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Ephemeris
2011

A Letter from the Editors

Letter from the Editors

The editors had a wonderfully stimulating year of reading the contributions coming from across the nation and beyond, and it was a great honor. We thank everyone who submitted work.

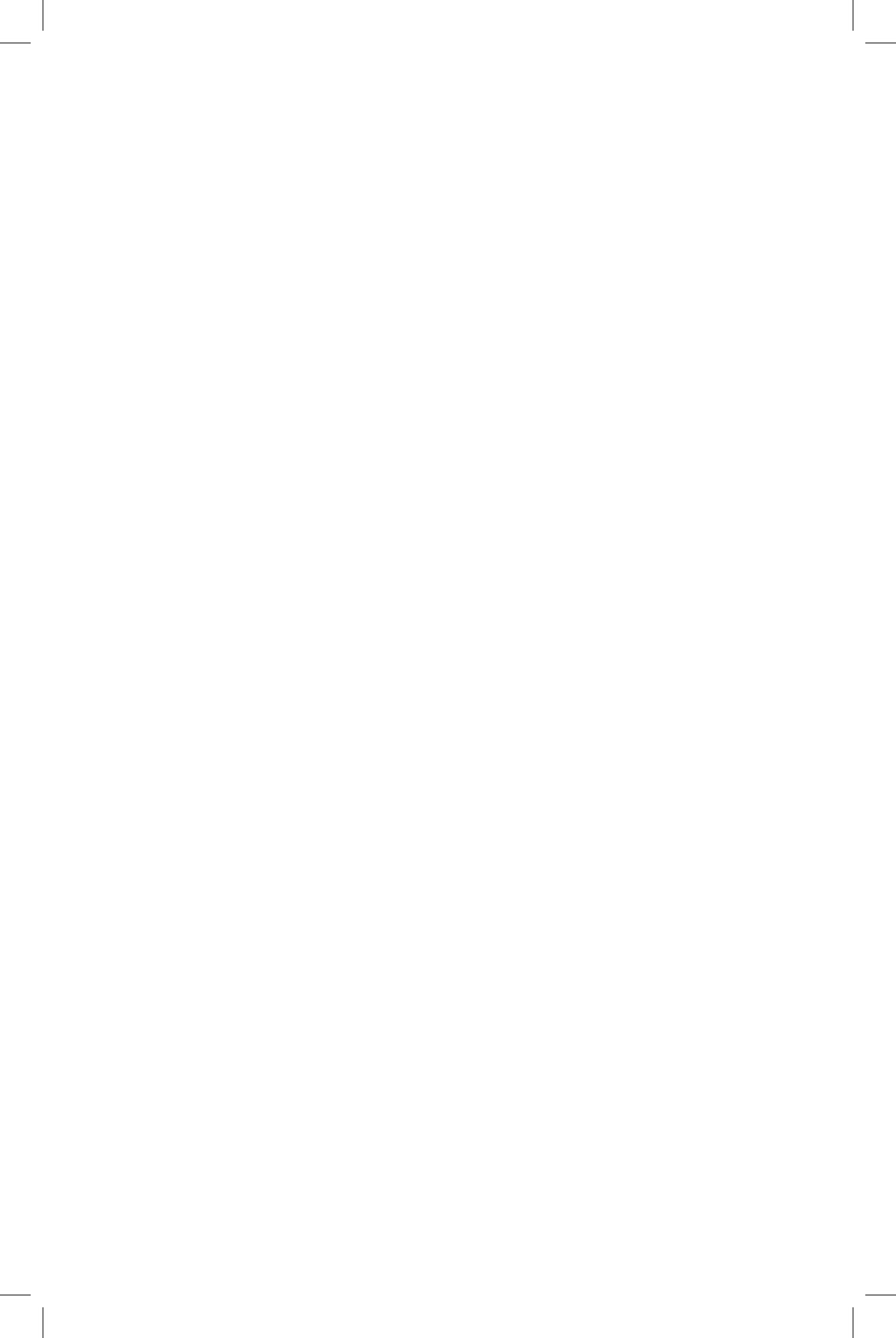
It is not an easy task making a final selection from such rich diversity as manifest in this issue which contains work of historical interpretation, metaphysics, aesthetics, epistemology and value theory. The two pieces in incommensurability, representing somewhat opposing views, recall that replies and responses to published work are welcome.

We also appreciate that it is not easy taking the bold step of submitting work for publication but we encourage it. We will now begin accepting submissions for the 2012 issue of *Ephemeris*. Our publication schedule is somewhat tightened and we expect the 2012 issue will go to print in August. Please consider contributing, as we look forward to the honor of reading your work again next year.

The Editors

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Ephemeris 2011

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Locke on Nominal vs. Real Essence and the Identity of Substances

Why a "Mass of Matter" and an "Oak Tree" Can Be in the Same Place at the Same Time

Michelle Dyke

Yale University

In "Locke on Individuation and the Corpuscular Basis of Kinds," Dan Kaufman argues there is an "intractable" problem in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* involving a contradiction between Locke's views on the identity of individual "things" and his understanding of the real and nominal essences of substances. Locke's opening remarks on the identity of "things" in Chapter XXVII of Book II imply that an "oak tree" and the "mass of matter" that constitutes it at a given time are two different things and that they can coincide in the same place and time provided they are of different "kinds." Intuitively, the different kinds they exemplify are simply indicated by the names "oak tree" and "mass of matter," respectively. Yet Kaufman believes Locke's discussion of nominal and real essence, in combination with Locke's corpuscular understanding of the basis of qualities, commits Locke to the claim that it is impossible for any x and y to share the same real essence and yet differ with respect to any of their nominal essences, and thereby differ in kind, as would be required of the coinciding "oak tree" and "mass of matter." Yet Locke neither is nor should be committed to such a claim. Kaufman's criticism problematically fails to take into account that the properties associated with a given nominal essence need not be, and in fact often will not be, the result of features of any one of what Kaufman refers to as an "individual real essence." The alleged tension may therefore be resolved. The realization that the properties of a given nominal essence need not be a subset of features of some one individual real essence helps to clarify the entirety of Locke's

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discussion of the identity of substances; Locke's theories of the essence and identity of substances are not only compatible but in fact mutually reinforcing, even if the emerging conception is, for external reasons, not totally compelling.

Locke's statements in Chapter XXVII of Book II do indeed commit him to the claim that an oak tree and the mass of matter constituting it at a given moment are two distinct things of different kinds. Locke states it is impossible for "two things of the same kind [to] exist in the same place at the same time," and that "one thing cannot have two beginnings" in place and time (II.xxvii.1). As Vere Chappell had already argued elsewhere, it follows from these principles and from Locke's own description of the persistence conditions for an oak tree and for a mass of matter that they are not identical things (Kaufman 502). A mass of matter, for Locke, is a particular collection of conjoined atoms; the same mass cannot survive a loss, replacement, or addition of particles (Kaufman 502). Yet the persistence conditions for organisms, according to Locke, involve continuation of the same "life." A tree can survive the loss of a few of its atoms and remain the same tree provided it still partakes of the same continued life (Kaufman 502). The tree would, however, be constituted by a new mass of matter since its atoms are not exactly the same. Since no one thing can have two beginnings in place and time, Locke must hold that a tree and the mass of matter constituting it at a given moment are not the same identical thing. They must be two things of different kinds since they do coincide.

Kaufman terms Chappell's interpretation, which holds that a mass and an organism can be non-identical coinciding things of different kinds, the "Coincidence Interpretation" of Locke. Kaufman writes that in order to defend Locke's account as coherent, the defender of this interpretation must be able to explain what the two different kinds are, exemplified by a mass and an organism, that allow them to coincide. The obvious answer, he concedes, is that those two kinds are simply "mass" and "organism," respectively. These names are indicative of two different

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nominal essences that happen to pick out, at a particular time, the same sensible object. Yet the great difficulty, according to Kaufman, is that Locke's discussion of the real and nominal essence of substances does not allow an organism and the mass constituting it at a given time to be of different "kinds" at all because they share the same "individual real essence" and two x and y of the same individual real essence cannot differ with respect to any of their nominal essences.

Locke presents his view of essence as an alternative to the view held by the Aristotelians who "suppose a certain number of those Essences, according to which, all natural things are made, and wherein they do exactly every one of them partake, and so become of this or that *Species*" (III.iii.17). Locke insists instead that "The other, and more rational Opinion, is of those, who look on all natural Things to have a real, but unknown Constitution of their sensible Parts, from which flow those sensible Qualities, which serve us to distinguish them one from another, according as we have Occasion to rank them into sorts, under common Denominations. (III.iii.17)

There is thus a key distinction for Locke between real and nominal essence. Real essence refers to that unknown constitution of corpuscular parts in nature from which observable qualities spring.¹ Yet we group the observed objects of our experience under certain names that emphasize different observable characteristics that we take to be important or noteworthy. For example, anything we consider to be a sample of the metal "gold" will display a certain color, malleability, solubility in *aqua regia*, etc. (III.vi.6). We human language users designate these characteristics as the necessary "properties" associated with the nominal essence of "gold." Locke believes there is some corpuscular feature or features at the level of the real essence

¹ Locke is clearly partial to corpuscularian explanations of qualities at the level of real essence although Locke's philosophical commitment to corpuscularianism as the only possible characterization of real essence has been challenged, for example by Lisa Downing in "Locke's Ontology." Kaufman assumes that Locke is committed to a corpuscularian understanding of real essence, and this can be assumed for the sake of this paper's argument as well.

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of a sample of gold that account for its observable characteristics. Interestingly, Locke is not committed to the claim that manifestation of the same observable qualities in two objects necessarily implies that the same (qualitatively) underlying real essence is the basis of them (Kaufman 521). Two samples of malleable metal, even if we call them by the same name (a name whose nominal essence includes malleability as a property) may, for all we know, have quite different real essences that make their malleability possible (Kaufman 521).

This much Kaufman agrees with. Yet he interprets Locke's understanding of the disconnect between real and nominal essences to entail a reductive formation of nominal essences, that is, the set of properties associated with any nominal essence that may be applied to a sensible object must be a subset of the properties associated with that object's "individual real essence":

Nominal essences are the "Workmanship of the Understanding" (3.3.14) according to Locke. Among the reasons for this label is that despite the fact that the qualities included in the nominal essence are produced by the individual real essence of a body, it is we who decide which qualities to include in the nominal essence. Thus, Locke believes that in the formation of nominal essences, both we and the individual real essence play the crucial roles. (Kaufman 518)

While we have the choice of which qualities to include as necessary properties of a nominal essence, these properties will, according to Kaufman, be a subset of the qualities of the individual real essence of a substance to which the name can be applied; "Given Locke's commitment to corpuscularianism, nothing other than the individual real essence of an individual could serve as the basis for the observable qualities which go into the creation of the nominal essence of a kind" (Kaufman 518). Given that "kinds" are a class of nominal essence, Kaufman concludes, "Necessarily, for any x and y, if x and y have the same individual real essences, then for any kind K, either (i) both x and y are members of K or (ii) neither x nor y are

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members of K." (527) This is true, argues Kaufman, because whatever qualities would be required for membership in a given kind (as necessary properties of the nominal essence associated with it), two individuals *x* and *y* of the same real essence will both either display or fail to display these qualities.

Kaufman finds this result incompatible with the claim that an oak tree and the mass of matter constituting it at a given time can be two distinct things of different kinds:

[T]he defender of the Coincidence Interpretation needs to establish that Locke held that two things that are composed of numerically-identical material parts arranged in a numerically-identical manner at a time can be of different kinds. That is, the defender of the Coincidence Interpretation of Locke must show that two things with the same individual real essence can differ with respect to at least one of their nominal essences. When stated in this way, the problem seems intractable... (521-2)

Yet Kaufman errs in thinking that the formation of nominal essences involves merely picking and choosing from among the qualities of some one individual real essence, such that all the properties of a nominal essence must be a subset of properties of just one "individual real essence." Locke makes no such claim explicitly, and his description of our "complex ideas" of substances encourages an outright rejection of this supposition. The nominal essence of an "oak tree" can include properties such as those describing its growth and behavior over time that are not properties of any one "individual real essence." The properties of an individual real essence at time *t* are not exhaustive of all the possible properties of nominal essences that could characterize a substance whose real essence is, at time *t*, that individual real essence. It is for this reason that two different nominal essences, with different sets of necessary properties, can intelligibly be applied, at time *t*, to a sensible object of some one individual real essence.

Strictly speaking, phrases like "oak tree" and "mass of matter" directly signify

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not material objects, according to Locke, but ideas: "Words in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the *Ideas* in the Mind of him that uses them" (III.ii.2). "Oak tree" and "mass of matter" in particular are examples of Lockean complex ideas, and more specifically, substances². Locke explains that the necessary properties associated with the nominal essences of substances are themselves whatever ideas we see fit to associate for the sake of identifying substances in ways we find useful or desirable:

The measure and boundary of each Sort, or *Species*, whereby it is constituted that particular Sort, and distinguished from others, is that we call its *Essence*, which is nothing but that *abstract Idea to which the Name is annexed*: So that every thing contained in that *Idea*, is essential to that Sort. This ... I call it by a peculiar name, the *nominal Essence*, to distinguish it from that real Constitution of Substances, upon which depends this *nominal Essence*, and all the Properties of that Sort ... (III.vi.2).

The complex ideas of substances are, according to Locke, built up of simple ideas. These simple ideas include not only primary and secondary sensible qualities like extension and color but also active and passive "powers" (II.xxiii.7). Locke explicitly insists that "*active Powers* make so great a part of our complex *Ideas* of natural Substances" (II.xxi.2). Yet powers are features that may not necessarily be reducible to the properties of any one individual real essence because they refer to abilities to "make, or... receive... change" (II.xxi.2). "I confess *Power includes in it some kind of relation*," Locke writes, "a relation to Action or Change" (II.xxi.3). Kaufman takes one individual real essence to be one particular corpuscularian arrangement of particles. Thus the exercise of a power may actually require a change from one individual to another at the level of real essence. For example, the idea of an oak tree can include powers like the ability to grow in height, the ability to take

² Kaufman agrees that these two things should be considered substances although he notes that certain other scholars have disagreed. Locke constantly refers to other organisms like men, horses, and swans, as prime examples of substances (II.xxiii.3, II.xxiii.14).

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up water and nutrients from the soil and the ability to drop its leaves in the Fall. An oak tree remains the same tree after absorbing iron and magnesium from its soil overnight. Yet strictly speaking, the corpuscularian real essence of the tree before and after is quite different. Exercise of this power requires change from one "individual real essence" to another and so this power cannot be reduced to the features of one individual real essence. Yet this power can be one of the properties of the nominal essence of an "oak tree."

Locke was clearly not averse to understanding even our "simple ideas" to be indicative of change over time. For example, Locke's short list of our simple ideas of primary qualities includes not only figure and extension, which can intelligibly characterize objects in given instants, but also motion (II.viii.9). A simple idea of motion, derived from experience as Locke's empiricism requires, would not be formed on the basis of an observation occurring at one given instant; a Lockean idea of motion must be an idea of something occurring over a span of time. Since even simple ideas can involve a sense of processes occurring over time, the complex ideas of substances built up from simple ideas can legitimately reference processes occurring over periods of time. A characteristic "constant regular motion" is in fact one of the ideas Locke himself lists as a component of our idea of the Sun, a prime example of a substance (II.xxiii.6). Thus when Locke states that the complex ideas of substances are collections of "*Ideas...* observed to exist united together," Locke is not saying that all of the component ideas of a substance must exist together in one place and time such that the observable qualities they are based upon are enabled by the features of one individual real essence (II.xxiii.6). The characteristics of a named substance need not all be qualities of some instantaneous individual real essence of that substance.

Granted, since motion is a primary quality, it characterizes substance at the level of real essence. Yet when Kaufman speaks of "individual real essence," he is

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speaking of the real essence of a substance at some given instant. An "oak tree" and the "mass of matter constituting it at time t" share the same real essence only in that they share an "individual real essence" at some one time t. This in itself casts doubt upon Kaufman's interpretation since the primary qualities are qualities of substance at the level of real essence (II.viii.15). Yet the instantaneous "individual real essence" would not even in principle be capable of displaying one of the primary qualities, namely that of motion. Locke clearly thinks motion is a quality. Yet if the characteristics of all substances (as properties of their nominal essences) are subsets of the qualities of one of their individual real essences, and no one individual real essence can itself possess the quality of motion, then how could Locke describe the substance of the Sun as having the quality of motion? If Kaufman is correct, then the *Essay* is even more deeply confused than Kaufman realizes. One might attempt to defend Kaufman's interpretation by appealing to the distinction between determinate and determinable qualities; one individual real essence might not be moving but it has whatever corpuscularian features are requisite for the ability to move. Yet this in itself does not explain how the complex idea of the "Sun" can include a determinate "constant regular motion, at a certain distance from us," as one of its simple ideas (II.xxiii.6). What is important to take away from this discussion of the quality of motion is that Locke makes room for even simple ideas to refer to processes occurring over spans of time; a simple idea of a quality or power need not be descriptive of some sensible object in a given instant.

Locke thinks we can and do form our ideas of substances on the basis of whatever observed features of nature we wish, even incorporating ideas of change over time into our ideas of substances. All of those constituent simple ideas forming the complex idea of a substance then become the essential properties of the substance's nominal essence; "The *Essence* of any thing, in respect of us, is the whole complex *Idea*, comprehended and marked by that Name" (III.vi.21). Thus, so

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long as powers like the capacity for growth and the ability to absorb nutrients from the soil are parts of our idea of a substance like an "oak tree," those powers can be necessary properties of the substance's nominal essence. We may refer to the "mass of matter" constituting an oak tree at a given time to indicate a different complex idea of substance, in which no powers for behavior over time are included. Any properties included in the nominal essence of the "mass of matter constituting the oak tree at time t" make reference only to qualities that intelligibly characterize the object at that one instant. Thus the nominal essences of an "oak tree" and "the mass of matter constituting the oak tree at time t" are two non-identical sets of properties that can be applied to a sensible object that, at time t, has some one underlying real essence.

This interpretation of Locke according to which the properties of a nominal essence characterizing a substance need not be a subset of properties of any one of the substance's instantaneous "individual real essences," is consistent with a corpuscularian understanding of the basis of observable characteristics. Any observed quality or power that is included as a property of a nominal essence is still explicable in terms of qualities of the corpuscularian real essence. The ideas of certain powers will be derived from observations over intervals of time. Yet these ideas of power will be based on a series of observations of qualities at different instants. For example, the observation that a tree has grown a foot in height will consist of a collection of instantaneous observations of the color and shape of the tree. If the color and shape observed at two distinct instants are characterized by the proper difference, then the tree is understood to have grown. These instantaneously observed qualities have their basis in the qualities of some individual real essence. Yet a tree one foot and two feet in height are not the same corpuscularian individual. To identify a growing tree as one substance and to attribute to it the power of growth is to identify a property of the "tree" that is not a property of any one individual real

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essence, even though all the qualities enabling us to form the idea of such a power over time must be qualities of real essences.

Thus Dan Kaufman is incorrect when he states that Locke is committed to the claim that given any x and y which share the same individual real essence (at any instant) and given any kind K , x and y are either both members of K or both not members of K . An "oak tree" and the "mass constituting it at time t " share, at time t , the same individual real essence. Yet the non-identical sets of properties associated with each of these nominal essences need not be subsets of the properties of that one individual real essence. The nominal essence of an "oak tree" includes powers to perform behaviors over intervals of time while the nominal essence of the "mass constituting the tree at time t " includes no such powers. The two different nominal essences of these "things" constitute their different "kinds." We can therefore coherently say, against Kaufman's objection, that an oak tree and the mass constituting it at a given instant are two distinct things of different kinds, coinciding in space and time at that instant. The alleged contradiction between Locke's views on identity and his views on real and nominal essence can be resolved.

The realization that Locke thinks that nominal essences can include properties that are not properties of any one individual real essence at some given instant helps us to make much better sense not only of Locke's remarks on spatiotemporal coincidence and kinds but of the entire Chapter XXVII of Book II, on "Identity and Diversity." Locke's conceptions of the nominal essences of substances and of the persistence conditions for individuals over time are directly linked. Locke realizes that the identity of a substance like an oak tree or a horse cannot consist in corpuscular sameness over time (II.xxvii.3). He explains that a tree is considered the same tree even as it grows from a small seedling to a large tree and a horse remains the same horse throughout its lifetime even while it gains and loses weight (II.xxvii.3). The identity of these substances remains the same "though, in both these

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Cases, there may be a manifest change of the parts" (II.xxvii.3). Locke realizes this entails there must be some difference between the oak tree, whose identity remains stable over time, and the particular mass of matter that constitutes it at some given time:

[That difference] seems to me to be in this; that the one is only the Cohesion of Particles of Matter any how united, the other such a disposition of them as constitutes the parts of an Oak; and such an Organization of those parts, as is fit to receive, and distribute nourishment, so as to continue, and frame the Wood, Bark, and Leaves, *etc.* of an Oak, in which consists the vegetable Life. (II.xxvii.4)

Locke is not arguing here that what makes something an oak tree and not a mere mass of matter is some one precise arrangement of parts that enables life at that moment as opposed to some jumble of particles that does not, because at any instant, as Locke notes, there will be one arrangement of mere matter that constitutes the tree (II.xxvii.4). He is instead drawing attention to the differences between our ideas of "masses" and of "oak trees." A mass is simply a collection of particles at some instant. Yet our idea of a tree entails certain abilities which Locke calls collectively the "disposition" to "continue" to support the same life over time. The exact parts of a tree may change but something that remains a tree must continue to "receive, and distribute nourishment." Continued possession of certain powers through time, as parts of the very idea of an oak tree, is intimately tied to its identity: "existing constantly from that moment both forwards and backwards in the same continuity of insensibly succeeding Parts united to the living Body of the Plant, it has that Identity, which makes the same Plant" (II.xxvii.4). As we have seen, Locke takes every constituent idea of our complex idea of a named substance to be a necessary property of its nominal essence (III.vi.21). Locke also notes that "Existence" is the key to a thing's identity; a thing is the same thing so long as it continues to exist (II.xxvii.3). We can easily answer the question about what it takes

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for a named substance to continue to exist by referring to the properties of its nominal essence. An object must continue to display the qualities, and powers, associated with the nominal essence applied to it in order to retain its identity as that substance.

Thus for Locke, identity is relative to some nominal essence; this is a key aspect of his theory of identity: "such as is the *Idea* belonging to that Name, such must be the *Identity*: Which if it had been a little more carefully attended to, would possibly have prevented a great deal of that Confusion..." (II.xxvii.7). If we accept Kaufman's interpretation of Locke, then we cannot make sense of even the broadest aspects of Locke's theory of identity. For according to Kaufman, Locke must hold that the properties of nominal essences are qualities observable at some one instant (Kaufman 530). If this is true, then Locke should have no reason to say that an oak tree and the mass constituting it at a given time are different things with different names at all because their observable qualities in that one instant will be exactly the same. The things identified by the names "tree" and "mass" do indeed have different identities according to Locke because they have different persistence conditions. Given that Lockean identity is relative to nominal essence, their identity is easily accounted for when we realize that different persistence conditions are entailed by their different nominal essences which, in the case of the tree, include powers governing characteristic behaviors over time, and for the mass, a lack thereof.

The thought makes intuitive sense that the ideas of a named substance's properties, its persistence conditions and its identity over time are all intimately linked. When we distinguish between "an oak tree" and "the mass of matter constituting it at time t," we do take ourselves to be making a meaningful distinction. Specifically, we take these things to be different because our ideas of them involve very different conceptions of their behavior over time. We realize that one same oak tree will be composed of very different arrangements of matter throughout its

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lifetime. Yet when we refer to a mass of matter at time *t*, we are referring to something that is unique to one instant of time and which would not be the same "mass" given any modification of its parts. We would not bother to make such a distinction if we were not accustomed to thinking of trees as things that have identity and persist through time. Locke's willingness to account for oak trees and the masses constituting them at a given time as different things, thereby entailing different nominal essences, different persistence conditions, and different identities, should be considered a merit and not a fault of Locke's descriptions of essence and identity.

While Locke's accounts of nominal vs. real essence and the identity of substances do allow for one consistent theory, that theory has at least one major problem. Locke explicitly argues that every component simple idea of the complex idea of a substance is a necessary property of that substance's nominal essence (III.vi.2). Thus a substance can no longer be the same substance as soon as it ceases to display any of its necessary properties. Yet consider, for example, the idea of a "swan." According to Locke's own example, this idea includes, among other characteristics, "white Colour, long Neck, red Beak, black Legs" as well as "a power of swimming in the Water, and making a certain kind of Noise" (II.xxiii.14). Yet it is quite easy to imagine an object that ceased to display any one or even multiple of these characteristics which we would nonetheless continue to identify as a "swan." What is unclear is how many of these properties an object must cease to display before it ceases to be a swan. What is truly essential to a swan's continued identity is not so clear and simple as Locke's account would suggest.

One could attempt to salvage Locke's theory by objecting that we have not correctly identified our idea of a "swan" in general; these are characteristics of some or even most swans but they are not the essential characteristics that really make something a "swan" in our minds. Yet it is unclear that there is actually even one characteristic that every single example of what we would want to consider a "swan"

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has in common, especially if we are looking for a set of characteristics not fully shared by any examples of some other named item we would want to distinguish as different like a "duck" or a "flamingo." This is certainly debatable, and anyway this theory makes major departures from the one actually offered by Locke who did suggest that all the usual characteristics that come into mind for a substance like a "swan" are necessary properties of the "swan" as a named sort. Thus while Locke's theory of the connection between a substance's identity and its nominal essence is at least consistent, it raises difficult questions that call its viability into doubt.

To conclude, while Kaufman accuses Locke of a gross inconsistency between his theories of the identity and essences of substances, his criticism hinges crucially upon a failure to recognize an important aspect of Locke's thinking on these subjects; Locke need not, and did not, hold that the properties associated with any one nominal essence must be a subset of the properties of the real essence, at some specific time *t*, of the sensible object to which the name is applied. Some individual real essence at a given instant can indeed be characterized by two different nominal essences with non-identical properties that can refer to behaviors occurring over differing spans of time. An awareness of this clarifies the alleged tension with the Coincidence Interpretation of Locke's remarks on spatiotemporal coincidence since one sensible object of one individual real essence at time *t* can indeed be associated with two different "kinds." Yet this awareness also sheds new light on basic aspects of Locke's theory of identity. For Locke, identity must be relative to some nominal essence; we must specify some named individual before we can ask, with respect to the necessary properties of that nominal essence, when its existence begins and when its existence ends. Locke can intelligibly distinguish between two things that have the exact same observable qualities at some given instant of time, like an oak tree and the mass of matter that instantaneously constitutes it, precisely because the nominal essences of two things can include properties that make reference to

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characteristic behaviors that occur over time. Locke's accounts of real vs. nominal essence and the identity of substances are not only consistent, but reinforce each other in key ways.

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Photography

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Photography as a medium for visual art is decidedly less certain than painting or sculpture. The latter have their roots in representation and in rendering things that otherwise would not exist whereas photography seems to be a photographic reproduction or catalogue of something that certainly, at some point, existed in the form it takes in the photograph. Kendall Walton argues that photographs are transparent and non-representational, and I believe that he confirms Roger Scruton's argument in his essay "Photography is not art" that photographs lack aesthetic values.

The differences between painting and photography are manifold but chief among them are differences in intention and execution. Scruton says that in painting, "properties of the medium influence not only what is seen in the picture but also the way it is seen." (Scruton 90) The artistic intention and execution of the portrayal of facial features, posture or body positions do in large part dictate our reaction to the painting and to the figure portrayed in the painting whether we view him as arrogant or demure or joyful. The artist controls that with his brushstrokes and does not rely on the attitude of his subject since his subject may not even exist. Oliver Cromwell once said to the portrait painter Peter Lely, "Remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me; otherwise I will never pay a farthing for it." Statements like these only make sense spoken to a painter and highlight the unique reliance on execution and intention in painting and other forms of representational art that does not exist in photography.

Kendall Walton's idea of photographs as transparent and non-representational

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is based on the inherent and unavoidable realism in photography, realism to the point where there cannot be photographs of fictional things in trivial ways. Walton says, “A photograph is always a photograph of something which actually exists.” (Walton 78) That statement is the lynchpin of this entire argument and expresses the fundamental difference between photography and other modes of visual art so that photography is not quite art. Walton argues that in viewing a photograph, the viewer does not “see” the photograph but sees through the photograph and sees the things portrayed. This at first seems counterintuitive; I know a picture of my dead grandfather is not actually my dead grandfather. Of course it cannot be, since he’s long dead. But I do in a sense see him, as he once existed.

In viewing photographs we often do not hesitate to present counterfactual states of affairs as existing in the present tense so that in viewing the picture of my grandfather I might reasonably say “he is smiling” when in fact he isn’t currently smiling, he’s buried. This, then, might mean that my seeing my grandfather is an indirect seeing but it nevertheless is more similar to seeing him through my glasses or a mirror than any pretense I would make at ‘seeing’ him in a painting. Walton highlights the importance of recognizing this indirect sight when he says that a major problem in writing on photography is “failure to recognize and distinguish clearly between the special kind of seeing which actually occurs and the ordinary kind of seeing which only fictionally takes place, between a viewer’s really seeing something through a photograph and his fictionally seeing something directly.” (Walton 81) Both of these kinds of seeing take place when one views a photograph, and they take place simultaneously but fulfill very different cognitive obligations in the viewing process, the same way that “one hears both a bell and the sound it makes.” (Walton 80) We are looking at photographs but we are still actually seeing the things photographed, if indirectly. These two types of sight are very similar, if not identical, and because both take place together a photograph cannot ‘represent’

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something since any time we look at any photograph that is pretending to be a representation, we cannot help but actually see the thing the picture attempts to represent, therefore collapsing the representation into the represented.

The objection could be raised that a photograph often doesn't look much at all like the actual scene – a black and white photo of my grandfather is not proof that he was a black and white man and I know that he was in fact as full of color as anything else. Against this Walton rightly maintains that “Seeing directly and seeing with photographic assistance are different modes of perception.” (Walton 82) These differences aside, it would be folly to deny that distortions in perceptions prevent true seeing of an object – here Walton gives the example of funhouse mirrors and microscopes. Those involve definite distortions of perception but nevertheless qualify as actual seeing of the things presented.

Photography is always of something that did at one point exist, thus it is a temporal medium in the way that painting is not. Scruton says “...it is a characteristic of photography that, being understood in terms of a causal relation to the subject, it is thought of as revealing something momentary about its subject – how the subject looked at a particular moment.” (Scruton 91) All photographs ever taken (and photos are taken, not made) can be traced back to a moment in time when the things in the photograph existed in reality just as they are portrayed in the picture. Thus when someone sees a photograph, it can also be said that they are “seeing” that moment in time when the things in reality lined up just as they do in the photograph. This is the same phenomenon as one would experience watching a slightly delayed broadcast of a live sporting event; the viewers, if asked, “did you see the game last night?” would likely reply in the affirmative without the qualification, “No, I did not see the game, but I did watch a slightly delayed live broadcast representation of it on my television screen.” Also, when I am walking to class and someone says, “Do you see that dog over there?” If I do in fact see the dog, I say yes

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rather than “no, I can only see the lenses of my glasses, but through them I see a representation of the dog. What I actually see is a brownish blur on a blurry green background.” Glasses, television broadcasts (live or not) and photographs are all aids to seeing actual real temporal things. Walton says, “The invention of the camera gave us a new method of making pictures and not just pictures of a new kind: It gave us a new way of seeing.” (Walton 78)

If through photographs one is actually seeing the thing photographed and not a representation, then, as Roger Scruton posits, any aesthetic properties or values a photograph may have are not actually aesthetic properties of that work but instead aesthetic properties or values of the scene that was photographed. Because photographs are temporal things, Scruton is right when he says, “In characterizing the relation between the ideal photograph and its subject, one is characterizing not an intention but a causal process.” (Scruton 90) The ramifications of this are that the intentions of someone wishing to shoot an aesthetically pleasing photograph lie not in the taking of the photograph but in the selection of the thing or things to be photographed. It is impossible to take a picture of something that is not physically there and the real art in photography is in composing or discovering a scene, that scene containing the desired or relevant aesthetic properties, and capturing the scene by means of the mechanical camera process. The picture then is “a means of access to the subject (the subject being the scene or composition) [parentheses added] and [the picture] is therefore dispensable to the extent that there is better means to hand (say, the subject itself).” (Scruton 90)

There can be no aesthetic value in a photograph that does not exist in the object itself, in either an equal or heightened degree. Photographs, surely, can serve to jar us from daily monotony and present, in an easily digestible and accessible medium and in locales that engender an aesthetic state of mind, things that we would not otherwise have recognized as aesthetically valuable. An old stone house that one

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passes everyday on the way to work or school but never really looks at might be rendered in stunning detail with a camera and made part of a photo series for display in local galleries, but those photos are not an enhancement of the aesthetic value of the mansion but rather a pointing out, like Roger Scruton's metaphorical finger that serves only to focus on something we had not stopped to look at before, but which if we had looked at in that same aesthetic state of mind, we would have recognized as equally or more worthy of value than the photographs of it.

All this can be said to be a direct result of the causal or mechanical process that results in the production of a photographic image. As a result of this mechanical process, "the formative intelligence of the photographer does not play a significant role in the generation of the image." This argument implies that because we cannot see the role played by the artist's intelligence in forming a representational image, we cannot "legitimately take the representational context of the image to be a proper subject of artistic interest." (Davies 341) David Davies presents this argument, one popularized by Roger Scruton, with the intention of disproving it. He claims that understanding a photograph requires "not merely knowledge of the mechanical process whereby an image is produced but also the kind of intentional activity that circumscribes this mechanical process." (Davies 346) Davies quotes Fox Talbot, "photography is indeed the 'pencil of nature' and it is the photographer who directs and sharpens the pencil." (Davies 346) By this analogy, though, Davies fails to recognize who guides the pencil in its shading. Surely the photographer points his camera and opens and closes the shutter but he is not the one who determines what it is he is framing. He has an enormous multitude of things to choose from, of places to direct his camera, but he does not have the free will to choose anything he could possibly imagine and capture it in his lens. The claim that the photographer "directs and sharpens" is weak and trivial and does nothing if not confirm the fact that photography is purely mechanical process that does not yield subjects of aesthetic

interest.

If I placed a beautiful golden goblet in the corner of a darkened room and then, after assembling an audience, cast a bright light into the corner, surely it would not seem that the light was what had made the goblet beautiful; rather the light was just an aid to proper seeing of the goblet. Yet the light is vitally necessary to the appreciation of the goblet, and perhaps even the angle or quantity of lighting affects to what degree I find the object beautiful but the potential for beauty or aesthetic value lies undeniably in the goblet, and not in the light. Without the goblet and with all the light in the world the corner would still be just a corner. But with the goblet and no light at all, the goblet would still have all that potential for beauty, however unrealized.

Similarly, imagine a world of nothingness where there was only unending midnight black in all directions and not a single thing else. Into this imaginary alternate universe a photographer and a painter are sent, each equipped in accordance with his chosen medium and both considered equally talented by their respective peers. It would seem, intuitively, that while the painter could sit in the black all day and paint picture after picture of things he drew from his imagination, the photographer would be at a loss for what to photograph as no matter what the level of his talent, he cannot produce anything at all worth seeing without there first being that same thing worth seeing already out in the world where it can be seen by anyone who happens to be in the right place.

No amount of artistic skill will allow for the creation of something of which to take pictures of the same way no amount of culinary skill can produce the necessary ingredients. Photography relies on the cooperation and assistance of the outside world to provide those subjects for documenting and the fact of that reliance seems to reveal a weakness in the medium – that it cannot create what does not already exist. Creation is the crux of art, creativity. Photography appears unable to do any

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creating at all but rather just rearranging things already present in perhaps eye-catching ways that seem pleasing but are nothing more than that and are not imbued with any real originality, at least not in the same way as painting or any other representational art form.

These examples and thought-experiments exhibit the important intuitive difference between painting and photography in a way that reveals what Kendall Walton describes as the “jolt” we feel when we recognize this difference, the sort of feeling one gets upon learning that Chuck Close’s *Self Portrait* is in fact a self portrait and not a photograph, (Walton 82), the feeling that prompts this discussion of the nature of photography and aesthetics.

So while I will grant to photography can highlight aesthetic properties of an object, it itself does not and can not create any new aesthetic qualities or endow an object with aesthetic properties merely by means of the mechanical photographic process. Any thing photographed had before it was photographed the same potential for beauty or the opposite and a photograph can do nothing more than affect the realization of that potential. Photographs cannot create beauty and they cannot add to the aesthetic properties of an object nor can they create new aesthetic properties. The photograph is like a floodlight or a drawn curtain, serving only to draw attention towards or away from certain already extant properties of the object portrayed.

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Choice: The Death of Incommensurability

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Our lives are successful only in proportion as we correctly forecast at the time of choice
how we shall feel if the choice is realized.

Judge Learned Hand, *The Bill of Rights*

Commensurability – that characteristic that allows meaningful comparisons via the same metric of two or more things – is of great import to philosophers, who are in the business of developing roads to the most rational, moral, meaningful or useful life. Surely our business as philosophers also includes uncovering the state of things but even our arguments uncovering what the state of things must be enjoy some commensurability with respect to one another. Commensurability is at the very core of our trade; we cannot develop arguments for which roads to which lives are best without endorsing, at the very least, the idea of commensurability. The very idea of “better roads” and “superior methods” itself rests on the idea of commensurability, a compelling reason for the philosopher to take commensurability as a basic necessity for philosophizing.

Admittedly, it is difficult to compare things of different types — how, for instance, does the philosopher go about comparing equality with Cream of Wheat? Equality is an abstract principle we value for societal reasons and as a requirement for justice, while Cream of Wheat is a physical thing we value for the appeasement of hunger, craving, or nutritional deficiency. But, although the common metric we would employ in such a comparison may be difficult to discern, it seems intuitive that equality would be more useful, in the scheme of things, than Cream of Wheat; it certainly seems obvious that being treated equally is more valuable than porridge. So it is perhaps not that comparisons across different types cannot be made, but

rather than such comparisons are more difficult than those between things of the same type.

In ethics there is a philosophical aversion to identifying one good (Lamprecht 1920)¹ or value (Griffin 1977)² as “better” or “worse” than another. Sterling Lamprecht vehemently affirms that “the goods of life are utterly incommensurable” (564). What underlies this aversion, I believe, is a separate aversion: distaste for the utilitarian philosophy which Griffin names “the computational approach to social and moral questions” or more broadly, “utilitarianism and all its heirs” (39). I think this aversion exists because of wariness about employing utilitarianism to undermine supposed examples of incommensurability. Here I want to illustrate the deficiencies of using hypothetical examples to demonstrate instances of incommensurability. Much of the confusion about the utilitarian’s creed is rooted in the nuances neglected by hypothetical constructions. I would also like to demonstrate what I call ‘conferred value’ using an analogy to the economist’s idea of markets. If, as I suggest, value is closely related to choice, intrinsic value seems impossible. Intrinsic value is key to the incommensurability thesis: if *X* and *Y* are valuable in and of themselves, what common metric can be employed to compare them? Indeed, intrinsic value seems to deny the common metric that commensurability requires.

In answering Laurence Tribe, James Griffin is right to introduce the concept of diminishing marginal utility into the discussion of utilitarianism and incommensurability but his attack on Tribe’s example falls short. In Tribe’s example a man is confronted with the choice of having his limbs removed in exchange for an unlimited number of tasty desserts. The example is meant to show that disvalue of loss of limb is incommensurable with the disvalue of loss of unlimited enjoyment of

¹ Lamprecht, Sterling P. "The Needs for a Pluralistic Emphasis in Ethics." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method* 17.21 (1920): 561-72.

² Griffin, James. "Are There Incommensurable Values?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 7.1 (1977): 39-59.

dessert. Here I offer several considerations to undermine Tribe's example of incommensurability but these considerations can also be applied more broadly as tools the utilitarian can employ to deconstruct hypothetical examples of incommensurability in general; often in the details neglected by these hypotheticals, the utilitarian can find ways to compare values that are purported to be incomparable.

First Griffin admirably dismisses the case with his suggestion that one instance of valuing *A* more than any amount of *B* does not prove the incommensurability thesis: what we care about, he argues, is "people in general," not individual idiosyncrasy, and not their current values but the values they would have "with greater knowledge or sensitivity" (46). Tribe's supposed proof of incommensurability could be rather proof of confusion about the relevant considerations or ignorance of these altogether.

So for example, economists teach us that things can decrease in value as we gain more of them: the first glass of apple juice after a long, exhausting run is far more gratifying and enjoyable than the tenth. Just as we must take "the ability to better assign values with increased knowledge" seriously, we must likewise examine decreasing/increasing marginal utility/disutility carefully. That first limbless day is likely far more terrible than the thousandth and that first pecan pie is probably far more enjoyable than the fiftieth – at which point the smell of pecans would perhaps produce a gag reflex. Because of the pecan pie's diminishing marginal utility there may be days when the pleasure of lots of pecan pie greatly assuages the pain of limblessness – but we do not pick the pecan pie option unless these days are more frequent than the days when the pain of limblessness wins out. If we accept that diminishing marginal utility applies to pleasures of taste, then at some point, choosing pecan pie will be the wrong choice, there will come a day when the pie will not make us significantly, or even noticeably, happier – but we will still be left

with the pain of limblessness, a condition which I assume contains an irreducible amount of disutility no matter how long it has been endured. Furthermore, the aforementioned gag reflex, if experienced, would increase the marginal disutility of pecan pie: I may always enjoy the taste at some level even if it decreases with each pie but I could perhaps become more aggravated by the smell of pecans. These important considerations go into an informed and complete deliberative process, one that utilitarians have in mind but their opponents often ignore.

Further, the value or utility of a thing changes depending on the terms of comparison, hypothetical or otherwise. For this reason, the pleasure of pecan pie is a function of the alternatives; say pecan pie and carrot sticks are my only two choices, then pecan pie is even more enjoyable because otherwise carrot sticks must be endured. In other words, there is an amount of pleasure in avoiding carrot sticks that often goes uncalculated, even by philosophers who construct such constraining and unrealistic scenarios. When we compare a lifetime supply of pecan pie to a lifetime use of one's limbs, the pleasure of pecan pie dims because choosing the pecan pie means a loss of limbs – there is no 'opt out' choice – so to the pleasure of the pie is inescapably attached the displeasure of limblessness, a condition (arguably) much worse than enduring carrot sticks. A limbless cripple, for example, likely enjoys pecan pie differently from a limbed individual because the torment of limblessness likely affects how much pleasure he can siphon as a result of his state of life. This is no different from saying a limbless person would likely derive more pleasure from being able to have a walk in the park than his fully functional spouse. Thus, the claim, No amount of pecan pie can be provided to compensate a loss of limbs, does not prove one cannot compare the value of pecan pie with the value of having limbs, it only proves that pecan pie loses some of the pleasure it provides when we stipulate that the pecan pie will be fed to us by a nurse as a result of limblessness.

Taking knowledge, marginal utility and comparison-specific utility values into

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account makes it difficult for Tribe to hold that scenarios where “A is valued more than any amount of B” prove incommensurability. If having limbs is valued higher than any amount of pecan pie, this is due to the decreasing marginal utility of the latter and the dynamics of the relationship between them, namely the effects lack of limb has on the amount of pleasure from pecan pie. So, if limblessness contains a discrete and constant amount of disutility and pecan pie contains increasing marginal utility, we would of course choose pecan pie. At some point the displeasure of limblessness is outweighed by the pleasure of pecan pie. Conversely, if limblessness produces X amount of displeasure and pecan pie produces a decreasing amount of pleasure, then at some point the pleasure of pecan pie is outweighed by the displeasure of limblessness. If limblessness increases in disutility and pecan pie decreases in utility, our choice is simple; if both are discrete and constant, we simply choose the higher utility between the two; if both are equal in the discrete and constant amount of utility they provide, our choice is not too important. The choice-maker must, of course, factor lifespan into his deliberations, as these choices depend on how long they can be enjoyed. Different lifespans will allow for different choices; if one dies before a certain disutility kicks in, one need not worry about it as much as one who will live to endure its realization.

At this point the defender of incommensurability could advance what at first might seem an important attack: *the utilitarian's view is so cold, so coarse, so bleak and calculative – how could he ever compare pie to the horrible condition of limblessness?! First, we must remember that the utilitarian did not construct the example; he is merely expected to grapple with its implications. The calculation is cold insofar as the example is unrealistic – cold by construction. Real life offers us a plurality of choices which make the utilitarian's task less cold and more pertinent. Second, we are not directly comparing pie and limblessness but rather the levels of utility and disutility they produce in sum. This common metric is supplied by those*

deriving pleasure from pie and displeasure from disability, not by the utilitarian himself. Comparing the common output of varied experience is not insensitive but practical and useful. The most fruitful attack the believer in incommensurability can wage on the utilitarian is an attack on the common metric itself; if there is no common metric, or if it is inapplicable in certain areas, the utilitarian is in trouble.

This is the war that Lamprecht wages when he proclaims that goods “can not be measured by a common scale and tabulated in a common calculus. They burst all artificial standards brought to bear on them, and sweep all barriers of philosophical system-making” (564). We can examine the ways Lamprecht’s main hypothetical example might be a victim of its construction.

Lamprecht provides an example in which an army general must choose to save a highly valued cathedral by sacrificing lives, or sacrifice the church and thus save lives. The choice between cathedral and lives is presented in such a way that these are our only choices; Lamprecht is telling us that we cannot save the cathedral without losing lives – there is no genius military strategy that allows us to avoid this choice, say, for example, by diverting the enemy’s attention away from the cathedral. There is no ‘opt out’ choice. When we choose the cathedral, we must also choose a loss of life. When we compare the continued enjoyment of a church to the continued lives of soldiers, the pleasure derived from the cathedral dims because choosing it means a loss of lives; to the pleasure of the church is inextricably attached the displeasure of death so the utility of the continued existence of the church is, in a way, sullied by its cost. This is to say that the example’s construction means we are, in a sense, dealing with a different church, a church with the blood of soldiers on its walls. It is not too hard to imagine that the deaths confer alter the properties of the church, giving it more meaning and perhaps more value, in the same way that the church’s age, location and unique sermons therein confer meaning or value. The church has changed, at least in the eyes of those who value it. Sacrifices always

change the things we choose, else they would not be sacrifices. Choices, hypothetical or not, that

- (1) contain a number of options greater than one,
- (2) allow no possibility of “having it all,” picking all the options, and
- (3) offer no opt out choice

involve a sacrifice; they entail a loss that one must suffer. If it is a moral choice where the sacrifice has moral weight, it is “sullied.”

Lamprecht constructs a world, and so too do we when we talk about value. The economist constructs a similar world – the marketplace – that I think may serve as a useful analogy. Markets assign prices that reflect the desirability of goods. Simply, if the net desirability of a good increases, its vendor can charge more. The amount more depends on the good’s desirability, which can, of course, fluctuate. Price and desirability fluctuate in tandem in a well-functioning market. Our level of agreement about the good’s uses confers on the good its value qua price. The goods in a market have no “intrinsic” price value; if the good is rare such as gold, we must first value the good before rareness can confer price value. Thus, the rarity of my paintings confers on them no added price value because people do not care about my paintings as they do, say, van Gogh’s. Rarity can only confer price value on something on which we have already conferred value.

Likewise value is a common metric we apply; our agreement confers on a thing its value. Lamprecht’s cathedral is as valuable as we agree it is. It has no intrinsic value. All value is instrumental: we must ask ourselves “value for whom?” and “value for what?” A church is valued as a place to worship by religious devotees. No value is intrinsic – a value cannot exist independently of those enjoying the value for a certain purpose.

Personhood, some would say, is an intrinsic value. But personhood cannot have a value, and this is because personhood cannot be valued by someone for

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something. Martyrs, though, can and do place a value on their lives. This value is not intrinsic but rather a result of their specific interests. Our valuations are not immoral but what we do as a result of our valuations can be: *it is wrong to sacrifice someone else's life because you do not value it highly or as high as something else*. Simply valuing something in a certain way cannot be wrong because no value is inseparable from the object to which it is attached. Not every price market is moral but a market can exist for anything. It is what we do as a result of pricing and valuing that may come under moral scrutiny.

Choice is the death of incommensurability. When we make a choice, we confer value, as demonstrated above in Lamprecht's example. "A sunset plus a child's smile gives no sum," he contends, presumably because both are intrinsically valuable (565). But if we are forced to choose between a sunset and a child's smile, we are likewise forced into a value market. The choice we make indicates which of the two we value more. If we abstain from choice-making, as is often an option in the real world, we indicate that we do not care enough about the differences between our options to choose among them. This is indifference – an indication we confer equal value on the options. This is not what Lamprecht means to say. Rather, he suggests the two are uniquely valuable. Once we are faced with a choice, we are inescapably involved in the activity of conferring value. Lamprecht might say here that *The forced choice between two or more intrinsic goods is random*. I would contend the opposite: once we must make a such a difficult choice, our vision clears, and we use what we can – even infinitesimally small considerations – to confer value where we believe it is most deserved.

Perhaps the concerns illustrated here can be addressed by proponents of incommensurability. If not, if the utilitarian tools mentioned here and the myth of intrinsic value are not addressed, the incommensurability thesis is significantly weakened, if not defeated.

Two Concepts of Causation, At Least One Kind

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1. Introduction

In the classic paper “Two Concepts of Causation,” Ned Hall argues that we have two concepts of causation: dependence and production. His argument appeals to several theses that describe aspects of our ideas of causation; he shows that a fraction of these theses are exclusively consistent with productive causation and that a fraction of these theses are exclusively consistent with dependence causation. Since there is no overall consistent concept of causation, Hall concludes that we have two concepts of causation. In the first part of this paper I will present Hall’s analysis as background and motivation for my project. Now, I think the idea that we have two concepts of causation is true but then Hall makes an extra claim: dependence and production causation are distinct kinds of causation. I will argue that we should be hesitant to conclude that dependence is a unique kind of causation because we cannot identify dependence by anything but its sufficient conditions, which does not justify claiming uniqueness for it. I will argue instead that an exchange of a conserved quantity is both sufficient and necessary for productive causation. Accordingly, I will attempt to show that productive causation is clearly identifiable as a unique kind of causation that can account for most conceivable causal phenomena. My purpose is not to give a complete analysis of productive causation, but to merely show that productive causation – unlike dependence causation – is promising enough to warrant such an analysis.

Causation is a relation between causes and effects. What counts as a cause and effect is not a trivial matter to determine though in Hall’s analysis, causal relata are

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events. We shall keep to this practice until later in the paper when the issue rears its head in an attack on against my thesis. Hall presents five theses about causation:

Dependence thesis: counterfactual dependence between two events is a sufficient condition for causation. So, if it is the case that had *c* not occurred, *e* would not have occurred, then *c* is a cause of *e*.

Transitivity: If event *c* is a cause of event *d*, and *d* is a cause of *e*, then *c* is a cause of *e*.

Locality: Causes are connected to their effects via spatiotemporally continuous sequences of causal intermediates.

Intrinsicness: The causal structure of a process is determined by its intrinsic, non-causal character (together with the laws). Specifically, Hall says:

Suppose an event *e* occurs at some time *t'*. Consider the structure of events *S* that consists of *e*, together with all of its causes back to some arbitrary earlier time *t*. Then any possible structure of events that exists in a world with the same laws, and that has the same intrinsic character as *S*, also has the same causal character, at least with respect to the causal generation of *e*. (Hall, 12)

Omissions: Omissions can both cause and be caused. An example of an omission as a cause is the following: Mary's forgetting to water the plants caused the plants to die.

Hall believes that all of these theses are true so if there is only one form of causation, it must be consistent with all of these theses. Two kinds of causation have been introduced by the philosophical community:

- 1) In **dependence causation**, if *e* counterfactually depends on *c*, then *c* causes effect *e*. So, had *c* not occurred, *e* would not have occurred.
- 2) In **productive causation**, *c* causes *e* when *c* helps brings about (or

generate) **e**. A widely-regarded view developed by Phil Dowe holds that for **c** to bring about **e** there must be a

3) *causal interaction*, i.e., an change in the conserved quantities of the participating objects (e.g. momentum, energy) from **c** to **e**.¹

According to Hall, neither of these kinds of causation is consistent with all of the five theses listed above. Dependence, he argues, is only compatible with the thesis of dependence and omissions, while production is only compatible with transitivity, locality, and intrinsicness. Thus, in the very least, we have two distinct concepts of causation.

1. The Limitations of Dependence

Why is dependence not compatible with locality, intrinsicness, and transitivity? Let us consider the locality case first. Hall considers the following example: Suzy and Billy are fighter pilots and Suzy is on a mission to bomb a base. An enemy fighter is gunning to intercept Suzy but Billy reaches the enemy first and shoots the enemy down – the bombing proceeds as planned. If Billy had not shot down the enemy fighter, the enemy would have shot down Suzy and the bombing would not have occurred. So Billy’s shooting down the enemy fighter was a cause of the bombing. Here we have a case of “double prevention” where Billy’s shooting down the enemy prevented the enemy from shooting down Suzy, which prevented the enemy from preventing the bomb. Let us now assume that Billy shot down the enemy fighter hundreds of miles from Suzy, i.e., in such a way as to have no physical effect on Suzy. Hall argues that it is counterintuitive to claim that Billy had an impact on what happens between the enemy and Suzy but the fact nevertheless remains that Suzy’s bombing depended on Billy shooting down the enemy. We

¹ Cf. Dowe (2007).

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accordingly seem to have two contrary intuitions about impact in the case of double prevention.

These contrary intuitions are understandable for when Billy causes the bombing from very far away we effectively have action at a distance which contradicts the thesis of locality.² But action at a distance is a rare phenomenon in this world (the only possible case I can think of is when particles are entangled), and if Billy's prevention counts as a cause then action at a distance would be a very common occurrence. It would seem that all laws that hold through physical changes (e.g. the laws of physics) permit action at a distance, which means that dependence is compatible with locality only when trivial laws (e.g. laws which only hold when there are no physical changes) are involved. So dependence and locality should not be jointly espoused.

Let us move on to the thesis of intrinsicness. We will modify our story about Suzy, Billy and the enemy as follows: imagine that the enemy would have received instructions to shoot down Suzy if Billy had not shot him down. But Billy shoots down the enemy and so the base never sends the instructions to the enemy to shoot down Suzy.

The structure **S** of this causal sequence consists in such events as Billy firing his gun, the bullets hitting the enemy, the destruction of the enemy, etc. But, Hall argues, the intrinsic character of **S** fails to determine, together with the laws, that there are no other factors that (i) would stop Enemy, if Billy somehow failed to; (ii) and would do so in a way that implies that Billy's action is not a cause of the bombing. (Hall, 12)

For example, we imagine that the enemy's craft had been sabotaged with a bomb that would have exploded even if Billy hadn't shot down the enemy. We can

² Action at a distance: "when at least one of the effects of a cause is not connected to that cause by a spatiotemporally continuous causal chain" (Hall, 11).

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very easily find a causal structure S^* identical to S consistent with this new scenario for should Billy shoot down the enemy, the causal structure will trivially be the same. But then (i) and (ii) are the case, for Suzy's bombing's dependence on Billy's shooting the enemy is a fact extrinsic to S . Should we conclude that Suzy's bombing did not depend on Billy's action, then we must either abandon the intrinsicness thesis or yield that S did not fully describe the causal history the relevant sequence of events. Hall argues that the latter is absurd (I will not discuss the specifics), which forces us to give up intrinsicness.

Finally, we now discuss the thesis of transitivity. Let us again revise our example with Billy and Suzy. Imagine that the enemy set his alarm early in the morning. If his alarm had not gone off, then he would have missed his scheduled departure time and Billy would not have shot him down. We know that if Billy had not shot down the enemy, the bombing would not have happened. Thus, by transitivity, if the enemy's alarm had not gone off, then the bombing would not have happened. So the alarm going off is a cause of the bombing. Indeed, anything that the enemy's being shot down depends on is, in effect, a cause of the bombing. This sort of messiness is unwanted in a theory of causation, and so transitivity is not compatible with cases of dependence.

One noteworthy objection is that Hall has not shown that we have two concepts of causation – he has shown that we have two kinds of causation. This does not strike me so much as being an objection but a strengthening of Hall's argument, for having two kinds of causation certainly implies having two concepts of causation. Indeed, Hall does say: "I am quite content to agree that I have (merely) shown that there are two kinds of causation – as long as those who insist on this rendering of my thesis agree that the two kinds answer to very different criteria, and consequently require very different analyses" (Hall, 19). I believe strengthening Hall's conclusion like this is too hasty, and I will spend the rest of this paper

explaining why.

Having shown that dependence is incompatible with locality, and intrinsicness, and transitivity, Hall discusses the thesis of omissions. I will not engage this topic, but note that his conclusion is that the thesis of omissions is incompatible with the theses of locality, intrinsicness, and transitivity, and compatible with the thesis of dependence.

2. Misdiagnosing Dependence as a Kind of Causation

Hall thinks there are two distinct concepts of causation: dependence and production. I do not object to this conclusion for both concepts seem to succeed in giving accounts of certain causal phenomena. He argues that it would be wrong to object to this result simply because it means the concept of causation is not univocal, and I am inclined to agree. However, when it comes to ontology I admit to having a bias in favor of simplicity; I cannot shake the feeling that having two kinds of causation would be ontologically messy. Fortunately, I believe all causation is productive and I am now prepared to do some work towards demonstrating this.

To push this view I will attempt to do three things: 1) argue that to identify a kind of causation minimally requires identifying the necessary conditions for its existence; 2) argue that productive causation satisfies this criterion while dependence causation does not; 3) show that productive causation can account for most conceivable cases of causation.

The complete set of sufficient conditions **S** for a kind of causation **K** describes the conditions for **K**'s obtaining. So if $s \in \mathbf{S}$, and s obtains, then we can infer that **K** obtains. The complete set of necessary conditions **N** for **K**, on the other hand, determines what is implied when **K** obtains. Therefore, whenever **K** obtains, every $n \in \mathbf{N}$ obtains. Identifying **S** is important because it allows us to identify

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under what circumstances we have a case of proper causation. But it is equally important to identify **N**, for then we know what it metaphysically means for **K** to obtain, which is to say that we know what makes **K** a unique kind of causation.³ For example, suppose that we have two distinct kinds of causation **K**₁ and **K**₂, with sufficient conditions **S**₁ and **S**₂ and necessary conditions **N**₁ and **N**₂. Suppose further that **S**₁ ≠ **S**₂ while **N**₁ = **N**₂. Unless **K**₁ and **K**₂ obtain in different – perhaps very unique – circumstances (given by the elements of **S**₁ and **S**₂ respectively), we would have no way of telling **K**₁ and **K**₂ apart if **N**₁ = **N**₂. In other words, for **K**₁ and **K**₂ to obtain would mean exactly the same thing metaphysically. The circumstances in which **K**₁ and **K**₂ obtain might be exactly the same, in which case we might have a hard time distinguishing **K**₁ and **K**₂. After all, it would certainly seem arbitrary to individuate **K**₁ and **K**₂ by their sufficient conditions. Thus, it is largely the necessary conditions that make a form of causation unique and without knowing them we should be hesitant to claim that we have identified a distinct form of causation at all. Accordingly, in the general case **K**, both **S** and **N** must be identified if we are to be satisfied that we have given a full account of a kind of causation; thus identifying **N** is crucial for the claim that **K** is unique.

Of course, identifying the complete set of necessary conditions for **K** to obtain is often impossible. Fortunately, assuming **K**₁ and **K**₂ exist, all that is required to determine that two types of causation **K**₁ and **K**₂ are distinct from each other is that we find $a \in \mathbf{N}_1$ such that $a \notin \mathbf{N}_2$. However, in practice, this is only possible under a certain circumstance: unless a is an observable condition in the actual world, we could not make a strong case that **K**₁ and **K**₂ are distinct. Any attempt at doing so would be unmotivated and the case most likely contrived. However, despite asserting

³ Note that $\mathbf{S} \subset \mathbf{N}$.

that dependence and productive causation exist, Ned Hall does not identify an observable $a \in \mathbf{N}_d$ such that $a \notin \mathbf{N}_p$, where \mathbf{N}_d is the complete set of necessary conditions for dependence causation and \mathbf{N}_p is the complete set of necessary conditions for productive causation. Moreover, I cannot conceive of any such observable a , and I challenge the reader to try. In the dependence thesis we certainly have a sufficient condition for dependence causation but nothing else that lends itself to identifying dependence as a unique kind of causation.

Let me clarify this with an example. Suppose the following counterfactual is true: Had Suzy not bombed the base, then the base would not have exploded. By the dependence thesis, Suzy's bombing the base caused the base to explode. But in what sense did Suzy cause the base to explode? The base exploding certainly depended on Suzy's dropping the bomb but we would have a lot of trouble making the case that this relation implies that a unique kind of causation was occurring because there is nothing identifiably unique about dependence causation. Indeed, I would argue that the kind of causation involved was productive which I will elaborate on in the next section. In any case, as currently formulated, I find the view that dependence is a unique kind of causation unacceptable.

3. Productive Causation

Hall says that production seems to capture essentially what we mean when we say \mathbf{c} causes \mathbf{e} : a productive relation between causes and effects strikes me as being both sufficient and necessary for causation (while a dependence relation does not). In other words, I assert the truth of the following biconditional: \mathbf{c} causes \mathbf{e} if and only if \mathbf{c} helps bring about \mathbf{e} (through the causal interaction of \mathbf{c} and \mathbf{e}). To see this let us consider the following classic example: the cue ball collided with the eight ball and pushed the eight ball into the pool pocket. There was clearly a causal

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interaction between the cue ball and the eight ball for we observe that momentum – in the very least – was exchanged between them. Moreover, it goes without saying that this conserved quantity exchange helped bring it about that the eight ball went into the pocket. Knowing only that this conserved quantity exchange brought about the eight ball going into the pocket certainly strikes me as sufficient to say that the cue ball caused the eight ball to go into the pool pocket. On the other hand, knowing that the cue ball caused the eight ball to go into the pocket seems to imply that there was an exchange of a conserved quantity from the cue ball to the eight ball. By the same analysis the biconditional holds for other causal interactions.

Because we know the necessary condition for causation of the productive kind, i.e., that there was a causal interaction such that **c** brought about **e**, we know what it means for **c** to cause **e**. In the billiard ball case, the cue ball causing the eight ball to go into the pocket means that there was an exchange of a conserved quantity from the cue ball to the eight ball. In this sense, we essentially capture what it means to say **c** causes **e**. Moreover, we are well aware that an exchange of a conserved quantity is sufficient for causation. I am therefore completely satisfied with the claim that production is a unique kind of causation.⁴ What is more, I believe that all causation is productive, and I will do some work to that end by answering some objections to this view.

To champion a completely productive account of causation requires rejecting the thesis of dependence and the thesis of omissions, which one might argue is problematic. But rejecting these is not the end of the world. Productive causation has its own sufficient conditions so the loss of the dependence thesis does not suddenly mean that we cannot evaluate the causal sufficiency of events. Moreover, unless we

⁴ Agent causation can even be explained in terms of productive causation. In agent causation, we have an uncaused event of the form agent **S** causes event **e** (O'Connor, 5). If we assume that agent causation is carried out by physical processes, then the idea of an exchange of a conserved quantity from the bodies involved is perfectly reasonable.

have observable conditions that are necessary for dependence causation, we have no reason to treat true cases of dependence as anything more than a “byproduct” of certain instances of productive causation. This sort of status would account for the lingering intuition that dependence relations are somehow related to causal relations. I can think of two situations where dependence obtains essentially as a byproduct of **K**. For the first, let dependence be a necessary condition for certain cases **K** of productive causation. Then, **K**'s obtaining would always involve the existence of counterfactual dependence between **K**'s relata. For the second, assume for certain instances of causation **K** that there exists some $a \in \mathbf{S}$ that is both a sufficient condition for both **K** and for the counterfactual dependence of the relata of **K** so when **K** obtains, it would merely coincide with the existence of counterfactual dependence between **K**'s relata.

On the other hand, the only sense in which omissions seemed to participate in causation was that events seemed to depend on omissions, or *vice versa*. Certainly, omissions do not participate in causation productively for there cannot be an exchange of a conserved quantity from the objects featured in an omission to the objects featured in an event, or vice versa. But, per the previous analysis, we do not know what it means for dependence causation to occur, hence we do not know what it means for an omission to cause or be caused. So I do not see the motivation for admitting omissions as relata in causal interactions in the first place. Thus, we need not count omissions as causal relata at all.

A second objection brings us back to the assumption that only events can serve as causal relata. First, note that admitting non-events as causal relata is consistent with dependence causation. For example, it is perfectly acceptable counterfactual analysis to say that had the rose not been red, Suzy would not have picked it – accordingly, the rose's redness contributed causally to her picking it.

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Perhaps Suzy only liked roses because they were red and in a world where roses were not red, *mutatis mutandis*, Suzy would not have picked the rose. Consider another causal relation: the fact that it was curfew caused Billy to go to sleep. Again, it is consistent with dependence to say that if it were not curfew, then Billy would not have gone to sleep (suppose that Billy were very serious about obeying rules).

However, admitting non-events as causal relata is inconsistent with productive causation and so damaging to our project. It does not make any sense to say that the rose's redness caused Suzy to pick the rose for the rose's redness did not transfer a conserved quantity to an event. Likewise, there is no transfer of a conserved quantity from curfew to Billy's going to sleep and so it would be bizarre to say that curfew caused Billy to go to sleep in the productive sense. In a causally closed world, conserved quantities can only be exchanged through physical processes and physical processes are reducible to events. Hence, in productive causation only events can serve as relata in causal processes.

Since I am attempting to demonstrate the robustness of productive causation, I am of course prepared with a solution to this problem. The issue of the causation of nonevents is solved merely by adopting the view that non-events do not enter into causal relationships. Consider the following example: suppose that the rose's redness caused Mary to pick the rose. The structure of this causal process is fully accounted for by events (we might need to assume causal closure for this view to work) and thus can be described productively: Mary's eyes observing the reflected red light from the rose caused a chain of events in her mind that caused her to pick the rose. This sort of analysis can be applied to any of the cases of non-event causation I can imagine and I challenge the reader to provide counterexamples. Certainly, the productive kind of causation does not completely explain why a non-event *c* caused *e* but if the instances of non-events in a causal structure are reduced to events, non-event causation can be completely described by production.

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Now if I am right, I have shown that it is possible to have two concepts of causation and only one kind of causation. One might wonder how this is possible. This is possible because whenever we conceptualize causation as dependence – to the extent that our concept is about what actually occurs in the real world – our concept is about productive causation. Indeed, I submit that we can always conceptualize a case of causation as productive even if doing so is not as obvious as conceptualizing it as dependence.⁵ This situation is analogous to situations when we have two proper names – each with different senses – that have the same referent. For example, we might know the “author of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*” as either Samuel Clemens or Mark Twain even though these names have the same referent. Likewise, we might conceptualize a case of causation as either production or dependence, even though the concepts are really about the same case of productive causation.

4. Conclusion

In this paper I have done my best to represent Hall’s views in “Two Concepts of Causation.” I have argued that he too quickly diagnoses dependence as a unique kind of causation without realizing that there is nothing uniquely identifiable about it. Indeed, I have made the case that while dependence is likely a distinct concept of causation, there are no grounds for the claim that dependence is a unique kind of causation. Moreover, it seems the only motivation for proposing dependence causation is that it can explain omissions and non-events; I have tried to demonstrate that productive causation is identifiable as a unique and robust kind of causation which leaves dependence totally un-motivated. Of course, I have not given a complete analysis of productive causation but I think I have demonstrated that, in the

⁵ Of course, there are certain cases of causation that we cannot conceptualize as dependence at all such as certain cases of double-prevention.

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very least, there is a solid basis for such a project.

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Dealing with Moral Incommensurability: A Proposal from Human Rights

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Efforts to determine the commensurability of values are prevalent in discussions of morality – and have been inconclusive, for the arguments for and against the existence of incommensurable values have demonstrated that there is a gray area. While there are certainly categories of values that are incommensurable, there are also some categories where a clear metric gives some values priority over others. I propose a hybrid view that allows room for both commensurable and incommensurable values since neither type of value on its own gives us a complete picture of moral evaluations. For the purposes of this paper, I am going to focus solely on the moral value of human rights which is commensurable with other values in the sense that it is worth more than most other values (but I would also contend that the same priority applies to the rights of any species, human or otherwise). I will argue that values promoting *goods basic for well-being* may be incommensurable with one another (*locally incommensurable*) but have greater priority than *non-basic* values and thus are commensurable with them.

One firm advocate for the commensurability of values is Wilbur Urban who makes a case for this position in his piece, “Knowledge of Value and the Value-Judgment.” Urban insists that all objects, real and potentially real, have value (Urban 678). Furthermore, all values are commensurable standing in either a higher or lower relationship with other values (Urban 677). He dismisses incommensurability arguing that the inability to determine relationships of measurement does not prove that these relations do not exist (Urban 678). Urban maintains, “[I]t lies in the nature of all values to be comparable” (Urban 679). I have to remark that I have difficulty imagining how one could compare certain values,

such as beauty and friendship. The intrinsic value of a painting, for example, and the consequent pleasure that one experiences viewing it are completely different from the intrinsic value of a friendship and the pleasure experienced by both friends as a result. At any rate, the case for commensurability seems to rest on the assumption that all values are measurable in degrees and against one another.

Then there are those who insist on the incommensurability of values. Sterling Lamprecht gives a detailed account of pluralism in “The Need for a Pluralistic Emphasis in Ethics.” According to his view, the “pluralism of the goods of life” entails that these goods of life have no common standard of measurement and are therefore incommensurable, goods such as health, beauty, courtesy, knowledge and friendship (Lamprecht 563-64). While I do agree that many of these goods are incommensurable, my inclination is to disagree with regard to health. Unlike the other goods Lamprecht mentions, health will always be more valuable than other goods. Without good health, one would not even be in a position to benefit from the other goods mentioned such as, for example, beauty.

Lamprecht compares health and beauty in an example where a general in the military essentially has to decide between saving human lives and protecting the Chartres cathedral (Lamprecht 564). Lamprecht notes that in addition to its beauty, the cathedral is an important symbol, one that many individuals would sacrifice their lives to save. However, even with these conditions in place, it is still clear to me that the obvious decision should be to save the human lives. Sacrificing the lives of the soldiers would show a serious error in valuation as the general would be mistakenly devaluing human life and overestimating the value of the cathedral. The fact that some people would sacrifice their lives to save the cathedral is not indicative of the incommensurability of the value of the cathedral and the value of human life, as Lamprecht would have us believe. Rather, this is merely an instance of irrational human behavior.

Even if we allowed that some people might have good reasons to sacrifice their lives in order to protect the cathedral, they would certainly be in the minority

and exceptional. Such exceptions would certainly not justify dismissing the commensurability of the value of the cathedral and the value of human life. The general would be in no position to sacrifice the lives of his soldiers who may or may not be members of this exceptional minority. The cathedral is only valuable as far as it enhances human life, however if there is no human life to enhance, the cathedral is worthless. Basic intuition tells us that human life is more valuable, and therefore sacrificing human lives in order to save the cathedral would be immoral.

So Lamprecht's case for incommensurable values is far from conclusive. In "Are There Incommensurable Values?", James Griffin considers the challenge of measuring the value of life itself (Griffin 53). While Lamprecht would argue that this value simply can not be measured, Griffin maintains that "we do not seem to value human life so specially that it cannot be exchanged for other things that we value" (Griffin 54). As an example, he notes that in our society we would not wish our government to allocate so much money to "life-saving schemes" that there's no money left to fund "life-enhancing schemes" (Griffin 54). In this way, Griffin argues, we are measuring the value of life against the value of, for example, art.

However, this line of argument presupposes a certain degree of general well-being in the deciding agent. I would posit that an individual with, for example, a fatal disease would likely support the funding of life-saving schemes, regardless of the cost to life-enhancing schemes. Similarly, it is probable that someone would trade a life-enhancing value for a life-saving value even if the life-saving value benefits another, the more so, the more intimate the relationship. So it seems we can measure values against one another though there are many values that still seem incommensurable. In the absence of a conclusive case for commensurable values, we are forced to look elsewhere for a solution.

The solution must be able to account for the commensurability of some values and the incommensurability of others. Specifically, it must prioritize select values over other incommensurable values. These select values are central to discussions of human rights and best presented in Alan Gewirth's piece, "The Basis and Content of

Human Rights.” Gewirth maintains that all persons have generic rights to freedom and well-being (Gewirth 1158). He identifies three kinds of goods crucial to the right of well-being: basic, nonsubtractive and additive. I am most concerned with basic goods, which Gewirth defines as “the essential preconditions of action, such as life, physical integrity, and mental equilibrium” (Gewirth 1158). Gewirth says that when a right to basic well-being is violated, the affected person suffers basic harm. Furthermore, whoever violates these rights has acted in a way that is both morally wrong and unjustified (Gewirth 1159).

Gewirth also affirms that every “rational human agent” accepts human rights and consequently accepts the goods associated with well-being. Human rights and the goods basic for well-being are action-guiding (Gewirth 1148-1149); intuitively they have intrinsic value and in addition, they have instrumental value because without these basic goods, one cannot benefit from other goods. For example, without life, physical integrity and mental equilibrium, one is not free or able to appreciate the beauty of art. Because of the supreme importance of these basic goods and the necessity of their fulfillment as “preconditions of action,” values promoting the basic goods are worth more than other values. In this way, values that promote the goods basic for well-being are commensurable, they can be measured and prioritized against those that do not promote basic goods. However, the values that promote basic goods are incommensurable with respect to one another though they all trump the less important goods. Clearly, there are varying degrees to which a value promotes goods basic for well-being but among such values, there is no way to measure or determine which means of promoting well-being is of higher or lower. So here we have commensurability between two groups of otherwise incommensurable values: values promoting goods basic for well-being are incommensurable with one another and commensurable with respect to non-basic goods.

To illustrate this more clearly, let’s revisit the previous example of comparing life saving versus life-enhancing schemes in more detail. Imagine there is a vacant

lot in the middle of a city, and it is up to the mayor of the city to determine what building to erect in the lot. The mayor is presented with two options: he can elect to build an art institution or he can choose to build a hospital. Imagine that the city does not currently have either sort of building within its perimeter. While these two buildings serve two very different values, the morally correct action would be to build the hospital. Building the hospital has greater intrinsic value because it promotes health which is a good basic for well-being. Furthermore, the hospital has instrumental value since if the residents of the city are not alive and healthy, then they won't even be capable of visiting the art gallery to begin with. The hospital promotes goods basic for well-being and as this value seems greater than the value of the art gallery, the values are commensurable.

However, if the mayor were then faced with the task of deciding what the hospital's specialty should be, he would be in a difficult position. There would be no way for the mayor to determine whether, for example, it would be of greater moral value to offer exceptional cardiothoracic services or exceptional psychiatric services. The values of the different options for hospital specialties are, in this case, mutually or 'locally' incommensurable.

While there is still much work to be done with regard to understanding the commensurability of incommensurable goods, an approach from human rights seems to accomplish the first steps in building a foundation. There may also be other groups of values that are commensurable with respect to other values but locally incommensurable. This has yet to be determined. At the very least it seems certain that values promoting goods basic for well-being fit the profile of being both incommensurable with one another while also being commensurable with respect to other values which themselves may be incommensurable with each other.

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Warranted Christian Belief and Internal Justification

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In *Warranted Christian Belief*, much of the strength of Plantinga's argument that the *de jure* objection to Christian belief collapses to the *de facto* question depends on the way that he characterizes the *de jure* objection. In the initial chapters of the book, he considers two different general characterizations of this objection, both of which he rejects: that Christian belief is irrational and that the Christian believer is not fulfilling some epistemic duty. He considers several different variations within these two different categories, and rejects them primarily for two reasons: first, he claims it is not clear what epistemic duty or what rule of rationality the believer is supposedly violating; and second, he claims that any irrationality or lack of justification involved in holding theistic beliefs is equally present in sensory or other basic beliefs. Having rejected irrationality and lack of justification as possibilities, he concludes that the *de jure* objection is some form of (Plantinga's interpretation of) Marx and Freud's argument: Christian belief is *unwarranted* (according to Plantinga's conception of warrant); it is a result of some cognitive process that is either malfunctioning or is not aimed at producing true beliefs. That is, the Christian believer has not fulfilled some external condition or conditions of justification. In responding to this objection, Plantinga develops his overall theory that theistic and Christian belief are almost certainly justified if their content is true; if God created us, beliefs gained by using the mechanisms he gives to know that he exists will obviously be warranted.

I will argue that by conceiving of the *de jure* objection as one that depends on external factors, Plantinga only pushes the question back a step. He still has not

addressed the issue of whether we have a right to or a reason to believe in God. His only arguments on this front are that the way in which it is supposedly irrational or unjustified is unclear and that sensory beliefs and other basic beliefs have the same epistemic status. I will argue that the first response collapses to the second and that the second is flawed. Though sense perception, like theistic belief, is only hypothetically warranted, this is not the same thing as there being only circular reasons to believe it, as Plantinga claims. First, I will show that Plantinga's rejection of irrationality and lack of justification stems from his claim that sensory perception, like theistic belief, is hypothetically warranted. Second, I will argue that this claim, though true, is deceptive and that though the two types of belief have the same status in terms of external justification, they are not equally justified internally. Finally, I will conclude that Plantinga offers us no reason to believe in God, and therefore the burden is on him either to provide such a reason or to give a plausible argument that such a reason is unnecessary.

Why Plantinga Compares Theistic and Sense-Based Beliefs

In rejecting the possibility that irrationality or lack of justification is a legitimate *de jure* objection, Plantinga does not conclusively establish that theistic belief is rational or justified, but instead shifts the burden of proof to the objector. He describes a Christian believer who is well-read, has tried to be honest with herself, and who nevertheless believes firmly that there is a God. He says that "there could be something defective about her, some malfunction not apparent on the surface. She could be mistaken, a victim of illusion or wishful thinking. . . nevertheless, she isn't flouting any discernable duty. She is fulfilling her epistemic responsibilities" (Plantinga 101). He considers many of this believer's supposed epistemic duties using models of justification as sufficient evidence, justification as deduction or induction from indubitable propositions, rationality as proper function,

rationality as deliverances of reason, means-end rationality, and others, and concludes that she is not violating any of them.

However, his basic argument for this is simply that it doesn't seem like she is violating any of these duties. This would ordinarily be quite a weak argument, but he strengthens it by comparing it with our ordinary belief. After considering the possibility that most of our beliefs are unjustified, he concludes that the classical picture of justification is too strong. If we took it seriously, almost none of our beliefs would be justified: "either most of our beliefs are such that we are going contrary to epistemic obligations in holding them, or (the classical picture of justification) is false" (Plantinga 98). Therefore, the argument that the theistic believer isn't obviously violating any epistemic duties collapses to the argument that our ordinary sense perception and other beliefs share the same epistemic status as theistic belief. That is, theistic and sense-based beliefs are both in violation of the strict standards of justification of the classical picture, but sense-based beliefs are indisputably justified, and therefore there is no good reason to think that theistic beliefs are not also justified.

However, Plantinga ends his direct discussion of justification and rationality at this point, which leaves the story only half told. Up to this point, Plantinga has introduced the following argument:

1) If two types of belief have the same epistemic status, there is no *prima facie* reason to believe that one is more justified than the other.

2) Sense-based beliefs and theistic belief have the same epistemic status.

Therefore,

C) There is no *prima facie* reason to believe that sense-based beliefs are more justified than theistic beliefs; the complaint that theistic belief is unjustified is not a legitimate *de jure* objection.

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Though this is a valid argument, Plantinga has not shown (2). All he has shown is that both theistic and sense-based beliefs violate the classical picture's standards of justification. But this does not necessarily mean that they have the same epistemic status. If the obvious justification of sense-based beliefs shows that the classical picture is false, before he can claim that these two types of belief have the same epistemic status, he must present some new theory of justification and show how both fulfill certain conditions that give them this status. In other words, this kind of proof by analogy works only if Plantinga can first prove that these are analogous cases.

Though Plantinga does not frame it this way, at least not explicitly, I believe that the rest of *Warranted Christian Belief* can be seen as an attempt to show that sense-based belief and theistic belief have the same epistemic status. He does this by developing his theory of hypothetical warrant; if God does exist, then theistic belief is very likely to be warranted. Likewise, if the outside world does exist as it is presented to us, our sense-based knowledge of it is very likely to be warranted. Both have the same epistemic status: internally, we find ourselves almost compelled to believe in them – certain beliefs just feel right. As Plantinga says about accurate memories, “the belief. . . seems right, acceptable, natural; it forces itself upon you; it seems somehow inevitable (the right words are hard to find)” (110). Externally, hypothetical warrant puts them in the same epistemic category of beliefs that are warranted if they are true.

So why all this comparison to sense-based beliefs? If theistic belief is “inevitably forced upon us” and is warranted if it is true, is this enough to show that we have a right to believe it? I would argue, and Plantinga seems to agree, that it isn't quite enough, because it's still not obvious what good reason we have to hold theistic beliefs. Characterizing theistic belief has not resolved the *de jure* question

or reduced it to the *de facto* question, but has introduced another, higher level *de jure* question, which I will call the *de juris jure* question. That is, when and how are we justified in believing these kinds of propositions? If I find a certain proposition slowly “forced upon me,” and I know that it is warranted if it is true, am I justified or do I have a good reason to give my assent to it? Whatever the answer to this question is, the important issue is that it is not obvious. This is why Plantinga argues that sense perception shares the same epistemic status – sense-based belief is obviously justified, and if it turns out that it is hypothetically warranted and internally adopted because it “seems right,” then this will prove that we are justified in adopting such propositions, and therefore *prima facie* justified in holding theistic beliefs. Plantinga seems to have recognized that the *de juris jure* question would come up, and he attempted to forestall it by including sense-based and theistic beliefs in this same category of hypothetically warranted beliefs.

Does this Comparison Work?

Plantinga is correct to say that both sense-based beliefs and theistic belief are only hypothetically warranted. However, he is wrong to say that they share the same epistemic status and therefore that there is no reason to think that theistic belief is less justified than sense-based belief. This is because sense-based belief is hypothetically warranted (or hypothetically externally justified) and actually, non-hypothetically, internally justified. Theistic belief is hypothetically warranted (or hypothetically externally justified), but it is not clear that it is internally justified. In other words, the basic difference between the two is that sense-based belief has hypothetical warrant that nevertheless still offers an actual good reason¹ to believe it.

¹ Swinburne makes an argument that is similar in some respects and claims that hypothetical warrant does not justify the believer. He maintains that all beliefs, however they are warranted, still require some evidence. I don't believe this objection is valid, however; as Plantinga has pointed out, there are many beliefs we have that we have no non-circular evidence for. Sense perception is a prime example. My argument retains Swinburne's insistence on some form of external justification, but does not presuppose

Theistic belief has hypothetical warrant that does not offer any such good reason.²

According to Plantinga, there are several conditions that must be fulfilled for a belief to be warranted. The belief must come from a properly functioning cognitive mechanism acting in the environment for which it was designed (a congenial environment), according to a design plan that is aimed at generating true beliefs and is relatively successful at doing so. Furthermore, if all these conditions are fulfilled and the belief is warranted, it must be also be true. Plantinga defines a congenial environment in such a strict way that if a belief is totally warranted, the properly functioning cognitive mechanism cannot yield a false belief. If this were not the case, if warranted false beliefs were possible, then Gettier problems would arise.³

A belief that is hypothetically warranted is one that, if it is true, fulfills all of the conditions of warrant. Beliefs of this kind are not common, and it is easy to mistakenly attribute hypothetical warrant. For example, a man who claims that he knows of some vast conspiracy in which his local Kiwanis Club is using its awesome power to subtly torment him and his family may feel vindicated if such a scheme is uncovered, and we may be tempted to say that he is hypothetically warranted: that is, if there is such a conspiracy, he is warranted in believing there is. But the fact that he happened to be right does not mean that that belief was gained by some properly

that this must mean some form of evidence.

² For the purposes of the following analysis, I will assume that Plantinga's theory of warrant is correct. However, the argument could be reformulated to apply to most theories of warrant or external justification.

³ Plantinga's argument that his theory of warrant implies that any warranted belief is true is unconvincing and somewhat *ad hoc*. He claims that if an environment is suitably congenial to one's cognitive faculties, it will not allow the cognitive faculties to form a false belief. This itself is not entirely implausible, but he then defines these "mini-environments" in such a way that it is possible that the only thing "uncongenial" about them is that the belief in question is false. For example, he considers the possibility that though he seems to know that his car is outside in the parking lot, it is possible that it has been stolen. He concludes, however, that this creates a mini-environment for which his faculties were not designed. However, other than making his belief false, I don't see how this environment is uncongenial. Did God (or evolution) not prepare our cognitive faculties for a world in which things are sometimes stolen? Whatever the answer to this question, however, the important issue is that Plantinga considers warrant to entail truth, and any plausible theory of warrant must do the same if it hopes to avoid Gettier problems.

functioning mechanism – after all, a broken clock is right twice a day, and paranoid delusions are accurate once in a while.

The issue of God's existence, however, is very different. If God exists, then it is natural to think that he would have created our minds in such a way as to allow us to gain knowledge about him. This cognitive mechanism Plantinga (borrowing from Calvin) calls the *sensus divinitatis*. Since God created our environment and our cognitive processes, he controls all of the factors necessary for warrant; he could easily have created the *sensus divinitatis* as a properly functioning cognitive mechanism operating in a congenial environment according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth.

Sense perception is another class of beliefs that are genuinely hypothetically warranted. If sense-based beliefs are true, then we are in the environment God or evolution intended us to be. We are not brains in a vat or victims of a deceiving demon. If sense-based beliefs and our scientific inductions based on them are true, then the evidence we see for evolution supports the idea that our cognitive faculties were designed for this real environment. And if our sense-based beliefs are true, these faculties are obviously fairly reliable about giving us true beliefs. So here again, sense perception accounts for all factors necessary for warrant. It explains the source and design plan for our cognitive mechanisms, how we are to judge when they are functioning properly, and the type of environment for which they were designed.

However, there are also other types of beliefs that are hypothetically warranted that seem less acceptable. We have seen an example of a conspiracy theory that is not hypothetically warranted, now let's consider a slightly modified example that is. Suppose our local eccentric from the previous example believes not only that the local Kiwanis Club is subtly tormenting his family, but that it has in fact made the entire human race the subject of a *Truman Show*-style reality show that is watched

by trillions throughout the galaxy. However, the Kiwanis Club has been gracious enough to adjust our brains in such a way that we intuitively know that this is the case, and knowing this, if we choose to opt out, we will be taken to a different planet where our privacy will not be invaded. Unfortunately, through natural depravity and self deception, everyone else in the world has completely blocked this cognitive mechanism that the Kiwanis Club was gracious enough to plant in our brains. Only our enlightened local eccentric, because of his amazing natural virtue, has seen the light, and having chosen to opt out, he expects that any day now he will be taken to another planet. This example seems more ridiculous than the first conspiracy theory, and yet this one is genuinely hypothetically warranted. If there is such a conspiracy, the Kiwanis Club is in control of all factors necessary for warrant. They have created the cognitive mechanism, chosen the appropriate environment, and made sure that this mechanism does indeed yield true beliefs (when it is not destroyed by people's natural depravity, of course).

So what is the difference between these examples? None of us would want to say that our local eccentric's vagaries have the same epistemic status as sense-based beliefs, but what is there to distinguish them? I argue that what distinguishes sense-based beliefs from LEV (local eccentric's vagaries) is the same thing that distinguishes sense-based beliefs from Plantinga's version of theistic belief – there are good reasons to believe in sense perception, and there aren't good reasons to believe the other two. In other words, while the external justification, the warrant, is of the same status in all three cases (i.e., it is hypothetical), the internal justification is very different: sense-based beliefs have internal justification, the other two do not.

But what are these good reasons to belief in sensory perception, and what about the reasons often given for theistic belief? The reasons to believe in sensory perception are manifold. First, sense perception is coherent in a very precise way. Our feeling of the edge of a table, for example, lines up exactly with where we see

the edge of the table, which is exactly where we would calculate the edge to be using sonar imaging, etc. This precise coherence has resulted in extremely complex theories and physical laws that admit of no exception. Even at the quantum level, where determinism doesn't seem to hold, we can still explain our observations probabilistically, and these probabilities are consistent. Second, in addition to being coherent at any given time, sense perception has (at least until this moment) maintained the regularities described by natural laws. Strictly speaking, to predict that these regularities will continue in the future goes beyond immediate sensory evidence, but to forestall an objection on these lines we can simply change the discussion from one about simple sense-based belief to one about what I will call "sense-based belief that has been accurate in the past and will continue to be accurate in the future." This type of belief is hypothetically warranted just as sense-perception, theistic belief, and LEV are, and there are also good reasons to believe it. With this addition, sense perception becomes an essential guide to learning from the past, predicting future events, planning for the future, working toward goals, and manipulating the environment. In essence, whether or not it is strictly true, even if we are brains-in-a-vat, believing in sensory perception is the foundation of virtually every human goal, need, and desire.

Some may argue that belief in God has similar benefits and good reasons for it. Belief in God, it is claimed, gives the believer purpose in life, psychological comfort, and possibly some communal feeling with other believers. But these kinds of reasons are just as present in our local eccentric's vagaries. The eccentric has been a given a purpose and comfort by his belief that he knows the truth, and he may get some feeling of community if he can convince others to join his cause. These benefits, however, are very different from those gained from believing in sense perception. Though there may be some coherence in theistic beliefs or conspiracy theories, it is nowhere near the degree of coherence present in sense perception, and

therefore these beliefs have much less predictive power. Second, theistic belief is beneficial in a way that gives the believer certain goals and fulfills certain desires. Sensory belief, on the other hand, does not so much fulfill certain desires as it does provide a means for the believer to fulfill whatever desires he or she might have. Theistic belief only works when working toward very specific goals, whereas sensory beliefs underlie virtually all goals. Specifically – and this is probably the most important way in which the reasons to have theistic beliefs is different from the reasons to believe in sense experience – sensory belief is necessary for survival, and theistic belief is not. Therefore, though we may have a reason to want to hold theistic beliefs (as we may have reason to want to believe in the *Truman Show: Earth Edition*), we don't need to hold them. On the other hand, if we want to survive for longer than a few days, we need to believe in sensory perception.

The point of these contrasts is to show that Plantinga's attempt to validate his version of theistic belief by comparison to sense-based belief fails, because he fails to appreciate that though they are both hypothetically warranted and therefore have the same status in terms of external justification, there are not equally good reasons to believe in both: they do not have the same epistemic status in terms of internal justification. However, some may not be convinced by my contrast between the benefits of theistic belief and the benefits of sense-based belief. But even such objectors have to admit that the fact that both types of belief are hypothetically warranted cannot by itself imply that we are equally justified in believing both. This is shown by the example of the Kiwanis Club conspiracy. Clearly this belief, even though it is hypothetically warranted, is less internally justified than sensory perception. So Plantinga or anyone who believes that there are good reasons to hold theistic beliefs must show how theistic belief is justified if the similar case of the Kiwanis Club conspiracy is not. Simply comparing theistic belief to sensory perception does not make theistic belief justified, because the ways in which theistic

belief is similar to sense-based beliefs are the same ways in which Kiwanis Club conspiracy beliefs are similar to sense-based beliefs.

Conclusion

The argument I have presented may seem hostile to theistic belief, but this is not my intention. My argument is simply that Plantinga's model of theistic belief fails because he does not offer us any good reason to believe in it. He explains to us how it is hypothetically warranted, but he does not show it to be internally justified. There may be good reasons to believe in God, or it may be that this is the kind of belief that doesn't need warrant. Plantinga has attempted to give a model in which our beliefs in God are warranted but also aren't held to the same standards of other types of beliefs. But this model fails; rather than allowing us to have our cake and eat it to, we are left unable to do either. We are left trying to defend theistic belief in terms of warrant, but we are also not given good reasons for that belief.

Plantinga could rescue his model by explaining how we have good reasons to believe in God, but even if he were to do this, his theory could only be rescued by giving up one of its central tenets: that the *de jure* objection to Christian belief collapses to the *de facto* objection. By pushing Plantinga back a step and asking when we are internally justified in holding a hypothetically warranted belief, we find that in these cases, we still need to have some good reason to hold a belief, and this is exactly what Plantinga has failed to provide. So the *de jure* objection is replaced with the *de juris jure* objection: we may be warranted in holding Christian belief if it is true, but without compelling evidence that it is, we are left without any good reason to believe, and therefore are unjustified in doing so.

This critique, I believe, points us toward one of the two paths that Plantinga attempts to synthesize. Either we accept the need for rational, empirical, or psychological evidence for the existence of God, or we embrace the idea that faith is

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unjustified, irrational, absurd, or in some other way not subject to the same standards that knowledge is. Whichever way we choose, the first step in moving beyond Plantinga is going back to what he rejected.

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