Founded in 2019, the *Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Australasia* (UPJA) is the first undergraduate philosophy journal run by students from Australasia. We publish one volume and host two conferences annually and interview philosophers with a substantial connection to Australasia. We aim to be an inclusive and diverse journal and welcome submissions from undergraduates (and recent graduates) worldwide, on any philosophical topic, so long as the paper attempts to make a substantive contribution to contemporary philosophy. Submissions from women and other members of underrepresented groups in philosophy, including those for whom English is not their first language, are particularly encouraged.

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Editors' Note

This year's editorial teams—thanks to past editors—had the pleasure of working with a well-established journal with a substantial audience. The editorial team was led through the first half of 2022 by Jack Hawke 何健平 and Jessica Sophia Ralph, joined by ourselves (James Cafferky and Anna Day) as associate editors. Under Jack and Jessica's leadership, UPJA began to review and renew its institutional and faculty relationships, successfully ran a conference and call for papers, and continued the *Conversations from the Region* interview series by publishing conversations with Bill Fish, Kate Manne, Philip Pettit, and Kim Sterelny to the largest audiences UPJA had received. We sincerely hope that the UPJA community enjoyed reading these interviews as much as we enjoyed conducting them.

In the latter half of 2022, we saw off Jessica and Jack and welcomed two new editors: Eloise Hickey and Mark Rothery. In this period, we expanded UPJA's reach by, for example, establishing relationships with Honours course coordinators throughout the region. We also focused on auditing and overhauling UPJA's internal processes to ensure the journal's sustainability. Consequently, we were delighted that the number of submissions we received in the second call for papers this year was nearly double the number of papers we received in the first half of the year. We also ran a conference and continued the *Conversations* series by interviewing Graham Priest, Eleanor Gordon-Smith, Agnes Callard, and Greg Restall (with more interviews to come in the early new year). Eagle-eyed UPJA watchers may also notice that we've made some minor alterations to our style guide to bring UPJA into closer parallel with the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.

We are thrilled to announce our four chosen papers for this year's issue: 'Thinking About Sex: Pornography and the Intuitive Mind' by Bettule Brigitte Assi, an incoming student at the Australian National University and recent graduate of the University of Melbourne; 'Colyvan's Dilemma: Inconsistency, Theoretic Virtues, and Scientific Practice' by Johnny Kennedy, a student at the University of Sydney; 'Life's a Chore: Menial Household Laobur, Aristotle, and the Outsourcing Dilemma' by Mahalah Mullins, a student at the University of Melbourne; and 'Haslanger's Method for (Un)Warranted Ideology Critique' by Hamish Scott-Stevenson, a recent graduate of the University of Melbourne. We are very pleased to award both of our awards, awarded for the best paper and the best paper from a member of an underrepresented group in philosophy, to Brigitte Assi. Brigitte's paper explores the cognitive effects of Campian 'characterisations' on women who consume pornography. Congratulations Brigitte and thank you to the AAP for generously funding these awards.

CONVERSATIONS FROM THE REGION

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

Associate Professor Kate Manne (Cornell University)

I think this isn't terribly original advice! Really get to know your professors and view them as a resource, as someone to bounce ideas around with, someone who you can look to for advice as to what to read and what might be interesting to discuss together. Also, practise wide reading and try to get as familiar as you can with many different areas of philosophy. I would also suggest, as much as people can (and again this varies depending on things like institutional privilege), going to lots of philosophy talks and just getting a flavour for what the discipline is like and how philosophers interact with one another. Again, that's not always possible for everyone, but in as much as it is possible, I think it's a really valuable thing—to get a sense of how philosophical discourse works, how 'back and forth' works. When you go to a talk, I think it's a good idea to try to think of a question, and then if you're able to—if you have the bandwidth and the confidence—try to ask that question. Raise your hand. My hope is that increasingly philosophers will welcome this show of interest from younger members of our discipline and be encouraging and welcoming. So that is my somewhat aspirational answer! But those are good practices for undergraduates: read widely, talk to your professors, and go to talks if you can (including those now online, given that we are living in a more Zoom-friendly world, for better or for worse).

Distinguished Professor Philip Pettit (Australian National University; Princeton University)

The thing about philosophy questions, I think that's the main thing, really, I like to communicate to any undergraduates, is that these are questions we can't help but ask. They're not questions that we ask idly. They're questions which you can't help but ask if you're, so to speak, at all curious or interested in your own nature as a human being. And I remember I almost couldn't believe it, I was almost in ecstasy as people described what doing philosophy would be like. I remember saying: 'You can't be serious, you mean you're asked just to think about free will and to read what the best people have written about it and make up your own mind?' I thought this was so exciting.

Professor Kim Sterelny (Australian National University)

My advice to undergraduate students is: don't do philosophy unless you really enjoy it and don't be afraid to be wrong! If you're reading something by a famous guy or a

famous girl and you think 'this can't be right', trust your instincts! Show it's not right; be different—don't be afraid to stick your neck out, don't be afraid to follow your interests. The pleasure of philosophy is the freedom to follow your interests, far more than any other discipline at university. You've got the ultimate licence to roam. And that's great fun.

I mean, you almost inevitably bite off more than you can chew. I can remember saying to myself 20 or 30 years ago, 'Well, when I retire, I'll take the philosophy of physics seriously. I'll try to understand relativity theory and quantum mechanics and stuff.' Okay, I don't think I'm ever going to. But in principle I could! In principle, I could decide tomorrow, 'Okay I'll learn it, and if it took me two years to learn it, that would be fine!' There's no other discipline like that. In philosophy, we use our heads and have the freedom to play.

Distinguished Professor Graham Priest (The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York)

If you're a philosophy student, whether you're an undergraduate or a graduate student, you're really just learning philosophy. And that's fine. Everybody starts somewhere, right? So, you're only going to know a little bit. There is always more than you will ever possibly know. The more I know in philosophy, the more I know I don't know. I feel I know only a small fraction of philosophy, and there's a lot more than that. So, a certain humility behoves you—and me—but you've got to start somewhere.

Where should you start? Start with a bit of philosophy that interests you most. You'll do your best philosophical thinking in something that really engages you. Follow your interests, whatever they are. Your interests, in due course, will lead you all over the place, because philosophy is this kind of networked subject, where knowledge of one thing will take you into knowledge of another. That will come in time. The thing is to do the best philosophy you can, maintain your enthusiasm, and that will be achieved by doing the things you're enthusiastic about. Humility I've already mentioned. But open-mindedness is a great virtue. I talked about that in the context of Australian philosophy. Don't think that philosophy as you're now doing it is the way that it's done in all parts of the world; don't think that the way you're learning to do philosophy now is the way that you will be doing it, or that it will be done professionally, in 20 years' time or 30 years' time—it won't be.

So, bear in mind that things are gonna change, your thinking is going to change if you stay in the profession, or if you carry on thinking about philosophy. Be prepared to think about new areas that you find interesting, even though they might take you off into wild new directions. Don't diss a philosopher just because that philosophy or those takes come from a tradition that you don't know anything about. Be prepared to read stuff. Learn from it, maybe you'll write it off as crappy philosophy in the end, and that's fine too. A lot of people will have been around in philosophy longer than

you have, and generally they'll give you good advice on what's worth reading and what's not. Be prepared to investigate and understand and make your own mind up, because in the end, in philosophy, there's consensus about very few things. In the end, you have to make your own mind up, and when you're making up your mind you'll be best armed to do so if you take into account the thinking of philosophers from a great many traditions. So be prepared to be adventurous—it will benefit you!

Ms Eleanor Gordon-Smith (Princeton University)

I thought relatively little about philosophy as a field or a profession and much more about whatever I happened to be philosophising about at the time. I guess that's the advice I'd give, which echoes what an old adviser of mine, Tom Dougherty, once told me: it's about the work. When you feel distracted or frustrated, try to find your way back to asking what's true about the question at hand.

Associate Professor Agnes Callard (University of Chicago)

I honestly don't [have any advice]. That is, I think that what will be good for students depends on their circumstances. But I can tell you something that I've found through mentoring, something I've thought was appropriate for a number of students, though not all. Recently, I've found that a lot of my students have become more atomized and alienated from one another through the pandemic. We have been back in person for a little while, but what hasn't really come back are student organizations and philosophy clubs, and things like that. Those organizations relied on that hand-down system where the seniors would hand the mantle over to the next group. So the advice could be: find a way to connect with other students and do philosophy together. A view that I have about philosophy (I'm writing a book right now to defend this view) is that it only appears that you could do philosophy by yourself, that it's a bit of an illusion—you actually can't do it by yourself, you need other people. And the earlier you are on your philosophical journey, the more you need those to be living breathing people in the same physical space as you.

Professor Greg Restall (University of St Andrews)

Try and keep it all together. No, I mean, make the best of what you have. Philosophy is an amazing thing in the contemporary university setting where everything is so directed towards career outcomes and things like this. Spending your time in a discipline learning about the creative and the critical and developing your reading and reasoning skills is wonderful and applicable in any kind of workplace. But hey, that's not just propaganda, there is something wonderful about being there for three or however many years of your life that you can spend thinking about important issues, thinking together with a bunch of other people that think that these are really

important things to think about, and to make the time to enjoy that and express yourself and make friends and learn from other people in a kind of context where it's kind of clear you are not just on the sausage-machine thing (where the income is a bunch of creative, bright-eyed young students and the outcome is workers for the contemporary economy). I mean, if you wanna do that, there are plenty of other majors in the university that are much better suited than philosophy. So, enjoy philosophy and make the most of the opportunities that you have to come to grips with the issues that you think are important.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

* Winner of Best Paper

† Winner of Best Paper (Member of an Underrepresented Group in Philosophy)

Thinking About Sex: Pornography and the Intuitive Mind

Bettule Brigitte Assi*

Australian National University

Abstract

Most feminist discourse on the negative impacts of pornography focuses on how pornography impacts the behaviours and views of men. This paper offers an account of pornography that considers its impact on female viewers. Specifically, I discuss how pornography impacts the ways female consumers intuitively think about sex and their sexual roles. I argue that feminists should distance themselves from belief–desire models of action when accounting for certain sexual interactions since belief–desire explanations can be stigmatising. I deploy Elisabeth Camp's work on 'characterisations' and consequently call for investigations into how women characterise sex. I contend that pornographic material deploys certain representations which can construct patriarchal characterisations of sex in consumers. These characterisations then affect how women evaluatively, emotionally, judgmentally, and behaviourally respond to sex. I use Camp's concept of 'perspectivalism' to demonstrate how people adopt pornographic perspectives which come to construct their characterisations of sex.

1. Introduction

Most philosophical accounts that are critical of pornography describe the harm of pornography with reference to its impacts on the behaviours and views of male consumers. The typical argument is as follows: pornography is bad because it makes men act like X and women act like Y; men acting like X and women acting like Y is bad for women. Thus, pornography's 'badness' is that it entices men, and coerces

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* *Bettule Brigitte Assi is an incoming Master's student of philosophy at the Australian National University and recent graduate of the University of Melbourne, holding an Honours degree in philosophy. She researches feminism, social and cognitive construction, phenomenology, and philosophy of mind. She primarily works in the gap between philosophy of mind and feminist philosophy, investigating sex, sexual violence, and gendered structures.*

women, into bad sexual scenarios. Often prominent feminist philosophers discuss this phenomenon in terms of beliefs and desires.[1] To these philosophers, pornography shapes the sexual desires and beliefs of the viewer, socialising them to act in certain ways during sex: men are socialised to act dominantly during sex and women are socialised to act submissively during sex. The assumption made by the socialisation argument is that women come to desire and believe in their sexual submission. My paper resists this argument, contending that sexual actions may have more to do with cognitive structures rather than beliefs and desires.

My work critiques traditional feminist belief–desire models of action as limiting feminists in their capacity to fully understand the extent to which pornography cognitively impacts consumers. I argue that feminists ought to look beyond how pornography alters the *conscious* beliefs and desires of women and look towards how pornography impacts how women *intuitively* think about sex, sexual relations, and their sexual role in a gendered society. Using the work of Elisabeth Camp, I contend that pornography deploys representations of sex that encourage consumers to view sex through certain 'characterisations',[2] thus impacting consumers' evaluative, emotional, judgmental, and behavioural responses towards sex, irrespective of their beliefs and desires. By adopting pornographic 'perspectives' of sex,[3] consumers adopt open-ended dispositions to interpret and form intuitive (and often associative) thoughts of sex that are pornographic. This paper, therefore, contends that sexuality may have less to do with the performance of sexual desire or engendering sexual beliefs and more to do with gendered construction and cognitive representation.

2. Pornography: What is it? Who Watches it?

The discussion on pornography and its social legitimacy has been a hot topic in feminist literature since the 1980s.[4] Feminists including Naomi Wolf, Germaine Greer, and Catherine MacKinnon have discussed pornography's role in women's understandings of sex by arguing that pornography shapes women's sexual desires through socialisation.[5] Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin notably argued against the distribution of pornography, contending that pornography subordinates

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[1] Dworkin, Andrea and Catharine A MacKinnon (1988) *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality*, Organizing Against Pornography, 28–109.

[2] Camp, Elisabeth (2015) 'Logical Concepts and Associative Characterizations', in Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence, eds, *The Conceptual Mind: New Directions in the Study of Concepts*, MIT Press.

[3] Camp, Elisabeth (2019) 'Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of Ultimate Understanding', in Stephen R Grimm, ed, *Varieties of Understanding: New Perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology and Theology*, 24–26.

[4] Fraiman, Susan (1995) 'Catharine MacKinnon and the Feminist Porn Debates', *American Quarterly* **47**, 743–46.

[5] Wolf, Naomi (2012) *Vagina: A New Biography*, Virago, 84–89; Greer, Germaine (2007) *The Whole Woman*, Black Swan; Dworkin and MacKinnon, 61.

women.[6] MacKinnon and Dworkin's work in the 1990s prominently grounded a feminist effort to regulate and scrutinise the pornography industry.[7]

Contemporary debates among feminists are usually concerned with whether pornography could be a useful tool for women's sexual liberation or whether it is an oppressive force, one which keeps women submissive and sexually subservient to men (as contended by, for example, MacKinnon and Dworkin).[8] Catarina Novaes's 'Pornography, Ideology, and Propaganda: Cutting Both Ways',[9] a paper in response to Nancy Bauer's *How to do Things with Pornography*,[10] is an example of feminist arguments from the former camp; Novaes argues that feminists ought to embrace visual pornography[11] and that they ought to advocate for female pornographic directors and producers to encourage sexual discourse to be more female-centred.[12] These philosophical debates usually do not extend beyond how pornography can be used as a shared social resource for good or bad, leaving the discussion of cognitive construction to psychologists. Dworkin and MacKinnon crafted a legal definition of pornography as

> the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women, whether in pictures or in words, that also includes one or more of the following (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities, or (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped, or (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or (v) women are presented in postures of sexual submission, servility or display, or (vi) women's body parts—including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, and buttocks—are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts, or (vii) women are presented as whores by nature, or (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals, or (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.[13]

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[6] Dworkin and MacKinnon, 28–109.

[7] Fraiman, 745–46.

[8] Fraiman, 745–46.

[9] Dutilh Novaes, Catarina (2018) 'Pornography, Ideology, and Propaganda: Cutting Both Ways', *European Journal of Philosophy* **26**.

[10] Bauer, Nancy (2015) *How to Do Things With Pornography*, Harvard University Press.

[11] Though erotica exists as an obvious example of non-visual pornography, this paper is solely focused on visual internet pornography that depicts the sexual role of the female participant as being submissive and objectified.

[12] Dutilh Novaes, 1422–24.

[13] MacKinnon, Catharine A (1986) 'Pornography: Not a Moral Issue', *Women's Studies International Forum* **9**, 63.

MacKinnon contends that pornography heavily influences both female and male sexuality; she argues that these sexualities are socially conditioned.[14] Men are socially conditioned to find the subordination of women to be sexy and women are socially conditioned to find aggressive male sexuality erotic: it is erotic to be sexually subordinated.[15] Both male and female sexual desires are constrained by the masculine point of view, or perspective, of sex, which is heavily influenced by pornography.[16] Male sexuality is thus an expression of power that enforces masculine perspectives of sexuality onto women. Female sexuality is, instead, a response to this expression of power, manifested in the eroticisation of their own sexual submission: women's expression of sexuality is thus obscured by pornography.[17]

Notable in MacKinnon and Dworkin's analysis is their emphasis on how pornography shapes the sexual desires of men and women through socialisation.[18] My paper diverges from the traditional radical feminist project as it aims to distinctly provide a conceptual foundation for discussing the cognitive effects of pornography on the thoughts, actions, and mental processes of people who consume it, without involving analyses of the sexual desires of consumers. By transcending belief–desire models, feminists can contend that sexuality is less to do with sexual desire and more to do with gendered construction and cognitive representation of sexuality, thus broadening the critique of pornography and patriarchal representation.

Content analysis of the most watched internet pornography reveals that over 88% of pornographic scenes involve acts of physical aggression, with 87% of the acts being committed against women, and 70% of the perpetrators being men.[19] Most pornographic videos have been found to 'typify patriarchal constructions of masculinity and femininity'.[20] Despite the existence of counterexamples (e.g., subsets of kink videos that depict subservient men and dominant women or homosexual pornography) the most watched pornographic videos depict heterosexual sex between a submissive woman and a dominating man;[21] this trend is congruous with MacKinnon's description.[22]

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[14] MacKinnon, 65–76.

[15] MacKinnon, 74–76.

[16] MacKinnon, 'Pornography: Not a Moral Issue', 74–76.

[17] Dworkin and MacKinnon, 47, 52, 84–87.

[18] Dworkin and MacKinnon, 32–87.

[19] Bridges, Ana J, *et al*, (2010) 'Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update', *Violence Against Women* **16**, 1065, 1076.

[20] Sun, Chyng, *et al*, (2014) 'Pornography and the Male Sexual Script: An Analysis of Consumption and Sexual Relations', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* **45**, 984.

[21] Bridges, *et al*, 1065, 1076; Sun, *et al*, 983–92; Brown, Jane D and Kelly L L'Engle (2009) 'X-Rated', *Communication Research* **36**, 129–35.

[22] MacKinnon, 63.

As most studies focus on male pornography consumers,[23] with little empirical research done specifically on female viewers,[24] much of the philosophical literature discussing pornography relies on the idea that pornography harms women due to what it does *to* men and their sexual desires. The disproportionately low amount of philosophical work on the impacts of pornography on female consumers is concerning, as pornography has become increasingly more accessible and watched by women and girls.[25] Though there is an increasing number of women and girls accessing online pornographic material,[26] the issue has remained relatively untouched in contemporary philosophy, with few exceptions.[27] Thus, under the current model, the assumption is that pornography impacts women similarly to how it impacts men. That would mean that women sexually desire their own submission and lesser sexual place, just like men desire sexual domination. This assumption, I will demonstrate, stigmatises women's sexuality in ways that encourage patriarchal victim-blaming narratives.

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[23] Meta-analyses indicate that increased exposure to pornography is positively correlated with a higher likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour (such as sex without the use of contraception, unprepared anal sex, and unprotected penetrative sex), endorsement of a sexual hierarchy featuring dominant men and submissive women, greater acceptance of sexual violence, endorsement of rape myths, and higher perpetration of sexual harassment and sexual violence among males: Sun, *et al*, 988–92; Braun-Courville, Debra K and Mary Rojas (2009) 'Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Sites and Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors', *Journal of Adolescent Health* **45**, 160–61; Brown and L'Engle, 144–48; Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg (2006) 'Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material on the Internet', *Communication Research* **33**, 197–201; Häggström-Nordin, *et al*, (2006) '"It's Everywhere!" Young Swedish People's Thoughts and Reflections About Pornography', *Scandinavian Journal of Caring and Public Health Sciences* **20**, 391–92.

[24] Maas, Megan K and Shannamar Dewey (2018) 'Internet Pornography Use Among Collegiate Women: Gender Attitudes, Body Monitoring, and Sexual Behavior', *SAGE Open* **8**.

[25] Sabina, Chiara, Janis Wolak, and David Finkelhor (2008) 'The Nature and Dynamics of Internet Pornography Exposure for Youth', *CyberPsychology & Behavior* **11**, 691, 693.

[26] Specifically for women and girls, pornography consumption is correlated with low self-esteem, increased insecurities related to sexual performance, higher rates of body monitoring, and riskier sexual behaviour: Stewart, Destin N and Dawn M Szymanski (2012) 'Young Adult Women's Reports of Their Male Romantic Partner's Pornography Use as a Correlate of Their Self-Esteem, Relationship Quality, and Sexual Satisfaction', *Sex Roles* **67**, 263–67; Maas and Dewey. The more pornography watched by a person, irrespective of gender, the more likely they are to believe that the pornographic material is reflective of real-world sexual interactions and the more likely they are to recreate what they see in pornography with real-life partners: Tsitsika, Artemis, *et al*, (2009) 'Adolescent Pornographic Internet Site Use: A Multivariate Regression Analysis of the Predictive Factors of Use and Psychosocial Implications', *CyberPsychology & Behavior* **12**, 546–49.

[27] Recent work by Jungyo Lee and Eleonore Neufeld discusses how violent 'gang-rape' pornography impacts beliefs held by female viewers: Lee, Junhyo and Eleanore Neufeld (2022) 'Pornography, Discourse, and Desires', paper under review.

3. Characterising Sex from Pornographic Perspectives: The Cognitive and Behavioural Impacts of Pornography

I will now criticise belief–desire models of action before subsequently discussing how human thoughts are often intuitive, thereby demonstrating that Camp's understanding of characterisations, associative thoughts, and perspectives facilitates a better account of discordant sexual behaviours in women than belief–desire models of action.[28] My aim here is to conceptually ground the following claim: sexuality in gendered societies is not just constituted by sexual beliefs and the performance of sexual desires; rather, there are cognitive thought mechanisms that entice certain sexual behaviours of people, irrespective of that person's held beliefs or desires. Making this claim is an important step in feminist conceptions of sexuality as it will broaden the implications of gendered construction and representation to the realm of cognition and action, demonstrating the interdependent relationship between social and cognitive construction.

3.1 Standard Belief–Desire Models of Intentional Action

In the standard Davidsonian model, action is explained by the combination of belief and desire.[29] This model asserts that action—as opposed to mere behaviour—is intentional, as there is a conceptual connection between the actions, desiderative profile, and beliefs of an agent.[30] Hence, given knowledge of two of those elements, one can infer the third. Consider the following cases of sexual interactions between women and their sexual partners, based on emerging data highlighting the impacts of pornography on the sexual experiences of women: [31]

1. A woman and her partner are having sex. During the act, her partner begins to pull her hair; she knows that this sexually excites her partner. She neither likes nor desires this act, to the point where it turns her off sexually. Irrespective of her personal feelings of desire towards hair pulling, she does not protest, resist, or vocalise any discomfort, she lets them pull her hair.

2. A woman and her husband are beginning to sexually experiment. Her husband expresses that he wants to try anal sex. She does not feel particularly excited by

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[28] Davidson, Donald (2001) *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford University Press, 3–20.

[29] Davidson, 6, 83–102.

[30] Davidson, 14–19, 83–102, 189–204.

[31] This data demonstrated that pornography consumption in women correlates with increased expectations of being hit, choked, and ejaculated on: Maas and Dewey, 'Internet Pornography'. Coerced and unwanted anal and performative oral sex are also common experiences for many women: Marston, C and R Lewis (2014) 'Anal Heterosex Among Young People and Implications for Health Promotion: A Qualitative Study in the UK', *BMJ Open* **4**. Most reported incidents of these kinds of coerced and unwanted sex are described as consensual by the women involved: Peterson, Zoe D and Charlene L Muehlenhard (2007) 'Conceptualizing the "Wantedness" of Women's Consensual and Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences: Implications for How Women Label Their Experiences With Rape', *Journal of Sex Research* **44**, 72–84.

the prospect yet does not want to deprive her husband sexually, so they try it. She doesn't like it and finds it uncomfortable, yet she continues because she believes her husband is enjoying the act.

3. A young woman and her boyfriend are beginning to be sexually active. During their sexual encounters, she allows her boyfriend to do whatever acts he wants and desires, as she enjoys his pleasure. Her desire for him to perform oral sex remains unspoken. She acts unbothered by her lack of orgasm and satisfaction.

These interactions can be described as *unwanted consensual sex* or *unacknowledged non-consensual sex*.[32] These are sexual acts that occur between parties who purport the acts are consensual, even if one or more participant(s) claim they neither wanted nor desired the act. In the first scenario, the woman's actions (not vocalising her dislike for hair-pulling) and her desires (not wanting her hair to be pulled) are known. In the second case, the woman's actions (continuing with uncomfortable anal sex) and her beliefs (that her husband is enjoying the sexual act) are known. In the third case, the young woman's actions (performing sexual acts to please her boyfriend) and her desires (wanting to receive oral sex) are known. According to the Davidsonian belief–desire model, the women in the cases above either (i) hold beliefs regarding the relatively lesser significance of their sexual pleasure and the prospective fulfilment of their desires, thus prioritising their partner's sexual pleasure over their own, or (ii) hold distorted desires and care more about their partner's pleasure than their own.

The belief–desire model available to philosophers would propose those two options as explanations for the sexual experiences described above. Thus, the assumption made by this model is that *bad sex* (that is, sex that emerges from gendered norms in which 'women cannot be equal agents of sexual pursuit, and in which men are entitled to gratification at all costs'),[33] is a function of the explicit beliefs and desires men and women come to hold living under patriarchy. The action of having bad sex is attributed to a combination of the desires and/or beliefs held by the individuals involved. The responsibility for the bad heterosexual sex thus belongs to both the man and the woman, even though she is disenfranchised by the interaction. Her actions become indicative of her desires or purported beliefs. In instances such as these, contending that the actions of women are conceptually connected to their beliefs and desires can facilitate stigmatisation, as the claim 'she acted like X and thus must have desired to act like X or believed that she wanted to act like X' would be justified even when she was disenfranchised by X.

Belief–desire theorists may hope to avoid stigmatisation in accounting for these behaviours and actions by arguing that the actions exhibited by these women are irrational, insofar as they do not promote the desired outcomes that each of these

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[32] Peterson and Muehlenhard, 'Consensual and Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences', 72–75.

[33] Angel, Katherine (2021) *Tomorrow Sex Will Be Good Again: Women and Desire in the Age of Consent*, Verso, 27.

women hold.[34] If the actions of these women are irrational, then we can see these actions as not being the product of women's strongest desires, given their beliefs. That is, the charge of irrationality blocks the inference from actions to one's strongest desire or assumed belief. A problem with arguing that the behaviours exhibited are irrational is that one could reasonably claim that a person is capable of desiring their partner's sexual satisfaction, even more so than their own. Thus, the fulfilment of their partner's sexual satisfaction would be the fulfilment of their desires.[35] In non-sexual contexts, this claim is uncontroversial. For example, person A may desire to do activity X, however, A's child, B, may desire to do activity Y. A and B then do Y, not because A prioritises B's desires over their own, but because A prioritises their own desire to see B happy over their desire to do X. As such, the claim of irrationality would only hold in contexts where one desires their sexual fulfilment more than their partner's sexual fulfilment but acts in a way that preferences their partner's sexual fulfilment over their own.

In the alternative to this failed defence, one could hold, as I do, that the Davidsonian model is incomplete or limited because there are more operative mechanisms to the human mind than just desires and beliefs. Desire has a mind-to-world direction of fit: the mind projects its desires towards the world.[36] Belief, on the other hand, has a world-to-mind direction of fit: the world is conceived and interpreted by the mind.[37] Belief–desire models conceptually divide the available space to account for human action. By accounting for other cognitive processes, we can frame sexual behaviours as complex processes that are not simply indicative of one's beliefs or desires. I will now explore this second option and focus on the effect associative/intuitive thoughts have on the sexual actions of these women and female pornography consumers in general.

3.2 Characterising Sex: Pornography and Thinking about Sex

One of the main underlying questions in this paper is how pornography encourages viewers to think about sex. That is, how does the interdependent relationship between

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[34] Bratman, Michael (1984) 'Two Faces of Intention', *Philosophical Review* **93**, 380–93.

[35] The fulfilment of sexual desire in some instances could be problematic and not indicative that the agent is having good and respectful sex. Amia Srinivasan discusses the conditioning of one's sexual desires, drawing on the case of a woman who desires to have sex with her father who began raping her as a child. As Srinivasan describes, 'her father made her into a creature who wanted it, and now, as an adult, can't stop wanting it—can't, that is, be free of him': Srinivasan, Amia (2021) 'What Does Fluffy Think?', *London Review of Books* **43**. The fulfilment of this woman's desire to have sex with her abusive father would not be an act that promoted the sexual agency of the woman; she is still not sexually free from his abuse. Thus, fulfilment of sexual desire cannot be the only factor determining whether one has sexual agency. The nuances of this however remain outside the scope of this paper.

[36] Davidson, 207–60.

[37] I would contend that MacKinnon's analysis of pornography, discussed earlier, fits the Davidsonian model, insofar as MacKinnon speculates that pornography operates in a world-to-mind direction of fit: pornography socially conditions sexual desire.

cognitive and social construction manifest sexually? Camp contends that human thought is not just logical but often employs representational structures that are intuitive, holistic, and contextually malleable: 'characterisations'.[38] Thus, when one thinks about sex, one cognitively employs a representation that is informed by their operative characterisation of sex.[39] Characterisations attribute a set of features to a particular subject or event and embed those features in a 'multidimensional structure of prominence and centrality'.[40] 'Prominence', here,[41] is similar to what Tversky calls 'salience':[42] a feature's intensity and diagnosticity. A feature is intense to the extent that it has a high 'signal-to-noise ratio';[43] it stands out from the background and is a significant attribute of the subject.[44] A feature is diagnostic to the extent that it is useful for classifying objects as belonging to some shared kind.[45] Thus, salience selects which features matter in a characterisation. On the other hand, centrality determines *how* features matter by connecting features into 'explanatory networks',[46] creating a paradigmatic basis for explaining causal connections between features in a characterisation. Both prominence and centrality are structural ways for a feature to matter to a characterisation.

Characterisations share three additional important features: they are 'informationally, affectively, and experientially rich',[47] they are context-dependent, and agents need not explicitly nor implicitly endorse a characterisation of a subject to hold that characterisation.[48] Characterisations integrate 'as much data as possible into an intuitive' and associative whole.[49] For example, my characterisation of a school nerd includes how they dress, walk, talk, and perform in school, what extracurricular activities they are involved in, their personal life (including their relationships), and my emotional and evaluative responses to those details and the nerd more generally. This is an informationally, experientially, and affectively rich integration of as much data as possible, which in turn forms an intuitive and holistic characterisation of a school nerd: you know a nerd when you see one.

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[38] Camp, 'Logical Concepts', 591.

[39] Camp, 'Logical Concepts', 594–98; Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 27–29.

[40] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 24.

[41] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 37.

[42] Tversky, Amos (1977) 'Features of Similarity', *Psychological Review* **84**, 332–44.

[43] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 20.

[44] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–24.

[45] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19.

[46] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 20.

[47] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 20.

[48] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–20.

[49] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 20.

Characterisations are context-dependent. Literature on intuitive thinking[50] and framing[51] demonstrates that one's intuitive thinking is largely contextually dependent. For example, it may be fitting that school nerds are smart and socially awkward, and these features may play an organising role in my characterisation of nerds. However, I do not use these features as a means of categorising someone as a school nerd; someone can be smart and socially awkward and yet not be categorised as a school nerd. There can be a person who displays features that I take to be 'nerdy' but who does not operate under the same context that would make me characterise them as being a nerd (e.g., a smart person who is not a school student or a smart school student who is also an athlete). Context, here, is constituted by the relevant background features that explain my characterisation of some subjects as belonging to a certain kind.[52]

The characterisation an agent brings to a subject may not be under their voluntary control; said characterisation may be dictated by uncontrolled internal or external factors without an agent willing (or even noticing) the characterisation occurring.[53] An agent can reject a sexist stereotype (such as women being homemakers) yet still consider women to be prominent and central to homemaking. Some philosophers suggest otherwise and argue that an agent only endorses certain features being ascribed to a subject if they believe that the ascription is correct.[54] However, psychological data challenges this argument. For example, people who sincerely believe in anti-racist sentiments may nonetheless implicitly hold negative racial biases.[55] This challenge is congruous with Camp's understanding of characterisations,[56] thereby indicating that agents can hold characterisations of subjects even if they explicitly believe those characterisations are false. What is most important for my purposes is understanding that the emotional, judgmental, and evaluative responses towards some subject or domain (including judgements about that subject or domain's causal structures) influence (and are influenced by) the operative characterisations held by an agent towards that subject or domain.[57]

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[50] Camp, 'Logical Concepts'.

[51] Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman (1981) 'The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice', *Science* **211**, 453, 457–58.

[52] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–23.

[53] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 23.

[54] Ginsborg, Hannah (2011) 'Primitive Normativity and Skepticism About Rules', *Journal of Philosophy* **108**, 239–47.

[55] Jost, John T, *et al,* (2009) 'The Existence of Implicit Bias is Beyond Reasonable Doubt: A Refutation of Ideological and Methodological Objections and Executive Summary of Ten Studies That No Manager Should Ignore', *Research in Organizational Behavior* **29**, 39–42, 63–64; Wilson, Timothy D, Samuel Lindsey, and Tonya Y Schooler (2000) 'A Model of Dual Attitudes', *Psychological Review* **107**, 101–2, 118–21.

[56] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–24.

[57] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 22.

In pornography, sex can occur in a bedroom, a car, a classroom, a basement, a couch, at work, at a hospital, in a jail cell, or in an office. During sex, women can be screaming, crying, laughing, giggling, enjoying themselves, disassociating, or hating. They may be having their hair pulled. They may be hit, punched, slapped, kissed, or groped. As inferred from content analysis, these constituent features of sex are connected in a multidimensional structure that identifies different features as being prominent or central to sex: the submissiveness of women and the dominance of men are highly prominent and central features of sex in pornography,[58] this centrality is why female submission and male domination are paradigmatic bases for explaining causal connections between men's and women's behaviours in pornography. For example, sex occurring on a couch or in a car is neither central nor prominent to how an agent characterises sex. However, sex occurring between a man and a woman—with the women's sexual agency remaining unacknowledged—may be highly salient and central to how an agent characterises sex. I argue that this demonstrates, simply, that pornography deploys certain representations of sex that come to create certain characterisations of sex in its viewers.

Importantly, judgements about these causal connections are context-dependent. They depend on factors such as the individual consumer's experience, their current operative characterisations, and the genre of pornography being consumed.[59] However, the scaffolding supporting pornography's representations of sex is patriarchal, providing the foundation for masculine conceptions of sex in which women are considered sexually subservient to men.[60] Thus, the representations of sex and gendered relations depicted prominently in pornography centrally endorse patriarchal ideals and imagery. An individual consumer of pornographic content need not endorse the specific representations of sex presented to them by the material. Agents can outright reject, be disgusted, or be turned off by pornography yet still carry patriarchal characterisations of sex caused by viewing pornographic and patriarchal material.[61]

3.3 Characterisations, Associative Thoughts, and Behaviour

The thought patterns underpinning characterisations are fundamentally *associative*. Characterisations cluster features and dispositions and embed them in structures of prominence and centrality, which in turn associate those features and dispositions as

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[58] Bridges, *et al*, 1074–81; Sun, *et al*, 988–92.

[59] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–24.

[60] Bridges, *et al*, 1074–81; Sun, *et al*, 988–92.

[61] It is worth noting that the advent of pornography coincides with increased female sexual agency. Women today have comparatively more sexual agency than women five decades ago, even though there is much more pornography today than five decades ago. The question I am considering is not so much 'Are women today more likely to speak up and ensure that their sexual agency is respected than in the past?' but rather 'Are women today in pornography-saturated societies less likely to speak up and ensure that their sexual agency is respected, compared to women today if there was no such pornography-saturation?'

fitting of a represented subject. Associative thought consists of a variety of dispositions,[62] thus functioning similarly to what psychologists call stereotypes or 'prototypes'.[63] Associative thinking facilitates how one acts given their characterisation of certain subjects, as their behavioural responses become implicated in their overall intuitive responses to those characterisations.[64] Characterisation is a way of conceptualising a particular reference, a way that actively primes certain ways of reasoning, emotionally responding, and acting in relation to that reference.[65] Therefore, if one's characterisations of sex are partially formed by pornographic representations, their dispositions and actions towards sex also become partially impacted, as the way one intuitively thinks about a subject affects how one behaves towards that subject in a certain context.[66]

In most pornographic scenes, the sexual role of the woman is represented as being sexually subservient and submissive, a person whose desires are not acknowledged by the dominant man.[67] The woman's submissiveness and sexual objectification are both central and prominent in the interaction, generating a concrete image of sex deployed in most pornographic material. These concrete images play an important role in associative thinking: they facilitate the rapid recognition of a subject's fittingness as belonging to a certain kind.[68] The feminine sexual role becomes associatively linked with sexual submission and subservience, as women fit the submissive role; submissiveness and subservience to men become central and prominent to female sexuality. Thus, consumer characterisations of sexual interactions are primed by pornography and how pornography associates the sexual purposes of both female and male sexuality. Female consumers may thus involuntarily or unknowingly create and hold patriarchal characterisations of sex that associate their sexual role as being submissive, subservient, and objectified, even if they consciously endorse egalitarian views of sex. Considering the examples presented in §3.1, these associative and intuitive characterisations may then facilitate desire-harming and belief-discordant actions in some women when primed in sexual contexts.

As discussed earlier, belief–desire models of action cannot properly account for the phenomenon of unwanted consensual sex, as such models assume that women's actions are intentional and indicative of their conscious beliefs and desires. However, many women report, despite knowing their desires and believing that their sexual pleasure is just as important as their partners, that they still participate in unwanted

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[62] Evans, Jonathan St B T Evans (2008) 'Dual-Processing Accounts of Reasoning, Judgment, and Social Cognition', *Annual Review of Psychology* **59**, 255–58, 270–71.

[63] Rosch, Eleanor (1978) 'Principles of Categorization', in Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B Lloyd, eds, *Cognition and Categorization*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 27–29.

[64] Camp, 'Logical Concepts', 601–14; Jost, *et al*, 39–42, 63–64.

[65] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–26.

[66] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–24.

[67] Bridges, *et al*, 1074–81; Sun, *et al*, 988–92; Brown and L'Engle, 139–48.

[68] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19–24.

sexual activity.[69] Thus, belief–desire models fail to fully account for the complicated relationship women have with their sexual role in a gendered society. Characterisations allow us to consider that women can hold certain beliefs and desires towards sex while also holding characterisations towards sex that are in tension with those beliefs and desires. However, characterisations are only a piece of the puzzle in investigating the full impact of pornography on people's thoughts and behaviours. Following Camp, to account for how pornographic representations guide an agent's characterisation of sex, we must consider an agent's perspective on sex.

3.4 Generating Characterisations from Perspectives

Characterisations are seldom isolated. Agents have default proclivities to form certain characterisations of subjects.[70] Camp describes these proclivities as being perspectives:

> open-ended dispositions to interpret, and specifically to produce intuitive structures of thoughts about, or *characterizations* of, particular subjects.[71]

Ultimately, perspectives are tools for thinking; they produce and structure an agent's intuitive thoughts and characterisations of certain subjects.[72] Perspectives structure an agent's intuitive patterns of attention, responses, and explanations towards certain subjects, not just an agent's propositional attitudes towards those subjects.[73] Perspectives contain the same 'intuitive implementational aspect' of the characterisations they generate.[74] That is, perspectives come to form the type of intuitive thoughts that make up an agent's characterisations. Perspectives have two main features. First, they are intuitive and open-ended dispositions towards certain subjects.[75] Second, they generate characterisations of certain subjects.[76] These features allow perspectives to determine which information, feelings, and images agents attribute to certain subjects. Perspectives determine what features an agent tends to notice, the explanatory connections an agent makes, and the emotional and evaluative responses an agent tends to have to particular subjects.[77] Most importantly, perspectives structure these responses to subjects in cognitively intuitive ways, leading an agent to form certain evaluative, emotional, judgmental, and behavioural responses to those subjects.[78]

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[69] Peterson and Muehlenhard, 77–84.

[70] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 19, 23.

[71] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 18–19.

[72] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 18–19, 24–28.

[73] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 24–28.

[74] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 25.

[75] Camp, Elisabeth (2017) 'Perspectives in Imaginative Engagements With Fiction', *Philosophical Perspectives* **31**, 77–79.

[76] Camp, 'Perspectives in Imaginative Engagements', 77–79.

[77] Camp, 'Perspectives and Frames', 24–28.

[78] Camp, 'Perspectives in Imaginative Engagements', 77–79, 84–95.

Perspectives, applied to pornography, would determine which features of pornography agents tend to notice and agents' emotional and evaluative responses to those features and determine what information, feelings, and images agents attribute to sex. Adopting a pornographic perspective of sex is thus not just adopting a certain representation of sex. It is adopting a certain disposition to what sex *is*, how one should *feel* about it, and how one *responds* to sexual situations.

As perspectives are open-ended dispositions to interpret and produce intuitive thoughts about subjects, an important feature of perspectives is that they can be understood and adopted by other people. For example, when sharing a piece of information with someone I know well, I can predict and anticipate how they will respond to the new information—as well as how they will assimilate this information into their broader and existing frameworks about the subject—by understanding or adopting their perspective on the subject. If I understand that my mother is afraid of sharks and I tell her about a recent shark attack close to her home, I can anticipate that she will be fearful and might exclaim that we should not go swimming near her home. Her perspective on sharks is something I intuitively understand. If all the information I had concerning sharks came from my mother, I may begin to respond to sharks with fear; I may adopt her perspective on sharks. My perspective on sharks can change as I have new experiences with—and information about—sharks that I had not considered previously. This would change how I interpret and respond to sharks in the future. The way that I interpret, respond to, and construct characterisations of certain subjects can be impacted by the different perspectives I temporarily or permanently adopt, even if these perspectives are not my own.

However, it is difficult to determine whether an agent is operating with a perspective that is their own or whether they have adopted their perspective from someone else.[79] Applied to pornography, it is difficult to determine whether an agent who consumes abusive pornography and thinks that it is sexy is operating with their own perspective or a pornographic perspective that they have adopted. The open-ended nature of perspectives makes it difficult to identify and individuate sameness and difference. Consequently, it becomes difficult to determine when an agent is operating with a perspective that is their own or adopted. In the case of pornography, empirical data shows that people who regularly watch pornography are more likely to believe that pornography is representative of the real world and are more likely to recreate what they see with (or on) real-life partners.[80] I thus grant that at least some pornography consumers adopt pornographic perspectives which would differ from their own—had they not consumed pornography—when thinking about sex and sexual relations. These adopted perspectives eventually influence the consumer's intuitions about which features of sex are central to the act of sex itself and how they respond to those features. Consumers can adopt pornographic perspectives of sex and then generate

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[79] Camp, 'Perspectives in Imaginative Engagements', 74.
[80] Tsitsika, *et al*, 546–49; Sun, *et al*, 988–92.

characterisations of sex that inform how they interpret and respond to sexual situations in the real world. When consumers adopt a pornographic perspective of sex, their evaluative, emotional, judgmental, and behavioural responses to pornography bleed into their evaluative, emotional, judgmental, and behavioural responses to sex in real life.

Consumers who adopt pornographic perspectives come to know their way about the pornographic worlds they engage with. They begin to know how to extrapolate the base-level facts being offered to them about the domain of sex, how to respond to information in pornography as it presents itself, and how to navigate the information they already know about the domain of sex. Adopting a pornographic perspective means an agent gains intuitive insight into the world pornography is offering and can anticipate, expect, evaluate, and emotively respond to particular information being presented. For example, a person who engages in watching non-consensual pornography may come to a new pornographic video within that category, in which a man and a woman are sitting on the couch. If the viewer has adopted some pornographic dispositions and perspectives, they will anticipate that the man will want to have sex with the woman, that the woman will not want to have sex with the man, that the man will force himself onto the woman, that the woman secretly likes what is happening to her and, most importantly, that what is happening is *sexy*. The consumer responds to the initial information given (a man and a woman sitting on a couch), evaluates this scene, and responds with an extrapolation or anticipation of the scenes to follow. Consumers intuitively understand what is happening in pornography, why it is happening, and how they should feel about it.

Remembering Dworkin and MacKinnon's argument (that pornography socialises sexuality) [81] my analysis provides a cognitive framework for conceptualising how socialisation manifests in the pornography consumer. Rather than arguing that one's desires become pornographically conditioned, I contend that people adopt certain perspectives and dispositions which come to generate pornographic characterisations of sex. The behavioural result is more or less the same under both models: women act submissively and men act dominantly during sex. The utility of my argument, however, is that it provides philosophers with a robust discussion about how desire-hindering and discordant behaviours can manifest in sexual situations without automatically implicating the harmed participants' beliefs or desires. Under my model, someone's beliefs and desires do not need to be affected in order for a subject to act in some way; sexuality is less to do with sexual desire, or purported belief, and more to do with gendered structures and cognitive representation. However, this does not mean that the characterisations an agent holds towards a subject or domain cannot affect their desires and beliefs; I contend that characterisations do affect desires and beliefs. What distinguishes my model is that it does not rely on one's beliefs or desires

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[81] Dworkin and MacKinnon, 61.

to be conditioned, a distinction from how traditional and radical feminists conceptualise the socialisation process.

Philosophers who discuss the role pornography has on different sociological and behavioural phenomena, such as unwanted consensual sex, ought to do so in ways that neither stigmatise nor victim-blame the disenfranchised party. Belief–desire models, as they currently stand, cannot offer philosophers the means to do so. However, by supplementing the analysis with a discussion on perspectives and characterisations, feminists have a new way of accounting for some women's behavioural tendencies during sexual interactions with male partners. Returning to §3.1, consider the following case again.

> A woman and her partner are having sex. During the act, her partner begins to pull her hair; she knows that this sexually excites her partner. She neither likes nor desires this act, to the point where it turns her off sexually. Irrespective of her personal feelings of desire towards hair pulling, she does not protest, resist, or vocalise any discomfort, she lets them pull her hair.

The woman in this example has a clear grasp of her sexual desires; she doesn't like her hair being pulled. Her belief that her partner likes hair-pulling does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that she must also hold beliefs about the relatively lesser significance of her sexual pleasure and fulfilment of desire. However, if this woman's characterisation of sex and her role in sex is informed by patriarchal and/or pornographic representations of sex, then her action of not resisting or vocalising discomfort is consistent with her represented role. Her characterisations of sex generate sexually subservient actions that *fit* her gendered role.

4. Conclusion

I have presented a new way of thinking about the role pornography plays in how people conceptualise, and have, sex. However, the contributions of this paper are preliminary. The broader social implications of pornographic representations of sex and their impact on consumers remain outside the scope of this paper. though I have given a new account of how pornography impacts individual consumers—with special consideration to its effect on women—I also want to nod to possible remedies. These remedies include accurate sexual education resources that focus on female pleasure and promote informed consent, the fulfilment of all parties' desires, and respectful and equal participation during sexual interactions. Due to my explanation endorsing social-cognitive constructivist models, the issue of bad sex and sexual inequality is considered an issue of the public world, not the private. The onus of bad sex is thus not individualised; bad sex is a social condition.

Additionally, the promotion of shared sexual resources that have an emphasis on shared pleasure may help women to construct sexual thoughts which prioritise respectful and healthy sex, encouraging women to vocalise their discomforts and needs. Absent from my discussion are the several moral and epistemic implications

surrounding the questions pornography poses. Living within patriarchal social structures would entice most agents to form patriarchal characterisations of sex, gender, and women, even if these agents do not consume pornography. The next question is *what do we do now*? Is all sex under patriarchy problematic? Is all sex influenced by pornographic characterisations wrong? These questions remain outside the scope of this paper, however, they are questions I nevertheless believe are important to ask. MacKinnon and Dworkin's mission to censor and restrict the use of pornography largely failed due to the vast expansion of internet pornography. Thus, in trying to solve the issue of bad sex, feminists will have to look towards other solutions, such as comprehensive sexual education, the distribution of health-based sexual resources, and feminist-led consciousness-raising. There have been many other propositions by feminists for bettering our sexuality and capacity for sexual expression and agency. Though I do not discuss these remedies and propositions extensively in this paper, I aim to do so in future work.

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Colyvan's Dilemma: Inconsistency, Theoretic Virtues, and Scientific Practice

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Abstract

Mark Colyvan formulates a puzzle about belief in inconsistent entities. As a scientific realist, Colyvan refers to salient instances of inconsistencies in our best science and demonstrates how an indispensability argument may justify belief in an inconsistent entity. Colyvan's indispensability argument presents a two-horned dilemma: either scientific realists are committed to the possibility of warranted belief in inconsistent objects, or we have a *reductio ad absurdum*, bringing realism into a crisis. Firstly, this paper follows Graham Priest by opposing the received characterisation of inconsistent belief as a kind of epistemic hell. Secondly, I challenge the Quinean naturalism that underpins Colyvan's indispensability argument. Then, I reformulate Colyvan's argument with a fallible naturalism, better equipped to account for certain problem candidates for inconsistent entities. Finally, I contend that—even if indispensable—an inconsistent entity poses no problem for the scientific realist, who can have justified belief in inconsistent entities.

1. Introduction

1.1 Indispensability Arguments

Scientific realists look to our best scientific theories to determine what should be taken to exist. Following Mark Colyvan, this stance can be understood as the view that we are justified in believing in all, and only, those entities indispensable to our best

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science.[1] This premise is the foundation for indispensability arguments, which have been used to justify belief in entities that are not observable, particularly those entities like electrons, which some anti-realists remain agnostic about.[2] Mathematical entities are also posited in the theorems of our best science; this has controversially motivated indispensability arguments for mathematical realism, notably, by Quine, Putnam, and Colyvan.[3]

In light of the significant inconsistent entities that have featured in our best science at certain historical periods—such as the infinitesimal posited by the early calculus and Bohr's model of the hydrogen atom—an indispensability argument ('IndA') can be made for belief in inconsistent entities, in our best science (what I will call 'IndA$_{io}$').[4] Moreover, Colyvan points towards contemporary examples of inconsistency in modern physics, such as the theory of waves in the open ocean and the inconsistencies between relativity and quantum mechanics, to explore whether we can have justification for believing in an inconsistent state of affairs.[5] We can reformulate IndA$_{io}$ as follows:

> (P1) We have justified belief in all and only the entities that are indispensable to our best scientific theories.
>
> (P2) Inconsistent entities are indispensable to our best scientific theories.
>
> (C) We have justified belief in inconsistent entities.

1.2 The Pressure of the Puzzle

Colyvan's conclusion may seem absurd: it seems to move towards a stranger and more uncomfortable dialetheic territory (where dialetheism refers to the position that there are some contradictions that are true). However, for Colyvan, we may treat the argument as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the premise. Importantly, Colyvan emphasises that scientific realists (like himself) must either (i) welcome a scientific realism that is willing to accept that we may be justified in believing an inconsistent state of affairs, or (ii) accept that it could never be rational to make such an affirmation and, consequently, give up on scientific realism.

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[1] Colyvan, Mark (2008) 'The Ontological Commitments of Inconsistent Theories', *Philosophical Studies* **141**, 115.

[2] Most notably, the constructive empiricist Bas van Fraassen (1980) in *The Scientific Image*, Clarendon Press, 204. Also see Antunes, Henrique (2018) 'On Existence, Inconsistency, and Indispensability', *Principia: An International Journal of Epistemology*, **22**, 8–30.

[3] Quine, W V (1986) *Theories and Things*, Harvard University Press, 148–55; Putnam, Hilary (1971/2013) *Philosophy of Logic,* Routledge; Colyvan, Mark (2001), *The Indispensability of Mathematics*, Oxford University Press.

[4] For the purposes of this paper, these may be entities that are described as inconsistent internally within the theory, or entities that are described inconsistently by two theories of our best science.

[5] Colyvan, 'Ontological Commitments', 116.

The dilemma that follows from the *reductio* is, therefore, unsurprising. *Reductio* arguments imply that we ought to reject a given premise because it entails an untenable conclusion. Typically, *reductio* arguments demonstrate, firstly, that the premise entails a contradiction and secondly, that from the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC), the premise is untenable. However, Colyvan's dilemma is precisely the kind of puzzle that demands a re-evaluation of the authority of LNC. It forces us to evaluate whether there is, in fact, a case where we *can* have a justified belief in a contradictory state of affairs (dialetheia).

1.3 Roadmap for the Paper

In this paper, I will respond to two arguments contending the absurdity of a belief in a contradictory state of affairs. The first is the logical problem of 'explosion' and the second is an inductive argument for consistency as a necessary or law-like feature of the world. Against these two compelling cases, I defend the possibility of a justified belief in contradictory states of affairs. I call this thesis the *Provisional Lemma for Justified Inconsistent Belief* (PLJIB): we can have justified belief in inconsistent entities where the virtues of our best (but inconsistent) science trump the virtue of consistency. The PLJIB challenges the LNC and defends the possibility of justified inconsistent belief beneath the framework of Colyvan's IndA$_{io}$.

In light of some problem examples, this thesis is not sufficient to resolve Colyvan's dilemma. Building on this provisional defence of Colyvan's conclusion stated above, I will defend the view that we ought *only* to believe in the entities of our best science, that we are justified in interpreting *realistically*. That is, some of our best scientific theories are not good candidates for realistic interpretation. Therefore, whilst some of our best science is inconsistent, such theories usually ought not to be interpreted realistically. However, I also demonstrate that a realistic interpretation is appropriate in some inconsistent cases. In this paper, I focus on two examples of inconsistent theories that have featured in our best science to show that although not all scientific practice is aimed towards truth it may nonetheless be evaluated against some other (perhaps empirical) goal. Therefore, (P1) of Colyvan's IndA$_{io}$ ought to be altered in light of my Resolving Thesis (RT): the realist ought only to believe in the entities of our best science *which we are justified in interpreting realistically*.

In §2, I provide an account of the theoretical virtues, which play two roles in this essay. Firstly, defending the PLJIB, the account reveals that the scientific practice of theory construction (and assessment) categorises consistency as merely one virtue among others, rather than as a necessary condition for what could be considered our best science. Additionally, (as discussed later in §5), I contend that we can begin our assessment of whether a theory ought to be interpreted realistically or merely instrumentally by appealing to the scientific virtues.

In §3 and §4, I evaluate two objections to the PLJIB, one logical and one *a posteriori*. In §5, I focus upon (P1) of Colyvan's IndA$_{io}$, and the principles of naturalism and

confirmational holism that underpin Colyvan's argument. I contend that Quinean naturalism plays an enthymematic role leaving the IndA$_{io}$ open to worrying counterexamples.[6] In §6, I reformulate (P1) of IndA$_{io}$ in light of the limitations of Quinean naturalism and test the new indispensability argument against two of the strongest salient historical candidates for justified belief in an inconsistent entity. I conclude that given the strong support for the PLJIB and RT, one should be open to belief in inconsistency (though not in a great number of cases).

2. The Theoretical Virtues and the Virtue of Consistency

2.1 Scientific Virtues

The PLJIB holds that we can have a justified belief in an inconsistent state of affairs. Before I consider two objections to the PLJIB, it is helpful to understand how our best science can be inconsistent and to provide an account of the theoretical virtues (which we will draw upon in §5). The assessment and confirmation of scientific theories are guided by — and make reference to — certain qualities. These qualities are conceptually understood as theoretical virtues. The adoption of the concept of 'virtues' appropriately signifies that the criteria of assessment are not categorical rules nor conditions that a theory must fulfil, but rather goals that can stand independently of, and even in tension with one another. McMullin offers a helpful account of theoretical virtues in 'The Virtues of a Good Theory'.[7] McMullin's account includes empirical fit, explanatory power, internal coherence, simplicity, optimality, consistency, consilience, fertility, and durability.[8] If science (as a common enterprise) is aimed at success, it seems that success is to produce theories that optimise the scientific virtues.

As emphasised by van Fraassen and affirmed by Maddy, the debate between scientific realists and anti-realists turns upon a different account of the '*telos* of scientific activity'.[9] Scientific practice is organised and aimed at achieving certain goals; if the assessment and confirmation of scientific theories are evaluated with reference to the theoretical virtues then we ought to expect that the *telos* of scientific practice would be inextricably connected to the theoretical virtues. Generally, scientific realists characterise the goal of scientific activity as giving a true description of the world, whilst anti-realists are concerned with the instrumental goals of scientific activity. This debate, perhaps unsurprisingly, manifests in a different account of the scientific virtues, their relation to each other, and whether they are truth-conducive.[10] For instance, constructive empiricists (members of a significant, scientific anti-realist school of thought) consider empirical fit to be the primary virtue of scientific practice

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[6] An enthymeme is a concealed premise not explicitly stated in an argument.

[7] McMullin.

[8] McMullin.

[9] Maddy, Penelope (2022) *A Plea for Natural Philosophy: And Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, 50; van Fraassen, Bastiaan C (2015) 'Naturalism in Epistemology', in Richard N Williams and Daniel N Robinson, eds, *Scientism: The New Orthodoxy*, Bloomsbury Academic, 70.

[10] That is, virtues that are conducive to producing true, or approximately true, theories.

(cast within the semantic view of theories that formulates it as 'empirical adequacy').[11] For constructive empiricists the other virtues are subservient; not necessarily truth-conducive, but justified in their theoretical utility.[12]

2.2 Consistency as a Virtue

If consistency is just one virtue among others, an inconsistent theory's virtues might combine to such a level of excellence that the virtue of consistency is trumped and the theory becomes our best science. At a first glance, the positioning of consistency as a theoretical virtue, therefore, has a troubling implication. This implication subverts the received view: that inconsistent beliefs would place us in an 'epistemic hell'.[13] This received view has consistency in a ruling position over the other theoretical virtues. Consistency is often treated as a necessary condition for a coherent system of beliefs,[14] not as merely a virtue. However, this received view is perhaps an overzealous application of Aristotle's LNC in his search for essential, universal, and primitive principles on which to base his *scientia*.[15] A robust defence of the PLJIB requires one to acknowledge the compelling arguments that have been formulated in defence of the LNC. Many of these arguments have been untangled and rejected in Priest, along with Colyvan and Bueno,[16] but I will consider two of particular significance for this paper: one logical and one *a posteriori*.

3 First Objection to PLJIB

3.1 Ex Contradictione Quodlibet

Classical logic is *explosive*: any proposition can be derived from a contradiction ($A \land \neg A$). It seems—at least *prima facie*—that the realist cannot coherently commit to both PLJIB and the restrictive injunction of (P1) in IndA$_{io}$ to believe *only* in those entities

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[11] van Fraassen construes empirical fit in this way: van Fraassen, Bas C (1980) *The Scientific Image*, Clarendon Press.

[12] van Fraassen, 'Naturalism in Epistemology', 87. For a helpful summary of the distinction between the epistemic and pragmatic use of theoretical virtues see Otávio Bueno and Scott A Shalkowski: Bueno, Otávio and Scott A Shalkowski (2015) 'Modalism and Theoretical Virtues: Toward an Epistemology of Modality', *Philosophical Studies* **172**, 674.

[13] Bueno, Otávio (2006) 'Why Inconsistency Isn't Hell: Making Room for Inconsistency in Science', in Erik J Olsson, ed, *Knowledge and Inquiry: Essays on the Pragmatism of Isaac Levi*, Cambridge University Press, 70.

[14] Bueno, 70.

[15] Aristotle (1994) *Posterior Analytics*, Jonathan Barnes, trans, Oxford University Press, 73a24–7; and for further elaboration see Anstey: Anstey, Peter (2022) 'Principles in Early Modern Philosophy and Science', in Dana Jalobeanu and Charles T Wolfe, eds, *Encyclopedia of Early Modern Philosophy and the Sciences*, Springer.

[16] Priest, Graham (1998) 'What is so Bad About Contradictions?', *Journal of Philosophy* **95**; Bueno, Otávio and Mark Colyvan (2004) 'Logical Non-Apriorism and the "Law" of Non-Contradiction', in Graham Priest, JC Beall, and Bradley Armour-Garb, eds, *The Law of Non-Contradiction: New Philosophical Essays*, Oxford University Press.

indispensable to our best science. C I Lewis' proof demonstrates that the hypothesis of a contradiction entails some arbitrary proposition B:

1. A ∧ ¬A

2. A (Follows from (1) by and elimination).

3. A ∨ B (Follows from (2) by or introduction).

4. ¬A (Follows from (1) by and elimination).

5. B (Follows from (3) and (4) by disjunctive syllogism).

This is known as *ex contradictione quodlibet* (ECQ) and its content is often presented as:

$$A, \neg A \vDash B$$

Under classical logic, the PLJIB appears untenable for the realist. Nonetheless, there are two plausible responses for the realist to avoid 'explosion', both of which I will outline briefly.

3.2 Inferential Quarantining and 'Chunk and Permeate'

Firstly, the realist can avoid ECQ and coherently support both the PLJIB and (P1) by making a distinction between logical entailment, and rationally justified inference practices. A relevant point, suggested by Michael (although he would disagree with the conclusions of this paper), is that theorists do not merely draw every inference that can be logically deduced within a theory.[17] For example, even in a consistent theory, there is no good reason to infer all the valid conjuncts of an accepted proposition. It simply isn't helpful for a theorist to develop valid inferences of the sort:

$$A \vDash A \land A,$$

$$A \vDash A \land A \land A, \text{ or}$$

$$A \vDash A \land A \land A \land A$$

ad infinitum.

Given inconsistent propositions, we may be rationally justified in avoiding certain kinds of inferences that, although logically implied by the theory, are of the form set out in ECQ.

Though the connection has not been made by either Priest or Michael, in my assessment, this resistance to explosive inferences has been formalised into what

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Priest calls an 'inferential strategy',[18] namely, his 'Chunk and Permeate'.[19] For Priest, theorists dealing with an inconsistent theory can operate by separating the theory into multiple, discrete 'chunks' that are internally consistent. That is, theorists inferentially 'quarantine' the would-be-conjuncts of a would-be-contradiction into a number of chunks; each chunk is self-consistent.[20] A limited amount of information can then permeate from one chunk to another, meaning the consistent chunks are not explosive (i.e., they do not entail every proposition). Following a Chunk and Permeate strategy, Colyvan may be able to rationally justify an inconsistent belief by avoiding certain inferences that would trivialise the theory.

However, avoidance strategies leave Colyvan open to criticism. Even if Colyvan refuses to explicitly make certain inferences implied from his theory, a critic of Colyvan's position could make that inference. Take, for example, a debate between a realist, committed to classical logic (who takes some contradictory propositions to be true) and an anti-realist. The anti-realist would point out that the realist's position is untenable, referring to ECQ and simply asking the realist if their position logically entails every proposition. A realist must concede that their theory entails explosion and can consequently only justify this position by affirming that they refuse to believe everything their theory logically entails. With this resolution likely being unsatisfying for a realist, I will now turn to a more promising approach.

3.3 Paraconsistent Logic

Another approach—as pointed out by Colyvan—is to give up on classical logic and take on a paraconsistent logic.[21] A logic is paraconsistent if, and only if, its logical consequence relation is not explosive. Whilst Quine insisted that to change the logic was to 'change the subject',[22] a serious commitment to naturalism suggests we ought to abandon classical logic *before* we give up on our best science. If our classical logic cannot accommodate belief in an inconsistent entity indispensable to our best science, naturalists would be better served by taking on a logic that serves their project better. In fact, as has been argued by Priest, misperceptions about the aggrandised status and history of classical logic are rife and, on the other hand, contemporary research into, and developments in, paraconsistent logics have blossomed.[23] Each logic encapsulates a substantial metaphysical and/or semantic theory and, perhaps, we ought to give up

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[18] Priest, Graham, Koji Tanaka, and Zach Weber (2022) 'Paraconsistent Logic', in Edward N Zalta, ed, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

[19] Brown, Bryson and Graham Priest (2004) 'Chunk and Permeate, a Paraconsistent Inference Strategy. Part I: The Infinitesimal Calculus', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* **33**; Brown, M Bryson and Graham Priest (2015) 'Chunk and Permeate II: Bohr's Hydrogen Atom', *European Journal for Philosophy of Science* **5**; Benham, Richard, Chris Mortensen, and Graham Priest (2014) 'Chunk and Permeate III: The Dirac Delta Function', *Synthese* **191**.

[20] Priest, Graham (2006) 'What Is Philosophy?', *Philosophy* **81**, 206.

[21] Colyvan, 'Ontological Commitments'.

[22] Priest, 'What Is So Bad About Contradictions?', 416.

[23] Priest, Tanaka, and Weber; Priest, 'What Is So Bad About Contradictions?'; Priest, Graham (2005) *Doubt Truth to be a Liar*, Oxford University Press.

on the classical assumption that truth and falsity in an interpretation are exclusive and exhaustive.[24]

As noted above, paraconsistent logic is defined by the minimum requirement—to not have an explosive consequence relation.[25] The scientific realist, however, requires a far more discriminating logic than this minimum condition for paraconsistency. The realist requires a condition that will fit their purpose to believe in *all* and *only* those entities indispensable to our best science. Like Colyvan, I will not specify the paraconsistent logic suitable for this purpose; investigations of this sort are outside of this paper's scope. Nevertheless, I emphasise that adopting a fit-for-purpose paraconsistent logic removes the explosive consequence of belief in an inconsistent state of affairs under classical logic. If this can be done, we have a response to the logical problem of ECQ.[26]

4. Second Objection to the PLJIB: *A Posteriori* Justification

4.1 Case for a Consistent World and the Problem of Occlusion

Aside from the logical problem for the PLJIB, it is important to recognise an *a posteriori* case for justifying the received commitment to the LNC. One might infer that the empirical evidence for consistency in the world gives tenable grounds for consistency as a necessary feature of the world.[27] If the world is consistent per se, there could be no warrant for belief in an inconsistent state of affairs. Of course, this inference may have some important issues. First, consider Priest's commentary on the 'problem of occlusion' raised by Beall.[28] Beall challenges the strong empirical evidence for consistency in our perceivable world by introducing the concern as to whether our cognitive or perceptual mechanisms preclude the possibility of perceiving an inconsistent state of affairs. Beall wonders whether we are wearing, (to put it metaphorically) consistency lenses that pick out a given worldly state of affairs—either A, or ¬A—and never both. However, as Priest rightly recognises, there doesn't seem to be any empirical evidence for such a cognitive or perceptual-consistency-conforming feature.[29] Moreover, there is evidence that we do in fact have the capacity to perceive an inconsistent state of affairs, as evoked by illusory representations of impossible figures.

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[24] Priest, 'What Is So Bad About Contradictions?', 415–16.

[25] Priest, Tanaka, and Weber.

[26] There are costs to taking on paraconsistent logic. However, whilst a paraconsistent logic may have its weaknesses, and in some respects be less intuitive, I contend that this price may be worth paying in order to defend scientific realism.

[27] The evidence indicates that we never perceive an actual inconsistency in the world. Although we might perceive an inconsistency, like that which will be introduced in Figure 1, there is other good empirical evidence that this perception is merely an illusion. For further discussion, see Priest: Priest, *Doubt Truth to Be a Liar*, 60–70.

[28] Priest, *Doubt Truth to Be a Liar*, 60–70. Beall himself doesn't take on this terminological tag: Beall, JC (2000) 'Is the Observable World Consistent?', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* **78**.

[29] Priest, *Doubt Truth to Be a Liar*, 63.

4.2 Penrose Stairs

Priest appeals to imagistic representations of impossible states of affairs to demonstrate that we can perceive impossible states of affairs. Figure 1 is a creation by Oscar Reutersvärd, published by Roger Penrose (such stairs are now called Penrose stairs). It is important to recognise that the picture is not a veridical representation of an impossible state of affairs but merely a drawing that utilises artifice to disguise its tricks and fool us into perceiving a contradiction.
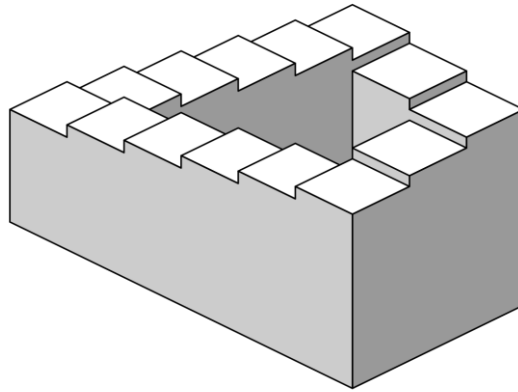

Figure 1. Penrose Stairs.

Looking at the figure, if we choose a given corner, we perceive that climbing the stairs in ascension will lead us back to the same place. In this way, we are perceiving something that is both higher than itself and not higher than itself: both A and ¬A.[30] The perceptual experience of both conjuncts gives us reason to suppose, contra Beall, that we do not have a consistency-limited perceptual or cognitive structure. This is not to say that the representation *is* an instance of a contradictory state of affairs; rather, it is only a trick upon our perception. The contradictions that Priest himself takes to be true seem all to arise in the 'unobservable' realm, including semantics, set theory, and instantaneous change.[31]

4.3 Fallibilism About a Consistent World

An *a posteriori* case for the consistency of the world is not sufficient for asserting an *a priori* LNC, it merely justifies the use of consistency as one theoretical virtue among others. It would be irrational to treat the apparent consistency of the world as an infallible thesis. On the contrary, I suggest that Naturalists ought to remain epistemically open to the possibility of evidence for inconsistent states of affairs and be ready to believe in inconsistent objects as the evidence directs. Science has

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[30] Although this account could be contested, here I follow Priest's compelling interpretation: Priest, *Doubt Truth to Be a Liar*, 60.

[31] Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber (2022) 'Dialetheism', in Edward N Zalta and Uri Nodelman, eds, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

continually subverted historical intuitions about the world. For this reason, it would be foolish to hold tightly onto consistency as a law of nature.

Moreover, if we were to do so, we risk preventing the possibility of being open to dialetheias that may be found in the world. In this sense, Beall's concern of occlusion has weight, not as a theory about how our innate perceptual and cognitive structures filter out consistency, but as a warning that our observations are laden with the received commitment to consistency as a necessary condition of theories which, in turn, restrict the possibility of accepting, or even observing, actual inconsistencies in the world.

4.4 The Virtue of Consistency and PLJIB

Colyvan's paper gestures towards several examples where the virtues of a scientific theory have warranted acceptance despite its inconsistency.[32] The discussion of scientific virtues thus far demonstrates how such an acceptance is possible. Acceptance of an inconsistent scientific theory is rationally justified where its virtues trump the virtue of consistency. This discussion has established a coherent way the realists can bite the bullet on beliefs in inconsistent entities. Thus, the PLJIB: we are justified in believing in the inconsistent objects indispensable to our best scientific theories *where our best scientific theories' virtues trump the virtue of consistency*.

However, the PLJIB by itself is not enough to comfort the realist in the face of $IndA_{io}$. In §5, we will review $IndA_{io}$ in light of a troubling candidate for inconsistent beliefs proffered by Maddy, to demonstrate that a requirement to reformulate (P1) of $IndA_{io}$ ought to extend to our best science *that we are justified in interpreting realistically*.[33]

5. Problem Candidate for $IndA_{io}$ and the Resolving Thesis

5.1 Naturalism and Holism

In this section, I contend that (P1) of Colyvan's argument ought to be altered in light of the shortcomings of Quinean naturalism. Two stances underpin (P1): naturalism and confirmational holism.[34] Maddy begins her 2001 paper 'Naturalism: Friends and Foes' with the comical recognition that '[t]hese days, it seems there are at least as many strains of naturalism as there are self-professed naturalistic philosophers'.[35]

The strain of naturalism referred to in IndA is the strain associated with Quine. Quinean naturalism is taken to be the stance that metaphysics ought to be a kind of 'last science'.[36] Our epistemic commitments—or our 'home theory'—are given to us

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[32] See §1—examples will be turned to in greater depth shortly, from §5.2.

[33] Maddy, Penelope (1992) 'Indispensability and Practice', *Journal of Philosophy* **89**.

[34] Quine himself uses a more controversial semantic holism in his indispensability argument for mathematical realism: Quine, *Theories and Things*.

[35] Maddy, Penelope (2001) 'Naturalism: Friends and Foes', *Philosophical Perspectives* **15**, 37.

[36] Colyvan, Mark (2019) 'Indispensability Arguments in the Philosophy of Mathematics', in Edward N Zalta, ed, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

by science; the task of philosophy is to perform a kind of 'housekeeping' role.[37] This Quinean stance arises from the naturalistic impulse to be suspicious of any kind of first philosophy (i.e., any philosophy that purports to tell us about the world without recourse to the methods of science).[38] Moreover, as recognised by Colyvan, Quinean naturalism is driven by enthusiasm and deep respect 'for scientific methodology and an acknowledgment of the undeniable success of this methodology as a way of answering fundamental questions about all nature of things'.[39] In §5.3 I will show that Quine's naturalism, taken at face value, has obscured that scientific practice is not always aimed at answering fundamental questions about the nature of things.

On the other hand, confirmational holism—also known as the Quine-Duhem Thesis—holds that theories are confirmed or disconfirmed as wholes.[40] If a theory is confirmed (by, for instance, the successful observation of a novel prediction), then all of the theory's commitments—rather than merely some of them—are confirmed holistically. For example, when classical mechanics was confirmed by the discovery of Neptune,[41] the inconsistent early calculus that the theory employed was also confirmed (we will return to an analysis of the early calculus in §5.3). Following Colyvan, (P1) is constituted by the 'all' given to us by holism and the 'only' given to us by naturalism.[42] However, in §5.3 we will endeavour to show that, *pace* Colyvan, Quinean naturalism is playing another enthymematic role in (P1). First, I will introduce a problem example employed by Maddy, and outline her misguided objection to the doctrine of holism underpinning (P1). Although Maddy rejects the doctrine of holism and the use of IndA altogether, I show that an alternative path can emerge for a scientific realist.

5.2 Theory of Waves in Open Oceans and Scientific Practice

The forceful example employed by Maddy,[43] which continues to rear its head as a problem candidate,[44] is the theory of waves in the open ocean. Scientists have found that the assumption of infinite depth in the ocean simplifies equations without any loss to the accuracy of the models. With an infinitely deep ocean, scientists can ignore the reactions of waves bouncing off the bottom of the ocean, complicating the wave function. Maddy uses this example to demonstrate that scientists do not consider confirmation of this best theory of waves, as confirmation of the assumption of infinite depth. On Maddy's assessment, our philosophical doctrines about scientific practice

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[37] Michael, 'Facing Inconsistency', 356.

[38] Maddy, 'Naturalism', 39.

[39] Colyvan, 'Indispensability Arguments in the Philosophy of Mathematics'.

[40] I defend, in this paper, this weaker form of holism, rather than Quine's suggestion that 'the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science': Quine, Willard Van Orman (1976) 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', in Sandra G Harding, ed, *Can Theories be Refuted? Essays on the Duhem-Quine Thesis*, D Reidel Publishing Company, 56.

[41] Psillos, Stathis (2005) *Scientific Realism: How Science Tracks Truth*, Routledge, 33.

[42] Colyvan, 'Indispensability Arguments in the Philosophy of Mathematics'.

[43] Maddy, 'Indispensability and Practice', 281.

[44] Caret, Colin R (2021) 'In Pursuit of the Non-Trivial', *Episteme* **18**, 289; Colyvan, 'Ontological Commitments', 117; Michael, 'Facing Inconsistency', 356.

ought to cohere with the doxastic standards of the scientific community.[45] Whilst Maddy admits that the doctrine of holism is 'logically … unassailable',[46] she encourages us to embolden our naturalism such that we defer to scientific practice as a greater precedential authority than a philosophical doctrine like holism. For Maddy, we must reject the doctrine of holism and, for that matter, the use of IndA altogether.

A closer look at the problem candidate, through the lens of theoretical virtues, reveals an alternative path for the realist that avoids rejecting the doctrine of holism. In the previous discussion of theoretical virtues, it was noted that certain theoretical virtues—and the question of whether or not they are assessed as truth-conducive— are associated with realism; others are associated with anti-realism. Moreover, scientific practice is guided by the theoretical virtues that it strives to achieve. In the present example, we can see that the scientists are not seeking to provide a veridical, explanatory account of the causal history of waves in the open ocean. It seems that the theorists are seeking to achieve instrumental goals, such as modelling currents to make predictions concerning the tidal dissipation of certain seas.[47] This was indicated by the fact that the theorists justified a significant trade-off, giving up on the virtue of consistency and explanatory power for a simpler formula, with reference to its negligible impact upon the virtue of empirical fit (*qua* predictive power). Scientific theories guided by an instrumental goal—attempting to maximise their virtues as an instrumental theory—are not good candidates for belief. As will be demonstrated below, *pace* Maddy, the problem isn't the doctrine of holism: it is the enthymematic role played by Quinean naturalism that undiscerningly extends the scope of IndA to all our best science.

5.3 The Limits of Quinean Naturalism

Maddy's example is helpful in showing that naturalism is playing another enthymematic role in (P1). As mentioned above, naturalism extends the scope of $IndA_{io}$ to *all of our best science*. Quinean naturalism is asking us to be undiscerning in determining whether one ought to epistemically commit to our best science, obscuring the different and distinct aims that instigate, motivate, and direct science. Quine is perhaps right; science is our best (and perhaps only) chance of having justified beliefs about the world. However, it would be naïve to claim that all scientific practice is aimed at giving a picture of the world that we are justified in believing. The scientific methodology is called to attend to different goals which are often in tension with each other. Attending to the ontology of nature is one of these goals but so are: solving certain problems, providing us with reliable predictions, or constructing a provisional

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[45] Maddy, 'Naturalism', 45.

[46] Maddy, 'Indispensability and Practice', 280.

[47] Bell, T H, Jr (1975) 'Topographically Generated Internal Waves in the Open Ocean', *Journal of Geophysical Research* **80**, 326.

theory that may be fruitful for future theories.[48] Per my RT, (P1) of IndA$_{io}$ ought to be adjusted to:

> (P1) We have justified belief in all and only the entities that are indispensable to our best scientific theories *that we are justified in interpreting realistically*.

To make this adjustment is not to become an anti-realist,[49] an anti-naturalist, or agnostic about problem cases such as that described in §5.2. All our best theories in oceanography that we are justified in interpreting realistically posit a finitely deep ocean, an entity which, from our indispensability argument, we are justified in believing in. Realists need only concede realistic interpretations of those theories that are driven, directed, or organised by goals (and virtues) that are *instrumental*. There is another concession for the realist, and that is the simple path to metaphysics. Where indispensability arguments previously allowed metaphysicians to simply defer to the entities contained in our best scientific theories, realists might engage in the interpretive practice of understanding whether it is appropriate to realistically construe a given theory. Colyvan worries about whether introducing a realistic or instrumental distinction is an *ad hoc* adjustment to the indispensability argument.[50] For the reasons stated in this subsection, the enforcement of this distinction in our indispensability argument is not *ad hoc* but adjusts our argument to a better-developed naturalistic stance that is sensitive to the orthogonal, competing aims of scientific practice.

6. Two Case Studies for the Adjustment of IndA$_{io}$

6.1 Resolving Thesis

We have now arrived at a higher standard for belief in inconsistent entities than Colyvan's initial dilemma proposed. We can reformulate Colyvan's IndA$_{io}$ to reflect RT and call it IndA$_{io}$*:

> (P1) We have justified belief in all and only the entities that are indispensable to our best scientific theories *that we are justified in interpreting realistically*.

> (P2) Inconsistent entities are indispensable to our best scientific theories *that we are justified in interpreting realistically*.

> (C) We have justified belief in inconsistent entities.

The realist ought to accept this conclusion in light of IndA$_{io}$*. On the one hand, the standard of the RT promises to deal with worrying counter-examples, and on the other hand, the PLJIB epistemically prepares us to bite the bullet on any inconsistent beliefs

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[48] Other reasons for taking on specifically inconsistent theories are developed in Bueno: Bueno, 74.

[49] A distinction between realist theories and instrumental theories is happily drawn by the realists: Brown, Bryson (1990) 'How to Be Realistic About Inconsistency in Science', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* **21**, 281–94.

[50] Colyvan, 'Ontological Commitments', 122.

that are derived from our best science that we are justified in interpreting realistically.[51]

I will now demonstrate the desirability of the conclusion of IndA$_{io}$* with reference to two of the salient inconsistencies in our historiography of science.

6.2 Bohr's Atom and the Interpretive Assessment

Bohr's model of the atom draws together classical electrodynamics and the quantum theory of radiation.[52] One of the two ways that Bohr's model of the hydrogen atom has been characterised as inconsistent is by the account of the electron as a charged, orbiting (and therefore accelerating) particle that isn't emitting radiation.[53] The daring thesis that the particle isn't emitting radiation (derived from the quantum theory of radiation) was inconsistent with Maxwell's equations (from electrodynamics); this unsurprisingly caused suspicion from within the scientific community: 'This is nonsense! Maxwell's equations are valid under all circumstances, an electron in an orbit must radiate.'[54] Under Colyvan's IndA$_{io}$, our two best scientific theories purport to justify a belief in an inconsistent entity: an electron behaving in a manner that entails it is both emitting radiation and not emitting radiation. Under IndA$_{io}$*, we ought only to believe in the inconsistent electron if we are justified in realistically interpreting the theory.

So, how are we to determine whether we are justified in realistically interpreting the theory? As discussed, this can be assessed with reference to the telos of scientific activity, namely, which virtues scientific practice is aiming to fulfil, and the relation of these virtues to realism. I think it is wise, as naturalists, to take scientists' assessment as *prima facie* acceptable. In this case, contemporaneous physicists did not take the model to be true, even though they accepted the model as the best theory of the atom.[55] However, there is nothing principally 'first philosophical' about making such an assessment as philosophers. We can see that the model was working to account for a peculiar observation, namely, the spectral lines of the hydrogen atomic emission spectrum. Bohr understood that the best provisional theory with empirical fit with these observations needed to be inconsistent. The demands of observation called for a theory that the physicists could use instrumentally as a provisional path towards a theory of the atom that was appropriate for realistic acceptance. A brief analysis of the goals directing the theory, in conjunction with its scientific virtues, together indicates

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[51] Of course, it may be the case that none of the inconsistent theories are ones that are justified in interpreting realistically.

[52] For a brief introduction and elaboration on the implication of Bohr's model, see Bueno, Otávio and Steven French (2011) 'How Theories Represent', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* **62**, 866; Caret, 'In Pursuit of the Non-Trivial', 284.

[53] Vickers, Peter J (2008), 'Bohr's Theory of the Atom: Content, Closure and Consistency', presented at the 1st conference of the European Philosophy of Science Association.

[54] Vickers, quoting Max von Laue, quoted in Pais, Abraham (1991) *Niels Bohr's Times*, Oxford University Press, 154.

[55] Bueno and French, 'How Theories Represent', 867.

that realists ought to have interpreted the theory instrumentally. Therefore, under $IndA_{io}$*, there was no time at which belief in the inconsistent entity was justified.

6.3 The Early Calculus and Holism

As suggested by Colyvan himself, perhaps the strongest historical case that could be made for belief in an inconsistent object is the inconsistent infinitesimal posited by the early calculus.[56] Before Bolzano's development of the notion of a limit and the epsilon-delta technique in 1817, the early calculus (developed in the 1660s) depended upon the notion of an infinitesimal, defined as a quantity greater than 0, but smaller than any real number. This definition allows the infinitesimal to play a dual role in early calculus; for some purposes, the infinitesimal is taken to be a quantity *distinguishable* from zero whilst for other purposes the infinitesimal is taken to be *indistinguishable* from zero. If 'δ' is an infinitesimal, then in early calculus '$\delta = 0$' and '$\delta \neq 0$'.[57]

Would the inconsistent infinitesimal meet the criteria of the RT? Notably, George (Bishop) Berkeley emphasised in *The Analyst* that even Newton's fluxional calculus (that attempted to resist any reference to infinitesimals) contravened the LNC.[58] However, despite Berkeley's critique of the alleged artifice of calculus, experimental philosophers took on Newton's use of calculus which, given its inconsistency, was an extraordinarily useful theory in formulating classical mechanics. These physical theories were theoretically strong, developing over time and proving fertile in their production of novel predictions confirmed by observation (e.g., the discovery of Neptune). It is intuitively striking and strange to recognise that the doctrine of holism claims that as these theories were confirmed, the infinitesimal—an indispensable mathematical *abstracta*—was also being confirmed. Indeed, from $IndA_{io}$* there is a strong case that during the 150 years in which the infinitesimal was indispensable to our classical mechanics—a science which the practitioners were justified in interpreting realistically—there was good justification for belief in the inconsistent object of the infinitesimal.

7. Conclusion

$IndA_{io}$* produces a result that may worry the scientific realist. This is the result that for a significant period in our history there was a strong case for a justified belief in the infinitesimal: an inconsistent entity. This would have been untenable for the early moderns who held onto the LNC. However, if we are to suppose that the logical explosion of a contradiction can be defused by paraconsistent logic and that we ought to be epistemically open to finding inconsistency in the world, then a justified belief in infinitesimals might not seem so surprising. If we are justified in stepping into a

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[56] Colyvan, Mark (2009) 'Applying Inconsistent Mathematics', in Otávio Bueno and Øystein Linnebo, eds, *New Waves in Philosophy of Mathematics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 161.

[57] Caret, 'In Pursuit of the Non-Trivial', 284.

[58] Berkeley, George (1734/2002) *The Analyst; or, a Discourse Addressed to an Infidel Mathematician*, David R Wilkins, ed, Trinity College Dublin, 3.

post-LNC epistemic world, justified belief in an inconsistent object is exactly something we might expect.

Colyvan's dilemma provokes a worrying puzzle for his own scientific realism. I have aimed to show that although there are compelling motivations for treating Colyvan's conclusion as absurd, we may be warranted in a belief in an inconsistent state of affairs. Moreover, in light of worrying examples, such as the idealisation in modelling waves in the open ocean, I have emphasised that the dilemma highlights the naivety of a Quinean naturalism that fails to recognise that not all scientific practice is aimed at truth, nor is treated as veridical by scientists. However, if Colyvan's paper is aimed to provoke, this paper is aimed to clarify that scientific realists should accept all and *only* realistic interpretations of our best science and should not have an iron insistence on consistency as a necessary condition of a good theory.

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Life's a Chore: Menial Household Labour, Aristotle, and the Outsourcing Dilemma

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Abstract

As technology increases the ease and convenience of outsourcing chores, a moral dilemma has emerged: it seems that to outsource menial household labour is unvirtuous, but that to perform it stifles personal flourishing. This paper engages an Aristotelian framework to engage with the moral discomfort associated with paying someone to do your dirty work, looking first at the legitimacy of the two intuitions underpinning the dilemma. Finding both intuitions to be false, I argue that menial household labour can facilitate flourishing. Thus, whilst there is nothing inherently unvirtuous about outsourcing, to outsource is to give up something of value to one's own flourishing, contra the Aristotelian idea that one can seek transcendence only through the performance of higher-value tasks and, by implication, not through menial household labour. I conclude that we should not over-outsource chores because doing our chores can aid the pursuit of well-rounded human flourishing.

1. Introduction

> I was about to hire a cleaner for my home (three hours a week), but my best friend says it's immoral … She says I should scrub my own floors. Is she right?
>
> — Anonymous[1]

Amidst the weighty moral issues of our busy world, outsourcing menial household labour might be easily dismissed as an insignificant domestic concern, a slightly

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[1] The Guardian (2008) 'Is It Wrong to Employ a Cleaner?', *The Guardian*.

awkward dilemma that does not warrant serious philosophical contemplation. Yes, it seems that there is something morally uncomfortable about paying someone else to scrub our floors or take out our bins. Yet why should we perform these tasks if doing so is of no benefit to ourselves and costs precious time that could be better spent in pursuit of the good life? Why is this paper wasting attention on the moral discomfort of a few soccer mums and yuppies, when it could be advocating for justice for mistreated seasonal workers?[2] Nonetheless, as our capacity for, and the uptake of, outsourcing increases, a thorough tidy-up of this ethical issue—which is as unglamourous and underappreciated as the labour itself—is timely.[3]

This essay will critically explore the outsourcing dilemma through an Aristotelian framework. I begin in §2 by introducing the types of tasks that are associated with this moral discomfort, before outlining the nature of the outsourcing dilemma: it seems that to outsource menial household labour is unvirtuous, but it is also often assumed that to perform such tasks stifles personal flourishing. Next, I establish an Aristotelian understanding of flourishing and labour within a spectrum of human potentialities as the basis of both this dilemma and my subsequent exploration of the legitimacy of the dilemma's two underpinning intuitions. I find that there is not anything inherently or especially unvirtuous in being someone who outsources their menial labour. The second intuition within the apparent dilemma is also found to be a fallacy: menial labour maintains a valuable—albeit moderate—role in facilitating flourishing. The dilemma is thus inverted. The moral discomfort is ultimately traced to the surrendering of critical opportunities for cultivating virtue and flourishing, particularly as technology and productivity ideals demand excessive specialisation. This disrupts the Aristotelian idea that seeking transcendence through higher-value, heroic tasks should be prioritised over engaging in 'animalistic' labours; labours that I contend remind us of our immanent humanity, embed us in our social environment, and facilitate transcendence indirectly. Thus, we should not over-outsource chores because doing our chores can aid the pursuit of well-rounded human flourishing.

2. The Outsourcing 'Dilemma'

In this section, I define menial household labour before recognising that technology and prosperity have increased the capacity of many households to outsource these tasks. This capacity, however, exposes a moral discomfort which I attribute to an apparent outsourcing dilemma, which is underpinned by two intuitions.

Menial household labour is understood in this investigation to refer to *tasks that require no or low levels of skill and that are performed for the benefit of the household*.[4] These tasks

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[2] Faa, Marian (2021) 'Australia: Employers Accused of Exploiting Pacific Seasonal Workers', Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

[3] If any yuppies would like to compensate me for outsourcing their moral contemplation, my Beem is @mahalah.

[4] This investigation focuses on the distribution of labour between a household and external parties rather than within households. The household forms a relevant grouping because some menial labour

are mainly, but not exclusively, associated with the private sphere. Otherwise known as 'chores', some examples of these tasks include cleaning, basic food preparation, taking out the bins, and going grocery shopping.[5] This definition falls within Aristotle's conception of *empeiria*: biologically necessary menial actions that must be regularly performed for human survival by maintaining basic needs like hygiene, sustenance, and housing.[6] Whilst the exact services included in this definition have evolved over time, particularly with technological innovation and changing cultural standards, such tasks are generally performed by their beneficiaries (i.e., members of the household) outside of an elite context. The limits and standards of biological necessity have similarly shifted; however, it remains true that menial labour tasks subject to the outsourcing dilemma are performed primarily for the direct benefit of the household, rather than for secondary benefits such as social status or wealth acquisition.[7]

But the rise of the gig economy, particularly facilitated by technology and highly specialised apps, has made outsourcing many of these tasks cheap and convenient. This rise is complemented by increasing levels of disposable income within some demographics.[8] Whilst it would have been previously too expensive and difficult to organise someone to pick up your dog's poo,[9] gig economy platforms increase the efficiency of this transaction by reconfiguring the opportunity costs of outsourcing both common and niche forms of menial labour.

This increasing capacity to outsource chores has revealed an apparent dilemma. Many members of demographics that are time-poor and cash-rich, particularly women,[10]

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tasks are inevitably shared. Household members are joint performers and beneficiaries: an individual cannot clean a common space for themselves without cleaning it for others. The distribution of labour within households is, although an issue of high socio-political importance, not the subject of this essay.

[5] Not all tasks performed within or for the household are menial labour. For example, caring for children, household management and good cooking are clearly skilled tasks and can be of high eudaimonic value.

[6] Angier, Tom (2016) 'Aristotle on Work', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* **278**, 436.

[7] One man's need is another man's luxury: necessity is an ambiguous label, which should be considered within its context. For example, the necessity of menial labour tasks performed for the mental and physical health of members of the household depends upon particularised circumstances and motivations. For example, considering the impact of obsessive compulsive disorder on an individual or household's relationship to particular chores. Due to their particularised nature, assessing these circumstances are not the subject of my investigation.

[8] Wilkins, Roger and Inga Lass (2018) *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings From Waves 1 to 16*, Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne, 27.

[9] Webb, Carolyn (2021) '"One Thing I Don't Have to Worry About": Would You Pay Someone to Put Out Your Bins?', *The Age*.

[10] The outsourcing dilemma is likely felt more poignantly by women, who often bear the brunt of a higher burden of menial household labour: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017) '"Typical" Australian: National', web page, Australian Bureau of Statistics. Nonetheless, the gendered division of labour within the household will not be a major focus of this investigation.

experience guilt over not personally performing these tasks.[11] A certain moral discomfort is identified by the busy many who may, for example, juggle a demanding job whilst raising children, caring for parents, and exercising regularly, when they consider hiring a weekly cleaner. They have no time nor desire to clean their own toilet yet paying someone else to do it 'feels wrong' or incurs moral condemnation from others.[12] Thus, an apparent dilemma emerges for the outsourcer between two conflicting moral intuitions. Firstly, that to outsource menial household labour is, in some imprecisely identified manner, inherently unvirtuous and secondly, that to perform menial household labour detracts from the outsourcer's pursuit of their own flourishing. However, both these intuitions are misleading. In fact, as I will find, menial household labour facilitates flourishing and, thus, whilst there is nothing inherently unvirtuous about outsourcing, to outsource is to give up something of critical value to one's own flourishing.

3. Aristotelian framework

An Aristotelian understanding of virtue and flourishing, as facilitated or undermined by the performance of hierarchically valued tasks, can shed initial light upon the moralisation of menial household labour, or what I refer to as the outsourcing dilemma. However, Aristotle's understanding is based on dated assumptions regarding slavery that are incompatible with the modern recognition that all humans should, ideally, be free to flourish.

According to Aristotelian ethics, the pursuit of virtue is the pathway to the good life of human flourishing.[13] Individuals cultivate virtue by regularly performing tasks that are virtuous until they perform such virtuous behaviours instinctually and habitually.[14] These virtues are found at the mean between deficiency and excess of a certain trait. For example, courage is located between cowardliness and rashness.[15] Identifying the 'golden mean' is an individualised process, informed by temperaments such as moral discomfort and rational deliberation.[16] In turn, the cultivation of virtue drives one's pursuit of *eudaimonia*, or flourishing.[17] This

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[11] The Guardian.

[12] The Guardian.

[13] Aristotle (2014) *Nicomachean Ethics*, C D C Reeve, trans, Hackett Publishing Company, 1095a.

[14] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1104a.

[15] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1109a.

[16] Kraut, Richard (2018) 'Aristotle's Ethics', in Edward N Zalta and Uri Nodelman eds, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

[17] Some scholars contest this translation because 'flourishing' can describe the life of an animal or plant which thrives in good environmental conditions, whereas Aristotle is referring to a uniquely human epitome that involves rationality and aspiration towards divine ideals: Hursthouse, Rosalind and Glen Pettigrove (2016) 'Virtue Ethics', in Edward N Zalta and Uri Nodelman, eds, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Similarly, Aristotle understood that slaves and women could achieve a lower level of *eudaimonia* constricted by their potentialities, which are allegedly limited 'by nature': Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1254a, 1259a. 'Flourishing' will

flourishing finds ultimate expression in the virtue of greatness of soul; this virtue is a mastery of the 'ordered whole of moral virtues' and approximating a 'superhuman excellence'.[18] The epitome of greatness of soul is found at the perfect mean between the unvirtuous extremes of smallness of soul and conceitedness.[19] As such, a holistic, well-balanced existence is equivalent to flourishing. As Andrea Veltman recognises, paid and unpaid work tasks constitute an undeniably critical portion of human life, and therefore can facilitate or 'stifle' flourishing.[20] As such, the great-souled person would intuitively focus 'exclusive attention' on the tasks that will help this pursuit of excellence rather than be consumed by minor affairs.[21]

Aristotle's hierarchical axiology of tasks forms the conceptual and practical foundations of modern labour markets, from the influential work of classical economists Adam Smith and Karl Marx to the technocratic Australian Qualifications Framework.[22] For Aristotle, human lives are hierarchically divisible into three clear types: indulgent, active, and contemplative.[23] The first kind of life is unvirtuously and unthinkingly focused on pleasure and indulgence. The second emphasises virtue through action, although it is inferior to the third, the contemplative life of the philosopher.[24] Aristotle values the worthiness of these lives on a continuum, demonstrating humankind's unique position straddling the earthly animal and the heavenly divine. The lower life, practised by hedonists, is 'wholly slavish' and 'characteristic of grazing cattle', whereas, in the contemplative life, the rational practice of *theoria* allows humans to strive towards godliness and ultimate pleasure.[25] Aristotle prioritises pursuing activities that are 'akin to the gods' over attending to worldly immanence.[26]

Within the active life, Aristotle delineates three forms of action to their eudaimonic value. The highest, *praxis*, is the use of 'word and deed to insert oneself into the human world' and is not motivated by necessity or utility, but by initiative, suggesting divine inspiration.[27] These are actions steeped in virtues, like justice or generosity,

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henceforth be used to describe the specific form of *eudaimonia* which Aristotle believed was only possible for free, male human beings.

[18] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1124b; Howland, Jacob (2002) 'Aristotle's Great Souled Man', *Review of Politics* **64**, 39, 43.

[19] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1125a.

[20] Veltman, Andrea (2015) 'Is Meaningful Work Available to Everyone?', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* **41**, 726.

[21] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1124b; Howland, 43.

[22] Murphy, James Bernard (1993) *The Moral Economy of Labour: Aristotelian Themes in Economic Theory*, Yale University Press, 11; Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2013) *Australian Qualifications Framework: Second Edition 2013*, Australian Qualifications Framework Council.

[23] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1095b.

[24] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1096a.

[25] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1096a, 1178b.

[26] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1178b.

[27] Arendt, Hannah (1998) *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, 176–77.

particularly occurring in the civic context and embodied by the politician.[28] Subsequently, *techne* constitutes skilled actions that have utility and generate enduring products, like crafts.[29] Finally, *empeiria,* the least eudaimonistically valuable form of action, involves unskilled, menial household tasks that are biologically necessary and must be continuously reperformed throughout one's everyday existence.[30] An uncritical neo-Aristotelian perspective would conclude that chores are not 'eudaimonistically meaningful' and that one should outsource this labour,[31] if possible, to free time and attention for higher-value tasks.[32] The great-souled person is more concerned with philosophising or governing nations than cleaning toilets. This interpretation of Aristotelian valuation of various forms of action remains dominant in modern attitudes towards pursuing *eudaimonia*.[33] Contributors to a *Guardian* column on the subject recognised cleaning as 'a low priority' in relation to their careers, justifying their outsourcing on the basis of the requirements of pursuing more prestigious tasks: 'I am a busy, self-employed professional'.[34] Another contributor, proclaiming 'it's dirty work, but someone has to do it', revealed how the value of chores is reduced to biologically necessary utility, done begrudgingly because they must be.[35]

However, Aristotle's position needs revision in the modern era. Slavery is now recognised as unacceptable, whilst the universal distribution of opportunities to flourish is a normative goal of neo-Aristotelian political thought.[36] These updated assumptions reveal an inconsistency in Aristotle's thought that corresponds to the outsourcing dilemma. The great-souled person, for Aristotle, does not engage in behaviour that is 'slave-like' or menial, however, they simultaneously shun excessive help and are 'ashamed to be a beneficiary'.[37] They do not perform menial labour, necessary to their basic biological existence, as it stifles their flourishing, however, they simultaneously are ashamed to be indebted to others for helping them, even through the performance of menial labour. This inconsistency can be swept under the carpet if some 'other' who lacks the status or dignity that would cause shame or indebtedness (e.g., slaves, servants, or women) exists to do the sweeping. It was not, for Aristotle, unvirtuous to outsource to certain types of people who supposedly deserved to perform menial household labour. However, modern acknowledgment

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[28] Angier, 436.

[29] Arendt, 177; Angier, 436.

[30] Angier, 436.

[31] Veltman, 725.

[32] This perspective will be critically evaluated in §4.

[33] Various attempts at rehabilitating attitudes towards *techne* have taken place, notably the Marxist theory of value and the citing of Jesus' career as a carpenter by Christian thinkers; however, *empeiria* has firmly maintained its place at the bottom of the hierarchy: Angier, 437–38.

[34] The Guardian.

[35] The Guardian.

[36] Veltman, 726.

[37] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1124b–1125a.

of inherent human dignity has resulted in an airing of the dirty laundry, previously dutifully washed, and an emerging recognition of the distribution of eudaimonistically low-value work as a political issue.[38] A moral discomfort thus exists for modern outsourcers increasingly encountering this neo-Aristotelian dilemma. However, a more critical discussion of the two intuitions underpinning the dilemma is necessary to determine the legitimacy of the dilemma and, in turn, if this discomfort has a justified source.

4. Intuition One: That Outsourcing Menial Household Labour is Unvirtuous

The first intuition is the sense that there is something unvirtuous in having someone else perform our menial household labour. The exact nature of this 'something', however, is unclear. Aristotle's portrait of flourishing claims that it is virtuous to serve others, or at least a certain privileged group of others, but refrain from allowing them to serve you. I will consider various justifications for this intuition once generalised to all others, ultimately finding no grounds that distinguish outsourcing menial labour forms outsourcing other eudaimonistically meaningless work. Various considerations are presented as possible, but unsatisfying, justifications for the intuition that outsourcing harms the flourishing of either the worker or outsourcer.

4.1 Harming the Flourishing of Others

An initial response to the outsourcing dilemma might locate the first moral intuition as stemming from guilt about the impact of outsourcing on the worker and their own flourishing. This is attributed to two distinct beliefs: that outsourcing menial household labour obstructs another's flourishing and that it degrades them. These beliefs will be considered in sequence.

Firstly, outsourcing chores might be considered unvirtuous as doing so could prevent another from gaining meaningful work and pursuing their own flourishing. When menial labour is highly specialised and dominates an individual's tasks, they can be excluded from attending to the world in higher value forms, through *techne*, *praxis*, or contemplation. Thus, their opportunity to flourish is harmed.[39] Critically, the frequency of tasks performed determines whether they simply stifle some potential opportunities for flourishing with high opportunity costs or more seriously prevent flourishing. Nothing inherent about performing these tasks absolutely prevents flourishing, within moderation. Scrubbing toilets for ten hours a day before cleaning one's own home might prevent flourishing and thus constitute an injustice, but an hour or so a day of relatively diverse housework would not.[40] Further, the eudaimonic cost of menial labour increases marginally: as specialised tasks become excessively

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[38] Veltman, 735.

[39] Veltman, 725.

[40] The typical (mode) Australian in 2016 spent 5–14 hours a week on unpaid domestic work: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

routine and monotonous, they lose eudaimonic value.[41] Outsourcing chores, one might contend, encourages specialisation and thus is a failure to share eudaimonistically meaningless work, undermining the opportunity of others to flourish and, consequently, perpetuating injustice.[42]

However, there is nothing that distinguishes chores from other forms of eudaimonistically meaningless work that would justify why this intuition applies exclusively to the former kind of work. Individuals rarely cite moral discomfort, or at least this specific moral discomfort, with these same tasks being performed in different contexts outside the domestic sphere or where the beneficiaries extend beyond oneself and the household. For instance, we are less uncomfortable with someone else cleaning the toilets at our school or office or performing highly specialised factory labour to build the toilet.[43] Whilst unjust distribution of meaningless work is a legitimate moral and political issue, it fails to serve as a justification for this specific moral intuition. Such distribution does not demonstrate that outsourcing menial household labour is particularly immoral nor does it demonstrate that this question is the best hill on which to take a stand against the larger issue of the unequal distribution of meaningless work.

Secondly, this intuition might be associated with discomfort with hiring 'help', particularly within the middle class, stemming from a history of unfair and disrespectful treatment in employment relationships associated with these tasks. The belief that performing this work is degrading is compounded by gendered, ethnic, and socio-economic dynamics of worker–outsourcer relations. However, this is not an inherent characteristic of this form of labour, as attested to in the attitudes and experiences of workers themselves.[44] Nor is this discomfort associated with outsourcing these same tasks in public or communal contexts. If workers are treated professionally, respected with dignity, and fairly compensated, this cultural hangover has no standing as an inherent justification for the moral intuition that it is wrong to outsource these forms of labour.[45]

Menial household labour is not inherently demeaning and only acts as a barrier to flourishing when it is performed without moderation, in an excess that occupies too much of an individual's time or energy.

4.2 Reflecting the Virtue of Outsourcers

Rather than imperilling the flourishing of those outsourced to, outsourcing may instead reveal flaws in the outsourcer's own virtue. This intuition is superficially

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[41] Veltman, 727.

[42] Veltman, 734.

[43] The Guardian.

[44] The Guardian.

[45] Those who believe they cannot hire a cleaner without degrading them are, in the eyes of one *Guardian* contributor, and former cleaner, 'total snobs' who perpetuate these degrading attitudes by refusing to acknowledge the dignity in this work: The Guardian.

linked to various beliefs about virtuous behaviour that collapse upon critical interrogation.

This intuition might be justified by a belief that the person failing to perform chores is lazy, or incompetent, and thus unvirtuous.[46] Whilst this might hold true for some UberEATS lovers, it does not justify the wider intuition. The highly skilled doctor who works six days a week and coaches their children's netball team on the seventh is not omnipotent: they ultimately just lack the time to clean their bathroom. Neither lazy nor incompetent, these workers are efficiently distributing their time, considering their skills and the perceived eudaimonic value of their various tasks. Justifications citing an unvirtuous failure to take personal responsibility are similarly misplaced. For Aristotle, allowing others to serve you is unvirtuous because it produces a dishonourable indebtedness to the other;[47] however, this is irrelevant if sufficient compensation is paid (financial or otherwise) and is morally comparable to outsourcing other tasks in modern market societies.

Similarly, this intuition could be explained by the general performance of most of these tasks within the private sphere, owing to some discomfort or embarrassment with the intrusion into private and intimate spheres. This might explain the distinction between someone else cleaning the toilets at home versus at the office. However, this explanation is not consistent with the comfortable and common practice of having a skilled worker perform other types of work in one's home—think of home-visiting doctors, plumbers, and locksmiths. Nor is this intuition justified by outsourcing exposing one's dirty behaviours: the plumber gets just as close to the toilet as the cleaner, and whilst this can be socially uncomfortable, it is not morally wrong. These concerns do not justify the intuition.

On the other hand, feminists might claim this moral discomfort is entirely illegitimate, attributing it to patriarchal norms that pressure women into unpaid labour. Whilst a nuanced feminist critique of this issue is beyond this paper's scope, [48] I note that the feminine coding of menial household labour is not inherent in the task—there is nothing necessarily feminine about doing the dishes. Instead, this coding reflects a patriarchal norm that *itself* necessitates critique. The feminist objection cannot entirely falsify this intuition or discomfort; at most, it demonstrates that these tasks should not be enforced disproportionately upon women, as such a disproportionate enforcement unjustly favours men within a patriarchal system that financially and eudaimonistically values actions that are more male-coded. Women should not feel *more* guilt than men about outsourcing chores, although the full exploration of these questions is outside the scope of this essay.

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[46] As another contributor opines, '[n]o self-respecting … [and] physically capable' person should outsource chores: The Guardian.

[47] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1124b.

[48] Feminists from differing schools (i.e., differing 'feminisms') would have a diverse range of perspectives on outsourcing menial household labour that will not be expanded on here.

Outsourcing menial household labour is not inherently unvirtuous, or at least, no more so than many other forms of outsourcing that are not subject to this special moral discomfort. These various justifications have failed to withstand interrogation, thereby revealing that the outsourcing dilemma is, at least partially, fallacious. However, this does not mean that the moral discomfort with outsourcing menial labour is necessarily unjustified. Rather, if the justification exists, it must be found in other arguments, such as those I will now forward.

5. Intuition Two: That Performing Menial Household Labour for Oneself Conflicts with the Pursuit of Flourishing

The second intuition embraced by Aristotle and the outsourcing dilemma, that performing menial household labour conflicts with the pursuit of flourishing, also requires critical interrogation. Having established that menial labour impacts flourishing by using up time that might be better spent otherwise, one might conclude that chores should simply be outsourced. However, this assumes that menial household labour is eudaimonistically worthless. I will now explore the oft overlooked value of performing these tasks in well-balanced flourishing. Firstly, I will demonstrate the value of these tasks for both those who do and do not perform regular routine labour. Subsequently, I will explore how these tasks can enhance the pursuit of flourishing through *praxis* and contemplation and identify their critical importance within an increasingly technological and specialised society. I find that the second intuition of the outsourcing dilemma is also fallacious: menial household labour does *not* inherently conflict with the pursuit of flourishing, rather, in moderation, it forms a critical aspect of a well-balanced flourishing life.

This intuition suggests that there is something inherent about performing chores that stifles flourishing; they occupy time and attention better spent on tasks with higher value. Menial household labour seems to have a high opportunity cost considering their time-cost and the existence of more virtuous tasks. I established in §4 that chores are not inherently demeaning and only prevent flourishing when they are performed in excess, taking too much of an individual's time or energy. In this context, we might assume the value of chores to always be neutral or low: they are relatively eudaimonistically meaningless. If this was so, we should always outsource the chore when presented the opportunity to do any alternative task with eudaimonic value. However, this view, following Aristotle, fails to recognise—as I contend—that chores have value in themselves and can actively help individuals and groups to cultivate virtue and pursue flourishing. Thus, these opportunity cost considerations require revision: choosing to perform or outsource chores may actively facilitate or undermine the pursuit of flourishing. I begin this section by demonstrating that chores are a form of valuable virtuous behaviour, before exploring how chores can facilitate flourishing by supporting the performance of purportedly higher-value tasks. Consequently, the discomfort associated with outsourcing can be reattributed to the surrendering of valuable opportunities for bettering one's life.

5.1 The Eudaimonic Value of Chores

Menial household labour is eudaimonistically valuable for both those who do and do not otherwise perform meaningless, routine tasks in excess.

Performing menial household tasks can cultivate virtuous traits including modesty, responsibility, attentiveness, and respect, or 'virtues of drudgery'.[49] It is no coincidence that chores form an integral part of monastic and spiritual life throughout the world; they are humbling, reaffirming immanence and the biological, animalistic nature of human life.[50] Similarly, it could be argued that the routine nature of chores develops discipline and resilience, building a critical foundation from which other virtues are habituated. A student's opportunity to rise to the challenges of rigorous study and contemplation are more efficiently taken when complemented by habits of discipline and resilience. Whilst outsourcing to focus on higher-value tasks might appear efficient in the short term, cultivating fundamental virtues through chores can improve the efficiency of other tasks. The opportunity cost calculation is more complex than first assumed. This is particularly relevant for individuals who regularly perform meaningful and non-routine tasks, forgoing other opportunities to cultivate these virtues of drudgery.

On the other hand, many workers are all too familiar with drudgery. In this case, menial household labour is valuable for adding diversity to life, particularly when routine *techne* is performed in excess. Outsourcing chores to perform other, allegedly higher-value tasks more efficiently might appear a desirable goal, however, excessive specialisation can undermine the meaningfulness of these higher-value tasks. As craft and production have become highly specialised through industrialisation, technical jobs have become highly routine and meaningless.[51] Whilst the development of highly specialised skills can contribute to one's flourishing, the perceived value of these skills is skewed by the prioritisation of efficiency within capitalist labour markets. Similarly, many white-collar service jobs are *techne* (they are skilled, have utility, and produce things) but are so radically abstracted from their products that they lack meaning. The manager checking off their list of responsibilities is abstractly crafting a useful bureaucratic system but goes home feeling as if they have 'contributed nothing to the world'.[52] Often, outsourcing chores is justified on the grounds that outsourcing facilitates working longer hours in these 'bullshit jobs' (albeit working those longer hours to afford related regular UberEATSing).[53] However, the meaninglessness of routine work might be alleviated—and flourishing even somewhat advanced—by escaping this efficiency trap and diversifying tasks. Performing a range of different daily household chores might reasonably be considered more fulfilling than

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[49] Aly, *et al*, (2018) 'Love-Labour: Is There a Moral Imperative to Do Housework?', *The Minefield*, Australian Broadcasting Company.

[50] Aly, *et al*.

[51] Veltman, 727.

[52] Graeber, David (2013) 'On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant', *Strike Magazine* **3**: 1–7.

[53] Graeber.

performing the same skilled task without variation (e.g., monotonously calculating insurance premiums); this is because variation can relieve drudgery and novelty can contribute a rewarding sense of balance and well-roundedness within one's life. As such, depending on one's context, chores can be of higher value than *techne* for facilitating flourishing and to outsource them can sometimes stifle, rather than aid, flourishing.

Menial household labour is especially suited to promoting diversity and preventing drudgery because it requires low, to no, skill, whereas skill and capital barriers prevents sharing other, more specialised tasks.[54] Many menial tasks can become fulfilling and liberating when juxtaposed, in moderation, with the routine and excessive tasks of highly specialised *techne*. One can 'go fishing', clean their room, or bake a birthday cake[55] and find fulfilment in the task without 'becoming a fishman', cleaner, or baker and consequently attracting the negatives associated with exclusively attending to a menial task.[56] The same cannot be said for routine tasks that require specific skills or capital and are thus specialised to an efficient scale: very few people operate industrial labelling machines or calculate insurance premiums for weekend fun.

5.2 The Value of Chores for **Praxis**

The actual performance of menial household labour is critical for facilitating the most virtuous of actions, *praxis*. Menial household labour serves to develop social and ethical relationships and cultivate compassion for others, developing a well-functioning political sphere for *praxis*.

Performing menial household labour can cultivate social and ethical relationships, in turn facilitating flourishing via *praxis.* Chores are often not performed purely for one's individual benefit but are shared amongst immediate household members and are critical for social cohesion. As Aristotle recognises, the great-souled person should perform tasks for others; *praxis* should be organically, not financially, inspired.[57] These services act as 'gifts' that cultivate relationships of indebtedness and, in turn, ethical obligations to others in our immediate surroundings.[58] As Aristotle recognised, 'the city is a multitude of households'.[59] The family microcosm extends out to the local community as individuals cultivate virtue and expand their ethical spheres. We help

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[54] Veltman, 733.

[55] Although these tasks *can* be performed in skilled or professional capacity, here I refer to their low-skill and accessible forms.

[56] Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1998) *The German Ideology*, Prometheus Books, 78.

[57] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1124b.

[58] Mauss, Marcel (2006) *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge, 6.

[59] Bruni, Leonardo (1987) *The Humanism of Leonard Bruni: Selected Texts*, G Griffiths, J Hankins, and D Thompson, eds, trans, Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 308. Leonardi Bruni, a medieval Aristotelian translator, commented on the critical importance of a healthy civic community, contending that 'when the constituent parts are lacking, the society dissolves' and 'the city perishes': Bruni, 309.

our housemates with the washing up and put the bins out for our elderly neighbours because helping is the right thing to do.[60] However, outsourcing these forms of tasks for money can corrode our feelings of social and ethical obligation toward one another. There is a new app that facilitates Melbournians outsourcing putting their bins out.[61] This outsourcing might be entirely justified by circumstance; for example, elderly households might physically struggle with the task. However, something of critical civic significance is lost as social networks of mutual obligations, such as those between neighbours, are weakened to the extent that sharing a roster or requesting help with the bins is considered inappropriate.[62]

This trend dishabituates the gratuitous performance of tasks for others and resultingly corrodes civic *praxis*. Critically, *praxis* is not motivated by utility or necessity but by something greater, like moral or political ideals. In Australia, engagement in *praxis*, including political participation, volunteering, and jury duty, is declining, particularly amongst the youth.[63] Political scientists have recognised a causal connection between the participation in one *praxis* action and willingness to participate in others, lending empirical support to Aristotle's theory of habituation.[64] Furthermore, financialised outsourcing of chores reflects broader trends of individualism and reluctance towards indebtedness to others that, although espoused by Aristotle as virtuous, have proliferated excessively under capitalism. Financialising and outsourcing menial household tasks can threaten the relationships necessary for flourishing of the individual, community, and political system through *praxis*.

Additionally, performing chores reminds us of our basic equality with other humans, particularly those who perform tasks on our behalf. As Montaigne declared in 1580, 'kings and philosophers shit, and ladies too'.[65] Within a political community that recognises universal basic equality, kings[66] and philosophers need reminding that they are capable of cleaning their 'shit', and others' 'shit' too. Performing chores cultivates a 'broad compassion' for others that is a critical virtue in modern

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[60] It is, of course, concerning that women perform more unpaid household labour than men, and that the obligation to reciprocate the cost of this labour is often unfulfilled along gendered lines. These patriarchal inequities require remedying, however, they do not negate the potential eudaimonic value of performing tasks for others within or between households.

[61] Webb.

[62] This is not purely caused by all financialisation, but the depersonalised financialisation of outsourcing through professional services and particularly apps. The existence of compensation does not imply pure financial motivation. For example, 'paying a neighbour's kid' to take out the bins as one *The Age* contributor suggests, could still act to facilitate strong community cohesion: Webb.

[63] Volunteering Australia (2020) *Key Volunteering Statistics: January 2020*, Volunteering Australia; Martin, Aaron (2013) 'Political Engagement Among the Young in Australia', presented at the Senate Occasional Lecture Series at Parliament House, Canberra.

[64] Gastil, John, E Pierre Deess, Phil Weiser, and Jordan Meade (2008) 'Jury Service and Electoral Participation: A Test of the Participation Hypothesis', *Journal of Politics* **50**, 355.

[65] Montaigne, Michel de (1958) *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, Donald M Frame, trans, Stanford University Press.

[66] As recognised previously, ladies are much less likely to need reminding.

democracy.[67] Although an individual's own professional or class position may make it unlikely that they will become a full-time cleaner, the completion of household cleaning tasks provides first-hand experience and understanding of these jobs. Coupled with sufficient knowledge of the insecurity of socio-economic fortune, this understanding may promote greater attention to those who perform this labour—often members of politically marginalised groups—and inform empathetic engagement in *praxis*. For a political advisor, regularly cleaning their toilet at home may facilitate empathy for whomever cleans the toilets in parliament house and could increase support for regulatory protections against exploitation in the cleaning industry, such as the Australian Cleaning Accountability Framework.[68]

It could be argued that imaginative empathy with those who perform menial labour on our behalf is sufficient for facilitating this broad compassion. However, our capacity to imagine ourselves in the place of others, as Alexander Tocqueville observed, is not inherent, but distinctive to political systems that actively cultivate it.[69] For instance, Aristotle lacked broad compassion and a recognition of the basic equality and dignity of humans, believing that individuals, owing to their nature, deserved to be either slaves or free and thus either denied or afforded opportunities to participate in *praxis*.[70] Regular performance of menial household labour helps maintain this valuable imaginative capacity, habituating compassion and cultivating a civic community that supports flourishing for all, regardless of class.

Chores have been historically undervalued for their subtle but important role in facilitating *praxis*. They critically contribute to a social and political community founded on equality and ethical relationships and encourage virtuous action. The tasks Aristotle regarded as lowly and plant-like valuable because of those very; they are important tasks because they keep us grounded (despite our attempts to reach for the divine) and allow us to develop connective roots through which human communities can flourish. To outsource chores is to surrender something of crucial social and political value.

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[67] Alexis de Tocqueville, quoted in Storey, Benjamin and Jenna Silber Storey (2021) *Why We Are Restless: On the Modern Question for Contentment*, Princeton University Press, 149.

[68] Australian Human Rights Commission (2021) 'Tackling Modern Slavery and Labour Exploitation With the Cleaning Accountability Framework', web page, Australian Human Rights Commission.

[69] Storey and Storey, 149. Tocqueville was born into French Aristocracy in the 19th century and observed the absence of broad compassion within societies like his own, with immobile class structures, in comparison with the United States, where it was politically fostered: Storey & Storey, 149. At the time, slavery was still practised in the US, demonstrating that this capacity for imagination was still more limited than in modern democracies. The current crisis of division throughout modern democracies has a possibly relevant correlation with growing class inequity and, perhaps, a weakening of this imaginative capacity, however this speculation lies beyond my scope.

[70] Aristotle (1997) *The Politics of Aristotle,* Peter L Phillips Simpson, trans, University of North Carolina Press, 1255a.

5.3 The Value of Chores for Contemplation

Finally, menial household labour is valuable because it creates opportunities for Aristotle's most valued task, contemplation, particularly against the backdrop of our demanding, technological modern society.

Pursuing flourishing is not simply a case of mind over matter: material conditions influence one's capacity to effectively engage in higher-order tasks. Noble actions are facilitated by wealth, tools, and technology, and the 'more of them the greater and more noble the actions are'.[71] The modern politician, for example, must be always accessible to perform their duties: they don't reply to media enquiries on a Nokia brick. Capacity-boosting technologies are similarly standard in a wide range of modern — particularly white-collar — professions. However, increased efficiency in *techne* and *praxis* can also conflict with flourishing.

Contemplation can be undermined by an excess of material goods and technology, which serve as 'impediments'.[72] Consequently, noble actions hinder engagement in contemplation. Contemplation requires a suspension of the imminent world; one must become 'lost in thought' to explore transcendent ideas. To gaze upwards towards the heavens, one must momentarily divert their attention from the things and people around them. But wearing watches that notify us to breathe is a far cry from the isolated mountain top of the stereotypical philosophical sage. *Techne* and *praxis* demand near-constant cognitive engagement. Even whilst performing meaningless tasks, technology users are affected by Zoom 'fatigue' and email burnout from the demand of 'continuous partial attention'.[73] As our lives have become increasingly complex, *techne* and *praxis* have become misaligned with contemplation.

In contrast, low-skill menial household labour usually requires minimal cognitive engagement and only basic technology. Beyond the occasionally baffling washing machine child lock, chores are generally mindless. This contributes to their eudaimonic undervaluation, as they don't engage what Aristotle deems higher human faculties. However, this mindlessness also uniquely positions chores to be of value in facilitating contemplation. Whilst the body is engaged in labour, the mind is free to wander. This might be through daydreaming or intellectually responding to handsfree, thought-provoking materials like podcasts.[74] One can ponder Aristotelian ethics whilst cleaning the toilet, but not whilst paying partial attention to a Zoom

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[71] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1178b.

[72] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1178b.

[73] Sklar, Julia (2020) '"Zoom fatigue" Is Taxing the Brain. Here's Why That Happens', *National Geographic*.

[74] Audiobooks and podcasts are an increasingly popular source of scientific, political, artistic, and philosophical material in Australia and don't require visual or physical attention: Roy Morgan (2019) 'Podcasts growing in popularity in Australia', web page, Roy Morgan. Whilst many might elect to listen to material that is explicitly for entertainment, chores nonetheless carve out discretionary time in which one can relatively effortlessly choose to engage in thought-provoking material: the opportunity to flourish is provided.

meeting or responding to emails. Thus, chores are valuable in creating unique opportunities for contemplation.

This opportunity creation is of crucial significance in modern life, in which the time to contemplate is scarce. *Praxis* and *techne* increasingly colonise time that could previously be engaged in contemplation. High 'proximity of capital and labour' produces expectations to respond to work emails from the breakfast table.[75] The constant demands of work and the techno-cultural landscape of the modern world impact the ability of individuals to contemplate, particularly when efficiency and productivity in *praxis* and *techne* are idolised. Furthermore, technology critically impacts our ability to engage in contemplative tasks. Staring out the train window to consider one's minuteness relative to the vast cityscape is made harder by a constantly pinging phone and candy waiting impatiently to be crushed. The challenge of contemplation is exacerbated by technology, which provides paths of lesser cognitive resistance and immediate dopamine rewards. Chores carve out time to subvert technologically empowered tendencies towards productivity, efficiency, and attention division. As discretionary time in which contemplation would previously have taken place is lost to the cult of productivity, chores uniquely justify time spent 'away with the pixies'. For most, the closest we regularly get to monastic life is taking off our watches to wash the dishes. Performing menial household labour provides elusive opportunities for modern individuals to contemplate.

5.4 The Value of Chores in Moderation and Balance

The unforeseeable nature of modern life necessitates a neo-Aristotelian revision of the valuation of chores within a balanced, holistic life. For Aristotle, performing menial household labour could reduce one to being plant-like by stifling the pursuit of 'activities characteristic of a human being'.[76] But as *praxis* and *techne* are performed in technologically enhanced excess, chores can forge an unexpected path to balanced virtue. We are disconnected from both the tasks that ground us, *empeiria*, and those that give us something greater to look towards, *theoria*. Stuck in the unmoderated mess of human activity and bereft of steady footing or a stable point to stare at, we lose our balance. Amidst mental health and burnout epidemics, psychologists recognise that acting like a plant from time to time is not so bad.[77] Responding to basic human needs through menial household labour can be 'an antidote to the modern world'.[78] Re-establishing our foundations, growing roots,[79] and connecting to others best positions

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[75] James, Alastair (2020) 'The Proximity of Labour and Capital: An Unexamined Difficulty for the Just Distribution of Discretionary Time', unpublished manuscript, University of Melbourne, 1.

[76] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1097b, 1098a. A life focused on basic biological necessities to fulfill nourishment and growth would be a form of living 'shared even by plants' and not constitute human flourishing, which requires 'activity of the soul in accordance with reason': Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1097b, 1098a.

[77] Jones, Lucy (2020) *Losing Eden: Why Our Minds Need the Wild*, Penguin Books, 107.

[78] Jones, 108.

[79] I borrow Simone Weil's plant metaphor: Weil, Simone (1952/2002) *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind*, Arthur Wills trans, Routledge.

humans to flourish. Individuals, households, and communities should reacquaint themselves with their immanence to seek transcendence through contemplation. Menial household labour is like a keystone species in the ecosystem: an element that might seem insignificant, but one that keeps the whole system in well-moderated balance, a balance that often remains unrecognised until it is disrupted.

6. Conclusion

We should not outsource too much of our menial household labour, but not for the reasons initially expected. Both claims within the dilemma have been found fallacious: it is not inherently unvirtuous to outsource one's menial labour and performing menial labour for oneself does not conflict with flourishing. Rather, performing menial labour is critically valuable for cultivating virtue, as well as for *praxis* and contemplation. Thus, the outsourcing dilemma is inverted into a typical issue of moderation, requiring, for the virtuous individual, performance of menial labour as demanded by a contextually-dependent mean. A household might, for example, sometimes find this moderation in outsourcing grocery planning and shopping to a kit company,[80] whilst still taking the time to cook and wash up. On another day, they might order entire meals via a delivery service, eat quickly, and throw away the plastic containers so as to have the opportunity to walk the dog, wash the bedsheets, or simply spend time together.

We live in a unique time. Instead of pondering life's mysteries whilst sitting on the toilet, we can be on an app, hiring someone to clean it. A life of flourishing requires balance, and as technology and modern life increase our capacity — and pressure us — to specialise to extremes, performing chores can help ground us. To outsource menial household labour is not inherently bad; rather it is wrong to outsource *too much* and thereby surrender valuable opportunities for pursuing one's own flourishing in diverse, moderated forms. The outsourcer's discomfort is best justified not by moral guilt, but by a recognition that one is giving up something of moral value.

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[80] A service that delivers regular 'meal kits' including ingredients and recipe recommendations.

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Haslanger's Method for (Un)Warranted Ideology Critique

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Abstract

The conditions of ideology pose a series of challenges for social critics in their attempts to develop warranted ideology critiques. Sally Haslanger's 'epistemology of consciousness raising' (EoCR) seeks to delineate a method that can guide consciousness-raising (CR) groups towards achieving this epistemic feat. This paper advances what I take to be the most forceful objection to Haslanger's EoCR, namely, that it can be appropriated by CR groups with false background assumptions to produce unwarranted ideology critiques. I propose that the fundamental issue resides in an underdeveloped step in Haslanger's EoCR ('testing the hypothesis'), which destabilises the legitimacy of her EoCR as a whole. Drawing on Helen Longino's procedural notion of scientific objectivity, I offer a reconstruction of Haslanger's underdeveloped step, which I suggest provides a successful rejoinder to the objection. However, I conclude by arguing that my reconstructed EoCR is at odds with the spirit of Haslanger's original project, as the locus of legitimate epistemic justification for ideology critique now emerges not from the affective-discursive practices and collective activity of CR groups but from deference to the consensus of a heterogeneously constituted scientific community.

1. Introduction

Sally Haslanger's 'epistemology of consciousness raising' (EoCR) seeks to delineate a method of resistance that can guide consciousness raising (CR) groups toward

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articulating *warranted* ideology critiques and *pro tanto* moral claims against others.[1] CR groups are collections of people united by shared experiences of oppression who seek to enhance consciousness about their identities by discussing personal experiences with similar subjects.

This paper is divided into four sections. In §2, I summarise Haslanger's EoCR with reference to a fundamental challenge for ideology critique (what Robin Celikates labels 'the normative challenge')—a problem that, on her own account, Haslanger's EoCR overcomes. In §3, I mount what I take to be the most forceful objection to Haslanger's EoCR. The objection begins by outlining two examples of the ways the EoCR's steps can be appropriated by CR groups with *false background assumptions* (e.g., anti-feminist CR groups) to produce *unwarranted* ideology critiques and *pro tanto* moral claims against others.[2] I then develop this objection by clarifying the threat that echo chambers (ECs), when paired with bad epistemic content, pose to the EoCR. I conclude my objection by arguing that an underdeveloped step in the EoCR ('testing the hypothesis') is what leads to this weakness in the EoCR as a whole. This step in Haslanger's method fails to account for the possibility that unchecked empirical inquiry can reproduce and legitimise social bias due to false background assumptions held by those inquiring. As such, I suggest that Haslanger's EoCR ultimately fails to overcome 'the normative challenge' of ideology critique. In §4 I evaluate the consequences of this criticism for Haslanger's EoCR. That section begins by offering a reconstruction of the underdeveloped step ('testing the hypothesis') that I suggest provides a successful rejoinder to the objection raised in §2. My proposal draws on Longino's notion of scientific objectivity to suggest that deference to heterogeneously constructed and adequately regulated scientific communities affords *epistemic warrant* to CR groups' ideology critiques and moral claims.[3] However, I conclude by arguing that the reconstructed EoCR appears inherently at odds with the spirit of Haslanger's original project: the locus of legitimate epistemic justification for ideology critique now emerges not from affective-discursive practices and collective activity of CR groups, but from deference to the consensus of a scientific community subject to certain conditions. While Haslanger's EoCR confronts two other challenges for ideology critique, this paper engages exclusively with 'the normative challenge' because it fundamentally threatens to undermine Haslanger's entire project. Ultimately, it appears that the epistemic warrant of a CR group's ideology critique is dependent on the legitimacy of the epistemic norms used to 'test their hypothesis'.

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[1] Haslanger, Sally (2021) 'Political Epistemology and Social Critique', in David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall, eds, *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy: Volume 7*, Oxford University Press.

[2] It's worth noting that although anti-feminists CR groups, as an example, do not explicitly appropriate Haslanger's EoCR, their current CR practices *do* mimic the steps she outlines. Should they encounter Haslanger's EoCR, one might worry that anti-feminist CR groups could appeal to the EoCR to ascribe warrant to their anti-feminist ideology critiques.

[3] Longino, Helen E (1990) *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*, Princeton University Press.

Insofar as the warrant of the epistemic norms themselves relies on a procedural process of intersubjective critical inquiry, then the goal of Haslanger's EoCR—to instil epistemic authority in CR groups themselves—appears to be both redundant and problematically misleading.

2. Exposition of Haslanger's EoCR

Haslanger's EoCR outlines a method for *warranted* ideology critique in response to scepticism—in particular as articulated by Robin Celikates—about the possibility of such critique given certain conditions of ideology. First, 'ideology' is defined by Haslanger as a 'cultural technē gone wrong'.[4] A cultural technē refers to a collection of social meanings which are a 'stage-setting for action' and reflect a central component of the 'local social-regulation system'.[5] Cultural technēs shape the material world and offer us the resources necessary to interpret it.[6] They 'go wrong' when they distort our ability to value, thereby organising us unjustly in accordance with distorted values.[7] Individuals shaped by ideology become 'good subjects': their internalisation of the ideology's norms, values, and practices causes them to understand the social mores as binding.[8] As such, good subjects may not recognise social injustice due to the pervasive naturalisation of certain social practices.[9] Given these conditions of ideology, Celikates proposes three challenges for the possibility of ideology critique.[10] This paper focuses on what I take to be the most important challenge, which Haslanger summarises as follows:

> *The normative challenge:* Are there objective moral truths by reference to which we can judge a social arrangement defective or unjust? If so, how do we gain knowledge of those truths?[11]

Responding to this challenge, Haslanger's EoCR delineates the conditions under which a CR group can construct warranted ideology critiques and *pro tanto* moral claims against others. According to Haslanger, CR is a 'collective activity' which provokes a 'paradigm shift in one's orientation to the world' and is not easily reversed.[12] The shift in consciousness involves a reconsideration of what facts are accessible, how we interpret them, and how we might respond to them.[13] However, the *warrant* for CR groups' paradigm shifts (and resulting moral claims) is 'not

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[4] Haslanger, 23.

[5] Haslanger, 23–25.

[6] Haslanger, 23.

[7] Haslanger, 23, 25.

[8] Haslanger, 25.

[9] Haslanger, 26.

[10] Celikates, Robin (2016) 'Beyond the Critical Theorists' Nightmare: Epistemic Injustice, Looping Effects, and Ideology Critique', presented at the Workshop for Gender and Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology.

[11] Haslanger, 55.

[12] Haslanger, 43.

[13] Haslanger, 44.

guaranteed'.[14] Haslanger focuses her EoCR on the 'hard cases', where individuals have become *good subjects* and are 'fluent' in the social practices of an ideology.[15] The following procedural developments detail the EoCR method, however, Haslanger emphasises that the order of the sequence is flexible:

1. Desiring negation/gut refusal;

2. Group participation;

3. Developing a hypothesis;

4. Testing (and revising) of hypothesis; and

5. Articulating a moral claim.[16]

Warranted resistance, Haslanger argues, begins with 'desiring negation': a 'gut refusal' to comply with being subordinated, along with a yearning for alternative possible norms and ideals free of oppression.[17] 'Desiring negation' can be understood as a particular type of response to oppression known as 'oppositional consciousness' and forms the basis of collective action.[18] Individual displeasure alone, however, is typically insufficient to provide substantive evidence for positional vulnerability in social organisation.[19] This is because the harm experienced may occur on an individual (rather than systematic) basis, that is, not as a consequence of group membership. Ultimately, Haslanger holds that it is exceedingly difficult for an individual to interpret whether or not a harm is structurally produced. As such, a crucial moment for Haslanger's EoCR is 'group participation': subordinated subjects articulate their complaints to 'others within the same (affected) social group', testing their responses, and realising through collective activity that 'they are not the problem'.[20] To facilitate this 'group participation' step, Haslanger recommends that CR groups develop 'counter-publics' in which members of an oppressed group can engage with one another without interruption from members of a dominant group.[21] From here, the CR group 'develops a hypothesis' regarding the causes and manifestations of social injustice, specifying which practices reinforce oppression and obstruct change.[22] However, similar to the challenges that an individual faces in interpreting whether oppression is structural in nature, initial evidence supporting CR groups is likely to be limited and grounded in the experiences of those participating. As such, Haslanger argues that in 'testing the hypothesis' it is necessary to evaluate whether the hypothesis is empirically adequate for explaining structural

[14] Haslanger, 44.

[15] Haslanger, 27.

[16] Haslanger, 49.

[17] Haslanger, 48.

[18] Haslanger, 48.

[19] Haslanger, 50.

[20] Haslanger, 50.

[21] Haslanger, 50.

[22] Haslanger, 51.

injustice.[23] This procedural step is crucial in ensuring the resulting *pro tanto* moral claims are warranted because a moral claim with grounds that are empirically refutable does *not* need to be honoured.[24] Revision of the hypothesis may eventuate here if required. Once the hypothesis has been tested (and revised) the CR group may move to 'articulating a moral claim' (e.g., that x structural practice is unjust and ought to be changed).[25] Thus, according to Haslanger, a CR group's moral claim is warranted 'insofar as it moves from a "gut refusal" to a moral claim through a collective examination of shared experience that is guided by sound epistemic norms'.[26] It is worth highlighting that for Haslanger a warranted moral claim derived from a process of CR is not necessarily dispositive. Instead, resulting claims advance *pro tanto* contentions which must be evaluated in relation to other moral claims through a process of collective political deliberation.[27]

Haslanger argues that her EoCR overcomes Celikates' normative challenge for the possibility of ideology critique.[28] Importantly, the EoCR does not attempt to offer an objective account of morality.[29] According to Haslanger, a complete theory of justice is not necessary to engage in social critique, as we can know that 'a practice is unjust, without knowing why'.[30] Haslanger observes that one of Celikates' other challenges ('the epistemological challenge') implies that any highly abstracted form of social critique incurs the risk of paternalism.[31] As such, the EoCR seeks to guide social change *without* reliance on a 'set of "external" imported values'.[32] Without recommending objective principles or resorting to moral relativism, Haslanger maintains that CR groups can appeal to 'moral truths about the injustice of particular historically-specific practices and structures'.[33] As such, cases of 'grotesque repression' can guide ideology critique. The examples she offers are the Holocaust and the Atlantic slave trade, as these injustices 'are not truths we learn from theory; theorizing is guided by these truths'.[34] CR groups are encouraged to draw parallels between more obvious cases of injustice and those they take for granted in their pursuit of paradigmatic shifts in the way they perceive the world.[35] Thus, Haslanger's ultimate response to the normative challenge holds that 'if the parallels are sufficiently strong' or 'if we agree that the new interpretation better guides our practice' (i.e., by satisfying her EoCR steps) then 'we are entitled — epistemically and morally — to make

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[23] Haslanger, 50.

[24] Haslanger, 50.

[25] Haslanger, 51.

[26] Haslanger, 51.

[27] Haslanger, 51.

[28] Haslanger, 53.

[29] Haslanger, 54.

[30] Haslanger, 30.

[31] Haslanger, 40.

[32] Haslanger, 40.

[33] Haslanger, 55.

[34] Haslanger, 55.

[35] Haslanger, 56.

a claim on its basis'.[36] As such, the EoCR offers a template to identify and challenge injustices in historically-specific practices from a situated position *within* the relevant ideological formation.[37]

3. Critique of Haslanger's EoCR

This section develops a critique that demonstrates the ways Haslanger's EoCR can be appropriated by communities who have false background assumptions to produce *unwarranted* ideology critiques and *pro tanto* moral claims. Fundamentally, my objection identifies Haslanger's 'testing the hypothesis' step as underdeveloped insofar as it fails to account for how unchecked empirical inquiry can justify social biases which are concealed by the conditions of ideology. I contend that this objection can be best understood with reference to actual anti-feminist CR groups' appropriation of the EoCR as means of mounting *unwarranted* anti-feminist ideology critiques against women and feminists. Anti-feminist groups (largely composed of men) are generally united in their belief that feminine values and misandry dominate contemporary society and operate to disadvantage men.[38] Additionally, they often share the belief that this truth is disguised and perpetuated by feminist ideological social practices.[39] Examples of anti-feminist groups include: men's rights activists, incels (involuntary celibates), fathers' rights groups, and paleomasculinists (who believe that male domination is biologically determined).[40] Feminist research has documented in depth the multifarious ways in which anti-feminist CR groups have coopted feminist epistemologies in order to pseudo-legitimise the warrant of their ideology critiques.[41] Here I will outline an appropriation of steps that specifically reproduce Haslanger's EoCR.

First, mirroring the modality of Haslanger's 'gut refusal' step, anti-feminist communities foreground experiences and emotions (regarding their feelings that men are victims of feminism's 'man-hating' project) as the basis from which their moral claims derive warrant.[42] For example, Save Indian Families (one of the most popular Indian fathers' rights CR groups) claim that their masculine gender identity is 'the main restriction' in a 'differential treatment between men and women' by referencing their shared experiences of 'shock, humiliation, anxiety, feeling of sadness and shame,

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[36] Haslanger, 56.

[37] Haslanger, 33–36, 39.

[38] Allan, Jonathan A (2016) 'Phallic Affect, or Why Men's Rights Activists Have Feelings', *Men and Masculinities* **19**, 26; Marwick, Alice and Rebecca Lewis (2017) *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*, Data & Society Research Institute, 14.

[39] Marwick and Lewis, 14.

[40] Marwick and Lewis, 13.

[41] Marwick and Lewis; Rothermel, Ann-Kathrin (2020) '"The Other Side": Assessing the Polarization of Gender Knowledge Through a Feminist Analysis of the Affective-Discursive in Anti-Feminist Online Communities', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* **27**; Allan 2016.

[42] Rothermel, 726–27.

mental worry, and fear', which leave them 'very confused' and under 'tremendous stress'.[43]

Second, anti-feminist CR groups create and retreat to online forums ('counter-publics'), collectively known as the 'manosphere', where *group participation* occurs without interruption from members of the apparently 'dominant' group (women).[44] These communities are characterised by a distrust of mainstream content due to its supposed saturation with feminist ideology. Instead, they grant elevated epistemic credibility to radical manosphere content due to it being 'more authentic, non-hierarchical, and not controlled by the elites'.[45] The cooption of the EoCR's first steps is neatly summarised by Rothermel: 'these affective-discursive dynamics mirror and appropriate feminist epistemologies of affective dissonance based on experiences of oppression shared in alternative spaces'.[46]

Third, as anti-feminist CR groups perceive their social oppression as originating from 'women in general and feminists in particular', developing their hypotheses generally involves generating propositions that aim to curb the influence of feminism.[47] This might include targeting feminist-influenced social practices such as political correctness.[48]

Testing their hypotheses – as CR groups should do according to Haslanger's EoCR – anti-feminist CR groups use 'sound epistemic norms' (according to their metrics) to support their contentions.[49] For example, apparently delegitimising the 'myth' that gendered housework means 'women work two jobs; men work one', Warren Farrell argues that men also work outside of their waged hours (e.g., commuting, 'doing yardwork, repairs, painting').[50] In line with Haslanger's recommendations, Farrell supports his contention with reference to empirical research by the University of Michigan which found that (accounting for housework) 'the average man worked sixty-one hours per week, the average woman fifty-six'.[51] In his books, *The Myth of Male Power* and *Why Men Earn More*, Farrell verifies both men's victimisation at the hands of feminism and men's natural superiority to women by drawing extensively

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[43] Rothermel, 730.

[44] Haslanger, 51.

[45] Rothermel, 726.

[46] Rothermel, 723.

[47] Blais, Melissa and Francis Dupuis-Déri (2012) 'Masculinism and the Antifeminist Countermovement', *Social Movement Studies* **1**, 22.

[48] Marwick and Lewis, 14.

[49] Rothermel.

[50] Farrell, Warren (2005) *Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap — and What Women Can Do About It*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 121.

[51] Farrell, *Why Men Earn More*, 121; Juster, F Thomas and Frank P Stafford (1991) 'The Allocation of Time: Empirical Findings, Behavioural Models, and Problems of Measurement', *Journal of Economic Literature* **29**.

on empirical evidence, particularly with reference to evolutionary psychologists (e.g., David Buss) who employ scientific methodologies to reproduce sexist stereotypes.[52]

Similarly, appropriating Haslanger's recommendation to find guidance in 'referring to cases of grotesque repression', Farrell writes,

> We acknowledge that [B]lacks dying six years sooner than whites reflects the powerlessness of [B]lacks in American society. Yet men dying seven years sooner than women is rarely seen as a reflection of the powerlessness of men.[53]

'A Voice for Men' (one of the largest websites for men's rights activism in the United States) reproduces similar themes and logic to those in Farrell's books, frequently citing his work, hosting him at conferences, and describing him as a mentor and founding father.[54] Mirroring the steps of Haslanger's EoCR, these anti-feminist CR groups engender 'paradigm shifts' in their members' interpretations of the world. Members are taken from individualised confusion and helplessness to unified political movements that criticise mainstream feminist claims on the grounds that they are ideological and naturalise men's systematic oppression. Much like in Haslanger's EoCR method, these groups 'articulate a moral claim' which highlights that 'they are not the problem'—but in these cases, the result is anti-feminists legitimising their calls to reverse feminism's influence on society.[55] Nonetheless, many of the demands of anti-feminist CR groups come from *unwarranted* critiques of feminism—and generate *pro tanto* moral claims which work to oppress women and feminists—because these groups hold *false background assumptions* as the premises from which their inquiry proceeds.[56]

One example of an articulated ideology critique can be seen in a widely circulated article originally posted on 'A Voice for Men'. The author concludes that:

> Departments of Gender Studies—as well as the myriad other faux 'identity studies' programs like queer studies, race theory, critical theory, fat studies, sexuality studies, whiteness studies, *ad vomitatum*—do not constitute real subjects; they are centres of radical indoctrination or specimens of academic frivolity.[57]

We might extend this critique by highlighting that such concerns are not unique to anti-feminist CR groups but can equally occur within *feminist* CR groups. For example, a group of cisgendered feminists embarking on a process of CR may fail to discover

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[52] Buss, David M (1994/2016), *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating*, Basic Books; Farrell, Warren (1993) *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men Are the Disposable Sex*, Simon & Schuster.

[53] Farrell, *The Myth of Male Power*, 101.

[54] O'Donnell, Jessica (2022) 'Men's Rights Activism and the Manosphere,' in *Gamergate and Anti-Feminism in the Digital Age*, Palgrave Macmillan, 14.

[55] Haslanger, 49–50.

[56] Blais & Dupuis-Déri; Marwick and Lewis; Rothermel; Allan.

[57] Rothermel, 721, quoting a 2018 AVfM article by David Solway.

that their background assumptions and privileges cause them to engage in empirical inquiry which situates 'subjective gender identifications as a dichotomous variable'.[58] Embedding these biases within the conceptual framework of empirical inquiry 'naturalises, and thereby perpetuates, social inequality'.[59] Alternatively, Rebecca Hufendiek reveals that Martie Haselton (psychologist and self-proclaimed Darwinian feminist) applies tendentious suppositions of evolutionary psychology to reproduce biological-determinist claims about behavioural and cognitive differences between the sexes in her new book, *Hormonal*.[60] Both examples demonstrate that well-intending feminist CR groups are capable of generating *unwarranted* ideology critiques while nonetheless 'testing their hypothesis' with scientific methodologies.[61]

The threat that these anti-feminist and feminist CR groups pose to Haslanger's EoCR can be explained through an analysis of how echo chambers (ECs) grounded in *false background assumptions* lead to distorted empirical inquiry. ECs are social network environments in which members' beliefs are robustly reinforced through a regular echoing of consonant beliefs.[62] An EC's 'good' or 'bad' nature is distinguished by its content, which itself is determined by the 'presence or absence of truth-conducive [or falsehood-conducive] mechanisms'.[63] As Benjamin Elzinga points out, false beliefs in epistemic communities are most saliently caused by a lack of mechanisms that constrain echoing beliefs to the factual world.[64] These communities thus become 'substantively cut off from the truth'.[65] In turn, *bad ECs* (ECs grounded in false background assumptions) provide fertile grounds for epistemic communities to foster false and harmful beliefs which are exceedingly resilient to both internal dissent and external opposition.[66]

The problems of echo chambers are amplified by the structures of contemporary epistemic environments. An epistemic environment is a complex, dynamic system in which factors of the social and material world influence the production and dissemination of knowledge. ECs are produced by a combination of *internal* and *external* mechanisms. Epistemic agents have numerous *internal* social and cognitive

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[58] Anderson, Elizabeth (2020) 'Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science', in Edward N Zalta, ed, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

[59] Bem, Sandra Lipsitz (1993) *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, Yale University Press, 6.

[60] Haselton, Martie (2018) *Hormonal: The Hidden Intelligence of Hormones — How They Drive Desire, Shape Relationships, Influence Our Choices, and Make Us Wiser*, Little, Brown and Company; Hufendiek, Rebekka (2020) 'Beyond Essentialist Fallacies: Fine-Tuning Ideology Critique of Appeals to Biological Sex Differences', *Journal of Social Philosophy*.

[61] Anderson.

[62] Elzinga, Benjamin (2020/2022) 'Echo Chambers and Audio Signal Processing', *Episteme* **19**, 1.

[63] Elzinga, 12.

[64] Elzinga, 2.

[65] Elzinga, 11.

[66] Elzinga, 2.

biases which impact their uptake and analysis of information.[67] 'Selectivity bias' refers to epistemic agents' greater propensity to seek out information which 'confirms and reinforces their preconceptions' (regardless of truth-value) rather than seeking out 'information that challenges these views'.[68] I use 'conformity bias' to refer to agents' tendency to adopt group members' values and perspectives.[69] The tendency to conform can obstruct a groups' formulation of true beliefs, as individual members are less likely to volunteer valuable information that goes against the grain.[70] Agents' informational inputs are also shaped by external forces. Key examples of external mechanisms include state-controlled media, systematic censorship, and internet algorithms that filter online experiences.[71] 'Algorithmic personal filtering' is a particularly salient mechanism unique to the modern world that significantly reinforces the echoing of anti-feminist beliefs on the manosphere and makes it extremely difficult to 'successfully evaluate and epistemically compensate for such filtering'.[72]

Collectively, these mechanisms impose self-reinforcing epistemic filters: they filter information uptake by omitting countervailing facts and arguments, thus preventing people from seeing evidence necessary for sufficient evaluative discourse.[73] Such filters create a dearth of dissenting perspectives which greatly increases the likelihood of coverage gaps and makes the 'discovery of mistakes significantly less likely'.[74] Furthermore, an overabundance of corroboration magnifies the epistemic convictions of EC members, thereby illegitimately over-inflating the epistemic credibility of certain ideas or group members while depreciating the credibility of others. As such, EFs forcefully subdue potential barriers to the reinforcement of consonant beliefs and false background assumptions.[75]

Condensing these epistemic worries, I suggest that Haslanger's step of CR groups 'testing their hypotheses' is underdeveloped and destabilises the cogency of her

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[67] Goldman, Alvin and Cailin O'Connor (2021) 'Social Epistemology', in Edward N Zalta, ed, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

[68] Benkler, Yochai, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts (2018) *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*, Oxford University Press; Unerman, Jeffrey (2018/2020) 'Risks From Self-Referential Peer Review Echo Chambers Developing in Research Fields', *British Accounting Review* **52**, 2.

[69] Asch, S E (1951) 'Effects of Group Pressure Upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments', in Harold Steere Guetzkow, ed, *Groups, Leadership and Men: Research in Human Relations*, Carnegie Press; Goldman and O'Connor.

[70] Weatherall, James Owen, Cailin O'Connor, and Justin P Bruner (2018) 'How to Beat Science and Influence People: Policymakers and Propaganda in Epistemic Networks', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* **71**.

[71] Goldman and O'Connor; Nguyen, C Thi (2020) 'Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles', *Episteme* **17**, 144.

[72] Nguyen, 144; Rothermel.

[73] Nguyen, 150.

[74] Elzinga, 14; Nguyen, 144, 150.

[75] Elzinga, 6.

EoCR. Ultimately, Haslanger's assumption—that a claim's epistemic warrant can be legitimated by CR groups' empirical inquiry—fails to account for CR groups testing their hypotheses from a basis of *false background assumptions* and over-inflated epistemic self-confidence. Drawing on Quine, feminists have stressed the theory-laden nature of observation.[76] The central concern is stressed by Carol Lee and Christian Schunn when they say that there is 'nothing intrinsic to the data or its relationship to a hypothesis that establishes an evidential relationship between them'.[77] In turn, the gap between hypothesis and data must be bridged by background assumptions.[78] Given that empirical verification depends on a range of implicit assumptions of which the group conducting empirical investigation is typically unaware, it is not usual that a group will be incapable of assessing and addressing their implicit biases.[79]

As seen in the above examples, these biases in agents' background assumptions skew research questions, conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and interpretations of data in various ways. Empirical inquiry itself is thus vulnerable to being distorted by the conditions of ideology. The implications of this can involve empirical knowledge production which, for example, may undermine feminist values, impair scientific understanding, and reinforce oppressive gender norms under the auspices of scientific authority. As such, it appears that amorphous and underdeveloped conceptions of 'objectivity' and 'sound epistemic norms' impede Haslanger's EoCR from truly overcoming Celikates' normative challenge for ideology critique. Ultimately, an EoCR sensitive to the problems that come with conducting empirical inquiry from within an ideology must acknowledge that scientific standards of evaluation can be applied in ways that either intentionally or unintentionally produce and maintain harmful manifestations of social bias.[80]

4. Reaffirming an EoCR

To respond to this objection, I suggest that Haslanger should concede that deferring to expert consensus from a relevant (heterogenous) scientific community is the most epistemically legitimate means of grounding an ideology critique.[81] Given the

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[76] Anderson.

[77] Lee, Carol J and Christian D Schunn (2011) 'Social Biases and Solutions for Procedural Objectivity', *Hypatia* **26**, 352.

[78] Lee and Schunn, 352.

[79] Intemann, Kristen (2010) '25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now?', *Hypatia* **25**, 781; Longino, 71–74.

[80] Lee and Schunn, 352.

[81] Offering a precise definition of a 'scientific community' or its 'consensus' is beyond this paper's scope. These terms are particularly complicated within the social sciences, which use a variety of methods and instruments to gather and analyse evidence. Generally speaking, the 'scientific community' can be understood as a collection of experts of a relevant (scientific) field. Here, 'experts' broadly refers to people who hold better knowledge in a specific domain than others. While my argument is incomplete as long as it lacks an explicit guide or criteria for a 'scientific community', these comments are the most I can achieve in this paper. Martini and Boumans more closely read

concerns of scientific inquiry, the new challenge for Haslanger means that she needs to delineate the specific tools and methodologies that amount to 'sound epistemic norms' that can safeguard ideology from epistemically detrimental forms of social bias perverting the conduct of empirical inquiry.[82] Haslanger might address this issue by drawing on Helen Longino, who maintains that through a procedural process of intersubjective critical scrutiny, the (appropriately structured) scientific community can collectively achieve epistemic warrant and approach scientific objectivity.[83] Longino argues that, due to the *socially* achieved nature of objectivity, epistemically flawed biases are progressively eliminated by scientists holding each other accountable, irrespective of the fact that a bias-free position is unattainable for any individual scientist.[84] Deference to scientific consensus establishes an ongoing demand for open dialogue, justification of argumentation, disclosure of inconsistencies, and the procurement of new information.[85] This ensures that a process of 'vigorous contestation and testing of arguments' has established a claim's warrant.[86] Lee and Schunn aptly summarise this sort of social notion of objectivity: 'Procedural objectivity is achieved when communities cultivate and maintain social structures that promote attention and responsiveness to the background beliefs licensing inferences from data to hypotheses.'[87]

An important caveat is that the threat that problematic biases pose to empirical inquiry can extend to homogenous scientific communities at large. As Longino suggests, 'when, for instance, background assumptions are shared by all members of a community, they acquire an invisibility that renders them unavailable for criticism'.[88] Haslanger's EoCR might accommodate for this danger (which applies to CR groups too) by emphasising the importance of a heterogeneously constructed scientific community. Here, 'diversity' and 'heterogeneity' refer to a scientific community composed of people with a variety of demographic characteristics (e.g., race, class, gender, disability, etc.). Personal experiences stemming from demographic characteristics influence people's perception and understanding of the world.[89] Groups of people possessing different demographic characteristics or social positions will thereby have diverse experiences of oppression, providing 'access to evidence that has implications for the plausibility of background assumptions, models, and

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these terms: Martini, Carlo and Marcel Boumans, eds, (2014) *Experts and Consensus in Social Science*, Springer International Publishing; Goldman and O'Connor.

[82] Lee and Schunn, 353.

[83] Longino.

[84] Longino.

[85] Moore, Alfred (2017) *Critical Elitism: Deliberation, Democracy, and the Problem of Expertise*, Cambridge University Press.

[86] Moore, 54–8.

[87] Lee and Schunn, 366.

[88] Longino, 80.

[89] Oreskes, Naomi (2019) 'Getting Unstuck: Social Epistemology', in Stephen Macedo, ed, *Why Trust Science?* Princeton University Press, 50.

methods'.[90] Thus, *ceteris paribus*, a scientific community constituted by members with diverse demographic characteristics will apply relatively more divergent perspectives to a claim than a homogenous community would. In turn, subjective perspectives which reign hegemonic could be, and more likely would be, opposed by others for inappropriately influencing evidential reasoning.[91] Ultimately, the conditions of ideology can only truly be overcome through the procedural strategy of intersubjective critique (what Longino calls 'transformative interrogation') because this process alone is capable of ensuring that false background assumptions are methodologically eliminated from empiricism.[92]

The foundations of my argument here could be inferred from Haslanger's own claims, for example when she writes:

> But the process of epistemic validation is not foundationalist. The best that any inquiry—empirical or not—can achieve is a holistic balancing of considerations. And scientific inquiry has managed to weather paradigm shifts before without giving up all standards.[93]

Here, although Haslanger doesn't develop this thought, she may be interpreted as referencing the procedural strategy of scientific objectivity, although she does not directly refer to scientific consensus as *the* means of achieving 'a holistic balancing of considerations'. If so, Haslanger's claim that the task of CR groups is to 'engage in epistemically responsible practices that push us beyond what is taken to be common sense, while also *affording some degree of objectivity*' is better understood with explicit reference to the demand that the empirical inquiries of CR groups be verified by consensus from a relevant (heterogenous) scientific community.[94]

One might object that an emphasis on diversity may itself engender epistemic bias within a scientific community's consensus. Critics may suggest that diversity in scientific communities could cause oppressed scientists to either remain quiet or to be ignored by the dominant group. Following Miranda Fricker, this could occur due to different forms of epistemic injustice which arise out of economies of credibility related to social position *within* scientific communities themselves (e.g., testimonial injustice, white ignorance, or hermeneutical marginalisation).[95] For instance, within a heterogeneously constructed scientific community, scientists of a minority racial group may experience forms of racism that the broader community do not recognise as racism by virtue of either (i) never having experienced it, or (ii) having benefited

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[90] Intemann, Kristen (2010) '25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now?' *Hypatia* **25**, 750.

[91] Oreskes, 52.

[92] Oreskes, 52.

[93] Haslanger, 54.

[94] Haslanger, 54.

[95] Fricker, Miranda (2007) *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford University Press, 20; Elzinga, 7; Nguyen, 149.

from the institutions which perpetuate it.[96] Where a scientist suffers a credibility deficit due to an identity prejudice in the broader scientific community, they experience a form of testimonial injustice that may lead to biases in the scientific community's consensus at large.[97] Alternatively, without the formation of CR groups, individuals of a racially discriminated subgroup of scientists may lack the collective hermeneutical tools needed to comprehend, formulate, and express a viewpoint that conflicts with the dominant attitudes of the scientific community.[98] In both cases, one might suggest that diversity *within* scientific communities may work to obscure, rather than raise, consciousness about certain social problems.

However, the development of certain norms of interaction can be incorporated by heterogeneous scientific communities to minimise the likelihood of bias in group consensus arising from epistemic injustices. Again, Haslanger could refer to Longino, who recommends governing protocols to ensure that intersubjective scrutiny and 'transformative criticism' between diverse peers occur justly.[99] First, scientific communities should incorporate 'publicly recognised avenues for criticism', such as peer review forums, journals, conferences, and more.[100] Longino suggests that this entails critical research activities receiving 'equal or nearly equal weight to original research'.[101] Second, science must incorporate norms that encourage uptake of criticism, in that the community must heed the intersubjective critical discussion and ensure their governing assumptions remain logically sensitive to the developments taking place within it.[102] Finally, scientific communities must ensure an 'equality of intellectual authority': intellectual authority cannot be unequally distributed across qualified practitioners.[103] This criterion seeks to disqualify scientific communities that allow a tendentious assumption to remain hegemonic due to the social and political power of its proponents.[104] Collectively, introducing these norms as institutionalised protocols creates robust mechanisms which ensure that open debate and criticism take place so that heterogeneous perspectives can be voiced, heard, and suitably responded to.

It is worth adding that my argument does not seek to undermine the political and epistemic significance of CR groups and their practices generally. Should a subgroup of scientists experience some form of epistemic injustice, there may be strong grounds for individual members of the oppressed subgroup to engage in CR practices to formulate a critique of the scientific community's dominant assumptions. Instead,

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[96] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this objection to my attention.

[97] Fricker, 28.

[98] Fricker; Grasswick, Heidi (2018) 'Feminist Social Epistemology', in Edward N Zalta, ed, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

[99] Longino, 76.

[100] Longino, 76.

[101] Longino, 76.

[102] Longino, 78

[103] Longino, 78.

[104] Longino, 78.

more modestly, I want to emphasise that the locus of legitimate epistemic justification for social critique cannot emerge *solely* from the affective-discursive practices of the CR group themselves. To suggest that a CR groups' social critique is warranted does not authorise us to affirm that the critique is true without doubt, but rather that it is widely perceived as compelling through a rigorous process of intersubjective critical scrutiny. Without the privilege of direct access to the objective world, it is unclear that we could aspire for anything more.[105]

My final comment on Haslanger's EoCR is that while the proposed modification of her method appears to successfully overcome the objection that some CR groups (like bad ECs) could (and do) develop unwarranted ideology critiques using a similar methodology to the one Haslanger outlines, the resulting EoCR appears inherently at odds with the spirit of her original project. The threat of bad ECs causing sectors of society to become systematically disengaged from a shared reality instils the need to defer to objectivity by some metrics for a claim to have epistemic warrant. This appears to require an appeal to the reliability of scientific consensus as a basis for the 'fact-regarding' demand of epistemic warrant. If what I have argued above holds, it seems that the only means of distinguishing and delegitimising epistemically *bad CR groups* (e.g., anti-feminist CR groups) from epistemically *good CR groups* is identifying the illegitimacy of bad CR groups' *epistemic norms*. Bad CR groups fail to defer to the relevant (heterogenous) scientific community's consensus regarding their foundational epistemic assumptions. Distilling this further, the only way to epistemically distinguish false background assumptions from true ones is by determining whether the assumptions have survived heated scientific contestation or whether they were rejected by the scientific community. If this is true, it follows that the locus of epistemic warrant derives not from a CR group's use of Haslanger's EoCR, but from a CR group's deference to an epistemically credible scientific community. While such a reading could potentially be extrapolated from Haslanger's article, it simultaneously appears entirely at odds with the apparent overarching intention of the text: namely, to instil epistemic authority for ideology critique in CR groups themselves. In light of this, Haslanger's contention that 'the resulting claim is made on behalf of a social group and *warranted through their collective efforts*' seems misguided.[106] An inherent tension appears to exist between Haslanger's claim that epistemic warrant can be derived from subjective shared experiences yet must appeal to 'some degree of objectivity'. Ultimately, the underdeveloped account of objectivity risks reducing her EoCR into a roundabout way of arriving at the same conclusions that Longino did in the 1990s (with added steps).

A more forceful construction of this critique might argue that Haslanger's EoCR is not only destabilised by its failure to specify 'sound epistemic norms' but this very omission also encourages an interpretation of her EoCR as an active endorsement of a

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[105] Longino, 79.

[106] Longino, 21, my emphasis.

methodology that leads to epistemically *unwarranted* claims. If anything has been extracted from the evaluation of bad ECs, it is that narrowness and homogeneity in groups and scientific communities appear to reflect a design feature that significantly increases the likelihood that these groups will produce epistemically *unwarranted* claims. Haslanger's persistent legitimisation of the relationship between 'marginalised' or 'narrowed' communities and *epistemic warrant* seems to encourage the construction of ECs and perhaps pseudo-legitimises the practices of epistemically bad CR groups. Although Haslanger's claim that 'the aim of consciousness raising is not to reach certainty or to offer evidence that would be compelling to all who consider it' may be true, her theory would still benefit from the explicit clarification that moral claims nonetheless *must be compelling* to a relevant heterogeneously constructed scientific community in order to be epistemically validated.[107] Ultimately, critical theorists—like Haslanger—seeking to instil epistemic authority in relatively homogenous groups ought to have heightened vigilance in their accounts of empirical justification, so as to safeguard their contentions from being coopted by epistemically bad CR groups seeking to justify harmful moral claims.

5. Conclusion

This paper opened with an exposition of Haslanger's EoCR as a method for CR groups to develop *warranted* ideology critiques given the challenges which arise from the conditions of ideology. I proceeded to offer the most forceful objection to her EoCR, articulated by Celikates. I demonstrated the ways CR groups with *false background assumptions* can appropriate Haslanger's EoCR and nonetheless produce *unwarranted* ideology critiques. I clarified the danger that bad ECs pose to Haslanger's EoCR and explained why anti-feminist CR groups' moral claims remained unwarranted in the face of their cooption of her methodology. Fundamentally, this objection argues that the 'testing the hypothesis' step in Haslanger's EoCR is underdeveloped, in that it fails to consider how unchecked empirical inquiry can legitimise false background assumptions and social bias which are disguised by the conditions of ideology. In §2, I offer Haslanger's best rejoinder to the objection, which holds that the 'testing the hypothesis' step must be substantiated by CR groups' deference to the consensus of a relevant, heterogeneous, and appropriately constituted scientific community. This, I argue, is because, through a process of intersubjective criticism, these scientific communities can methodologically account for the conditions of ideology as a social achievement over time. While I suggest this rejoinder reaffirms the cogency of an EoCR, I proceed to argue that this reconstruction appears at odds with Haslanger's intended EoCR. This is because the resulting EoCR places the locus of epistemic warrant of a CR group's moral claim in their deference to a specifically constructed scientific community, rather than in the CR group's collective activity itself.

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[107] Longino, 20.

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