FRAGMENTS

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Defining Art: A Full-Fledged Defense of Binkley's Institutional Account

Nico Wada

Why do we regard Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes, a stack of silk-screened plywood boxes put on display at the Stable Gallery in New York, as art and not the identical cardboard Brillo containers lining supermarket shelves? The "institutionalist" school of philosophers maintain that the only prerequisite for an object to be considered a work of art is for that object to be accepted as art by an institutional known as the Artworld. In this essay, I explore the concept of the Artworld as a broad social institution and cultural framework for the presentation and exhibition of artworks. I then compare George Dickie's institutional account, which defines arthood as a process of status-conferral by the Artworld, to Thomas Binkley's understanding of art, composing the most minimal of institutional theories. Binkley adequately reconceives the nature of the artistic act through which objects are transformed into artworks, defining artistic creation as a process of specification within the institutional context of the Artworld. An understanding of art as piece-specification is a leading candidate for a definition of art, providing an explanatory framework capable of accounting for artists like Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, and the entire cohort of postmodern artists.

In 1917, Marcel Duchamp purchased a urinal, signed and dated it with the appellation "R. Mutt, 1917," provocatively entitled it Fountain, and submitted it to the Society of Independent Artists in New York for inclusion in their annual exhibition. Duchamp's iconoclastic gesture, the readymade, serves a central hurdle over which any attempt to define art must leap, challenging the idea that works of art must be the product of the artist's hand, aesthetically beautiful, or emotionally profound. The "in-

stitutionalist" school of philosophers of art greeted the work of Duchamp and his avant-garde heirs with considerable enthusiasm. Proposing an explanatory framework capable of dealing with seemingly intractable problems of subjectivism and relativism in artistic judgment, institutional theorists like George Dickie maintain that arthood is not an intrinsic property of objects, but a status conferred upon them by the institutions of a broad social structure known as the artworld. In this essay, I first provide an analysis of the concept of an institution before criticizing Dickie's notion of status-conferral as irremediably flawed. I then argue that Timothy Binkley's understanding of art, composing the most minimal of institutional theories, more successfully defines artistic creation as a practice of indexing according to the conventions of the artworld. I finally defend

Marcel Duchamp, Fountain

Duchamp's Fountain, an upside down urinal on display, is one of Duchamp's many "readymades" and is considered to be one of the most intellectually challenging art pieces of the 20th century.

Binkley's ideas against attacks from critics, attending particularly to the accusation of vicious circularity. Overall, Binkley's understanding of art as piece-specification is a leading candidate for a definition of art, accounting for the peculiar, irresolvable nature of the readymade and the gradual liberalization of artistic conventions in general.

A critique of Dickie's institutional theory demands an antecedent analysis of the artworld as an institution. Philosopher Arthur Danto is credited with coining the term "artworld" as a rich structure in which works of art seem to be embedded. In his article "The Artworld," Danto writes: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of history of art: an artworld."[1] Inspired by Danto's notion that the policy for defining art rests on nonexhibited attributes, Dickie refers to the artworld as the

1   Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," in Journal of Philosophy Vol. 60, No. 19 (1964), 580.

"broad social institution in which works of art have their place."[2] Dickie understands that institutions like legal systems and universities, with their formally established constitutions and fixed lines of authority, appear conservative in a way that juxtaposes the freedom and creativity associated with art. Responding to this concern, Dickie describes the artworld as providing the "elasticity" whereby "creativity of even the most radical sort can be accommodated."[3] Adhering to one particular definition of an institution as an "established practice," Dickie emphasizes that the artworld is informal in that it merely provides a cultural framework for the presentation and exhibition of artworks. Subsystems within the artworld each provide unique institutional backgrounds for defining objects as artworks within a domain. While theater, painting, and music constitute a few examples, the number of subsystems can be expanded indefinitely to incorporate the "radical creativity, adventuresomeness, and exuberance of art."[4]

Further embracing the frivolous and capricious nature of art in his theory, Dickie claims that, unlike other institutions with clearly defined power structures, "every person who sees himself as a member of the artworld is thereby a member."[5] While an expansive categorization, Dickie emphasizes that artworld members have institutionalized roles. A theater-goer, for example, is not someone who just happens to enter a theater, but a person who enters with expectations and knowledge about the anticipated experience. The core personnel of the artworld make up a loosely organized, but nonetheless related, set of persons consisting of those who create artworks, "presenters," and those who appreciate them, "goers." Dickie's broad conception of artworld membership therefore implies that inclusion in the artworld arises as a result of private determination rather than outward selection. This definition helps to elucidate the aesthetic difference between Duchamp exhibiting his Fountain and "a salesman of plumbing supplies who spreads his wares before us." Unlike the plumber, Duchamp views himself as a "presenter," placing his urinal within the institutional setting of the gallery, and therefore participates as a member of the artworld.

Institutional theorists claim that the artworld defines which ob-

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2   George Dickie, "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," in Art and Philosophy (St. Martin's Press: 1979), 86.
3   George Dickie, "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," in Art and Philosophy (St. Martin's Press: 1979), 88.
4   George Dickie, "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," in Art and Philosophy (St. Martin's Press: 1979), 88.
5   Ibid., 90.

jects constitute artworks. For Dickie, this process requires an artifact, understood as a product of human conception, to have "conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld)."[6] To clarify his rather vague notion of status-conferral, Dickie analogizes the process with an act of christening. "The institutional theory," Dickie explains, "may sound like saying, 'A work of art is an object of which someone has said, 'I christen this object a work of art.' And it is rather like that."[7] Similar to how the christening of a child is an act rooted in the history and structure of the church, status-conferral has as its background the "Byzantine complexity of the artworld."[8] Furthermore, just as an individual may be ignorant of the fact that a child is christened, one may be unaware that an object has acquired the status of candidate for appreciation. Dickie's use of "candidacy" allows his definition to be inclusive of unknown art that has the potential for appreciation if it becomes known. For an object to be considered a "candidate for appreciation," however, actual appreciation is not required by even a single observer. As Dickie states emphatically, christening something a work of art does not necessarily make it an objectively good piece. He elaborate that what is meant by appreciation is that "in experiencing the qualities of a thing one finds them worthy or valuable."[9] This worth and value, Dickie explains, arises from the art object being embedded in the institutional structure of the artworld. While one can make a work of art out of a sow's ear, Dickie explains that "that does not necessarily make it a silk purse."[10]

While I defend the institutional theory's premise that art exists only within the framework of the artworld, I agree with Thomas Binkley that Dickie's notion of status-conferral vitiates his account as a credible or particularly useful one. In Binkley's article "Deciding About Art," he writes: "Having the status of candidate for appreciation does not appear to be a necessary condition for being a work of art."[11] Dickie claims that an object acquires the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of the artworld, yet Binkley demonstrates that this description is open-ended to a fault. Offering an illustrative counterexample, Binkley imagines a scenario where a gallery director mounts a brief biography of an artist on the gallery

6   Ibid., 91.
7   Ibid., 89.
8   Ibid., 93.
9   Ibid., 92.
10   Ibid., 93.
11   Ibid., 101.

wall beside that artist's works. Both Binkley and Dickie agree that the gallery director plays an institutionalized role within the artworld. Since the director acts on behalf of the artworld, exhibiting the biography for appreciation within the structure of the gallery, the director's biography must be regarded as a candidate for appreciation on Dickie's account. However, I argue in favor of Binkley's objection to this characterization. Members of the artworld may appreciate knowing something about the person who made the art, however the biographical note is not a work of art. The gallery director may also mount arrows on the wall guiding individuals to the location of the washrooms or place a fan in the corner of the gallery to maintain a comfortable room temperature on a hot summer day. While these artifacts are appreciated by art-goers, Binkley accurately labels items like the biography, arrows, and fan as "items of interest" rather than works of art. Unable to account for this important distinction, Dickie's notion of status-conferral proves to be devastatingly unrefined.

I argue that Binkley's institutional theory adequately reconceives the nature of the artistic act through which objects are transformed into artworks. Maintaining that Dickie's account fails to describe the process whereby artworks come into existence, Binkley defines artistic creation as piece-specification. Piece-specification differs from status-conferral in that it is a single-step procedure. "When Leonardo took up palette and brush," Binkley explains, "he did not first make a painting and then christen it art if he liked it."[12] Dickie's theory mistakenly involves two separate stages, that of creating a work of art and that of conferring upon it the status of candidate for appreciation. Binkley's more apt description characterizes DaVinci as producing an artwork when he specifies his piece. Piece-specification requires DaVinci to catalogue his completed work within its relevant artistic convention. "To be a piece of art," Binkley puts succinctly, "an item need only be indexed as an artwork by an artist."[13] While painting is one index, Duchamp and his avant-garde heirs attest to the gradual liberalization of the conventions for piece-specification. Contrary to Dickie's belief, Duchamp's feat wasn't his ability to confer art status on a urinal. Specifying an ordinary, unaesthetic object as a work of art, Duchamp's Fountain reveals that no a priori reason exists for identifying artworks by their appearances or embodied mediums. As

12   Thomas Binkley, "Deciding About Art," in Culture and Art, ed. L. Mogensen (Humanities Press: 1976), 106.
13   Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson (Oxford UP: 1992), 457.

Binkley explains, "Duchamp bypassed the indexing conventions superimposed on art by aesthetics."[14] Therefore, Fountain's dramatic entrance into the New York gallery supports Binkley's thesis, namely that nothing other than specification within an institutional context assures arthood.

Marcel Duchamp, L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved

In 1965, Duchamp affixed a playing card with the Mona Lisa image, unaltered, to a folded note paper with the caption "rasée L.H.O.O.Q." This ironic gesture supports Binkley's notion that art creation is a process of mere piece-specification that takes place within the conventions of the artworld.

As an impish and ironic gesture, Fountain is imbued with artistic meaning. "Cultural contexts endow objects with special meanings," Binkley states, "and they determine arthood."[15] Binkley's piece-specification mechanism is capable of identifying the ideas and values behind artworks in a way that status-conferral fails to do. This ability, which Binkley refers to as intensionality, allows for his institutional theory to more accurately account for the discontinuities between traditional works of art and late modern works. A primary failure of Dickie's account is that status-conferral is an extensional means of classification. Philosopher David Davies explains Binkley's concept of extensionality adroitly in his work Art as Performance. If the sentence "John has status S" is true, extensionality allows for the sentence to remain true "if we replace the word 'John' with any other expression that refers to the very same individual—for example, 'my best friend,' if John is the individual who fits that definition."[16] While this detail may appear trivial, Binkley highlights the implications of extensionality in regard to Duchamp's L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved. Since L.H.O.O.Q Shaved is

14   Ibid., 107.
15   Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson (Oxford UP: 1992), 458.
16   David Davies, Art as Performance (Blackwell Pub: 2004), 54.

a reproduction of the Mona Lisa, the two works share virtually identical aesthetic qualities. Therefore, while one extensionally specified object is identified, two intensionally specified artworks exist. Piece-specification acknowledges that two identical objects may represent different cultural roles because "the tools of indexing are the languages of ideas."[17] Recognizing that artists engage in a cultural enterprise to produce meaningful works of art, Binkley's institutional theory provides a highly refined definition of art. While the institutional theory is often denounced as circular, I demonstrate that this criticism poses no serious threat to Binkley's account. The circularity charge refers to the fact that the institutional theorist defines an artwork by reference to the notion of an artworld public. Critics claim that a comprehensive definition of art must dissolve these two concepts, the explanans and the expanandum, through providing an understanding of how artworks are classified. A non-circular account, for example, arrives at a linear, reductive explanation of art as a set of terms—a simple idea, in Lockean terms. Failing to delineate which features are shared among various artworks, the institutional theory is dismissed as providing an uninformative, and essentially disposable, definition of art. In an essay entitled "The Institutional Theory," Richard Wollheim asks: "Is it to be presumed that those who confer status on some artifact do so for good reasons, or is there no presumption?"[18] If no criteria exist to establish the status of objects as artworks, artistic status appears to both arbitrarily assigned and irrelevantly possessed. "The importance of the status," Wollheim declares, "is placed in serious doubt."[19] If reasons for conferral do exist, on the other hand, Wollheim claims that a correct theory of art must acknowledge them. However, an account justifying the reasons for conferral "forfeits its claim to be an institutional theory of art."[20] Wollheim's dilemma aims to illustrate how the circularity of the institutional account results in unfavorable implications.

By rejecting the notion of status-conferral, Binkley's account is able to withstand the seemingly fatal consequences of the circularity charge. Binkley attacks Dickie's definition of an artwork as a candidate for appreciation. While Dickie describes appreciation as the experience of a work's valuable qualities, Binkley argues that no conspicuous form of appreciation exists com-

17   Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson (Oxford UP: 1992), 459.
18   Richard Wollheim, "The Institutional Theory of Art," in Art and its Objects (Cambridge UP, 1980), 160.
19   Ibid., 163.
20   Ibid., 164.

mon to Duchamp's Fountain and the Mona Lisa, for instance, but absent from all non-art. Dickie's reference to appreciation is therefore troublesome, as his theory confronts "the old problem of separating aesthetic experiences of nature from aesthetic experiences of art."[21]A solution to this "old problem" must involve a description of arthood in terms of either aesthetic experience or a set of aesthetic qualities. Such deliberate specification, however, is exactly what the institutional account hopes to avoid in order to both account for the gradual liberalization of art as a concept and escape Wollheim's troublesome dilemma. Dodging these problematic concerns, Binkley's theory of piece-specification accounts for the laxity of artworld conventions and defines art without reference to explicitly aesthetic criteria. "Status-conferral is a changing convention," Binkley states, "piece-specification is a creating convention."[22] A changing convention invites Wollheim's question of what justifies transformation from an object into an artwork. Piece-specification, on the other hand, is a process of creating new entities "which need not be isolated and identified prior to their becoming pieces."[23]

Binkley further responds to critics like Wollheim by rejecting what he terms the "aesthetic assumption," namely that to talk about art is to talk about a set of objects. Supposing that the problem of defining art can be resolved by explaining membership in a class of entities is "simply a prejudice of aesthetics," Binkley states, "which underplays the cultural structure of art for the sake of pursuing perception objects."[24] Avoiding this "prejudice," Binkley characterizes art as a practiced discipline of thought and action, like economics, history, or philosophy. A casual painter indexes his painting and creates art analogous to how an amateur philosophy student completes a term paper and produces a piece of philosophy. However, analyzing the student's dissertation to arrive at a definition of philosophy is a fruitless endeavor. The meaning of the words on the page demands an understanding of both language and culture in the same way that the meaning of the painting requires the context of its artistic milieu. Art, like philosophy, is a cultural phenomenon. Binkley notes that a study of Kant's philosophy likely requires a perusal of his works, just as a study of painting typically involves analyzing paintings. However, a definition of philosophy is not a manual of how to detect all of the philoso-

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21 Thomas Binkley, "Deciding About Art," Culture and Art, ed. L. Mogensen (Humanities Press: 1976), 102.
22 Ibid., 105.
23 Ibid., 105.
24 Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson (Oxford UP: 1992), 455.

phy books in a library. An artwork, like a philosophy text, "cannot stand alone as a member of a set."[25] Ultimately, aesthetic discussions of "What is art?" turn to the question "What is a work of art?" as though the two inquiries are synonymous. By rejecting this assumption and defining art as a discipline, albeit one with no general subject matter, Binkley dismisses the circularity accusation as misconstrued.

Further shielding his theory from Wollheim's attack, Binkley claims that defining art need not involve distinguishing between good and bad artworks. Because Binkley rejects the aesthetic assumption and defines art as a practice, his piece-making convention places no limits on the scope of artistic content created. For example, Binkley describes the preposterous instance of an artist "christening his or her radio or anxiety to be an artwork."[26] While the artwork of this "amateur indexer" may lack appreciation from other artworld members, an artistic failure still classifies as an artwork. Wollheim believes that conferring objects with artistic status in such a non-exclusive manner eliminates the significance of identifying objects as artworks. This concern leads him to the first horn of his dilemma, namely: if such status can be assigned absent of any evaluative or objective criteria, the institutional account fails to be "a theory of art."[27] In response, Binkley warns: "We need to beware of confusing issues about arthood with issues about good or recognized arthood."[28] Wollheim is therefore mistaken to assume that the institutional theory, while allowing for an expansive categorization of artworks, subsequently fails to provide a meaningful account of art. For Binkley, a definition of art must merely acknowledge that the "general focus of art is creation and conception for the sake of creation and conception."[29] The essence of arthood resides in the fact that any object or idea can constitute an artwork, and piece-specification appropriately functions as a creating convention.

In a separate critique, Wollheim ridicules the institutional theory's conception of the artworld. Once again, however, Wollheim's criticism fails to challenge Binkley's cleverly construed definition of art. While the institutional account is grounded in

25   Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson (Oxford UP: 1992), 455.
26   Ibid., 457.
27   Richard Wollheim, "The Institutional Theory of Art," Art and its Objects, Cambridge UP, 1980, 164.
28   Ibid., 457.
29   Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson (Oxford UP: 1992), 457.

the belief that artworld members dictate which objects constitute artworks, Wollheim asks: "Is there really such a thing as the artworld, with the coherence of a social group, capable of having representatives, who are in turn capable of carrying out acts that society is bound to endorse?"[30] With his inquiry, Wollheim reveals his mistaken perception of the artworld as an authoritative body where, just as citizens must respect the laws produced by lawmakers, "society is bound to endorse" the artistic status assigned to objects by artworld members. On Binkley's account, artists merely engage in a discipline of thought, meaning a comparison of artworld members to economists, historians, and philosophers is more germane. Like a professional economist, a "professional" artist is one demonstrating a special dedication to the discipline of art. Professional artists, however, play no role in dictating which objects acquire artistic status. Therefore, they are not authoritative representatives of the artworld. "What these 'professionals' do," Binkley states, "is no different from what the amateurs do."[31] Wollheim's inquiry is therefore of little importance. When artistic creation is defined as piece-specification, no requirement exists for society to "endorse" the activities of artworld members.

What traditional theories of art and their definitions communicate about art qua art is problematic in light of the work of the postmodern movement, which is ultimately why I defend Binkley's institutional theory as the most justifiable definition of art. In The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, Arthur Danto postulates a necktie painted smoothly, uniformly blue by the aged Picasso as a rejection of 1950s flaunting of paint and brushstroke. Danto then investigates the notorious claim of "my child could do that" by imagining a second, identical necktie painted by a child with paint from the same manufacturer. While producing an entity indiscernible from one turned out by the greatest master of modern times, Danto states: "I would hesitate to predict a glorious artistic future for the child on [these] grounds."[32] To suppose that the interesting differences between Picasso's tie and the child's tie has anything to do with set membership or perceptual differences "is almost to comically misclassify their artistic interest."[33] Binkley's account justifies Danto's intuition. A work of art is identified intensionally, rather than by its aes-

30   Richard Wollheim, Painting as an Art (Princeton UP: 1987), 15.
31   Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson, (Oxford UP: 1992), 457.
32   Arthur Danto, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, ed. P. Alperson, (Harvard UP: 1981), 40
33   Ibid, 44.

thetic attributes. "By making a piece, a person makes an artistic statement," Binkley explains, "but good art is distinguished by the interest or significance of what it says."[34] The philosophy of art must ultimately leave aesthetics behind in order to cope with art which is not fundamentally aesthetic, meaning beautiful in the traditional sense. Binkley's account of piece-specification arises as a superior definition of art, understanding that artists engage in a cultural enterprise in order to "create with ideas."[35]

The attempt to define art by specifying its necessary and sufficient conditions is an ancient challenge that I argue has been successfully tackled by Binkley. Duchamp and the entire postmodern cohort reveal how relying upon "formal" or "aesthetic" properties to arrive at a definition of art is a misguided effort. After a brief discussion of the artworld as an institution, I have demonstrated the shortcomings of Dickie's institutional account. Whereas Dickie's notion of status-conferral fails to acknowledge that artworks embody a host of culturally significant ideas and meanings, Binkley's piece-specification convention identifies artworks intensionally. More accurately articulating the process of artistic creation, Binkley rejects the aesthetic assumption by defining art as a discipline. While critics like Wollheim challenge the belief that art is institutional, I have outlined my defense of Binkley's account against such accusations. Ultimately, as Binkley describes: "Extending and changing the concept 'art' is the business of art today."[36] As an explanatory framework capable of accounting for this trend, Binkley's institutional account is capable of defining art.

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34 Thomas Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," in Philosophy of the Visual Arts, ed. P. Alperson, (Oxford UP: 1992), 457.
35 Ibid., 459.
36 Thomas Binkley, "Deciding About Art," in Culture and Art, ed. L. Mogensen, (Humanities Press: 1976), 99.

Binkley, Timothy. "Deciding About Art," Culture and Art, edited by L. Mogensen, Humanities Press, 1976, pp. 99-106.

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Duchamp, Marcel. Fountain. 1917. Sculpture. 38.1 cm x 48.9 cm x 62.55 cm. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA. Source: sfmoma.org (accessed 1 March 2019).

Duchamp, Marcel. L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved. 1965. Print. 21 x 13.8 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. Source: moma.org (accessed 1 March, 2019).

Ricoeur et le Visage de la Responsabilité

Tiphaine Le Corre

Le concept de la responsabilité se déploie au sein de la philosophie ricoeurienne sous différents volets, analysé à travers la relation au soi, à autrui, ainsi qu'aux institutions qui régissent nos interactions. Cette étude tente d'en décerner les formes et d'en appréhender les implications. Une première partie porte ainsi sur la responsabilité comprise comme imputabilité. Les questions suivantes sont abordées : dans quelle mesure l'action peut-elle être dite volontaire, et comment délimiter les conséquences potentiellement innombrables d'une action singulière imputables à un agent ? Comment déterminer la juste distance entre la mauvaise foi qui consisterait à refuser d'anticiper les conséquences de ses actions, et l'attribution injustifiée de toutes les répercussions qui peuvent être attribuées de façon indiscriminée à l'acte initial ? La seconde partie de cette étude se tourne vers la responsabilité comprise comme capacité à répondre à l'appel du fragile. Si la responsabilité-imputabilité s'inscrit dans un rapport de soi à soi, la responsabilité se tisse aussi dans la relation de soi à l'autre, de soi avec l'autre et grâce à l'autre. Avec Ricoeur, l'autre nous enjoint à la responsabilité par sa fragilité. Enfin, une troisième partie proposera une lecture de l'œuvre de Ricoeur comme une invitation à la responsabilité individuelle et collective dans sa dimension relationnelle et actuelle. La singularité de l'approche ricoeurienne sera définie à travers le lien à autrui : la responsabilité se déploie et prend son sens dans l'altérité.

Confronté à la multiplication interprétative et aux confusions sémantiques qui encerclent le concept de responsabilité, Ricoeur a tenté d'en explorer et distinguer les différents volets. Cette entreprise s'inscrit dans son dessein de répondre à la question qui? à travers la problématique du soi. Quatre approches distinctes et néanmoins indissociables sont alors proposées: *qui parle? qui agit? qui se raconte? qui est moralement responsable?* [1] La discussion entamée par Ricoeur à propos de cette dernière question constituera l'objet de notre étude. Une première partie sera consacrée à la responsabilité comprise comme imputabilité. Nous tenterons ensuite d'analyser le concept déployé par Ricoeur de la responsabilité comme capacité à répondre à l'appel du fragile. Enfin, nous proposerons une lecture de la philosophie ricoeurienne à travers ce prisme de la responsabilité:

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1   Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 31.

son oeuvre sera alors appréhendée comme une invitation à la responsabilité, indissociable de la relation entre soi et autrui.

I - La responsabilité-imputabilité

Le concept de responsabilité chez Ricoeur peut être distingué en deux temps : tout d'abord, il se penche sur la responsabilité-imputabilité, qui s'inscrit dans un rapport de soi à soi, avant de proposer une conception de la responsabilité comme une réponse à l'appel d'autrui, établie dans un rapport de soi à l'autre. Suivant le sillon tracé par Ricoeur, nous tenterons initialement de comprendre les caractéristiques et les enjeux de l'imputabilité.

L'imputabilité, écrit Ricoeur, est "l'acte de tenir un agent pour responsable d'actions tenues elles-mêmes pour permises ou non permises"[2]. À la notion d'ascription, qui consiste simplement à attribuer une action à un agent[3], s'ajoute alors l'évaluation de la dimension morale de l'action. Dès lors, l'imputabilité s'appréhende au-delà de la simple ascription: elle intègre le caractère éthique et moral de l'acte au lien de causalité établi entre l'agent et l'action. À cet égard, Ricoeur affirme :

> *L'imputabilité, dirons-nous, c'est l'ascription de l'action à son agent,* sous la condition des prédicats éthiques et moraux *qui qualifient l'action comme bonne, juste, conforme au devoir, faite par devoir, et finalement comme étant la plus sage dans le cas des situations conflictuelles.*[4]

Ainsi, si Ricoeur conçoit aisément que nos actions ne soient pas toutes d'ordre moral - d'où la notion d'ascription, moralement neutre - il attribue à l'imputabilité les actions à charge morale[5]. Cette conception que Ricoeur nomme "minimale" de la responsabilité est principalement tournée vers le passé. Ricoeur écrit : "on recherche qui est à la source de telle ou telle chaîne de changements dans le cours des choses et on isole un ou plusieurs agents humains que l'on nomme et que l'on déclare

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2   Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 121.
3   Paul Ricoeur, "Le concept de responsabilité". Le juste. (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), 53.
4   Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 338.
5   Gaelle Fiasse remarque que Ricoeur a pu employer le terme d'imputabilité dans un contexte moralement neutre, notamment à l'égard de l'imputation d'une oeuvre à son artiste. Cependant, dans Soi même comme un autre et Concept de responsabilité, il semble y préférer le terme d'ascription. Fiasse, Gaëlle. "Paul Ricoeur et le pardon comme au-delà de l'action". Laval Théologique Et Philosophique. (2007), 365.

responsables"[6]. Il existe cependant une dimension à travers laquelle l'imputabilité s'oriente vers le futur, dans la mesure où il incombe à l'agent de justifier son action passé et d'en assumer les dommages - ce sont là les "conséquences prévisibles dont on assume la charge"[7], et par là même que l'idée de responsabilité "commence à se diriger vers le futur"[8].

Le concept d'imputabilité sous-tend deux questions intimement liées qu'il nous semble important de traiter avec Ricoeur. D'une part, dans quelle mesure l'action peut-elle être dite volontaire, et d'autre part, comment délimiter les conséquences potentiellement innombrables d'une action singulière imputables à un agent? Il est nécessaire de se confronter au "dilemme moral"[9] que représente l'intentionnalité, dans la mesure où "on voudrait pouvoir n'imputer à l'agent que les suites de l'intention qui porte la marque du but qui est en l'âme"[10].

 Si la raison s'accommode aisément de la primauté de la question de l'intentionnalité, ses implications pratiques sont plus complexes à appréhender. Il faut ainsi déterminer la juste distance entre la mauvaise foi qui consisterait à refuser d'anticiper les conséquences de ses actions, et l'attribution injustifiée de toutes les répercussions qui peuvent être attribuées de façon indiscriminée à l'acte initial. Ce dernier écueil est particulièrement pervers car, comme le remarque Ricoeur, le sens de la responsabilité est alors dilué face à l'attribution illégitime de conséquences que l'agent n'aurait pu anticiper: il devient alors "responsable de rien dont il puisse assumer la charge"[11]. Ricoeur tente donc de dépasser une approche binaire du volontaire et de l'involontaire. Il admet que certains actes volontaires n'excluent pas une part d'involontaire. Dès lors, comme l'affirme Francoise Dastur, "la question est précisément de savoir ce qui dans l'acte volontaire lui-même ne relève pas de la volonté et ce qui en lui *ne dépend donc pas du sujet*"[12]. Selon Ricoeur, l'involontaire peut prendre corps dans la motivation, les savoir-faire préformés, les émotions, habitudes, et le caractère[13]. Il conçoit donc que l'involontaire s'immisce dans des actions qui s'apparentent

6   Paul Ricoeur, "Postface au Temps de la responsabilité". (Fonds Ricoeur, 1991), 7.
7   Ibid.
8   Ibid.
9   Paul Ricoeur, "Le concept de responsabilité". Le juste. (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), 67.
10   Ibid
11   Ibid., 66.
12   Francoise Dastur, "Volonté et liberté selon Paul Ricoeur". Paul Ricœur (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 2004), 182.
13   Ibid.

auprès de l'agent même comme volontaires, puisque "la volonté subjective ne peut devenir action qu'en s'éxteriorisant, se mettant ainsi sous la loi de la nécessité extérieure"[14]. En d'autres termes, la volonté n'est pas toute-puissante face à son actualisation - elle se confronte à des modalités qui lui sont externes et donc hors de son contrôle.

Cependant, quand bien même l'acte initial serait volontaire, comment la responsabilité doit-elle s'assumer face à la multitude de conséquences qu'engendre l'acte? Comment distinguer les effets intentionnels des effets latéraux?[15] Puisque "un agent n'est pas dans les conséquences lointaines comme il l'est en quelque sorte dans son geste immédiat, le problème est alors de délimiter la sphère d'événements dont on peut le rendre responsable"[16]. Ricoeur formule la question en ces termes: "Jusqu'où s'étend la chaîne des effets dommageables de nos actes que l'on peut tenir pour encore impliqués dans le principe, le commandement, l'initium dont un sujet est tenu pour l'auteur?"[17]. Nous pouvons ici penser au leitmotiv mythologique de la responsabilité d'Hélène dans la guerre de Troie. Dans quelle mesure Hélène est-elle imputable des morts grecs et troyens? Qu'est ce qui, dans la mort des soldats et la chute de la cité, peut être attribué à l'acte initial de l'abandon de Ménélas? Puisque aucune réponse rectiligne ne peut être à la hauteur de l'ampleur de cette interrogation légitime, Ricoeur propose un détour par l'admission de la finitude et de la fragilité humaine. Il est impossible d'établir une hiérarchie des conséquences imputables à un agent de façon indéterminée. Ne reste alors que la "sagesse pratique instruite par l'histoire entière des arbitrages antérieurs"[18] pour assigner raisonnablement à un agent les conséquences et la responsabilité qui découlent de l'acte posé.

Face à l'impuissance qui nous caractérise pour distinguer d'emblée les effets intentionnels des effets latéraux, Ricoeur en appelle à une nouvelle responsabilité - celle de la prudence. Ainsi, la prudence, définie comme "sens de jugement moral circonstancié"[19], constitue le recours de l'agent responsable. Ricoeur écrit à cet égard: "c'est en effet à cette prudence, au sens fort du mot, qu'est remise la tâche de reconnaître parmi les consé-

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14   Paul Ricoeur, "Le concept de responsabilité". Le juste. (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), 67.
15   Ibid., 66.
16   Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 130.
17   Paul Ricoeur, "Le concept de responsabilité". Le juste. (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), 63.
18   Ibid., 68.
19   Ibid., 69.

quences innombrables de l'action celles dont nous pouvons légitimement être tenus responsables, au nom d'une morale de la mesure"[20]. L'imputabilité morale survit alors au dilemme évoqué, en se muant à travers une responsabilité de la prudence. Dès lors, Ricoeur peut affirmer : "c'est finalement cet appel au jugement qui constitue le plaidoyer le plus fort en faveur du maintien de l'idée d'imputabilité"[21].

II - L'appel du fragile

Avec Ricoeur, la responsabilité a deux visages. D'une part, la responsabilité se réfère à l'imputabilité, qui s'inscrit dans un rapport de soi à soi. Mais la responsabilité se tisse aussi dans la relation de soi à l'autre, de soi avec l'autre et grâce à l'autre. C'est vers ce deuxième visage de la responsabilité que nous allons maintenant orienter notre étude. S'inspirant des travaux de Hans Jonas, Ricoeur écrit que "la responsabilité a pour vis-à-vis spécifique le fragile"[22]. Deux sources sont à l'origine de la fragilité d'un homme : elle peut advenir en raison de faiblesse naturelle, ou à travers l'exposition à la violence infligée par d'autres hommes[23].

Si l'autre nous enjoint à la responsabilité par sa fragilité, quelle forme prend cet appel ? Moralement, l'appel de l'autre est un impératif[24] : c'est donc un principe qui s'impose à la conscience. Cependant - et il nous semble que la finesse de l'analyse ricoeurienne se manifeste par ce dépassement - le sujet qui entend l'appel, qui le reçoit et l'embrasse, n'y répond pas en raison d'un devoir réfléchi et prémédité. L'injonction morale est ainsi incorporée dans un *sentiment* : "c'est enveloppé dans un sentiment que nous découvrons ce principe, un sentiment par lequel nous sommes affectés, atteints, au niveau d'une humeur fondamentale où nous nous tenons tout d'abord"[25]. Face à l'injuste et à l'injustifiable, un sentiment peut alors prendre forme : l'autre, le fragile, nous appelle à la responsabilité. Ricoeur propose l'exemple de l'enfant : "quand un enfant naît : du seul fait qu'il est là, il oblige"[26]. Cet appel s'exprime sous deux formes. D'une part, l'autre est remis à notre charge - Ricoeur ne nie pas la dimension pesante, contraignante, du "fardeau qu'on prend

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20   Ibid.
21   Ibid.
22   Paul Ricoeur, Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003),128.
23   Ibid.
24   Ibid.
25   Ibid.
26   Ibid., 129.

sur soi"[27]. Mais l'appel invite aussi à la confiance[28], qui nécessite que l'être responsable ne définisse pas l'autre par sa seule fragilité. Puisque l'autre compte sur moi, l'accueil de son appel s'inscrit dès lors dans la relation, dans un lien de complicité et d'échange. Ricoeur exprime cette tension dans les termes suivants : "dans le sentiment de responsabilité nous sentons que nous sommes rendus responsables de... par..."[29]. A cet égard, Cyndie Sautereau souligne à juste titre la réciprocité de la relation qui caractérise la pensée de Ricoeur[30]. Elle se réfère à Vivant jusqu'à la mort, dans lequel Ricoeur met l'accent sur la compassion qui naît dans le contexte des soins palliatifs entre le fragile atteint par la maladie et l'autre qui l'accompagne. Ricoeur parle alors de "la réelle compassion du *donner-recevoir*"[31]. C'est donc à travers l'autre et grâce à lui que ma responsabilité s'impose à moi. Il nous semble ici important d'interrompre momentanément notre analyse pour évoquer la part de fragile qui habite le soi qui accueille la responsabilité, et la part de responsabilité qui se manifeste dans l'être fragile.

Un bel exemple de cette dualité est présent dans le film Still Alice, qui suit le parcours d'une professeure d'université brillante qui se découvre atteinte d'une forme précoce de la maladie d'Alzheimer. Fragilisée par sa maladie qui l'éloigne progressivement d'un aspect fondateur de son identité narrative - son intellect et son éloquence - elle s'efforce néanmoins de rester présente envers ses enfants dont elle craint qu'ils soient porteurs de sa maladie. Quant à l'être responsable qui se voit fragilisé par la vulnérabilité de l'autre, on peut penser à la figure de son mari. Malgré de bonnes intentions, il est confronté à son incapacité à assumer le rôle de l'être responsable qui accompagne. Il se dérobe alors à sa responsabilité, pour voir son rôle assumé par leur fille cadette qui, dans un échange avec son père s'apprêtant à quitter la maison familiale, affirme : "je suis convaincue d'être à ma place ici"[32]. Dans la langue originale, la fille affirme à son père "I know this is where I need to be", qui se traduirait plus justement par "Je sais que c'est ici

27   Paul Ricoeur, Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003),129.
28   Ibid.
29   Paul Ricoeur, Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003),129. .
30   Cyndie Sautereau, "Subjectivité et vulnérabilité chez Ricoeur et Levinas". Études Ricoeuriennes/ Ricoeur Studies (2013), 19.
31   Paul Ricoeur, Vivant jusqu'à la mort: suivi de, Fragments. (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 52.
32   Wash Westmoreland, Richard Glatzer, Lisa Genova, Still Alice. DVD. Directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland. (Sony Pictures Classics, 2015).

que je dois être". Nous pouvons ici entendre l'écho de la formule que Ricoeur emprunte à Lévinas "Me voici!"[33] pour désigner la réponse à l'appel du fragile. Cette scène témoigne, d'une part, de la fragilité de l'être supposément responsable confronté à son impuissance et, d'autre part, de la notion ricoeurienne selon laquelle l'impératif moral s'intériorise à travers un sentiment - sentiment exprimé par la jeune fille qui ressent l'injonction d'être auprès de sa mère fragile.

Si la responsabilité-imputabilité semblait enclavée dans une boucle qui s'initiait et s'achevait avec le soi, la responsabilité entendue comme capacité à répondre à l'appel du fragile est ouverte sur l'altérité. La responsabilité se découvre et s'assume dans la relation. Une autre distinction à établir avec la responsabilité-imputabilité est celle de la portée et de l'étendue de notre responsabilité. Sous le premier visage de la responsabilité que nous avons évoqué, celle-ci se limitait surtout à réparer une faute, à compenser un mal, à reconnaître la paternité de ses actes. Si elle pouvait aussi consister à assumer une louange, elle était principalement tournée vers le passé: "c'est donc toujours vers l'arrière que nous sommes tirés, vers la rétrospection"[34]. A l'inverse, l'appel de l'autre nous incline vers le futur, vers les potentialités dans l'avenir de voir le fragile non seulement se tenir debout, mais aussi de s'épanouir, de s'accomplir et de croître[35], alors même qu'il n'existe aucune garantie de succès[36]. La métaphore de l'enfant déploie tout son sens à la lumière de ces deux singularités du deuxième visage de la responsabilité - un dépassement dans la portée de la responsabilité, et un dépassement dans la temporalité dans laquelle elle s'inscrit. Assumer la charge d'un enfant et s'en tenir pour responsable est ainsi un projet bien plus vaste que celui de restitution. Le parent aimant ne souhaite pas seulement voir son enfant nourri et vivant, mais aussi éduqué, épanoui et libre : le parent est alors responsable de l'actuation de l'enfant. Il est aussi important de souligner l'absence de garantie de succès qui se comprend bien à travers la métaphore de l'enfant. En assumant sa responsabilité, le parent s'engage à être présent auprès de l'enfant quand bien même il verrait ce dernier, plus tard, faire des choix contraires aux ambitions que le parent a tendance à projeter sur lui. En parallèle, la responsabilité d'un parent à l'égard de son enfant n'a pas de durée déterminée. La naissance d'un enfant engage le parent, à travers et grâce à lui, pour une durée

33   Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 195.
34   Paul Ricoeur, ."Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003), 129.
35   Ibid., 128.
36   Ibid., 138.

qui s'annonce aussi lointaine que porte le regard du parent sur le bonheur et l'épanouissement de son enfant.

Ayant établi ce qui dissocie les deux visages de la responsabilité, il nous incombe maintenant d'évaluer la nature de leur lien. L'imputabilité et la capacité à répondre à l'appel de l'autre sont-ils antinomiques ? A cet égard, Ricoeur affirme que les deux manifestations de la responsabilité évoquées ci-dessus sont non seulement complémentaires, mais indissociables. Il écrit ainsi :

> *Si nous ne pouvions, après coup, reprendre dans une brève remémoration le cours de nos actes et les rassembler autour d'un pôle que nous disons être nous, auteur de nos actes, nul ne pourrait non plus compter sur nous, attendre que nous tenions nos promesses.*[37]

Il faut donc savoir se reconnaître comme agent responsable de ses actes pour assumer la responsabilité d'un autre. Inversement, la responsabilité à laquelle l'être fragile nous enjoint est probablement propice à la reconnaissance de sa propre responsabilité vis-à-vis de ses actes. Si Ricoeur refuse de se prononcer quant à quelle forme de la responsabilité advient en premier[38], il les appréhende comme inséparables. Ainsi écrit-il dans Soi-même comme un autre: "le terme de responsabilité réunit les deux significations: compter sur…, être comptable de…"[39]. Cette unification des deux formes de la responsabilité au sein du sujet se traduit par le maintien de soi[40]. Au terme de cette étude, nous pouvons donc affirmer : c'est un seul et même visage que revêt l'homme responsable.

III - Une invitation à la responsabilité avec autrui

Au cours de cette troisième et dernière partie de notre étude, nous proposons une lecture de la philosophie ricoeurienne comme invitation à la responsabilité dans sa dimension relationnelle et actuelle. La singularité de l'approche de Ricoeur est la suivante : la responsabilité ne se pense et ne se vit que dans l'altérité. C'est dans le lien à autrui, qui peut être proche ou lointain, que la responsabilité se déploie et prend son sens. Quelqu'un pourrait ici nous interrompre pour rétorquer: "Qu'en est-il alors de la responsabilité-imputabilité, par

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37   Paul Ricoeur, Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003), 129.
38   Ibid., 130.
39   Paul Ricoeur, Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 195.
40   Ibid.

laquelle un agent est associé à ses actes? N'est-ce pas là simplement un rapport de soi à soi?". Nous répondrions alors : le rapport de soi à soi ne s'appréhende que dans un contexte social, un contexte par lequel le soi existe avec autrui, un contexte par lequel le soi, ses choix et ses actes, sont pensés dans leur relation à l'autre. À l'égard de la responsabilité-imputabilité, Ricoeur affirmait dès ses débuts qu'elle ne pouvait se concevoir qu'à travers ce lien à l'altérité. Aussi écrivait-il dans sa thèse Philosophie de la volonté :

> C'est principalement à l'occasion de mes rapports avec autrui, dans un contexte social, que je forme la conscience d'être l'auteur de mes actions dans le monde et, d'une façon plus générale, l'auteur de mes actes de pensée; quelqu'un pose la question: qui a fait cela? Je me lève et je réponds : c'est moi. Réponse: responsabilité.[41]

En d'autres termes, le sens de responsabilité se conscientise par et grâce à autrui. L'imputabilité permet aussi de demander le pardon ou encore de tenir ses promesses : elle est ainsi tournée vers autrui. Sans responsabilité assumée, le pardon ne peut être ni demandé, ni accordé. Il en va de même pour la promesse : nulle promesse ne peut être faite, entendue ou tenue d'un agent qui n'assume pas la paternité de ses actes. L'imputabilité ouvre donc la voie à la relation avec l'autre.

Philosophe soucieux d'inscrire ses concepts et ses pensées dans la société contemporaine, Ricoeur ne s'est pas maintenu dans une tour d'ivoire éloignée des enjeux sociopolitiques de son époque. Au contraire, son oeuvre s'est tissé au flux des débats qui animaient la société. Il en est de même pour sa compréhension de la responsabilité. Ainsi, si il nous semblait nécessaire d'expliciter les implications théoriques de son concept de responsabilité, nous orientons maintenant notre étude vers une appréhension de la responsabilité telle qu'elle se présente à nous dans notre quotidien, dans notre rapport à l'autre, et dans les institutions qui régissent ces rapports interpersonnels et orientent les principes politiques de nos sociétés. Ricoeur identifie alors au sein de nos société les lieux de fragilité - ces mêmes lieux qui appellent à la responsabilité individuelle et à la responsabilisation collective. Il affirme qu'il est impératif que le citoyen "sache que la grande cité est fragile"[42], qu'il en soit conscient pour pouvoir y assumer sa responsabilité. Le risque

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41   Paul Ricoeur, Philosophie de la volonté. (Paris: Aubier, 1950), 55.
42   Paul Ricoeur, Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003), 135.

est grand que le sens de responsabilité se diffuse à travers la multitude et l'ampleur des institutions et organismes qui régulent nos sociétés. Aussi Ricoeur propose-il dans le Postface au Temps de la responsabilité d'identifier les lieux et enjeux qui nous appellent à la responsabilité. Dans une parole qui résonne fortement aujourd'hui, il évoque tour à tour le défi environnemental, la fragilité des mutations liées aux sciences de la vie et à l'économie mondiale, ou encore la volatilité associée au milieu de l'entreprise et de la surabondance d'informations[43]. Autant de lieux qui appellent ses lecteurs à la responsabilité. Parmi tous ces enjeux de taille, il en est un qui est singulièrement cher à Ricoeur: "la crise de la démocratie représentative"[44] ainsi que la "participation insuffisante des citoyens à la vie publique"[45]. En un sens, le politique cristallise tous les conflits et fragilités abordées ci-dessus. Ricoeur écrit ainsi :

> *Le politique est le lieu où se focalisent toutes les problématiques parcourues dans tous les autres secteurs ; c'est aussi celui où le caractère problématique qui s'attache aux mutations considérées est redoublé par la problématicité propre au politique en tant que tel.[46]*

La démocratie représentative souffre d'une fragilité double, exprimée par Ricoeur dans "Responsabilité et Fragilité". D'une part, elle se maintient à travers un pacte fondateur fictif (ce que Rousseau a nommé "contrat social") et d'autre part, elle se nourrit au travers de représentants élus qui, en intégrant le monde politique, s'éloignent des enjeux et désirs de leurs électeurs[47]. Cette double fragilité démocratique appelle tous les citoyens à la responsabilité, afin que le vouloir-vivre-ensemble d'une communauté se manifeste dans un "lien de coopération"[48] à travers des institutions justes.

Nous prendrons comme exemple d'institution qui appelle à la responsabilité celle de la justice, et plus particulièrement du procès. Si nous ne pouvons dédier ici au sujet toute la place qu'il mérite et que Ricoeur lui accorde, nous limiterons notre analyse à l'ambition qu'a la justice de restaurer la responsabilité des citoyens. Ricoeur parle de "reconnaissance mutuelle"

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43   Paul Ricoeur, "Postface au Temps de la responsabilité". (Fonds Ricoeur, 1991), 4.
44   Ibid.
45   Ibid.
46   Ibid., 5.
47   Paul Ricoeur, Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique. (2003), 135.
48   Ibid., 134.

pour désigner l'acte au travers duquel victime et coupable se reconnaissent comme sujets de droit dignes d'être entendus. Juger, c'est "faire reconnaître par chacun la part que l'autre prend à la même société que lui, en vertu de quoi le perdant et le gagnant du procès seraient réputés avoir chacun leur juste part à ce *schème de coopération* qu'est la société"[49]. Cette reconnaissance mutuelle, qui ne peut advenir que dans le cadre d'un procès juste et non à travers l'acte de vengeance, constitue le premier pas emprunté par le coupable pour assumer sa responsabilité - responsabilité, qui, ici aussi, est pensée dans son lien à autrui.[50]

Les oeuvres de Ricoeur que nous avons citées nous donnent à voir un fil rouge par lequel se tisse une invitation à la responsabilité. Se porter responsable permet alors d'acquérir l'estime de soi, de demander le pardon, de tenir ses promesses, de poser un acte libre. Se porter responsable, c'est aussi entendre l'appel du fragile, et savoir y répondre dans la durée et avec cohérence, sans tomber dans l'écueil de s'approprier l'estime de l'autre. La responsabilité s'appréhende parallèlement dans sa dimension politique, par laquelle l'homme s'engage au sein de son travail, des institutions et de sa cité. Sous toutes ses facettes, la responsabilité s'inscrit dans le rapport à l'autre - non pas l'autre qui efface ou absorbe le soi, mais l'autre qui révèle le soi à lui-même. En lisant Ricoeur, nous pouvons y déceler son invitation à la responsabilité : une invitation à la responsabilité qui dépasse les confins de la personne pour s'écrire et se vivre dans la relation avec l'autre. Tournés vers le monde, ses institutions et ses lieux de fragilité, sans renier le soi et ses convictions, nous pouvons donc déclamer : "Me Voici !".

49   Paul Ricoeur, "L'acte de juger". Le juste. (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), 192.
50   Ricoeur insiste aussi sur la responsabilité qui incombe aux hommes travaillant dans les institutions. Elles sont aussi lieu de fragilité, et par la même dépendent non seulement de lois et de normes, mais aussi d'individus qui assument leur responsabilité à l'égard des fonctions qui leur confèrent du pouvoir dans la société. Aussi parle-il dans Soi même comme un autre de la responsabilité du juge. Ricœur, Paul. Soi-même comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 322.

Françoise Dastur, "Volonté et liberté selon Paul Ricoeur".
Paul Ricœur. Paris: Editions de l'Herne. 2004.

Gaëlle Fiasse, "Paul Ricoeur et le pardon comme au-delà de l'action".
Laval Théologique Et Philosophique. 63 (2): 363-376. 2007.

Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.

Paul Ricoeur, "Postface au Temps de la responsabilité". Fonds Ricoeur. 1991

Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté*. Paris: Aubier. 1950.

Paul Ricoeur, "Responsabilité et fragilité". Autres Temps.
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Gaze and Racialization: Interactive Dynamics

Evangéline Durand-Allizé

A phenomenology of gaze and vision appears to be particularly insightful in understanding dynamics of racialization. Alia Al-Saji's and Frantz Fanon's works offer examples in which the racist gaze makes the racialized person "hypervisible", both literally and representationally. In parallel, bell hooks' account of the "invisibility" of Black slaves in the 19th century Southern United States seem to show the contrary. This essay aims at explaining this apparent duality through the creativity and resilience of racism, its adaptivity to available societal structures. It appeals to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of vision, which allows us to understand those different kinds of gaze in terms of differential projects, and thus, as contextual strategies of racialization.

"I wanted quite simply to be a man among men". This is the prayer that Frantz Fanon expresses in *Black Skin, White Masks,* recalling instances of racism he experienced in metropolitan France. Longing to be anonymous, invisible, he could not avoid the exposure that the color of his skin seemed to carry: the gaze of others placed him under an inescapable spotlight. According to philosopher Alia Al-Saji, veiled Muslim women in contemporary France (and elsewhere) suffer from the same kind of hypervisibility, Muslim veils being the target of heated debates around the implementation of secularism. In these examples, gaze, shaped by structural racism, focuses on the racialized other as to make them particularly visible. Yet author and activist bell hooks's idea of an "oppositional gaze" rather responds to instances of *invisibilization* of enslaved Black people. Indeed, one of the strategies of white supremacy during slavery was to deny slaves the right to look at white people. This relegated them to the "realm of the invisible", and prevented them from participating in the intersubjective world[1]. The goal of this essay is to make sense of these dynamics of "invisibilization" and "hypervisibilization", which appear antithetical at first glance.

After having observed and explained how gaze functions

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1   hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination", Black Looks, 168

as to make the racialized other visible or invisible, I will argue that these dynamics can be understood in terms of seeing habits and contextual strategies of racialization. For reasons that will be explained later, no distinction will be made here between *seeing* and *looking*, both encompassed by what we define as gaze.

Being under the spotlight is not inherently positive. In some circumstances, the racist gaze makes the racialized person *hypervisible* both literally and representationally, which contributes to their racialization. This hypervisibility can be understood in two ways: first, the racist gaze is one that "sees" the racialized person as standing out among others, as if they were inherently visible. The French 2004 law, which bans "conspicuous" religious signs in public schools, provides a good example: as Al-Saji recalls in her essay *The Racialization of the Muslim Veil*, this law implicitly targets Muslim veil (and Jewish kippah). More than a mere foulard, the Muslim woman's distinctive sign of religious identity seems to stand out, carrying with it the mark of her racialization. It is interesting that the term "conspicuous" (*"ostensible"* in French) is defined as something which is "meant to be seen" (*"avec l'intention d'être vu"[2]*). It places the intention of distinction in the Muslim woman, rather than in the others' gaze. Much like Al-Saji does in her essay, I would rather argue that it is the gaze of a white racist society, of Christian heritage, which sees any Muslim or Jewish sign as more visible than others. By calling these "conspicuous", French law flips around the accusation, hiding a racist gaze behind the ideal of Republican universalism.

In France, the fact that racialized groups are often identified in public debates with the expression "visible minority" (*minorité visible*) reveals the link between visibility and racialization. It shows how an exterior characteristic, like non-white skin color or a veil, can serve as a basis for a process of othering and come to constitute in itself a symbol of cultural/racial distinction. In this manner, racism is sometimes equated with discrimination on the basis of visual appearance (*délit de faciès*). Al-Saji also gives the example of veiled Algerian women becoming the focus of the gaze of the French colonizer, as the veil becomes a metonymical object for gender oppression and thus a target of missionary (colonial) French projects in Algeria[3]. As a consequence, he Muslim

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2   Définition du Larousse.
3   Al-Saji, "The racialization of the Muslim veil: A Philosophical Analysis", p.883.

woman is essentialized in her veil, and seems inherently more visible in the eyes of the colonizer. As we will see later in this essay, this hypervisibility is intrinsically linked with her othering.

The second way in which racist gaze gives visibility to the racialized other is by making them an object of gaze and attention. In this case, visibility is acquired *through* the racist gaze. This is arguably what Franz Fanon experienced in France. While he seems, like veiled women, to carry an inherent visibility in France because of his skin color, the differential treatment he receives also *makes* him more visible. When people avoid sitting next to him in the train, his personal space and visibility expands, as he can no longer be an anonymous body in the mass. By being stared at, he becomes the center of an attention he does not call for, the gaze of the other "fixing"[4] him quite literally. It is interesting to note the ambivalent meaning of the verb "fixer" in French: it refers both to the act of staring and that of maintaining something in place, like fixing color on a wall. Fanon plays on this double meaning to evoke both the staring looks and the racializing images white people attach to him. The obsession of all people with his skin color reinforces his visibility and alienation; every inevitable remark about his skin color reaffirms his deviance from white normativity[5]."Where should I hide?" asks Fanon.[6]

However, the racist gaze is one that can also "invisibilize" the other. In *Black Looks*, bell hooks recalls the way that white slave owners in the United States did not "see" Black slaves working for them. Indeed, denying them the right to look allowed white people to see nothing but "a pair of hands offering drinks on a silver tray"[7], ignoring the individual behind it. As long as the slave did not look back, he or she was invisible, for only subjects are thought to see and observe. What hooks identifies as a "strategy of domination"[8] can perhaps be better understood through Merleau-Ponty's analysis of vision. In his later work, *The Visible and the Invisible,* he qualifies vision as a participatory and reciprocal process, serving as a basis for intersubjec-

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4   Fanon, The Lived Experience of the Black Man, Black Skin, White Masks, p.95
5   Fanon expresses the obsession with his skin color in these terms: "When they like me, they tell me my color has nothing to do with it. When they hate me, they add that it's not because of my color. Either way, I am a prisoner of the vicious circle" (p.96)
6   Fanon, p.93.
7   In this passage, taken from the chapter "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination" in Black Looks, hooks cites Sallie Bingham's autobiographical work Passion and Prejudice.
8   hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze", p.115.

tivity. According to him, seeing the other allows you to grasp the other's *visible* properties, giving you a perspective on, or an indirect access to, their interiority, and reciprocally. This is why, in quite a literal sense, being seen is a necessary condition for seeing and for intersubjectivity: the painter sees trees, and in a sense, the trees see the painter[9]. By denying slaves the right to look, slave owners denied them the possibility of participating in the reciprocal dynamics of vision, thus breaking any intersubjective relation. Slave owners maintained the illusion of being unseen, their interiority ungraspable, unshaped by the look of the other. Contingently, slaves that did not look could remain invisible in slave owners' eyes.

It is important to note that regardless of the context, in both these processes (making invisible or hypervisible) the gaze of the racialized person is denied. Forbidden in institutionalized slavery context, ignored in others: hooks recalls of her graduate students who could not conceive of a looking back, a representation of whiteness in the Black imagination – a terrorizing one, in addition[10]. Similarly, in contemporary France, the debate on the veil is one in which veiled women are not allowed to participate: their opinion is made secondary, and their affirmation of free will in choosing to wear the veil is interpreted as bad faith. This is what makes veiled women both visible and invisible : hypervisible as a representation, but invisible as a subject[11].

To explain why racialized people sometimes appear and sometimes disappear before racist eyes, it is insightful to appeal once again to Merleau-Ponty's account of vision. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, as Al-Saji summarizes it in her own essay, he dismantles a conception of vision as a neutral gathering of visual information[12]. Instead, vision is an active process through which we evaluate the world in relation to our projects[13]. They allow some objects to be foregrounded, and others to stand out, like stains appear to me when I'm cleaning a table. This is why we make no distinction here between seeing and looking: they don't carry the passivity/activity duality that the terms suggest when vision is itself dynamic and active. This account of vision explains how colonial projects in Algeria like that of unveiling Algerian women could make the veil "hypervisible to the French

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9   Merleau-Ponty, "Eyes and Mind", The Visible and the Invisible, p.167.
10   hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination", p.165.
11   Al-Saji, pp.880/886.
12   Al-Saji, p.890.
13   Merleau-Ponty, "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motricity."
Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 131-132.

male observer"[14] while remaining invisible to Algerian men. In addition, we unconsciously form habits of seeing – which themselves remain invisible – that match our projects and make us see the world differentially, although it appears to each one of us as an unquestionable truth. Thus, in a Western society that endlessly reaffirms white (often Christian) supremacy and nationalistic sentiment, one is brought to see the stranger as a threat, and any affirmation of identity as endangering the prevalent social order. In these circumstances, the veil can be perceived as *ostensible*, and a Black psychiatrist as a striking exception[15]. In parallel, 19th century slave owners who are taught to see slaves as property, acquire the habit of seeing them as "things among things": slaves become as invisible as random objects in familiar surroundings. It is also arguable that the invisibility of slaves was an illusion unconsciously formed by slave owners who did not want to see their own cruelty reflected at them in the slaves' gaze. As hooks explains further in *Black Looks,* slaves were not unable to see and judge: there *was* a looking back, an "oppositional gaze"[16]. But ignoring it allowed slave owners to pretend it did not exist, maintaining the naturalness of slavery methods.

 If vision adapts to one's own projects, it becomes clear how the gaze can function as a strategic tool of racialization. Depending on the context, (post-)colonial and racist structures teach one to look at the racialized other in a way that confirms and reinforces racism. This is what makes racism vicious, resilient and adaptive. The creativity of racism is particularly striking in Angela Davis's account of the "myth of the Black rapist." She explains how after post-Civil War emancipation, when traditional justifications for Black lynching were decried (e.g.: slaves' insurrection or conspiracies), discourses on the danger of Black men's assault on white womanhood were used as a new justification for lynching and racism in the Southern United States. This political invention enabled racism to persist and flourish in a new context, infusing "the entire race with bestiality", leading to confusion in progressive movements and supporting further exploitation of Black labor.[17]

The hypervisibility and invisibility of racialized individuals defined earlier can thus be understood contextually, in terms of

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14   Al-Saji, p.886.
15   Fanon recalls white people's comments about Black people occupying high professions: "We have a Senegalese history teacher. He's very intelligent…. Our physician's black. He's very gentle" (p.96)
16   hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze", p.115.
17   Davis, "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist", Women, Race and Class, pp.182-185.

various strategies of racialization. In the 19th century United States that hooks is referring to, where slavery is an institutionalized norm, any proof of the existence of racialized subjects *as subjects* would question the legitimacy of a system where all men are declared to be naturally equal. But as long as slaves remain "invisible", their subjective existence can be ignored, their access to the white intersubjective world barred, and their agency further limited. In Fanon's France, however, where slavery has been officially abolished for more than a century, where Republican universalism (and equality, and liberty) is the ideal supposedly guiding public discourse, maintaining the structures of racism involves subtler strategies. For example, refusing to talk about "race" as the product of a process of racialization, allows one to silence the experience of racialized individuals and perpetuate a blind-to-itself racism. On the one hand, the affirmation of the equality of all denies the actual oppression of racialized minorities. On the other hand, making those minorities "visible" allows one to draw a distinction between white and non-white people, maintaining a social order that privileges white people. Therefore, endlessly pointing at Fanon's Blackness reaffirms his difference: the woman certifying that he is "as civilized as [white people] are"[18] suggests again that Black people are commonly less civilized. Correspondingly, placing the veil at the heart of public discourse reinforces white gender norms, producing a negative mirror in which western norms of gender can be positively reflected.[19]

A phenomenology of vision and gaze is thus particularly insightful to understand dynamics of racialization. We learn to see according to our projects, and those projects are shaped by the surrounding society. As a consequence, what seems to be at first like antithetical effects of the gaze are to be understood in terms of adaptive and contextual strategies of racialization, namely, hypervisibility and invisibility. Those are defined relative to a certain positionality, in a given society. In every instance of racist gazes, these dynamics participate in securing racist structures and white normativity. Another reason for hooks to encourage us to "shift location"[20] in order to deconstruct practices of racism : if habits of seeing are acquired along a given positionality, shifting location involves a change of standpoint and may allow us to modify these habits, foregrounding other aspects of reality.

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18   Fanon, p.93.
19   Al-Saji, p.875.
20   hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination", p.177.

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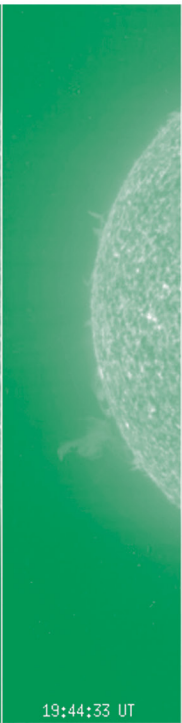
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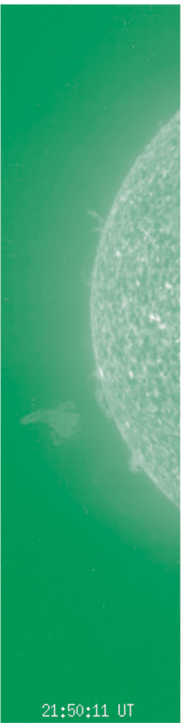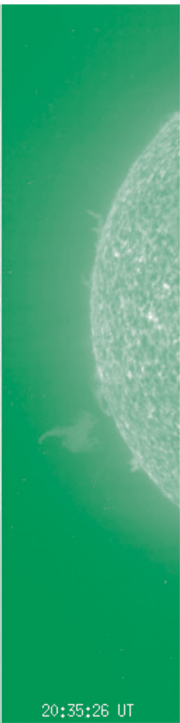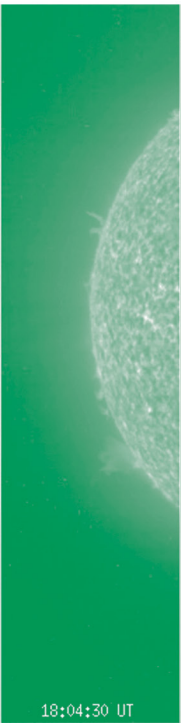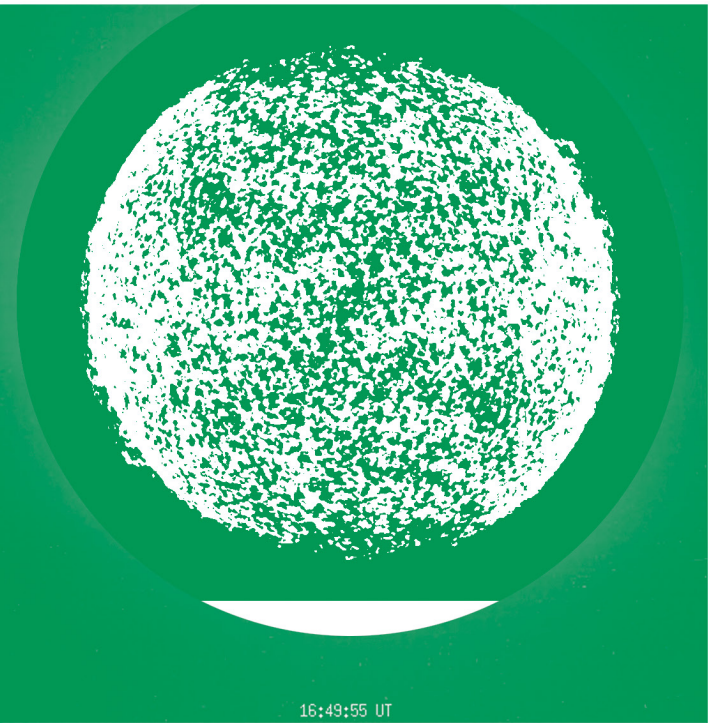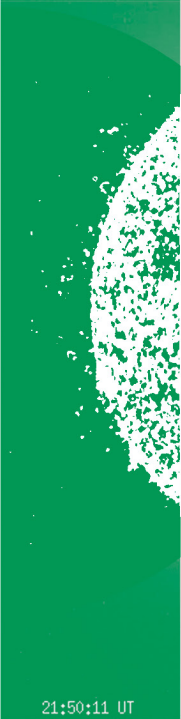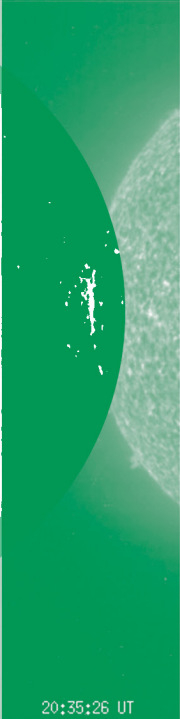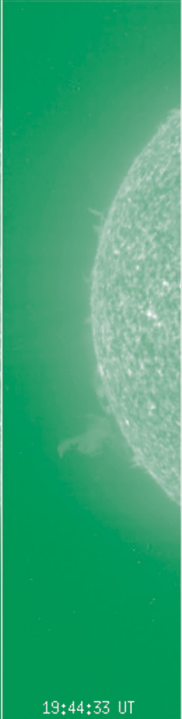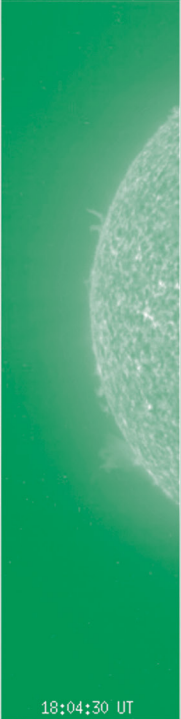
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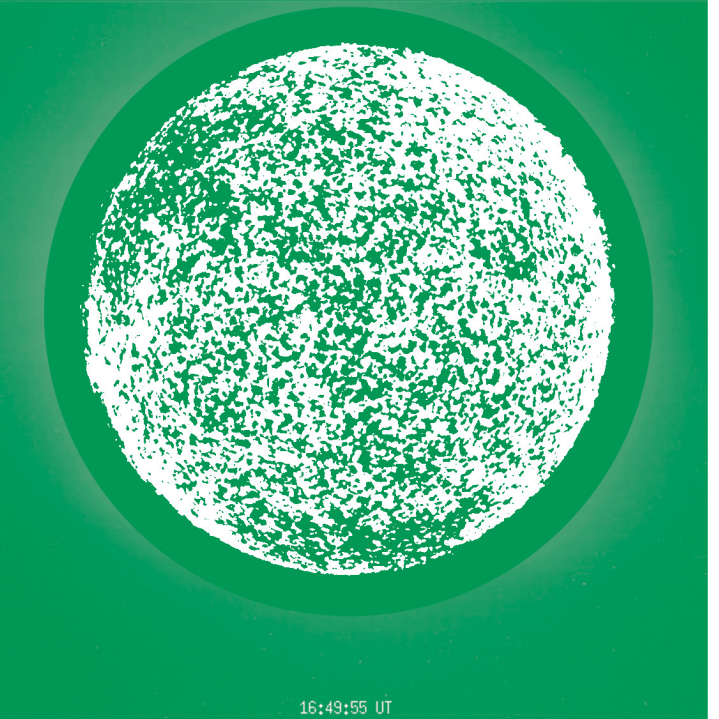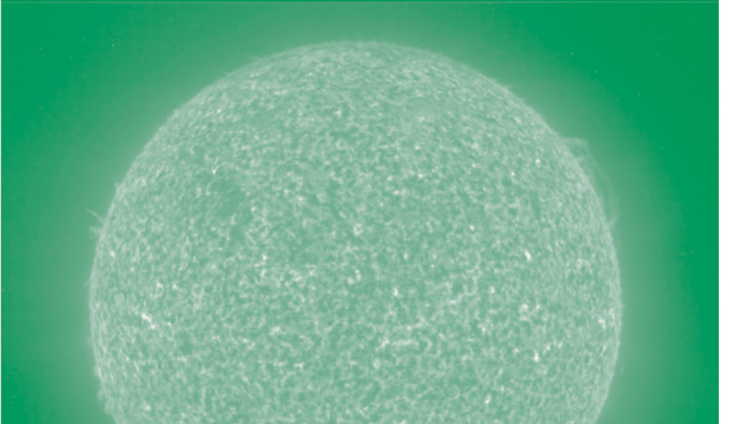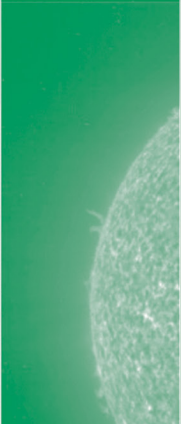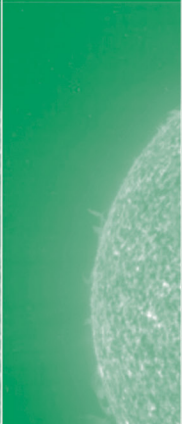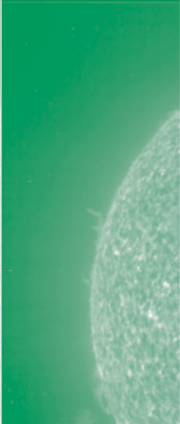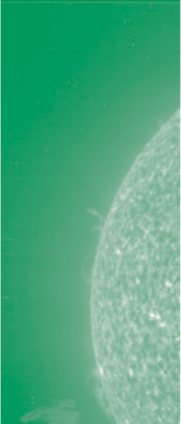21:50:11 UT   20:35:26 UT   19:44:33 UT   18:04:30 UT   16:49:55 UT

Narrative Identity in Paul Ricœur's Oneself as Another: Sameness, Selfhood, and Suffering

Norah Woodcock

In the fifth study of Paul Ricœur's Oneself as Another, narrative identity is crucial for understanding selfhood as temporally extended, and how Ricœur's hermeneutics of text help to make sense of an exegesis of the self. In section 2, I show that this is because narration allows for the dialectic of selfhood and sameness—the structure of identity wherein selfhood and sameness are differentiated but connected dialectically, articulated in a temporal dimension—and for the reconfiguration of the self. I then illustrate in section 3 why Ricœur's hermeneutics of selfhood, wherein identity is understood narratively, is appropriate for self-understanding, because it accurately depicts how we intuitively understand our identities, whether or not it is how we explain them ontologically. Finally, I argue in section 4 that narrative identity is a therapeutically valuable approach, as it enables people who are suffering to understand their experience, to better cope with it, and to undertake processes of recovery and healing.

1. Introduction

In the first four studies of Oneself as Another, Ricœur focuses on a descriptive theory of speech (*who is speaking?*) and of action (*who is acting?).* In the fifth study, he moves to a narrative theory in order to account for the question of selfhood, the self who is "implied in the power-to-do, at the junction of acting and agent"—that is, the self that is the answer to *who is acting* (or *who is suffering, i.e., being acted on*)[1]. This move is necessary for Ricœur because when he introduces the temporal dimension, lacking from the descriptive perspective, he finds he must account for how the agent of the action, or the subject of whom

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1   Paul Ricœur, Oneself as Another, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 113-4.

we speak, "have a history, are their own history."[2] In this paper, I first show how, for Ricœur, this theory of narrative identity is crucial for an understanding of selfhood because narration allows for the dialectic of selfhood and sameness and the reconfiguration of the self. I then illustrate why Ricœur's hermeneutics of selfhood, wherein identity is understood narratively, is not only appropriate for self-understanding but is also therapeutically valuable.

2. Narrative Identity: Narration and the Dialectic of Idem and Ipse

Ricœur sets out the dialectic of personal identity between *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (selfhood), which becomes an issue at this point in *Oneself as Another* with the introduction of the temporal dimension, because the answer to any question *who?* is a self who has a temporal history[3]. *Idem*-identity can refer to numerical identity (oneness) or qualitative identity (extreme resemblance), but with the passage of time, it can become uncertain which one of these two components the similitude is, so "a principle of permanence in time" is also necessary; hence there is a third component to *idem*-identity, that of the "uninterrupted continuity between the first and the last stage of the development of what we consider to be the same individual," allowing us to say that something, *idem*, remains identical throughout a person's life.[4] This continuity is demonstrated in the "ordered series of small changes which … threaten resemblance without destroying it."[5] Conversely, *ipse* is selfhood, the kind of identity that refers not to sameness but reflects back to the subject, referring to the subject herself.

The difference between *idem* and *ipse* only emerges once the temporal element has been added, as the relation between the unchanging *idem*-identity and the changing *ipse*-identity can only unfold in a narrated story[6]. In literature, the extreme of *idem* can be seen in the nearly complete coincidence "between the coherence … and the fixity of character," allowing the character to be identified as the same character throughout the story, from beginning to end; on the other hand, the extreme

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2   Ricœur, Oneself as Another, 113.
3   Oneself as Another, 115-6.
4   Ricœur, Paul. "Approaching the Human Person." Ethical Perspectives 1 (1999): 52; Ricœur, Oneself as Another, 116-7.
5   Ricœur, Oneself as Another, 117.
6   Ricœur, "Approaching the Human Person," 53; Paul Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005): 101.

of *ipse* can be seen in texts (mostly modernist ones) where a character's identity seems to dissolve completely, when selfhood (ipseity) becomes dissociated from sameness[7]. In such extreme cases, the question of personal identity becomes simply *who am I?,* since all that is left is the *ipse*, the only answer to *who?*[8] Even in saying *I am nothing*, "I" refers to a "self deprived of the aid of sameness."[9] The tension of ipseity with sameness is thus revealed in narrative, because when a character changes, these changes "render problematic the identification of the same."[10] In everyday life, Ricœur says that personal identity moves between the poles where *ipse* and *idem* almost completely coincide or almost completely dissociate, but conventional theories of identity do not recognize this dialectic between *idem* and *ipse*, often collapsing *ipse* into *idem* and so making selfhood completely coincident with sameness.[11]

The fifth study of *Oneself as Another* explores whether there is a part of identity whose permanence in time is irreducible to "the determination of a substratum," where the substratum is the *what* of a substance rather than the *who* of selfhood.[12] Here, the question of *what?* is internal to the question of *who?*: I cannot ask who I am without asking *what* I am.[13] According to Ricœur, there are two models of permanence in time when speaking of ourselves: the character and the promise.[14] Character is where we see the "almost complete mutual overlapping" of *idem* and *ipse*, because a character is a set of features and dispositions by which an individual is recognized, i.e., identified as "being the same" over time.[15] At this point, *idem* and *ipse* are indistinguishable in their permanence.[16] The features that lend to a character this permanence in time include those that characterize *idem*-identity, such as biological genetic identity and physical appearance, as well as dispositions, including both habits (traits that give the character a history in which the sedimentation of acquired habits "cover[s] over the innovation which preceded it") and acquired identifications (the identifying of oneself with values, ideals, heroes, and so on, thereby internalizing otherness).[17] Through the dialectics of innovation and

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7   Ricœur, "Approaching the Human Person," 53.
8   "Approaching the Human Person," 53.
9   Paul Ricœur, "Narrative Identity," Philosophy Today 35, no. 1 (1991): 78.
10   Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, 102.
11   Ricœur, "Approaching the Human Person," 53.
12   Ricœur, Oneself as Another, 118.
13   "Approaching the Human Person," 53; Oneself as Another, 118.
14   Oneself as Another, 118-9.
15   Oneself as Another, 119.
16   Oneself as Another, 119-21.
17   Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, 102; Oneself as Another, 121.

sedimentation and of otherness and internalization, the character's permanence in time is here inscribed on both the *ipse* and *idem*, and the history that is thus acquired points to the narrative dimension.[18] In terms of the search for the who of selfhood, Ricœur says that the character is the what of this who (where what coincides with who, although the who is not reducible to the what, and it is not possible for what to be substance without selfhood, *idem* without *ipse*). [19]

The promise, in contrast, is where *ipse* and *idem* almost completely separate, because keeping a promise "marks the extreme gap between the permanence of the self [*ipse*-identity] and that of the same [*idem*-identity]."[20] Ricœur thinks ipseity cannot disappear entirely without the person escaping their capacity for accountability for their actions, which is their ethical identity; the ethical obligation of the promise requires a kind of permanence in time that is opposed to permanence in character, and so *ipse* and *idem* come closest to dissociating entirely here.[21] This permanence is "a *self-constancy* which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely within the dimension of 'who'": in asking *who* promised, *who* keeps their word, there is reference not to identity in general but to the *ipse*-identity, which identifies the person who made the promise and the person who keeps their word now as the same self.[22]

Narrative identity is needed to mediate between these irreducible temporal poles of permanence in time since it is within narrative identity that the dialectic of *idem* and *ipse* can unfold.[23] A temporally extended personal identity can therefore be understood as a narrative identity, and we can see identity being figured as a narrative identity in the reflexive form used (*ipse*) when a person talks about herself narratively (*se raconter*).[24] Ricœur says that the instrument of the dialectic of identity is emplotment, not just of action but of character as well (here "character" refers not to the model of permanence but to the concept of a character in a story).[25] In the sixth study of *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur explains how a character's identity in a narrative is constructed in connection with that narrative's plot, and at this level of the

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18   Oneself as Another, 121-3.
19   Oneself as Another, 122.
20   Oneself as Another, 118-9
21   The Course of Recognition, 103; Oneself as Another, 123-4.
22   Oneself as Another, 123-4.
23   Oneself as Another, 118-9, 124.
24   The Course of Recognition, 99-101.
25   "Approaching the Human Person," 53.

plot there is a "competition" between concordance (the order of the arrangement of facts in the plot) and the threat of discordances (the "reversals of fortune" that can alter the plot). [26]

Ricœur draws on Aristotle's understanding of *muthos* (plot) as *mimesis praxeos* (imitation or representation of action) to explain the structuring function of the plot.[27] Emplotment is the narrative operation whereby events are connected and organized into an "intelligible whole," rather than simply enumerated.[28] The plot synthesizes heterogeneous elements, such as "circumstances, agents, interactions … unintended results," and composes out of them a single unified story whose unity can be characterized as dynamic due to its discordant concordance.[29] This synthesis makes the configuration of these elements intelligible, as we understand the narrative by following or retelling the story, and it also serves the temporal function of synthesizing the two kinds of time in our stories, which are the episodic successions of incidents and the integrations, culminations, and endings "in virtue of which a story gains an outline."[30]

The emplotment of action refers to narrative events, which are part of the plot's "unstable structure of discordant concordance."[31] Action is configured into narrative by emplotment, and this configuration is considered dynamic, because emplotment inverts the contingency of the event into narrative necessity. [32]The other process of emplotment, that of the character, is also a narrative category as plot is, because characters are those who perform the actions in the narrative; in fact, Ricœur says that characters are themselves plots.[33] The character's identity is made comprehensible through emplotment as well, and its configuration thus corresponds to the configuration of the narrative.[34] There is also a dialectic, correlative to the plot's discordant concordance, that is internal to the character: the character's singularity is drawn from "the unity of a life considered a temporal totality," but this temporal totality is "threatened by unforeseeable events," which take on narrative necessity as part

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26   Oneself as Another, 141.
27   Paul Ricœur, "Life: A Story in Search of Narrator," in Facts and Values: Philosophical Reflections from Western and Non-Western Perspectives, ed. M. C. Doeser and J. N. Kraay (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986): 122.
28   Ricœur, "Life," 122.
29   "Life," 122; Paul Ricœur, "The Text as Dynamic Identity," in Identity of the Literary Text, ed. Mario J. Valdés and Owen Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985): 176.
30   "Life," 123; "The Text as Dynamic Identity," 176-7.
31   Oneself as Another, 142.
32   Oneself as Another, 142.
33   The Course of Recognition, 100; Oneself as Another, 143.
34   "Narrative Identity," 78; Oneself as Another, 143.

of the plot of the character's story.[35] One's narrative identity thus emerges from the narration of one's life, as the character shares the particular condition of dynamic identity that belongs to the story being told, with the story's identity shaping the character's identity.[36] The process of emplotment is therefore crucial for understanding selfhood because it is through this process that narrative identity, which is only disclosed in the dialectic between sameness and selfhood, is constructed. Furthermore, if we ask *who* it is who narrates the story of a life, the answer is the self (*ipse*), so selfhood is central to narrative identity.

3. Hermeneutics of Identity:
Narrators and Characters of Our Lives

We have seen how a narrative theory of identity allows selfhood to be understood as temporally extended and how this hermeneutic approach supports the dialectic of *idem* and *ipse*. But should we even be adopting a narrative approach to the question of personal identity? It could be objected that our identity cannot be understood as narrative because of the ambiguity of the notion of author (when I interpret myself in terms of a life story, I am narrator and character, and possibly co-author, but not author), but Ricœur responds that "[b]y narrating a life of which I am not the author as to its existence, I make myself its coauthor as to its meaning."[37] Though there seems to be a contrast between a life that is lived and a story that is told, by interpreting the lives we are living and by appropriating narratives, such as cultural or fictional ones, into our own lives, we gain "a narrative understanding of ourselves" and "learn to become the narrator of our own story without completely becoming the author of our life"—and this is only possible within the dialectic of selfhood and sameness.[38] Through the narrative interpretation of her identity, by which she comes to self-understanding, a person thus coauthors the meaning of her life. [39]

It could still be argued that construction of personal identity cannot involve the appropriation of narratives into our lives, because there seems to be a distinct separation between the lives we live and the narrative world of fiction.[40] But in Ricœur's hermeneutics of text, there is no undialectical distinction or sep-

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35   Oneself as Another, 147.
36   Oneself as Another, 147.
37   Oneself as Another, 160-2.
38   "Life," 131-2.
39   "Narrative Identity," 80.
40   "Life," 121.

aration between the inner world of the text and outer "actual" world of the reader; rather, he thinks that the narrative text's identity emerges at where the world of the text and that of the reader intersect.[41] He considers the narrative text itself to have a dynamic identity, with the act of reading both resuming and completing the dynamic configurational act of narration: the act of reading actualizes the narrative's ability to transfigure the reader's experience, so the story's meaning arises "in the interaction between text and recipient," with the narrative text being an unfinished one whose gaps the reader fills in (the text provides paradigms and instructions that guide the reader by structuring her expectations for the story).[42] Since emplotment, the configurational operation of narration, is the joint work of text and reader, Ricœur thinks that reading fiction is "a way of living in the fictitious universe of the work" and thus stories are told as well as lived in the "imaginary mode."[43] The same work of hermeneutics is applied in the narrative identity: the emplotment of narration configures the narrative identity, with this narrative being lived in the "real" world of the individual, and so there is a less distinct boundary between the world of the life lived and that of the story told.

The similarity between the hermeneutics of text and that of identity is one reason why narrative identity is a particularly suitable way for Ricœur to understand the self, as is the reason that narrative identity allows for the dialectical distinction between *ipse* and *idem*, which allows for the persistence of a person's selfhood over time to be intelligible. Most of all, narrative identity is appropriate for depicting the way we understand ourselves because it accurately represents the way in which we intuitively describe our lives as stories and ourselves as characters in them. Moreover, as Andreea Deciu Ritivoi says, an argument for "the 'inevitability' of an identity-narrative" does not have to be judged by any "claim about what features the self truly possesses or instantiates."[44] In claiming that I think about myself, my life, and my identity in a certain way (i.e., narratively), it is not necessary that this actually *be* their true ontological structure.

It also seems that most people do have an "intuitive pre-understanding" of life as a fusion between fiction and history. This is why Ricœur looks for this fusion in the constitution of narra-

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41   "Text" 183-4.
42   "Life," 126; "The Text as Dynamic Identity," 183-5
43   "Life," 127.
44   Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, "Explaining People: Narrative and the Study of Identity," Storyworlds 1 (2009): 31.

tive identity—human lives, he points out, "become more readable when they are interpreted in function of the stories people tell about themselves," and those life stories are "rendered more intelligible when they are applied to narrative models—plots—borrowed from history and fiction."[45] Similarly, we often refer to the interval between a person's birth and her death as the story of her life.[46] Hence, we find that this is the way we already speak about our lives—"equating life to the story or stories we tell about it."[47] In speaking about our lives this way, are we not interpreting them as narratives, making the lives we lead more intelligible by constructing a narrative identity, and being influenced by the narratives that we encounter on an everyday basis?

As Eakin points out, we are already "embedded in a narrative identity system … Our social arrangements … require self-narration as the occasion demands, and the identity narratives we produce, delivered piecemeal everyday, establish for others our possession of normal, functioning identities."[48] Identity must also be understood as narrative because of the crucial role of the mediation of narratives of daily life, including cultural signs and fictional stories, in the configuration of narrative identity and so in self-knowledge.[49] We reinterpret our narrative identities by drawing on familiar cultural stories, and we can, as readers, appropriate a fictional character's identity (recall the relationship between the world of text and that of reader discussed above).[50] Therefore another reason why a hermeneutics of selfhood is appropriate is the omnipresence of fictional narratives in our lives: fiction is "an irreducible dimension of *the understanding of the self*," and "fiction cannot be completed other than in life," and "life cannot be understood other than through stories we tell about it"—they are interconnected, and a life examined must be one that is *narrated*.[51] The intuitive and ingrained nature of such an approach to identity also points to the pre-narrative capacity of our lives: a life that is not narrated has the capacity to be narrated and thus interpreted. In our daily experience, Ricœur says, we tend "to see a certain chain of episodes of our life as stories not yet told, stories that seek to be told, stories that offer anchor points for the narrative."[52] Hence a

45   Ricœur, "Narrative Identity," 73.
46   Ricœur, "Life," 121.
47   Ricœur, "Narrative Identity," 77.
48   Quoted in Ritivoi, "Explaining People," 31.
49   Ricœur, "Life," 127; Ricœur, "Narrative Identity," 80.
50   Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, 101; "Narrative Identity," 80.
51   Ricœur, "Life," 130.
52   Life," 129.

narrative theory of identity is appropriate for self-understanding because it accurately depicts how we intuitively understand our identities, regardless of whether it can explain their ontology.

4. Narrative Identity in Suffering and Recovery: An Approach to Therapy

Narrative identity is also useful in our understanding of selfhood because of its therapeutic potential for recovery from suffering, trauma, or illness, allowing us to reinterpret our identities in the temporal dimension. In fact, Ricœur claims that narrative is what generates our capacity to bear and endure suffering.[53] Action must involve both agents and sufferers, with the essential dissymmetry of agents initiating action processes by which sufferers are affected.[54] When referring to action, Ricœur is therefore also referring to the suffering that accompanies it.[55] In configuring a narrative identity we are trying to structure and make sense of "chaos and confusion," which Ricœur says allows him to "join of suffering to action," with our capacity to narrate being maintained throughout all of the fragmentation of human experience, both active and passive.[56] Of course, suffering refers to passion, to an undergoing as the patient of an action, and not necessarily to distress, but it is significant that the word suffering implies, like passion in French, that being acted upon is an opening to undergoing harm. This is why Ricœur believes that, in emphasizing suffering as the counterpart of action in the emplotment of narrative, we need "to recapture the theme of mourning by revealing its narrative component."[57]

The work of mourning, which Ricœur borrows from Freud, is important for selfhood, as it allows for healing through narrative reinterpretation, being a kind of "working-through" of memory carried out at a narrative level.[58] In mourning one detaches oneself from the lost object and, through the work of mourning, is able to interiorize this object again, "as a kind of internal icon," coming to terms with loss in a movement of reconciliation.[59] To mourn, a person must reinterpret her narrative of the past, and will learn both "to narrate otherwise" and to let herself "be nar-

53   Paul Ricœur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life-Stories," Philosophy Today 47, no. 3 (2003): 322.
54   Ricœur, Oneself as Another, 144.
55   Ricœur, "Life," 127.
56   Ricœur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life-Stories," 322-3.
57   Sorrows and the Making of Life-Stories," 323.
58   Ricœur, "Can Forgiveness Heal?," 32.
59   "Can Forgiveness Heal?," 34; Paul Ricœur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue between Paul Ricœur and Sorin Antohi," trans. Gil Anidjar, Janus Head 8 (2005): 24

rated by the other," insofar as she comes to terms with a new interpretation of herself and a new relationship with her past, having lost previously held illusions about her life, and having been the sufferer (the patient) of another's action.[60] Narrative identity thus allows for this narrative working-through which allows someone to understand, and begin to heal from, the discordant influence of others' actions.[61] For instance, Morny Joy shows how incest victims, in writing narratives of their experiences, can "achieve a measure of distance, of a fragile hold on the present," like the work of mourning, and can use the narrative to thematize "events that may otherwise be … too chaotic or too distressing."[62] I therefore think that narrative identity, in allowing for the unfolding of the dialectic between *ipse* and *idem* wherein a person's identity is neither totally fixed nor totally fragmented, is extremely valuable in helping someone to come to terms with the suffering she has undergone, as she can make sense of it, of the self who suffered and the self who is telling the story of suffering, while being able to recover and to reconstitute the self who has recovered, putting that suffering in the past.

Likewise, it has been suggested that narrative approaches to identity are useful in the treatment of illness or trauma by helping the patient to make sense of her lived experience and exert her agency in reconstituting her identity. For instance, Henderikus J. Stam and Lori Egger argue that, although much of what happens to us may remain at the pre-narrative level, not being configured into an explicit narrative, "[o]n some occasions narrative intelligibility is crucial to personal and social life," and therapy helps to form "narratives that are socially, if not acceptable, at least intelligible."[63] They say that there is in fact a hermeneutic imperative that we make meaning out of the pre-narrative, uninterpreted content of our lives, with narrative texts exposing us to alternative possibilities.[64] Olivier Taïeb et al. also see the refiguration of the self that comes from the re-interpretation of one's identity through the narrative approach as a promising path to recovery, and they argue that the "ill-

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60 Paul Ricœur, "The Difficulty to Forgive," in Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur, ed. M. Junker-Kenny (Münster: LIT, 2004), 7, 15-6; Ricœur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness," 23-4.
61 Ricœur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life-Stories," 324.
62 Morny Joy, "Writing as Repossession: The Narratives of Incest Victims," in Paul Ricœur and Narrative: Context and Contestation, ed. Morny Joy (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1997): 38, 42.
63 Henderikus J. Stam and Lori Egger, "Narration and Life: On the Possibilities of a Narrative Psychology," in Paul Ricœur and Narrative: Context and Contestation, ed. Morny Joy (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1997): 73-4.
64 Stam and Egger, "Narration and Life," 80.

ness narrative"—which is a story that a patient tells in order "to give coherence to the distinctive events and long-term course of suffering," articulating her experience of illness through narrative—is especially helpful for drug addicts, because of how elusive their lives feel and the uncertainty of their temporal experience.[65]

In addition, by appropriating the narratives of "popular and professional literature," an addict can organize her life and give it intelligibility, as well as articulate the experience of new beginnings and the making of provisional endings.[66] Addicts usually encounter specialized professional literature about addiction and recovery indirectly, through the mediation of various professionals.[67] Taïeb et al. describe clinicians and patients "collaborat[ing] in creating a therapeutic plot," which reflects the joint construction for which Stam and Egger advocate: they endorse a "postmodern" narrative approach to therapy wherein therapist and client "jointly construct an alternative narrative," drawn from "many culturally available narratives," with the overall goal being to construct a unified narrative that can guide "the client's understanding of life, action and the world" and that allows her to describe and explore possible versions of herself.[68] Taïeb et al. also emphasize that narrative identity in this case is not simply the story a person tells herself about her recovery, but is itself a component of the recovery, because the addict reconstructs her sense of self by reinterpreting her life and giving "convincing explanations" for her recovery and renewal of identity.[69] The person emerges from the recovery process as different from the person who experienced the illness, and from the person who was in a different state of health before the illness, but through the narrative configuration of identity (wherein *ipse* and *idem* are connected dialectically throughout change and discordance) she maintains a sense of being the same self over these periods of time.

Catriona Mackenzie and Jacqui Poltera also underscore the "fragmentary nature of lived experience," especially that of mental illness, which narrative identity helps us to organize in order to understand ourselves and our lives.[70] Specifically, they claim

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65   Olivier Taïeb et al., "Is Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity Useful in Understanding Recovery in Drug Addicts?," Qualitative Health Research 18, no. 7 (2008): 991, 994.

66   Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 994.

67   Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 998.

68   Stam and Egger, "Narration and Life," 74, 80; Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 998.

69   Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 997.

70   Catriona Mackenzie and Jacqui Poltera, "Narrative Integration, Fragmented

that the illness narrative can help patients "give expression to their suffering and some kind of meaning to their disordered experience."[71] They argue against Galen Strawson's episodic approach to identity, which says that identity can be understood in non-narrative terms: an episodic person knows "in principle" that she is "'roughly' the same person" she was in the past, and does not perceive any sameness between her "present and past selves."[72] Mackenzie and Poltera, however, use the case of a person suffering from schizophrenia to show that "genuinely episodic self-experience," that does not get constructed into a coherent narrative, is identity-undermining.[73] Since narrative identity allows us to make sense of ourselves as temporally extended subjects, someone who cannot grasp a sense of identity over an extended period of time and whose identity is thus reduced to *ipse* without support of *idem* feels "disconnected from her own past and future," emotionally disconnected from others (since relationships with others do not make sense without a temporal history), and unable to distinguish between reality and delusion through interpretation.[74]

A narrative identity does not need to portray "a seamless, coherent unity," but rather can be self-constituting despite being fragmented as long as the person can interpret her experiences as temporally extended, integrating the fragments into some sort of narrative without entirely separating *idem* and *ipse* from each other.[75] For instance, in response to the objection that, since a life is narratively incomplete (I cannot grasp the beginning or end of my narrative and thus cannot see it as a singular totality), identity cannot be understood narratively, Ricœur embraces this incompleteness, saying that the narrative unity of life is "an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience," and that literature can be used to retrospectively organize one's life and to understand its beginning and end.[76] This lack of beginning and closure is reflected in the ability of ipseity to go "beyond the safety of mere sameness" in the self-constancy of the promise.[77] We do not strive to get a unity of substance from narrative identity, but narrative wholeness; even so, if narrative wholeness cannot be obtained, we can still refer to an *ipse* who, as long as there is some narrative with some temporal ex-

Selves, and Autonomy," Hypatia 25, no. 1 (2010): 32, 42.

71   Mackenzie and Poltera, "Narrative Integration," 32, 42.
72   Ritivoi, "Explaining People," 28.
73   Mackenzie and Poltera, "Narrative Integration," 32-3.
74   "Narrative Integration," 40.
75   "Narrative Integration," 47-8.
76   Ricœur, Oneself as Another, 160-2.
77   Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, 103.

tension, is not entirely separated from *idem*.[78] Narrative identity therefore helps those suffering from illness and trauma to hold on to a sense of self, constitute meaning in their lives, and reinterpret their identities, allowing them to cope or even to heal.

A possible criticism of narrative identity in this context is that "a person's self-narrative may be quite falsifying," since people often deceive themselves or exaggerate. As Mackenzie and Poltera observe, however, our access to our past and present experience is always mediated by some interpretation (which is not the same thing as "merely inventing fictions"), and there are still constraints against the ability of narratives that include "delusions and gross distortions" to actually be self-constituting in this narrative approach.[79] Furthermore, there is a danger in the narrative approach to therapy that narratives and characters could be appropriated uncritically and thus be harmful to a person's understanding of themselves and the world around them, but Ricœur does stress that such appropriation should be as critical as possible.[80] Taïeb et al. also mention that narrative identity is constructed through many encounters and interactions, not just one encounter with one narrative, minimizing the threat of inadvertently falsified self-narratives.[81]

There are also possible problems that can emerge from the mimetic circle in Ricœur's theory of narrative identity. As we have seen, there is a "reciprocal relation" between the work of the text's world and the reader's world, and life configures narrative while "narrative configures and reconfigures life" in what can be considered a mimetic circle.[82] When it comes to therapeutic treatment, many elements of the professionals' discourse are also found in the addicts' narratives because of how the narrative is socially constructed.[83] There is thus a "circle linking narrative and illness," because the illness narrative reflects how the illness is experienced, and in giving shape and meaning to it, contributes to the experience, and this structure may seem problematic or even fallacious.[84] But the fact that "human experience is already mediated by … all kinds of stories we have

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78   Ricœur, "Life," 132.
79   Mackenzie and Poltera, "Narrative Integration," 43-4.
80   Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, 100; Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 995, 998.
81   Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 998
82   Ricœur, "The Text as Dynamic Identity," 186; Linda Fisher, "Mediation, Muthos, and the Hermeneutic Circle in Ricœur's Narrative Theory," in Paul Ricœur and Narrative: Context and Contestation, ed. Morny Joy (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1997): 216.
83   Taïeb et al., "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 994, 997
84   "Ricœur's Notion of Narrative Identity," 991.

heard," told by others whose existence has been thus mediated, and so on, is not evidence of a vicious circle in Ricœur's theory: firstly, he argues that experience as such already has a pre-narrative structure, and this is "virtual narrativity" that does not come from "a projection of literature on life."[85] Secondly, the mimetic circle is what Fisher calls "not a vicious, but a healthy circularity," as it is one of the hermeneutical circles Ricœur uses in which two terms have a dialectical, reflexive, and progressive relationship wherein their activity is mutually informing.[86] The valuable advantages of narrative identity for coping with suffering or illness, described above, are therefore not undermined by narrative incompleteness, inevitable falsification, or vicious circularity.

5. Conclusion

For all these reasons, narrative identity is not only a suitable way to describe selfhood, but is therapeutically valuable for people to adopt as an approach to identity. The dialectic of identity, wherein *idem* and *ipse* are differentiated but connected dialectically, can only take place in the space of narrative identity, because they can only be articulated in a temporal dimension. Therefore, in Oneself as Another, narrative identity is crucial for understanding selfhood as temporally extended, and Ricœur's hermeneutics of text help to make sense of an exegesis of the self. I have also shown why I think that narrative identity is a suitable and accurate way to depict how we intuitively understand our identities, and why I think that there is significant therapeutic merit in narrative identity due to how it enables people who are suffering, from illness or other troubles, to understand their experience and better cope with it, and to even undertake processes of recovery and healing in the configuration of narrative identity.

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85   Ricœur, "Life," 129
86   Fisher, "Mediation," 209, 213.

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Phenomenology of the racialized body: a tool for challenging systematized racism

Elvire Rallis

This essay compares Sara Ahmed's phenomenology of the racialized body to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: Merleau-Ponty, an able-bodied white man, universalized his phenomenology of motility to all bodies, which, this essay demonstrates, overlooks the experiences of more marginalized individuals. He presents the body as the power for determinate action, as the condition of possibility for living among others. Ahmed, on the other hand, presents the racialized body as a source of great limitation, as one's intentionality is directed toward it rather than toward space and others. She argues that the racialized body cannot project its possibilities into space in the same way that the white body does, as public spaces are "oriented around" white bodies, forcing the racialized body into a perpetual state of alienation. Moreover, this essay examines the way in which the white body's historical tendency to expand into space has forced the racialized body into the margins of society. In an attempt to offer a new (phenomenological) understanding of the racializing process, this essay presents Linda Martin Alcoff's ideas on the habit of racialization, offering a possible outlet for challenging habitual formations that perpetuate racial oppression at their root—that is, at the pre-reflective level. Finally, this essay draws on Alia Al-Saji's notion of "hesitation", emphasizing the affective weight of colonial formations on the racialized body, and ultimately revealing this state of perpetual alienation as a critical intervention for reconfiguring the orientation of white spaces.

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Maurice Merleau-Ponty presents the body as the condition of possibility of existence in all beings. It is through a dialogue between the body and the objects in the world, he argues, that objects show themselves to us. The body is therefore the medium through which we have access to things. Sara Ahmed's account of the racialized body in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) presents a body faced with limitations, one that is the basis of restriction in a predominantly white world. Through an analysis

of Merleau-Ponty and Ahmed's respective views of the body I argue that the white body's ease of motility shields it from perceiving the systematized racialization of spaces. Furthermore, drawing on texts by Alia Al-Saji and Linda Martin Alcoff, I demonstrate the way in which a phenomenological account of the racialized lived experience, such as Ahmed's, can be used as a tool to make visible this systematized racialization.

Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is a power which connects me with the world and allows me to fundamentally grasp it. We don't see the body, but rather see with it: "it is the darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance,"[1] which also implies that it is necessary for us in order to experience the world. For example, I don't perceive my hand while writing, rather I focus on the writing itself—if I were to shift the focus to my hand, I wouldn't be able to write as fluidly. My body, then, is that which allows me to access the world: it picks "privileged figures against indifferent backgrounds … insofar as my body is polarized by its tasks … it *exists towards* them."[2] With respect to our projects, in other words, our body is driven towards cues from its environment to give meaning to them. Giving meaning to an object, and thus understanding it as such, is that which in turn allows me to operate freely with it: knowing how to drive a car gives me greater possibilities for travel than not knowing. This understanding and by consequence meaning-making thus allows me to project my possibilities into the world.

This understanding, however, is not theoretical: Merleau-Ponty distinguishes it as bodily understanding. He asserts, "consciousness is originarily not an "I think that," but rather an "I can."[3] We understand things by living them, not by reflecting upon them. For instance, I can only fundamentally understand—or grasp—driving a car by driving it, no matter how much theory I have practiced. Our body consequently makes sense of the world by experiencing it, which is an active process; we cannot obtain knowledge about something without actively pursuing it. In other words, the body is "a power for determinate action,"[4] where action is the condition for its existence—it is a force that dynamically occupies, or inhabits, the objects in its projectivity. Merleau-Ponty thus understands "motricity unequivocally as original intentionality,"[5] which situates the body

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1   Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motricity."
Phenomenology of Perception, trans. By Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2012, 103
2   Ibid.
3   Merleau-Ponty, 139
4   Ibid., 108
5   Ibid., 139

as one's primordial access to the world. Therefore, the body is the condition of possibility for us as beings-in-the-world, and we understand the things within the world by projecting it—our limbs, our eyes...—towards them.

Ahmed argues that this power to project one's possibilities into the world is a privilege only certain bodies possess. She claims that in a white society, "whiteness "goes unnoticed"… white bodies do not have to face their whiteness."[6] This considerably echoes Merleau-Ponty's comparison of the body to the darkness of the theater—where the body facilitates one's access to the world—which Ahmed attributes to white bodies specifically: such bodies "trail behind"[7] actions, they are unaware of their whiteness. In a white society, whiteness is inevitably the default—and therefore the 'neutral'. Ahmed even compares whiteness itself to this 'darkness': it is ""the background," as what shapes the conditions of arrival."[8] In other words, our whiteness—which we're not explicitly aware of—opens doors that allow us to navigate more spaces than others; the "performance", namely the world we're situated in, is more accessible for us by virtue of this whiteness.

Ahmed explains this phenomenon through the orientation of bodies and spaces. Essentially, "the white world is a world oriented "around" whiteness."[9] Being oriented "around" something means "to make that thing central, or as being at the center of one's being or action."[10] A seemingly mundane example is stores catering shampoo for predominantly white hair types. Whiteness is what Western society is shaped around, while blackness—and black hair types—for example, remains at the margins. Furthermore, it is this orientation around whiteness that allows it to be oriented toward other things: "we are oriented … toward objects, and those objects are "other" than us."[11] Being oriented toward things involves a directionality, an othering which discerns the self from the not-self. In whiteness being around me, I no longer pay attention to it—I therefore am oriented toward non-whiteness. This is why the white body "trails behind" and is not noticed—and by consequence becomes a power for determinate action—while the racialized body is. For the racialized body then, this orientation around whiteness "turns the body

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6   Ahmed, Sara. "The Orient and Other Others." Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others, Duke UP, 2006, 132
7   Ibid.
8   Ahmed, 137
9   Ibid., 126
10   Ibid., 116
11   Ibid., 133

back toward itself as the object that the action is orientated toward."[12] In not finding shampoo for her hair type, a black woman is made aware of her blackness. Rather than being oriented toward other things, the racialized body hence remains in the foreground of perception. Therefore, in a world oriented around whiteness the racialized body is often impeded from being a power of determinate action—almost never lagging behind, it becomes the object of attention.

Alia Al-Saji similarly examines the racialized lived experience through the notion of hesitation. She argues that colonial and racial formations of the past manufacture our everyday experiences without our explicit realization, and such systems of power are "disregarded … from white … perspectives, yet intensely structuring the everyday for the occupied, racialized, and "formerly colonized"."[13] Racialized individuals' experiences are often hindered by the past's influence in the present, which is felt in the form of hesitation. She explains, "hesitation may be produced by situations of oppression"[14]: in being racialized—in experiencing one's body as the foreground of perception—one can experience this hesitation. It involves a "delay with respect to meaning-making in the world,"[15] producing a dissonance that arises in response to one's projects being limited: whether it is not finding shampoo as a black woman or, more disturbingly, not being able to travel freely. From such situations emanates a discomfort, a sense of non-belonging turning the racialized body's attention inward instead of into the world.

By contrast, Merleau-Ponty alludes to a body that expands into the world, which he defines as the habitual body. He claims that "habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments."[16] In other words, the habitual body is the body's mode of being through which it integrates and unifies itself with the world. For example, walking home through an unfamiliar path may cause me to ask for directions or look at a map. In becoming habituated to this path, however, I can comfortably walk while talking, while reflecting, without thinking of the path itself—I can move freely within that space which my body has incorporated. Habit therefore involves an appropriation of the

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12   Ibid., 146
13   Al-Saji, Alia. "Hesitation as a Philosophical Method—Travel bans, colonial durations, and the affective weight of the past." Journal of Speculative Philosophy 32, 3, 2018, 346.
14   Ibid., 337.
15   Ibid., 338.
16   Merleau-Ponty, 145.

othered object, in order to assimilate it as part of the body, and effectively use it to fulfill one's projects.

According to Ahmed, this tendency of assimilation characterizes whiteness—and she thus defines whiteness as a *bad habit*.[17] This phenomenology of "I can" *"describes the ease with which the white body extends itself in the world through how it is oriented toward objects and others."*[18] Whiteness, operating as an ontological force, has a tendency to appropriate things: as revealed above, white bodies orient themselves toward the world, expanding their reach, unlike oriented-toward-self racialized bodies. This tendency creates a universal incorporation of things into whiteness, rendering them a part of it, which as a phenomenon is highly visible in history: whiteness has colonized—in other words, appropriated and assimilated—everything in its path it has perceived as non-white. Ahmed notes, *"history can also be described as a process of domestication—of making some objects and not others available as what we "can" reach."*[19] She therefore explains that the habit of appropriation—the "bad habit"—has shaped the way in which different bodies move in space today. Consequently, this results in allowing "some bodies to take up spaces by restricting the mobility of others."[20] Through their perpetual expansion, white bodies have taken up more space in society: this is plainly visible in the media, for example, where whiteness is overly depicted at the expense of more diverse representation.

This bodily expansion is further illustrated by Merleau-Ponty's idea of the intentional arc: it is a "vector moving in every direction … by which we can orient ourselves toward anything."[21] It is the pre-reflective, bodily understanding that we have of our world that allows things to show up for us in a particular way. In other words, the intentional arc binds the body to the world, which is understood as meaningful and already 'there': it "projects around us our past, our future, our human milieu, our physical situation, our ideological situation, and our moral situation" and "ensures that we are situated within all of these relationships."[22] The attitude then with which I orient my body in the world affects my possibilities: a single object is experienced differently by each body that dialogues with it. This may be visible in two different ways in which an old employee and

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17 Ahmed, 129.
18 Ibid., 138.
19 Ibid., 117.
20 Ibid., 129.
21 Merleau-Ponty, 137.
22 Ibid.

a new one engage within their work-space: the old employee, being more familiar with it, may stop by a coworker's desk to have a chat on her way to the coffee machine; the new employee will not yet perceive such an action as one of her possibilities, as she hasn't established a relationship with her coworkers. Both attitudes allow one to relate oneself to the world, rather than constantly having to re-learn everything one encounters. Our intentional arc therefore ensures that the body isn't in space, but lives or inhabits it, implicitly informing us of our possibilities within it.

Continuing this idea, Merleau-Ponty explains that our body grasps things through their physiognomy. It doesn't constantly analyze each of their parts: "the subject takes up the sense scattered across the object and the object gathers together the subject's intentions."[23] An object presents various features that, with respect to our intention, we just understand. In perceiving a friend walking in the street, we simply get who it is from our prior knowledge of her style of walking or clothing. This physiognomic apprehension, then, is about recognizing things in a non-theoretical way—it is the "I can" of Merleau-Ponty's consciousness. Through the aforementioned intentional arc, the body polarizes the world and "physiognomic perception, arranges a world around the subject that speaks to him on the topic of himself and places his own thoughts in the world."[24] In other words, by projecting my intentions into the world, I can make sense of it for me, and reach things accordingly.

Ahmed conversely argues that this way of being in the world is characteristic of whiteness, and therefore defines whiteness as a style. She asserts, "white bodies—come to "possess" whiteness *as if it were a shared attribute.*"[25] White bodies share a style of being in the world, which isn't itself inherited. Instead, "likeness is an effect of proximity or contact, which is then "taken up" as a sign of inheritance."[26] Ahmed distances her argument from whiteness (and race in general) as appearance or property and presents it instead as an ontological force governing our daily interactions. She suggests that whiteness is a way of being that is adopted vicariously, in the same way that I adopt my older siblings' behavioral traits while growing up. She defines whiteness as "an orientation that puts certain things within reach,"[27] offering thus a phenomenological ac-

23   Ibid., 134.
24   Merleau-Ponty, 124.
25   Ahmed, 125.
26   Ibid., 123.
27   Ibid., 126.

count of privilege, where being white allows for more opportunities in life—getting a job, a loan, and so on. Ahmed therefore redefines Merleau-Ponty's "phenomenology of the "I can" as a phenomenology of whiteness."[28] The body as "I can" pertains to white bodies, in a world which, oriented around them, grants them a full scope of movement.

The racialized body therefore isn't always a condition for possibility. Rather than as "I can" it often experiences itself as an "I cannot": "to be black or not white in "the white world" is to turn back toward oneself, to become an object, means not only not being extended by the contours of the world, but being diminished as an effect of the bodily extensions of others."[29] In a society oriented around whiteness, white bodies take more space, and overpower the racialized body's intentional arc. This is materialized in the context of cultural appropriation, for example: cornrow braids have been generally characterized as 'ghetto' on black bodies—for instance often being the reason for one's rejection from job applications—while white bodies who have adopted this hairstyle are now praised for it. This demonstrates the way in which white bodies' intentional arcs expand over those of racialized bodies, therefore magnifying their own meaning-making capacity while reducing that of others.

Racialized bodies are then arguably limited in their possibilities to polarize the world. Ahmed explains how such bodies are *stopped*—in situations of hesitation, in questions such as "Who are you? Why are you here?"[30] the body is constantly put into question. In being stopped, the racialized body experiences its otherness as an object, leading it to "feel pressure upon one's bodily surface, where the body feels the pressure point as a restriction in what it can do."[31] This counters therefore Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of motility, of the body as a power of possibility—the body in Ahmed's account is rather one of frequent impossibility, one that is stopped. Ahmed thus makes a distinction between "an active body, which extends itself through objects" and "one that is negated or "stopped" in its tracks."[32] The latter cannot be polarized by its tasks, as its attention is oriented inwards. Ahmed uses Husserl's biography to embody the difference between the two: Husserl was an esteemed white philosopher with significant influence, who rapidly

28   Ibid., 138.
29   Ahmed, 139.
30   Ibid.
31   Ibid.
32   Ibid., 110.

became reduced to his Jewishness during the expansion of Nazi Germany. During this time, he lost his place as a renowned scholar and—by losing his philosopher's "chair"—he also lost the comfort of being able to move freely within spaces.

The notion of comfort is crucial: Merleau-Ponty's idea of the body is one that blends with its environment, which allows it to feel at-home with itself in the world. He argues, "we experience the near presence of others under a veil of anonymity."[33] There is an ambiguity to existence that connects me to others and things, as we are all beings-in-the-world. The boundaries between each being aren't then properly defined: "our perspectives slip into each other, we coexist through a single world." [34]Merleau-Ponty therefore implies that in our dialogue with objects, the objects also contain a part of us—two people will have different perspectives of a book, a painting, a chair even, forming a more complete reality for these objects together. There is an anonymous layer of existence in which all bodies reside, inherently producing a sense of belonging and comfort.

Indirectly responding to Merleau-Ponty, Ahmed argues that this comfort of anonymity only pertains to white bodies. She asserts, "to be comfortable is to be so at ease in your environment that it's hard to distinguish were one's body ends and where the world begins."[35] White bodies blend so well in their environment—namely white spaces—that they feel deeply intertwined and at home with it. In not finding shampoo, a black woman's project to wash her hair will be temporarily hindered, which may result in a feeling of alienation or non-belonging, while a white woman will not hesitate in finding shampoo and can thus feel integrated in her world. In other words, "white bodies are comfortable as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape."[36] White bodies, in other words, are encouraged by white spaces to project their possibilities within them, and within these spaces they find comfort.

One can infer that individuals in privileged positions don't "hesitate", as their experience of the world is fluid, and their body "trails behind". Al-Saji explains, there is "a totalizing sense of completeness or absorption that means it does not hesitate in its course."[37] The racializing, privileged body does not perceive

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33   Merleau-Ponty, 363.
34   Ibid., 379.
35   Ahmed, 134.
36   Ahmed, 134.
37   Al-Saji, Alia. "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing." Living Alterities, NY: U of NY Press, 2014, 142.

structures of oppression: those who benefit from such struc-
tures are not naturally compelled to look for problems when
such structures operate in their favor; it is indubitably easy
to ignore the structure of a space when the space extends—
or is oriented around—one's body. As suggested above, find-
ing shampoo as a white person is a trivial activity due to the
immensity of available options, and therefore one does not think
much about it. It is then difficult for a privileged person that is
not faced with situations of discomfort to understand the re-
ality of the racialized lived experience. Al-Saji asserts, there is
a "numbing of receptivity that paradoxically accompanies the
strong affects of racialization—as if these affects serve as blind-
ers."[38] In other words, experiencing the world from a privileged
position around which the world itself is molded inhibits the
fundamental understanding of these privileges.

Dwelling in comfort, or not-hesitating, therefore, prevents spa-
tial structures from being noticed. In being habituated to a cer-
tain view of the world, we aren't naturally driven to dispute it.
Linda Alcoff brilliantly elucidates this, as she looks at the way
in which habit conceals the process of racialization. Alluding to
Merleau-Ponty's notion of habit, she argues, "perceptual prac-
tices can be organized, like bodily movements used to perform
various operations, into integrated units that become habitu-
al."[39] This entails that we get used to seeing things a certain
way, without actually recognizing that what we see is an in-
terpretation of things rather than the things themselves. Alcoff
uses Merleau-Ponty's example of a blind man's use of a cane to
find objects, and quotes: "habit does not *consist* in interpreting
the pressures of the stick on the hand as indications of certain
positions of the stick, and these as signs of an external objects,
since it *relieves us of the necessity* of doing so."[40] This shows that
when we first apprehend an object, we analyze it under a certain
light—as the interpretation becomes habit, however, it loses its
nature as 'interpretation' and becomes for us the nature of the
object itself. In other words, "the overt act of interpretation itself
is skipped in an attenuated process of perceptual knowing."[41]
Habit therefore allows us to navigate spaces without having to
spend any energy in situating ourselves within them, which, in
the racializing context, results in an unfortunate consolidation
of assumptions and stereotypes.

38 Ibid.
39 Alcoff, Linda Martin. "Towards a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment."
Radical Philosophy 095. 1999, 21.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.

This formation of habit explains the rigidity of racializing attributions, and perhaps why people who aren't overtly racist remain prejudiced: "our experience of habitual perceptions is so attenuated as to skip the stage of conscious interpretation and intent."[42] In being habituated to racist structures and stereotypes from a young age as is the case in Western society, we remain prejudiced despite actively condemning the existence of such stereotypes. Alcoff therefore suggests that "a phenomenological approach can render our tacit knowledge about racial embodiment explicit."[43] The phenomenological method can thus be used as a tool to tackle habitual ideological constructs, as it deals with pre-reflective understandings of the world. In a similar vein, Ahmed specifies, "a phenomenology of "being stopped" might take us to a different direction than one that begins with motility."[44] This implies that in taking into account the lived experience of the body that is racialized, we might bring to light the racializing structures that govern white spaces.

Al-Saji's account implements this idea as she presents *hesitation* as a critical intervention for disrupting affective racializing tendencies. Affect is "an encounter mediated by forces of sociality and historicity, by structures of domination and privilege,"[45] which echoes Merleau-Ponty's intentional arc; it is that which precedes and polarizes one's encounter with the world. In performing a phenomenology of "being stopped", as does Ahmed, the affective patterns of the racializing body are disrupted: I realize that the world isn't that which I'm habituated to as I'm exposed to the *lived experience* of the racialized body, which results in a productive feeling of alienation. Hesitation as a critical intervention can thus "interrupt the embodied past that we live as habit."[46] Habit, as Merleau-Ponty and Alcoff maintain, allows me to move in space rather than perceive it; by interrupting our habitual orientations, then, we can begin to notice the space—namely, its orientation around whiteness. In other words, "denaturalizing affect involves … not only the suspension of its immediacy, but also changing its directionality,"[47] which allows the racializing body to distance oneself from racial structures that have been assumed through habit. Furthermore, by taking this distance, one can perceive these structures *as such*, rather than as accurate representations of the racialized body.

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42   Ibid.
43   Ibid., 19.
44   Ahmed, 139.
45   Al-Saji, 2014, 148.
46   Ibid., 2018, 347.
47   Ibid., 2014, 148.

The white body's ease of motility in the world conceals hegemonic structures of racialization. Its tendency to reach out and incorporate within it the things it encounters perpetuates the whitening of spaces, while subduing the experiences of racialized bodies. Alcoff examines this phenomenon through the formation of habit: while it allows one to efficiently navigate the world, it omits the experiences of other bodies, which in turn fuels the racial constructs that govern Western society. In performing a phenomenological account of racialization, Ahmed familiarizes the white reader with the racialized lived experience, which, to use Al-Saji's term, induces hesitation: this consequently promotes a shift in perspective, which reveals one's habitual ideological practices as part of the racializing constructs. One can therefore think about the phenomenological approach as a universal tool for deconstructing ideological biases at their foundations in order to make space for new—and improved—understandings of the world.

Ahmed, Sara. "The Orient and Other Others." Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others, Duke UP, 2006, pp. 109-156.

Alcoff, Linda Martin. "Towards a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment." Radical Philosophy 095. 1999.

Al-Saji, Alia. "Hesitation as a Philosophical Method—Travel bans, colonial durations, and the affective weight of the past." Journal of Speculative Philosophy 32, 3, 2018, pp. 331-359.

Al-Saji, Alia. "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing." Living Alterities, NY: U of NY Press, 2014, pp. 133-172.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motricity." Phenomenology of Perception, trans. By Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2012, pp. 100-148.

Mathematical Beauty: An Account for the Genuineness and Distinction of Aesthetic Claims in Mathematics

Dalia Renzullo

Mathematicians often judge of their work according to aesthetic standards. Speaking of mathematics as "beautiful" or "elegant" raises several questions and has elicited various responses concerning aesthetics with regards to mathematics in recent philosophical literature. Among these, I aim to discuss these judgements considering the dimensionality of mathematics, aesthetic-epistemic feelings, intellectual beauty and aesthetics of the abstract, as well as mathematical practice as an artform. The discussion and contrast of these views will shed light on the role, importance, and possibility of the aesthetic in mathematics and will characterize it as a distinct and genuine judgment that can be made within the field.

Introduction

It is commonly claimed that certain aspects of mathematics are "beautiful" or "elegant". Making aesthetic judgments about mathematics is in fact so common that prestigious prizes are often awarded on the basis of these criteria, such as the Abel Prize majorly awarded for "deep", "beautiful", and "ingenious" work.[1] Mathematical beauty is also often cited as a driving force

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1   H. Holden and R. Piene, The Abel Prize 2003–2007: The First Five Years

for mathematicians' research agendas, such as Herman Weyl's wish to prioritize beauty over truth in his work.[2] These types of claims are not only disputed, but raise numerous questions concerning the nature of mathematics, art, and truth. What is beauty in mathematics? What is the status of such aesthetic judgments made in it? Do they play a legitimate role in mathematical reasoning? Are there any analogies to other aesthetic contexts? These are questions I hope to bring attention to in my discussion of aesthetic judgments made in mathematics. I argue that these judgments are distinct and have genuine aesthetic status. To support this, I survey contemporary articles that offer insight to different aspects of this topic. First, mathematical dimensionality will be discussed. Appraisals made about mathematics can be mapped onto different axes, and in so doing, demarcate the aesthetic from the rest, in addition to separating concepts of beauty and simplicity. Second, the role of cognition in making aesthetic judgments in mathematics will be analyzed through a view that sees them as aesthetic-epistemic feelings. Third, "intellectual beauty" derived from rare and fruitful properties, in addition to a formation of an "aesthetics of the abstract", will be explored. Finally, I will discuss mathematics as art through an analysis of its propositional content.

Aesthetics and Mathematical Dimensionality

Judgments of beauty in mathematics are often taken to be totally, or partially, judgments evaluating simplicity. Among the many mathematicians who hold this view, James McAllister succinctly explains how the most important factor influencing a proof's perceived beauty is "the degree to which it lends itself to being grasped as a single act of mental apprehension".[3] Similarly, David Wells' survey of sixty-eight mathematicians found that simplicity of proofs influenced the perceived beauty of theorems.[4] Inglis and Aberdein counter this classic view in "Beauty Is Not Simplicity", demonstrating that mathematical appraisals have dimensionality, and that beauty and simplicity within mathematics are in fact separate. The authors begin by asking: are aesthetic judgments made in mathematics genuinely aesthetic? They distinguish between two accounts. The conjunctive theory asserts that perceived beauty in mathematics is in fact a sign of its truth, effectively joining the aesthetic and

(Heidelberg: Springer, 2009). H. Holden and R. Piene, The Abel Prize 2003–2007: The First Five Years (Heidelberg: Springer, 2009).

2   Reid (1986) cited in Inglis and Aberdein.

3   McAllister (2005) cited in Inglis and Aberdein.

4   David Wells, "Are these the most beautiful?", The Mathematical Intelligencer 12, no. 3 (1990) 37–41.

the epistemic. This account is reductive, suggesting that aesthetic claims are in fact proxies for epistemic ones. Disjunctive accounts instead convey that the aesthetic and epistemic are independent of one another. It is non-reductive and asserts the genuineness of aesthetic claims made in mathematics. Simplicity is central to these non-reductive assessments in the widely-held classic view, according to Inglis and Aberdein. The authors contend that an account of mathematical dimensionality would be useful and appropriate in understanding the relation between the aesthetic and the epistemic for an investigation concerning mathematical beauty. This account of dimensionality in the authors' study is what reveals how assertions of mathematical beauty are not assertions about simplicity.

The authors employ a statistical procedure called factor analysis for their study. This method identifies unobservable underlying constructs, called factors, within sets of variables with strong inter-correlation. The technique seeks patterns in a matrix of correlations between original variables to do so. Inglis and Aberdein cite Burt and Banks's study to illustrate this methodology. The study took a group of men's physical measurements at various points on their body, as well as their weight, and used this data as their set of original variables. It is expected that these measurements will all be strongly correlated and largely measure the underlying construct of "general body size", which is the factor the study successfully identified.[5] Analogously, Tupe and Christal's study asked participants to think of a specific person they know and rate how well a series of adjectives that describe personality apply to the person. Factor analysis was then used to determine how many underlying constructs emerged from these ratings, comprising their group of variables. It was found that adjectives that describe human traits cluster around five broad factors.[6] Inglis and Aberdein's study uses adjectives often used in aesthetic judgments of mathematics, such as "elegant", "simple", or "abstract".[7] The study enables a systematic investigation of the language structure employed by mathematicians when they evaluate qualities of mathematical proofs. The study found four dimensions of mathematical evaluation: aesthetics, intricacy, utility, and precision.[8] Developing a critical stance to-

5   C. Burt and C. Banks, "A factor analysis of body measurements for British adult males", Annals of Human Genetics 13 (1946): 238–256.
6   E.C. Tupes and R.C. Christal, Recurrent Personality Factors Based on Trait Ratings. Lackland Air Force Base, Texas: US Air Force (1961).
7   The authors acknowledge that their study does not allow them to draw conclusions about objectivity of a given proof's qualities, whether certain proofs have given qualities, or whether there are differences among mathematicians in their individual assessments of proofs.
8   Examples include, respectively, "beautiful", "elegant", and "deep"; "dense",

wards common assumptions about the genuineness of aesthetic judgments made in mathematics becomes much more informed now that these findings identify typical appraisals made with distinct categories. Contrary to the classical view presented earlier, Inglis and Aberdein's main finding demonstrates how there is no relationship between a proof's perceived simplicity and perceived beauty due to almost no correlation between the two terms in their results.

The disjunct between simplicity and beauty poses two suggestions concerning their employment in mathematical appraisals. Claims linking the two concepts are either simply incorrect, or their use by philosophers in discussing mathematical practice differs from how mathematicians themselves use them.[9] Inglis and Aberdein support the former. They argue that the ability to associate "simple" with "beautiful" and with "dull" represent two distinct interpretations, yet do not indicate two meanings. They only indicate that simplicity is independent from the dimension of aesthetics.[10]

The dimensionality of mathematical appraisals shown by Inglis and Aberdein has important implications regarding the relationship between the aesthetic and the epistemic. Recall that reductive accounts contend that aesthetic judgments made in mathematics act as mere proxies for epistemic ones. This view is countered by the authors' results, as it was found that most epistemic adjectives[11] only weakly described the aesthetics dimension. This indicates that there is no strong relationship between aesthetic and epistemic judgments, and that these judgments made about proofs are indeed different.[12] Epistemic judgments concentrated more towards the utility dimension, whereas aesthetic judgments concentrated on the aesthetic dimension. Despite the difference between these two types of judgments, an overlap between the two was also noticed, specifically by shared correlation of terms like "enlightening" and "insightful" on both aesthetics and utility dimensions. These results suggest that the aesthetic and epistemic in judgments of mathematical beauty are distinct but share specific points of commonality.

"difficult", and "unpleasant"; "practical", "efficient", and "applicable"; "careful", "meticulous", and "rigorous".

9   Matthew Inglis and Andrew Aberdein, "Beauty Is Not Simplicity: An Analysis of Mathematicians' Proof Appraisals," Philosophia Mathematica 23, no. 1 (2015): 101.

10   Inglis and Aberdein, 101. Such as "explanatory" and "informative".

11   Such as "explanatory" and "informative".

12   Ibid., 102.

The aesthetic-epistemic overlap and the genuineness of aesthetic claims made in mathematics is further discussed by Cain Todd. His article "Fitting Feelings and Elegant Proofs" examines the nature of psychological experiences that lead mathematicians to make aesthetic judgments about mathematics. Todd offers a view that is more reductive than Inglis and Aberdein; he argues that aesthetic judgments made in mathematics are what he calls "aesthetic-epistemic feelings".[13] This more reductive view is worth considering as an attempt to account for the aesthetic-epistemic overlap found previously in Inglis and Aberdein. He begins by formally differentiating what is aesthetic from epistemic.[14] According to Todd, aesthetic pleasure is exclusively tied to sensory-intellectual pleasures that occur from our experiences with nature and the arts[15]; further discussion as to the validity of this claim will be taken up with Starikova[16]. Todd states that aesthetic value is non-instrumental as it exists for its own sake and bears no relation to empirical or epistemic utility.[17] Todd focuses his work on aesthetic criterial claims, where an aesthetic property is attributed to some mathematical entity based on other properties.[18] Todd chooses these claims to focus on because they pose a problem for interpreting aesthetic criteria in mathematics. He contends that the way these claims are appealed to differs from other aesthetic contexts.[19] This difference in function elicits the possibility that they may be functioning epistemically instead of aesthetically, according to Todd. This is illustrated by purportedly aesthetic judgments of "symmetry" that are in fact descriptive and not aesthetic in nature.

Todd then introduces the reductive, sceptical view that was previously discussed: that aesthetic claims made in mathematics are simply masked epistemic ones. He admits that scepticism is somewhat justified because aesthetic judgments made in math-

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13   Cain Todd, "Fitting Feelings and Elegant Proofs: On the Psychology of Aesthetic Evaluation in Mathematics," Philosophia Mathematica 26, no. 2 (2018): 212.
14   SAesthetic pleasure is not the same as other pleasures, namely moral pleasure, intellectual satisfaction, comic pleasure, personal gain, or sensory pleasure..
15   Todd, 213.
16   Irina Starikova, "Aesthetic Preferences in Mathematics: A Case Study," Philosophia Mathematica 26, no. 2 (2018): 161-183.
17   Todd, 213.
18   Such as: "the proof is elegant in virtue of its symmetry", Ibid., 214.
19   Criteria aren't used to justify negative relations in mathematics, there are fewer disagreements over particular, but not comparative cases, and there seems to be a limited aesthetic vocabulary in mathematics.

ematics are too closely correlated with their primary epistemic function to be called unequivocally aesthetic.[20] Despite the results from Inglis and Aberdein's factor analysis that previously revealed a separation of the aesthetic and epistemic, Todd explains this correlated view by stating that the primary function of mathematics is epistemic, since it is inherently concerned with truth. This can be compared to art, which arguably has a primary aesthetic function. However, Todd doesn't fully accept this view, claiming that it shouldn't be denied that mathematicians have genuine affective experiences that they characterize as aesthetic. Todd cites multiple studies, including Inglis and Aberdein's, to show how the relationship between aesthetic judgments in mathematics and how mathematicians justify them is not straightforward, but that these judgments still generate a link to epistemic experiences.[21]

In his partial acceptance of scepticism and partial acceptance of the genuineness of aesthetic claims, Todd seems to be stuck in the middle. He mediates these views by making the claim that aesthetic values can serve an epistemic function through "aesthetic-epistemic feelings": affective conscious states, positive or negative, that arise in epistemic contexts.[22] Cognition plays a role in these feelings, according to Todd. He contends that they are perhaps a self-monitoring mechanism of one's cognitive processes since they involve both our cognitive states and a specific object to which they are directed. More specifically, aesthetic-epistemic feelings are related to cognition in mathematical reasoning due to "fluency": the experienced ease with which mental content is processed. Greater fluency in a mathematical task may elicit more positive effects that translate to greater aesthetic appreciation. Nonetheless, Todd connects epistemic feelings to aesthetic experience by finding that judgments of beauty can be grounded in processing experiences of the perceiver, in addition to arising from feelings of fluency. He concludes that aesthetic and epistemic experiences may in fact be experiences of the same kind. Therefore, a range of feelings can have joint aesthetic-epistemic nature. For Todd, not all aesthetic-epistemic experiences can be accounted for by fluency. The notion of harmony or "fit" when the feeling of understanding

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20   Todd, 216.
21   In particular, Cohen's study concludes that beauty is connected to cognition and is epistemically valuable.
22   To illustrate, he includes the feeling that you know something when you are trying to remember it, the feeling of intellectual satisfaction that motivates you when you understand something, the feeling of rightness when you are successful in reasoning, or the feeling of certainty (compared to uncertainty) when you are aware of the precision of your mental information (Todd 220).

is experienced can account for what is left.

So far, a few key points have been made. From Inglis and Aberdein, we have learned that judgments of beauty in mathematics do not refer to its simplicity. In addition, mathematical appraisals have dimensionality, and can be mapped onto four axes which differentiate between aesthetics, intricacy, utility, and precision. So aesthetic judgments and epistemic judgments of utility are in fact two separate branches of possible appraisals that also allow for some overlap. This overlap is then expanded on by Todd, who accounts for it with aesthetic-epistemic feelings. Despite their differences, it can be argued that both views suggest that aesthetic judgments made in mathematics have genuine aesthetic status. For Inglis and Aberdein, this is shown through their study's result of a separate dimension of aesthetic appraisals. For Todd, it is expressed through aesthetic-epistemic feelings. The overlap of the aesthetic and the epistemic suggested in Inglis and Aberdein's work and further explored in Todd's work does not contradict the genuineness or distinctness of aesthetic judgments made in mathematics. Acknowledging it simply highlights a different mode of operation for certain aesthetic judgments.

Aesthetics of the Abstract

The question concerning this particular mode of operation with regards to what aesthetic judgments are in mathematics is taken up by Irina Starikova in "Aesthetic Preferences in Mathematics: A Case Study". Starikova argues that aesthetic judgments made in mathematics are part of an "intellectual beauty", derived in a coordination of significant and rare properties, forming an "aesthetics of the abstract". According to Starikova, abstract mathematical objects can be literally beautiful, in the sense that they have the power to give aesthetic pleasure and are positively valued.[23] Additionally, she assumes the beauty of these visual representations can admit degrees. Starikova presents two views of beauty: perceptual[24] and intellectual. Starikova highlights that it is only in the latter case that mathematical beauty could exist. She argues that mathematical beauty is not limited to proofs and theorems as traditionally discussed, but it can apply to other entities such as graph theory, which she uses to make her analysis. For Starikova, abstract mathematical entities can be beauti-
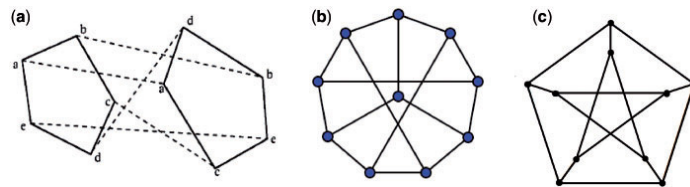
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23   Starikova, 163.
24   This would imply a dependence on only properties which are perceived, relegating all other discussion of beauty to metaphor.
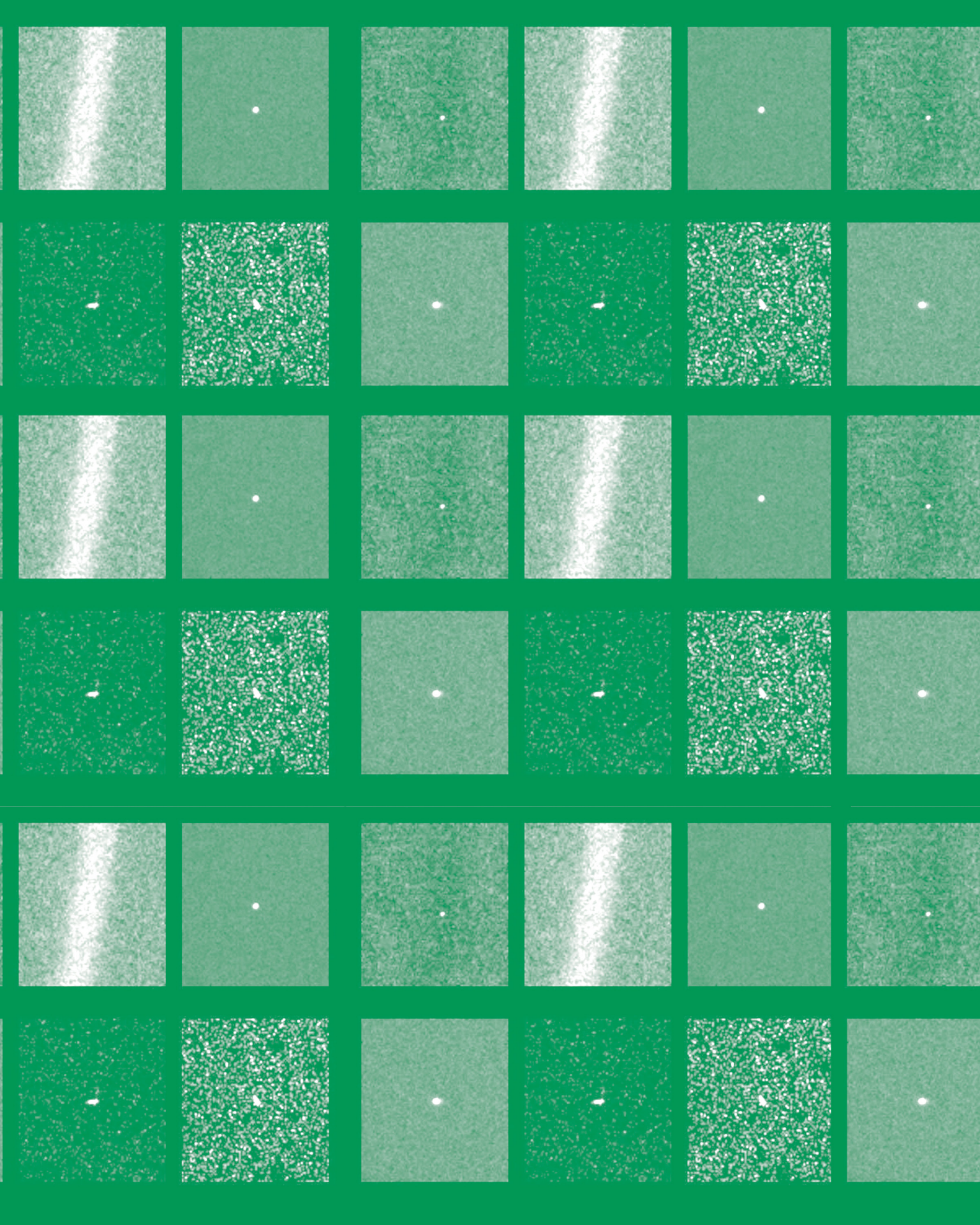
ful, and judgments of this beauty imply a positive emotional effect on a mathematician.[25] Like Todd, Starikova contends that beauty is not separate from a mathematician's cognition. It instead acts like a power, causing pleasure when mathematicians are intellectually engaged, and she defines beauty as a response dependent property.[26]

Starikova makes sure to distinguish between abstract mathematical objects and their representations in her discussion. She points out that in making aesthetic judgments, mathematicians may be responding to abstract properties of mathematical objects or to visible properties of the representation.[27] Visual representations provide perceptual beauty, which is not caused by mathematical content.[28] In addition, an understanding of the geometric paradoxes it can produce leads to an admiration of its mathematical beauty.[29] Establishing the two kinds of mathematical beauty, perceptual and intellectual, Starikova now examines how they interact or contribute to one another. She does so by considering symmetry, a particular property which had been traditionally associated to both types of beauty. She examines how visually perceived symmetries and symmetries known to exist but that are not perceived, can contribute to beauty. Using multiple examples from graph theory, she highlights the limits of visible symmetry and determines that not all symmetries can be easily perceived in visual representations.[30] The Peterson graph can be drawn in multiple representations to perceive some of its symmetries, but no drawing can show all of them at once, representing an "invisible" beauty.[31] In addition, one particular representation of the Peterson graph is considered "more beautiful" than the others (Figure 4c). This representation is special in that it has a myriad of rare properties that set it apart from others.[32] Starikova argues that what

25 Starikova, 163.
26 Ibid., 163.
27 Ibid., 164.
28 She uses the example of a tangram puzzle: its numerosity and diversity of shapes is attractive and intellectually pleasing, not the shapes themselves.
29 Ibid., 165.
30 Ibid., 166.
31 Ibid., 168.
32 These include high symmetry, strong regularity, vertex-transitivity, edge-

makes this specific representation of a mathematical object beautiful is a combination of these rare mathematical properties that shapes the intellectual beauty to which mathematicians respond to emotionally. She suggests that its symmetry contributes to beauty due to its ability to aid in grasping mathematical structure and its higher generality.[33] [34]She also suggests that finding a balance between simplicity and complexity causes more favourable aesthetic responses.[35]

Starikova's account of what constitutes the aesthetic and what constitutes mathematical beauty is richer than that presented by Todd previously. The inclusion of intellectual beauty in her account provides a deeper understanding of mathematical beauty that can perhaps act to separate it from the epistemic. She takes this task up herself, acknowledging Todd's work and how close the aesthetic and epistemic are in his account. However, she contends that there still may be a difference, and suggests the distinguishing of fulfilling an epistemic function from finding instances of some other features which mathematicians value.[36] Positive emotional responses can be elicited by the properties of the Peterson graph to refer to both aesthetic and epistemic benefits, yet the specific emotions analyzed are perhaps more related to the aesthetic. To understand this separation, she argues that all proofs serve a primary epistemic function to establish a conclusion, yet not all are judged beautiful. Some proofs which are judged beautiful do not explain their conclusions.[37] Starikova's account is one that admits a genuineness and distinctness for aesthetic judgments in mathematics due to this separation. She supports this by stating that in the Peterson graph, experts agree on citing specific examples as relevant contributions to mathematical beauty. In addition, they do so because the degree and kind of pleasure they experience must be similar to that from other experiences they feel are strictly beautiful.[38] The visual attraction of the graph is not a sufficient explanation for the strong emotional response mathematicians have, and they do not seem to be concerned with using it when they make aesthetic judgments about it.[39] The richness of Starikova's account also stems from her focus on the abstract. Using the Peterson graph, Starikova points out that

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transitivity, and the smallest snark, to name a few.
33   Starikova, 169.
34   Ibid., 170.
35   Ibid., 171.
36   Ibid., 173.
37   Marcus Giaquinto. "Mathematical proofs: The beautiful and the explanatory", Journal of Humanistic Mathematics 6, (2016): 4
38   Starikova, 174.
39   Ibid., 174.

it is the rare combination of perceivable and non-perceivable properties, as well as cognitive simplicity and richness of symmetry, that account for mathematical beauty. She argues that it is the abstract beauty of the graph that makes it stand out and accords it with a higher aesthetic value than its other representations. She parallels mathematicians visualizing abstract structures in the most effective way with artists following rules of perception, like symmetry and proportion, to help one recognize an artefact's beauty.[40]

Mathematics as Art

It is this comparison of mathematics with art that is taken up by Adam Rieger in "The Beautiful Art of Mathematics". He argues that the aesthetic content of mathematics is genuine, and highlights some of the salient traits that are shared between mathematical and artistic practice. For Rieger, mathematics is sometimes an art, in the same way painting or literature is an artistic practice.[41] He explains how mathematicians report emotional responses to mathematics and uses specific examples to demonstrate how its beauty is distinct from the beauty of the picture that represents it.[42] This parallels Starikova's distinction between mathematical objects and their representations. Like Starikova, Rieger argues that it is not the picture of a mathematical object that is beautiful, but the mathematical content itself.[43] With this he states that propositions are the locus of beauty[44], since this mathematical content takes on the form of proofs, which can be thought of a sequence of propositions.[45] Rieger notes that mathematical beauty is not just cited in specific instances, but in whole areas of mathematics as well. [46]He discusses the possibility of finding necessary and sufficient conditions for beauty in mathematics and mentions uniformity amidst variety.[47] This is also supported by Starikova, who finds that balancing simplicity and complexity is favourable to aesthetic response. Inglis and Aberdein's finding that beauty is not simplicity also finds more depth with this line of thought, since

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40   Ibid., 178.
41   Adam Rieger, "The Beautiful Art of Mathematics," Philosophia Mathematica 26, no. 2 (2018): 235
42   He uses Euler's formula, the proof that √2 is irrational, and a Newton fractal to illustrate.
43   Rieger, 239.
44   Ibid., 245.
45   Ibid., 240.
46   This includes number theory and complex analysis. He contrasts this to "uglier" theories like differential equations, which he likens to "a ragbag of disparate techniques" (Rieger 238).
47   Ibid., 238.

it is not simplicity per se that constitutes beauty, but its interplay with variety and complexity, according to Starikova and Reiger. A sense of enlightenment or understanding is mentioned by Rieger as well, which resonates with Todd's notion of fluency and fit, as well as Starikova's conveyance of intellectual beauty.

Rieger argues that aesthetic judgments made about mathematics are genuinely aesthetic. Like Starikova, he points out that these judgments cannot be related to perception but are nonetheless genuine aesthetic claims. He cites how the appreciation of a literary work's significance and characterization is not sensory, yet still considered art.[48] Like Todd, Inglis, and Aberdein, Rieger also argues against the conjunctive account of aesthetic claims made in mathematics. He states that there is more to claims of beauty than mere utility, which is supported by Inglis and Aberdein's separation of aesthetic and utility dimensions in mathematical appraisals. He also notes that it is possible to separate the aesthetic and epistemic when considering proofs that are strictly invalid but nonetheless contain valuable ideas which make them beautiful.[49] This is also supported by Starikova in her example of beautiful proofs with unexplained conclusions, as previously mentioned. Rieger considers the most serious threat to the genuineness of aesthetic claims in mathematics to be the observation that mathematicians are ultimately concerned with producing truths.[50] Like Todd, Inglis, and Aberdein, Rieger agrees that some overlap between beauty and truth exists, allowing for some of a conjunctive view to be correct. He proposes that truth can be a necessary condition for beauty in mathematics if we consider how beautifully a mathematical truth is represented.[51] He compares this to the aesthetic value of a painting whose success depends on the truthfulness of its representation. This accounts for the overlap of the aesthetic and epistemic but does not make the aesthetic appraisals any less genuine.

Rieger argues that sometimes, mathematics is an art. He suggests that perhaps there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for art due to great difficulty in philosophical attempts to define it. Both representational paintings and literary works of fiction are related to truth in an indirect way, but this relation to truth is not an obstacle in considering both works of art; it arguably adds to their artistic value. The same line of thought can be

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48   Ibid., 243
49   Ibid.
50   Ibid.
51   Ibid., 244.

applied to mathematics. Rieger argues that mathematics is "one of a family of activities which tells us how things are, in a way that is aesthetically valuable. It seems no travesty to call such a practice *art*"[52]. This relation to truth also supports Rieger's position that propositions are the locus of beauty. The main difference lies in the aesthetic value of mathematics stemming from its content and not its representation, unlike literature or visual art whose beauty lies in its representation and not its subject. Yet, the most valued paintings have beautiful subjects in addition to being beautiful representations, suggesting that the contrast between the two is not sharp.[53]

Conclusion

Contemporary work on aesthetic judgments made in mathematics offers a fascinating look into this highly contentious aspect of the field. With a comparison and analysis of contemporary work, I argue that these aesthetic judgments are genuine and distinct. Mathematical dimensionality enables a separation of the aesthetic axis from other types of appraisals and shows that beauty in these appraisals is not indicative of simplicity. Cognition plays a role in aesthetic judgments and highlights its overlap with the epistemic when considering aesthetic-epistemic feelings. Intellectual beauty largely contributes to an aesthetic of the abstract within these judgments. Finally, mathematics can sometimes be seen as art. Further considerations would involve disambiguating descriptive and qualitative terms of "art". Does a more descriptive sense of art that permits ugliness or unaesthetic art still allow the same things to be said about mathematics? This poses larger questions beyond the scope of this paper but is nonetheless an interesting route for future investigation.

52   Ibid.
53   Ibid., 248.

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