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SHARING TIME IN WE-EXPERIENCES: A CRITICAL MERLEAU-PONTIAN RE-READING OF SCHÜTZ' TUNING-IN RELATIONSHIP

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Recent scholarship about group ontology and collective agency seeks to understand experiences of togetherness and why they are important to us. Work by Michael Bratman (2014), Raimo Tuomela (2013), John Searle (2010), and Margaret Gilbert (1990), among others, has sought to identify the conditions under which we each severally enter a distinct mode of togetherness that philosophers call the "we-experience." Much of this scholarship focuses the nature of shared plans and commitments thought to occur in such experiences. Other approaches take a different focus altogether, seeking to identify a more basic level of connectivity out of which shared agential structures such as plans could arise. Alfred Schütz (1976), for example, points to a "mutual tuning-in relationship" as the basis for all communication (161). For Schütz, this tuning-in relation is achieved through sharing time, or "sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time" (173). Such sharing of inner time not only prefaces the assumption of communicative or, by extension, agential structures, but is also constitutive of a new form of higher-order unity, the "we."[1]

A critical phenomenological approach to questions of social ontology and collective agency would seek to recognize how "quasi-transcendental social structures" and the "lived experience of power and oppression" inform the being of such a "we," to use Lisa Guenther's (2019) helpful terminology (12). One facet of identity-based social hierarchies is the exclusion or "othering" of targeted populations, and an adequate account of we-experiences must therefore grapple with the features of social reality that undermine we-experiences across intersectional power differentials.[2] Unlike the "planning" accounts noted above, Schütz's approach to we-experiences allows these salient features of social reality to be thematized. However, as I hope to demonstrate in this paper, this is only true if we give Schütz's account a Merleau-Pontian rendering by replacing the Husserlian notion

[1] See also Schütz 1972, 219-20.

[2] "The white world, the only honorable one, barred me from all participation" (Fanon 2008, 86).

of temporality relied upon by Schütz with an account of body-schematic temporality from Merleau-Ponty.

In Schütz's account, music has a temporal structure that distinguishes it from other activities that can be done together, such as painting or bird watching, and thus offers a suitable microcosm for the analysis of shared temporality. Though music is not the only context where a tuning-in relationship is possible, it is the example he chooses for his analysis and readily accessible for most readers. Most of us have had we-experiences during musical activities, from intimate duets with caregivers in early life to evenings spent thrashing in the mosh pit as young adults (or older ones). The effects of such musical experiences on our sense of social belonging have been confirmed in clinical studies in psychology. Bronwyn Tarr et al (2016) have found that musical activities such as dancing help to "establish and maintain group cohesion" by facilitating "interpersonal cooperation and feelings of social closeness" (343). Kathleen Marie Higgins (2012) articulates this feeling as "ontological security" (146):

> the person senses that he or she occupies the same order of being as other people and shares the encountered world with them . . . On the basis of this conviction, the person feels confident of living in a shared world. (150)

Notable in her characterisation of the we-experience is "world-sharing" and "self-belonging." Dan Zahavi's (2019) definition of we-experiences emphasizes the positionality of the subject *within* the group: "The we, the first-person *plural*, is not an entity observed from without, but rather something experienced from within in virtue of . . . participation in a certain group" (256). I will take it as granted, then, that we-experiences occur and that they often occur in music. What we need to know more about, however, is *how* they occur: how do we enter a we-experience from a starting position as a unitary individual?[3]

My point of departure for addressing this question will be Schütz' (1976) account of "sharing time" as the means by which a unitary individual enters a tuning-in relationship constitutive of a we-experience. When music, in his words, "evokes in the stream of consciousness participating in it an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations" (170), then "the performer partakes in the stream of consciousness of the composer as well as of the listener" (174). There is something intuitively right about this characterization, but it runs into trouble in its evocation of Husserl's (1964) account of time from *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*. After explicating some of the tensions that arise for Schütz by basing his account of sharing time in an account that makes time effectively *unshareable*, I suggest that we can better understand sharing time through Merleau-Ponty's (1962) theory of embodied temporality found in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, and the related ideas contained in the notes from his lectures delivered at the Sorbonne between 1949 and 1952, especially "The Child's Relation with Others."

[3] Intersubjectivity is a basic structure of consciousness and the fulfilled we-experience is not reduceable to it: we-experiences are not equivalent to intersubjectivity. This point is the theme of Zahavi's (2019) criticism of Heidegger in the following quotation: "Any plausible account of intersubjectivity has to factor in the embodied face-to-face relationship. It is not permissible to denigrate it to a mere ontic manifestation of some supposedly more basic ontological structure" (258).

My argument proceeds by characterizing the temporality endogenous to what Merleau-Ponty (1964) calls the body schema, and then showing how the body schema is something that can be shared. I infer that the body schema's endogenous temporality can thus also be shared. I then proceed to address a concern stemming from disability theory that the body-schematic basis for this account of sharing time contains assimilationist tendencies. If conforming to the relevant body schematic patterning is a condition for inclusion in a particular we-experience, then we should be worried that we-experiences are thereby made impossible for those incapable of such body schematic conformity. I argue that in comparison with the more common paradigm of synchronization, *improvisation* provides a more viable model for understanding how it is possible to share a body schema while respecting bodily difference. The example of collective free improvisation shows how a shared body schema grounded in the inherent motilities of participant body schemas can be interactively generated, rather than externally imposed in what Mariusz Kozak (2020) calls "a forced time compliance" (119). Comprehending that body schemas are assumed in a bi-directional fashion whereby the individual takes on the schema and the schema adapts to the individual allows us to see how it is possible to share a schema between diverse temporal bodies. Only when we see body schematic assumption as a unidirectional application of a pre-established pattern do we encounter the problematic requirement of bodily sameness to participate in we-experiences through sharing time together. Therefore, so long as we accept the Merleau-Pontian re-formulation offered here, I argue that we should continue to regard Schütz' account of the tuning-in relationship as an important and viable account of group ontology and collective agency.

PROBLEMS WITH HUSSERL'S INNER TIME FOR SCHÜTZ'S TUNING-IN RELATIONSHIP

Before laying out my positive account, let me clear some ground and provide a motivation for my interest in finding an alternate conceptualization of shared time. I will do this by analyzing the Husserlian underpinnings of Schütz' account. As noted above, Schütz (1976) posits a *tuning-in relationship* that founds the experience of a "we." This mutual tuning-in relationship "is the means by which 'I' and the 'Thou' are experienced by both participants as a 'We' in vivid presence" (161). The tuning-in relationship is said to occur through sharing time, specifically "sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time" (170).[4] While Schütz draws from both Bergson and Husserl (1964) in characterizing his concept of "inner time," the example he provides of such musical sharing of inner time emphasizes the Husserlian framework:

> The flux of tones unrolling in inner time is an arrangement meaningful to both the composer and the beholder, because and in so far as it evokes in

[4] "A 'we,' originates," Schütz (1976) adds, "in the possibility of living together simultaneously in specific dimensions of time" (162).

> the stream of consciousness participating in it an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations which interrelate the successive elements. (Schütz 1976, 170)

The unrolling of tones is meaningful for participants because of how the unrolling evokes in participants "an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions, and anticipations."[5] Sharing the same flux of inner time,[6] in some sense, then, would appear to be the way the tuning-in relationship, constitutive of the "we" experience, seems to be explained in Schütz' account.

The means by which Schütz claims we will enter this shared flux of inner time, however, reveals a deeper problem with the very suggestion of sharing Husserlian inner time in the way apparently suggested. Schütz says we enter shared inner time through a specific act of consciousness which Husserl calls an active polythetic synthesis (to be contrasted with an active *monothetic* synthesis).[7] This jargony terminology drawn from Husserl's *Ideas I* boils down to a distinction between understanding something in a step-by-step temporal sequence (polythetic), or grasping something all at once in a single moment of insight (monothetic).[8] Schütz is saying that he thinks an understanding of music is of the first kind: it happens in a step-by-step way. However, what I am drawing attention to is the *active* quality of *both* forms of synthesis. Schütz seems to be saying both that musical experience is a *passive* unfolding of inner time, and that this passive unfolding is synthesized in an *active* manner, in an active polythetic synthesis. It is hard to see how an *active* synthesis of any sort can instigate operations of a *passive* nature, such as those involved in the flux of inner time.[9]

The more concerning problem, however, is not that this or that way of entering a shared flow of time is untenable: it is the worry that Husserl's inner flow of time is, as such, unshareable. Husserl (1964) holds that "two different times can never be conjoint" and

[5] For further explication of the concepts from Husserl's *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* used in this essay, see Lohmar and Yamaguchi 2010 and Kortoons 2011.

[6] Schütz (1976) distinguishes between inner time and outer time in the following illuminating passage: "to make clear why we consider inner time the very medium within which the musical flow occurs, let us imagine that the slow and the fast movement of a symphony each fill a twelve-inch record. Our watches show that the playing of either record takes about three and a half minutes. This is a fact which might possibly interest the program maker of a broadcasting station. To the beholder it means nothing. To him it is not true that the time he lived through while listening to the slow movement was of 'equal length' with that which he dedicated to the fast one. While listening he lives in a dimension of time incomparable with that which can be subdivided into homogeneous parts. The outer time is measurable; there are pieces of equal length; there are minutes and hours and the length of the groove to be traversed by the needle of the record player. There is no such yardstick for the dimension of inner time the listener lives in" (89).

[7] Schütz (1976) writes: "The meaning of a musical work, however, is essentially of a polythetical structure. It cannot be grasped monothetically. It consists in the articulated step-by-step occurrence in inner time, in the very polythetic constitutional process itself" (172). And also: "the musical content itself, its very meaning, can be grasped merely by reimmersing oneself in the ongoing flux, by reproducing thus the articulated musical occurrence as it unfolds in polythetic steps in inner time" (173).

[8] See Husserl 1982, §118- §120.

[9] Husserl (1982) writes that time-consciousness is "not to be thought of as an active and discrete synthesis" (283).

"their relation is a non-simultaneous one" (29). These statements suggest that one flow of time can never enter into another, making the notion of sharing of time itself implausible. As we will see below, commentators seem to agree that at best, for Husserl, two discreet flows of inner time can interlock, but never interpenetrate.

For example, the unshareablility of Husserlian inner time has been noted by Lucia Angelino (2020) in an essay on collective free improvisation. Angelino, like Schütz, has turned to music for insight into the constitution of groups in real-time. However, despite Angelino's stated intention of going beyond "the original Husserlian frame" (60), she nevertheless reasserts the intractability of individuality in inner time:

> Instead of looking at the dynamic loop between backward-looking retention and forward-looking protention (Husserl) as something which is confined purely to each individual consciousness, we apply it to understand the interlocking of streams of consciousness that takes place among players [in collective free improvisations] . . . it must be added, however, that in performing this process the stream of consciousness of each player flows alongside, but never into the internal-time consciousness of another, even though it is constantly coloured and challenged by the others' ideas, moods and feelings in the process. (60–61)

Angelino attempts to use notions from Husserl's (1964) *Internal Time-Consciousness* to articulate group processes that transcend "each individual consciousness" (60). She does so by describing an "interlocking" of stream of consciousness among players, adding that such streams of consciousness "flow alongside*, but never into* the internal-time consciousness of another" (60; emphasis added). This notion of "interlocking" comes from Dan Zahavi's (2014) way of understanding how Schütz might be envisioning the unity produced through sharing time that nevertheless respects the stricture against sharing Husserl's inner time:

> Rather than entailing metaphysical fusion, what Schütz has in mind here is the fact that our respective streams of consciousness in such situations are *interlocked* to such an extent that each of our respective experiences are colored by our mutual involvement. (245–46)

Zahavi's suggestion that "sharing time," for Schütz, is not to be thought as a "metaphysical fusion" would make the problem of shared time disappear by making it superfluous to the tuning-in experience. The tuning-in experience, Zahavi seems to be suggesting, can be achieved by merely *interlocking* our "fluxes of experiences in inner time," rather than sharing them.[10] This solution permits discussion of we-experiences while continuing to rely on a conception of temporality that does not permit sharing as such. However, as we saw earlier, Schütz' language does not entirely support Zahavi's "interlocking" interpretation of the time shared to form the tuning-in relationship.

[10] This is a paraphrase of Schütz' (1976) definition of a tuning-in relationship, quoted above: "sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time" (170).

Schütz describes the tuning-in relationship using language that suggests greater coalescence than the mutually external arrangement implied in Zahavi's solution. We can see this by bringing our attention to the terms chosen to describe the relationship between the parties of a we-experience in Schütz' (1976) text: "living together simultaneously" (162), "participates in" (170), "participates with" (171), "living through a vivid present in common" (173). While mounting a full critique of Zahavi's interpretation of Schütz is beyond the scope of this paper, I will resist his "interlocking" interpretation to leave open the possibility that a more zygotic temporality could underlie the tuning-in relationship constitutive of the we-experience.

One worry about the interlocking view of shared time would be that such hermetically individuated streams of inner time, no matter how intertwining they might be, might fail to establish anything other than what Brandon Polite (2019) calls *parallel experiences*: "separate, but similar, activities occurring in each other's company" (429). If we are looking to understand we-experiences that occur in music as a product of shared time between participants, individual temporal streams bearing external relationships to one another does not seem to be a satisfactory account. For while a rope may be comprised of many strands of twine or a chain of many interlocking links, the whole that is the rope or chain is only perceived externally, not by each strand of twine or individual link. Names and concepts that unify material things cannot provide a paradigm for what it is to share subjective temporality: what it is to be in a "we" as a human subject is to have a perceptual (or pre-perceptual) grasp of that *we* from within.

If, then, instead of settling the interpretive question about whether Schütz understood shared time to be fused or interlocked, we retain only his more general clue about a possible basis for we-experiences found in music, then, accepting that Husserl's flow of inner time is largely unshareable, searching for an alternative account of temporality might help us to further our inquiry into the basis of such "we" experiences.

MERLEAU-PONTY'S TRANSITION SYNTHESIS: THE TEMPORALITY OF THE BODY SCHEMA

If individual flows of Husserlian inner time cannot be shared but only run parallel to one another, then we might turn elsewhere for an account of temporality that would allow us to understand the tuning-in relationship as a sort of sharing time together. In the "Temporality" chapter of *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1962) distinguishes his account of temporality from that of Husserl in a way that would seem to offer resources for our inquiry:

> It is true that the other will never exist for us as we exist ourselves; he is always a lesser figure, and we never feel in him as we do in ourselves the thrust of temporalization. But two temporalities are not mutually exclusive as are two consciousnesses, because each one knows itself only

> by projecting itself into the present where they can interweave. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 433)

Merleau-Ponty thus preserves Husserl's individual flow of inner time—the thrust of one's *own* temporalization—while also positing a level of temporal non-exclusivity: "two temporalities are not mutually exclusive" (433). While the final image of this quotation, that of *interweaving*, might initially seem to advocate the "interlocking" model of shared time I rejected above, I would suggest we interpret the role of this image differently. The term "to interweave," *se enlacer* in the French,[11] is not, I offer, meant to be describing what it is to share time in a "we" experience, but is rather used to illustrate the weaker condition of what it simply means for two temporalities *not* to be mutually exclusive. The grammar of the sentence suggests that the second half of the phrase is supposed to be supplying the evidence for the first half: we know that two temporalities are not mutually exclusive *because* (*parce que*) they, among other things, can intertwine (*peuvent s'y enlancer*). The notion that two temporalities *may* (*peuvent*) interweave is a much looser condition than what is suggested by the vocabulary of "interlocking," and we should take it to be highlighting *the quality of having an interactive capacity,* rather than a description of the "we" that might occur after a tuning-in relationship has been achieved. Let us, then, look more closely at this "non-exclusivity" with an eye to better characterising the kind of temporality the sharing of which could underlie the tuning-in relationship constitutive of "we" experiences.[12]

THE TEMPORALITY OF THE BODY SCHEMA

Merleau-Ponty's (1962) account in the "Temporality" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception* stems from his account of embodied intentionality developed earlier in the book. This account of embodied intentionality, in turn, critically pivots around the notion of the *body schema*, and its sedimented cousin the *habit body*.[13] The body schema is, paradoxically, an acquired *a priori* intentional structure paraphrased by Shaun Gallagher (2005) as a "system

[11] "*Mais deux temporalités ne s'excluent pas comme deux consciences, parce que chacune ne se sait qu'en se projetant dans le présent et qu'elles peuvent s'y enlacer*" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 495).

[12] I agree with Michael Kelly's (2015) reading of Merleau-Ponty's (1968) "Temporality" chapter, which resists Merleau-Ponty's own later assessment of it in *The Visible and the Invisible* as too much on the side of Husserl's theory of consciousness. Kelly argues instead that the chapter "foretells Merleau-Ponty's philosophical ontology from 1961, which reformulates intentional consciousness as a product of a 'wild being' . . . 'the time-thing, time-being.'" Merleau-Ponty presages this reformulation in the "Temporality" chapter, according to Kelly, specifically through embracing Heidegger's (1990) formulation of time, which explains "how time's affecting of itself constitutes consciousness and its awareness of time and spatiotemporal objects" (199). I mean what I say here to be consistent with Kelly's interpretation.

[13] While I understand the habit body as a body schema sedimented through repetition, Maren Wehrle (2020) offers a contrasting interpretation of their relationship: "the body schema mediates constantly between the currently performing body . . . and the habitual body, which determines the practical possibilities of this very body" (508-09). David Morris (2018) adds: "The body schema is a key concept in the *Phenomenology*. Basically, it names the deeper dynamic through which the body structures itself as expressive, habitual, and capable of organizing itself in a sense-making way" (94).

of processes that constantly regulate posture and movement . . . that function without reflective awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring" (37-38).[14] The temporality endemic to the body schema is described by Merleau-Ponty (1962) as neither a line or an unalterable directional flow, but "a network of intentionalities" (417). Merleau-Ponty describes the "network of intentionalities" constitutive of this body-schematic temporality as a "transition synthesis" (419): "my world is carried forward by lines of intentionality which trace out in advance at least the style of what is to come" (416). In other words, what is given to me in presence and what is portended on the horizon are connected by one continuous through line. This through line is a transition from what is here and what is to come, a transition whose steps are mapped out for us in the body schema, if not in vivid detail (for the protentional horizon is *open*) at least in *style*. Positioning himself with respect to Husserl, Merleau-Ponty elaborates on the origin of this network of intentionalities:

> Husserl uses the terms protentions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. They do not run from a central I, but from my perceptual field itself, so to speak, which draws along in its wake its own horizon of retentions, and bites into the future with its protentions. (416).

For Husserl, Lanei Rodemeyer (2006) explains, "presencing consciousness includes what is called a *retention* of experiences just-passed and a *protention* toward experiences that are just coming" (9–10). Retention and protention are what frame our immediate experience of a present, what Husserl calls "*Urimpression*, or primordial impression" (Rodemeyer 2006, 10). For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, such temporal framing of the present comes not from a central constituting consciousness but from my perceptual field itself, that is, from the intentionality of the body schema and the habit body.[15] The body schema and habit body are geared into the world, not projected onto it. Therefore, the temporality endemic to them is likewise geared into the world and not something superimposed upon it. Rather, temporality emerges from the spontaneous sequence of interactions between subject and world.[16]

Once we see that there is a temporality sustained by the body schema and habit body, an avenue for understanding sharing time presents itself. For Merleau-Ponty contends that

[14] Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes the body schema as "neither the mere copy nor even the global awareness of the existing parts of the body . . . its active integration of these latter only in proportion to their value to the organism's projects" (100).

[15] Following David Morris (2018), I understand the body schema not as "simply a matter of the body projecting its schema, one-way, onto the world" but rather "that schema is itself gathered out of the world in a two-way junctural relation between body and world" (84). See also Morris 2004.

[16] Mariusz Kozak's (2020) description of this dynamic in the smelling of a new perfume is illuminating: "As you press on the plunger, aerosolized droplets rush out and form a cloud that hangs in the air in front of you. In order to catch a whiff, you move your head, maybe even your whole body, this way and that. You create a fan-like motion with your hands in order to direct the fragrant air toward your nose . . . the reciprocal relationship between the aerosolized droplets and the human subject gives both spatial and temporal structure to this encounter" (5).

the body schema is itself *shareable*. In the lectures that comprise "The Child's Relations with Others," Merleau-Ponty (1971) maintains that subjective experience is not a purely private matter but is rather "a relation to the world." In terms of other people, he continues, the "other's consciousness is chiefly a certain way of comporting himself toward the world." Understood as conduct, other minds are not inaccessible to us but are plain to observe.[17] But not only can we observe others through their behaviour, the schema issuing from such behaviour can be taken on as our own. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, the "'postural,' or 'corporeal, schema'" of another person "speaks directly to my own unique motility" as "themes of possible activity for my own body" (117). While not every body schema offers a *near* possibility for my own body—I may, with practice, be able to perform the gymnastic sequence I observe before me but at present it is not a near possibility for me—it nevertheless offers a guide for my body; I clap and cheer along with the twists, leaps, and landings I witness. Much more will be said below, however, about what is undoubtedly an implicit assumption on Merleau-Ponty's part: the postural schema of another can only suggest themes of activity for my body if it does, in fact, speak directly to *my own* motility. In many cases, the body schema of another will *not* speak to my own motility.

Emphasizing that this shareable schema is identical to the ordering principle of my own experience (embodied intentionality), Merleau-Ponty (1971) writes:

> To the extent that I can elaborate and extend my corporal schema . . . to that very extent will my consciousness of my own body cease being a chaos in which I am submerged and lend itself to a transfer to others. (118)

Conceiving of experience as comportment towards the world, as the body schema, enables, as it were, its "transfer" between individuals. The term "transfer" here needs some elaboration. In the French, the passage above reads:

> *Si mon corps n'est plus seulement connu par une masse de sensations strictement individuelles, mais comme un objet organisé par rapport à l'entourage, il en résulte que la perception de mon corps peut être transférée à autrui et l'image d'autrui peut être immédiatement « interprétée » par mon schéma corporel.* (Merleau-Ponty 1988, 311)

Here, in my translation, the second half of this complex phrase seems to read more literally as follows: "the perception of my body can be transferred to another, and the image of the other can be immediately interpreted by my body schema." The first thing to note here is the ambiguity in the expression "the perception of my body": this could mean either (loosely) the perspective my body gives me of the world, or the perspective of another as they behold my body (311). This ambiguity could be intentional: the body schema is particular in serving both of these roles. But what precisely it means to *transfer* such "perceptions of one's body" remains somewhat opaque. This notion is illuminated, however, in a passage a few pages earlier in the collected *Sorbonne Lectures 1949–1952*, in the text that comes

[17] See also Krueger 2012.

immediately prior to "The Child's Relation with Others," a lecture titled "Child Psycho-Sociology (1950-1951)." There Merleau-Ponty (2010) characterizes transfer as the general character of *habit*:

> a habit always has a general, relative character. What is acquired by habit is not a series of determined movements, but a possibility, an aptitude to invent a valuable solution to a situation . . . This general character of habit is found in the phenomenon of habit transfer: for example, a habit acquired by the right hand is partially transferred to the left. Therefore a relative independence of habit from the motor apparatus exists. (196)

We can read this passage to indicate the way Merleau-Ponty is using the term "transfer" in his thinking around this time. "Transfer" indicates, in the first instance, the ability of a habit to be generated in one context and applied in another (the organist plays in several different cathedrals). In the second instance, "transfer" indicates the intra-corporeal movement of a localized habit, as exemplified in learning to write with one's nondominant hand.[18] In the third instance, that expressed by our original quotation taken from "The Child's Relation with Others," "transfer" indicates the *inter*-corporeal movement of a habit (or schema) between different individuals.

Returning to "The Child's Relation with Others," Merleau-Ponty (1971) elaborates on the notion of schematic transfer, suggesting that such "alienation" facilitates my grasp of other subjectivities:

> It is this transfer of my intentions to the other's body and of his intentions to my own, my alienation of the other and his alienation of me, that makes possible the perception of others. (118)

On this view, then, the inner life of another is not inaccessible: the body schema of another speaks directly to my own as a set of embodied possibilities. In other words, the schema of the other is available to me to use as *my* schema; the schema is shareable.

There is, then, for Merleau-Ponty, a temporality not reducible to Husserl's inner time, one that emits from the body schema. Furthermore, this schema is shareable.[19] Before concluding that sharing a body schema is equivalent to the sharing of time in a tuning-in relationship, however, I want to consider two possible objections. The first can be met, while the second will lead to a more nuanced and precise account. The first objection revolves around a potential *reductio ad absurdum*. If the body schema is shareable, and, as Merleau-Ponty asserts, when we perceive another person we perceive their body schema,

[18] Merleau-Ponty (2010) claims knowing how to write with one's dominant hand makes it easier to learn to write with one's nondominant hand: "we find that learning is much faster if one has already learned with the right hand (habit transference)" (212).

[19] Scholars are currently investigating whether such schema sharing must occur in a face-to-face, in-person manner, or whether it can occur, for example, online. This issue cannot be addressed here, but I would refer interested readers to the following sources: Fuchs 2014, Osler 2020, Osler and Krueger 2021, Kim 2001.

then one might think that the tuning-in relation is trivially obtained in *any* person-to-person encounter.

This objection would overlook the difference between *observing* a body schema (but not *sharing* a body schema) and *using* a body schema (and thereby sharing it), as well as other distinctions that would allow us to grasp the body schema of another person without partaking in it. We can allow the possibility of recognizing the body schema of another person without participating in it ourselves. The difference between noticing and using a body schema might be appreciated by reflecting on the difference between watching a ballet as an audience member and participating in a parade during Latin American *Carnival*. In the former case, we observe the pattern of movements the dancer makes without altering our own motility reciprocally: observing the dancer's body schema without using it. In the latter case, by contrast, dancers in the parade demonstrate steps to the onlookers by grabbing their bodies and moving their limbs, using eye contact, facial expression, and gesture to transfer their schema to the onlooker who then joins in the procession: using the dancer's body schema as one's own.[20] Over-attributing the tuning-in relationship to any interpersonal situation whatsoever is not required if we maintain that it is possible to distinguish between ways of encountering the body schemas of others in ways that do not amount to sharing it. Respecting a distinction of this nature circumvents the *reductio*.

However, maintaining a distinction of this nature may not be viable for Merleau-Ponty.[21] If not, it would make my attempt to map the tuning-in relationship onto the sharing of a body schema (in Merleau-Ponty's sense) rather tenuous, because of the looming *reductio*. Is there a distinction in Merleau-Ponty between *noticing* or *recognizing* another person through their body schema and *sharing* that body schema? Consider a passage from the *Phenomenology of Perception* which begins with a description of another person coming into view (the other is noticed or recognized) and ends with the characterization of that other as "a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions," a description which implies a shared body schema:

> No sooner has my gaze fallen upon a living body in process of acting than the objects surrounding it immediately take on a fresh layer of significance . . . it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 353–54)

Does this not suggest that for Merleau-Ponty, as soon as another person comes into view, we immediately find ourselves sharing a body schema with that person? I do not think so. For what goes on in between the beginning and the end of the paragraph can be characterized precisely as a description of the very process of *tuning-in* whereby a heretofore un-shared (but noticed) schema becomes shared.

[20] This description comes from my experience of Carnival in Cuba in 2016.

[21] I appreciate the anonymous reviewer who helped me develop my thinking by challenging this point, and for the suggestion to consider the passage below.

The first phase of the interaction described in the passage above begins when the gaze has come upon a "living body in the process of acting" (353). As part of noticing this body in action, Merleau-Ponty (1962) recounts, the worldly objects involved in that action take on a meaning relative to it: "they are what this other pattern of behaviour is about to make of them" (316). What is happening in this stage of the interaction is the noticing of a body schema—a body schema includes the very pattern of worldly comportment by which these objects become meaningful in the ways described, and the objects themselves are part of the schema. Recognizing that the objects have taken on a fresh significance, one relative to the actions of the living body, Merleau-Ponty then begins to regard that body in a different way, one that serves as a midway stop along the route to the sharing of the body schema rather than merely noticing it. For we cannot yet say at this point that the schema is shared: there is no particular sense dawning for how Merleau-Ponty might interact with this other schema. All Merleau-Ponty is aware of at this stage is that the objects that heretofore had primarily significance relative to his own body schema have now been "sucked in" by the activity of the other: "Someone is making use of my familiar objects. But who can it be?" (353). Up until this point, it has only become clear ***that*** another body is acting in a space previously occupied only by Merleau-Ponty: the fact of another body schema has been registered, but what that body schema is doing and how Merleau-Ponty might interreact with it have yet to be appreciated and thus the schema is not shared in the relevant sense.

Turning toward the other, Merleau-Ponty (1962) then comes to recognize this living body in the process of using his things as "a second self," which he says he knows through the recognition of similitude: "I know this in the first place because this living body has the same structure as mine." But what structure does he mean? He describes the structure which both he and the other share as "the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world" (353–54). That is, he recognizes both in himself and in the other the power to behaviourally create a meaningful situation. This is a general recognition of the other as a schema-adopting being but does not yet constitute the sharing of a schema since the specificities of the schema are still not in view.

The next step is where the schema begins to be shared. Merleau-Ponty (1962) begins to detect the particular body schema of the other using his own body schema: "it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another." This step is distinct form the earlier one where the simple fact that his objects were, as he puts it, "no longer merely mine" was registered. There the description was of his own world being "sucked in" by the other: initially, it sounds like there is a question about the compatibility of the two schemas vis-à-vis the significance of their common objects, his things. In this step, the compatibility of the two distinct schemas towards their shared objects is negotiated. This is the tuning-in relationship after which point the schema should be thought of as shared. Merleau-Ponty (1962) writes: "it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world" (354). By tuning into the body schema of the other with his own body schema, he "discovers" a "miraculous" and "familiar" way of dealing with the world. The choice of words here emphasizes the degree of surprise with which Merleau-Ponty (1962)

registers that the two schemas are in fact compatible.[22] The other's schema is a "familiar" way of dealing with the world and the discovery of this is not something that can be taken for granted: it is "miraculous" (354). Breaking down the sequence of stages presented in this passage, starting from the noticing of a body schema to the sharing of it, it is possible to see more clearly that a tuning-in relationship that entails a shared body schema is not something we must, on Merleau-Ponty's account, invariably attribute to any case of body schematic interaction whatsoever. Here we see that a schema is initially observed and then, as a later step, becomes shared.

The second objection I want to consider similarly stems from attention to matters related to just when and how body schematic assumption, or "transfer," can occur, and compels us to question the conditions under which it happens. This objection can be grasped through a critique that Gail Weiss (2011) makes of Schütz:

> Although Schütz doesn't say this explicitly, his implication is that because human bodies share basic physiological similarities despite their manifest differences of age, sex, skin, hair, eye color, height, weight, and so on, there will be corresponding structural similarities in our temporal experiences. However, recent work by disability theorists has challenged even this rudimentary assumption. (172)

Weiss highlights the "question of incommensurable durées" (173) between what she, following disability theorist Rosemarie Garland Thomson, calls "normates," on the one hand, and those with disabilities who are not "able to draw upon the same basic motor capacities [as normates]" (172), on the other. The objection can also be framed, as it has been by Joshua St. Pierre (2015), as an issue concerning the "idealization of 'bodily time' by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schütz" (49). St. Pierre vividly depicts the experience of a disabled person forced to express himself within a temporal structure unsuited to the possibilities of his own embodied temporality: "[he] experiences a violent and persistent temporal decentering as he is folded into uncomfortable communicative rhythms and tempos woven around the bodily time of his interlocutors" (St. Pierre 2015, 49–50). If the tuning-in relationship characteristic of the "we" only obtains by sharing a body schema, is there no "we" possible for those who cannot inhabit the dominant we-engendering body schema? If this were true, then we would not be able to correctly say that it is any tuning-in relationship that engenders we-experiences, but only those that obtain within conditions of bodily sameness. The result that we-experiences could only occur through bodily sameness would be concerning. Therefore, we must try to meet this second objection that comes from disability theory.

[22] The passage in the French reads: "*c'est justement mon corps qui perçoit le corps d'autrui et il y trouve comme un prolongement miraculeux de ses propres intentions, une manière familière de traiter le monde*" (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 406).

DIFFERENCE IN BODY-SCHEMATIC TEMPORALITY: CONTINGENT EXCLUSION

The nature of the exclusionary tendencies contained in body-schematic tuning-in relationships can be clarified through the example of synchronization, on the one hand, and improvisation, on the other. I want to argue that it is not the notion of sharing a body schema *as such* that entails exclusion of bodily difference; the problem lies in the specifics of the schemas themselves, how they are generated, and how they are assumed. Through the example of synchronization, which I discuss as a mechanicalized synchronization, we will see how schemas that demand strict conformity, are pre-patterned (composed), and are assumed unidirectionally tend toward exclusion, while flexible schemas permitting deviance or variation, which are co-created in live-time (emergent), and which are assumed in a bidirectional fashion enable diverse bodies to enter a tuning-in relationship by sharing a single body schema. This is a way of showing that the Merleau-Pontian tuning-in relationship does not require bodily sameness nor is it exclusionary in principle. Merleau-Pontian body schemas, on my view, are capable of both synchronization and improvisation. I am contrasting synchronization and improvisation for the purpose of highlighting the features of particular body schemas that can tend towards exclusion and bodily conformity. The distinction between synchronization and improvisation, in general, is not absolute and they are not mutually exclusive as ways of enacting a Merleau-Pontian tuning-in relationship.

Music theorist Mariusz Kozak (2020) describes the experience of drumming to a metronome as "a forced time compliance" (119). When a drummer tries to synchronize with the rigid and inflexible temporal schema of a metronome, it does not allow for a two-way negotiation of temporality, a feature that in Kozak's view characterizes synchronization between humans. While Kozak contrasts mechanical synchronization with what he calls "human synchronization," I am going to draw attention to the ways that mechanical synchronization can also be found in human relationships. What Kozak calls "human synchronization" displays the bidirectional structure that I will, somewhat confusingly, associate with what is typical of improvisation. For Kozak, unlike mechanistical timing devices, human synchronization is a two-way negotiation between different bodily tempos (120). As we will see more fully below, two-way negotiation allows for the inherent bodily tempos of each party to shape the schema that both will share for a single collective musical act. Contrastingly, the rigid, pre-patterned, and unidirectional nature of the metronomic schema institutes a "forced time compliance" (119) that excludes bodies incapable of complying with its demands.

To see how the mechanical synchronization of the metronome can be reproduced in human synchronization, consider British monarch Queen Elizabeth's funeral procession from Westminster Abbey to Wellington Arch in London in September of 2022. Members of the cortege walked in step with the casket for what seemed like hours. They synchronized with a steady drumbeat, accented with timed bell chimes and gunshots, as well as with one another: marchers swayed left and right in concert as their synchronized footfalls matched a steady downbeat. In this scenario, individuals had little room to impact the

shared schema of the whole. A "forced time compliance" (Kozak 2020, 119) was in effect because the options available to any individual participant were limited to conformity or exclusion. One could finding a way of arranging oneself such that one would be in sync with the temporality of the shared schema; one could fall out of sync by expressing one's own bodily rhythms and tempos; or one could leave the cortege. There was no real possibility of individual temporal patterns shaping the operative temporality of the shared body schema. The schema used in the cortege demanded conformity, was pre-planned, and was unidirectionally assumed.

Contrastingly, collectively improvised music can be understood as a form of music whose schema emerges flexibly from the very act of playing itself, through the contributions of each player, in a bi-directional fashion. Kozak (2020) calls the way players participate in improvised schemas "complimentarity," which he contrasts with the demands of synchronization, dubbed "concurrence." "In contrast to concurrence," Kozak writes, "complementarity is a dynamic spatiotemporal network within which each participating body . . . is able to account for some, but not all, of the resulting structure" (120). Complementarity makes sense as an orientation for participation in collective free improvisations since such musicking invites contributions that participants find suitable in the moment, rather than those pre-planned in the interest of determinate aesthetic goals. Collective improvisation institutes "structures of behaviour," as Matthias Solli and Thomas Netland (2021) have recently noted, which are "embedded in how musicians listen to each other and how they distribute initiatives within a musical collective" (497). A brief look at the origins of collective free improvisation will serve to illuminate how the practice exemplifies the use of flexible, emergent, and bidirectionally assumed body schemas.

Contemporary practices are influenced by two lineages of improvisatory playing, the European avant-guard tradition and the African-American jazz tradition.[23] In the former case, practitioners wished "to envision improvisation, particularly in its freer manifestations, as emerging from nowhere, a tabula rasa" (Borgo 2022, 77). But beyond a mere collection of individual sound emissions, free improvisation aims at matters of collective structure, as musician Ann Farber explains:

> Our aim is to play together with the greatest possible freedom—which, far from meaning without constraint, actually means to play together with sufficient skill and communication to be able to select proper constraints *in the course of the piece*, rather than being dependent on precisely chosen ones. (Borgo 2002, 167)

Free improvisation in this sense may attempt to *start* from a position free of conventions in some respects, but it does not operate in the absence of a schema altogether: in fact, they are in the process of being made and used within the play itself.

Lucia Angelino (2019) has recently described how the form of collective free improvisation emerges through "a free proliferation of actions and their subsequent

[23] See Lewis 1996.

pruning" (204). Referring to the piano improviser Keith Jarrett, Angelino (2019) articulates this process in a step-by-step fashion:

> The first step consists in just acting and generating multiple options to begin with. The second step consists in selecting among possibilities previously produced at random, then assessing the results and seizing significant structures of action. The third step consists in seizing the developing situation as a framework that narrows down the options for action with regard to what is relevant and what is not. The fourth and final step consists in continuing intentionally what is already started. (220)

While this articulation of the process of improvisation in some ways seems too abstracted and linear to be convincing as a description of the lived experience of improvising, it nevertheless reiterates that free improvisation begins without a shared schema, and proceeds interactively to create one that is used for the duration of the piece. My experience improvising on the flute in a collective free improvisation at the bi-yearly Sound Symposium Festival in St. John's Newfoundland reinforces this view as well.

At the Sound Symposium, our improvising proceeded by gathering and positioning ourselves optimally for seeing and hearing one another on stage.[24] We cultivated a silence that lasted until someone made a sound and another person responded to it. The rest of us observed this interaction between the two initial sounds and took note of the pattern between them: what did the second tone emphasize in the first? Tone colour? Rhythm? Tonality? Volume? Others join in by contributing to this initial interaction: they might *heighten* it harmonically, *recognize* it through contrast, they might build a rhythm, or make space for others. Watching and listening, offering and responding was how the flexible, adaptive, and bidirectionally assumed shared schema was created and used.

What makes these actions an act of schematic creation and use can be seen in Matthieu Saladin's (2012) description of improvisatory listening:

> the improviser is not simply listening to the present situation, but through it, in collective improvisation, he/she is also listening to the listening of partners and the audience . . . the improviser is not only listening to the music that the other improvisers are producing with him/her on stage, not simply paying attention to their gestures which become sound, but . . . he/she is also listening to their listening. (Saladin 2012, 46)

Saladin is highlighting that the improvisers in the circle are listening to the listening of others, which in Merleau-Pontian terms means *paying attention to their individual body schemas*. Listening to the listening means paying attention to the body schemas of each participant with the specific purpose of including that schema in the play: it is using that individual body schema, in part, to influence the pattern of sounding, generating a shared

[24] This performance occurred in the summer of 2014; the performers were students in the Summer School of the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation.

schema such that "each participating body . . . is able to account for some, but not all, of the resulting structure," to reiterate Kozak's (2020, 120) definition of complementarity. Solli and Netland (2021) likewise note the foundational role of mutual listening in schematic emergence occurring in jazz improvisation: "the temporal organization emerges *in-between* subjects listening to each other in joint musical attention" (493).[25]

Jazz improvisation is the other ancestor of contemporary improvisational practices and derives from the African American jazz tradition (arguably the better-known lineage of improvisation in music). In this tradition, improvisation traditionally *does* start from "standards" and idiomatic American and European music but does not merely *follow* those patterns: they are permutated and experimented with in ways that highlight the two-way mode of schematic adoption characteristic of improvisation. Schemas are not assumed in a unidirectional fashion, nor are they strictly adhered without deviation:

> if too many references to traditional musical idioms creep into a performance or an underlying harmonic character or tempo lingers for too long, many improvisers will immediately begin to search for more uncharted and uncertain musical terrain. (Borgo 2022, 127)

This quotation underscores the point that improvised schemas permit deviance or variation, and seek it, even after a schema has been created (emergently) and assumed (bidirectionally).[26]

Through these vignettes of collective free improvisation in music, a paradigm for shared body schemas has been offered that would seem to meet the demand from disability theory that we account for bodily difference. The objection that sharing time through sharing a body schema assumes bodily sameness, then, primarily applies to body schemas that are rigid, pre-planned, and unidirectionally assumed (only bodies with an existing habituation to that particular schema will be able to participate in any we-experience that comes from sharing it). By contrast, schemas permitting deviance or variation, which are co-created in live-time (emergent), and which are assumed in a bidirectional fashion, permit all who participated in its creation to share in it and its endogenous temporality. With this qualification in mind, then, we can conclude that Merleau-Ponty's body-schematic temporality provides a suitable alternative to Husserl's notion of inner time for the purposes of conceptualizing the basis of we-experiences in shared time.

I hope in this section to have shown that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy does not assume bodily sameness, and to have provided an explanation for why it may nevertheless appear to do so: schemas that are rigid, pre-planned, and unidirectionally assumed tend to demand bodily sameness. St. Pierre's (2015) critique of Merleau-Ponty, in my view, is valuable

[25] It should be noted that Solli and Netland (2021) insist on a distinction between amateur and expert musicians, a distinction I am not committed to in this paper. For them, expert jazz musicians "explicitly train to be sensitive to *pluralisms* of interrelated temporal organizations unfolding *together* in real-time polyphonic communication" (496).

[26] While it cannot be explored here, it would be an interesting area of future research to consider Merleau-Ponty's theory of expression vis-à-vis collective free improvisation. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

for highlighting the perils of using rigid, pre-planned, and unidirectionally assumed body schemas, but does not establish the impossibility of sharing time across bodily difference for Merleau-Ponty. Similarly, an ambiguous passage from Merleau-Ponty himself, although appearing to demand bodily sameness, should be read otherwise. In the passage I analyzed earlier where Merleau-Ponty (1962) claims to recognize the other as "a second self" in so far as "this living body has the same structure as mine," the structure in question is not the body-at-this moment nor even the body schema as such: it is the general structure of being an intentional creature with "the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world" that is recognized as the same (353–54). This power is not reducible to any specific body configuration (nor, of course, independent of them) and can be itself recognized while at the same time bodily difference appreciated. Therefore, despite there being reason to suspect Merleau-Ponty of assuming bodily sameness, this suspicion is not, finally, definitive.

CONCLUSION

One of the quasi-transcendental structures conditioned by systemic intersectional oppressions shaping our experienced reality is the body schema, and its entrenched derivative, the habit body. In this paper, I have developed an account of we-experiences that explicitly accounts for such structures unlike what would be possible without a Merleau-Pontian re-reading of Schütz's (1972) tuning-in relationship. Schütz's account otherwise relies too heavily on Husserl's fully transcendental and individualistic notion of an unshareable inner-time consciousness. If we follow Schütz's general intention to ground we-experiences in a shared temporality while relying on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) body schematic notion of temporality as a "network of intentionalities" to permit such sharing, we bring these intersectional quasi-transcendental structures into the very heart of our account of the we-experience (417). Doing so forces us to grapple with challenging questions about power, embodiment, diversity, and collectivity that do not arise if we fail take such structures into account. I have drawn on the example of collective free improvisation in an attempt to illustrate how the conception of shared time that I am putting forward might work if we do not assume bodily sameness, and instead seek to create flexible, emergent, bidirectional schemas that reduce the exclusionary tendencies observed in, for example, extreme versions of synchronization. The schemas emergent in collective free improvisation are not the only instances of shared body schemas that permit of diverse bodily motilities, however, and there can be little doubt that bringing other such instances into focus would deepen our appreciation for progressive, diverse, and inclusive modes in which to have we-experiences.

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ETHICS FOR THE DEPRESSED: ARGUING WITH "S"

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I have a friend, "S," who also struggles with depression. They are intelligent, charismatic, funny, and generous. I love them very much. But I think that they have difficulty following through on long-term goals or projects, and I worry that they are frustrated by, and feel undeserved shame about, their struggles. Their days may be disrupted and their time consumed by episodes of deep listlessness, during which they describe themselves as feeling unmotivated and yet bored, both unable to act and dissatisfied with passivity. They have sought treatment for depression but, thus far, it has not been sufficient.

Recently, I had an argument with S about how they might respond to these episodes. I claimed, basically, that exploring different treatments might be worth trying despite the possibly considerable cost and effort involved. Their primary objection was not to my weighing of costs and benefits. Rather, they objected to the notion that the problem was at all internal to them. They are hopeless, they claimed, because the world is without hope.

I will call my rendering of their argument, in S's honor, the "I Am Going to Become the Joker" argument, or The Joker Argument for short. In the hope that it will entertain S, and readers generally, I now present it in the style of a melodramatic comic book villain:

> Look at the world around us. Inequality of opportunity and outcome is extreme. Frauds and grifters prey unobstructed on anyone who relaxes their vigilance. Disease runs rampant. Soon, climate change will ravage the earth until we spiral into war and famine. Politicians do nothing and will continue to do nothing as they feed from the festering trough of the wealthy.
>
> In this world, still, I have tried to pursue my ambitions, to realize my dreams. I have failed. Of course, I have failed. This world is designed to deny our success. I am not to blame. Yet in one last spiteful mark of this world's injustice, I cannot help but bear the shame.

> You say that I am compelled by depression to some irrational conclusion. But there is nothing irrational about my response to this world. The world is hopeless, and my hopelessness is a rational recognition of its hopelessness. I am right to be hopeless. You are wrong to hope.

One may reasonably find this argument either moving or silly. But I think that it is powerful in an unsettling way, in part because it is premised on a pessimism about the world that may more accurately predict the future than optimism. It is also fatally flawed by a missing premise. Because S is a logical person, my case to them benefits from formalizing their claims.

In examining my formalization of S's argument, we may discern the structure of depressive thought. In observing what is missing from this structure, we may identify what depression tends to hide from depressed persons and what, more broadly, it tends to compel from them. Only once we understand what depression compels will we determine what, if anything, can come of arguing with S.

Figure 1. The author's rendering of S. (The author has not seen the movie, just its memes.)

THE JOKER ARGUMENT

What follows is a formalized and simplified version of S's argument. If you are unfamiliar with formalized arguments, do not be too concerned if you find it dense and difficult to understand at first. I will go through it step by step. If you are familiar with formalized arguments and find them tedious, please be patient. Simple claims lead to novel conclusions.

My formalization of the Joker Argument initially involves three premises and three conclusions:

1) **Premise 1.** If, for S, success in their hoped-for goals is impossible, then hope is, for S, irrational.

2) **Premise 2.** Only a select few may succeed in their hoped-for goals. For all others, the "unfortunate," success in their hoped-for goals is impossible.

3) **Premise 3.** S is a member of the unfortunate, not the select few.

4) **Conclusion 1** (*from Premise 2 and Premise 3*). For S, success in their hoped-for goals is impossible.

5) **Conclusion 2** (*from Premise 1 and Conclusion 1*). Hope is, for S, irrational.

6) **Conclusion 3** (*from Conclusion 2*). S should not hope.

To maintain our focus on S, I have not represented S's claim that I am wrong to hope. My central question will be if Conclusion 3 follows from the stated premises, or in other words, if the Joker Argument successfully shows that S should not hope. I also have not included a striking but ambiguous phrase that S employs: "the world is hopeless." I will return to that phrase. First, let us consider these three premises.

Going forward, I will assume for the sake of argument that all three stated premises are true. But we should note that there are good reasons to doubt them all.

PREPARING TO REFUTE THE JOKER ARGUMENT

Premise 1 links the rationality of action to the possibility of its success. This might be reductive or overly simplistic. Perhaps someone could, for example, rationally decide to pursue an impossible goal for the sake of experiencing the journey rather than reaching an unreachable destination. The truth of Premise 1 thus depends on what one means by "rational."

But if we understand the term "rational" to imply the possibility of success, then Premise 1 will necessarily be true. Since we are going to assume that Premise 1 is true, let us then take the term "rational" to imply the possibility of success, at least in the case of what is called means-end or instrumental reasoning, that being the capacity to formulate plans of action that are as likely to be successful as is possible.

Premise 2 distinguishes the select few, who may possibly succeed, from the unfortunate, who will never succeed. This claim suffers from being both excessively absolute and excessively vague. First, "success is impossible" is a sweeping claim that is at least difficult, if not itself impossible, to justify compared to a more moderate claim like "success is highly unlikely." Second, its morbidly hierarchical vision of the world admits of no alternative communities where better equality of opportunity and outcome may exist. This seems narrow-minded at best.

But these absolutist assumptions, while highly dubious when viewed in this light, may still seem intuitive. For example, if S hopes for wealth or love, the globe-spanning reality of severe economic inequality or viciously demanding beauty standards could plausibly motivate a belief that the difference between the haves and have-nots is basically immutable, which is another way of expressing Premise 2.

Even so, the extent to which S's hopes will be obstructed by the world will depend on what specifically S hopes for. To take another example, imagine that S hopes instead for self-acceptance in an unjust and hostile world. Self-acceptance can be very difficult to attain or maintain, but it is still plausible that changing one's own mind is easier than changing the minds of many others. Arguably, then, Premise 2 is excessively absolutist: it flattens all hoped-for goals such that they appear equally unattainable. It is thus also vague as to whether some hoped-for goals might be more successfully pursued than others, even in an unjust or what S calls a "hopeless" world.

This problem of vagueness will then affect the truth of Premise 3, the claim that S is one of the unfortunate or have-nots. Whether S is personally likely to succeed in S's hoped-for goals may depend on what those specific goals are. Perhaps someone is a member of the "select few" in some contexts and an "unfortunate" in others, rather than simply being one or the other in all contexts. Premise 3 implicitly rejects this possibility, but it is plausible.

But let us grant all three premises for the sake of argument. Despite their problems, we will assume for now that they are true. We have a better target: Conclusion 3 itself.

Before we take aim at this target and develop a counterargument to S, there is a general definitional question that we will benefit from answering. What does S mean by "hope"? What, then, did S mean by saying that "the world is hopeless"? Has my formalization of S's argument adequately captured their meaning?

My account thus far understands hope in a standard sense as goal-directed or "intentional." Intentional hope is a motive or reason to pursue goals that emphasizes the possibility of success over the possibility of failure. An intentionally hopeful person is hopeful because they either 1) believe that they will likely succeed in their hoped-for goals or 2) simply do not dwell overmuch on the possibility of failure to achieve their hoped-for goals. This definition presumes, I think fairly, that the relevance of hope to a depressed person has to do not just with its affect, or how it feels to be hopeful or not, but with its relation to action. Intentional hope may facilitate goal-directed action and its absence may inhibit it. Because the intentional hopelessness of a depressed person may function as an obstacle to action, hopelessness may appear as a ***problem***, as it apparently does to S.

I note that the term "intentional," as in "intentional hope," has an unconventional meaning borrowed from phenomenology and linguistics: it means "directed towards something" or "about something." For example, fear is fear *of* something and intentional hope is hope *for* something. In contrast, we can understand physical pain as just being a sensation that is not "about" anything, even if it is located in specific parts of the body. Such pain has causes, like injury, but these painful experiences are not "directed towards" or "about" its causes (which may be unknown or absent) in the same sense that fear or intentional hope are "directed towards" or "about" their objects.

This becomes a key insight if we recall the striking phrase I mentioned: "the world is hopeless." If intentional hope is directed toward something, then the claim "the world is hopeless" is presumably directed toward "the world." But what is S referring to by the phrase "the world"? Their surroundings? Their society? The planet Earth? The universe? If S's hopelessness is a response to the world, then to know if there is any solution to S's problem, we have to know what "the world" refers to.

Perhaps S is just saying: "the way things are, broadly speaking, makes it irrational for me to intentionally hope." If so, that claim resembles Conclusion 1, which states that success in S's hoped-for goals is impossible. In this case, we have already included the idea behind the claim that "the world is hopeless" in the Joker Argument, and nothing more need be said.

I think that S is trying to express something else with the phrase "the world is hopeless," and that S's argument hides a second definition of hope that neither I nor S have yet explored. But before I can convincingly demonstrate this, we must return to S's argument and what I have called our "better target."

REFUTING THE JOKER ARGUMENT

Conclusions 1 and 2 of the Joker Argument seem to logically follow from the premises. According to Premises 2 and 3, S, as a member of the "unfortunate," cannot succeed in their hoped-for goals. Thus, according to Premise 1, hope is, for S, irrational. So far, so good.

But does Conclusion 3 logically follow from Conclusion 2? Does it logically follow from hope being irrational for S that S should not hope?

No, it does not. There is a missing premise:

5.5) **Premise 4.** If hope is, for S, irrational, then S should not hope.

This is not just any old missing premise. It is the crucial move to the normative, to what one should do, from the descriptive, or what is the case. Premise 4 is logically necessary to make the move from the descriptive ("is") Conclusions 1 and 2 to the normative ("should") Conclusion 3.

Just because something is the case does not mean it should be the case. If I were to say, "Yes, our unequal world is divided into the unfortunate and select few, and we should accept that," you might fairly respond, "Wait, why accept it?" Even if my description of what "is" the case is correct, that description alone does not determine what we "should" do. I am missing some additional justification.

How is Premise 4 justified? How do we know that if hope is irrational, S therefore should not hope?

The Joker Argument is invalid without Premise 4, because Premise 4 is necessary to logically conclude what S "should" do from what S claims "is" the case. But Premise 4 does not include its own justification. Behind the claim "if hope is, for S, irrational, then S should not hope," there ought to be some criterion for what counts as a good reason for hoping. It is not clear what that criterion is.

Premise 4 is weak, and it is where I would strike. Consider a counterexample: the existentialist as depicted in Albert Camus's (2018) *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

THE EXISTENTIALIST'S ARGUMENT AS A COUNTEREXAMPLE

The existentialist believes, basically, that their hoped-for goals are irrational, just as S says. All our acts will be forgotten, all our works will turn to dust, and all meaning is ephemeral, ever slipping through our fingers. Even so, the existentialist chooses to act. It is *because* acting to pursue their hoped-for goals is irrational that, therefore, the only reasons to act must be the existentialist's own. No principles or traditions may constrain or guide them. In being completely bereft of any external affirmation that could truly justify their existence, the existentialist believes themselves to be truly free, choosing to continue existing entirely by their own will.

The experience of choosing to act without an external reason to justify action becomes the experience of radical freedom, which they take to be valuable of their own volition. Thus, absurdly, heroically, the existentialist pursues their goals, like the mythical Sisyphus pushing a boulder up a slope forever, repeating endlessly, achieving nothing that endures.

A formalized sketch of the existentialist's argument might go:

1) **Premise A**. If success in hoped-for goals is ultimately impossible, then hope is irrational or absurd.

2) **Premise B**. Success in hoped-for goals is ultimately impossible.

3) **Conclusion A** (*from Premises A and B*). Hope is irrational or absurd.

3) **Premise C**. One should do what is absurd, as an expression of radical freedom.

5) **Conclusion B** (*from Premise C and Conclusion A*). One should hope, as an expression of radical freedom.

This is a valid argument: the conclusions logically follow from the premises. Of course, this does not mean that the premises are true. We do not have to agree with the existentialist as I have portrayed them here. The question is how this existentialist could coherently argue for "hope" given our previous definition of intentional hope.

Hope has taken on a different meaning in the existentialist's argument. Recall that intentional hope involves an emphasis on the possibility of success over the possibility of failure. The existentialist does not believe in the possibility of success. By that definition, it would be incorrect to call them hopeful.

The existentialist's version of hope is a second definition of hope, the one that I believe to have been hidden in S's argument. This "existential hope," in contrast to intentional hope, is not hope for success or any specific achievement. Instead, it represents the existentialist's broad assertion, for them unjustifiable on the grounds of any external reason, that their own freely chosen action is valuable regardless of its success or failure. We might say that the existentialist hopes against hope: they justify existential hope for the sake of freedom, even when intentional hope cannot be justified. To try and fail, over and over, forever, may be understood as guided by and expressive of existential hope.

My point is not that the existentialist's argument is right and that S's is wrong. My point is that *it is not obvious that S is right and that the existentialist is wrong*. S argues that the world gives them their reasons to be hopeless. But if the existentialist is right, then S could instead respond to the same circumstances with absurd hope. For S's argument to hold, the existentialist, who is existentially hopeful in an intentionally hopeless world, must somehow be refuted. If the existentialist's response is a valid alternative to the Joker's, then the Joker Argument is not convincing.

I have chosen the example of the existentialist strategically. I have not merely targeted S's Premise 4—the claim that if hope is irrational, one should not hope—because I think it is the weakest premise. I have targeted it because I think S will be sympathetic to the existentialist who is its counterexample, and I am playing on their sentiments. The existentialist is a romantic figure. I predict that S will admire the existentialist, even desire to be like them, yet feel powerless to do so.

Why do they feel powerless? That question is what I want to direct their attention towards. If there is no *reason* that the existentialist is wrong to hope against hope, what is the *cause* of S's feeling of powerlessness to, say, emulate them? Both S and the existentialist seem to see themselves as being powerless to make the world a better place in which to pursue their goals. But why, then, does this absurd world, which seems for the existentialist to provide a reason to act, seem obviously to S to be a *reason for inaction*?

I may now reformulate my original claim to S, that different treatments for depression may be worth pursuing despite the costs and risks. Recall that S objected to this recommendation because it implies that at least some cause of their hopelessness was distinct to them rather than purely a rational response to a hopeless world, which treatment of S would not change. Let us grant that all the causes of S's feelings of powerlessness are external or shared with the hypothetical existentialist, relating to the hopelessness or absurdity of the world, and that none are internal or distinct to S, in the sense of being related to brain chemistry or trauma. I will soon qualify these notions of "internal" and "external," but some minimal distinction like this is needed to understand what S's argument has missed. Namely: the cause of the feeling of powerlessness *seeming to obviously be a reason for inaction* must be at least partly *internal*.

This is because the existentialist and S differ in their responses to their equally hopeless or absurd external worlds. If causes of action are either internal or external and there is no external difference between the worlds of S and the existentialist, and yet their actions differ, it follows that there must be some internal difference between them.

The Joker Argument fails fundamentally because, in failing to distinguish between intentional and existential hope, it fails to diagnose S's problems. It could be true that, as its three premises state, none of S's hoped-for goals are achievable. It could be true that the world is a tragic, farcical place where the success of the few exists to taunt the many for whom failure is punished and guaranteed. In such a world, intentional hope is absurd.

But the example of the existentialist shows that S's problem is not just the absurdity of intentional hope. Rather, S's central problem is that they seem to lack the existential hope that motivates the existentialist even in the absence of rational intentional hope. In other words, it may be a problem that "the world is hopeless" in the conventional sense, or that the world is such that intentional hope is irrational. But it is also, separately, a problem that S is hopeless, or that S is such that they seem to lack the existentialist's existential hope.

S's argument arises from a fixation on the consequences of their actions, specifically, their estimation of how likely they are to succeed. They are overpowered by a fear of shame and pain stemming from failure, unable to fully accept or reject the societal standards that define success. As I mentioned when we first surveyed the premises of the Joker Argument, their estimation of their chances of success in their goals seems skewed by excessive absolutism and vagueness. But as we have now seen, even *if* their three premises are correct, their conclusion does not follow. If they could think like an existentialist, they could justify action even if success were impossible. But they do not. Maybe they cannot.

In the end, then, the problem is not really that success is impossible. The problem is that "the world," everything and anything, seems fragile, fearful, drained of color. All that appears to S is the prospect of disgrace and punishment. In S's state, the actual features of the world are beside the point. The world is hopeless. That is, S is hopeless, and the world is all that appears to S.

Now, I must be very clear here. First, S did not choose to be hopeless and is not to blame for their hopelessness. Even if S could eventually come to "think like an existentialist," assuming anyone can or should, I expect that this would involve a process of habituation, not simply choosing to become more hopeful and calling it a day. To claim or even to imply otherwise is cruel and unfair to S. The purpose of this argument is to take S's claims seriously in the process of refuting them, not to assign blame.

Second, I am not claiming that the internal causes of S's inaction are "more important" than the external causes, just different. We can agree that the intentional hopelessness of the world, the unjust way it undermines the hopes of the unfortunate, is a serious problem. My point is simply this: an external problem may require external solutions, by which I mean, actions to change the world, if possible. An internal problem may require internal solutions, including indirect approaches like, say, different medication or therapies. Furthermore, individual responses to internal problems, like seeking different medication or therapies, may be more likely to succeed than individual responses to external problems, like trying to change the world on one's own.

This is just to say that some hoped-for goals, like self-acceptance, may, even if they are still very difficult, be more likely to succeed than others, like creating a fairer world. This claim conflicts with the absolutism of S's Premise 2. But I think it may still seem reasonable to S.

Third, the internal-external causal distinction that I just presented has limits: not all causes of action or depression are easily categorized in those terms. For example, so-called internal causes like brain chemistry or trauma may be responses to or activated by one's environment. To call them "internal" is just to say that one "carries" them into different contexts or circumstances. I relied on the distinction to show how S and the existentialist are different even though their circumstances seem to be the same, i.e., hopeless.

But some of the features that one "carries," like one's body, are visible to others in a way that complicates these categories. To take another example, one's physical appearance may consistently trigger hostility or cruelty from others. This is "carried" like an internal cause, but it is others, external to oneself, who are causing the problems. This is just to say that we should not take the internal-external distinction too far. It is only sometimes useful.

Finally, as I think their thoughtful argument shows, S is very reasonable. Yet they *still* compulsively and unknowingly assert Premise 4. They erroneously take their assertion of an ostensible fact or descriptive claim, that it is impossible for them to succeed, to be a normative reason for inaction, despite the valid counterexample of the existentialist. Let us examine this point more closely.

LEAPS AND COMPULSIONS

There is nothing necessarily objectionable about taking facts to obviously be reasons, at least in practice. I do so all the time. If I perceive a dangerous object to be hurtling at me at dangerous speeds, I do not have to reflectively conclude that I have a reason to get out of the way. My mind takes a shortcut around conscious thought to protect me. I may be leaping aside before I even understand what I am doing. Moreover, although I did not choose to leap, I will judge afterwards that it was good to leap. This leap is consistent with my desires and beliefs regarding my own self-preservation.

Here is a useful way of understanding practical reasoning. If we understand "acting rationally" in a purely reflective sense, to mean "reflectively endorsing a reason for action," then my instinctive leap would not be a rational act. I did not, in that moment, choose to value my self-preservation and then deliberately act on that choice. But if we understand "acting rationally" to mean, in a more practical sense, "acting in accordance with reasons that one would reflectively endorse," then even an instinctive act like my leap is rational.

True, my mind took a shortcut from the factual claim of "there is a threat" to the action of "avoid it" without deliberating about what that *fact* is a *reason* to do. But even if my leap is not "from" reasons, because it was instinctive and not reflective, it is "in accordance" with reasons of self-preservation that I would reflectively endorse (for example, that I would judge afterwards to be good reasons). Thus, though I was *caused* to leap, my leap is fairly called rational.

Note that I have distinguished between causes and reasons. Outside of the context of ethics, it is typical to use the terms "cause" or "motive," on the one hand, and "reason," on the other, interchangeably. The interrogative word "why" is ambiguous between causes

and reasons. Both a cause and a reason are "why" something might happen. If I am asked "why" I leapt aside, I will explain that I was dodging the object. It will not matter in this context that I was compelled by instinct, a causal force, to move and that I did not choose, by reflectively endorsing a justifying reason, to move. My answer is an appropriate and acceptable response.

But imagine that instead of leaping, I am hitting someone, and when I am asked why, I respond, "Because I was angry." This is an explanation, but it is not an excuse. My listener may understand my meaning, but it does not follow that they agree that my action was acceptable. In this ethical context, which is the *normative* context of reasons that is the primary theme of ethics, the distinction between causes and reasons is essential and necessary. Anger may be an understandable *cause* of or *motive* for someone hitting someone else, but it is not therefore a good *reason* to accept them doing so.

Now imagine that instead of leaping to dodge, I am leaping seemingly at random. What if this leap is not consistent with my desires and beliefs? That is, what if I do not want to leap and do not think it is a good idea, but find myself doing so anyway? I will then find myself having already acted in ways contrary to those desires and beliefs. I will have to react not just to the world but to myself, attempting to correct my own actions after the fact so that they conform to my desires and beliefs. I will have to move back to my previous location after cleaning up whatever mess I have made by leaping in some random direction at some random time. This will require additional effort from me and will likely involve some embarrassment, even if (I dread to even mention the possibility) no one has been hurt.

What if I find myself leaping, inconsistent with my desires and beliefs, over and over? I will then constantly be reacting to my own actions, struggling to resist myself like I am my own adversary. Eventually, even as I consistently perceive the threats to me as being from without, I may come to suspect that the threats to me are coming from within, that some alien force has already infiltrated me. My presumptive boundary between an external world of possible threats and obstructions and an internal world of freedom and security will seem to degrade. I will become at once hypervigilant and exhausted. No amount of vigilance will be enough to forestall the activation of a cognitive shortcut that takes over before I can think.

In the context of depression, I will call this sort of cognitive shortcut a "compulsion." The compulsive move from the fact of a threat to a reason to evade seems useful for rapid response in self-preservation. But imagine that a person who is otherwise reasonable may experience the presence of a threat at any time, regardless of if one is present. The self-preserving reaction of aversion will trigger, again and again, and every time this person will have to ask: is something out there? This time, what if my instincts are right? I'd better wait. I'd better hide. I'd better just lie still for a while. After all, what is the alternative but inching forward, my every synapse crackling and every nerve straining, telling me over and over I'm in danger from a threat that must be there even if there is no other evidence?

In this story, the mind makes just one error: either some assertion or some sense that a threat is present, one that makes the possible failure of prospective action seem both

punishing and practically guaranteed. This threat may come to mind in any number of ways. It may stick to any object of one's perception or reflection. It may be fear of the shadows, or fear of getting out of bed, or fear of the shame of failure, or fear of one's fearfulness being noticed and being shamed for inaction, or fear of what one's fearfulness says about one's own character. It may seem to switch between these fears or to be all of them at once. This is because it does not matter what the fear is of. To turn to metaphor: the mind has already decided that there is a threat. The heart is left to sort out the rest.

I take the invalidity of S's argument to represent and reveal the operation of distinct depressive compulsions interfering with their reasoning. But maybe it would be a mistake to take S to be an exemplar of depression. I have, admittedly in jest, presented S as villainous. Yet depressed persons are not generally villains. I take my caricature of S to represent one possible, and especially defiant, response to a general sense of precarity and isolation, one that may also manifest as anxious paralysis or retreat. If depression may be fairly, if very loosely, defined in reference to this deep sense of precarity and isolation, then my argument with S is useful in identifying compulsions most significant in depression. A depressed person may not identify with S. But they may empathize with S or have had such thoughts themselves at least once.

That said, depression is not necessarily compulsive. Inaction, despair, dread, and rumination are understandable responses to the seeming impossibility of success or inevitability of punishment, and there may be contexts of extreme brutality or injustice in which success really is impossible and punishment for failure really is inevitable. Even if existential hope might remain a valid response to such a desolate context in theory, in practice one probably cannot flip a switch and become Sisyphus. That is, one may be depressed or demoralized just because of external causes, unlike S. My account of the compulsive causes behind S's argument would not apply to such a person.

Even so, I venture that this person is likely to be traumatized by that context. Made cruelly aware of their vulnerability to being put in hopeless situations, habits of vigilance and doubt would color their experiences of less brutal or unjust circumstances, introducing a sense of threat where before it was absent and suppressing hope where before it was possible. If this is true, then these defensive habits or trauma responses could constitute new internal causes of depression, "carried" into different contexts. Because I posit that trauma responses to external causes of depression produce compulsions like S's, and because compulsions explain the specific flaws or gaps in S's argument for hopelessness, I take S to be an exemplar of depression and focus on the compulsions of the depressed.

Let us identify the compulsions most significant in depression, then. First, of course, there is Premise 4, the jump from the impossibility of success to the imperative of inaction. But there is also Premise 2, the initial assertion of the impossibility of success. As I noted, "impossible" is a sweeping claim.

I propose that S does not really think that successfully acting toward their hopes is impossible, or at least, they do not *just* think so. I suspect that they already have thoughtful plans for action that involve reasonable estimations of success. But even if they do have

these plans, Premise 2 overrides them, effectively rendering them irrelevant. Thus, S may come to both believe and disbelieve in the possibility of success.

The absolutism and vagueness of Premise 2 is, like Premise 4, the product of compulsion. It is like the threat that seems to come from everywhere and nowhere, at once absolute and vague, disrupting action and destroying hope.

ETHICS FOR THE DEPRESSED

The intuitive leap from facts to reasons—from observing a state of affairs to taking that state of affairs to give us a reason to act—may be self-preserving, as when I dodge. Thus, it is not necessarily destructive. It may even be the beginning of ethical reasoning as such. But S is making two specific leaps, first from the unlikeliness of success to the impossibility of success, and then from the impossibility of success to the imperative not to try. The point is not that S is wrong. The point is that S, who is otherwise reasoning carefully, is making these leaps anyway.

These leaps are S's internal problem, distinct from any problems posed by the absurdity of the world. This problem has two aspects, the first descriptive and second normative: it is the compulsion to leap 1) from the seeming unlikeliness of success to the seemingly certain impossibility of success, and then 2) from the seemingly certain impossibility of success to the imperative of inaction.

But now we have a new problem. Let us assume that all that I have said is correct. S is thus under a compulsion to assert Premises 2 and 4. So what have I achieved by arguing with them? Haven't I suggested that S already, on some level, believes that Premise 2 is false? Yet S has asserted Premise 2 anyway. If S's self-refutation is ineffective, why would my refutation be effective? How could arguing with S change their mind?

This objection is not to my argument but to my attempt to argue with S. Again, S is a very reasonable person. But Premises 2 and 4 are not responsive to reasons, theirs or mine. In arguing, I am being stubborn at best and cruel at worst, myself compulsively philosophizing.

Point taken. Yet I think it is possible for this argument to achieve at least two things:

> 1) **Exhortation through Description**. S concluded that the world gives them sufficient reason for inaction. I have demonstrated this to be false by refuting Premise 4. Now, even if S compulsively asserts Premise 2 and 4, if S recognizes them as being compulsive assertions, their attitude toward these premises may change. S may come to view them as internal threats to hope and thus acknowledge that there are internal, and not just external, threats to hope. Then, perhaps S will be motivated to seek new methods of easing their compulsive power. Even if S cannot choose to be more hopeful, there may yet be treatments or coping mechanisms that will ease their

episodes of hopelessness, thereby enabling them to better act in accord with their other desires and beliefs.

Now, the idea that I may "motivate" S might seem strange, since one might think that S, being depressed, lacks any desire to seek solutions to their internal problems. But in my telling, S's problem arises from two specific compulsive mental leaps. Desire was not mentioned. It is thus entirely possible that S retains all the desires that provide them the motivation to pursue and value their goals. S's problem would then only seem to be a "lack of motivation." Rather, *S would be motivated but effectively unable to act* due to the compulsive and absolute assertion of the impossibility of any action's success. This would explain why S, in depression, is bored and dissatisfied, yet does not act. S may feel as though they lack desire, that they "do not care." But they only suffer because they desire, because they care.

2) **Exhortation through Prescription**. This is a riskier bet. Perhaps S will only feel frustrated with me or with themselves as our argument collides impotently with Premises 2 and 4. Perhaps S will feel disrespected, victimized, betrayed, or humiliated by the experience that I will seem to have inflicted. But there is another option. S may also feel respected because I am taking S seriously. I am treating S not merely as sick or confused but as making an argument worthy of consideration. Arguing with S will likely not be enough to change S's mind, because some of S's premises are the products of compulsion. Worse still, it is possible that by showing S that there is a hypothetical way forward from their position (that being the indirect rejection, through treatment or coping mechanisms, of Premises 2 and 4), they will only feel more isolated. They may feel that although this hypothetical way forward exists for others, they themselves, somehow, cannot proceed with it.

But I am placing my hopes on another possibility: that through reasoning, S experiences themselves as an essentially reasonable person. S is *mostly* responsive to reasons. More importantly, S wants to respond to reasons. Otherwise, S would not bother to argue fairly with me.

If someone wants to respond to reasons and is already at least somewhat responsive to reasons, then whatever they might think, there is hope for them. They may still find reasons to go on. They need not wait for the world to give them those reasons. In truth, they already have them.

I have argued for a redescription of depressive thinking in terms of two compulsions: 1) to perceive an absolute and vague threat that causes disruption to action and 2) to take this disruption as also being a reason for inaction. Depression's first, descriptive compulsion makes intentional hope seem irrational. Depression's second, normative compulsion

neutralizes the depressed person's remaining motives for action. This includes both specific desires and, underlying or implicit in them, a general affirmation of the value of going on.

I have said that S seems to lack existential hope. What our examination of the compulsive structure of depressive thought reveals is that S *does not actually lack existential hope*. In suffering, in struggling, in arguing with me, S evinces hope against hope, or existential hope even as intentional hope seems irrational. Although I have used the existentialist as a counterexample to the Joker Argument, I thus do not think that S necessarily requires some additional Sisyphean affirmation of absurd hope in order to go on. This affirmation is implicit in their behavior. As S's argument hid the possibility of existential hope, so depression hides S's existential hope from them, by rendering it functionally impotent and affectively inaccessible. Framing depression as compulsive may begin the process not of creating existential hope anew but of revealing and releasing the hope that still endures.

S may respond to my argument with self-exhortation through description, observing the leaps in their own depressive reasoning and naming those leaps as products of compulsion, not personal or intellectual failings. This, alongside other forms of treatment and coping, may ease the spiral of doubt and guilt that short-circuits motivation. When motivation becomes possible, reasons may become acceptable, good enough for going on again. But the frailty of the reasons for going on that one may have once taken for granted will not be forgotten. The questions depression raises—how and why one should go on—will endure.

To do ethics for the depressed is to ask what philosophical argument can do for those who seek justification for action but struggle with these specific limits on their responsiveness to reasons. My dissertation, "Ethics for the Depressed: A Value Ethics of Engagement," presents its arguments to an interlocutor suffering from these compulsions. It first presents a metaethics for the depressed: "ethics as a reliable guide" as a response to "demoralization" and "hypermoralized deliberation." I challenge what I call the Stocker-Smith account of depressive loss of motivation as being a loss of desires, arguing instead that it involves the defeating presence of what the phenomenologist Matthew Ratcliffe (2015) calls "pre-intentional" mental states that interfere with intention formation and action despite the persistence of desire. Though depressed persons may feel as though they have lost their desires, it is plausible that their experience instead reflects a reality in which they retain all their desires but a pre-intentional state, like a compulsive "quasi-belief" (Noggle 2016) that success is impossible, is neutralizing the motivational efficacy of those desires.

I then present a normative ethics for the depressed, or a "value ethics of engagement" that is a "gentle perfectionism" of "contingent value ranking." By concluding in the first half that depressed persons may retain their desires, I attempt to premise a value ethics upon what I call a depressed person's consistent desire for a "sense of stability" in response to experiences of precarity and isolation. My earlier metaphorical distinction between the "mind" and the "heart" develops into a phenomenological concept of the heart as the set of "felt values" or intuitive value paradigms that are motivation-compatible pre-intentional states to which a depressed person, who has become vigilant about motivation-defeating pre-intentional states like compulsive beliefs, is more likely to be attuned.

I thus attempt to structure a complete ethical theory, integrating plural philosophical traditions and founded on the phenomenological category of the pre-intentional, in response to the presence of two specific compulsions experienced by an otherwise reasonable interlocutor. I put an orthodox style of philosophy in service of an unorthodox agent: one who I call "aspiringly autonomous."

I have done this knowing that, in the context of depression, theory and argument only go so far. My reasoning remains vulnerable to the same depressive sense of isolation that it aims to ease. A depressed person may always respond to me, "What you say may be true for others, but I am certain, somehow, that it is not true for me. I am uniquely hopeless." That response is resistant to refutation. Their certainty might not yield to any argument I muster.

There is one last problem. I fear that S's pessimism is accurate. Even if S becomes able to hope, that hope will likely be frail. If the world is too cruel or unfair, their trust in it may be betrayed and their hope may be destroyed. Changing S, or many Ss, may not change the world.

Still, I am hopeful. I am hopeful that theory and argument may give hope, that hope may give way to trust, and that, through trust, the world may change, becoming less hopeless and more trustworthy for us all, S included.

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