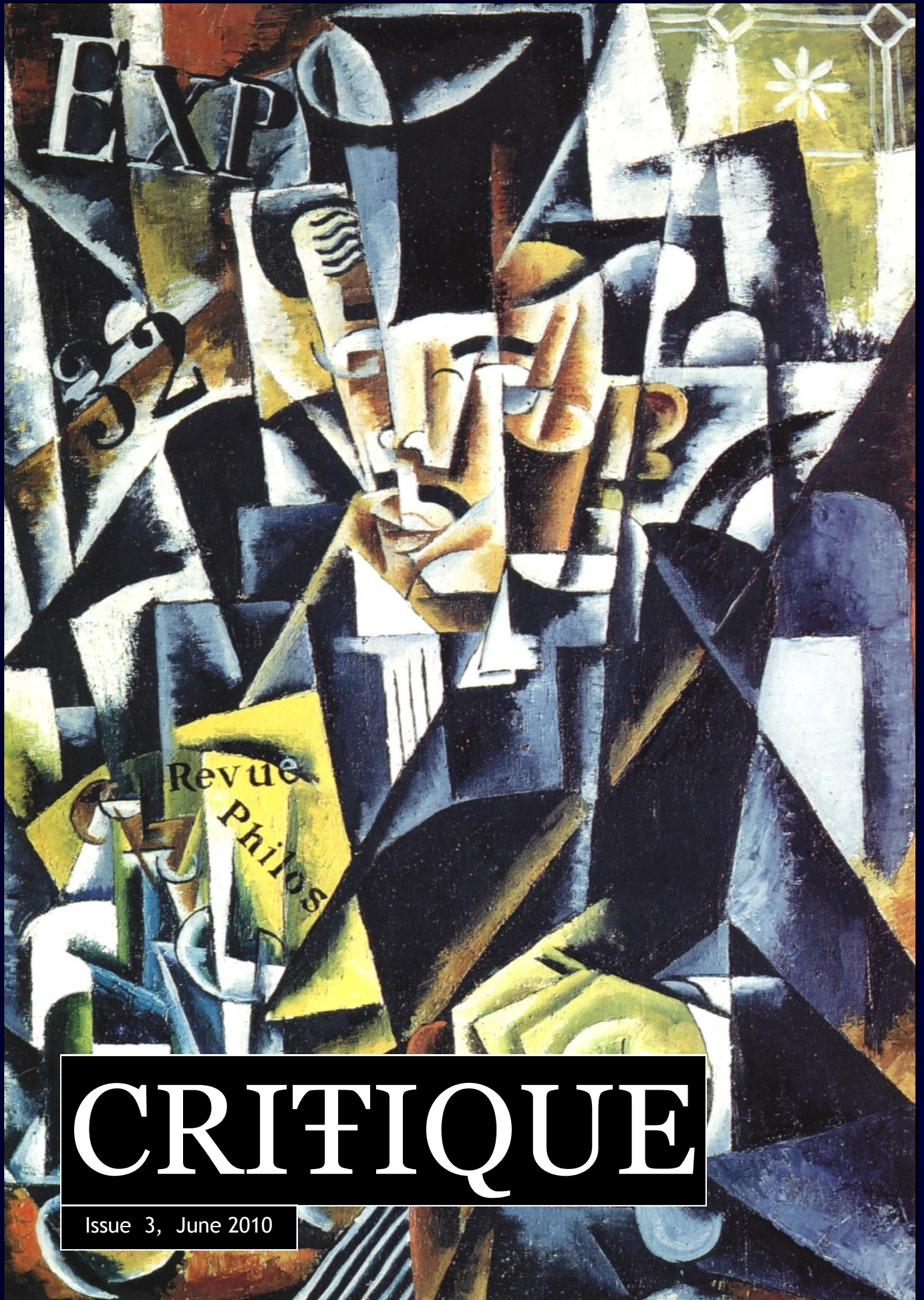




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# CRITIQUE

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## Language-Learning

Tamsin Boatman

theory really comes to the fore is in non-normal language acquisition.

Europeans and North Americans relied strongly on the African slave trade in our (tragically) recent past. However, amongst the struggles these workers experienced was one that supports our nativist theory: that of the struggle to communicate. These workers invented a pidgin language required for basic but necessary tasks. When these workers had children their children 'creolised' the language and introduced grammatical complexity which had not existed in the original pidgin language. This example shows two things: firstly, that learning language requires exposure at the right time (the adults were unable to learn a fully grammatical language) and that language-learning requires more than a simple experience of spoken language. Further support is given by Pinker who provides the example of 'Simon', a deaf nine year old boy, who was only exposed to sign language by his parents who learnt it in their teenage years and therefore only had a rudimentary grasp of the language. Whilst he wasn't completely isolated from language, Simon's 'signing was far better ASL (American Sign Language) than theirs' (Pinker, 1994); effectively Simon creolised his parents 'pidgin' language. These children all developed their own grammatical language independently of the relevant input. It remains to be seen how an empiricist can explain these astonishing feats of syntax learning.

Language-learning is a difficult

process (think about trying to learn all those irregular verbs in French) and yet Chomsky has explained why it appears so easy for young children to learn. Unfortunately this extraordinary ability to pick up a language without effort is lost within the first few years of a person's life. The answer to our question posed at the beginning of this article is therefore, 'yes' we should be amazed at a child's language-learning abilities. It may appear easy to learn a language (as Descartes points out 'there are no men so dull and stupid, not even idiots, as to be incapable of joining together different words, and thereby constructing a declaration by which to make their thoughts understood'), yet this is only the case because of the unique situation nature has provided for us.

Marcus, G. F., 1993. 'Negative evidence in language acquisition'. *Cognition* 46(1) 53-85

McNeill, D., 1966. 'Developmental psycholinguistics' *The Genesis of Language* F. Smith and G. Miller, ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pinker, Steven 'The Language Instinct' (Penguin Group, London, 1994)

Tomasello, M, 2000. 'First steps towards a usage-based theory of language acquisition', *Cognitive Linguistics*, 11-1/2 (2000), 61-82

## Language-Learning

Tamsin Boatman

Everybody is used to seeing a new mother ‘baby-talking’ to her pride and joy, or a proud grandparent exclaiming over the new words their youngest relation has learnt. But is this really necessary? Should we be so amazed at a child’s language-learning abilities? After all, we all learnt to speak and can now communicate in a (mostly) clear and coherent way. However there does seem to be something magical about the speed children learn a language, emphasised by our depressing attempts at learning a second language at secondary school. Furthermore, children are incredibly uniform when it comes to learning language: after only a few days old, infants can discriminate between their mother tongue and a foreign language from a different rhythmic class (e.g. English and Mandarin), after 9-15 months they use words that have meanings of whole sentences (e.g. Milk! meaning ‘I would like some milk’), and by the age of 4 children have acquired a full grammatical language. There is evidence that this uniformity is in no way related to any effort on the part of the parents to encourage their child to speak. Parents do sometimes try to correct their children’s grammar but this is inconsistent (Marcus, 1993). Furthermore, McNeill (McNeill, 1966), argues that in many cases any corrections are in vain, children simply ignore them.

So what are we to make of this? Children learn languages with regular success and regularity. Every normal

child hits all the language-learning benchmarks apparently without their parents’ well-meaning interference. An answer is provided by Chomsky: language-learning is unlike any other learning ability we possess in that we have a specific language-learning ability. We are born with a universal grammar, a (very) general grammar that every child is born with and that every language adheres to. When children make mistakes, they make very specific mistakes that may not be mistakes in other languages. Children learn language by setting the parameters in their native language and forgetting other possible grammatical constructs. Chomsky argues children are simply not exposed to enough data to learn a language at the speed they do without some kind of innate knowledge (UG) and innate ability (specific language-learning ability). This is just a theory, however, that not everyone accepts, but I shall try to show you that, in reality, it is the only possibility.

Normal language acquisition has other explanations, just one of these being Tomasello’s theory that children learn by imitating specific pieces of language, then, as they come to understand what is being said they discern patterns of language use. These patterns lead to the construction of different categories of linguistic unit and the ability to construct unique sentences (unique in the sense the child is not simply imitating what has been said) (Tomasello, 2000). Where Chomsky’s

## Editorial

Toby Newson

Many thanks to all our contributors and to the Philosophy Department for continuing to fund our publication. This edition of *Critique* is a little longer than usual, with the hope of making up for the lack of an edition in first term. Bearing in mind that this is the edition that hopefully a few first years will be reading as they start courses or modules in philosophy next academic year, I thought I'd write a little with them in mind.

I'm just finishing my last year of a philosophy degree. Looking back, philosophy has for me, I think, been a worthwhile course of study. Of course everyone involved in it from time to time feels that they're wasting their time, slogging away at problems that have been kicking around for hundreds, if not thousands of years. This means it's always tempting to look for hard and fast answers as though one were doing a natural science, but often to do so would not do justice to the irreducible complexity and ambiguity of life.

Rather than definite answers, philosophy teaches you a certain flexibility of thinking about things from different perspectives. For instance, the most interesting areas I've studied in the subject, and I think many fellow students would agree, have not so much been particular solutions to particular philosophical problems, rather ways of approaching philosophical problems, or indeed problems in any area. Often the most interesting approaches of all are those that can show

you how a problem might, from a different perspective, be seen as in fact no problem at all.

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My first K&R lecture was given by a now retired member of staff, but he was such a good speaker I can still remember a lot of it even now. He spoke about the importance of speech in doing philosophy, saying that, for example, though you should write notes and essays to organise your thoughts, so you should also try to discuss issues as much as you can with friends, in addition to tutorials. Moreover, the most useful tip he gave to my mind was that often the only way to understand a really difficult text is to read it out loud, the intonation being what makes such a text comprehensible, as well as keeping you from getting bored. He also suggested you shouldn't be intimidated by how reading philosophy is often such slow going; better that you understand it rather than skim it superficially. My limit is about twenty pages a day. Some of this he linked to Plato's *Phaedrus*, which has related things to say about the difference between written and spoken philosophy.

It's often difficult to grasp what's being asked of you in philosophy essays. One thing it can take a while to realise is that the essay questions you are set are mostly far too general to be answered well in the word limit. Hence in essays and particularly exams, don't be afraid to narrow your concerns. State in your introduction that you're

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Toby Newson

just going to analyse one particular criticism, distinction, recent article, or whatever. Other than that, you should aim to be as clear as possible, argue to the greatest depth you can, read the reading list and beyond and if at all possible show a bit of passion and flair.

As a first year student, you're likely to have a fair bit of time on your hands, so in addition to using it to keep up with your course, make friends, get involved with societies and the like, reading around in philosophy is also worthwhile. You will rarely get as much time again to discover things that might interest you. I'm not suggesting locking yourself away in a library to start preliminary research on your dissertation, just start thinking about how you will approach philosophy.

Basically, just read as widely and diversely as you can. If you're doing straight philosophy, make good use of your electives to enrich your year; not all courses give you such free reign over all modules. Along similar lines to what I mentioned earlier about philosophical methodologies, below are some books that might make for stimulating reading in comparison with the kind of philosophy you'll encounter.

Wittgenstein      *The Blue Book*

Richard Rorty      *Philosophy and  
Mirror of Nature*

David Cooper      *Existentialism: A  
Reconstruction*

Maurice  
Merleau-Ponty

*The Phenomenology  
of Perception,  
Preface*

Nietzsche

*Beyond Good and  
Evil, Chp 1 &  
The Gay Science,  
Book3*

Eugen Herringel

*Zen in the Art of  
Archery*

Perhaps better yet read some fiction. Some books of particular relevance to philosophy include:

P.D. Ouspensky

*The Strange Life of  
Ivan Osokin*

Tolstoy

*The Death of Ivan  
Illych*

David Lodge

*Thinks...*

Scarlett Thomas

*The End of Mr Y*

Sophocles

*Oedipus*

Euripides

*Medea*

Milan Kundera

*The Unbearable  
Lightness of Being*

## Does “Morally Right” Simply Mean “Approved of by a Certain Culture”?

William van der Lande

Benn enunciates the illogicality of this notion by asking: “Is it not common to engage in moral debate, with the hope of getting closer to the truth?”. Surely the fact that when faced with a different culture people can, and do, apply their existing notions and reflect upon them, articulates that the “ethical thought of a given culture can always stretch beyond its boundaries”. Relativism supposedly encourages respect for other cultures, an issue few would dispute; yet does it not show a certain lack of respect not to engage critically with these cultures?

What cultural relativism fails to address is that the difference in moral and cultural practices between societies may in fact reflect one culture’s moral superiority over another, articulated by James Rachels as follows: “The premise that there is diversity of belief cannot support a conclusion that there is no universal truth to morality. Some people - or everybody, even - might be mistaken.”

So just because a particular habit is approved by a culture does not mean that it is morally *right*. The possibility of a culture being wrong must be allowed. An example would be the cultural tradition of female genitalia mutilation. The benefits of such an act (if they can be called such) include a reduced promiscuity in women, thus making them less likely to commit adultery; and an increase in the attractiveness of the woman (girl) from a male point of view, since those who have not undergone the process are considered

‘unclean’. The negatives for the woman would include the loss of sexual pleasure; great pain; and possibly walking difficulties in later life. Are we, in response to this practice, to consider the society where this happens to be perfectly legitimate in its actions, since that is the way things are done there? Or are we to think that it is the mark of a society that has not yet reflected upon itself enough to know that this practice is truly wrong?

Thus far I have undermined the principle of cultural relativism, but perhaps the example which does so most conclusively is that of the Nazis. The brutality enacted by them during Hitler’s time in power was in tune with their society’s moral code, but can we honestly suggest that the Nazis were ‘morally right’ in their views and actions because of their status as an established culture? To believe so would simply be inhumane. The Nazis go to show that “some individuals and cultures may be radically mistaken about basic moral principles”.

It is clear, then, that ‘morally right’ does not simply mean ‘approved of by a certain culture’, and that this alignment is a simplistic and misleading comparison. While cultural differences will doubtlessly always exist, fundamental human moral values maintain within rational cultures; and to constrict what is right and wrong by where and how you live is naive, and misunderstands what morality really is.

*William van der Lande is a first year natural sciences undergraduate.*



## Does “Morally Right” Simply Mean “Approved of by a Certain Culture?”

James Roberts

In her book *Patterns of Culture* Ruth Benedict states: “Morality is a convenient term for socially approved habits.” But in describing morality like this, she is confusing societal traditions and etiquette with a society’s ethical framework. There is a difference between the morals one should adhere to and the manners one should adhere to. Morality is rather more than just a “socially approved habit”; to do something immoral is not simply frowned upon, it is widely condemned.

This differentiates and elucidates slightly the loose language used by Benedict. What of course she meant to say was that morality differs culture by culture, with each culture being morally right in their own way, because they are their own culture, and no culture can be seen to be better or worse, morally speaking, than any other. This rather confusing statement goes to the heart of the most popular form of moral relativism: cultural relativism. But is this really true? Can one culture be seen to be just as morally right as another? I think not.

In accepting cultural relativism one must accept certain conditions which go with it. One condition would be the assumption of each society as a *perfect* society; the word ‘perfect’ here means that for the people of that society, the society’s moral code is the *right* code to follow, and there can be no possible divergence from this code without it being wrong. Thus, in short,

moral progression within a society is fundamentally impossible, because it would sway from the original, correct moral code. While it is natural for people to deliberate morally, if an opinion is prevalent in a culture, and is therefore true, the very process of deliberating is a counterintuitive undertaking.

The moral progress contradiction of cultural relativism is most succinctly expressed by Julia Driver: “Moral progress is often achieved through the efforts of rebellious individuals with beliefs that do not conform to popular cultural beliefs. It seems odd to say that they were wrong and everyone else was right, until others just happened to start sharing their beliefs.”

The process whereby a society is able to reach a furthered state of ‘enlightenment’ is achieved through reflection. Only by stopping and truly reflecting, either as an individual or as a society, upon whether certain issues are actually *right*, is moral progress possible. It is by questioning the current state of things that societies morally change, mostly for the better. But cultural relativism prevents us from criticising our own society, since why question something which cannot be seen to be wrong?

There could never be moral judgement on other cultures, and it would be theoretically impossible to have a debate with a member of another culture about their moral beliefs, since they could never be wrong. Piers

## Philosophy, Continentally

James Roberts

There isn't a hotter subject than philosophy in Madrid. I decided to do my second year over in Spain's gorgeous capital, and, although studying in Spanish has at times been akin to being the bull in a bullfight, now, with my return to the UK dawning on me, I'm realising how amazing this experience has been. I've discovered a place where philosophy is done differently, a school of thinkers proud not to be analytical. The content of philosophy here is less truth and more expression, less logic, more hearty portions of the passions. Basically, there is a different priority in the discipline, and this is apparent in the education. That's what I'm going to write about here.

In Spain the education is weighted towards studying more vocational subjects at the end of secondary education. So, when I tell Spaniards that I want to go into the PR industry, they give me strange looks and say "but you do... *philosophy?*" There's not the custom of doing an academic discipline primarily- right now I would be expected to be studying Public Relations or Media (what we might regard as Mickey Mouse subjects over in the UK). Furthermore, the public university system is by law not elitist. That means, there is no official ranking of universities and departments. So while in the UK you know *exactly* where one is in the system, here no university is 'officially' better than others. Though some, in reality, are; "We're the best philosophy department in Spain," is

whispered in the corridors of the humanities faculty of the Autonomous University of Madrid. This means however, that philosophy students can't rely on the name of their top ten university to get them a job outside of Academia.

It also entails that there are very few philosophy students, with the average class size being about 8, and they tend to be committed passionate martyrs to their subject. They have this sense of "I'm going to be a philosophy teacher or unemployed." They're clever souls who have made a sacrifice in choosing to study philosophy, so, they're going to throw themselves into it. The philosophy department is a close-knit community of chain smokers to be found reading Derrida on the extensive campus grounds, absorbing the sun and looking delightfully hippy- no preppy-ness to be found here. I know I'm trading in generalisation right now, but that's something I've found is a great intellectual tool this year; a stress on rules being more interesting than their exceptions.

All the philosophers know each other, and, have a real chummy relationship with the professors too. Spain isn't the biggest world exporter of philosophy, but, the Autonoma is probably Spain's philosophical powerhouse right now. So, I've spent the year with a twenty hour-a-week schedule of tutorials with some of the most esteemed philosophers in Spain. We haven't heard of them, but anyone who reads the na-

## Philosophy, Continentally

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tionals here has. Philosophy is done more personally, and that shows in the course content too. It's not "What did Kant think about this and how can we criticise him?", it is "Why did Kant think this? What was he feeling? At what stage in his career? How did he develop from this position?", even "Who were Kant's friends?". Though I've barely read *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, I feel like I know Hegel's whole social life. It's quite refreshing.

Hegel was mates, by the way, with thinkers such as Fichte and Schelling, who I'd never heard of until the names were written on the board in History of Modern Philosophy, and I think they're not taught in the normal syllabus in the UK. Wikipedia them-they're hot stuff. Another thinker I've discovered this year was Machiavelli, who has practically become a love-affair of mine. He's so naughty, but so nice. The January exam question here was by the way, "Write about Machiavelli." Not very *specific*, but a great chance to write three pages on the role of marketing in Machiavelli.

The key term this year has been "Post-modernity". I've not had a subject which didn't in some way mention trends in modernity, except perhaps Philosophy of Logic, the subject which the Spanish philosophers-to-be did not cease moaning about. Ethics was "post-modern", theory of culture was about "globalization of postmodernity", aesthetics was "issues in contemporary art", philosophy of religion was even "how is belief today?". The professors

here don't seem to be looking for universal logical articulations of absolute truths so much as fashions in contemporary thought. It's philosophical cool-hunting.

This trend is also prevalent amongst the philosophers-to-be (keep in mind that, unlike most of us they will not be leaving philosophy for the City.) There is an active dislike for all things analytical. One of my first essays came back with a note "good, errors in Spanish don't prevent expression but many obvious *analytical prejudices*". There is a sentiment here that the continental discipline which they favour is undervalued- that the analytical tradition has hegemony in the philosophy industry. 'Post-modernity' is where these new thinkers see their opportunities, to trade in historicism and generalisation, to talk about the ever-present and ever-expanding post-modern world, where the analytics must be silent; it's not their place to talk about truths contingent on the present. These are thinkers in awe of Friedrich Jameson, who gave a conference for the university recently, and bored of Bertrand Russell.

So philosophy here is more personal and more trendy, but finally, it's also more emotional. Ethics was a small class which was particularly full of passions, these fiery thinkers with opinions often grounded in "that's just how I feel." For example, a really interesting class was centred on "Why can you go to court for breaking a window, but not for breaking a heart?". Professors aren't

## Modern Art: The Difficulty for Aestheticians

Sam Crutchley

need to look deeper into *why* there are such discrepancies.

Any theory of aesthetic appreciation must run alongside and compliment contextual elements of an artwork. Returning to the Punk Example, it would seem senseless to evaluate the Punk movement without acknowledging the rebellious culture and the disjointed Britain that manifested such resentment towards those in authority. With the clashing guitars mocking the decadence of the system, the Pogo-dancing satirising their own apparent idiocy, and the haircuts, piercings and outlandish clothes, the Punks stuck two fingers up to middle-England. Never mind the Bollocks, Punk was not just The Clash or The Sex Pistols, it was a whole aesthetic construct. There was nothing ugly about The Pistol's blasphemous rehashing of the National Anthem; if anything it signified total musical liberation; a thing of *real beauty*.

Danto, A.C.: *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and The Pale of History*, Princeton University Press 1997

Kieran, M.: 'Aesthetic Value: Beauty and Ugliness and Incoherence', in *Philosophy*, Vol.72, 1997

Nietzsche, F.: 'Gay Science: With a prelude in German Rhymes and an appendix of songs', ed. Bernard Williams, Cambridge University Press 2001

Zemach, E.: 'Real Beauty', Pennsylvania State University 1997

## Modern Art: The Difficulty for Aestheticians

Sam Crutchley

ing is that any artwork can be tackled using a certain set of guidelines, and whether or not we come to the conclusion that the artwork has aesthetic merit is a personal matter. By stating that arriving at the conclusion that a work has cognitive significance is a “personal matter” may seem somewhat misleading. What I mean by this is that my theory of Cognitive Ethicism will provide a perfectly viable set of parameters which will assist the “agent” in aesthetic appreciation, yet other suitable theories can be used to finish at a different conclusion. I.e. if one was also bothered with the authorial intention element of the artwork, then this would supplement my Cognitive Ethicism. I see the latter as providing a skeleton for other theories (such as authorial intentionalism, historicism et al) to flesh out, thereby noting that Cognitive Ethicism is set in a pluralistic framework. We should give the artwork the greatest chance to benefit us cognitively.

This is a good juncture to bring in the problems of historical progression and show how it effects the way we aesthetically appreciate Art. I shall give an historical explanation as to why we may find an artwork in one epoch aesthetically redundant, whilst coming to bask in its new found glory in a later era. Is everything just a matter of personal taste; just a construct founded upon environmental and societal upbringing; just a reflection of what so-called-critics believe and impart upon their ignorant subjects? How can some-

thing so revered one minute, seem ugly and outmoded the next? ‘How can realists explain a change in judgement where there is no change in the object judged?’ (Zemach, p71). Will we learn to love contemporary art? The answer is - unsurprisingly - not as clean cut as the questions asked. We have to answer whether or not art works are indeed works of art in themselves or merely a dialogue on an epoch of art history.

‘What is new is always evil, being that which wants to conquer and overthrow the old boundary markers and old pictures; and only what is old is good.’ (Nietzsche, 78)

In Hieronymus Bosch’s *Christ Carrying the Cross (Ghent)* he portrays the “persecutors” heavily pierced, swarthy-skinned, bedraggled; the classic physical definition of a savage or barbarian, whilst the Punk culture deliberately set out to achieve these pinnacles of ‘maximal ugliness and incoherence’ (Kieran, p384). Furthermore, there are elements within the Punk music genre - and contemporary classical music (see John Cage) - that actively seek out discordance and clashing musical paradigms. This offers the idea that aesthetic appreciation is dependant on how the viewer wants to perceive the work; if they are looking for discordance and so-called “musical ugliness” then they will find it. Although it would be easy to utter the old chestnut: “it’s all just relative”, we

## Philosophy, Continentally

James Roberts

afraid to get their opinions out, these are adults who saw the demise of a dictatorship and the speedy construction of modern Spain. Politics doesn't seem so distant to people who have lived under a dictatorship; this isn't abstract discussion, this is heated debate.

With a longer stint here in Spain than in Durham overall, I'm going to admit- Madrid and continental philosophy have both stolen my heart.

## Anti-Paternalism and Quasi-Slavery

Stephen Ingram

Most people do not want to be slaves. This much seems uncontroversial, so it is unlikely to be a serious practical problem if a government legislates against voluntary-slavery. However, prohibiting voluntary-slavery does seem to be problematic *in principle* for a liberal society of the kind advocated by John Stuart Mill. Mill's anti-paternalism seems to lead to some counterintuitive results, such as the legitimacy of voluntary-slavery, which only inconsistency can avoid. I will try to show that, though Mill's argument against voluntary-slavery is not successful, by developing a notion of 'quasi-slavery' we can make his approach consistent.

Mill's anti-paternalism stems mainly from his belief that we should promote "utility in the largest sense" (Mill 1991, p15). For Mill, the well-being of individuals and mankind involves each person's ability to flourish characterologically. This requires freedom with regard to one's choice of action. However, Mill recognises that anarchistic freedom will be detrimental to overall utility. This leads him to mitigate his anti-paternalism with the 'harm principle': "[t]he sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is ... to prevent harm to others" (ibid, 14). The claim that liberty is justifiable *derivatively* (from utility) is not uncontroversial, but this is not my concern here. It is (at least) not counterintuitive, and has the at-

traction of preserving both freedom and security. But, it seems that the harm principle can lead to strange results.

Mill only prohibits harm to *others*. He believes that one should be free to harm oneself because liberty consists in doing what one desires. As long as one is aware of the danger, chooses autonomously and does not harm others in the process, one may do oneself harm. This seems to legitimise voluntary entry into a slavery-contract as long as the choice to do so is one's own, and the action does not genuinely harm others. This is an intuitively troubling result because slavery is so contrary to most modern moral thinking. How can Mill *consistently* avoid this outcome?

Mill attempts an evasion by claiming that "[i]t is not freedom, to be allowed to alienate [one's] freedom". Selling oneself abdicates all future freedoms, and this defeats "the very purpose which is the justification of allowing him to dispose of himself" (ibid, 114). This seems weak. If one is truly free to harm oneself as long as one is aware of the dangers, surely all that is required for voluntary-slavery to be legitimate is that the wannabe-slave *knows* they will be alienating their future freedom and still chooses autonomously.

The argument against voluntary-slavery can be strengthened. Alan E. Fuchs highlights that what is objectionable is the irrevocable nature of the

## Modern Art: The Difficulty for Aestheticians

Sam Crutchley

Has the shift from Cezanne to The Cubist School constituted a direct break from our traditional conceptions of the aesthetic? Have works by contemporaries such as Duchamp, Warhol and Serrano volte-faced our preconceived notions of the ideas of the ugly and the aesthetic? By using Serrano's *Piss Christ* as an exemplar, I shall show how aesthetic appreciation has become a much more complicated pursuit. On the face of it, we see a Crucifix enclosed in a vat of Andres Serrano's urine; not exactly a masterpiece by Manet! Is this just a blatant, even puerile misuse of artistic licence; perhaps even the "ugly" side of art that should be abandoned? There appears to be no aesthetic merit that we can glean from this; the artist's quest was to repulse, and it appears that he has succeeded. We should conclude that this artwork is aesthetically deficient. Yet, one needs only to alter the boundaries slightly to interpret *Piss Christ* as a legitimate, aesthetically meritorious work of art. Hegel promotes art which is pristine and free from the shackles of production, free from conjuring tricks and - most importantly - represents the ultimate freedom of the artist. Through the medium of *Piss Christ* it is obvious that Serrano is not inhibited by any shackles of production and the fact that he has had the audacity to produce such an artwork represents the ultimate freedom bestowed upon him to do this. Furthermore, it is a crucifix in a vat of piss; this is not exactly a

conjuring trick! Therefore, do we conclude that this represents the pristine vision of art that Hegel envisioned? It should be noted that we can still advocate a position where we are capable to appreciate this artwork aesthetically, but we must realise that it will be far more difficult to do so.

"(It) becomes clear that there is no special way a work of art must be - it can be a Brillo box, or it can look like a soup can." (Danto, p35)

It seems that art no longer needs to conform to a particular philosophical or aesthetic mandate; it has been reduced to an ultimately subjective level wherein the appreciators of art are at liberty to form their opinions *totally* irrespective of others' views. With regards to Serrano's *Piss Christ*, I personally recognise the ugliness of its medium: "piss", the submerged Christ/ Crucifix, and the obvious intention to shock the viewer - if we fail to acknowledge these facts (especially the latter), then I believe that it makes aesthetic appreciation difficult if not impossible. If you are appalled to the extent that you are denying yourself access to the work due to Serrano's impudence, then *any* form of aesthetic appreciation, cognitive or otherwise, seems somewhat pointless. I don't particularly think that I need to give an opinion as to whether or not I believe that this artwork has any particular aesthetic value; all I'm intent on show-



## Why Vegetarians Should Eat Meat...

Nick Constantine

sume and buy only free range animal products. To not eat (or rather, not buy) meat is akin to not voting because the BNP field a candidate in an election. Anyone who feels that the suffering is morally unacceptable must buy meat that has been reared in a humane way (even if they do not then eat it). McMahan is right about the morality but wrong about the method. If demand were great enough, factory farming would stop; no producer would be indifferent to cruelty if it were unprofitable.

*Nick Constantine is a first year physics undergraduate. Next year he hopes to switch to natural science.*

## Anti-Paternalism and Quasi-Slavery

Stephen Ingram

act. It is possible that “the desires and values of one or more of the parties [could] change significantly over time, such that ongoing arrangement is now alien to their fundamental higher-order and settled interests” (Fuchs 2001, 244). This means that the slavery-contract can no longer be considered to have been autonomously self-imposed, because, for Fuchs, the non-revisability of one’s plan of life is inimical to autonomy (ibid, 246). So, it does not seem problematically paternalistic to prohibit voluntary-slavery, because the decision to be enslaved can never be made completely autonomously. It appears to follow that the state should legislate against voluntary-slavery.

However, it is not clear that this does follow. Derek Parfit has plausibly argued that acting to protect a future version of oneself is generally bad for us because, for example, we would have less fear of growing old and dying (Parfit 1984, 174-177). *If* this is accepted, it seems that we cannot legitimately legislate against voluntary-slavery. Claiming that non-revisability implies lack of autonomy expresses a bias towards the future that we would be better off shedding. A person whose desire to be enslaved is integral to their higher-order interests should, therefore, not be dismissed as lacking autonomy. Yet it still seems immensely counterintuitive to require the state to enforce a contract if the slave does experience a radical shift in their higher-order interests.

Perhaps we should endure a com-

promise. This is where ‘quasi-slavery’ comes in. A quasi-slave will live as though a slave, but can appeal to the state to free him if he can convincingly show that being a quasi-slave is no longer any part of his higher-order interests. The state *is not* entitled to legislate against quasi-slavery, but *is* entitled to decide not to enforce quasi-slavery-contracts. Quasi-slaves are therefore not *absolutely* alienated from freedom, but can still abdicate their freedom to act in every other sense. I admit that this seems an odd notion, but I think it is promising. Though it cannot apply to all problem cases (quasi-prostitution seems a bit far-fetched) it may lead us to a framework through which we can deal with apparent inconsistencies for the harm principle.

The notion also faces another problem regarding contract law: why would a wannabe-quasi-slave-owner enter into a contract whose enforcement was not guaranteed?<sup>1</sup> I do not think this problem is insoluble. We may legitimately allow some contractual clause stipulating that quasi-slaves who successfully appeal their quasi-slavery must compensate the slave-owner in a way that is agreeable to the quasi-slave-owner, fair to the former quasi-slave and does not cause harm to others. I confess; no mean feat. But it is not, in principle, impossible.

What I have said, I have said roughly. However, I believe that the notion of quasi-slavery could potentially give a plausible framework for

## Anti-Paternalism and Quasi-Slavery

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dealing with apparent inconsistencies in Mill's anti-paternalism. Whatever other objections we may have, Mill's liberalism cannot be dismissed as grossly counterintuitive.

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<sup>1</sup>I am grateful to Holly Savage for emphasising the importance of this objection to me

## Why Vegetarians Should Eat Meat...

Nick Constantine

We may wish happiness to other creatures; a minimum of suffering; but life presents a series of choices in which we tend to put ourselves (as humans) first. We value our own, human, interests much higher than those of animals. To be fair to McMahan, he does accept a moral order of importance of animals. He draws a line, below which the animals' enjoyment of life is negligible or irrelevant, at around shrimps and prawns. However the "chimpanzee" example is meant to show that my objection is relevant even if CH is meant to apply only to higher order creatures.

I believe the only distinct line that can be drawn is between persons and non-persons. If a madman threatened to kill two cows or one human, the authorities would tell him to kill the cows (and think they had got off relatively lightly). If he had given the ultimatum but with two-hundred cows the answer would be much the same. Though this example is rather crude, it is indicative of the *discretely* superior moral importance of humans. It is why a simple addition of experiences between species in CH does not work. The tangible consumption of the steak cannot be linearly subtracted from the hypothetical happiness of a cow in such a simple way with any coherent meaning.

CH is not a viable way to make moral decisions with any recourse to life. An action is detrimental to all species it does not bring net pleasure to. This arises because McMahan insists on

considering creatures' good as well as bad experiences. You are doing wrong not just by causing pain, but also by not facilitating animals' happiness! Using a CH methodology any conceivable action could seem immoral.

Though I think there are some problems with my argument, namely how to feasibly consider the negative impact of the infinity of non-performed simultaneous positive actions, I have a pragmatic argument against vegetarianism that I think is irrefutable. To misquote the apocryphal proverb, "All it takes for evil to flourish is good men to do nothing." I see ethical vegetarians in this light. Imagine everyone in the world were to reassess whether they could continue to eat meat or not. Let's also assume McMahan is correct in his assertions. Thus, from his point of view, the ideal result is that everyone (well, maybe *almost* everyone) decides they will immediately become vegetarians. Unfortunately even this, the *best* possible outcome from McMahan's point of view, would not remove cruelty from the meat industry.

The only people continuing to eat meat (and fund the livestock industry) would be those to whom the suffering of the animals is morally acceptable. Assuming the taste is not detrimentally affected, which for the sake of argument is completely reasonable, then all meat would become factory farmed. I am as concerned as McMahan about the suffering caused to animals in the livestock industry, but I vote with my feet. My prerogative is to con-

## Why Vegetarians Should Eat Meat: A Refutation of the Philosophy Bites Podcast “Jeff McMahan on Vegetarianism”

Nick Constantine

Jeff McMahan is a vegetarian purely on ethical grounds. He thinks that the practice of raising livestock for food essentially necessitates cruelty. He also makes a novel point, the consideration of any future enjoyment of life the animal might have had, which I have christened a “cumulative hedonism” argument, that I shall outline and refute. I will then give a separate argument explaining why I believe all ethical vegetarians should eat meat.

McMahan acknowledges that it might be possible to eat, for instance, road kill, or free-range eggs that have not engendered any cruelty. He weighs up eating a piece of steak thus:

*Net pleasure =*

*My enjoyment of the steak*

*–Health problems from red meat, environmental concerns, suffering at slaughter stage*

*–The future happiness the cow would have enjoyed for the remaining years of its life*

He assumes that the creature takes some small pleasure in fulfilling its needs, such as eating (just as I would from enjoying the steak), so ending its life early is a pleasure-negative act. This is the “future happiness” term. Factoring it in, he suggests the sum will be negative; more cruelty (pain) than happiness (pleasure) is involved in its consumption. The net

pleasure is negative therefore we should not do it.

I shall call McMahan’s methodology, somewhat facetiously, *cumulative hedonism* (CH). That is to say striving to bring maximum happiness and minimal suffering to all animals (including humans) over their full lives. This is my generalisation of his equation for calculating the morality of actions. I admit to being a bit cavalier with how I have formulated CH, but will give examples to refute more robust versions of it.

If the “aim” of life (or just a good way to live) were to let as much happiness and as little suffering flourish in every species at once, one would lead a very strange life. Imagine a cumulative hedonist, named Jaff, is having a picnic. He notices a stream of ants creeping out of the picnic basket, carrying away his (vegetarian) sandwiches. Jaff should rejoice at his ethical existence. Though he will “suffer” slightly from temporary hunger, many thousands of ants will experience the pleasure of his sandwiches. Say the same cumulative hedonist later held a lentil flatbread up to take a bite, and a chimpanzee charged past and grabbed it, he should once more be satisfied by his very ethical life. The chimpanzee would certainly be happy, but the CH conclusion that Jaff would feel morally fulfilled does not quite ring true in my ears.

## Is Logic Applicable at the Quantum Level

Robert White

Logic is one of the cornerstones of intellectual thought, allowing philosophical, mathematical and physical reasoning to be pursued in an effective manner. It has allowed thought experiments to be considered and inductively worked through in order to envisage situations far too complicated for experiment, and produce theories with testable predictions. One of the crowning glories of this technique was the development of special and general relativity by Albert Einstein. Whilst faring well on the scales we meet in everyday life, this method has fared less well on the scale of Quantum Mechanics.

Quantum Mechanics is a physical theory mainly dealing with interactions at very small scales (of the order of the size of atoms) and is one of the most empirically supported theories in the history of physics. From modelling the atom, to understanding the inner workings of the sun, it is truly fundamental in our understanding of the universe. The predictions of Quantum electrodynamics (a branch of Quantum Mechanics) give an error in their predictions of less than the width of a human hair, in comparison with the distance from New York to Los Angeles (J. Polkinghorne, pp. 40). Importantly Quantum Mechanics has never been shown to be inconsistent with experimental data. However, in a seminal thought experiment devised by Einstein, Podolsk and Rosen (EPR), which used logic to show a contradiction in Quantum Mechanics, the

result predicted through logic was inconsistent with later experimental evidence. This leads to the question: is logic applicable at the Quantum Mechanical scale?

A brief summary of the EPR thought experiment is as follows. The EPR experiment considers a nucleus which emits two photons (particles of light). Photons can either be polarised (i.e. they point in a certain direction) up or down (A. Rae, pp. 17). Due to empirically tested laws of physics if the polarisation of one of the photons is known the polarisation of the other can be deduced. This would not be a problem in a system governed by Classical Mechanics (the physical laws that govern the macroscopic world). However, in Quantum Mechanics the photons are not pointing in any direction until they are measured (A. Rae, pp. 59); only after a measurement is made on them are they pointing in a set direction. This means that a measurement on one photon causes the other photon to be measured indirectly. As the property of polarisation was not predetermined it implies that one photon is interacting with another. If this was done so that faster than light transmission of information was required, this would go against Special Relativity (which again is an empirically tested theory). This thought experiment seems to be a strong argument against Quantum Mechanics, as this interaction between the two particles is regarded as impossible. (J. S. Bell, 1964), (A. Einstein et

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al, 1935).

The physicist John S. Bell devised an experimental way of determining whether this communication (known as non-locality) took place (J. S. Bell, 1964), which was subsequently tested in a lab when the technology became available. The most recent experimental data supported Quantum Mechanics and was inconsistent with the conclusions of the thought experiment, showing that the system displayed non-locality (A. Aspect 1999), (M.A. Rowe et al 2001), (G Weihs et al 1998).

As the logic used in the EPR experiment is universally considered to be watertight, the results of the experiment suggest one of four things: there is a problem with Quantum Mechanics; there is a problem with the assumptions made by Bell to make a testable experiment; there is a problem with the experiments themselves; or there is a problem with the use of logic at the scales in question. As mentioned above, Quantum Mechanics is incredibly successful at dealing with this type of phenomena it is unlikely that this is the issue with Bell's experiment (J. Polkinghorne, pp. 40). The assumptions made by Bell in the experiment have been under scrutiny for 45 years and the assumptions are widely regarded to be valid by the physics community (A. Rae, pp. 42). However, there are still issues with the experiments which leave a flaw in this argument.

Even the most recent experiments have one major flaw. This is due

to the inefficiency of the detectors used to measure the direction in which the photons are pointing. Therefore only a small subset, around 5% (G Weihs et al 1998) in the most recent experiments, of the photons is being measured. This forces an experiment to assume that this subset is representative of all the photons (A. Rae, pp. 45). As there is no data on whether a photon is more likely to be detected if it disobeys the expected Quantum Mechanical prediction, this assumption looks premature (G Weihs et al 1998).

The macroscopic world at the level at which we interact with it agrees with logic as we understand it; this is supported by both our everyday interaction with the world and more scientifically through the results of thought experiments which rely on logic. As there is no understanding of why logic would break down at smaller scales; the default position must be that logic holds until sufficiently strong evidence is provided.

Although there is significant evidence with which to attack inductive logic at the Quantum Mechanical Scale, the experimental evidence is not yet strong enough and constitutes a significant flaw in any attack. This leaves the conclusion that logic is still applicable at the Quantum Mechanical Scale.

## Is Logic Applicable at The Quantum Level?

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