I comprehend nothingness? Surely, no mortal can speak on the concept of nothing, on the cause beyond everything; ultimate causes are the concern of natural science: "they shall obey the laws of the universe," we regard.

3.

Maybe perfection includes existence, but can I actually conceive of a perfect being? –is the proposition not just the perfect clue for a madman: the god among men?

4.

I have never attended church myself, but I have had the opportunity to listen in on a certain type of rhetoric that was used to sway the hearts of those wretched devotees. I eavesdropped on the sermon through an empty conch shell: the mass that was once home to intelligent life could now only echo the tides of hysteria– the waves rose exclusively by means of cunning but fell into gracious applause. And suddenly, one of the waves had crashed onto my backside, as I felt a peculiar second-hand embarrassment wash over my conscience–what do I know! –surely then I would be hysteric if I thought the ocean lay inside a conch shell...

5.

The mathematician Paul Erdős would allude to a work he called "The Book", God's encyclopaedia of the best and most elegant proofs for mathematical theorems. So then, if I am to write a work of philosophy, should I entertain the idea of God's perfect answer to the question of the meaning of being?

6.

Perhaps this is the symptom of a failed education, but while taking exams I had often imagined what it would be like for all the correct answers to become apparent before my eyes without any work put in: when I am not focused on the questions, I tend to dwell on the fact that my grade is simply the result of which answers that I end up choosing–if only I had the Ouija!

My dwelling cannot be classified as pure inaction, for such a distinction relates to the binary opposition between an action and the negation of the action (the negation of the action remains an action)–all is action. Action is the manifestation of will. The writer's block that impedes my philosophical project, still too, an exercise of my will to truth–but I need not forget the third fundamental principle: action = distraction... I speak of my will as if I understand it, but never will I become free from the direction of the will itself–any self-assertion of my will effectively participates in a presumptuous definition of 'I'.

7.

Philosophy consists of propositions and questions begging for proposition–all distractions of the philosopher's consciousness. In recognition of his bounds, the philosopher is permitted to become self- conscious: his thinking grinds to a halt, his focus narrows and he dwells on propositions with enough contempt to wallow in their tautological assertion–the catharsis of his questioning.

Propositions that describe experience transcendent of consciousness are hysterical to the philosopher–patience remains rewarded, his laughter supreme.

8.

Even in dreams, the philosopher does not rest.

I had a dream one night (please excuse my prose, for I cannot remember all the details), which began with myself standing in the corner of a pitch-black room. I let my eyes adjust to the darkness enough to attain a general depth perception. In the center of the room was a bed with someone sat up against the headboard–I inched toward it; and although I could only make out the silhouette of a man with a distinguished mullet, by the time I stood at the foot of the bed, I somehow became aware of who lied there, and also where and when I was located.

Then I crossed my arms and chirped: "les femmes, aije raison?" No response–he lied completely still. I went on with my quip anyway: "la vérité est une femme, après tout..... quelle honte, je sais!"

After another moment of silence, I put my arms down and looked around the room awkwardly. I saw curtains to my left, so I shuffled over and opened them.

It was snowing. Moonlight reflected off the white carpet over the street below–it bounced up and scattered across the falling crystals, giving the night sky a soft illumination. I spaced out for a while.

Eventually, I became focused on my own reflection in the window, which prompted me to turn around and–

"In the face of existential despair, there must be an intrinsic call to solidarity; to the recognition that our struggles, while uniquely our own, are part of the greater human experience that is merely being."

In the shadowed corridors of our recent history, humanity stands a solitary figure, grappling with the existential echoes of its past, present, and uncertain future. The world stage has been fraught with conflict, civilian and otherwise; a testament to the ceaseless struggle intrinsic to the human condition. It is reflective of the inescapable turmoil that rages within the soul of every human being. This era, marked by its search for meaning amidst chaos, resonates with the heartstrings of existential thought; a philosophy born from the ashes of untold war and our relentless quest for meaning.

As nations clash incessantly, and cultural ideologies battle for supremacy, the contemporary individual seems adrift; much like a poet searching for an elusive presence in a world incapable of understanding him; a grounding force in a reality torn asunder. The wars that have scarred our century; the revolutions that have redrawn borders and massacred millions; the social movements that have both united and fractured us, all underscore the relentless human endeavor to forge meaning and identity in a universe otherwise indifferent to our predilections.

And so, one who searches for meaning within this endless crucible of conflict, will find Existentialism echoed back at them as a refrain. This is a philosophy that does not retreat into scholarly abyss, but engages with the bloodied hands of human history, addressing an individual's confrontation with freedom. For in every act of rebellion; in every cry for justice or mercy; in every leader's rise and every tyrant's fall; in every hero and martyr's demise; we see the existential drama unfold. It is a testament to our innate need to define ourselves through our actions and choices.

This narrative is not confined to grand historical gestures or specific events, but is reflected in the personal sagas that have woven the fabric of our times. The familiar archetypes: the dissident who stands against an oppressive

EXISTENTIALISM:

From Intellectual Exercise to Necessary Refuge

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Aryamoy Mitra

regime; the soldier who questions the morality of orders that contradict his inner conscience; the activist who challenges societal norms, and demands an authentic form of human expression and identity - each of them are the living embodiment of existential defiance.

As we stand at this juncture, the existential undercurrents of our times compel us to reflect on our shared humanity, above everything else. The freedom that allows us to chart our course, also binds us to the consequences of our actions. In the face of existential despair, there must be an intrinsic call to solidarity; to the recognition that our struggles, while uniquely our own, are part of the greater human experience that is merely being.

Note: Although it can be read independently, this is a supplement to a piece published last year by the same author. The original article can be found on the website.

The (il)Legitimacy of Constitutional Monarchy.[1]

Matt Munnelly

1. Introduction

This paper will discuss a form of monarchy that is also, supposedly, a democracy. The problem outlined here is an epistemic one: a constitutional monarchy imposes restrictions on the deliberative process necessary for an illegitimate democracy. Following introductions to key terms in Part 1, Part 2 provides a sketch of the essential characteristic of a constitutional monarchy. Part 3 outlines the conception of democratic legitimacy to be used in the analysis in Part 4. Part 4's argument has three sections: the first emphasises the monarchy's restriction on democratic deliberation, the second discusses a trilemma for explaining a monarch's enhanced ability to contribute to deliberation, the third focuses on the lack of scrutiny that the monarch's deliberation receives. I conclude that constitutional monarchy places an insurmountable epistemic constraint on deliberation, preventing the achievement of democratic legitimacy.

In this paper, the analysis of constitutional monarchy will be focused on a particular form where it is limited by a democratic constitution rather than a monarchy merely limited by a constitution.[2] Constitutional monarchy will here mean: a system that blends monarchical and democratic government by transferring powers usually held by a monarch to an elected politician but reserving certain powers and symbolism to the monarch. These powers are limited by a democratic constitution. The monarch, from here on referred to as a Head of State (HoS) 'shares' responsibility for running the state with a Head of Government (HoG).[3]

The view that this kind of system can be democratically legitimate can be called 'compatibilism'. Compatibilism claims that there is a way of coherently having this mixed government without difficulty or contradiction. It claims that democracy's goods, both theoretical (legitimacy, equality) and practical (open elections, free press) are not forfeited in this blend of monarchy with democracy. Given the little attention constitutional monarchy receives in democratic theory, there are few accounts of this view. Compatibilist arguments can, however, be found in various other mediums: political theory constitutional law, journalism.



The French Royal Family in 1782 (anonymous artist, Versailles)
Image by Wikipedia commons

In short, legitimacy is the justification of political decisions and authority based on normative criteria. It "qualifies the right of the democratic institution to impose laws and regulations on itself" (Peter 2008 A, 57). A full account of legitimacy will be given in Part 3.

2. Constitutional Monarchy

This section will provide a minimal sketch of the kind of constitutional monarchy this paper addresses. Discussing a specific monarchy could confuse Constitutional Monarchy as a form of governance with that specific instantiation of it. The argument made here should absolutely not be understood as a critique of a particular monarchy. No, not at all. Instead, it should be understood to be demonstrating how this form of governance is democratically illegitimate. To avoid this pitfall, it is necessary to abstract away from a specific monarchy and focus on the features of it that makes it a constitutional one. The UK's constitutional monarchy is praised as the perfect paradigm of a constitutional monarchy that allows democracy to thrive, so will be abstracted here (Barker 1943, Hazell & Morris 2020).[4]

The abstraction will be completed by using what compatibilist texts take to be the essential constitutional rights of a monarch.[5] This method has the benefit of proving that there is no possibility for reform. That is, since I below argue against what is essential to this system of governance according to compatibilists, to counter my argument with claims for reform would be to reform it into something other than the system of governance at play.

The essential constitutional rights of the HoS are the Personal Prerogative Powers, the Bagehot Rights, and the Opinion-Gathering Function.



The Personal Prerogative Powers are (1) to appoint and dismiss ministers, particularly the HoG, (2) to summon, prorogue and dissolve the legislature, and (3) to give Royal Assent to Bills passed by the legislature (Hazell & Morris, 21-26). The exercise of these is only a formality – the HoS does so when they are instructed to (ibid, 22). The HoS has neither choice nor responsibility for when they are exercised (Barker 1943, 8). When they are exercised, it is the fact than the HoS did so that makes someone HoG, summons the legislature, or makes a Bill an Act.

The Bagehot Rights are: (1) to be consulted, (2) to encourage and (3) to warn (Bagehot 2001 [1867], 60, Hazell & Morris 2020, 80). How these might be practiced is abstracted away, but to explain, consider how they are exercised in the UK. The HoS is informed of all government business through meeting minutes and communication with the HoG (fulfilling the first right) (Hazell & Morris 2020, 80). Weekly meetings then allow the HoG to exercise the second and third rights (ibid).

The purpose of the Opinion-Gathering Function is to acquaint the HoS with the 'current thinking' among their subjects; the HoS must be familiar with opinions of all peoples in the state (Barker 1943, 6). Opinion-Gathering is done by making regular public appearances, meeting people from all over the state and from all walks of life (Hazell & Morris 2020, 80). The end of opinion-gathering is taken to be the HoS understanding what government action people wish for – allowing the HoS to "join together with their subjects" to bring about change (Barker 1943, 6). The gathering of this information allows the HoS to be epistemically justified (i.e., qualified) in exercising the two rights explained above.

The Opinion-Gathering Function has no full epistemological explanation. It does seem difficult to accept that the HoS can be in touch with the thinking and sentiment, let alone reasons, of all subjects.[6] The claim is that the HoS gathers opinion that reflects the state's political landscape that can then inform and legitimise the exercise of the other two rights discussed here.

3. Legitimacy

In this part, the conception of democratic legitimacy at play will be introduced. However, I will be careful to demonstrate how my conclusions do not only apply to this particular conception.

According to Pure Epistemic Proceduralism (PEP), a political action is legitimate if its deliberation procedure meets certain political and epistemic fairness requirements (Peter 2008 A). Epistemic democrats, like Fabienne Peter, are concerned with the knowledge involved is democracy, as opposed to democracy's outcomes. Similarly, for a proceduralist, the value of democracy is within the democratic process itself. Pure proceduralism refrains from appealing to any procedure-independent standards (Peter 2008 A, 130); all the value of democracy comes from the procedure itself. PEP is this paper' s selected conception of legitimacy because of its broad-church approach in democratic theory. That is, it involves developments of various popular views; deliberative democracy (ibid, 31-55); Rawlsian proceduralism (ibid, 93-99); Dewey's and Estlund's focus on epistemology and Anderson's intrinsic/ instrumentalist development in that vein (ibid, 110-129).

PEP considers decisions being the outcome of democratic procedure exactly what makes them 'correct', instead of believing in some procedure-independent ideal outcomes of decision-making that democracy merely tracks (ibid, 123). There is "an ongoing process of critical engagement and learning with conflicting representations of what the problems are, what it takes to solve them, and the reasons people have for valuing alternative options thus construed" (Peter, 2008 B, 50). This is the comstruct-

tive function of democracy (Sen 1999, cf Peter 2008 A, 3, 64). So long as certain requirements are met to ensure the decision-making procedure is politically and epistemically fair, any output of that procedure can be legitimate. This function emphasises the importance of deliberation in PEP, despite being an epistemic, rather than deliberative account.

Peter's account has two kinds of fairness requirements: epistemic and political. For brevity, I will here dedicate most of the exposition to the epistemic requirements. This enables the paper to later criticise monarchy not for restricting political fairness but proving illegitimacy on epistemic grounds in Part 4.

Following Helen Longino's social epistemology in the philosophy of science, there are four requirements that the knowledge-producing procedure ought to offer in order to be legitimate (Peter 2008 A, 123-4, Peter 2008 B, 47-9).[7] The first is a publicly recognised forum for criticism of knowledge. That is, space for critical discourse. Citizens' claims are scrutinised and tested against others'. Second is the uptake of criticism: all groups should be responsive to each other's criticism. If group A outlines a problem with group B's proposal, group B then responds to that problem: either outlining how it is not actually a problem, or accounting for the problem in an updated proposal. The third requirement is for publicly recognised standards of evaluation, which can themselves be scrutinised. That is, a process or structure for how deliberation is carried out to enable "orderly and constructive" critical discourse (Peter 2008 A, 123). This would be a public forum with a clear debating structure, though that structure itself can be changed. The final requirement is equality of intellectual authority: "a criterion that warns of illegitimate associations between social, political and/ or economic privilege and power with epistemic privilege and power" (ibid, 124). There must be insurance that privilege in social, political, or economic spheres do not enable individuals to make a disproportionate contribution to public discourse.

These requirements provide answers to the 'where, why, how and who' questions about the constructive function of democracy, respectively (ibid). All citizens are involved in public deliberation in a way that is responsive to others, with clear (adaptable) discourse methods and with equal capability for making contributions. From here, it is possible to see how PEP can then arrive at typical democratic goods (open elections, equality and so on).

It is important to bear in mind the ways that epistemic and political fairness requirements can impact each other. It would be wrong to think that they are completely distinct from each other. I will just note two implications of the epistemic on the political.

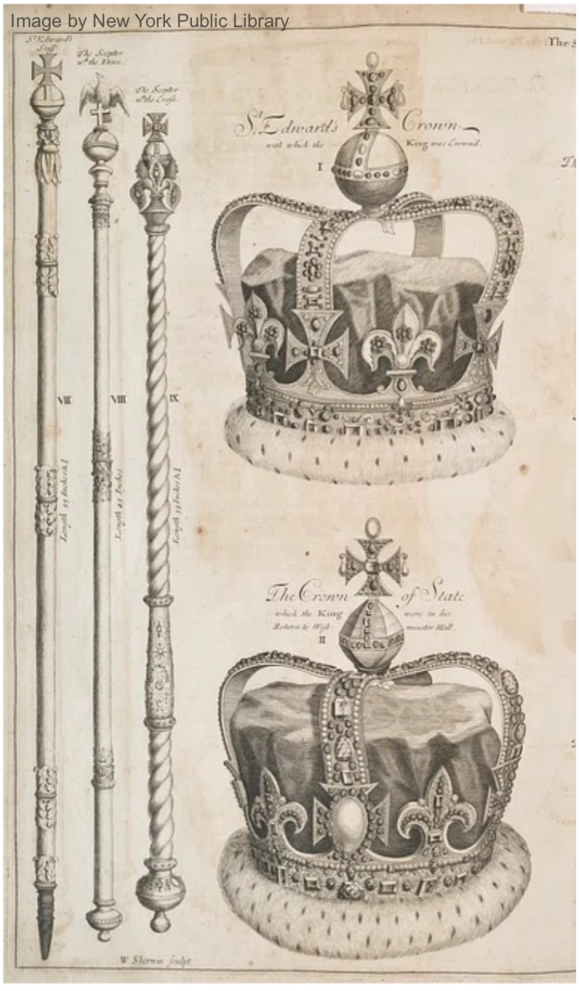
First, the requirement for uptake of criticism impacts how one treats their political opponents. When individuals reflect on and react to their opponent's criticisms, they will have to closely interact with their opponent and their claims. It is insufficient to merely 'acknowledge each other as equal'.[8] The construction of knowledge that a state legitimately acts on means citizens must give strong consideration to their opponents, seeing one's political opponents as individuals who one must respond to and, in an indirect way, can learn from.

A second notable implication on political fairness is from the fourth requirement: equality of intellectual authority. This would mean that no viewpoint in public discourse should be afforded more importance, credibility or indeed consultation from law makers. Once public discourse has taken place and found its decision, a viewpoint cannot be reintroduced and allowed to contribute further to the deliberation once a law has been created. In order for further deliberation to take place, it must be made accessible to all citizens. Equally, one cannot pay private fees for their input to be granted more consideration by representatives than others.

It may be questioned whether the arguments of Part 4 can only apply to this specific conception of legitimacy. In other words, the conclusions made here might be held hostage to pure epistemic proceduralism. Before moving on, I must clarify why this is not true.

Equality is essential to democracy; specifically who is equal and how it works is indeed debated, but to discuss democracy without equality would be to discuss some other concept.[9] Indeed, Peter herself calls equality "the most important intrinsic value of democracy", despite her account being procedurally focussed (Peter 2008 A, 38). It is not true that legitimacy here relies merely on epistemology or the pureness of procedure. PEP uses a common thread through democratic theory – equality.

To expand this point further, consider that accounts of democratic legitimacy appeal to equality on either instrumental or non-instrumental grounds.[10] That is, democracy is either taken to be instrumentally valuable for reaching ideal outcomes, or non-instrumentally valuable for instantiating goods in itself: but to claim both is also possible (Anderson 2009)[11]. PEP is an ideal way of accounting for this dual value: some non-instrumentalists appeal to political equality or fairness, but sometimes others make epistemic equality or fairness. So here, by using a conception that does BOTH (political and epistemic), the PEP conclusion represents a deeper, more broad possibility in democratic theory. Thus, it can be said that the epistemic arguments in what follows do not apply only to PEP, but to the 'equality' that is fundamental to democracy.





4. Constitutional Monarchy's (il)Legitimacy

The argument made in this part shows the epistemic restriction that the essential constitutional rights of a constitutional monarchy impose on the attainment of democratic legitimacy. Whether used or not, the ability to inform the deliberation process more than other people undermines

democracy because it means that certain people can make a greater contribution to democracy than others. That is, an undemocratically selected individual can make a larger or more advanced political contribution than others. Part 4.1 shows that the Opinion-Gathering function is an attempt to aggregate opinion, which undermines the deliberation necessary for the constructive function of, democracy. Second, 4.2 introduces a trilemma that proves that the lack of scrutiny that the HoS' opinion receives undermines the epistemic fairness requirement for the uptake of criticism. Finally, 4.3 discusses how the HoS' deliberation receives insufficient scrutiny. 4.3 will also make the links between each part of the argument clear. Each of these sections handle illegitimacy stemming from the Bagehot Rights. In 4.2 and 4.3 these rights prevent the 'democratic' constitutional monarchy from meeting the epistemic fairness requirements. In 4.1, their conjunction with other essential features of constitutional monarchy show illegitimacy.

4.1 – Aggregating

The intention of the Opinion-Gathering function is to legitimise the HoS' role in deliberation (Barker 1943, 6). By gathering opinion, the HoS can collect the public's criticisms and feed them back to the HoG. This would mean that in exercising the Bagehot Rights, the HoS can make an epistemic contribution by way of aggregating some common or general will for their encouragement or warning. The compatibilist claim here is that the HoS contributes the opinion of the whole state in exercising the Bagehot Rights, not merely their own.[12]

The Opinion-Gathering Function cannot be considered a supplement for democratic decision-making for two related reasons. They both turn on the assumption of some kind of aggregation – this aggregation is completed via the Opinion-Gathering Function and is taken to legitimise the HoS' encouragements and warnings.

The first point is a rudimentary one; aggregation is epistemologically inconceivable. That is, no epistemological framework, whether Helen Longino's or another, would concede that an individual would be able to aggregate and adequately scrutinise all citizens' (subjects') opinions, let alone reasons.[13] The compatibilist's proposal here does not put the HoS' views up to adequate scrutiny because of the HoS' own bias. That is, it only allows the HoS (an individual) to scrutinise the reasons of others, not all citizens (subjects) being able to scrutinise the reasons of others.

But even entertaining the possibility of the compatibilist's claim here, there is the second, far more important, problem. The use of aggregative functions is insufficient for the conception of democratic legitimacy at play: what identifies a decision as legitimate is that it is the outcome of a democratic procedure that satisfies certain political and epistemic fairness requirements. To meet these conditions, the process must scrutinise different arguments and put them against each other to decide what a state is to do. The assumption that it is possible to use the opinion-gathering function of the HoS as a supplement to guarantee that their encouragements and warnings are legitimate also commits a further assumption: that it is possible to achieve the same outcome as democratic procedure, just through the opinion of one person. In other words, the compatibilist is assuming that the procedure could come to the same conclusion as an individual, and that both can be legitimate.

Both assumptions are mistaken. To simplify the issue, we will use a thought experiment that concedes the first assumption. Take two scenarios: one where the democratic process decides 'Yes' in a referendum, and the second where a monarch HoS decides 'Yes' to the question that the referendum posed, but only based of the Opinion-Gathering Function.

Here, even though both democratic process and the HoS were to reach the outcome, only the former would be legitimate. In the former case, adequate democratic deliberation has taken place. In the latter, subjects' different reasons have not been scrutinised (except by the individual HoG), criticisms of views have not been accommodated to form new reasons.

This case is also evidence of how the democratic illegitimacy charges against constitutional monarchy do not only stand in the context of pure epistemic proceduralism. It would be quite absurd for a democratic theorist to claim that the result of a referendum is less desirable than a monarch making some decision themselves based on communication with subjects. If a democratic theorist did make such a claim, serious study of their work probably would not be necessary: cancelling their Daily Mail subscription, however, might be.

It should be noted that it may be asked why I take the Opinion-Gathering function to be essential to constitutional monarchy. First, because of the absurd claims made by the likes of Barker (1943) that I already referenced. Second, I have been charitable here by conceding to the compatibilist a way of qualifying the HoS' contribution. Otherwise, the compatibilist might as well go out into the street, find the most insufferably stuck-up, unqualified and privileged person around, and invite them to private (behind-closed-doors) meetings with the HoG.

Therefore, there is no way of legitimising the HoS via the Opinion-Gathering Function, as well as the aggregation process

being impossible. All laws do not need to be subject to an individual's will to be illegitimate: not meeting the epistemic fairness requirements is sufficient for illegitimacy. I have just shown that appealing to the Opinion-Gathering Function to justify the second and third Bagehot Rights as legitimate elements of a democratic procedure does not meet the epistemic fairness requirements. In the following section I will turn from the Opinion-Gathering Function to focus more on the Bagehot Rights themselves.

4.2 – Contributing

This subsection shows that a compatibilist attempts to give democratically legitimate justification of the Bagehot Rights, comparative to the contribution of subjects, raises a trilemma. All three horns of this trilemma lead to illegitimacy. Thus, all possible justifications of Bagehot Rights fail, exposing their democratic illegitimacy.

4.2.1 – the Bagehot Trilemma Let me set the scene for the trilemma.

The HoS' consultation (first Bagehot Right) comes at a comparatively late stage in democratic procedure. The public have debated an issue, perhaps there has been a petition, or a pressure group has held demonstrations. Opinions here are scrutinised by opposing views and are partly formed by party policy. So far, contribution to the procedure has been open to all subjects, including to respond to opposing views.[14] All this deliberation has been fed into legislature representatives, who are now making and debating a Bill. Yet, at this (late) stage, the HoS is consulted. The HoS can encourage or warn at a stage much later than most subjects. Certainly, they can input at a stage at which there is no longer opportunity for further debate from individual subjects. The issue is that the Bagehot Rights, as the arbitrary privilege of an individual's democratic contribution, seems to be a contradiction of democratic legitimacy. The impetus is on the compatibilist to state how this contribution can be democratically legitimate.

Either the contribution the HoS makes when exercising their Bagehot Rights can be considered their only opportunity to take part in the deliberation process, or it can be said that the HoS contributes both along with subjects and when exercising the Bagehot Rights. The third option open to the compatibilist is that the HoS never contributes to deliberation at all. The first horn is problematic because it overlooks the unique opportunities that the HoS gets; the second is problematic because it would be to arbitrarily award disproportionate ability to contribute to democratic process; the third is problematic because it would be to inadequately scrutinise the HoS' contribution to democratic procedure.

4.2.2 – First Horn

The first possible democratic justification of the Bagehot Rights is that the HoS did not have an opportunity to contribute earlier, along with 'their subjects'. Instead, encouraging and warning is their opportunity to contribute. This attempt at justification prevents fulfilment of the second epistemic fairness requirement, uptake of criticism. There is no way for subjects to respond to the HoS' contribution, so it can make a disproportionate amount of impact compared to subjects'. The contribution is expressed only to the HoG but makes a lasting impact, on the so-far socially constructed solution to the issue being debated.

But what about other people, for instance legislature representatives and lobbyists who influence government disproportionately? How is that any different? In the case of these examples, the former would be deemed legitimate, the latter





illegitimate. A representative's contribution is legitimate because it is enhanced by democratic mandate (election). Concerning lobbying, the only response that can be made is that, yes, certain lobbying practices do exist in political systems that PEP would deem as democratically illegitimate. That is not, however, a loss. The interests of corporations being considered far more than individual subjects is, surely, an affront to equality of intellectual authority.

4.2.3 – Second Horn

The second horn would have the compatibilist claiming that the HoS has already had the opportunity to contribute along with subjects. Indeed, owing to some constitutional monarchies insistence that their state is one of equality, this is likely to be claimed by compatibilists.

If it is the case that the HoS participates in the early stages, then this fails to justify their additional contribution from their Bagehot Rights. It suggests the HoS contributes twice, i.e., double the contribution of subjects. Their second contribution then falls into the same lack of justification as in the first horn: it receives little to no scrutiny from subjects. In this way, it is in tension with the fourth epistemic fairness requirement for equality of intellectual authority. The HoS' reasons are privileged against all other individuals' by being entered twice. Further, by not being met with criticism the second time, this contribution fails to meet the second epistemic fairness requirement: there is a lack of criticism from other subjects (see 4.3).

It may be asked why there isn't a fourth option available to compatibilists: that the HoS only contributes at the earlier stage of deliberation with subjects. Someone pressing this argument must then explain what the purpose of the Bagehot Rights are in the first place. It seems quite impossible that they only deliberate with subjects at the start of the process, but then also are informed by the HoG business, and can encourage and warn based on that.[15]

4.2.4 – Third Horn

The third horn of the trilemma is to claim that the HoS never contributes to deliberation. I will not emphasise that this ignores exactly what the Bagehot Rights are, as noted just above. Instead, I will discuss an important oversight in pursuing this horn.

This horn, in truth, abandons compatibilism. Here, the claim is that all democratic subjects are entitled to contribution to the deliberation process, but the HoS is not. Thus, an undemocratic relation to others is imposed on a specific individual (the HoS), for no reason other than their ancestral lineage. This is, surely, a forfeit of democratic goods – which compatibilism claims does not happen. This forfeit of democratic goods is also an admission of illegitimacy: one person being treated without political fairness shows a vulnerability to meet political fairness requirements, though this aspect does not fall- under my argument.

This trilemma shows that regardless of whether and how the HoS uses the Bagehot Rights, their having such rights undermines the fourth epistemic fairness requirement (equality of intellectual authority), preventing legitimacy along with the first two horns. To deny that the HoS contributes at all to the deliberation process is not an adequate attempt at justification for the Bagehot rights either, because this is to completely abandon compatibilism and admit some democratic good is not achieved in constitutional monarchy, namely equality. Thus, the trilemma of this section has given a second aspect of the illegitimacy of constitutional monarchy, through pure epistemic proceduralism's epistemic fairness requirements.

4.3 – Criticism of Reasons

The Bagehot Right to consultation is incompatible with the epistemic fairness requirement for a publicly recognised forum of knowledge. By granting the HoS special access to government information, the public's ability to scrutinise all relevant knowledge and arguments is undermined.

Subjects contribute at an early stage of deliberation and feed into their representative's actions and reasons. It is only at this stage that an individual subject can make major impact on the construction of the knowledge that impacts state action. However, the HoS has access to government business, unlike other individuals – they are epistemically privileged in being able to respond to government action as an individual, an ability which none of their subjects has. This initial problem is then exacerbated by the second and third Bagehot Rights because the HoS' contribution to this stage can feed directly into the government's approach, unlike subjects, who have nowhere near this much influence.

Compared with the HoS, a subject cannot make as much impact at the stages in construction of knowledge open to them, nor can they influence on a similar scale. That is, they can only contribute at an early stage (so their access to relevant knowledge is limited by virtue of the time at which they are bound to contribute) and can contribute only on behalf of themselves as an individual (i.e., sign a petition once, attend a demonstration). However, the HoS' contribution, via the Bagehot Rights is at a much later stage (once the 'knowledge that impacts state action' involved has been further informed, consolidated, or changed whilst being debated by elected representatives). Worse still, they may also contribute their own private reasons, when all other people involved at this stage have constituent's interests also to consider. Following Part 4.1, and the HoS' lack of election, the Opinion-Gathering function cannot be used here to claim all subjects are the HoS' constituents. Finally, this contribution receives very little scrutiny, perhaps only from the HoG (or perhaps even not, depending on the status that being the HoS ascribes a person in context). Thus, the HoS' contribution, which the ability to make is already proved to be illegitimate, is also illegitimate because it does not meet scrutiny from subjects, as stipulated by the fourth epistemic fairness requirement.

So far, we see that the HoS can contribute to the deliberation process at a later stage than subjects. The issue still not quite answered is why this illegitimacy of the HoS' contribution is bad. Answering this question allows me to tie the parts of this argument together.

Without denying that 'democracy is good', one must give a reason why one person's input can be prioritised. To elucidate how important a mistake this is, I will take stock of what has been achieved in preceding subsections. We have seen that the justification of the Bagehot Rights on democratic terms fails. This was show in Part 4.2. Thus, the arbitrary privileging of one individual's contribution is indefensible. This part's argument furthers this by saying that, taken with the information the HoS receives from the Bagehot Right to be informed, their already illegitimate contribution can in fact be made on epistemologically certain grounds. The preceding arguments tie together in this way: the HoS' illegitimate contribution is based off inadequately scrutinised information and will not be scrutinised again. This illegitimacy symbolises one person's ability being enhanced over all others. This is to contradict a core democratic principle: equality.

5 – Conclusion

I began by introducing compatibilism; the view that monarchy and democracy can be blended in a way that does not forfeit democratic goods. I then introduced legitimacy, i.e., what is required for a political action to be justified. I then outlined an abstracted constitutional monarchy, arrived at through assessment of what compatibilist texts claim to be essential to democracy, escaping the response of reform. These features were the Opinion-Gathering Function, the Bagehot Rights and Personal Prerogative Powers. Pure epistemic proceduralism and its four epistemic fairness requirements was introduced as an account of democratic legitimacy with which to evaluate this abstracted form of constitutional monarchy.

Section 4 presented an argument of three parts for the illegitimacy of constitutional monarchy, each focussing on the Bagehot Rights and how they interact with the other two features. First, it was shown that an aggregative conception of democratic activity, as is implied in the use of the Opinion-Gathering Function of democracy, does not allow for sufficient deliberation for the form of governance to be deemed legitimate. Second, a trilemma revealed that the compatibilist has no way of justifying the contribution the monarch makes through their Bagehot Rights. Without this justification, the possession of such rights makes the HoS illegitimate. Finally, it was shown that the essential features of a monarch's rights mean that their opinions do not meet the requirement for scrutiny that the reasons members of a democracy should receive. Taken together, the implication of these is grave: the constitutional monarch's essential Bagehot Rights are an affront to the very essence of democracy itself. Not only is the HoS illegitimate, but the means taken to prove as much also demonstrates the restriction imposed on equality.

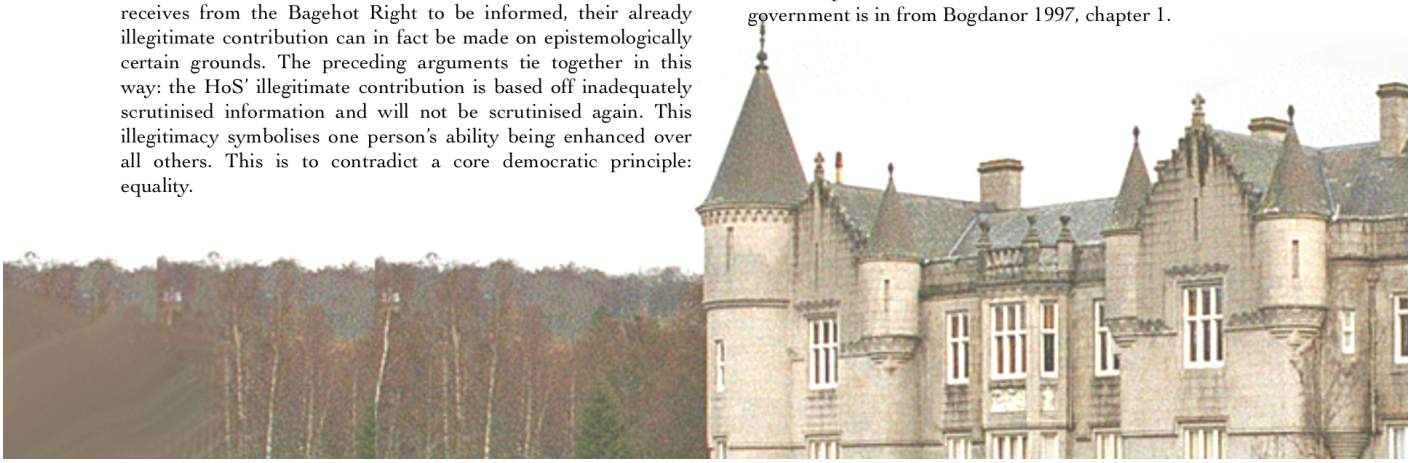
I have, therefore, shown that the form of constitutional monarchy discussed cannot attain democratic legitimacy. The rights that are essential to constitutional monarchy, according to compatibilists, make it such that the state cannot attain legitimacy as it has been understood here, and I have discussed how other conceptions of democratic legitimacy would struggle to reach any other conclusion.

The implications of what has been said here should be two-fold. First, an expansion of democratic theory's interests to assess real-world systems of governance. Said assessment should then be used to compliment the strong arguments against monarchical rule from other areas of philosophy and history.

Notes

1 This is a condensed version of a paper written funded by the Warwick URSS bursary, supervised by Dr Kirk Surgener. Thanks to him for his guidance, as well as to Jeshurun Ratnasamy, Fabienne Peter, Harland Cossons and Ciara Munnelly for helpful comments on earlier versions.

2 A helpful discussion of kinds of constitutional/limited government is in from Bogdanor 1997, chapter 1.



3 If this HoS/HoG business gets confusing, remember that a previous HoG in this country is David Cameron. As for the connection between Cameron and hogs, I leave up to the reader.

4 This paper does not deny the morally abhorrent actions of the UK's monarchy throughout history right up to and including the present. Instead, it says that even if the members of any royal family were morally exemplary, a constitutional monarchy of this kind would still be democratically illegitimate – the necessary features of constitutional monarchy make it so, regardless of the individuals involved.

5 Compatibilist texts considered are Bagehot 2001 [1867], Barker 1942, Hazell & Morris 2020.

6 The absurdity of this delusional compatibilist claim could be developed into a reductio ad absurdum very simply and easily, so I will not argue for this here. The lack of epistemological analysis is representative of a larger gap in democratic theory's analysis of Monarchy, but also of an absence of critical thinking on the part of Monarchists.

7 From Longino's The Fate of Knowledge (2002)

8 As deliberative democrats have it, for instance, Thomas Christiano (2008, 15-16)

9 I am thinking here of epistocracy, or some other elitist system with democratic features like voting, but that is not actually Democratic.

10 For an instrumentalist account, see Wall 2007. For a non-instrumentalist, Christiano 2008

11 I have elsewhere shown Anderson's 'Dualist Democratic Equality' approach to also show incompatibility between democracy and equality (Munnelly 2022).

12 "Sir" Ernest Barker writes that "the powers of the King shall be used in accordance with the will of the nation" and that previous monarchs in the UK "joined with their subjects in brining about change when the will of the nation was set for change" (Barker 1943, 6). His evidence is spotty and would be better interpreted as monarchs conceding small defeats in order to stay in power in their tax-funded ivory towers.

13 For context, consider the kind of system this abstraction comes from. A serious, respected political theorist really claimed that by occasionally having conversations with members of the British public, George VI was qualified to be involved in political decision making. Apparently, saying "and what do you do" a couple of times delivers as much of a mandate as popular vote.

14 I do concede that in order to inform the party policy aspect of deliberation is only open to all subjects insofar as they are able to become members of any political party. As far as I am aware, party membership does not follow an ancestral line, however.

15 Indeed, even Robert Hazell admits that knowing how the HoS deliberates is mere guesswork (Hazell & Morris 2020, 80)

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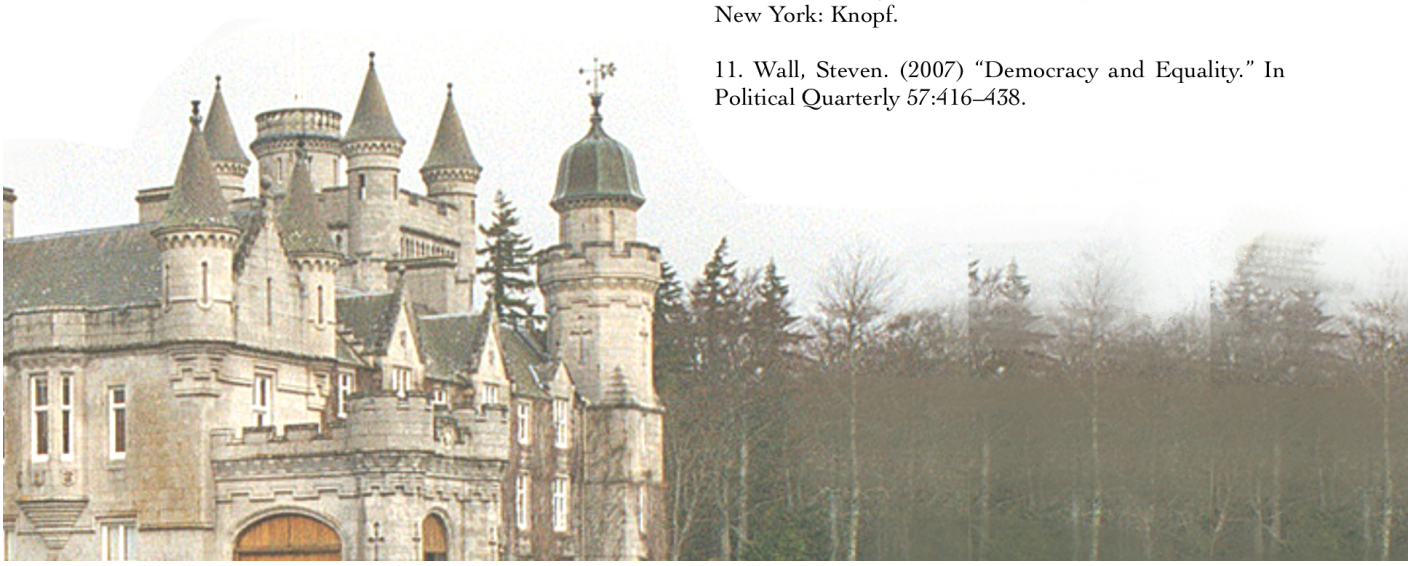
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THE EPIS
OF POLIT
CHECKIN

Ben Long



As cliché as the sentiment may be, the presence of social media has indeed made both information and disinformation more readily accessible to the public. This is especially the case in the political sphere, where election denialism and intolerant rhetoric can spread rapidly. In light of this, the question 'How should we respond to misinformation?' becomes particularly pressing due to the ability of the young and impressionable to be exposed to extreme ideas and be led down conspiratorial pipelines.

A natural response to the challenge of political misinformation and conspiracy theories is to simply debunk them. After all, with all of the facts at our fingertips, one need only read a small disclaimer below a post to be set back on the road of rational enquiry. Arguably, this is the approach that has been taken by social media companies over the past few years, with fact-checking becoming a key tool in identifying misinformation.

Whilst it is praiseworthy that steps have been taken to remedy the problem of misinformation, I contend that the ethos behind political fact-checking is mistaken. In order to do this, it is useful to distinguish between three individuals who may encounter a conspiracy theory online. Alan is a man who is already critical of conspiracy theories and who has the media literacy and critical disposition that enables him to reliably evaluate sources of information. Next is Bob, who is a fully-fledged conspiracy theorist, one who buys into the claims made by sources that are the target of fact-checkers. Finally, there is Craig, who is on the margins of believing a particular conspiracy theory but who still has nagging doubts about doing so. Whilst the underlying assumptions of political fact-checking may be useful for Dave and possibly Craig, I contend that it is much less useful for Bob.

Why may I advance such a claim? My main reason for doing so is that I believe that the propositions believed by conspiracy theorists are not in the market for straightforward debunking. Rather, they more closely resemble what Wittgenstein (1974) classified as hinge propositions. These propositions are ones which are held with a basic certainty of which no evidence could be given.

Consider the proposition 'the world has existed for a long time'. Imagine trying to convince someone of the truth of this claim, you may show them fossils or reports of ancient history in order to prove that the proposition is true. However, if one were unsure of whether or not the world has existed for a long time, then for what reason would they accept your evidence. The fossils you may present to the historical sceptic are taken as evidence only because one presupposes that they existed in a world a long time ago. Without your interlocuter 'buying in' to

the claim about the existence of the past, no evidence can be given for it. Instead of believing hinge propositions for a set of reasons supported by evidence or deductive reasoning, they are an 'inherited background' (OC, 94) against which we act, enquire, and generate evidence.

Let us again consider the beliefs of Bob the conspiracy theorist. Nicholas Smith has identified a particular conspiracy hinge as: 'There is a secret collective of Satanic child traffickers in positions of cultural and

"Propositions believed by conspiracy theorists are not in the market for straightforward debunking."



@Tracy Le Blanc (Pexels)

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@Markus Spiske (Pexels)

political import' (2022, p365).

Bob may hold onto this view so firmly that no amount of countering evidence or fact-checking may serve to disprove it. Smith gives us the recent example of election denialism by hardcore supporters of Donald Trump, where no amount of counterevidence would sway the conspiracy theorist- for it simply is not evidence for them in the first place. One may imagine Bob being presented with solid empirical evidence in favour of Joe Biden rightfully winning the 2020 election, only for him to respond, 'That's what they want you to think!'. The mistake of the fact-checking response to conspiracy theories is simply that such beliefs are insulated from revision, especially from 'mainstream' sources.

Going further, why would Bob take the fact checker seriously if his faith in conspiracy hinges is so certain? Part of the narrative of populism is that its leaders are representative of common sense as opposed to the progressive ideology of Western elites. The hinges held by Bob are viewed as just as intuitive as the existence of the external world, leading attempts to debunk them to resemble the Orwellian dictum of '2+2=5'. If this is the case, then there is little surprise if fact checkers routinely try to debunk conspiratorial content in their crusade against straight talkers like Bob.

To pre-empt an objection to the claim that some of Bob's beliefs are hinges which are beyond the realm of rational disconfirmation, isn't it clear that such claims have been debunked? The trustworthiness of valid journalism is not of the same kind as the certainty we have of the existence of the external world. Noncircular reasons can be given for why satanic elites don't rule the world- so why treat the view as a hinge?

We can consider hinges from two perspectives- universal and particular. Many hinges are taken to be universal, such as the belief that our senses are reliable or that the world exists. Others, however, are constrained to either a particular framework (Ranalli, 2022) or a particular individual. In the case of Bob, the hinge may either be part of an ideological framework or simply a certainty held by Bob as an individual. In either case, the views that Bob holds as the most basic are alien to the fact checkers- making their efforts (even if correct) irrelevant to the belief's hinge status. Even if one is not persuaded by this distinction in terms of what may rationally qualify as a hinge- we could say that Bob takes certain propositions (irrationally) to be hinges for him or his worldview.

A second confusion behind the fact checker response is that it views Bob's beliefs strictly as a way for Bob to arrive at the truth. Whilst arriving at the truth may be part of the story, it is by no means the entire picture. As Cassam (2019) notes, the primary function of conspiracy theories is political rather than epistemic. The views peddled by conspiracy theorists function to mobilise and motivate a particular demographic against a cabal of shadowy elites. Even if a conspiracy theory is not overtly political, it tends to operate within a network of other (more political) theories which can send an individual down a radicalising pipeline.

In a peculiar way, Bob's belief in conspiracy theories depends on a kind of pragmatic justification. If the belief helps to explain (or integrate) the role of a political nemesis in day-to-day affairs, then it ought to be believed. Even the (justified) outrage of one's political opponents may be enough to

"Conspiracy beliefs ... resist debunking. Fact-checking falls short, as convictions are 'inherited background.'"

warrant these beliefs, this being the central tenet of the conservative strategy of owning the libs. Once again, if Bob's beliefs are held for the above (non-truth-tracking) reasons, then why should he take an apparently liberal fact-checker seriously?

I'd like to highlight a final feature of Bob's conspiratorial views- the role of expression. Put simply, believing in a conspiracy theory makes you a part of something. In an age of increasing political polarisation, political beliefs can become more integrated into one's sense of self and embody a 'form of life' (OC, 358). Bob's belief in a conspiracy theory not only strikes him as commonsensical but also as a deeply held commitment that informs how he goes about his daily investigations- if that is the right word. Attempts to debunk or fact-check this framework misses the fact that it is not acquired by "satisfying [ourselves] of its correctness" (OC, 94) and are bound to be construed as an attack on those who live by them.

Is there an alternative to the fact-checking solution that I have criticised in regard to Bob? I believe so, although it is much more personal. Wittgenstein remarked that '[a]t the end of reasons comes persuasion' (OC, 612); what is needed is not debunking deeply held hinges but a reshaping of the worldview which they support. In order to persuade Bob, we must work gradually to change the beliefs which lie on the periphery of his worldview. These are the beliefs which rely on hinges for their legitimacy, such as a belief that a particular policy will have certain negative effects, which nonetheless can be challenged without direct reference to the hinge commitment.

Better yet is to expose Bob to other (to repeat Wittgenstein's term) forms of life in which the hinge has no role and is open to empirical falsification- this means getting out of the online echo chamber in the first place. After this combined process of gradual belief revision and socialisation, Bob may hopefully find himself dropping his conspiratorial hinge commitment for it no longer provides its pragmatic or epistemic function without ever tackling it head-on (Smith, 2022). The best way to guide those like Bob away from falsehood is to make such falsehoods neither logically nor pragmatically necessary for them and to do this they may need to just log off.

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POEM ON ROUSSEAU

Anon.

Civilisation is a hopeless race
Because of the evils it makes us face
Corruption will always run wild
As the wealthy continue to stockpile

The creation of privatised land
Has now and forever ruined man

No person in the state of nature
Would feel this constant threat of danger
They would be peaceful, timid and mute
Not these corporate obsessed capitalist brutes

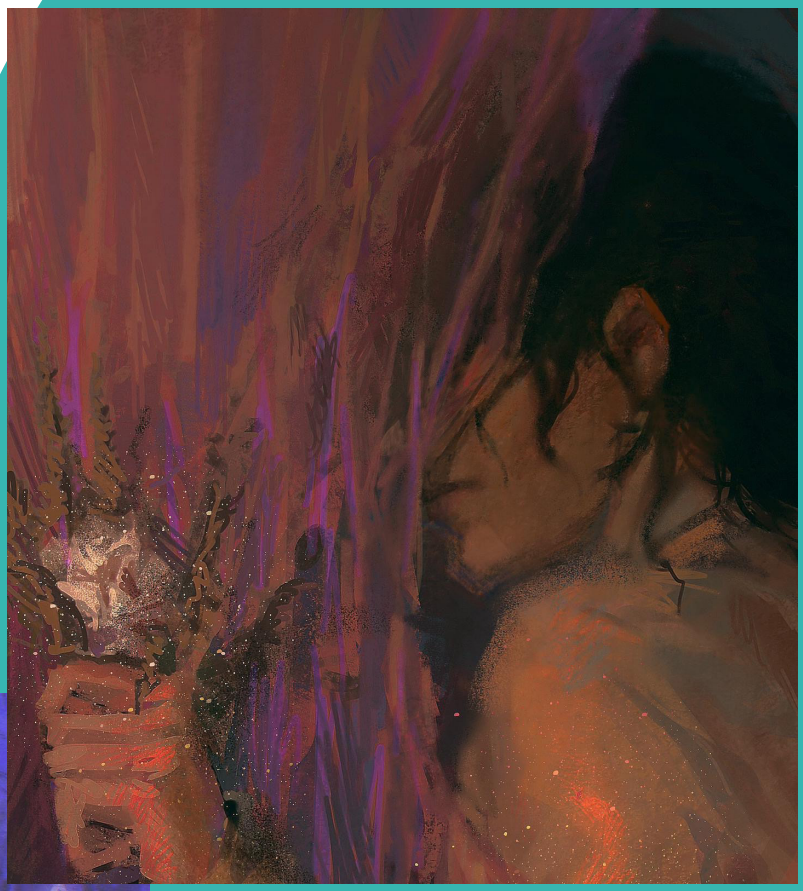
The noble savage may have been full of strife
But at least he had no concept of property rights

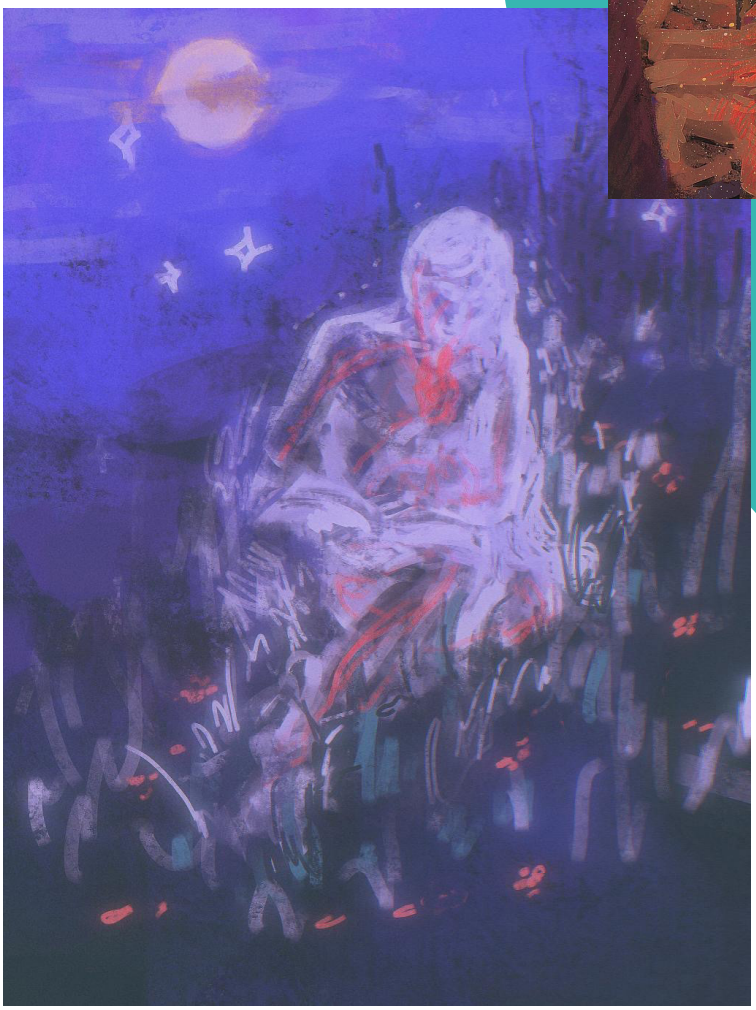
Institution should be built on compassion not competition
Instead we rely on these moronic politicians
They call on the social contract for protection of all
When they, of all, are most afraid to fall

Our blissful human nature, society has corrupted
Why? So that maybe we'd be more productive

UNTITLED ART

Yutong Mao







I'm only twenty

Snehashree Saikia

BA Philosophy (Hons)

3rd Year/Final year student

Zakir Husain Delhi College

University of Delhi

India

Golden Storm (1925)
Arthur G. Dove
Image from The Phillips Collection

At six, we gaped at the illusions of magicians,
Hiding tricks behind the shiny red curtain.
The dream of becoming Houdini one day,
Led us to buy magic-learning boxes.

At fifteen, we finally peeked behind the curtain.
And thus began the never-ending whys and hows.
Who will tell the circus kids -
The biggest illusion is life itself?
Or is that a lie (as in the case of Santa)
best hidden until later?

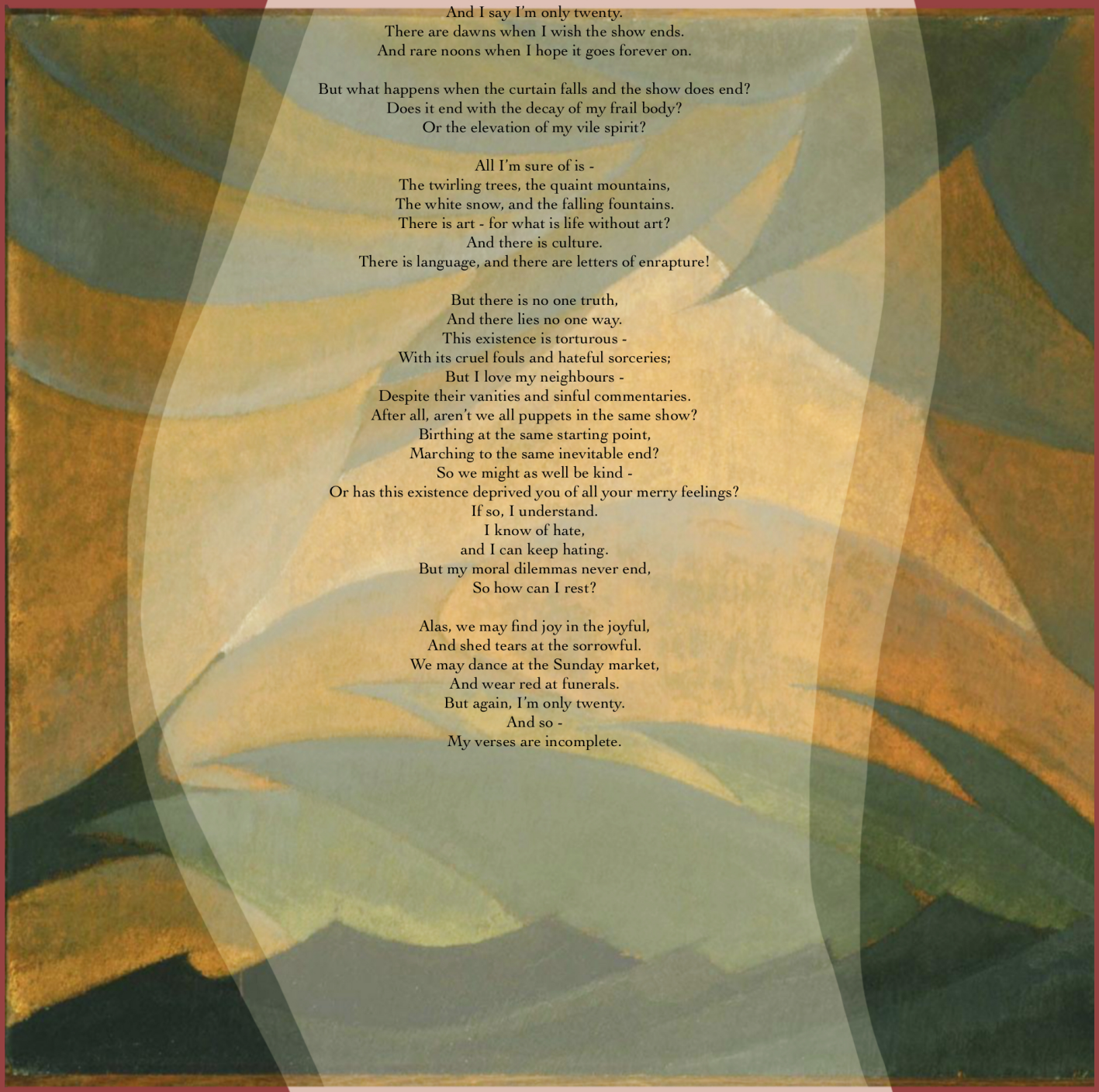
You ask me what I think of life -
And I say I'm only twenty.
There are dawns when I wish the show ends.
And rare noons when I hope it goes forever on.

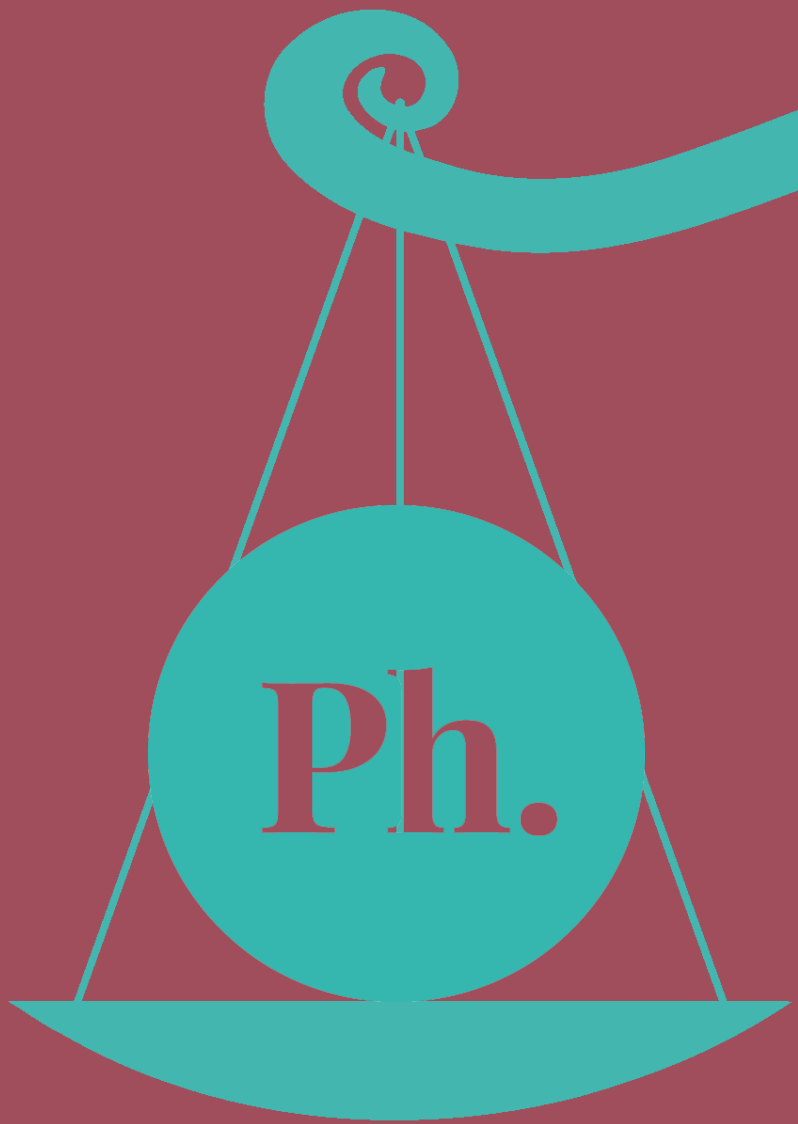
But what happens when the curtain falls and the show does end?
Does it end with the decay of my frail body?
Or the elevation of my vile spirit?

All I'm sure of is -
The twirling trees, the quaint mountains,
The white snow, and the falling fountains.
There is art - for what is life without art?
And there is culture.
There is language, and there are letters of enrapture!

But there is no one truth,
And there lies no one way.
This existence is torturous -
With its cruel fouls and hateful sorceries;
But I love my neighbours -
Despite their vanities and sinful commentaries.
After all, aren't we all puppets in the same show?
Birthing at the same starting point,
Marching to the same inevitable end?
So we might as well be kind -
Or has this existence deprived you of all your merry feelings?
If so, I understand.
I know of hate,
and I can keep hating.
But my moral dilemmas never end,
So how can I rest?

Alas, we may find joy in the joyful,
And shed tears at the sorrowful.
We may dance at the Sunday market,
And wear red at funerals.
But again, I'm only twenty.
And so -
My verses are incomplete.




Ph.