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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It was an honor to have served as Editor-in-Chief of the Spring 2020 Edition of *Aletheia*. I would like to thank the current editorial board, as well as those that came before for their revival of the journal's publication. *Aletheia* was inactive for the four years leading up to 2014. I am proud to be a part of a group that has tended to its consistent publication.

To the authors: you have produced wonderful work that you should be thoroughly proud of. Thank you for your contribution to philosophical discourse.

To the editorial board: Garion and Eric, I am deeply appreciative of your dedication towards seeing the journal's publication this semester, notwithstanding the odd circumstances of its release. I truly mean it when I say that the journal would not have been published without the efforts on behalf of you both. Thank you for all of the hard work you put into *Aletheia* this semester, and thank you for your devotion to building a platform where other philosophers can share their voices.

To the reader: I hope you are able to draw insight and inspiration from each of the essays in this edition as you consider the thoughtful, meticulous, and creative arguments that the authors have put forth.

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Hegel and *Blade Runner*: The Light That Burns Twice as Bright

Evan Jones

In Reason in History, the Hegelian Hero belongs to a specific epoch and specific class in history. As history progresses and we leave the epoch of which Hegel talks about, the Hero takes a new shape. This new Hero is symbolized by Roy Batty from Blade Runner. Roy Batty does not belong to Hegel's epoch and is amongst the lowest rung of the societal ladder. Batty plays a role which contradicts Hegel's idea of the hero. Viewing Blade Runner through a Hegelian lens shows us that many of the Hegelian Hero's qualities can be mapped onto the new hero, but it becomes apparent that Reason may not need to play as significant of a role for the new Heroes.

Introduction

Hegel argues in *Reason in History* that a Hero is one who breaks from the status quo and unconsciously brings about the unification of humanity. The Heroes that Hegel suggests belong to their own epoch, the epoch of imperialism. Some people argue that humanity has not progressed in a spiritual way, even though we have progressed so far in the field of technology. This sentiment serves as the theme for the film, *Blade Runner*. In the film, Roy Batty is a character who overcomes the status quo of his society. The status quo is depicted as the human species' loss of passion, and the view that the "replicants" (bioengineered humans) are somehow less than human. Through Roy Batty's own desire for life, he manifests the possibility of unity being spread to the replicants. Through the course of these actions, Roy Batty shows us that he carries certain traits belonging to the Hegelian Hero, while also belonging to a new epoch, and is thus a new type of Hero that breaks away from Hegel's conception.

Hegel's *Reason in History*

In *Reason in History*, Hegel gives an account of the Hero as an individual who focuses on personal aims and sources his actions with his own "inner spirit," referring to these personal aims as the *particular* (Hegel 40). Hegel describes the Heroes as seeming to have "produced a condition of things and a complex of historical relations that appear to be

their own interest and their own work” (Hegel 40). These individuals have been used by the *Idea* before being eventually cast aside (Hegel 44). By *Idea*, Hegel is referring to the Divine and what the Divine wills.

The use of these individuals was intended for the *universal*, or the unification of humanity. By the term *universal*, Hegel means an expansion of freedom, and the ideas expressed in public institutions. Although these men who have helped to forge history did so all for their own glory and particular goals, it is not the glory that remains. Instead, it is the *universal* or social institutions that gain the benefits of the Hero’s labor. The idea of the Hero that Hegel describes to us, then, is not the type of person who is perfectly just and already focused on the good of the totality. Instead, the Hero is a man who, in self-actualization and vanity, marches a sword in hand to conquer for no one but himself. To such historical figures Hegel gives the attributes of being “practical and political,” claiming that they are thinkers with intuitions as to what is currently needed (Hegel 40). The historical men, or Heroes, have aligned their passion with the new *universal* because they can see what is needed. The Heroes have made this *universal* their own aim, all while being ignorant of the *Idea*.

The claims that Hegel makes about the Hero are supposed to show that this Hero, as described, plays the part of *Reason* in history. *Reason* is the part within humanity which is of divine nature, i.e. reason is a divine trait that humanity possesses. It is this trait alone that makes humans an end in themselves. The Hegelian Hero makes the mistake in perceiving this divinity as something within their *particularity*, rather than something for the *universal*. Moreover, Hegel refers to history as a “slaughter bench,” because history is composed of wars started by the Hegelian Heroes in attempts to make the world in their own image (Hegel 27). The Heroes that Hegel refers to are the men who have enough influence to conjure their countrymen to follow their lead in the creation of the providence that the Hero has in mind. Through the conflicts displayed throughout history the *Idea* is developed.

The conflicts seen throughout history are Hegel’s dialectical processes expressed within the world. The opposing people, groups, or societies, serve as a *thesis* and an *antithesis* when in conflict with each other. As the groups clash together, there is some loss on both sides of

the conflict; however, this loss is never a total loss. What remains after the conflict is the *synthesis*, which expresses the *universal* aspects that were held by each side. The particular individuals who wanted to shape the world how they saw fit have their particularity negated. It is the *cunning of Reason* (God) that has used up the Hero's individual passion to bring about the positive freedoms for the world.

Hegel seems to have placed the Heroes inside a certain epoch, as the Heroes that he has mentioned are all imperialists. Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Napoleon are used as examples by Hegel as such historical individuals. Of Caesar, Hegel says, "in accomplishing his originally negative purpose—the autocracy over Rome—he at the same time fulfilled the necessary historical destiny of Rome and the world" (Hegel 39). The force by which Caesar is possessed is the *cunning of Reason*, which enables him to satisfy his particular goals of complete control over the Roman Republic. However, through the disguise of his personal victory, *Reason* had been using Caesar as a means to its own end the whole time. Hegel says that the heroes do not have an understanding of the concept that he refers to as the *Idea*. Caesar certainly worked for his own satisfaction and not the desires of the people of Rome. In doing so, Caesar pushed the world along the path that it needed to go, leaving behind *universality* rather than his own *particularity*.

Blade Runner

Some of the traits held by the Hegelian Hero can be seen in the film, *Blade Runner*. In this film, Earth is a dystopia wherein the humans who remain, no longer possess the passion or spirit to further their own species despite the sundry technological advancements they have made.. Biomechanics have almost perfectly created artificial humans, who are referred to as replicants. Roy Batty, the character who I will be concerned with analyzing throughout this essay, is a replicant who comes back to Earth in search of life. He knows that his time is running out and his death has been set for the near future. Upon Batty's arrival to Earth, the police hire a former detective named Rick Deckard to find and retire him.

When Batty is given the chance to confront his maker, Eldon Tyrell, Tyrell informs him that he cannot grant him what he is looking for: more

life. This is upsetting for Batty, as Tyrell is portrayed to be “the god of biomechanics” (Blade Runner). In a fit of passionate rage caused by the realization of mortality, Batty kills Tyrell. This scene symbolized Batty’s realization that Tyrell is not a higher power, which is shown by how he brings Tyrell down to the same level of mortality. This exhibits that the two beings are, in fact, equals.

Deckard, who has been searching for the replicants, finds them hidden away in the home of J.F. Sebastian, an employee of the Tyrell Corporation. Deckard first has to fight Pris, a replicant who he is able to kill with relative ease. The difficulty of the situation escalates when Batty arrives to find Pris, his comrade, slain on the floor. Batty and Deckard engage in a conflict, in which Batty could easily become the victor. Instead, he spares Deckard and instills within him the desire to live. During this conflict, Batty has become increasingly aware of his expiration date as he loses some function of his hand. During this engagement, Batty has Deckard barely clinging to his life. He grabs Deckard and brings him up from the ledge, saving him. Soon afterwards, Roy passes away.

The Hegelian Hero’s Traits Seen in *Blade Runner*

While Batty is not a Hegelian Hero, he does exhibit several of the Hero’s traits in the film. The status quo that is present in the society depicted in *Blade Runner* is the unproductivity of the human population, as well as the view that the replicants are less than human. When watching the film, the viewer notes that the society is unproductive, the city is covered in such a dense smog that the sunlight can no longer reach the ground. The humans refer to replicants as “skin jobs,” which is supposed to be seen as a degrading term. Roy Batty has to break this status quo. It is clear that he has what the humans in the film lack: he has passion.

Batty’s passion is recognized by Tyrell, who says, “the light that burns twice as bright burns half as long, and you have burned so very, very brightly, Roy” (Blade Runner). This is a testament to the passion and spirit possessed within Batty’s character. When his creator cannot provide for him what he is seeking, he kills him, illustrating how this scene echoes back to Hegel when he tells us that the Hero is devoted to

his own interest. He sums up his claim by saying: “But so mighty a figure must trample down many an innocent flower, crush to pieces many things in its path” (Hegel, 43). Hence, the Hero, caught up in his passions, can be devoid of morality. This is true of Batty’s character because it is not only Tyrell that he kills, but also J.F. Sebastian, an innocent bystander.

Batty breaks the status quo in the fight with Deckard, since he instilled all of the passion that he had within Deckard so that he was able to find the will to live. Although Batty could have defeated Deckard, right before he dies, he chooses to save the detective. In his dying breath he says that, “all those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain” (Blade Runner). This scene proves significant, especially for Batty’s role as the counterexample to the Hegelian Hero. It is in this scene that Batty not only gives spirit back to humanity, but he also shows the audience just how human his actions truly are. What is depicted in this scene is a shift from considering the replicants as lesser than human to now seeing them as equals. The recognition given to Batty in this scene shows an expansion in *universality*. The humans and the replicants do not merely coexist, but they actually bring out the best in each other.

Roy Batty: A Counterexample to the Hegelian Hero

So far, I have established the traits that the Hegelian Heroes and Roy Batty have in common. Namely, I have pointed out that they all bring about *universality* through their passions. The heroes who are recognized by Hegel were leaders of empires, men who had the full weight of their military behind them. They had subjects other than their countrymen to tax, and this gave them the finances that they needed to have such great military might. They were humans brought about unintentional universal results when attempting to satisfy their own personal goals (Hegel 35).

Batty is not a Hero by Hegel’s definition because he is not a leader of an empire, nor does he wish to be. Likewise, he is not a human, he is a replicant. Despite this, Batty still proves to be a hero and therefore he represents a counterexample to the Hegelian Hero. He fights towards one goal, which is life, but loses that fight, while gaining the *universal*, which is the recognition that replicants are at least equal to humans. Roy

Batty is only able to achieve this recognition of equality by severing the toxic stream of recognition that stems from Tyrell. When Batty killed Tyrell he was destroying the streams of recognition that come from a higher authority. Batty had recognized that the higher authority had limited his freedom. Batty had been created to be used as a means for some end. Rather than being used by his creator, Batty killed him. Thus, the death of Tyrell granted Batty a new freedom. Despite Batty lacking the one thing that makes humans human—being born instead of being made—he proved to be more human than the humans could have imagined. Batty had the passion needed to push the world forward. Rather than being thrown into the script of the Hegelian Hero, it seems more appropriate to see Batty as an existential hero.

A Hero for a New Epoch?

As Hegel's epoch has drawn to an end, it becomes important to establish how the Heroes of the new age differ. I have already stated that in the epoch prior to this new age, the Heroes were on the top rung of society. Usually the heroes of yesterday had wealth or political standing, if not both. The Heroes from a new epoch come from little wealth if any and are usually a part of an oppressed group of people. Like Batty, they thirst to be recognized as equals. They desire to be seen as equals to those who have placed them in a second class citizenship. Although we have left Hegel's epoch, history is still being made and it still presses onwards for freedom. As long as there is an oppressed group of people, there is still a lack of *universality*. It is *Reason's* role to expand freedom to people throughout society. Previously, *Reason* did this by using passionate individuals who brought about change for their own particular self-interest, while in the new epoch, people seek to raise the oppressed segment of society for freedom's own sake.

The Hegelian Heroes' particular aims had the unattended consequences that produced universal freedom. In the case of the new heroes, the expansion of *universality* is completely aligned with their own particular interests. When Deckard recognizes Batty to be more than a bottom tier citizen, that recognition is then applied to other replicants such as Rachel. Rachel is a replicant who Deckard ends up pursuing as a romantic interest because the recognition that Batty earned is being

spread to the other replicants. Replicants who went from being seen as less than human, are now being seen as worthy of humanity's affection. This type of recognition was previously unseen.

For the Hegelian Heroes of imperialism, conquering a new province was not meant for spreading freedom. The spread of freedom was by *Reason's* own doing. That is to say that the spread of recognition was not intentional by the Hegelian Hero, but in accord with a power outside of themselves. The new Heroes want freedom for themselves, and in turn, gain it for others within their own oppressed group. In this instance, the *particular* and the *universal* clearly have the same goal, which is freedom. The process of expanding a society's freedom starts with recognizing it. Therefore, the toxic streams of recognition must be destroyed and replaced with the recognition of equality.

Conclusion

Hegel chose to depict his Hero by showing us men who were filled with passion and wanted to satisfy their own desires. Framing Roy Batty as a counter example to the Hegelian Hero shows us that it is not only great historical men that have the capacity to pave the way to their own individualistic goals, but that the marginalized people in a society can obtain the same passion to drive the world closer to providence. In conclusion, Roy Batty proves to be a successful counterexample to the Hegelian Hero.

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The Role of Civil Society in 21st Century Border Politics

Blake Ochoa

In this essay, the political and social philosophy of contemporary Latinx philosophers, Luis Villoro and Gloria Anzaldúa will be used to analyze the U.S.-Mexico border crisis. Their perspectives will then be applied to the work of the infamous anti-immigration author, Samuel Huntington. From the work of these three authors, I will draw conclusions about how the crisis on the border and social status of Latinx citizens seem to inform future models of political engagement for immigrants.

Introduction

The current situation on the U.S.-Mexico border is the source of countless theories, political and philosophical alike. The scenario is a vast and complex web of law, ethics, and political interest. For this reason, although this essay will explore a number of these concepts, in no way does it claim to solve or even understand the entirety of the factors relating to the current immigration and detainment crisis. The concepts in this essay are to be understood as generalized perspectives that can be treated as a starting point for further deconstruction of the situation at hand.

This essay focuses on the work of three contemporary authors who have written about either the ideal structure of government, the function of the border, or both. I will begin by looking at Luis Villoro, a Mexican scholar and member of the Zapatista indigenous community. I will analyze his theories on just governance and how an ideal democracy ought to operate. Next, I will turn to Gloria Anzaldúa, a queer Latina who was raised in a small border town in southern Texas. I will specifically look at her seminal work, *Borderlands*, and the way that she conceptualizes life on the border in order to inform our understanding of both the physical border and the lived experiences of those who cross it. Finally, I will discuss the infamous writings of Samuel Huntington, a Caucasian-American Harvard professor, who laid out the grounds for the ethnic panic response to Hispanic immigration into the United States in his 2009 article, "The Hispanic Challenge." I will explore the

justifications for his claims, as well as the common refutations of his argument. This essay will conclude by examining how the writings of these three drastically different theorists interact with one another. Using Huntington's work as an outline for anti-immigration sentiment, I will apply Villoro's strategies of representation and Anzaldúa's philosophical approach to the border in hopes of creating a comprehensive framework for further political engagement in the present immigration crisis.

Luis Villoro: Philosophy in Democratic Societies

Luis Villoro is a prolific author on many subjects, ranging from language, to metaphilosophy, to political organization. This third topic area is where I will focus the current discussion of Villoro's philosophy.

Villoro claims that the concept of liberal democracy that is often espoused in Western cultures has become tainted as actual governments throughout the world become less and less truly democratic. For instance, Villoro takes particular issue with the way that representation has been warped in modern democracies. Of course, electing representatives to discuss and write policy is necessary in large groups. However, in countries like the United States, several factors, including the growth of political parties, have turned the role of the representative into a mechanism enabling their accumulation of wealth and power instead of voicing the concerns of the many. It is often the case that, when representatives get further involved in politics, their attention shifts towards meeting with corporate executives, engaging in political bargaining, and seeking support from partisan powers as opposed to accurately and honestly representing their constituents. This devolution has ensured that so-called "representative democracies" no longer truly represent the will of the governed. Instead, the government is composed of greedy and power-seeking politicians who act in their own interest instead of the interest of the masses.

In order to propose a truly liberal form of democracy, Villoro draws upon his ties to the Zapatista, an indigenous community in Mexico. This group operates on an entirely communal system of governance, in which all members of their society have a direct say in the creation of rules and direction of action. Power is decentralized. The elders act as advisors and are encouraged to pass along their wisdom, however their final vote is

no more or less valuable than other members. Based on this foundation, Villoro proposed an adapted model of government that focused on expanding representation on a larger, nation-wide scale.

Villoro's radical democracy begins by diffusing power and resources to local governments. Over the course of a gradual transition period, the national government's responsibilities are restrained only to matters that operate on a larger scale than local governments could handle. In the instance of the United States, these include inter-state conflicts, international activities, and the maintenance of universal human rights. All non-national obligations are transferred to local power structures that can focus on the direct needs of the people in the community. In local communities, direct votes are held, and the majority decides the outcome. Whenever the national government must make a decision, representatives from local communities are sent to vote, however, they are contractually obligated to vote according to a referendum of citizen opinions. Therefore, the local vote does not decide the final outcome of the issue, but rather, certain localities ensure that the majority is heard through their representation. Finally, civil society ought to become more democratic in its structure. Businesses, schools, churches, and other non-governmental entities must operate under democratic models where votes are used to decide how to resolve current issues. This ensures that true democratic concepts are instilled in all citizens and that each individual gets to experience representation on a smaller scale, hopefully preventing the re-emergence of corruption in political structures.

This model reinforces representation in order to preserve the true goals of democracy and avoid larger socioeconomic issues, like monopolization and broad disparities in political influence between social classes. This proposal clearly suggests that representation is the most fundamental way to uphold justice in political systems. Still, Villoro believes that some barriers to true democracies and decentralization of power are unavoidable. We must remain vigilant and prepared to address individual occurrences of these trends. The most prevalent of these is the threat of ideological domination.

In some of his metaphilosophical work, Villoro has contended that the true function of philosophy is for it to be a liberatory tool. Through seeking better understanding of complex issues, we can achieve more

egalitarian and liberated societies. However, philosophy can often act as a double-edged sword. Even the most liberatory of philosophy is frequently hijacked and warped by those in power to become tools of subjugation. This process is what fuels ideological domination, or the control of knowledge production by those in power.

In relation to modern immigrants in American society, ideological domination is what constrains their social position and ability to access representation. Those in power have constructed threat narratives that Latinx immigrants will steal jobs or cause crime rates to increase. These claims have created a form of groupthink that otherizes immigrants and teaches the public that violence and political repression is needed to prevent the expansion of the “Latino threat.” This is where Villoro becomes essential to the immigration discussion. His work suggests that the war against immigration is driven less by physical violence, but rather ideological violence that justifies the physical expressions we see in everyday society.

Through this pedagogical warfare, even the most democratic of countries can still be corrupted by groupthink, informing the spread of ideologies under false pretenses. Therefore, in order to protect their ability to be heard, marginalized groups must always be aware and resist this form of domination by deploying counter-ideology to deconstruct and refute the claims of those seeking authority. Counter-ideology can take many forms, but it is most effective when it can gain broad support. Therefore, one of the challenges in preserving representation of marginalized groups, is finding means to disseminate liberatory theories in effective ways.

While there is lots of merit in what Villoro conceptualized, what is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Villoro’s theory is the way in which it was presented. As was mentioned before, Villoro’s model of democracy was based on his experiences living with the Zapatista. Villoro took the concepts at the core of Zapatista governance and explained them in the language of dominant Western ideology. However, no one knew that Villoro’s theories were based on the Zapatista at the time that they were published. It wasn’t until after Villoro’s death that his Zapatista roots were revealed. In this way, Villoro forced society to recognize the legitimacy of indigenous theorists by disguising their

influence until his writings gained universal recognition. In other words, Villoro's writings perfectly model how to achieve representation using counter-ideology that inverts the messaging of those in power.

Through the work of Villoro we can begin to understand, in abstract terms, what a more just political system ought to look like and how we, as citizens, can begin to move away from dominating power structures. So, now that Villoro has laid the groundwork for further discussion, I will turn to the work of Anzaldúa to introduce us to the border.

Gloria Anzaldúa: Life in the Border and Hybrid Perspective

Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* is an incredibly nuanced and stylized exploration of a number of modern issues that Latinx individuals face. This section will in no way be an extensive summary of this work, but rather it will select certain areas of focus as they apply to the modern immigration debate.

When most people imagine the border, they think of the actual geographic boundary between the United States and Mexico. The most basic theory at play in Anzaldúa's writing is how to best approach the borderlands as a philosophical, rather than literal, concept. To do this, she draws upon the indigenous concept of *nepantla*, or "in-between-ness." For Anzaldúa, the borderland is a state of being, the position of being stuck between two poles and constantly drifting closer and farther from these extremes. The literal examples of this are obvious, such as the physical border and border communities between the United States and Mexico. The culture in this area is a mix of American and Latinx norms that, at times, emphasize one of these influences more strongly over the other. The non-physical applications of this concept include the creation of mixed languages. Anzaldúa for instance, claims that she speaks no less than eight languages, all of which reside somewhere between Spanish and English, some more formal and others entirely casual. Language is fluid in the borderland and simple categories and divisions between concepts such as Spanish and English no longer function properly.

The result of this constant ambiguity is often disorientation and a sense of a lack of belonging. As a queer Latina from a border town that

speaks multiple languages, Anzaldúa herself has confessed to struggling with this sense of frustration and loneliness. She, as well as other Latinxs, sit on the imagined boundaries that are meant to wrangle and constrain identity. These lines can dig into us and leave us divided. Although this feeling is common and almost intrinsic to being Latinx, Anzaldúa claims that this ambiguity can become a positive aspect of Latinx identity.

Many have claimed that the root of the out-of-place feeling for Latinxs is society's general rejection of "impure" races. The very state of being in-between cultures is viewed as a threat to the purity of the dominant race. Anzaldúa rejects this notion. She believes that being a racial hybrid gives one a unique perspective on society and the issues at hand. The Latinx perspective is uniquely developed and essential to the advancement of society. This perspective has led to the creation of *Mestizaje* identity. Many Latin American regions, especially Mexico, have a high concentration of people who identify as *Mestizo* in order to highlight the impurity of their racial and ethnic background. *Mestizos* can see issues from both sides and learn to walk the line between these poles. So, in the face of this criticism of impurity, the Latinx must embrace the ambiguity of their identity and claim all that is theirs, regardless of which side of the border it may be on. To be *Mestizo* is for individuals to claim their Latin side, their indigenous side, their American side, and the identity of any other group to which they may belong. For these individuals, mixed blood is a source of pride, not shame.

By refusing to be assimilated towards one side of the border or the other, the Latina can occupy and learn to traverse the borderland. Through reclamation and pride we can turn our confused tumbles in and out of extremes into a carefully choreographed dance that balances us between the opposing forces of the world in an elegant and empowering manner. To put it simply, we must embrace our impurity and demand that the rest of the world respect it too. Therefore, if we are to find a way to espouse this reclamation in the modern border crisis, we must understand what the perspective of the racial purist is in modern America. For this task, we can (for once) find the work of Samuel Huntington extremely helpful.

Samuel Huntington: Immigration Crisis and Ethnic Panic

As was mentioned in the introduction, Samuel Huntington gained relative infamy after publishing an article in 2009 entitled “The Hispanic Challenge.” In this article, Huntington asserts that the influx of Latinx immigrants is a threat to American culture and society as a whole. He claims that what is unique about Latinx immigrants is that they refuse to fully assimilate to American culture, instead creating localized hubs of Latinx culture. In Huntington’s eyes, the creation of new subcultures in regions with high levels of immigration undermines the unity of American society and, in extreme cases, could even lead to the creation of ethnic enclaves that operate outside of the societal rules by which the rest of the country abide. In the article, he specifically references Miami in the wake of the Cuban immigration crisis, claiming that it has essentially become a second Cuba, where principles inherent to Cuban politics have become common despite their contradictions to American governmental principles. Huntington argues that if this continues in areas like Southern California and Texas, American society will soon fracture and fall apart. This threat narrative is an example of what has come to be known as ethnic panic, a response that aims to curtail immigration by generating fear of the influence of immigrants on dominant culture. This work and many similar writings inspired by Huntington, have come to be a key point in the anti-immigration argument.

While it is easy to decry this view as racist and reject it outright, it is important to deconstruct the basic assumption at play in this argument. Through this dissection we can better understand what drives this form of racial purity and ethnic panic that has come as a response to increases in immigration. In other words, understanding the racist ideas at play allows us to better address racism in society at large. To develop this understanding, I will be refuting three key assumptions of Huntington’s argument.

The first concept on which I will focus is the assertion that Latinx immigrants wish to espouse the political ideology of their home country. This idea is akin to claiming that Latin-Americans are a sort of sleeper agent or political spy meant to sow seeds of revolution into American society. On the contrary, the reason we are seeing immigration from

these countries, especially recently, is because the violence or subjugation in other countries are driving people away. Those who leave a country like Cuba are keenly aware about which parts of Castro's regime were unsuccessful and repressive. While it is true that some individuals, like Villoro for instance, defend forms of governance that are inspired by their ethnic roots, the goal is almost always to create a syncretic form of government that works for everyone. In fact, the input of Latinx citizens in American politics almost always takes the form of cautionary tales and the recognition of patterns that have led to authoritarianism in other Latin countries.

The second assumption I will discuss is the claim that Latinx immigrants wholly reject American culture. Huntington's rhetoric of societal collapse is dependent on the idea that Latinx communities operate entirely outside or in rejection of American civil society. On the contrary, theorists like Anzaldúa make it abundantly clear that those who cross borders and exist in the borderland are not wholly allegiant to one side. Instead, they accept their new country while still holding onto the foundational aspects of their home country. It is unreasonable to expect an immigrant to deny the blood in their veins once they reach the other side of the border. Yet it seems as though racial purists, like Huntington, expect Latinxs to do exactly that. It is true that Latinx immigrants hold onto cultural aspects of their home; however, this behavior is central to the creation of hybrid communities that advance society through cultural syncretism.

The final aspect that I will explore is perhaps the most basic and the most farcical of Huntington's assumptions: the idea that racial purity exists in any group. To claim that America is threatened by the arrival of new cultures implies that there is cultural uniformity in the United States absent Latinx presence. This claim is absurdly inaccurate. By its very nature, America is one of the most racially impure nations in the world. Various Europeans conquered a region controlled by indigenous groups and brought Africans over as coerced labor. Therefore, America is foundationally made up of at least three broadly defined groups, each of which having numerous subcultures and distinct norms. Further, there have been massive waves of immigration from almost every region, which have included Latin America in the past. The United States is not

threatened by having a number of distinct cultures within its borders, because it has always had a number of distinct cultures within its borders. Furthermore, the influx of Latinx immigrants is made up of a number of diverse groups itself. There is no uniform culture invading the United States, as there is no uniform culture in the nations from which immigrants are coming. In summation, the foundational assumption of Huntington-esque racial purists is absurdly false.

Samuel Huntington's perspective on the immigration issue is undeniably discriminatory and academically empty. However, precisely because of its absurdity it can play an important role in refuting other, similarly discriminatory, justifications for opposing immigration from Hispanic cultures.

Conclusion: Fear, Blood, and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Border

As it stands today, most of the tools to create a perfect model for resolving the immigration crisis and human rights abuses on the U.S.-Mexico border are available to us. Villoro taught us what just representation looks like in government. Anzaldúa showed the world that to cross borders is not a shameful act, but rather a point of potential empowerment and self-liberation. Huntington showed advocates for more liberal immigration policies what exactly they are up against. Yet if all of these things are true, why are we still seeing such extreme abuse and injustice on the border? Why are we as a society so willing to overlook violent and repressive anti-immigration sentiment in our social, political, and academic spaces? Through the lens of Villoro, Anzaldúa, and Huntington, it is apparent that the true source of the conflict regarding immigration is not one of employment or national security. The crisis on the border is one of fear, blood, and politics.

Based on what I have discussed, it appears that civil society in the United States is incredibly afraid of immigration. They are not scared of economic downturns or the breaking up of America into a series of ethnic enclaves, but what they do fear is the ambiguity that they do not understand. When looking at the Latinx immigrant, what is reflected back to them is not a person, it is an unknown. They see a constantly shifting and fluid individual that is the antithesis of the foundational belief of their society. Political systems in the United States and much of

Western society were built to delineate the right from the wrong, and assume that everything can fit neatly into boxes, or that the world can be neatly carved into a series of borders. The Latinx immigrant does not respect those delineations. They stand on the line between “is” and “is not,” and they refuse to back down. This positionality of the in-between is in their blood.

This is why American society cannot accept the Latinx immigrant into everyday life. This is why immigrants are not just denied, but detained and killed. This is why the rhetoric surrounding immigration is so inflammatory. If the immigrant is recognized as legitimate, then the United States will have acknowledged that the notion of stability upon which their nation is built may be wrong.

In the face of such drastic differences, what can be done to bridge the gap and create reform? What is the framework through which we can address these issues? The answer lies, of course, *between* Villoro and Anzaldúa. Villoro’s model of political engagement was to hide the influence of the Zapatista. In this way, he forced society to recognize the legitimacy of the theories that he discussed before revealing that they came from a marginalized group. On the other hand, Anzaldúa says that we must wear our ambiguity on our sleeves and force society to see the face of the other. Ergo, the solution for the Latinx immigrant once again lies in the middle. We must use the flawed political system of the United States to point out the discrimination and hatred at the core of anti-immigration policy. We enter the system as Villoro did, discreetly and with identity close to the chest. Then, once we have the attention of society, we can show them the face of immigration, smudged with dirt and the very blood that they have learned to fear. Only after we have forced recognition is it possible for us to make changes that improve the democratic structure of the government based on Villoro’s model of decentralization.

In other words, perhaps living in a society that has become so unaccepting of Latinxs has made us exactly the double agents that Huntington feared. However, we do not work for any outside forces. Rather, we enter the political system in order to invert it. Only through this deception can we resist the ideological domination of theorists like Huntington and win the fight at the very heart of this nation.

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How Does Society Influence the Imbalance of Men Versus Women Serving in Higher Level Court Positions?

Leah Reyes

This paper, originally written for my Philosophy of Law class, focuses on the gender disparity of women in higher level court positions. It portrays how women are underrepresented in the legal field, mostly due to society's perceptions of gender roles and the stereotypes that are ingrained into females and males, starting as children. This paper explores this idea in more depth and emphasizes the need for society to recognize this social issue and make an active effort towards molding the attitudes of women as being just as capable and brilliant as men, when it comes to their career goals and futures.

Introduction

When Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, was asked, “when will there be enough women on court?” she replied, “when there are nine.” When questioned about this, she then said, “until 1981 there had always been nine men...for 192 years, nine men had the last, legal word across the land...so why not nine women? Let’s get started” (Ginsburg). This novel idea that women, too, can serve as Supreme Court Justices was finally established about twenty years ago when Ronald Reagan appointed the first woman to the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O’Connor. Before then, a woman on the Supreme Court was overlooked and seemed unnecessary. Now, there are currently three women who serve as Supreme Court Justices, bringing our history’s total to four. This 33% ratio of women to men judges also serves as a reflection of how many women compared to men serve across the nation as judges in all levels of court. This disparity is obvious; although it has improved, it is still nowhere near balanced. Evidence suggests that this discrepancy is due to the culture that surrounds young boys and girls and the influence of restricting gender roles that begin at a young age. For generations, stereotypes between men and women have limited the types of careers that women choose to pursue, which has led to a disproportionality of women in fields like the legal profession, specifically with judges. In this paper, I will argue that this puts women

at a disadvantage because they bring a different mindset to judiciary decision-making, but are not always able to excel to their full extent. Overall, including women would broaden perspectives and incorporate an aspect of inclusivity that the courts or other legal proceedings currently lack.

Establishment of Stereotypes

Beginning in infancy, cultural norms are placed on children based on their gender. The color of clothes they wear, their hairstyle, types of toys that they are given to play with, etc. originally come from their gender and by what is normally associated with a boy or girl child. Though this is not necessarily bad, or in itself oppressive, the extent to which these beliefs continue to be forced upon children as they grow up, could have negative effects on how they view themselves based on their gender. According to research done at the University of Chicago by Shelley J. Correll, “cultural beliefs about gender (called ‘gender beliefs’) are the component of gender stereotypes that contain specific expectations for competence. It is this component, with its specific expectations of competence, that presents special problems for gender equality” (163-164). In other words, these gender beliefs are the social cues that we use to develop our view of the world around us. These cultural beliefs represent what we think most people accept to be true about our gender, and this is used as the basis of what we expect of ourselves.

In North America, it is the prevailing notion that men are still more competent than women, or at least that is the impression we are given. Further, people are going to live up to or practice what they think most people believe of them. So, if little girls feel like they are not expected to perform as well as boys, then that is how they will perceive themselves as they age. Other studies have shown, “when subjects were told that males performed better at the task, male subjects outperformed female subjects. However, when subjects were told that previous research had found no gender differences in performing the task, females and males did equally well” (Correll 1698). This is convicting evidence in that it puts into perspective how belittling words and expectation can be. If there is a difference in performance this critical, then obviously the

implications made about one gender versus another matter and are contributing in shaping the minds of children. Further, the study proves that expectation affects performance and that women, even if only subconsciously, feel restricted by the perpetual expectation of them to perform worse in comparison. Moreover, when people begin choosing their career paths, though it is influenced by many factors, they must at least feel competent enough and capable of the necessary skill set or education that would be required to achieve that career. A young girl who has always been shown that she is likely to be less capable and less intelligent as her male classmates, of course, is not going to feel confident enough to pursue a prestigious position in the legal system, especially when that system still proves to be predominantly male. Starting from childhood, promoting boys as having more capability in academic performance or ambition towards future success commits a wrong against girls, because it automatically labels them as lesser than and advances the notion that there is a natural gap between men and women.

To reduce these stereotypes, some major corporations and non-profits have made efforts to raise awareness of this enduring issue and educate the public on its negative effects. Non-profit organizations like, 'She's The First,' 'She Should Run,' and 'Step Up,' concentrate on making young girls feel heard and confident, while encouraging them to pursue leadership roles in school and their future career paths. One of the biggest platforms of support against the cultural beliefs of girls versus boys comes from the Mattel Toy Company, specifically represented through Barbie, which has a central audience of young, impressionable girls. According to Mattel, "recent research shows that starting at age five, many girls begin to develop limiting self-beliefs. They stop believing their gender can do or be anything" (Barbie). Mattel refers to this as the Dream Gap, and explains how it, "creates barriers for girls to reach their full potential, which can negatively affect and inhibit their future trajectory or career choices" (Mattel).

In light of this campaign, each year Barbie highlights a "career of the year" where they create a Barbie that embodies a specific job. Mattel publicizes it as a way for girls to see women leaders and remind them that they, too, can be anything. This year the chosen career is, "The

Barbie Judge Doll,” which Mattel says, “encourages girls to learn more about making decisions to change the world for the better” (Barbie). By acknowledging this as a career underrepresented by women and giving it exposure to girls early on, Mattel is making efforts to close the Dream Gap and the accompanying perception that judges and higher-level legal positions are a ‘men’s only’ job. Further, they are using their influence to prevent from furthering the stereotype that girls ‘just play with dolls’ and instead are turning this activity into something to empower girls and remind them of the opportunities that their future holds. By using a doll to portray this message, they are emphasizing how toys like this are not made to teach or introduce domestic tasks to young girls nor paint a picture of a ‘house-trained woman. Instead, it paves the way for positive discussions about women leaders. This kind of campaign is one solution that is already in motion and focuses on breaking stereotypes while children are still young, preventing them from carrying on these kinds of cultural beliefs into their adulthood. While promoting a judge-themed doll may seem like a minute gesture, it subconsciously allows girls to picture themselves in these leadership positions and shapes their mindset away from submissive and into strong-minded.

Representation in the Workplace

Going along with this, it has been proven that physically seeing women fulfilling these positions of power alters society’s perception of “normalized” gender roles. It becomes more likely for children to pursue a career in positions where they see someone like them. Specifically, in the court system, “the mere presence of women on the bench serves an educative function... Additionally, judges occupy a highly visible position of authority, and the example set by women judges reaches far beyond the legal profession. Those non-lawyers who come into direct contact with women judges—as litigants, jurors, and witnesses—absorb a subtle but direct lesson about the role of women in our society” (Sherry 160). In order to overturn the widely accepted idea that women do not belong on the judicial bench or are not needed in a place of legal decision making, people must consistently, with their own eyes, see women in these roles and doing well in them. The more it is seen, the more it will be expected. The surprise factor of dealing with a woman judge

or lawyer will fade because, finally, it will be considered just as typical for a legal professional to be a woman than it is to be a man.

This correlates again to studies from Correll that show how female students who practiced in facilities with active female surgeons, were more likely to become surgeons themselves (Correll 1725). This finding portrays how over time gender patterns are replicated. Luckily, it seems like the medical field has been able to break this barrier, proving that the cycle of gender misrepresentation can be broken. Thus, this ideology is what the court systems are behind on promoting and their lack of attention towards this imbalance allows it to continue. Other parts of Correll's work show that, "what students see, hear, and do when encountering a specialty [can] affect whether they can imagine themselves therein" (Correll 1726). This reiterates that the jobs, obligations, and expectations that we show to young people matter. It also shows just how much gender inequality we tolerate, especially when it comes to high-level jobs like judges, and how this treatment impacts women and to the continuance of this cycle. People do not see women portrayed equally in these higher-level positions, so this inequality continues to be permitted. As studies show, this permissive attitude is demoralizing and could prevent women from realizing and pursuing their true interests or passions.

Antiquated Views from Those in Power

Interestingly, the ratio of men and women attending law school is very close to 50/50, while the representation of women in the judicial branch remains very low. At first glance, it seems puzzling why this might be. However, "across the globe, women judges report that an, 'old boys' club,' mentality surrounding judicial appointments poses a crucial barrier to entry in the legal profession, particularly in the higher courts," (Kalantry). This is the same mentality we see depicted often in movies and tv shows when the male character gets the job promotion over the woman character, though it is obvious she has worked harder, because the man is able to form that male bond and friendship with the bosses. This emphasizes how in judicial culture, it does not seem that a law degree and experience are enough to earn women the same respect as a man with the same credentials. For women to fill the roles of judges,

they must initially be hired and given the opportunity by someone else already in that position. If men are unwilling and stay unwilling to award women with these jobs, then nothing will ever be able to change. (sga has a heavy women influence in grade school but this is not reflected in congress)

It would seem that the culture surrounding these jobs is exclusively patriarchal. A survey done by the Task Force on Gender Bias for the Federal Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in the 1990s revealed that men and women have different opinions on where gender bias stems from. Findings show that, “female judges and lawyers believed that women are excluded from formal and informal networks that influence judicial selection, while male judges and lawyers generally believed that the gender composition of the judiciary was a consequence of merit-based decision-making” (Kalantry). These perceptions come from opposite ends of the spectrum, considering women believe that they have acquired all the necessary skills and knowledge it takes to be successful, yet they are held back due to the exclusive and demeaning mentality that surrounds their field. Those that are in the position to hire women, which is a pool predominantly consisting of men, believe that women just were not ambitious enough to achieve success at their same level. This ignorance of men to recognize the real problem of disparity in the legal profession just reemphasizes how big this problem really is and how much society still fails at attempting to solve it. Until it becomes a widely practiced and conscious effort to dismiss this display of a superiority complex existing within men in these jobs, women will not be able to reach their full potential or demonstrate their equal amount of qualification. This mentality is harmful because it allows the judicial system to stay stagnant in their beliefs and it conveys just how unwilling they are to improve their diversity as a legal force. This in turn leads to an ignorant and small-minded group of individuals making legal decisions. Evidently, those currently with the decision-making power follow old-fashioned and biased ways of thought, which in turn inhibits the judicial field’s social progress. There is no excuse for them to be harboring this viewpoint, especially when it is the court’s job to represent the people and they are still some of the few not recognizing this injustice.

Conclusion

Clearly this issue of gender disparity is a limitation that stems from our social culture and continues throughout the lives of both men and women. This stigma has an influence on the choices women make for their futures and eventually leads to unequal representation in places like higher level court positions. Nevertheless, these kinds of positions are what desperately need to be equal in order to justly serve the public. More efforts like, "The Barbie Judge Doll," are needed to make strides towards leveling out the mindsets of youth in this country, because that is where stereotyping and self-awareness begins. A solution I feel would be beneficial is a kind of elementary-level curriculum, in schools, that teaches kids history that makes sure to equally incorporate advancements made by men and women. Classroom lessons that stress how accomplishments made by each gender are one in the same could help engrain in young children that their gender has no indication of who they are meant to be, what kinds of goals they should be aiming to achieve, or how successful they should be. Along with this, it is crucial that parents also stick to these same ideals and raise their children in a way that does not classify them by their gender, nor or uses this as a determinate for what activities they encourage them to pursue as children. In order for this to occur, it takes our generation and even the ones older than us, to make efforts to dispose of any biases that have been ingrained into society as a whole and to become people that are open and accepting towards an equal opportunity lifestyle, even if that is not how it was once portrayed to us. Once these practices are acknowledged in higher level court positions, then we might be able to make strides toward a society that is a little more empathetic and well-rounded.

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Aristotle and Autism: Can Individuals with Autism Flourish?

Tory Martin

In this essay, I will evaluate Aristotle's exclusionary definition of happiness, or eudaimonia, in Nicomachean Ethics and how it relates to the disabled population, specifically people with autism. Aristotle's belief that individuals who are "ill-born" are excluded from obtaining a "character of happiness," leads to the conclusion that persons with disabilities may never reach their life's purpose, to be eudaimone (Aristotle 11). I intend to disprove this premise by validating the lives, happiness, and characters of people with disabilities, specifically autism, and thus proving that people with disabilities are neither stopped nor hindered from achieving eudaimonia. The long tradition of doubting, pitying, and marginalizing people with disabilities must come to an end, for their lives are as meaningful, fulfilled, and happy as anyone else's.

Introduction

Aristotle's virtue ethics in *Nicomachean Ethics* has laid a foundation for many ethical theorists since its birth. While Aristotle's ethical theory is a great aid in deciding how one may act virtuously and lead the good life, eudaimonia, it has many deficiencies. Primarily, his definition of eudaimonia is exclusionary towards any person with disability, leading one to the conclusion that disabled persons cannot achieve their life goal of eudaimonia. In this essay, I will prove that those with disabilities, specifically autism, are just as likely to achieve eudaimonia and flourish as non-disabled persons. To do this, I will evaluate how people with autism, through applied behavior analysis (ABA), are able to lead virtuous lives and thus allowing them to flourish in the eyes of Aristotle despite his previous disposition.

Aristotle's Definition of Flourishing

To begin, we must discover Aristotle's mean to differentiate between flourishing and non-flourishing lives. First, we must discern the unique function of a human in order to determine how to be the best human. Aristotle goes through various common answers to the question of human function until he concludes that human function is "activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason," for it is the only characteristic which sets apart humans from non-humans (Aristotle 9). The way in which we determine if a thing is functioning to its fullest

capacity, or flourishing, is through evaluating if it is carrying out its unique function well. For example, the best light is the one that shines the brightest due to it being the best functioning, or most light-giving. Since reason is the only distinguishing feature between humans and non-humans, it must be our purpose to carry out this function well. Thus, to determine if a human is flourishing, we must evaluate if the human is reasoning well, for Aristotle says “an excellent man is to [reason] well and finely” (Aristotle 9).

Aristotle determines that the best way to carry out our function of reason is to be eudaimon, commonly translated as having a life characterized by happiness and fulfillment. Eudaimonia is, according to Aristotle, the only good which is self-sufficient since it “makes a life choice worthy and lacking nothing” (Aristotle 8). Thus, it is through achieving eudaimonia that one has lived their life to their fullest potential and flourished.

Eudaimonia has many requirements in order for one to achieve it, such as leading a life of activity, having overall stability, good health, reasoning well, having friends and material goods, living in accord to virtue, being of good birth, and having leisure time. There exist “three types” of goods, “some called external, some goods of the soul, and others goods of the body” (Aristotle 10). In this essay we will focus on external goods, which includes having friends, material goods, being of good birth, and having leisure time, and what I will term internal goods, or the goods of the soul and body, which are leading a life of activity, having overall stability, good health, reasoning well, and living in accord to virtue.

It can be seen that eudaimonia “evidently also needs external goods,” thus these factors outside of one’s control can determine the level of flourishing that one will achieve (Aristotle 11). For example, a democratic socialist country, like Germany, will offer different levels of access to available material goods than an extremely capitalistic democracy like the United States. In the two countries, citizens, especially poorer citizens, have vastly different access to material goods such free health care, free or reduced higher education, and other safety net goods. Thus, the achievement of eudaimonia and flourishing is both directly related to the individuals and to society, since society can affect

the level of external goods one can have. Eudaimonia, which is a property of one's whole life or a "complete life," evidently requires many different factors to lead to its achievement (Aristotle 12).

Eudaimonia primarily requires the performance of actions that fulfill one's function as human, to reason. Aristotle defines these actions as virtuous. There exist two realms of virtue: "virtue of thought and virtue of character" (Aristotle 18). Virtues of character are "results from habit" in acting virtuously (Aristotle 18). To do such, one must choose the mean between excess and deficiency in action, such as being brave rather than being cowardly or rashly. In this example, acting cowardly is being deficient in bravery while acting rashly is having an excess of bravery, both of which are vices for not being the rational choice but "ruined by excess and deficiency" (Aristotle 20). One must continually act in the mean between vices to show a clear disposition for acting virtuously in order to develop a character of virtue. Next, it is through virtues of thought that one may differentiate the mean between excess and deficiency; for virtues of thought "arises and grows...from teaching" telling us truths about the world through intuition or scientific knowledge (Aristotle 18). It is together with virtues of thought, which determine what the mean action is, and virtues of character, which is the habituation of acting virtuously, that one may flourish.

Aristotle's definition of flourishing has commonly been thought to exclude people with disabilities, for his belief that one cannot "altogether have the character of [eudaimonia] if... [one is] ill-born" (Aristotle 11). Aristotle believes that anyone who is "deform[ed] in his capacity for virtue" will not "be able to achieve [eudaimonia]" for they will not be able to perform the necessary actions to have a virtue of character and thought (Aristotle 12). One can see how it is hard to imagine the possibility for someone with autism to flourish, or achieve eudaimonia, according to Aristotle's definition of this. However, I will prove that through new, innovative intervention and treatment, people with autism are not constrained by their diagnosis and can lead a life of flourishing just like a non-disabled person.

Defining Autism and ABA

Before evaluating whether people with autism do, in fact, have the

ability to flourish and achieve eudaimonia, we must define autism and its effects. As Todd M. Furman and Alfred Tuminello, Jr. in “Aristotle, Autism, and Applied Behavior Analysis” state, people with autism “usually suffer intellectual deficits...and...grave deficiencies in social interaction and communication skills” (Furman and Tuminello 256). Further, people with autism typically have “intense and atypical interests,” leading people with autism to be typified as living in excess and deficiencies due to their extreme interests and disinterests (Furman and Tuminello 256). This simple definition of autism may not cover every symptom of the disability, but it proves sufficient for my purpose.

Patients who begin treatment with ABA have had promising results in curbing these characteristics and have even been said to achieve “a remission of sorts” (Furman and Tuminello 258). ABA works on behavior modification through manipulation of a person’s environment. Social norms are taught explicitly to those being treated, since autism limits one’s ability to identify the social cues and norms that exist around them. ABA educates the patient sustainably through teaching the patient to learn from their environment outside of their ABA lessons, thus allowing the patient to independently engage in social learning. ABA has been seen to allow the patient to “proceed[] to develop in parallel with his typically developing peers” after treatment has stopped, consequently allowing the patient to be socially and intellectually the same as their peers with “47% [of patients having] reached normal ranges of IQ, adaptive skills, and social skills” (Furman and Tuminello 258, 259). ABA is seen to rid patients of their symptoms of autism in multiple replicated studies, therefore being characterized as ‘in remission’ of their disability.

ABA and Flourishing

As we have seen, ABA teaches patients the key knowledge and mental processes needed to curb the intellectual and social deficiencies that the disability characterizes. Henry D. Schlinger, Jr. in “Behavior Analysis and the Good Life” uses ABA techniques to apply it to the development of virtues of character and thought, thus proving that ABA goes beyond teaching basic social and intellectual skills and teaches the essential virtues that are required for one to flourish. As Schlinger points out, both ABA and Aristotle’s flourishing have at least one thing in

common, they both place an “emphasis on behavior or action” which is crucial to the advancement of people with autism and the flourishing of individuals (Schlinger 268). With ABA, patients are explicitly taught the social and intellectual skills that they would otherwise lack while teaching them how to continue to develop their skills after treatment, making them self-sufficient in the expansion of their knowledge.

Since virtues of thought can be learned, they can easily be taught to individuals with the assistance of ABA. ABA reorients patients towards the actions that are conducive to flourishing, such as teaching them how to discover the golden mean in actions, thus allowing patients to accurately identify virtues and avoid vices. This lets individuals with autism to no longer be characterized as being excessive or deficient in their actions like they previously were. To illustrate, ABA can teach individuals with autism social skills and adaptive skills which can greatly improve their ability to form and maintain relationships. Body language, such as eye contact and personal space, can be explicitly taught to individuals with autism to allow them to pick up on social cues and behave accordingly. This aids individuals with autism in the formation and maintenance of relationships, which is required to achieve a flourishing life and eudaimonia, because they have a greater understanding of the people and behaviors around them and are able to respond in a manner that will be well received.

Identifying the mean between vices further allows individuals to develop virtues of character. Like previously discussed, virtues of character are habituated, they do not come naturally to individuals. Due to this, individuals with autism that are being treated with ABA are no longer disadvantaged in developing virtues of character. ABA’s assistance in identifying and explaining to patients the golden mean in actions, such as discussing how to be brave without being rash or cowardly, lets patients with autism more easily practice virtuous actions. A kind of toolkit is provided to individuals being treated with ABA that allows them to achieve what may have been beyond reach prior to treatment, namely, a flourishing life. ABA guides patients towards the actions that are advantageous to flourishing, thus allowing them to have the opportunity to achieve eudaimonia.

Some point out that Aristotle’s definition of flourishing not only

accounts for performing the right action but also requires the actor to feel rightly about their action. Nancy Potter in “Doing Right and Being Good” points out that “internalization of correct emotional states is imperative to Aristotelian virtue theory” (Potter 264). Potter believes that ABA teaches individuals how to “cope better in the world” rather than how to live virtuously, for, according to her, ABA can only manipulate external factors in action and not internal factors, i.e. feeling rightly (Potter 264). Thus, these changes are “external to the sort of person one is” and does not constitute as flourishing for it is not equivalent to the “deep internal structure of virtue” that Aristotle emphasizes (Potter 264). Potter concludes that ABA can allow people with autism to lead better lives, however not flourishing lives.

However, Potter does not understand ABA’s true definition of environmental manipulation. ABA “structure[s] the environment so as to increase the likelihood of virtuous behavior” by altering the environment both internally and externally (Schlinger 269). Schlinger points out that the scientific conception of environment is “both outside and inside the individual because it consists of *all* stimuli that can affect behavior” (Schlinger 269). Therefore, Potter overlooks the fact that ABA also manipulates a person’s internal stimuli to behavior, such as emotion, which Potter pointed out is very important to living virtuously. Thus, emotional development does not limit patients treated with ABA, for ABA works on the advancement of patient’s emotions towards actions.

Moving Farther: Identity and Flourishing

Moving further, to be conducive to flourishing of people with disabilities, we must change the environment – the society – to allow for the viewing of those with disabilities as not defective, but having a unique identity. It is all too common in our society to devalue the ideas, thoughts, emotions, and contributions of people with disabilities, seeing them as less human and less important. This precludes many individuals with disabilities from receiving the external goods necessary for flourishing, such as acquiring friendships, sufficient resources, and education. We must, as a society, change our treatment of people with disabilities to allow them to flourish free from societal constraints.

In doing this, I believe we must not see people with disabilities as people who *had* or *could have had* able bodies or minds, for this leads to the pitying and doubting of people with disabilities. Conversely, we must allow them to have their own identity as a disabled person.

The creation of their identity allows for a greater ability to flourish, for the individual is allowed to live in agreement, rather than conflict, with their body or mind. By this I mean that an individual is not seen as defective for having an extra chromosome or being born without arms, but as individuals who bring unique characteristics, abilities, and identities to the table. Rather than being brought down by their disability, as they are now, they are lifted up by it. Allowing for individuals to have an identity in their disability, in whatever way they wish to express it, will further allow for them to flourish more. They will be able to flourish at a higher rate because there will not be societal constraints on these individuals, such as segregating mentally disabled and non-disabled students in schools and forcing a feeling of pity and sadness onto disabled persons. Getting rid of the stigma of disability will allow for people with disabilities to achieve the same external goods as those without disability, such as education, a job, and relationships. Without acknowledging that individuals can have a valid identity in their disability, we cause individuals with a disability into the margins of our society as defective humans, precluding them from receiving external goods. The creation of a valid identity in disability will create a nurturing environment that will allow people with disabilities to pursue eudaimonia at similar rates to non-disabled persons.

Some may see ABA as a treatment which suppresses an individual's identification with their disability or makes them feel ashamed of their disability. However, ABA merely provides individuals with autism a means to better interact and be a member of the non-disabled world. ABA teaches individuals with autism how to better live within the mean of extreme vices, which they often previously struggled with maintaining. This does not teach an individual to be ashamed of their disability, but empowers them to successfully interact and live in a world that does not immediately make sense to them. ABA allows individuals with autism to be successfully integrated into non-disabled populations, such as classrooms in school. Thus, it is a way for the ABA providers and

supporters to join with people with autism to raise them out of a diminished status in society. To argue that ABA is a way in which we suppress the identity of people with autism or make them feel ashamed of their disability is like saying those with cochlear implants are being suppressed or made to feel shameful for being deaf. Rather, it is a tool to empower the individual and allow the individual to easier obtain the goods necessary for eudaimonia.

This reframing of how we as a society look at individuals with disabilities will allow disabled persons the ability to achieve the external goods which were once not granted to them. A way in which this can be implemented is changing our vocabulary from handicapped to *handicapable*. This rhetoric expresses that while individuals with disabilities are different and have their own identity, they are not held back nor hindered by their disability but *capable* of participating in society in a meaningful way. When society shifts its mind frame in such a way, individuals with disabilities are able to be seen as equal, as handicapable, thus qualified to have friendships and leisure time, gain material goods, and be seen as being of good birth.

Changing our rhetoric from handicapped to handicapable forces society to see, or at least address, individuals with disabilities as being persons capable of the same goods that an able bodied or minded person can achieve. Thus, people with disabilities are encouraged to join the workforce, get an education, maintain meaningful relationships, and are granted leisure time. For example, it will be easier for an individual with a disability to make and keep friends if society no longer looks at them as defective beings to be pitied but as autonomous and capable people.

I believe it is of utmost importance to ensure that our environment and treatment of all people, especially people with disabilities, is conducive to their flourishing and achieving eudaimonia. Aristotle argues that eudaimonia is the ultimate goal for humans yet he attempts to systematically exclude entire populations of humans. ABA proves that people with disabilities, specifically autism, are able to flourish and achieve eudaimonia at outstanding rates. ABA is not enough to allow for people with disabilities to flourish, we must also allow for people with disabilities to be valued and seen as capable equals, not as defective or damaged. Through allowing people with disabilities to establish their

identity in relation to their body and mind, they are able to flourish due to societal constraints being lifted. Further, changing our vocabulary from handicapped to handicapable forces society to address people with disabilities with respect as capable people.

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Against the Proper: Gendered Pronouns and their Institutionalized Confessive Ritual

Jake Donohue

Within many contemporary institutions, constituents are required, as an introductory measure, to state the third-person singular gendered pronouns they want to be referred to as by others. This introductory ritual serves by design to create an inclusive setting free of gender misrecognition. However, the ritual's enactment yields numerous detrimental consequences. Utilizing poststructuralist philosophers like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Vicki Kirby, this project elucidates how institutionalized pronoun profession leads to restrictions both in how one self-conceives of one's own gender and how one interprets the gender of others. Accordingly, said restrictions problematically beget forsaken marginalities and stifling discursive limitations.

Introduction

What was at a time seemingly intuitive has now drifted into the realm of the obscure. Within an institutional context, it used to be that the proper third-person gendered pronoun to use for a person could be simply derived through a passing glance of the body. In the present, however, the hasty assumption of another's pronouns in this manner is no longer admissible. Obtaining knowledge of gendered pronouns is now accomplished via the deployment of a professive ritual. Across a myriad of institutional settings, the university and the workplace being the most prominent of these, we are directly prompted to both declare our own proper pronouns as well as respect and utilize the pronouns declared by others (Yarmosky). The impetus behind this shift from observation to profession stems from the advocacy of those seeking to establish a more acceptive atmosphere for transgender individuals. By the logic of these advocates, several factors necessitate a prompting of us to state our pronouns. For instance, a person's gendered pronouns cannot be definitively known through meager outward appearances, making it imperative to provide a means by which these pronouns can be brought into clarity (Spade, 57). Furthermore, a failure to utilize a person's proper pronouns is an act of misgendering, an act itself characterized as psychologically harmful (Kapusta, 504). Given the extreme marginality of trans people, it is apt then that measures be taken

as to eradicate this harm within institutional sectors. Now, by a surface assessment, the endeavors of these advocates come off as soundly noble and progressive. Accordingly, the ritualization of pronoun declaration itself also comes off as a beneficial practice. However, this shallow yet positive assessment is grossly erroneous, and this is due to two reasons. First, the stating of our pronouns compels us to articulate a gendered positioning that is both externally and internally restricted. By this positional restriction, the ritual fails in its function to protect those of the greatest gendered marginality. Second, the framing of these stated pronouns as being the “proper” ones to use for whomever initially declared them yields a stifling univocality restricting of alternative interpretation. By this interpretive restriction, institutions come to control the parameters whereby gender is conceptualized.¹

The Two Phases

Before articulating the pertinent problems surrounding acts of pronoun declaration, it is vital to establish both why gendered pronouns are a focal point of trans advocacy and how the ritual of stating these pronouns operates. By the conceptions of trans advocates, one’s own proper position of gender derives strictly from self-conception. Others accordingly are to referentially abide by and respect this position. As explained by Lal Zimman,

While the dominant system for gender attribution enables – even requires – that people make assumptions about one another’s gender identities in the process of assigning gendered language, trans people treat each individual as the ultimate source of authority on their own gender and thus the determiner of what language others should use (92).

In the English language, third-person singular pronouns that point to humans are inherently referential to a gender (e.g. ‘he’ references one who is a man, ‘she’ references one who is a woman) (McConnell-Ginet, 91). Further affirming the individual as the determiner of what referential language others should use, trans advocates devised the conception of ‘proper pronouns’. As defined, proper pronouns are the set

1. It must be prefaced that this analysis is working within the context of the English language, as it is within this same context that institutions are prompting the declaration of English gendered pronouns.

of gender pronouns an individual has selected as correct for others to use when referring to said individual in the third person (Nicolazzo, 169).

On account of both advocacy aimed at their reform and their relatively new prerogative to provide support for the marginalized, institutions presently facilitate a professive ritual whereby the proper pronouns of all belonging constituents come into clarity (Yarmosky). The ritual can be broken down into two phases, these being the 'phase of annunciation' and the 'phase of preservation'. Occurring first, the phase of annunciation operates as follows: whenever constituents give introductions in an institutional setting, be it a classroom, an office, or any other space of organized collusion, each are prompted to state the third-pronouns singular pronouns they wish others to refer to them as. In doing so, the proper pronouns of every individual become publicly elucidated to every other individual, preventing the referential use of an improper pronoun towards another by accident. The phase of annunciation serves for many trans constituents as a necessity. Trans advocates conceptualize both one's self-conceived gender position and corresponding pronouns as not readily evident by outward appearances (Dea, 103). Thus, an open stating of proper pronouns allows for a positional disambiguation otherwise not possible without the deployment of the professive ritual.² The following succinct message from Dean Spade to educators demonstrates concretely how the phase of annunciation commences in the institutional setting of the university: "When facilitating a group discussion, ask people to identify their pronouns when they go around and do introductions. This will allow everyone in the room the chance to self-identify and to get each others' pronouns right the first time" (60). After all constituents have stated their pronoun set, the ritual moves into the phase of preservation. While the duration of previous phase lasts only for the moments of initial introductions, this next phase contrastingly persists throughout the rest of the constituents' time as organized together in the institutional setting. Operationally, the phase of preservation validates the conception that each person's professed pronouns are the strictly correct ones to use in

2. Those of a non-binary positioning particularly rely on the phase of annunciation due to their proper pronoun sets consisting of 'neopronouns' (e.g. 'ze/hir', 'xe/xem', and 'ey/em'), singular third-person human-referential gender-neutral pronouns vastly unfamiliar to wider public (LaCarrubba, 246).

reference to whomever professed them, and does so through designating all improper pronoun utterances as *infractions of institutional guidelines* (Spade, 58). In other words, one cannot use a differently gender-referential pronoun for another that deviates from what that other self-conceives as proper. This phase of preservation serves as a proactive measure against misgendering, acts that gender an individual in way unaligned with or disaffirming of the individual's own self-conceived gender positioning. Trans advocates characterize misgendering, the disregarding of proper pronouns included, as inherently violative of those subject to it (Kapusta, 502). Across these two phases, thus, the institutionally facilitated ritual works first through annunciation to make known our pronouns to all others, followed by guaranteeing those others continually and consistently reiterate what we have announced.

Annunciation as Confessional

Having explained proper pronouns and the ritual by which they are publicly brought to light, a critique may be put forth that uncovers the grievously problematic aspects of pronoun profession. The first site of contention lies within the ritual's phase of annunciation. As previously explained, institutions prompt the stating of pronouns towards an end of clarification. By the completion of the ritual, the pronoun sets of all persons present ought to be openly established. However, there are consequences to this unambiguity, for out of a clarification of gendered pronouns comes a further imposed solidification of gender itself. In order to substantiate this further imposition, it is critical to draw upon Michel Foucault's concept of the confession. Foucault defines the concept as follows:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile (*History of Sexuality* 61).

To extrapolate upon this definition, the ritual of confession is a means by which authoritative institutions extract personal information from their

controlled constituents via said constituents engaging in the act of self-profession. It must be noted that these confessing constituents do not disclose this information off the basis of their own volition; they are thoroughly compelled to do the institution and are typically faced with consequences if non-compliant (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 59). Ultimately, the institutions' ends to the enactment of this ritual varies based on the setting, but in a general sense the confession serves to impose the contextualization of a so-called "inner truth" within the confessor. This truth, however, is not reflective of some actual hidden personal essence; rather, the articulative process *itself* manifests this truth. Put differently, this truth is an institutional product developed out of the very act of confession. To confess is, to quote from Foucault, to be "seeking a fundamental relation to the truth, not simply in oneself, ... but in the self-examination that yields, through multiple fleeting impressions, the basic certainties of consciousness" (*History of Sexuality* 59-60).

When examined through a Foucauldian lens, it becomes clear that the ritual of pronoun declaration is a contemporary rendition of this idea of the confession. The shared dynamics are astoundingly aligned. First, these third-person pronouns are inherently descriptive of one's own self, thus in being articulated they are a discursive exteriorization of the personally derivative. Second, this externalization is not spurred by an articulator's own desire to elucidate personal information, but rather by an authoritative institutional procedure that requires this information be articulated. Third and finally, the act of articulating one's pronouns ultimately *reifies that which is confessed as a truth of one's own inner self*. This last point cannot be stressed enough, for it is the crux of what problematizes the entire phase of annunciation. For Foucault, the confession is significantly characterized as "a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it" (*History of Sexuality* 62). In the context of pronoun profession, or perhaps more appropriately now confession, this intrinsic modification takes the form of solidifying a true and proper gender. To respond to the outside inquisition of one's own proper pronouns is also inevitably to undergo an internal questioning of the proper positioning warranting how one is

to accurately respond. One thinks to oneself, ‘I am being asked what pronouns are proper to use for me, what pronoun set accurately refers to what *I am?*’, and it is in the declarative moment that follows from this meditation that one’s decided position becomes not only publicly clarified as by an institutional prompting, but also internally solidified as by an institutional imposition.

What yields from this process of aforementioned solidification is an apotheosizing of gender to a place of omnipresence. In the confines of the institutions that elicit pronouns, the gender of all constituents must not only be unambiguously clear at the level of the interpersonal, but be just as unwaveringly stable at the intrapersonal level as well. One can be anything: a woman, a man, binarily or non-binarily trans; but one must *be something* and that something must *be known*. If a gender positioning is of non-specificity—be it ambiguous, undecided, indifferently considered, rapidly fluctuating beyond conception, or absent entirely—it is ultimately untenable from the vantage of the institution. Thusly, despite the enforcement of pronoun declaration being intended towards promoting a wider breadth of gendered inclusivity, said enforcement’s entrenchment within an over-solidified conception of gender leads only to greater positional bondage.

The Preservation of True Gender

Having critiqued the phase of annunciation, our focus may now shift towards the next critical area: the phase of preservation. While the phase of annunciation within the ritual serves towards an end of gender disambiguation, the function of preservation serves towards an end of gender univocalization. As already iterated, pronoun sets are not just to be spoken once as prompted and then disregarded in all future instances. They are to be repeated back to their initial speaker continually. Accordingly, the internal and external stabilization of gender facilitated through this speaking are also rendered not merely as momentary, but are designed by the institution to be active within all interactions that may occur between the constituents under its domain. These measures for consistency are unsurprising. Given how gender is framed by institutions as a truth of the inner self, it is only fitting that this truth be treated as such (i.e. as correct, actual, proper, etc.). Thus,

there is for each constituent a singular true pronoun set; a set confessed ritualistically and reflective of a true gender, that, as preserved via the institution, must be univocally and exclusively utilized when we reference others and when others reference ourselves.

Like the aspect of telling, however, the aspect of preservation is not without its perilous attributes; for out of this enforcement of univocality based upon the idea of a true gender comes both a closing off of all alternative interpretability and an eradication of any possibility for gendered multiplicity within constituents. The musings of Foucault prove enriching once again in the addressing of these issues; specifically the philosopher's interrogation of 'true sex', a product of modernity of which the contemporary concept of true gender is but a twisted recapitulation. At the center of Foucault's analysis of true sex stands the figure of the hermaphrodite, a sexual emblem of categorical ambiguity, simultaneity, multiplicity, and fluctuation. Under the regime of institutional modernity, this figure's plethora of destabilizing qualities were not taken as acceptably integratable. Accordingly, institutions sought to neutralize the chaotic implications of the hermaphrodite via the universal imposition of an essentialized true sex upon their constituents. As Foucault details, the onset of true sex meant that "everybody was to have one and only one sex. Everybody was to have his or her primary, profound, determined and determining sexual identity; as for the elements of the other sex that might appear, they could only be accidental, superficial, or even quite simply illusionary" ("Introduction" viii). Specifically pertaining to the hermaphrodite, the process by which a true sex was distinguished and determined from a false one was though a medical examination of the body. Medical practitioners of these institutions "had, as it were, to strip the body of its anatomical deceptions and discover the one true sex behind organs that might have put on the forms of the opposite sex. For someone who knew how to observe and to conduct an examination, these mixtures sex were no more disguises of nature" (Foucault, "Introduction" viii-ix). By the result of this examination, thusly, the once categorically elusive hermaphrodite was swiftly ripped from the realm of the uncertain and subsequently locked into a stabilized position of an institutionally comprehensible true sex.

‘True sex’ outlined, the question arises as to how specifically ‘true gender’ acts as its recapitulation. The answer lies in the institutional functionality of univocalization shared between these two concepts. In both the establishment of true sex and the establishment of true gender is an attempt by institutions to eradicate all multiplicity and ambiguity along the respective axes of gender and sex by enforcing an absolute positional oneness within the totality of their constituents. However, being concerned with different objects, there are some notably disparate dynamics at play between the administration of true sex and its recapitulated counterpart. The determination and designation of true sex stems from a direct investigation-based anatomical judgement made by the institution itself. Foucault observes that in said judgement being facilitated strictly by the institution alone, all capacity for positional self-selection is ultimately stripped from its designated target. To quote the philosopher, “It was no longer up to the individual to decide which sex he wished to belong individually or socially. Rather, it was up to the expert to say which sex nature had chosen for him and to which society must consequently ask him to adhere” (“Introduction” ix). In contrast to the operations of true sex, neither the judgement of an institutionally sourced expert nor the deprivation of personal choice facilitates an enforcement of true gender. Given how the anatomical is, from an institutional vantage, a non-factor of gender positioning, a thorough analysis of the body is an entirely uninformative procedure for its determination. This is not to say, however, that there is nothing present along the axis of gender analogous to the hermaphrodite causing similar disruptions and destabilizations, far from it. Before subjugation to the professive ritual of disambiguation, *all constituents are themselves hermaphroditic*. In the raptorial eyes of the institution, they embody a categorical position itself thoroughly multiple, potentially fluctuating, and without elucidation. But rather than utilizing a tactical logic akin to that used for the enforcement of true sex, where a stable position is prescribed at the expense of the constituent’s choice, the institution neutralizes these new hermaphrodites of gender through the very *affirmation* of whatever position the constituent chooses. Be not mistaken, however, for the inclusion of choice here as a factor does not necessitate a more liberal regime than the one of true sex; a mere shadowy exchange

of roles is all that has occurred. Analysis remains key to the solidification of category, but while before under the context of true sex said analysis was conducted by an institutionally representative expert, it is now under the context of true gender conducted by the constituents *themselves*. To clarify, this specific analysis takes the form of the phase of annunciation in its entirety, wherein the constituent must make a conclusion of the isness of the self. No longer then is truth sourced in one's corporeal shapes by the judgement of an intrusive other, but in the recesses of one's existence through an act of self-reflection. Ultimately then for the institutions, both the seeking of a true gender and the seeking of a true sex have the same aims: to establish a rigorous univocalization within all constituents and to erase any enigmatic cases that might undermine said establishment.

The Preservation of Corporeographical Closure

There is, however, one more noteworthy difference between these two regimes of truth beyond the interrogative focus of their positional analyses: the demanded expectations of social relationality. Upon receiving a true sex, the hermaphrodite was not solely to integrate what was designated as an actuality of the body, this alone would be utterly inconsequential. Rather, the binding to a position necessitated the designee was also to thoroughly conform to said position's social expectations (Foucault, "Introduction" ix). To be of a true sex was to *live* as that true sex, and to live in such a manner as to submit to the approved sexual standards of a collective other. However, under the designative context of true gender, the polarity of this self-other relationality undergoes a reversal. Institutions discontinue the demand that the constituent conform to the social expectations of a prescribed position; their new demand is that the constituent expect the social *itself* to conform to the position prescribed. In other words, that all others univocally adhere to the true self birthed from a restricting act of confessional reflection. Needless to say, pronoun usage is of the utmost relevance to this demand of gender extended to the social realm, hence the framing of "properness" to what is declared and the implementation of institutional measures utilized to preserve said declarations. But from of expectations results a dire expunction. If the other gazes upon the

body of a constituent and conceives a positioning of gender divergent from that of said constituent's own self-conception, then that other is at best of a mistaken understanding, and at worst noxiously bigoted. Solely through the dictations of each constituent can a proper gender be known. Thus, the corporeal is concerningly occluded, negated as it were as a readable surface pregnant with gendered translatability; a *bodily text* closed off from interpretation.

Before evaluating the problematic consequences this closing, it is salient that the dynamics of this 'bodily text' be first explained.

Regardless of any institutional disapproval or countermeasures, the site of the body itself cannot be barred from radiating positions of gender. As articulated by Linda Martín Alcoff in an analysis of gender and race,

The social identities of race and gender operate eluctably through their bodily markers ... They are most definitely physical, marked on and through the body, lived as material experience, visible as surface phenomena, and determinant of economic and political status. Social identities cannot be adequately analyzed without an attentiveness to the role of the body and of the body's visible identity (102).

Alcoff's assessment, however, while predominantly faultless, contains one minute misconstruction. For the philosopher, the constitutive physicality of the body ultimately situates positions of gender outside the pure sphere of language. Thus, Alcoff describes gender as "[not] some kind of linguistic rather than physical thing" (102).

The thought of Vicki Kirby proves immensely applicable to justifying this assertion of inescapability. By Kirby's thinking, the body exists as a sort of text called a 'corporeography'. Said text engenders the body's visibly exuded positionings alongside simultaneously constituting the very physicality of the body itself. To quote the philosopher, "Through the neologism, 'corporeography', I tried to suggest that representation is 'sensible' in that biology is not a supplementary ingredient to be included or excluded. The body is more than a mere visitor to the scene of writing: the body *is* the drama of its

3. Emphasis Kirby's; Noteworthy, 'biology' as utilized in this passage signifies beyond the bare body as stripped of all its cultural modifications. As Elizabeth Grosz, an associate of Kirby's, states, "Procedures of corporeal inscription do not simply adorn or do not simply adorn or or add to a body that is given through biology; they help constitute the very biological organization of the subject" (142).

own remarkability” (154). Reality, and especially the reality of the body, is *itself* a zone predicated upon the significations of writing. In this zone, “language bursts the boundaries of its conventional articulation, engendering a reality whose inscriptive production implicates the ideological with/in the physical” (Kirby, 52). And it is here that the conception of ‘there is no outside of text’ comes to the fore. In writing having seeped into the physical’s very formulation, the totality of significations upon this level of the physical assumes an unvanquishable status as all-engulsively textual. That there is no outside of text, in Kirby’s own words, “articulates a *différential* of space/time, an inseparability between representation and substance that rewrites causality. It is as if the very tissue of substance, the ground of Being, is this mutable intertext—a “writing” that both circumscribes and exceeds the conventional divisions of nature and culture” (61). Continuing on to relate this textual rendering of the physical back to corporeography, “If we translate this into what is normally regarded as the matter of the body, then ... [t]his would mean that the body is unstable—a shifting scene of inscription” (Kirby, 61). Through the ideas put forth by Kirby, thusly, the corporeal may be framed as a bodily text operating, via a tandem consideration of Alcoff’s conceptions, as visually indicative of gendered positioning.

With the workings of the bodily text sufficiently outlined, we may now approach both the problem of institutions striving to close the corporeographical as an apt site of gender interpretation and the consequences that manifest accordingly. As previously articulated, institutional stipulation grants each constituent unwavering authority over which pronouns they are to be addressed by, and hence which gender position others are to properly understand them occupying. Such a granting serves an elevative function, one though which the constituent becomes crowned into a place of apocryphal supremacy. For the institution to endow the constituent with a sense of primacy over what stands as the correct reading of gender for their bodily text inevitably aggrandizes them to the Barthesian figure of the capital-‘a’ Author. The Author, metaphorized by Roland Barthes as a patriarch and a revered god, ordains interpretable meaning be limited within the texts of its assumed jurisdiction to singularly that which conforms with a self-

conceived intention (146, 160). All readings encroaching beyond this limitation are deemed invalid and unacceptable. Thus, for any text of an Author there is but one true interpretation: the Author's own. As Barthes states, "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (147).

To ordain, however, is not to control. That this patriarchal deity declares a restriction upon textual interpretability is considerable only in so far as the limiting of interpretation itself falls within the deity's realm of mastery. But by no means is this here the case; for "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes, 146). What is key here in this passage, what bars the Author from controlling and singularizing meaning, lies in the configuration of this space of multi-dimensionality. Within one dimension, that literal surface zone of inscription itself, the weavings of writing amalgamate and juxtapose contiguously as to form a tissue of significations. However, while indeed said weavings necessitate a text's very existence, any capacity to generate meaning in this particular zone is an utter impossibility. In order to find meaning, we must enter an entirely different dimension all together: the dimension of the reader. Here, those blendings and clashings of writing gravitate beyond contiguous surface inscriptions into a diverged space effervescent with cognized reassemblings. This space is the readerly subject. These reassemblings, the subject's textual interpretations. As Barthes iterates on this dimension:

A text is made of multiple writings, ... entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is *the reader*, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination (148).

In text departing from its origin and surging into a readerly space profuse in a multitude of meanings, the Author's supposed power of limitation is shown thus as fraudulent, as a mere front erected in attempt to close off the writing from an uncontrollable proliferation of alternative interpretations.

The elevated constituent-Author of true gender is no exception here. They are equally bankrupt of this limitative power to control how their bodily text is read by others, despite what institutions demand of social relationality to the contrary. In synthesizing Barthes' conceptions with those put forth by Kirby and Allcoff, the totalized problem of the interpretive restriction of gender comes into clarity. Gender operates, recalling Alcoff, as a visible phenomena perceptually present at the site of the physical body, which, as corporeographically framed, is itself textual. Being simultaneously visually accessible and constituted as text, one comes to engage in the gendering of a visible body through the process of a reading of that body. But as Kirby stresses, the bodily text is characterized as ultimately *unstable*; unstable in the Barthesian sense that its reading yields a diversity of potentially contradicting meanings. Hence, from the body one cannot perceive an unflinchingly consistent and universally singular positionality of gender, *for within the bodies of all abides an interpretive possibility towards gender multiplicity*. Expectedly, institutions toil rigorously to combat this radical multiplicity from disturbing the desired solidity and univocality of gender within their controlled constituents. Those controlled are told to demand aligning recognition from the other, are bestowed as Authors a falsehood of self-superiority, and are necessitated to conceptualize within all a true gender exclusively utilizable as proper. Furthermore, even if the body of a constituent does signify multiple genders that deviate from a true gender, institutions, following modernity's treatment of the multiple at the site of the hermaphrodite as described by Foucault, debases such significations as mere illusions. The mandate remains that, even in the face of these illusions, one must limit one's interpretation to match the constituent's singularized self-conception. One must still give respect to the proper. Yet as Barthes declares, the textual warrants no respect in relation to its patriarchal progenitor: "As for the Text, it reads without the inscription of the [Authorial] Father.... Hence no vital 'respect' is due to the text: it can be broken; ... it can be read without the guarantee of its father" (161). The corporeographical exuding of gender multiplicity then occurs not through a presence of lesser illusions in subservience to a dominating true gender—one that alone is worthy of respect. Rather, no possibly interpretable gender holds the privileged status of being

inherently more 'true' than any other, regardless of its being institutional sanctioned or Authorially self-conceived. Hence, for constituents there is no 'proper gender'. No one position stands above all perceivable others as that which must be unwaveringly respected without question.

Given this ultimate invalidity of a proper gender, it follows that there is no valid conception of a proper pronoun set. In whatever referential gendered utterance emerges in response to one's reading of another's corporeography, be it aligned with the other's self-conception of gender or not, the pronoun uttered operates as inherently referentially viable by default. Otherwise, it would not have emerged in the first place. The confessional ritual's aspect of preservation primarily aims to restrict the onset of this unrestrained viability of gender referentiality. Following their post-confession subjectivation into a true gender, wherein one's professed pronouns become expected as unvaryingly reiterable, the constituent becomes subsequently barred in the inverse via an institutional closing off of all bodily texts from alternative interpretation. In other words, institutions deprive the constituent of their faculty to read the gendered corporeography of the other and accordingly obtain from it a third-person pronoun; now only through the verification of the other's true gender can a valid pronoun be obtained. Thusly, just as the phase of annunciation for the confessional ritual imposes a restrictive gender solidification under a pretense of broadened inclusivity, so too the aspect of preservation imposes a restriction on gender interpretation under the sinister guise of protection.

Conclusion (Against the Proper)

Having articulated in full the critique of the institutionalized ritual of pronoun professment, we conclude in detailing the *why* of this critique. Through the ritual's act of telling, institutions aim to eliminate all variations of gender non-specificity among the totality of their constituents. By consequence of this aim, constituents who, as self-conceptualized, do inhabit such grey zones of non-specificity find themselves under the pressure of an institutional apparatus utterly intolerant towards whatever falls outside of social and subjectivized stability. Thus is the first impetus for this critique: the necessitating of a true gender for all constituents neglects the acknowledgement of those

stationed at the most extreme margins of gender positioning; those for whom gender cannot be discursively self-exteriorized without there inherently occurring a coercive limitation. Poignantly ironic, for institutions to ignore these cases of extreme marginality completely undermines the deployment of the confessional ritual, as its establishment was for the very sake of protecting those in the most marginalized positions of gender in the first place. However, this intolerance of the most marginalized generates complications exceeding beyond issues directly impactful upon said margin. It is here where the phase of preservation becomes relevant. A self-positioning outside the boundaries of gender stability does not close off the corporeographical from its gendered signifying capacity. It, like the bodily text of one stably self-positioned, presents itself and its meanings as readable to others, regardless of one's own self-conceived understanding. What makes the corporeography of the non-specifically positioned so different from the stably positioned, however, pertains to the institution's incapacity to relegate its significations to the status of illusion. While said positional assumption of extreme marginality is nonetheless self-conceived, a constituent who does so still ultimately rejects the univocality of a true gender. True gender lacking, the constituent cannot take on the apocryphal role of the Author-God. With the constituent free then of all grandiose Authorial jurisdiction, their positioning cannot serve to establish a proper pronoun set. But the corporeography of the ambiguous still signifies gender, and from its reading alone can one find a set of pronouns. The bodily text being the only locus from which to derive pronouns, no other locus eclipses its significations as a properly legitimate or non-illusionary source.

This incapacity to delegitimize of corporeography of the non-specifically positioned fatally disrupts the phase of preservation's impositions. Nothing inherently distinguishes the bodily text of those stabilized within a true gender from those lacking such stabilization. In other words, non-specifically self-positioned constituents look no different from ones specifically positioned. On account of this indistinguishability, the derivation of pronouns through corporeographical reading works beyond situations of interacting with with the non-specific. Rather, the faculty of reading comes into

interactional effect *indiscriminately*, as its application works no different in the presence of a bodily text of one lacking specificity than it does of one positioned under a true gender. Corporeographical significations accordingly start to compete with the products of the confessional ritual as a source of gender origination. In counter to this threatening multiplicity of sources, institutions both refuse the allowance of non-specific self-positioning entirely and close off constituent corporeographies from non-Authorially sanctioned interpretations. Thus is the second impetus for this critique: in institutions closing off the reading of gender at the site of the bodily text, *so too do they close off the faculty of reading from the possibility of theoretical analysis*. The singularized legitimacy of a true gender relegates what yields from corporeographical reading as mere illusion, an illusion one must circumvent to find the deeper, proper understanding of gender. But such a relegation entails the neglect of reading's own dynamics. No longer are questions permitted like, 'what is it about certain corporeal textual configurations that elicit different referential utilizations of gendered pronouns?' or 'how might alternative readings of one's corporeography lead to alternative conceptualizations of one's gender positioning?'. Institutions snuff all inquiries that challenge the confessional ritual's enforcement of unambiguity and univocality. Most disturbing in this restriction of inquiry concerns the fact that the institutional settings where this restriction is most vigorously enforced, these being humanities and liberal arts departments at universities, operate as the very sites wherein new theoretical schemes of gender are discursively produced. Thus, to close off of the faculty of reading from analysis leads to the suppression of any scholarship with the potential to radically dislodge gender from its strangling, institutionally hegemonic conceptualization.

What then does it entail for one be against the proper? We must follow the guidance of Barthes, understanding that "everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered" (147). It is to oppose the institutionalized ritual of pronoun confession not because those of gendered marginality have made obscure something that should be taken as apparent, but because the ritual forsakes those in the *most* marginal of gendered positionings. It is to refuse to respect the authority announced pronouns not because one's own reading of another holds

primacy, but because no authority can reduce the vast multiplicity of possible gender readings. And lastly, it is to reject the implementation of true gender not because its schematization by trans advocates fails to capture the truth itself, but because behind gender there is no proper truth. Thus, to be against the proper demands we reject restrictive institutional regimes of over-stabilization, wherever they might arise.

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aletheia: (ἀλήθεια) is a Greek word meaning "the state of not being hidden; the state of being evident." It is variously translated as "unclosedness," "unconcealedness," "disclosure," or "truth."