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Acknowledgments

To two students, Josh Pittman and Declan Seviour, we would like to extend our sincerest thank you for your help in kick-starting the whole project, and to Dr. Peter Trnka who launched *Codgito* into the new phase it has reached today. We would also like to extend our thanks to all the members of the board who have helped in whatever ways, both big and small. As well as to the members of those who came before us and gave us the history and platform upon which *Codgito* has grown, we would not be here today without all your hard work in the past. We hope to have made those who came before us proud, and to inspire a new generation of thinkers through a platform on which they can express themselves freely and proudly. Additionally, we would like to extend our thank you to the journal we shadow, *Janus Unbound*, and all the members from that journal who have assisted us in some way without being members of our board, and to the MUN Philosophy Department which has helped us along with the members of the pseudo-board of the Philosophy Society. We would finally like to thank the extremely helpful staff at the Queen Elizabeth II Library who have assisted us in a multitude of ways. It is through everyone's combined initiatives that we have been able to launch *Codgito: Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory*.

New Beginnings in Precocious Times: Letter from the Senior Editor

Maxim Sizov



New beginnings, what is it that we mean by this term? How is one to have a new newness? *Codgito* as an idea is not something I can say I am responsible for or was in any way a part of. This student journal of philosophy has been around longer than I have been alive. However, while it may have existed for a long time, it has been a long time since this journal has truly been “alive.” Nearly a year ago, as a means to help bring life back into our student department, I undertook the task of trying to revive the journal. However, for those who know anything about group work, there is no I who can truly do things alone; perhaps a bit ironic considering our name. And yet, it is precisely not that we are *Cogito*, as we were once before, but we are *Codgito*: with a history to our name, a relation to the world, and a connection to more than just the I which dominates the *Cogito*.

With the help of two other students last year the journal began the slow and painful process of restarting and becoming something new. While this process has been arduous, we would like to believe it has been necessary and useful. We have grown as a collective, and with the help and support of those who have been with us along the way, we believe we have become a better version of what we once were. Prior to this expression, *Codgito* was a journal of philosophy; today we have become a journal of philosophy and theory, expanding our horizons and broadening our understandings. And in the academic environment we find ourselves within today, we feel it necessary to come together, to understand the power of transdisciplinary analysis and theory. Not only an epistemological widening, but a possibility of collectivity without limits.

While it is not our place to tell the story for those directly involved with the voice of the administration—that being the goal of our letter to the editor—we can speak of the case of the student Matt Barter and see how we find ourselves publishing in an academic environment in which students are being silenced by administrators for voicing their opinions. Matt Barter is a political science student at Memorial University who was banned on 3 December 2021 from being on campus excluding classes and exams. He was told to check in with campus security every time he did enter on campus. So we ask, what was the crime that befitted this punishment? On 2 December 2021 Matt Barter attended a public conference held by the Memorial University President Vianne Timmons. At this conference he held up a sign with a very simple message: no to student hikes and no to

Vianne Timmons. This was in relation to MUN's plans for a tuition hike on local and international students of nearly 240% starting in Fall 2022 for new students. He was neither aggressive nor vocal, he simply stood there, and at no point was he asked to leave. The next day he privately received the memo that he was banned from most of the campus.

After a month of very public outrage, media coverage, and Barter threatening legal action, the ban was eventually dropped. While MUN Administration may claim arbitrary claims of harassment or such, neither his message nor his actions were harassment on Vianne or the Administration as people. The university tried to quietly silence a vocal student and dropped it when suddenly it was no longer private. This, we feel, sets a very dangerous precedent for the university. While Barter was thankfully privileged enough to use legal action and make his case heard, not every student has this luxury, especially international students and students who can barely scrape up the means to attend university who will feel the brunt of this decision.

Thus, we are at a point at which many of the fundamentals of our university are shifting, and we feel it is not for the better. For members who have been privy to what is going on behind the curtains, many can feel a changing tide in our institution. At meetings with the arts faculty the direction is being shifted to focus on bigger projects which will attract more investors, with a lack of emphasis on creating jobs for professors, and more on the side of the corporate and administrative. At one meeting administrators claimed that by merging departments together they would be able to make one new job, yet in the same breath multiple new upper administrative positions were created seemingly at the drop of a hat when Vianne Timmons came to MUN. At one point during these monthly meetings a known conservative economics professor claimed that MUN was becoming too privatized. And while perhaps a little facetious, when the canary starts chirping, it is high time we stop for a moment and try to understand what is happening.

It is at this critical point that we feel it necessary we come together not only as thinkers, but as people with common interests. Thus, while this issue of *Codgito: Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory* has no overall theme, we feel the essays selected are a very fine sampling of the variety of theory and analysis that is to be offered through the humanities and social sciences. Thus it is here we find our answer to the question we asked, how is one to have new newness? Simply put, Codgito itself has been born anew; sampling from its roots, burning away the old, and giving the world something different, something necessary in these times where our administration is changing for the worse and the question of our future and our capacity to express ourselves is being raised as a question.

Calling Animal Spirits: Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Peter Trnka



What is this for? For students of philosophy and theory—whatever such may be and wherever such may be found—focused on Memorial University and Newfoundland and Labrador, as parts of the globalized world. Graduate, undergraduate, informal, perpetual students. But with little interference from faculty, professors, bureaucrats, etc. Hence a brief letter from me, as faculty “overseer” and signatory for the institution.

Free speech is needed, as always. Critical free speech included, of course. Much of this reawakened new issue of *Codgito*—itself a becoming-fish of disembodied thought—calls for better institutional conditions—at this university and globally—for the pursuit of education as the training of democratic, humanitarian spirits. Calling animal spirits to raise their voices: join our conversation!

This issue records traces of all sorts of utterances, songs, sayings, moans, and whispers of animal spirits, in cross-cutting transdisciplinary ways: becoming-woman and becoming-animal in Kafka, Lispector, Carrington, and Deleuze and Guattari; allegory of Hegel as owl, Feuerbach as fox, and Marx the mole; the voyage of the sun-seeking philosopher following Plato’s signposts for laws; and, finally, the becoming-priest of today’s international bankers.

More new critical voices now and forever more!

Censorship in Student Journalism: Letter to the Editor

Anonymous



There is nothing more beautiful to me than words—communication, letters, writing, reading—anything involving words has woven society together for as long as there has been society. As a writer, I have always used words to the best of my ability to express art, beauty, and most importantly, the truth. So the story goes, as a journalist, I was not allowed to express the truth in ways I would have liked.

We talk about newness in this issue, so I will do the same. I tried to breathe life into the discontent of students, the mistakes of the administration, and the clear lack of priorities when it comes to budgeting. I wanted to try something new with student voices under the administration. Despite the position I filled being advertised as an “opinion journalist” at MUN’s newspaper, I faced backlash every step of the way for voicing my opinions.

I would try to write about what other students and faculty have thought and said in discussion, and I was told that what I was writing needed to be *true*. Is it not true that the administration barely discussed with students about the reopening of campus, and then proceeded to only give a platform to students who happened to agree with the decision? The only conversation the administration seemed to have and support was with students who *wanted* to go back to campus, which we saw in that article that interviewed students who were excited to go back to campus.

Whatever I wrote, the final version of it would almost never place blame directly on the administration—where it belonged—and it came off as if our complaints were unjustified. Criticism towards the university’s higher-ups was neither accepted nor tolerated. The tiniest complaints I was able to print came after several back-and-forth edits, and they were the bare minimum of accountability the administration needed, and refused, to take. I saw this countless times when my words were met with claims of misinformation, rather than actually addressing the issues: the tuition raise, the maintenance deferrals across campus, returning to campus against the better interest of the students; these issues I raised were met with nothing but excuses. They would not take the accountability they should have in their mistakes and instead chose to tell me and other students that we were in the wrong.

On the flip side, when I wrote about mild topics, I faced no backlash at all; all was well on the wordy front of journalism. A number of times these mild essays received compliments and no edits whatsoever, and were published with no issues. The reputation

Censorship in Student Journalism

of the university was not in question, and I was not being “out of line,” so I faced no issues. It came as no surprise to me, but it was increasingly frustrating that I was hardly allowed to express my opinion.

I was too afraid to point out the censorship of student opinion then, but I will say it now: if the university cares about student voices as much as it claims to, it must be able to accept criticism as much as it does praise. If attempts to disagree are met with backlashes, censorship, or campus bans, then it is fair to say that the university has no intent to improve itself on the basis of student wellbeing; it only cares for its own self-interest.

To the readers of the journal and the editors: use your words well, and use them as much as you can, as I do now. Embrace means of expression and communication; sometimes it is all we have. Sometimes it is all we are allowed to have.

Becoming-Animal and Becoming-Woman Explored Through a Feminine Minor Literature

Margaret Hynes



To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs. Kafka's animals never refer to a mythology or to archetypes but correspond solely to new levels, zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves from their forms as well as from their expressions, from the signifier that formalized them. There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroaches are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow. (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 13)

Abstract

In this essay I will critically examine the concepts of becoming-woman and becoming-animal as discussed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I will explore them in terms of lines of flight and reterritorialization and how these might be realized differently through literature and art, namely *écriture féminine* (Cixous), a writing that destabilizes the molar phallogocentric tradition. More specifically I will discuss Clarice Lispector's literary work *The Passion According to G.H.* and Leonora Carrington's short stories. Femininity has been historically linked with chaos, the body, and animality rather than reason, in order to exclude women from logocentric disciplines of knowledge. I propose that this oppressive association might be reclaimed and reterritorialized to offer liberatory possibilities towards becoming. I do not aim to offer a structuralist or literary interpretation of these works, but rather to illuminate how these stories might function mechanically according to Deleuze and Guattari's concept creations in the way Deleuze and Guattari do with Kafka as *a minor literature*. In *G.H.*, the title character experiences her domesticity and bourgeois femininity as a confining rigid identity but experiences a deterritorialization and ontological interruption of her bounded everyday experience once she discovers unexpectedly a cockroach on her floor. She begins an ongoing line of flight towards becoming-cockroach, and therefore towards better understanding the being of this primordial creature, one that most humans experience as other, invader, and disgusting. Carrington's surrealist stories

offer darkly comic tales of transformation, of hoards of animals, of hybrids (both animal and sexual), and of becoming-animal, becoming-human, and becoming-woman. I will use Cixous' and Braidotti's writings on Lispector and Elizabeth Grosz' readings of Deleuze and Guattari to aid my exploration into how the notions of becoming-animal and becoming-woman open new liberatory positions hitherto unavailable.

Keywords: Becoming, *Écriture Feminine*, Feminist Theory, Materialism, Minor Literature, Leonora Carrington, H el ene Cixous, Deleuze and Guattari, Clarice Lispector

Becoming is a concept explored by Deleuze and Guattari in the plateau "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible..." from *A Thousand Plateaus*. Becoming-animal is a liberatory line of flight away from the rigid molar assemblages of "human" and "reason" towards rhizomatic movements, packs and multiplicities, and reterritorializations. Like animals, women have historically been linked to the body, the Earth, and the chaos that accompanies these. This association between women and the chaotic material body has formerly been harnessed as a tool of oppression—materiality that must be bound within form—but I suggest that it may be reclaimed to create a freeing line of flight towards becomings. As Deleuze and Guattari use Kafka's works to show the functionings of becomings, I will use H el ene Cixous' notion of * criture feminine*, a literature centred around feminine ways of knowing and experiencing, to illustrate becomings within and through the works of both Clarice Lispector and Leonora Carrington. In Clarice Lispector's 1964 novel *The Passion According to G.H.*, the title character, a bourgeois sculptress living in Brazil, experiences an "absolute molecular deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 58) of her world and identity through a transformative encounter with a cockroach on her apartment floor. This leads her to a series of openings and becomings, ultimately leading her to lose her humanity altogether. Similarly, in Leonora Carrington's short stories, her characters, primarily women, undergo animal transformations, joining packs and abandoning humanity. These two writers exemplify becomings in differing ways; while Lispector's G.H. is unexpectedly affected by a series of becomings after an encounter with another kind of being (an insect), Carrington's characters freely choose to renounce and challenge the stifling molarities around them to join pack animals and nomadic creatures instead. These becomings testify to the ecofeminist conception of the importance of all beings and ways of existing and destabilize the oppressive binary-machines of the State.

At least since Platonic dualism was founded in Ancient Greece, women have been linked to the body, the chaos, and the animality of nature. It was supposed that while men are endowed with reason, women are essentially confined to their bodies, unable to reflect on Platonic ideals or concepts such as truth, justice, or beauty. This grouping has served to justify the reproductive exploitation of women, as well as the claim that women's minds are inherently inferior or deficient. Although historically this association of women with bodily matter has been oppressive, I believe that women, as well as those who desire moments of becomings-woman, might harness this link as a power for hitherto unknown becomings. In experimenting with the body, we can affect and be affected in unforeseen courses, and recognize our inherent connectedness to other strata of beings. Or, as Lispector writes, realize that: "I too, who was slowly reducing myself to whatever in me

was irreducible, I too had thousands of blinking cilia, and with my cilia I move forward, I protozoan, pure protein” (Lispector, 54). This appreciation for molecular beings, not just human molar subjects, might open up new relations of becoming that recognize the value of all ways of existing, both becoming-woman and becoming-animal or insect.

Creating art is one of the many ways in which one might initiate becomings. In the act of writing, one takes on the identity of the characters and beings described, not imitating or acting “like” them but becoming them (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 238). Deleuze and Guattari use literature, particularly the works of Franz Kafka, to explore their concept-creations through *minor literature*—literary works that exemplify becoming-minoritarian, a social and political process in which one releases and reterritorializes one’s molar identities and instead moves toward the molecular.

Kafka, a Jewish Czech man who spoke German, unformed and reterritorialized the standard or “major” German language into a minor language (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16). Through his artful iteration of the language in his destabilizing, marginal voice, he blurred the limiting territorialities of the language and expressed impossible new identities or ways of being. By writing in such a way, Kafka evades interpretation and over-codification, instead expressing a radically free, flowing form of writing. Kafka also brilliantly illustrates becoming in his tales of becoming-animal in the becoming-cockroach in *Metamorphosis* as well as in other stories with less explicit becomings-animal, such as the becoming-fish or becoming-sea monster of Lena in *The Trial* or the becoming-mole or mouse within the endless rhizomes of offices in *The Castle* and *Amerika*. Kafka is so effective in illustrating becoming because his animals, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1986, 13), do not at any time refer to archetypes or mythologies, but to new freer forms of molecular movement and deterritorializations. Kafka’s worlds subvert strict significations, interpretations, and subjectifications equally, permitting instead lines of flight away from the molar and into the burrow or the pack.

Like Kafka, Cixous’ *écriture féminine* is a minor literature, revolutionary in both the political sense and radical in creating space for new lines of flight within the literary medium. In Cixous’ famous essay “Le rire de la Méduse,” she argues that the history of writing has been masculinist and centred around male subjectivity—the naturalization of their hierarchized values, desires, and sociality, minimizing the importance of women’s perspectives and experiences. Further, language is structured in the form of binary opposites, rigid structures, and linear timelines; undermining experimentation and creativity, especially when the body is involved because it centralizes the masculinist focus on unitary identities and withholds recognition of other ways of engaging, desiring, or knowing. Cixous calls for a form of writing that is not confined to patriarchal norms, a new medium that exists outside of the phallogocentric tradition, one which allows for women to freely express themselves in every sense, not merely in the conventional written fashion privileged by history. This unique type of writing is baptized as *écriture féminine*, a writing that encourages using the body and, like Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 256) call for an ethics of discovering “what a body can do.” Cixous creates a new language that

allows for a plurality of becomings-woman, not just of women themselves, but of anyone who desires becoming-woman. Cixous (1976, 6) does not call for an *écriture féminine* in the molar, rigid sense, nor for a mere inclusion of women to be subsumed by a totalizing dialectic, but for the undoing of strict significations and formations, allowing for reterritorializations and for one to “carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history.” *Écriture féminine* allows for the fluid experimentations that make becomings possible; the becoming-woman and becoming-Medusa of Cixous are among such examples. I propose that Lispector’s and Carrington’s works constitute *écritures féminines* that illustrate becoming-minoritarian through becoming-woman and becoming-animal both.

The Passion According to G.H. is a story of becoming-insect in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense: G.H. does not grow antennae or a shell as in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, she does not even scurry on the floor, but she rather experiences the affects, the very real feelings and perceptions of the cockroach and the bodily intensities of the non-human. Lispector introduces the novel with the narrator experiencing a cataclysmic disruption of her privileged everyday life when her maid moves out of her apartment, inducing an ontological and spiritual crisis. After her maid, a working class, indigenous Brazilian woman, quits, G.H. begins to clean her old room. In doing so, she crosses a threshold into the living space of someone she experiences as alien to her privileged, sheltered world, beginning a transformation into becoming-minoritarian (Braidotti, 160). In the maid’s closet, G.H. notices drawings of three figures outlined in charcoal: a man, a woman, and a dog. These drawings do not touch each other, they are discrete and limited to their own milieus, as are the rigid binaries of man-woman and human-animal, leading G.H. to question her comfortable molar assumptions of gender, class, and species. Describing the outlines, G.H. says: “It was a violation of my quotation marks, the quotation marks that made me a citation of myself” (Lispector, 34). When G.H. suddenly notices a cockroach on the floor of the wardrobe, she is arrested by a feeling of visceral disgust at this primordial, abject creature. G.H. is filled with hatred, loathing the fact that cockroaches are so ancient and invasive.

The cockroach is a challenge or foil to human subjectivity—it does not think like us or individuate itself; it cannot pretend to transcend the matter it is composed of in the way human subjects do, it is rather a disrupting line of flight from the arborescent moral stabilities of human identity. Becoming-insect is a common theme in Deleuze and Guattari’s work; insects, unlike certain other animals, are difficult to anthropomorphize—they escape human understanding. They buzz, vibrate, and drum instead of speaking, singing, or barking, disrupting the signifying regime. Insects are most repulsive to humans when they travel in packs, for it is within these multiplicitous groups that the loss of the individual subject is so apparent: “the blackness of hundreds of bedbugs, crowded together one atop the other” (Lispector, 40). These pack animals remind G.H. of her childhood poverty, of “leaky roofs, cockroaches and rats” (40). G.H. also describes the roach in terms of her revulsion towards darker peoples like her maid, identifying the roach as appearing like “a dying mulatto woman” (49). Like cockroaches, G.H. implicitly perceives other classes and races as invasive and filthy vermin, causing G.H. to uncomfortably confront

her own molar identities as an affluent light-skinned Brazilian woman. G.H. feels that her privileged humanity is threatened by this cockroach, and thus crushes it with the wardrobe door, leading the cockroach to spit a foamy white discharge of its insides.

Like a woman, a cockroach is inseparable from “the awareness of living, inextricable from its body” (Lispector 43). The discharge of the roach is the abject feminine, inducing G.H. to “abject herself” (Kristeva, 5), experiencing a transformation so bodily she feels as though she had vomited. The disgust that G.H. feels causes an “upheaval” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 240) of the self and “an inhumanity immediately experienced in the body as such” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 273). She finds her “self” becoming a non-self, becoming-imperceptible-with the insect. G.H. claims “it was a mud in which the roots of my identity were shifting” (Lispector, 51). Here, G.H.’s stable arborescent organization is interrupted and thrown into an escaping line of flight with G.H. finding her humanity deterritorialized, becoming instead an indiscernible flux of movement. Hoping to hold on to her stable humanity, G.H. wishes that someone would call her telephone to interrupt the process of deterritorialization she is continually undergoing, but it is no use. G.H. reaches the plane of consistency of becoming-cockroach once she puts the insect’s insides in her mouth, further developing her becomings in actualizing them through direct actions. G.H.’s mouth enters into compositions and relations with the particles of the insect matter. Insects that walk close to the ground are seen by humans as filthy and lowly beasts, described by the *Bible* as unclean forbidden animals unfit for human consumption. In “committing the forbidding act of touching the unclean” (Lispector, 67), G.H. releases herself from the last remaining arborescent roots of her humanity—her reason and Christian morality—and gives her “self” over to becoming. This forms an ecstatic joy that G.H. reaches, a complete and utter deterritorialization in becoming-imperceptible along with the cockroach, where G.H. and the cockroach produce something altogether new, not quite human and not quite cockroach. Through this series of becomings, G.H. further understands the struggles and experiences of the Other, of the insect as well as the minority, recognizing the interconnectedness of all strata and species.

In addition to becoming-insect, G.H. undergoes becoming-woman. As a middle-class, financially independent woman with her own apartment, G.H. is in a unique situation for a woman of the mid-20th century, she is neither man nor woman in the strict sense—she is what escapes, the “in-between” that disrupts dualisms (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 277). Like the abject insect, G.H. is minoritarian, ambiguous, but she understands herself in terms of the masculine—as an independent, rational subject. As she becomes-cockroach, G.H. feels connected to abject matter, to the mucus of the insect and the discharge linked to the feminine. When she reflects on a time when she was pregnant and decided to have an abortion, she feels linked to her body and begins becoming in a way she has never felt before. Time becomes non-linear, and her patriarchal molar conception of her subjectivity is altered. The eyes of the cockroach evoke images of ova, inducing G.H. to become moving, living matter, emitting her particles with the ovum particles of the insect. In becoming-insect, G.H. undergoes a liberatory line of flight that allows her to become-bodily, something which has been historically associated with the feminine. In reclaiming

this embodiment as deterritorializing, G.H. transforms what was once an oppressive association into something liberatory.

Deleuze (1993) uses Lewis Carroll's nonsensical worlds of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* to illustrate their philosophy of contradictions and paradox. Another notable surrealist, Leonora Carrington, also effectively demonstrates paradox in the forms of becomings in her hybrid-creation characters. Carrington's works commonly feature humans undergoing becoming-animal along with animals becoming-human through relationships and friendships. Her characters are often bourgeois young women who renounce the molar pillars of human identity—their well-to-do families, expensive clothing, and manners—to join packs of animals. These women renounce the despotic order-words of their families to become nomadic, destabilizing the powers of the State and the Oedipal family. Packs, as well as their well-dressed heads of the herds, often make appearances in these stories, equally experiencing becoming-human and becoming-woman along with the young women protagonists. These relationships form new ambiguous forms of being, indiscernible in terms of molar categories. Leonora Carrington's short story "As They Rode Along the Edge" features a woman in the process of becoming-cat. While Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming-animal is nearly impossible with our Oedipalized domesticated animals, Carrington shows that when cats undergo their own becoming-animal in taking lines of flight from domesticity, humans are rendered capable of "becoming-with" them (Haraway, 38). In the story, a woman named Virginia Fur joins a pack of feral cats, "fifty black cats and as many yellow ones," mixing her particles with theirs in such a way that her smell becomes "a mixture of spices and game, the stables, fur, and grasses" (Carrington, 39). Virginia not only grows a mane of fur, but more crucial for her becoming she joins the "customs" of the glaring by hunting, ceasing to bathe herself in the human fashion, and by abandoning human society to instead enjoy the company of the cats, living as just one cat among many. The citizens of the mountain in which Virginia lives respect her, but only because "the people up there were plants, animals, birds; otherwise things wouldn't have been the same" (Carrington, 40). Virginia is a kind of ambiguous marginal hybrid, a deviant from both molar human and animal classifications, challenging the rigid binary-machines of the State. Not only do humans undergo becomings in Carrington's phantasmagorical world, but plants do as well—while the cats are hunting on the mountain, "the brambles drew back their thorns like cats retracting their claws" (39). The plants do not imitate the cats, they rather enter into a relationship with the surrounding cats by joining their "herd" activity. Carrington demonstrates that everything is in an endless process of becomings towards molecular transformations and that this is not simply limited to the human or anthropomorphized animals. Virginia furthers her becomings-animal with bestialism, by becoming lovers with a wild boar, facilitating a series of becomings including the becoming-human and becoming-woman of the boar.

In another story entitled "Pigeon, Fly!," Carrington chronicles the experiences of a young woman invited by a musical sheep-human androgyne named Ferdinand to paint for an important man named Celestin des Airlines-Drues. When she arrives at his home, she notices a horse-drawn carriage carrying a coffin. In a clearing, there appears a large flock of sheep-humans bleating together, preparing for a funeral procession. In their collective

bleating, the sheep form a trance-like collective and facilitate the transformation of the young woman. The woman has been called there to paint a portrait of the deceased, but once she finishes, she notices that the face she has painted is her own. In this story, the woman joins the sheep herd, and as a result, the lines separating her and the dead woman grow imperceptible, the binaries of subject-object, human-animal, and dead-alive become indiscernible. In another story entitled “Jemima and the Wolf,” a young woman, Jemima, challenges the molarities of the Oedipal family, class, and gender through her becoming-animal and becoming-woman. Jemima ignores her State-prescribed duty of attending class and refuses to act “ladylike” or mannerly to the horror of her mother. Jemima’s mother, a haughty aristocrat, commands her daughter to stop being “difficult,” using order-words, claiming Jemima’s conduct is not natural for “a little girl of a good family” (Carrington, 193). Her mother gives her a doll, the ideal of femininity: frail, beautiful, silent, but Jemima despises what this toy represents and thus breaks the doll’s head against a rock exclaiming: “Isn’t it enough that the world is full of ugly human beings without making copies of them?” (193). Jemima takes a line of flight from her family’s rules, preferring instead the company of stray cats and bats, eating insects and dancing with them in ecstasy. She meets the head of a wolf pack and falls in love with him, promoting her becoming-wolf in new ways, following his lead. In fleeing their humanity and rigid womanhood, Carrington’s characters show the nomadic becomings that can be made possible through relations to animals. Both the sexual and animal becomings in these works exemplify Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of becoming as destabilizing and deterritorializing, allowing for freer ways of being and relating to one another.

Deleuze and Guattari use Virginia Woolf’s novels to illustrate the ways in which writing can induce zones of proximity between different molarities. The rhizomatic lines of flight within Woolf’s modernist prose show many possible modes of becoming, the becoming-other among the many characters of *The Waves*, or the becoming-other of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Carrington’s writing passes in-between molarities of species and gender, like Woolf producing “a becoming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, of sweeping them up in that becoming. Very soft particles—but also very hard and obstinate, irreducible, indomitable” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 276). Carrington narrates the interwoven immanence of all identities, evoking Virginia Woolf’s “I am this, I am that” (Woolf, 11). In the act of writing, Carrington must undergo molecular transformations herself in order to understand these multiplicitous ways of being and becoming.

These accounts of becoming illuminate new means of connecting with other ways of being and undo the oppressive molar identities that separate us. While Deleuze and Guattari might conceive of feminism as a molar endeavor that considers women and minorities as molar collectives as opposed to molecular becomings, I believe their notion of becoming has potential to guide eco-feminist projects. I do not mean to conflate the issues of women and minorities with those of animals and the environment, but rather to demonstrate how one might understand them together through becomings, or, in Donna Haraway’s terms, “becoming-with” (38). Minoritarian groups, with their understandings of molecular

becomings and their unique ontologies, might offer guidance on how to treat other marginalized molecular beings, guiding an ecology to come. The interconnectivity of all matter is highlighted by the various forms of becoming within both Carrington's and Lispector's works. Through becoming-animal, our molar differences are effaced to form new molecularities, creating an improved recognition of the value of all living, flowing matter. This allows for a recognition that all life upon Earth is important, driving the imperative to recognize and treat all matter with respect, including women, minorities, animals, and the Earth equally. The minoritarian status of woman is mirrored by the insect and the rat. While these animals might be large in number, they are still a minority in relation to the despotic rule of humanity. These animals are molecular pack animals, challenging rigid institutions and identities. Women, like insects, compose much of the population, but are subjected to the regime of Man, where society is centred around the white, male, heterosexual experience. In becoming-woman and becoming-animal, one is rendered capable of releasing oneself from human exceptionalisms and molar boundaries of species and gender to instead recognize the symbiotic, transformative relations we might form. As Haraway (36) argues of interactions with animals:

Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with—all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape. In touch and regard, partners willy nilly are in the miscegenous mud that infuses our bodies with all that brought that contact into being.

In experiences with varying ways of existing, such as those in Carrington's and Lispector's works, we come to understand the need to recognize and respect difference, in the domains of the sexual and species, but also in an infinity of molecular forms.

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Subjectivity and the Good in Plato's *Laws*

Nicholas Saunders



Introduction

In Plato's most well-known political dialogue, the *Republic*, both the sun and the cave act as important symbols. The sun represents the pure, unalloyed goodness upon which all truths rest (Plato, 507b-509c), while the cave is a den of illusion and ignorance, out of which Plato's philosopher is obligated to lead people (514a-520a). In Plato's *Laws* (625b), an Athenian stranger, a Cretan named Clinias, and a Spartan named Megillus have a discussion regarding how to properly legislate for a Cretan colony. Their discussion takes place while they are walking to the cave and chapel of Zeus, and on the way to their destination they attempt to find shady areas to hide from the sun. Given the importance Plato attributes to these symbols in the *Republic*, it would, in my view, be unwise to dismiss their appearance in the *Laws* as a mere coincidence, especially given its placement at the very beginning of the dialogue. It seems to me that the relatively straightforward meaning of this symbolism is that the Athenian and his interlocutors are fleeing from the form of the good and are heading to the illusion and ignorance of the cave. Due to the nature of the political system promulgated by the Athenian throughout the dialogue, this basic attitude should not come as a surprise. However, to understand what Plato is advocating in the *Laws*, we must determine why the legislators are fleeing from the form of the good and are seeking the cave of illusion, and what this turn represents in political terms. With this idea in mind, this paper will attempt to discover the source of legitimacy in Plato's *Laws*, the fundamental purpose of the regime, and what this turning away from the forms represents in philosophical and political terms.

To understand the purpose and meaning of Plato's apparent shift away from the forms in the *Laws*, we must examine the context in which the action of the *Laws* takes place. At the end of Book Three, Clinias reveals to Megillus and the Athenian that he had been tasked with legislating for a new Cretan colony, and Clinias requests the Athenian's help with the project (702c). The purpose of the *Laws* is not a disinterested search for the truth. The Athenian, Clinias, and Megillus are not, for example, conceiving of a society to find the nature and value of justice, as the characters of the *Republic* do. Rather, the purpose of the *Laws* is to legislate for a state that will, in the context of the dialogue, come into actual

being. This purpose has important implications for the dialogue: since their purpose is not theoretical but practical, their state cannot hope to live up to the theoretical perfection of the *Republic*. In Book Five of the *Laws* (739b-d), the Athenian states that the best society is the one where there is no private ownership—and all citizens act in perfect concert and gods dwell among the people. If we merely substitute philosopher-kings for gods, this regime bears significant resemblance to that of the *Republic*. The regime of the *Laws*, on the contrary, is second-best; the Athenian states, “That we have now in hand, were it once brought to the birth, would be in its fashion the nearest to immortality and the only one which takes the second place” (Plato 1961a, 739e). One of the consequences of the second-best regime is that the regime of the *Laws* allows for the possession of private property (740a-b). Understanding the regime of the *Laws* as being a fundamentally practical regime as opposed to theoretical, the second-best as opposed to the ideal, brings us closer to understanding the turning away from the sun and flight to the cave. This represents Plato’s beliefs that the form of the perfectly good state cannot be realized practically, and that the legislator must turn away from the pure form of the good in order to properly legislate. Hence the shift from the communal city of the *Republic* to the non-communal city of the *Laws*.

Having established that the *Laws* represents a second-best state held back from reaching the ideal form of the perfect state by practical necessity, we must examine the purpose of this second-best state, the way it is to be managed, and the source of its legitimacy. In the *Republic*, these questions yield relatively simple answers: the state’s purpose is to enact perfect justice, ruled over by enlightened philosopher-kings, and the source of its legitimacy is the perfect good. However, the situation in the *Laws* (624a) is more complex: the dialogue opens with the Athenian asking Clinias and Megillus whether the origin of the laws of their cities ascribed to a god or a man. Before we get into why the Athenian is the source of the law, we ask *why the law is sought after as a source of authority?* Both in the dialogue, and in other Platonic dialogues, we see that Plato does not believe that any law can have permanent validity. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato (277d) writes, “any work ... whether composed in a private capacity or in the role of a public man by proposing a law becomes the author of a political composition, is a matter of reproach to its author ... if he regards it as containing important truth of permanent validity.” In the *Statesman*, Plato (293c) writes:

The constitution par excellence ... must be the one in which the rulers are not men making a show of political cleverness but men really possessed of scientific understanding of the art of government. Then we must not take into consideration on any sound principle of judgement whether their rule be by laws or without them.

In the *Laws* (643d-e), the Athenian states that the laws of the city may be questioned by the older members of the community. Thus it is clear that legislation, for Plato, cannot

consist of eternal moral laws, but only contingent commands. In this practical utopia, it is not only the infallibility of the philosopher-kings that is excluded—the laws themselves are not representative of the form of the good. We must now determine why Plato's second-best city is ruled by laws and what is the source of their legitimacy. To determine this, we must first establish the purpose of the state itself.

The Athenian identifies two purposes for legislation: the virtue and happiness (1961a, 630d, 631b) of those whom the law governs. In his conversation with Clinias, the Athenian initially arrives at the purpose of legislation through an appeal to societal cohesion. Clinias is convinced that legislation should aim to preserve harmony between a society's various classes because this will render the society better able to defend itself from external enemies (628c-d). If this were the sole purpose of legislation, we would arrive at an organic view of legislation. Laws would be simply to preserve the health of the state so that it could preserve and expand itself. However, this cannot be the purpose—or at least not the sole purpose—of legislation since the Athenian states must leave victory or defeat in battle out of the picture when determining whether legislation is good (638a-b). This indicates that Plato has not altogether abandoned some notion of a transcendent good; therefore, the purpose of legislation, although it might be in part arrived at through appeals to societal health and cohesion, is not the simple self-interest of a people or state.

We can gain a better idea of what Plato considers the source of social virtue and the legitimacy of legislation by examining what form of society he idealizes: the pre-political society. In "Before and After Politics in Plato's *Laws*," George Harvey (308) argues that Plato's idealization of the age of Cronos in Book Three is not merely a poetic exaggeration, but reflective of Plato's genuine desire to return to a pre-political humanity. Harvey (313) argues that pre-political humanity, because it is unencumbered by the technological and social innovations which cause discord and ambition, is for Plato purer and more virtuous than political humanity. Because people living in pre-political societies do not have any poets, scientists, or complex religious structures, their lives are simpler, and they are less likely to commit great crimes (Harvey 314). Since pre-political humanity accepts what is said about the gods and nature without question, and adopts religion on a pre-rational basis, they are unlikely to question their society's religion. I would argue that Plato's description of the age of Cronos and of human history in general—typified by floods, cyclicity, disaster, and nostalgia for a golden age—helps to explain why the mere survival of a state or society cannot serve as the moral standard for legislation. If everything, including states and societies, is impermanent and liable to be washed away at any time, long-term physical existence cannot serve as an overriding moral goal.

Harvey argues that the laws set down by the Athenian are intended to recreate this pre-political humanity. According to Harvey (317), the near-absolute authority of legislation, elevation of ancestors and the elderly, and value placed on stability are all examples of this

tendency. The economic system of the colony, which is intended to limit as much as possible the corrupting influence of money and foreign influence, is for Harvey (318) designed with pre-political humanity in mind. The strict implementation of religious orthodoxy is intended to produce the naïve, pre-rational, religious system of pre-political humanity. I would add that we see this tendency at play with respect to the Athenian's constant appeals to the founders of Crete and Lacedaemon as sources of political legitimacy. When criticizing the laws of these cities, the Athenian always goes to great lengths to emphasize that the city's original legislators' laws were right and good, and that any error found in them comes as a result of our misunderstanding of their original intent (Plato 1961a, 632). While this does not constitute an explicit reference to pre-political humanity, it follows the theme of referring to the past as a source of goodness and legitimacy. With respect to practical politics, the good—and thus the source of the state's legal legitimacy—is found in the past.

We may now turn to how this good, which we have found to be embodied by Plato's pre-political humanity and age of Cronos, is to be administered by the state of the *Laws*. In "The Authority of Writing in Plato's *Laws*," Shawn Fraistat notes the contradiction or puzzle found in Plato's legislation. Fraistat (664) writes:

Like all writing, law is unable to tailor itself to individuals, but is compelled to speak to many people at once ... Therefore, its rhetorical character and its prescriptions must address the general case. This renders it unable to deal adequately with anything idiosyncratic, exceptional, or unexpected. In addition, the law is ineffective as a vehicle for instruction. Laws and writings cannot answer questions or explain themselves further.

Moreover, we have already shown that in Plato's best regime in the *Republic* and in his age of Cronos, the state is administered not by law but by philosopher-kings and gods, respectively. Why is the second-best regime, then, ruled by law? According to Fraistat, Plato turns to legislation because he recognizes that it is difficult to find perfectly good leaders, and even when lucky enough to find such a just leader, they will eventually die and be replaced by new and possibly lesser leaders. Legislation is Plato's method for ensuring that the writings of political experts, as opposed to leaders whose moral and intellectual virtue is uncertain, rule the state. As Fraistat (665) claims, the Cretan colony is a "grammatocracy, in which the laws of a wise man comprehensively regulate the conduct of each citizen from cradle to the grave." In short, the second-best state, constrained by the practical fact that good rulers are hard or nearly impossible to come by, implements the second-best form of rule: the rule of law. Plato recognizes, as we have seen, that legislation is necessarily imperfect and temporary, but it is the least bad option available. Fraistat (666) rightly notes that this does not represent a shift away from elitism toward democracy on Plato's part; for even if the regime of the *Laws* does contain some democratic elements,

the predominance of the law is still reflective of Plato's preference for the rule of wisdom. However, exactly how this rule of wisdom is realized is a complex issue.

The law, even when formulated by political experts, is still, for Plato, flawed and imperfect. As we have already seen, Plato does not believe in the permanent validity or infallibility of any laws or political writings. Given this, we should ask two deeply interrelated questions: *what* is the guiding principle of the political experts' legislation, and *who* is wise? The answer to the first question is difficult because of the numerous ways in which Plato defines the aim of the legislation in the *Laws*. On the broadest level, Plato (1961a) identifies the aim of legislation as being both virtue (630d-e) and happiness (631b). The Athenian defines virtue as being primarily loyalty in peril, then divides virtue into an eight-part hierarchy (630c). The former definition is arrived at through an appeal to the internal stability of the state, a principle reached by a mere agreement or common understanding between the Athenian and Clinias, while the eight-part hierarchy is snatched by the Athenian out of thin air. Happiness as the goal of legislation is a principle that is simply asserted by the Athenian and accepted; he states that the laws of Crete "serve the right end, that of effecting the happiness of those who enjoy them" (631b-d). Appeals to a pre-political past and the traditions of Lacedaemon and Crete are made ostensibly on the grounds that people in the past were more happy and virtuous than they are now. The exact character of this happiness and virtue, however, is similarly vague. Plato argues that they were happier and more virtuous because they did not question religion and were not corrupted by money and modern ideas, but this tells us more about how the conditions of the past *contributed* to virtue and happiness than it does about *what virtue and happiness actually are*.

Since the ultimate purpose of legislation is unclear, we must approach the question obliquely and examine *who* is capable in Plato's view of judging the good. Although Plato does make some appeals to wisdom, the main determination of political power in the *Laws* is not straightforward individual wisdom; rather, it is age. Plato identifies the old pre-political or mythic societies as the best, and appeals to tradition as a source of authority. Innovation and novelty are regarded by Plato (1961a, 634d-e) as sources of evil and moral confusion. It is not necessarily the wisest or the most educated who have the privilege of questioning the city's laws, but the *old*. It is only when these old men are out of view of the young that they are able to question the law. In Book Ten (888a-b), the Athenian states that one should say to a young person who questions the state religion, "My lad, you are still young, and as time advances it will lead you to a complete reversal of many of your present convictions. You should wait for the future, then, before you undertake to judge of the supreme issues." This indicates that, according to Plato, age brings wisdom. With respect to education, the Athenian states that "education is, in fact, the drawing and leading of children to the rule which has been pronounced right by the voice of the law, and approved as truly right by the concordant experience of the best and the oldest men" (659c-

d). With respect to the judgement of art within the context of a hypothetical theatrical competition, the Athenian states, “Clearly you and I cannot avoid saying that rightful winners are those who are preferred by men of their own age” (658e). Even though Plato does not specify the age of the political expert or legislator, in the case of the Cretan colony the legislators are the Athenian and Clinias—both old individuals—and given the fact that all the other privileges of legal, aesthetic, and moral judgement are granted to the old, it would be surprising if the legislators themselves were not elderly.

Therefore, the regime of the *Laws* is not *just* or *primarily* a grammatocracy, as Fraistat argues, but *gerontocracy by way of grammatocracy*. The laws of the state are, as Antony Hatzistavrou (209) argues in “Plato’s Legal Positivism in the *Laws*,” not primarily based on a notion of *natural* theory of law, but on a *legal positivism*. Despite the typically Platonic appeals to goodness and justice, the laws of the *Laws* are more fundamentally based on the opinions and preferences of the old. Hatzistavrou (212) sums up Plato’s legislative theory in the *Laws* in this way: “A legal system is a social construction based on customs that is defined by the presence of the main agents of law, namely legislators and rulers, whose task is to select laws from those pre-existing and rule in accordance with them.” This explains the dialogue’s ambitious attitude toward the purpose of legislation, which is not to manifest the absolute good, but the *opinion* of the old and the *continuation of or return to* ancient institutions and traditions.

We see the clearest example of this idea at work in the dialogue’s judgement of art. The Athenian states:

The standard by which music should be judged is the pleasure it gives—but not the pleasure given to any and every auditor. We may take it that the finest music is that which delights the best man, the properly educated, that, above all, which pleases the one man who is supreme in goodness and education. (Plato, 658e-659a)

We should not be thrown off by these references to goodness and education, since we have seen already that these concepts are somewhat ambiguous in the dialogue and refer primarily to the likes and dislikes of the elderly. What I would draw attention to is the notion that music should be judged on the basis of *pleasure*. If music were judged by an absolute standard of goodness, Plato could use the standard of the music’s goodness alone, divorced from pleasure. However, Plato advocates for judging music based on the *pleasure* of one individual. For the rest of society, the music is to be thought of on the basis purely of its goodness. The Athenian states, “As they aim at the noblest kind of song, they will have to aim not at a music which is pleasing, but at one which is right” (668b). This dichotomy is similar to the one we have already examined with respect to legislation: for the majority the laws are to be thought of as “god-given and admirable,” while the old are permitted to regard them as contingent, impermanent, and imperfect (634d-e). The rulers

of the state are permitted to retain their subjectivity and rationality, while the minds of those who are ruled are to be brought back to a state of pre-political simplicity where the laws and customs of society are regarded as natural and unchangeable. While the rulers of the state retain a positivist view of legislation and customs, the ruled are to regard them as pure manifestations of the natural law.

Our understanding of Plato's *Laws* will be aided by viewing it within the context of Jean-Paul Sartre's "look." According to Sartre (1966), there are two fundamental aspects of human existence: Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself. Being-in-itself constitutes all that is given, unchangeable, and objective in us, while Being-for-itself represents our ability to transcend the given. In simple terms, Being-in-itself is the individual as object, while Being-for-itself is the individual as subject. When we are embraced by the look of the Other, our Being-for-itself is frozen in objectivity. Sartre (443) writes, "For the Other I am irremediably what I am, and my very freedom is a given characteristic of my being." We respond to this loss of subjectivity in two ways: we either deny the subjectivity of the Other to regain our freedom from the Other's look, or we seek to regain our subjectivity and freedom by identifying with our Being-for-itself as a piece of objective facticity which is embraced by the look of the Other (443). The Other and the one looked at by the Other are transformed into an Us-object, which is metaphysically unified by the common alienation of their Being-for-itself, when embraced by the look of a third observer (507). Unless this tendency is counteracted by an attempt on the part of the Us-object to transcend the look of the third, the Being-for-itself of the Us-object is transcended by the look of the third. The freedom and subjectivity of the third is lost in the look of the third, while the subjectivity and freedom of the third is maintained. We can clearly see this theory at work in Plato's *Laws*. The old rulers of their regime retain their Being-for-itself—their freedom and subjectivity—while the Being-for-itself of the rest of society is rendered static and factic. Hence the laws and customs of the regime are to be regarded as contingent and subjective by the old rulers but as natural, objective, and unalterable by the ruled. Plato's goal in the *Laws* is to maintain the Being-for-itself and subjectivity of the old rulers, and to ensure that the Being-for-itself of the ruled remains trapped in objectivity.

Conclusion

We now have a clearer idea of the meaning of the symbolism at the beginning of the *Laws*. Because the second-best city is constrained by practical necessity, it cannot be a pure manifestation of the supreme good. This necessitates a turn from objectivity to subjectivity. The ideal of the best, the perfect good, is replaced by the ideal of the second-best, the old. Since Plato believes that pre-political society is the closest we can get to the perfect society, he turns back to the past and tradition. Due to his belief that the closest we can get to the rule of the wise or gods is the rule of the old, he affirms that the old should rule. Because we cannot fully know the natural law, he turns to the subjective, imperfect laws of political experts. However, the subjective and contingent nature of the laws and customs of the

regime must be hidden from the masses. It is important for Plato that the society is *believed to be* a manifestation of the perfect good. The ruled are to be embraced by the look and made factic by a small, old elite, which retains their subjectivity and recognizes the regime's inherent perfection. The turn away from the form of the good, however, is not total; the fact that Plato wishes to convince the majority of people that the laws and customs of the state are perfect and objective indicates that the perfect good is still the original source of legal legitimacy. Plato cannot face the unvarnished radiance of the sun, but he cannot and does not want to blot it out entirely. The *Laws*, therefore, represents only a partial turn away from the form of the good.

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The Owl, the Fox, and the Mole: Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx— Three Men, Three Moments, and a Movement from Stars to Soil

Declan Seviour



Abstract

Perhaps the most useful paradigm through which to view Marxist theory is provided by the concept of “dialectical materialism,” as employed in works such as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* by Karl Marx. In this essay, I will demonstrate that a valuable way to learn about this concept is by thinking of the process through which Marx arrived at his conception of dialectical materialism by way of the Hegelian dialectic. Specifically, I posit that Marx repurposes the Hegelian dialectical model of point, negation, and negation of negation, in such a way that it serves his materialist ends; and that, generally, this is what is meant by “dialectical materialism.” I propose that this approach, together with a critical analysis of both Hegel’s philosophy, and then Ludwig Feuerbach’s criticism of Hegel, is what allows Marx to convert the theory and speculation developed by predecessors into actual, particularly political, praxis. That is to say, we can think of Hegel’s idealist, speculative philosophy as the “point,” Feuerbach’s materialist criticism of Hegel as the “negation,” and Marx’s criticism and sublation of both philosophies into material reality as the “negation of the negation.”

Marx’s main issue with Hegel’s philosophy—particularly as it is expressed in Marx’s early works such as the *Manuscripts*—is that it is, as abstraction, inherently divorced from practical application. Moreover, the further we follow the Hegelian system, the further removed we find ourselves from reality. Notably, as we shall discover, this way of thinking lends itself to hierarchical presuppositions in the way we organize society, thus upholding and perpetuating existing oppressive power structures. Marx generally agrees with Feuerbach’s criticism as it is presented in “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy.” His primary contention with Feuerbach, however, arises from his assertion that Feuerbach’s approach to criticism has been unknowingly baited into the same realm of abstraction, wherein the criticism becomes self-satisfied in having successfully criticized; not realizing that it, too, has also established itself in the realm of theory exclusively, and does nothing to address the material impacts of just such abstraction. In fact, it has become subsumed by the abstraction it criticizes.

To elucidate the dynamic between these three figures, I will begin the discussion with a parable of my own devising wherein I envision the three thinkers analogously as animals

awakening one after another on a given night: the owl, the fox, and the mole. Hegel is the owl who flies high above the ground so that he may take everything in from above; Feuerbach is the fox who climbs the tree and attempts to catch the great bird and drag it back down to his den; and Marx is the mole who watches the chase in the trees for a while, before returning to his work of digging the dirt and reshaping the earth. This parable is intended to illustrate how Marx learned from the philosophical discourse between his predecessors, and how this provided him with the education he needed to go on to develop a system based thereon which produces actual, material change—namely, dialectical materialism.

Keywords: Feuerbach, Hegel, Marx, Abstraction, Criticism, Dialectical Materialism, Idealism, Sublation

Introduction

Perhaps the most famous passage to come from 19th century philosopher Georg W.F. Hegel is found in the Preface to his treatise *Philosophy of Right*: “The owl of Minerva, begins its flight only with the onset of dusk” (2014, 27). There is much to unpack in so few words. For the moment it is sufficient to consider what those words tell of how Hegel viewed philosophy in general, namely, that a complete and well-defined philosophical purview of a state of affairs is only observable in hindsight and from a bird’s-eye view. In other words, philosophy, like the wings of an owl, is what allows us to transcend the binds of earthly existence toward something greater—to take flight, observe the world as it has come to be from “above,” and bring ourselves closer to the stars. As we shall soon see, others will reject this outlook, preferring instead to have boots (or paws, as it were) on the ground, to look ahead to what ought to be, and to do what is needed to make manifest an envisioned world.

In this essay, I will explore Hegel’s philosophical system as it relates to two of his successors and critics: Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx. By exploring the succession and interaction of the ideas of these three I will clarify the Marxist conception of dialectical materialism. I propose that, by thinking of the three thinkers as three moments in a Hegelian dialectic—that is, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx as point, negation, and negation of negation, respectively—we can trace the development of dialectical materialism. Beginning with a parable that will serve to illustrate by analogy the dynamic between the three figures, I will then explore relevant aspects of the philosophies of each thinker individually, and the ways in which they relate to their predecessor(s), where applicable. I close with a discussion of dialectical materialism as Marx conceived of it, including how the philosophical chain of succession herein detailed led to its conception. But first, the parable:

The Owl, the Fox, and the Mole

Not long after the sun has dipped below the far-off hills, the wise old owl first stretches his furthest-most feathers toward opposite horizons and drops deftly away from his perch to scan the forest floor from above.

The Owl, the Fox, and the Mole

Far below, in a tree trunk burrow, the fox's keen ears twitch the rest of him awake at the sound of a "hoot" announcing the owl's inaugural flight this night. The fox's stomach growls, as does he.

As his head emerges from his cozy den, his sharp eyes instantly lock onto the silent silhouette of pitch-black wings gracefully gliding against the dimming dark purple of the dusk sky above. He wastes no time clawing his way up the bark of the nearest tree and leaping limb-to-limb, tree-to-tree, attempting to drag the great bird back down away from the stars. The hunt is underway.

Several times during the chase, the fox breaches the forest canopy, snapping at tail-feathers in the full glow of moonlight. In his ravenous resolve, the fox fails to notice his prey luring him ever further from the forest floor below, too preoccupied with his pursuit to look down.

Meanwhile, many metres below the treetop chase, the young mole is the last of the three to stir. He blinks his bleary eyes and tunnels his way upward to drink in the brisk night air. Once he breaches the surface, his head swivels skyward to observe the starlit spectacle overhead. He observes with interest, and he learns from the dizzying dance of the duo so high up. He admires their ability and agility—but only from his earthbound vantage can he also see its futility.

After a while, he tires of the aerial display, which doubtless will continue till morning to no avail, and so returns to his nightly work of digging around in the dirt.

By the time dawn threatens to break, the owl and the fox are forced to return to their homes, exhausted and hungry—another night wasted, fruitless. Only the mole retires happily, with a belly full of grubs, having shifted and reshaped the earth in a way that will make his world an even better one to live in tomorrow.

The owl is an analog for Hegel. This leaves the fox and the mole: Feuerbach and Marx, respectively. First, the owl remains in continuous flight throughout the night, scanning the earth from above, representing Hegel's philosophy of idealism. Briefly, Hegel's philosophical system is founded on considering finite experiences to be pointing toward a greater, intelligible reality, accessed by reason alone.

The fox's pursuit of the owl, then, represents Feuerbach's critique of Hegel, and the continued attempts to pull the bird out of the sky reflect Feuerbach's materialist inclinations, and his criticism of Hegel's idealism. A fundamental element of this criticism is concerned with rejecting the abstraction from material reality which Hegel's system requires.

Finally, the mole—Marx—is the one to notice, from his earthbound perspective, the fox's growing distance from the ground, of which the fox is unaware. This is intended as a

nod to Marx's criticism of Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel: it has been unwittingly baited into the same distance from material reality as its object of criticism. That is, Feuerbach's criticism, as Marx saw it, had essentially become the very abstraction it criticizes.

The mole's earthbound perspective on this scenario allows him to observe and learn from the maneuvers of the two overhead, recognizing the futility of the chase, before resolving to return to his nightly work of digging around in the earth. Marx engaged with the ideas of his predecessors, especially those of Feuerbach and Hegel, but only to the extent to which they could inform and be translated into material applications.

The Owl

Hegel's philosophy is a culminating product of post-Kantian German idealism and purports to be all-encompassing and entirely self-contained. The observable world is a reflection of the mind; "truer" reality is accessed in thought. Knowledge, for Hegel (2014, 12), must "examine, apprehend, and conceive the reason actually present in nature. Not with the superficial shapes and accidents of nature, but with its eternal harmony, that is to say, its inherent law and essence, [it] has to cope." Knowledge is formed by way of abstraction from phenomenal experience to universal intelligible forms in reason. Here can begin the construction of a universal philosophical system. Hegel (2014, 12) describes the fate of the immediate as "the plight of [them] who cannot see the woods for the trees." And so, the owl understands that he must breach the canopy of trees to better observe the whole of the forest from above.

Structurally, the Hegelian system is a "dialectic." Every idea is intrinsically tied to its own contradiction, and the pair in contradiction produces a new idea which incorporates its predicates and accounts for the contradiction—a process called "sublation." The most basic example, which he provides in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, he summarizes: "Nothing, if it be thus immediate and equal to itself, is also conversely the same as Being is. The truth of Being and of Nothing is accordingly the unity of the two: and this unity is Becoming" (Hegel 2001, 71). Hegel begins with the idea of Being. We innately have an account of being by virtue of our awareness of our own being and of the world around us. To have an account of Being, he argues, is to also have an account of its inverse: Nothing. For example, if we take a determinate, finite instance of being—say, me or my being—this automatically points to moments in the past and the future of nothingness: before I was born and after I die. The contradiction is then resolved when we consider that between the moment of Nothing and the moment of Being, there is a movement that must take place, a process of generation or elimination. This is how we arrive at the idea of Becoming. Becoming, as such, is predicated upon, while also serving to resolve the contradiction between, Being and Nothing; and it *sublates* the two opposing ideas within the result. In this way, we can think of the Hegelian dialectic as a movement of three moments: a point, a negation, and a negation of the negation. In the example provided, these moments would be Being, Nothing, and Becoming, respectively.

Importantly, even at this early point in the discussion, one might already recognize some ways in which in a system ideas are not subservient to the individual. But the reverse might lend itself to the entrenchment of hierarchical, fatalistic, and politically passive worldviews. These elements, as they are criticized by Marx and Feuerbach, will be described in greater detail; however, here I will introduce an example to work with henceforth: the State.

In *Philosophy of Right*, regarding the purpose of the text as a whole, Hegel (2014, 21) affirms that “this treatise, therefore, in so far as it deals with a political science, shall be nothing other than an attempt to *comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity*.” This is noteworthy because we see that Hegel’s notion of the state and how it operates and governs its constituents is as an entity that is rational *in itself*; that is, the very *concept* of state is rational, and not only those people of whom the state is comprised. What this means is that Hegel understands a government’s regime and a nation’s structure to presuppose a purely rational, conceptual framework. We might be able to access and understand the state’s various mechanisms by way of reason, but the principles to which it adheres—and which it imposes on the populace—are to be considered axiomatic. It is as though the state is an invisible, conceptual force, hovering over the tangible world, dictating how everything operates. As such, we see how the owl may have a vested interest in flying high above the ground. This notion will prove crucial in the discourse to follow.

The Fox

As discussed above, the fox’s attempts to drag the bird out of the sky represent Feuerbach’s materialist criticism of the abstraction inherent to the Hegelian system. Respecting the very outset of Hegel’s idealist project, Feuerbach levies a protest against his predecessor’s approach with regards to the idea of Being. He voices his point of contention in the following:

I take the notion of being from being itself; however, all being is determinate being—that is why, in passing, I can also posit nothingness which means “not something” or “opposed to being” because I always and inseparably connect “something” with being. If you therefore leave out determinateness from being, you leave being with no being at all. (Feuerbach 2012a, 186-7)

Feuerbach’s main issue has to do with a fundamental tenet of idealism: namely, the position that abstraction from determinate phenomena to universal objects of reason and understanding somehow constitutes a movement toward reality, truth, and knowledge. For Feuerbach, all notions of being are contingent on there being determinate instances of being, and any abstraction to a more universal concept is just that: abstraction. That is to say, Feuerbach’s argument is that the idealist way of thinking does not move us toward truth and knowledge eternal, extant only in the intelligible realm, or what have you; rather, it constitutes from its outset a departure from the reality of lived, material existence.

Notably, this criticism of Feuerbach's is not a purely academic one. There are demonstrable material implications of his contention when we apply it to, say, our example of the State. On this, he posits the following:

Every system is only an expression or image of reason, and hence only an object of reason, an object which reason—a living power that procreates itself in new thinking beings—distinguishes from itself and posits as an object of criticism. Every system that is not recognized and appropriated as just a means, limits and warps the mind for it sets up the indirect and formal thought in the place of the direct, original, and material thought. It kills the spirit of invention. (Feuerbach, 175-76)

Feuerbach's worldview contrasts starkly with that of Hegel. In the context of the State, the notion that governance and societal order are a function of some system of pure reason gives rise to some problematic implications. This way of thinking lends itself readily to the preclusion of anti-monarchist sentiments, for example; if we internalize the idea that the State is a manifestation of reason, it is easier to accept any political and societal reality into which we are born. Conversely, if we conceive of the state as being a product of those who uphold it, not only are we better equipped to recognize systemic injustices, but suddenly there are tangible objects towards which we can direct dissent (in the form of those people who uphold the unjust systems). Only a materialist analysis of the state fosters progressive political thought, because only the materialist paradigm includes an awareness that the State is what the people make of it. It is for this reason the fox so hastily climbs the tree, and desperately tries to pull the bird back down to earth.

The Mole

The owl's graceful flight and the fox's agility and determination, even in the topmost branches, are to be admired. Surely, however, as much as their dance is a spectacle to behold, the mole knows they will ultimately have nothing to show for it come morning.

Karl Marx wore many hats, often all at once: he was a historian, a political economist, a journalist, and a philosopher—although “student of philosophy” might be a better description for the latter. I draw this distinction because, from very early on in his writings, Marx advocates for thinking of theory as valuable only insofar as it serves to inform praxis. In an early article entitled “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing,” Marx (1978d, 13) calls for exactly what the title would suggest, clarifying that his meaning is “ruthless in two senses: The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be.” Not long before, in his dissertation, Marx (1978d, 9) posits that “it is a psychological law that the theoretical mind, once liberated in itself, turns into practical energy, and turns itself against the reality existing without it.”

The sum of the sentiments expressed in these excerpts speaks to Marx's view on philosophy, namely, that it should be a theoretical means to a practical end. That is, philosophy is valuable insofar as it inculcates in its student a ruthlessly critical mind, ultimately leading to enactment of material change in kind. It is primarily in this way that

Marx deviated from his predecessors—the mole turns away from the spectacle up in the trees, having gleaned what he could from their movements, and decides to redirect his efforts to actually reshaping the earth.

With regard to Hegel, Marx was more or less wholly in agreement with the criticisms levied by Feuerbach. For example, in the introduction to his essay “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” Marx (1978a, 53) addresses both of the examples touched on above—Being and the State—in the following passage: “*man* is not an abstract being, squatting outside the world. Man is *the human world*, the state, society.” In this respect, he agrees with Feuerbach’s assertions that the idea of Being has no content without determinate instances, and that the state is no more nor less than the sum total of the social production of its constituent populace.

That said, Marx’s departure from Feuerbach stems primarily from his assertion that Feuerbach’s criticism had unwittingly established itself at the same level of abstraction as that which it sought to criticize, and that the criticism was essentially identical to its object in this way. In the “Theses on Feuerbach” Marx (1978e, 143) states that “the chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively.” That is to say, for Marx, the point of materialist criticism is to act critically so that criticisms may have a transformative material impact on the world. In other words, Feuerbach’s criticism is inadequate *because* it is immaterial, in that it has seemingly become self-satisfied with having criticized only, without having incited any attempt to rectify the flaws it points out in the real world. This is why the mole views the fox’s hunt of the owl as ultimately pointless, and why he turns to focus his efforts on breaking and reforming the ground instead.

From Stars to Soil

One important caveat we might ascribe to Marx’s criticism of Hegel is that he tends to agree with the inverse of the Hegelian system. That is, Marx admires the dialectical motor of the system, but has to turn it upside down. Instead of soil to stars like the owl taking flight, Marx saw value in the route of the mole leaving the open air to venture back down into the dirt. This inversion of Hegel’s system, while preserving the method of his movement, is evidenced by this passage from “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”: “if Hegel had set out from real subjects as the bases of the state he would not have found it necessary to transform the state in a mystical fashion into a subject” (18). We see in Marx’s thinking both the preservation of the dialectical moments and movement, but with a different proposed starting point.

Marx used Hegelian dialectical logic toward material ends. This is exemplified by his description of communism in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* as the “*positive* expression of annulled private property—at first as *universal* private property” whereby the community becomes the “universal capitalist” (1978c, 82-83). Existing capitalist society would be the Hegelian point, its inevitable abolition by way of revolution brought on by conditions created under capitalism would be its negation, and the

establishment of a communist society in its place would be the negation of the negation. In this construct, the concepts of the individual capitalist and individual private property are sublated into the new communist reality in the form of the *universal* capitalist that is the community, and *universal* private property which is communally owned. This is an example of what is meant by dialectical materialism: a reapplication of the Hegelian model whereby the moments, the movement, and the sublation they entail all correspond to material changes.

We can better understand the progression of ideas which led to Marx's conception of dialectical materialism by thinking of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx as the dialectical moments. Hegel's idealist philosophy, with its dialectic structure, represents the point. Feuerbach's materialist criticism of Hegel's abstraction constitutes the negation. Marx's development of dialectal materialism is, itself, the negation of the negation. It sublates the inverse of Hegelian philosophy by way of Hegel's own logic and Feuerbach's materialist criticism of Hegel. It removes the contradiction of abstraction from material reality common to both, by way of always translating theory and criticism into praxis. Dialectical materialism expresses the sublation of both of Marx's predecessors. The owl takes flight, the fox chases the owl up to where the owl is flying, and the mole stays firmly on the ground wherefrom he watches, learns, and gets back to digging. Indeed, whereas the fowl and canine spend their evening dancing among the starscape above, the mole is much more content whilst tunneling his way through the soil under the forest floor below.

Conclusion

In sum, the Marxist conception of dialectical materialism can be understood by way of employing the structure of the Hegelian dialectic whereby we think of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx as the three dialectical moments. To better illustrate this idea, I have analogously described the dynamic between these three thinkers with my parable "The Owl, the Fox and the Mole." That is to say, the dialectically-structured, idealist philosophy of Hegel—the owl flying high above the ground—represents the initial point in the movement. The materialist criticism levied by Feuerbach, which unwittingly resembles that which it is criticizing in terms of abstraction—the ravenous fox straying ever farther from the forest floor in an attempt to pull the owl out of the sky—represents the negation of the point. And the sublation of both the inverse of the Hegelian system and its dialectical structure, as well as the valid points made in Feuerbach's materialist criticism, in practical application by way of the novel conception of dialectical materialism in Marx—the mole who watches the chase, and then gets back to his digging—represents the negation of the negation and the sublation of both other moments. What differentiates dialectical materialism from the Hegelian dialectic is that the third moment of Hegel's system produces only abstract concepts devoid of content which are arguably further removed from material reality, whereas Marx's reinvention of the movement informs praxis and produces observable, material changes. It is for this reason I maintain that these three men are the three moments in the movement from stars to soil.

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The Matadors of Animal Spirits: Are Central Banks Religious Institutions?

Dante Enewold



Introduction

Money is a funny thing. Although we measure most of our lives with it, its underlying value lies untethered from any material entity we find in reality. The central bank of the modern neo-liberal state has been given an impossible task: to create inflation. Inflation is the numeric value we put upon our money to measure its value over time. However, they do not have an effective mechanism to attempt such a thing. In lieu of this mechanism, central banks attempt to create inflation by manipulating the moods and motivations of their populations, specifically through the animation of Keynes' proverbial "animal spirits." This paper seeks to explore whether—in this attempt at the mechanistically impossible—central banks have essentially assumed the form of religious institutions in order to induce fervor among the animal spirits and achieve their mandate. We will discover by using the very formal, most empirical of all tests, that central banks walk, talk, and look like the duck of religious institutions. Central banks have been mandated to maintain stable inflation within our economies. There are two ways to do this, through a mechanical process of creating credit in the real economy; or through producing fervor in the animal spirits of marketplace participants. Because central banks are mechanically

unable to create credit in the real economy, they have become matadors to provoke the animal spirits of the population. In donning their roles as matadors of animal spirits, the central banks have been required to take up the qualities of religious institutions to achieve their mandates.

The Wizards in Oz

Credit—the extension of a debt to be repaid—comes originally from the Latin word *credito*, meaning *I believe*.

In 1971, Nixon broke the American dollar's peg to gold, which changed US dollars into fiat credit instruments. Credit is based on trust, and in a centralized credit system, there must be an institution that takes the role of "trust-holder." There must be some institution to declare the worth of the fiat credit instrument. In order for the credit instruments to have value without the backing of a fixed asset, like in the traditional gold-backed system, an institution must fulfill the role of backer to that credit instrument.

Central banks fulfill this role. Central banks, the banks of banks, declare the worth of the fiat credit instruments we use. As we can see from their legal inception documents, these institutions have been mandated to fulfill rather specific roles in our societies; always price stability, and sometimes something about employment. Three of the largest central banks are:

Bank of Canada:

To establish a central bank in Canada to regulate credit and currency in the best interests of the economic life of the nation, to control and protect the external value of the national monetary unit and to mitigate by its influence fluctuations in the general level of production, trade, prices, and employment, so far as may be possible within the scope of monetary action, and generally to promote the economic and financial welfare of Canada. (Bank of Canada Act 1985)

Federal Reserve Bank of America:

An Act to provide for the establishment of Federal reserve banks, to furnish an elastic currency, to afford means of rediscounting commercial paper, to establish a more effective supervision of banking in the United States, and for other purposes. (Federal Reserve Official Title 2017)

European Central Bank:

The European Central Bank (ECB) is the central bank of the 19 European Union countries which have adopted the euro. Our main task is to maintain price stability in the euro area and so preserve the purchasing power of the single currency. (European Central Bank Website 2020)

What do I mean by price stability? Price stability is defined as the maintenance of a steady value for fiat credit instruments, which is achieved by central banks holding inflation at a 2% growth rate. How does a central bank do that? One common misconception is that they achieve this through the setting of interest rates. Despite being commonly understood as a key policy tool in the toolbox of central banks, it was not until 2017 that anyone took an empirical look at whether interest rate targeting worked as intended. The results of this empirical analysis? Interest rate setting does nothing at all. If anything, the usage of interest rate setting creates the opposite of the intended effect (Lee).

If interest rate targeting does not work, what is happening? Let us now take a closer look at inflation. Inflation is a “general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money” (Oxford Languages). Many studies go into intricate detail about how these increases and falls come about (Shirakawa), but in broad strokes, it comes down to two key components: a mechanical tactic, through expansion of the credit available to the real economy; and a psychological tactic, through invoking what the economist John Maynard Keynes called animal spirits.

Interest rates were supposed to be the central bank’s way of affecting changes mechanically through the expansion of credit available to the economy. However, numerous studies have shown this to not be the case (Lee; Bauman et al.). But why is that? As it turns out, it is not actually the central banks that create credit for the economy; rather, commercial banks create credit (Werner). Therefore, the belief that it is through interest rates that the central bank expands credit within the economy is a misconception. The empirical evidence shows instead that interest rate adjustment does not affect credit growth, and that commercial banks, not central banks, provide credit to the economy.

Thus, central banks have no ability to stimulate the economy through the mechanical component of the inflation equation, which is an expansion of credit available to the real economy. This leaves central bankers with only one possibility to achieve their mandate: they must don their *traje de luces*¹ and dance with the bulls. They must raise Keynes’ animal spirits to prolong consumption in order to bring about inflation. See Figure 1.

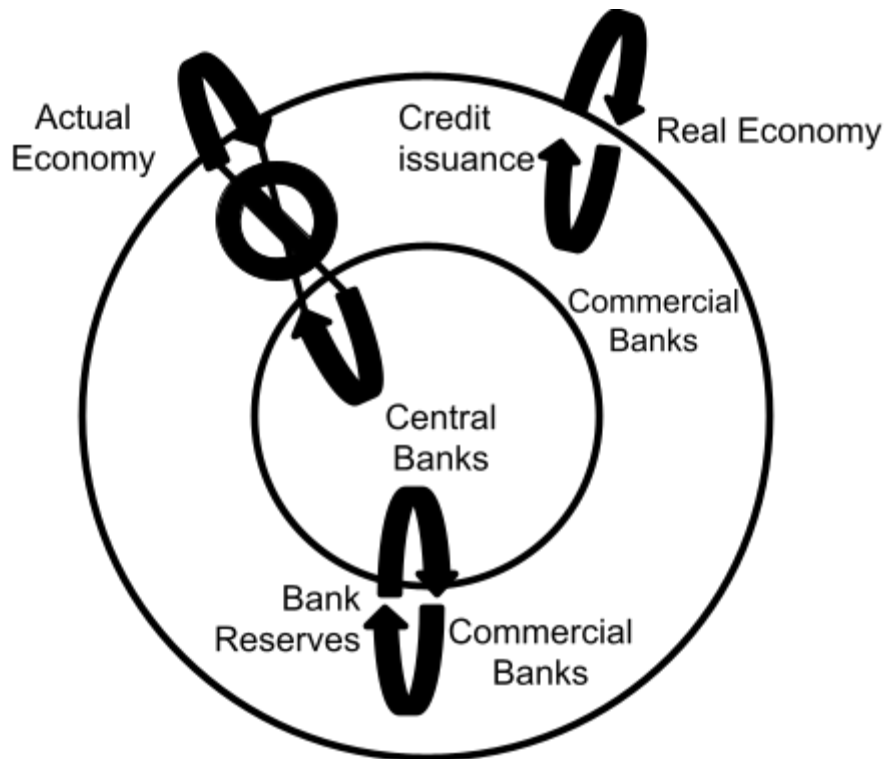


Fig. 1—The segregation of central banks from the real economy

Animating Animal Spirits

John Maynard Keynes first brought the idea of animal spirits to the world of economic thought in 1935 through his book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. Here he proposed:

that a large proportion of our positive activities depend on spontaneous optimism rather than on a mathematical expectation, whether moral or hedonistic or economic. Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many days to come, can only be taken as the result of *animal spirits*—a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities. (Keynes, 141)

In spite of what we may tell ourselves in this age of supposed technological enlightenment, we humans are not at all the most rational of actors (Ellickson). We are prone to

irrationality, exorbitant spending, and indefinite consumption. Since, as we have shown, central banks cannot achieve their mandates by any mechanical component at their disposal, it follows that it is through the provoking of animal spirits they can achieve their goals. The central banks must guide the moods and motivations of their populations towards one of credit-financed consumption. Is it indeed the case that unleashed animal spirits can create inflation? How would a central bank go about becoming the matador of animal spirits to guide the moods and motivations of its population?

The Fantasia of Flowers

The first time that animal spirits got out of hand was in the Netherlands in 1634. This is the time of tulip mania, a period of roughly eight years when a tulip bulb was worth the equivalent of about \$600,000 in present-day Canadian dollars. Recounted excellently by Edward Chancellor (2000) in his book *Devil Take the Hindmost*, the rise of tulip mania illustrates the inflationary potential of unleashed animal spirits.

It starts with the introduction of tulip bulbs to the Dutch from the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 1630s. By mid-decade, tulip bulbs had become an ever more coveted commodity by the increasingly prosperous Dutch population. Tulips, however, are a fickle commodity to covet. Not only do they take years to mature from bulb to actual flower, there is also little assurance of the aesthetic beauty of the tulip, and therefore its currency value, until it has bloomed. Futures contracts—a contract which allows the bearer of the contract to purchase a product from a pre-arranged seller at an already agreed-upon price at a pre-specified point in the future—were developed for tulip bulb markets to overcome this temporal issue. Not all the bulbs would bring equally coveted flowers; but there was no way of truly knowing the underlying quality of the flower until it bloomed.

Following this arrival of speculation into the tulip markets, tulip bulb futures contracts started relatively low, less than ten guilders per bulb, but rose to a price of one thousand guilders within a year.² At the height of the speculative frenzy, tulip futures reached a price of over 3000 guilders per bulb. For comparison, the average yearly salary of a carpenter in the Netherlands at the time was 300 guilders (Chancellor). How does the price of a tulip bulb become the same comparative value as ten years of a carpenter's salary? Inflation. Animal spirits, when witnessing the near miraculous spike in price of something, will feel the fool to not partake in the apparent alchemy of buying an object today, with the ability to sell the same object a few months later for double the original investment. This creates, as Keynes (141) called it: “a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction.”

It took just four days to reverse the fortunes of tulip futures contracts. A bad harvest led to the devaluation of numerous contracts, which created a cascade of markdowns across the tulip market. By the following week, the going price on tulip futures had dropped by 95%.

There have been numerous bubbles in markets since the tulip bubble, and there remains a constant amongst them: people assume that if they buy something today, they will be able

to sell it for profit tomorrow. The frenzies of animal spirits are at best flights of fancy, they go until they stop and then go the other way. They are volatile and unpredictable. They will go until they go no longer, and then drop like a rock. George Soros (1987) coined the term *reflexivity* to refer to the self-reinforcing nature of this phenomenon.

However, the question at hand is not *should* we make use of animal spirits to create inflation, but *can* unleashed animal spirits create inflation? As we can see from the example of the Dutch tulip mania all the way back in the 1630s, unleashed animal spirits have the capacity to cause a “general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money” (Oxford Languages). The frenzies of the animal spirits are by their very nature inflationary. They both create inflation and require the continuance of inflation to justify their purchases of the products targeted for consumers to covet.

Powell’s Money Printer

A strange thing happened at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. On 13 May 2020, *60 Minutes* correspondent Scott Pelley interviewed Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell in the boardroom at the Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington, DC. During that interview, the first of its kind for a sitting American central bank chairman, Powell made some rather odd remarks:

PELLEY: Fair to say you simply flooded the system with money?

POWELL: Yes. We did. That’s another way to think about it. We did.

PELLEY: Where does it come from? Do you just print it?

POWELL: We print it digitally.

(Pelley 2020)

This spawned a series of memes across the internet referring to Powell’s money printer.



Philip Bauman’s study of 124 countries over 18 years out of the Swiss Economic Institute found that “central bank related variables as well as political variables turn out to have the least empirical relevance in the forces that explain inflation” (1). As discussed earlier, central banks cannot affect credit growth in their economies. But if that is the case, why is the chairman of the central bank then going on television to tell the nation that he has “flooded the system with money”? This makes little sense if we think of central banks as the arbiters of the mechanical side of inflation; however, if we view central banks as the matadors of animal spirits, it makes more sense. Powell, in his speech to the nation, hoped to worry the population about inflation through excess production of the currency and, boy, did it work.³ Over the next two weeks following the broadcast, the price of treasury inflation indexed securities, a proxy for inflation concerns in the market, rose by 18%.⁴ This appearance by Powell on national television can therefore be viewed as the central banker taking the stage as a matador, attempting to provoke the proverbial bull into charging headlong once more into the inflationary escapades of animal spirits.

Bank Full of Priests

Central bankers are not the most straightforward of speakers. Karl Brunner (5) complained that:

Central Banking thrives on a pervasive impression that it is an esoteric art. Access to this art and its proper execution is confined to the initiated elite. The esoteric nature of the art is moreover revealed by an inherent impossibility to articulate its insights in explicit and intelligible words and sentences.

And, when we look at Michael Woodford's presentation to the central bankers assembled at the yearly Jackson Hole Conference in 2001, we can begin to understand the central banks' true intention: "Successful monetary policy is not so much a matter of effective control of overnight interest rates as of affecting the evolution of market *expectations*" (Woodford, 307).

Central banks have begun to realize the necessity of their acting as the arbiters of the market's potentiality. They have realized the necessity of their inciting the population's animal spirits in order to achieve their mandate of slow and steady inflation. As demonstrated, central banks cannot achieve their goals through mechanical means; instead, they must work through psychological manipulation of expectations. We are now left asking: have central banks become religious institutions? This question can be answered with the application of the most empirical of tests.

Very Formal, Most Empirical of Tests

In order to answer the question of whether central banks have become religious institutions we will turn to a most empirical of tests: the duck test. If something walks, talks, and looks like a duck, it is probably a duck. Let us now examine whether central banks do indeed walk, talk, and look like ducks by applying to them definitions of religion from select noted anthropologists and sociologists. In J.G. Frazer's work *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, he refers to religion as a "propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life" (53).

We can see the embodiment of this ethos of conciliation to a power superior to man in the current market's apathetic stance of "Don't fight the fed," a motto heard uttered by all market participants across all markets the Federal Reserve decides to enter into. Markets function normally on the implicit assumption that participants in the market have finite resources to purchase things in that market. Powell going on national television and saying, "We print money," puts the federal reserve in a position to be viewed as something superior to the mere mortal market participant.

Thus, central banks, in their posturing as the creators of the medium of the markets, whether true or not, become endowed with the popular perception that they are to be viewed

as superior to the average market participant. The central banker acts as though it is through their actions that the markets as we know them exist. In relation to J.G. Frazer's definition of religion, central banks certainly seem to look a little like a duck.

But that is just looking like a duck, we still must deduce whether central banks talk and walk like a duck. So let us turn to Émilie Durkheim, and his definition of religion in his work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. According to Durkheim (82):

Religious beliefs proper are always shared by a definite group that professes them and that practices the corresponding rites. Not only are they individually accepted by all members of that group, but they also belong to the group and unify it.

Here I propose the proverbial cult of capital. For capital, currency, must by its very nature be "accepted by all members of that group" (Durkheim 42). Arguably, in a modern society as geographically dispersed as ours, the common unification method for cross cultural exchange is through the use of a common currency; take the Euro for example. It is through our shared use of a common medium of exchange that we are able to engage in the diversity of experiences that is our modern economy. Whether this is actually an empirically valid proposition of what central banks provide to the economy is irrelevant; what matters when we are dealing with animal spirits are perceptions, not facts. And what was the perception put forth by the central banks? That it was through the medium of exchange they created, money, that our societies are as peaceful and prosperous as they are. It is through the central banks that we have our unification. The central bank thus becomes the institutional arbiter of its creation; a religious institution that creates the means through which to practice the corresponding rites of capitalism.

Okay, so these central banks are starting to look and sound a little like ducks, but do they walk like a duck? For the last step of our most rigorous and empirical test we turn to J. Milton Yinger (1969, 22) and his work "A Structural Examination of Religion," where he states:

Religion can be found wherever one finds awareness of an interest in continuing, recurrent, permanent, problems, of human existence—the human condition itself, as contrasted with specific problems; where one finds rites and shared beliefs relevant to that awareness which define the strategy of an ultimate victory; and where one has groups organized to heighten that awareness and to teach and maintain those rites and beliefs.

Well, few things concern more a human's existence than their livelihood, how it is they go about earning their dollars to purchase the food needed to eat to survive. Along with this shared concern comes a shared valuation of the righteous ways one can go about making their livelihood; and usually there exists a correlation between the level of compensation one receives for the expenditure of their lives and the perceptions related to that profession. Moreover, we find in our society the existence of a "group organized to

heighten that awareness and to teach and maintain those rites and beliefs”—that is, the central banks (33). Therefore, we find in this definition of religion once again a relation to the modern central bank.

Alas, it would appear our modern central banks walk, talk, and look like the proverbial duck. Hence it would appear that central banks are indeed religious institutions. But what are we to do with this conclusion?

Conclusion and Closing Remarks

In summary, central banks have been mandated to create inflation. There are two ways to do this: through a mechanical process of creating credit in the real economy; or through producing fervor in the animal spirits of marketplace participants. Because central banks are mechanically unable to create credit in the real economy, they have become matadors to provoke the animal spirits of the population. In donning their roles as matadors of animal spirits, the central banks have been required to take up the qualities of religious institutions to achieve their mandates. In becoming religious institutions central banks have become further stratified from the economies they were once meant to serve. Once answerable to democratic parliaments, independent central banks are now the *rule d'jour* of a modern neo-liberal economy.

Richard Fisher, former President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, had this to say to his fellow central bankers at a FOMC (Federal Open Markets Committee) meeting:

If the members of the FOMC could manage to get themselves to once again be thought of as humble, competent people on the level of dentists, that would be splendid. I would argue that the time to reassume a more humble central banker persona is upon us. (Booth 234)

I fully agree with Fisher. Our central banks should not be changing into religious institutions to affect the moods of mere market mortals in order to bring about their mandates. It is time to remove the central bank from the pedestal of the mythic and return it to the realm of the desanctified. It is time for the matador to put down his red flag and let the bull go be a bull.

Notes

1. In bullfighting, the matadors wear the *traje de luces*, or “suit of lights,” consisting of a short jacket, a waistcoat, and knee-length skintight trousers of silk and satin, richly beaded and embroidered in gold, silver, or coloured silk (Britannica Definitions).
2. 1 Guilder in 1630 is equivalent to roughly \$167 current Canadian dollars.
3. This is explainable by the supply and demand dynamics of currencies, if more fiat currency is “printed,” the supply grows, thus moving its marginal value down the demand side of the graph.

4. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US), 10-Year Treasury Inflation-Indexed Security, Constant Maturity [DFII10], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/DFII10>, 8 December 2020.

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About the Journal

Codgito Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory is a student-driven academic publication showcasing some of the best philosophy and theory-based essays that Memorial University has to offer by undergraduates and graduates. The purpose of this journal is threefold: 1) to serve as a forum for celebrating high-quality philosophical and theory-based writing produced by undergraduate and graduate students at Memorial, 2) to offer examples of good writing for other students seeking to improve the quality of their essays, and 3) to foster rich philosophical and transdisciplinary discussion within the faculty in the wake of each issue's publication.

Codgito accepts any philosophical or theoretical scholarly student writing which is 1,500-6,000 words in length. Essays are selected based primarily on style of writing, demonstrated understanding of the subject matter discussed, and originality of new ideas presented. This issue's selections were chosen by two student editors: they were then double-blind refereed, copy-edited, proofread, typeset, and laid-out by students. Although *Codgito* is a long-standing publication at Memorial, this is the first edition published since 2009. This issue is intended as a soft relaunch of sorts, with new issues to be published annually moving forward. The quality of the journal is determined by the quality and number of submissions received, and so the *Codgito* editorial team kindly asks that any student who is proud of a piece and who is interested in having their work published please consider contributing.

State of the Field

Whatever else may be said of *our times*, it seems innocuous enough to observe that spontaneity, rather than reflection, generally tends to be the ruling impulse of the day. Within the context of continual environmental, social, and technological change, the capacity to contemplate has not only been broadly dis-incentivized but also actively undermined. This is an especially acute issue for people new to the study of philosophy, and alongside the long-standing issues of accessibility and inclusivity, the barriers to entry may seem insurmountable. Students that do pursue an education in philosophy and related fields may find that in exploring the field with their peers, they are mostly confined to the oral dialectic, since few journals will accept writing showcasing developments in their thinking. In short, there may be a shortage of mediums in which curiosity can unfold, where thinking can unfurl as a process, and where the activity of learning can receive the professional esteem that it deserves.

Audience

Codgito holds that the study of philosophy and theory ought to be an activity available to all, and as such this publication targets any and all people with a desire to learn and engage in philosophical dialogue, whatever form that engagement may take.

Official Launch Date

2022

Guidelines for Authors

All citations and references must follow those of the Chicago manual of style 17th edition author/date style with in-text parenthetical citations. A quick guide to this format can be found here:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

All notes in all submissions should be formatted as endnotes.

All references must be complete (including all pages, authors, and books which are sourced.)

All articles must be submitted in Times New Roman font size 12.

All submissions must be double spaced.

Commas and periods are placed inside closing quote marks.

Quote marks

Double quote marks are used throughout. Single quote marks are used for quotations within quotations.

Dates

10 May 2009; 1980s; 21st c.

Language

The journal only accepts submissions and publishes in English or those which have been translated into English.

Spelling

UK (Canadian) -our with -ize endings.

Call for Papers (Issue Two)

Philosophy and theory—what do we mean when we speak of these two things? Philosophy itself seems straightforward—figures like Plato, Kant, and Arendt leap out at us—but theory is trickier. While seemingly all-encompassing, *Codgito* understands theory to be the use of both analysis and synthesis to understand. We see the social sciences and humanities and their means of analysis and explication as part of what has been called theory. We at *Codgito* call ourselves students of philosophy *and theory*. We do not restrict ourselves to one discipline or means of analysis. If issue 1.1 was any indication, we encourage and seek to find high-quality academic content which is encapsulated within this idea of theory while also flaring our philosophical feathers from whence we came.

Following the successful release of issue 1.1, we are excited to see the interest in *Codgito* growing among students, and would like to formally announce that *Codgito* 1.2 is now accepting submissions for the next issue of *Codgito: Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory* to be published in January 2023. While *Codgito* version 1.1 primarily accepted written essays, we are excited to announce an expansion into other forms of academic expression. *Codgito* will now be accepting not only written essays along with notes to the author, but will also be accepting poetry, book reviews, critical notes, and video submissions. There are no themes for this version of *Codgito*. Deadlines for submission are **1 September 2022**. However, pending quality of work, and reasonable circumstances, that deadline is flexible on the conditions that prospective authors have reached out to either Editor-in-Chief Dr. Peter Trnka or Senior Editor Maxim Sizov beforehand. All submissions are to be made by email to aiteojournal@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing submissions and to seeing *Codgito Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory* continue to expand.

—Maxim Sizov, Senior Editor for *Codgito: Student Journal of Philosophy and Theory*