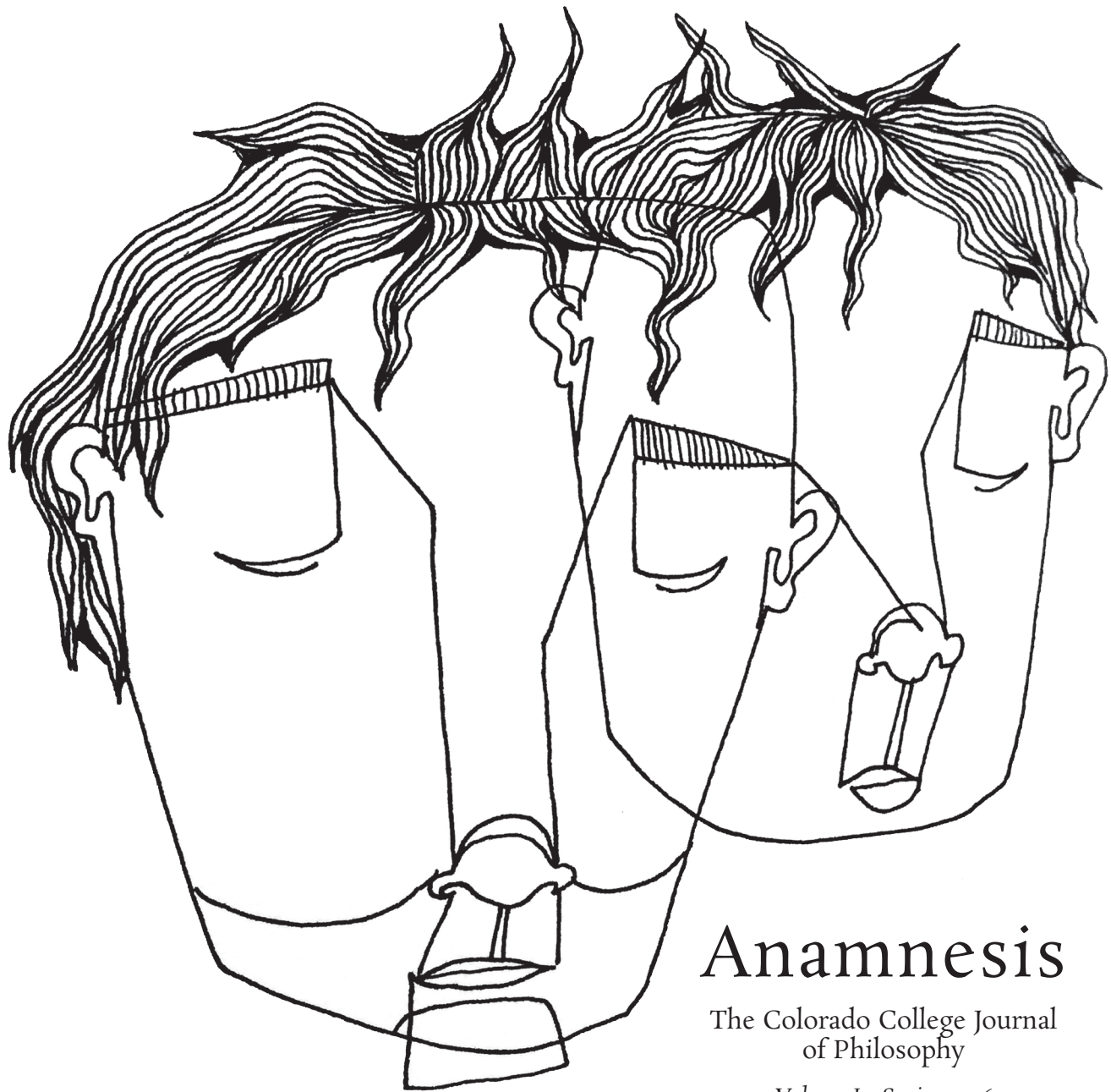# Anamnesis

The Colorado College Journal of Philosophy

The first volume of Anamnesis is dedicated to Rick Anthony Furtak for his unrelenting support and guidance. Without Rick, Anamnesis would not have been possible.

Anamnesis

Anamnesis

According to Plato, learning consists in rediscovering the knowledge that lies dormant in the soul. This process is Anamnesis: un-forgetting, recollecting and recovering the truths already embedded in us.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OBELISK FEVER:
A Philosophical Exorcism of the West's Favorite Phallus
Andrew Scherffius

The sun is the absolute, the blinding force. It is the Sun King (le Roi-Soleil), Louis XIV, who says, in his eleventh hour, "I depart, but the State shall always remain." It is the impossible-to-look-at: solar retinopathy is photochemical injury to the eyeball due to sun-gazing. The sun melts Icarus's wings. It demands of the Aztec warrior-priests a regular feeding of human blood. It is the *Sol Invictus*, a spiritual center of gravity. It is the occidental male divinity, the Egyptian-Roman-Greek male sovereign, the truth, the phallus. For Plato's Socrates, it is the clearest analogy to the good. Sun power and sun worship transcend space and time, leaving only notable instances, outcroppings of fervor, after-images. When we grapple with the sun, we will ourselves to run the gauntlet. We are always at risk and in danger.

On one end of the gauntlet, we are tempted by the sun's excess of power. But we all know what this temptation yields. As for Icarus, so for Isaac Newton, the 'father' of modern science, who, in his lust for discovery, stared intently at the sun's reflection until, blinded in one eye and mad with photophobia, he fled into darkness, pulling the curtains for three days. Years later, in a letter to John Locke, Newton divulged his lingering fear of the sun: "[I am] apt to think that if I durst venture my eyes I could still make a phantasm return by the power of my fansy" (Newton qtd. in Young). Even the reflection of the sun mutilated Newton. By the end of the gauntlet, he was destroyed. His example cautions us against the direct, totalizing viewpoint.

Nor can the sun be reduced. This is equivalent to forgoing the gauntlet. Think, here, of the methods of eclipse gazers and amateur astronomers, curiosos whose dark shades, pinhole flash cards, and solar filters 'capture' a tinted circle of the sun. In the process, they cannot help but strip the sun of its power, denuding it before it can be viewed. So far, our tactics have failed. We have learned just how tricky it is to 'seize' the sun, or at least how difficult it is to 'fill ourselves' with that for which it stands. At this point, we wish we could look beyond the meditative pointer finger of the Zen Buddhist master, the one who, according to tradition, follows the moon through the night sky with his finger, instructing the initiate to look at the moon, not at the finger. But the sun, which is in so ways the opposite of the moon, disqualifies even the meditative gaze. Our best bet is to side-step and circle around the sun, and at the same time to contemplate it in its excess. If we are successful, we will both point at and partake of the sun.

Consider, as one such avenue of inquiry, the obelisk. "Obelisk" is derived from the Greek *obeliskos*, a diminutive meaning "little spit" or "skewer." In ancient Egyptian, the obelisk is the *tekhen* (plural *tekhenu*), a form of the verb, "to pierce" (Iverson, 2006 qtd. in Curran, Grafton, Long, Weiss). A 'true' obelisk is a

single quarried block of stone with a tapering shape capped by a pyramidion.[1] The ancient pyramidions, inheritors of the benben and the phoenix, were plated with gold or electrum, a sun-enhancing gold-silver alloy (Habachi and Van Siclen). We are interested in the voyages of the obelisks and the meanings they have accrued over the ages. We are also interested in the philosophical underpinnings for such an investigation: Martin Heidegger, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Hélène Cixous, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida will all join the conversation. We are only tangentially interested in the sun, and, for that matter, we are only tangentially interested in obelisks. What really matters for us right now are the connections forged between these two objects, their shared forces, and the spaces formed between them. Through this double-paned window (of which one pane—the obelisk—is better suited for looking out and about into a larger space) we pursue our goal: to immerse ourselves in deep historical and semiological currents of meaning, and see where they spit us out.

We begin by considering the following disjointed facts… First, consider that as of February 6, 2016, Egypt retains eight of its ancient obelisks, Italy has thirteen, the United Kingdom has four, and a single ancient obelisk each belongs to France, Israel, Poland, Turkey, and the United States. Second, consider that the original quarrying, transportation, and erection of a single ancient Egyptian obelisk took at least thirty-five years, with as many as 900 worker deaths per obelisk (Curran, Grafton, Long, and Weiss 23, 30). Consider also the 1585 CE re-erection of the 'Vaticano' obelisk (originally erected in approximately 1990 BCE by pharoah Nebkaure Amenemhet II) in Rome's St. Peter's Square, when "half of Rome" gathered to watch "five levers, forty windlasses, 907 men, and seventy-five horses…set [it] into motion" (Curran, Grafton, Long, and Weiss 126). Last of all, consider the fact that since excavation began in Alexandria on October 29, 1879, it took American Naval Commander Henry Honeychurch Gorringe 15 months to lower, embark, transport, and raise the "New York" obelisk (Gorringe). This whirlwind of information is the opposite of exhaustive. On the contrary, it stimulates more and more thought. It lets us peek in on the powers and special significances of the obelisks. It is, as Heidegger would say in his own special way, "thought-provoking."

We begin anew by considering the spatial-temporal-energetic endurance of the obelisks. Their creators were the pharaonic Egyptians, who, with their conservative, nearly permanent religion of divine order, were artistically and architecturally predisposed against change. For thousands of years, the obelisks' electrum coated tips flanked pylons, gates, and temple doors in Heliopolis and Karnak, cyclically reintroducing (thrusting, subordinating) the pharaohs' subjects into a solar celestial regime, in which they, the people of the Nile, were eternally indebted to the sacrifices of Atum (the setting sun), Re-Harakhti (the rising sun), and Re-Atum "King of the Gods" (a mixing of the setting and the rising). An obelisk's hieroglyphics are what John Banes calls a medium of "decorum" (Banes).[2] They commemorate "great slaughter," "great victory," and the special relationship between the pharoah and the gods (Habachi and Van Siclen). When ancient Egypt was absorbed into the Roman Empire, these meanings underwent tectonic shifts.

During two flare-ups of Roman fascination with Egypt, about a dozen obelisks—each representing a significant investment and engineering challenge—traversed the Mediterranean. In the post-Roman millennium, many of the obelisks that had already travelled to Europe became defunct, toppled over, took up space in farmers' fields, and occasionally ruminated in swamps (Curran, Grafton, Long, Weiss).[3] Only after the latter half of the 16th century, during the reign of Pope Sixtus V, did the obelisks experience a revenance. Since then, a similar, more or less consistent cycle of dormancy and revenance has persisted. In its lifetime, a single obelisk in the 21st century might have been a temple guardian and a gnomon; it could have been walled in by political enemies, burned, toppled, and buried in sand; it could have been lowered and re-erected several times, and was maybe even transported across oceans; it could have belonged to pharaohs, kings, popes, dictators, and sovereign republican nations. Like a text with a long cultural heritage—the Bible, for instance—the obelisks exceed single meanings.

Just now, I used the word, "revenance," to describe the obelisks' peculiar cycles of popularity. Another, less morbid way to say this (for it is not the obelisks themselves that "die"), is that the obelisks are persistent nomads that undergo phases of revenance. Nomads, in this context, carry all the weight and implications accorded them by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Nomadology: The War Machine*. For

---

[1] This disqualifies the Washington Monument and the Obelisco de Buenos Aires from 'true obelisk' status, but only by a technicality. Although wholeness and seamlessness are essential to the ancient Egyptian significance of a 'true obelisk,' the monument at Bunker Hill, for instance, is still immersed in currents of meaning.

[2] "In the case of monumental display, the new medium of communication was an integral part of an ideologically important system I term decorum, which defines and ranks the fitness of pictorial and written material on monuments, their content and their captions. …The early use of writing and the system of decorum exemplify a principle of scarcity. Writing was a centrally-controlled facility in a state which was focused on its chief representative, the king, and became every more highly centralised in its first few centuries. …For 'pure' administration the number of literate people needed to be very small". (Baines 576-7).

For the illiterate majority, the obelisks' phallic shape, stature, and relationship with the sun would seem to be enough to communicate its power. On the other hand, the hieroglyphics, in addition to their divine appeals, might have been meant as an impressive injunction to the literate priests, who posed certain political risks to the pharaohs.

[3] For hundreds of years, two obelisks lay in the marshy leftovers of the Circus Maximus. Like many Roman artifacts and achievements, the obelisks caused great confusion and fear during the Middle Ages.

Nomad (War Machine) (ambulatory, rhizomatic, exteriority)	State Apparatus (stationary, arborescent, interiority)
A nomad "only goes from point to point as a consequence and as a factual necessity: in principle, points for him are relays along a trajectory (Deleuze and Guattari 50).	The State "is not defined by the existence of chiefs; it is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power" (Deleuze and Guattari 11).
As a "private thinker", a nomad lives in "a solitude interlaced with a people to come" (Deleuze and Guattari 44).	A "man of State…dreams to be a thinker" (Deleuze and Guattari 44). The man of State sometimes attempts to "counsel," "admonish," or "assigns a target or aim" for the private thinker (Deleuze and Guattari 47).
Nomad, or "minor," science is consistently fluid, in flux, and dynamic (Deleuze and Guattari 17).	State science takes "universal attraction [as] the law of all laws. …It is the form of interiority of all science" (Deleuze and Guattari 33).
Nomad space "is a vectorial field across which singularities are scattered like so many 'accidents' (problems)" (Deleuze and Guattari 37). A nomad "distributes himself in smooth, open space" (Deleuze and Guattari 51).	State space "is striated by walls, enclosures and roads between enclosures…" (Deleuze and Guattari 51).

these eccentric thinkers, the nomad is a manifold conceptual typology, the essence of which, if it can even be said to have an essence, only emerges through diverse interdisciplinary analyses and in contradistinction to another "essence without essence," that of the State apparatus. While bearing in mind that the nomad is only one part of a larger conceptual constellation called the "war machine," and that the war machine occupies an even more complicated role in Deleuze and Guattari's "universal history," a simple table ought to go a longs way towards uncomplicating these bifurcated, though by no means independent, typologies (Deleuze and Guattari 113).

Despite the fact that obelisks are frequently—and perhaps perpetually (unless they are defunct)—appropriated by State apparatuses, they are, in a sense, nomadic beings. Their spatial-temporal-energetic endurance propels them forward, much like Deleuze and Guattari's "private thinkers," into "a solitude interlaced with a people to come" (Deleuze and Guattari 44). In other words, obelisks project themselves into the future and into indeterminacy. They are like a Nietzschean aphorism "always await[ing]…meaning from a new external force, a final force that must conquer or subject [them], utilize [them]" (Deleuze and Guattari 44). This "to come" quality of the obelisks will reappear later in the essay, when we turn to Jacques Derrida and the deconstruction of democracy and sovereignty. In the meantime, we ought to say more about the obelisks beyond simply that they are like so-and-so and are not like something else.

At the beginning of this essay, I supposed that the problem of the sun was its incommensurability—its power to exceed our senses and our conceptual grasp. In this regard, the sun is a suitable example of the "retreating" and the "concealing" truth proposed by Heidegger.[4] For Heidegger, thinking is coming face-to-face with a problem. The only way to come face-to-face with a problem is to recognize what is most inherently problematic and concealed in a problem. Thinking, then, is a way of "mak[ing] the question problematical" (Heidegger 159). In consideration of the problem of the sun, I chose a thing which, in its many thousands of years of history, has consistently pointed to the sun with neither overweening confidence nor excessive diffidence—the obelisk. The obelisk does not "capture" the sun any more than it "captures" power. They are both things "to-come."

The obelisks' pure nature, their singular pierce (tekhen), their arrow-straight signification, are all illusory. To invoke the sun and to erect an obelisk are to engage in a polymorphous web of discourse with power. Our brief historical review of the obelisks revealed that they were objects with special importance for what Michel Foucault would call "unitary regimes identifying their will with the law, acting through mechanisms of interdiction and sanction" (Foucault 87). Of course, "unitary regimes" are not "pure and simple juridical edifices" (Foucault 87). They only present themselves as such. What is interesting here is that the obelisks did not cease to be erected during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when, Foucault tells us, power diversified into every strata of scientific, religious, and socioeconomic discourse.

One way to account for the obelisks' enduring fascination in the post-monarchic West is comically obvious. The obelisk is the phallus. The phallus (like the sun) is truth, sovereignty, and power.[5] It is the solar deity, Samson. It is the lion's mane and the British Empire's colonial prowess. Hélène Cixous is channeling Lacanian psychoanalysis when she calls the phallus the "fantasy of a 'total' being" (Cixous 254). An obelisk is erected by a pharoah, an emperor, a pope, a king, a dictator, or a quasi-democracy.[6] It thrusts its mighty bulk into the air, asserting its dominance over the city. It commemorates bloodshed and unification, of the Upper and Lower Nile, for instance. So far, the discourses of the obelisk are an unbroken chain of top-down, phallocentric, unificatory strengths of will. That is not to say that the grand discourse on obelisks is not bumpy or without qualifica-

---

[4] "Heidegger's conception of truth as the revealing of what is concealed, in distinction to the theory of truth as correctness or correspondence, is probably his most seminal thought and philosophy's essential task, as he sees it" (Gray xi).

[5] "These are by no means necessary semiological connections. In world history, the frequency of Sun-Goddesses may match or even exceed that of Sun-Gods. The Sun-God is merely the dominant mode in Western thought (Monaghan).

[6] "The twentieth-century political leader who adopted the obelisk with the most historically informed style was Benito Mussolini. In 1932 the Italian dictator had an Art-Deco-inflected 'obelisk' raised on the banks of the Tiber, north of Rome's old city center. The huge monolith bears no hieroglyphs, just the words' Mussolini Dux' in great blocky letters that run down the monument's side" (Curran, Grafton, Long, and Weiss 290).

tions. The nineteenth century, after all, saw the first erection of a 'democratic' or 'quasi-democratic' obelisk. This should strike us as strange, as thought provoking. Therefore, it is a wonderful new place to start.

Consider this clipping from an article published in the New York Herald, in 1881, in reference to the American claim to Cleopatra's Needle:

> …it would be absurd for the people of any great city to hope to be happy without an Egyptian Obelisk. Rome has had them this great while and so has Constantinople. Paris has one. London has one. If New York was without one, all those great sites might point the finger of scorn at us and intimate that we could never rise to any real moral grandeur until we had our obelisk (The Obelisk Scrapbook qtd. in Metropolitan Museum Bulletin).

The general picture that emerges from this clipping is of a self-conscious nation newly arriving on European political radars. The proposal of "moral grandeur" as a telos for the obelisk is a gesture which cannot be ignored.

The gamble of a 'democratic' obelisk (a notion we should be wary of, but nonetheless should acknowledge as in some way 'true') is not a paradox. If anything, it is a clear indication of the locality of power in capitalistic republics. It should not surprise us to learn that the commander in charge of the operation, Henry Honeychurch Gorringe, was funded by America's then wealthiest free market capitalist, the "Colossus of Railroads," Frederick William Vanderbilt. After all, the obelisk beckons power, and what better power to answer the call in late 19th century America than landed industry money. Capital assumes a political form in the obelisk.

As for the 'democratic' in 'democratic obelisk,' for the most part the sovereign American people were either opposed to, confused by, or indifferent to the project. Consider three reactions to the New York obelisk from around the time of its re-erection. The first, that of Charles Moldenke, is opposed. "It is just this… barefaced king-worship represented by the obelisk that gives its translation such a repulsive sound to modern ears" (The Obelisk Scrapbook qtd. in Metropolitan Museum Bulletin). The second reaction is that of a confused 'expert,' who claims that the obelisk's hieroglyphs "describe the wanderings of ancient Mexicans from Central America to Alaska and across Asia to Egypt, which [is] identified as an 'outgrowth of Mexico'" (The Obelisk Scrapbook qtd. in Metropolitan Museum Bulletin). The third reaction, another so-called 'expert opinion,' is similarly confused. In its confusion, however, it reveals something strangely prophetic. "The hieroglyphs on Cleopatra's Needle," says the expert, "foretell the future of America" (The Obelisk Scrapbook qtd. in Metropolitan Museum Bulletin).

If not literally, then how do we interpret this ridiculous translation? In the little space that we have left, we begin anew with a fresh set of problems, the problems of democracy. Democracy, according to Jacques Derrida, is always a "democracy to come" (Derrida 25). Like the to-come of the obelisks, the to-come of democracy arises out of an "aporia." This word, "aporia," beyond indicating "an internal contradiction," suggests "an indecidability, that is, an internal-external, nondialectizable antinomy that risks paralyzing and thus calls for the event of the interruptive decision" (Derrida 35). We can begin to unpack this problem at the intersection of freedom and equality:

> As soon as everyone (or anyone…) is equally free, equality becomes an integral part of freedom and is thus no longer calculable. This equality in freedom no longer has anything to do with numerical equality or equality according to worth, proportion or logos. It is itself an incalculable and incommensurable equality; it is the unconditional condition of freedom, its sharing, if you will (Derrida 49).

Democracy, split between freedom and equality, wavers in indecidability. When decisions must be made, they are made by a "rogue" power that asserts its exceptional sovereignty. To illustrate this point, Derrida uses the example of the United States' self-exceptionalism in the United Nation's Security Council.

The New York obelisk is a prime distillation of the undemocratic sovereignty still mucking about in American politics. It inserts itself into the aporia that lies between freedom and equality, seeking to establish a singular meaning that can never be found. The same goes for the Washington Monument and the San Jacinto Monument in Texas, a state which relishes its self-proclaimed exceptionality. The obelisks are essentially essenceless, but the meanings they accrue persist for millennia—unification, phallogocentrism, sovereignty. The obelisks are always telling us something. Sometimes, for fleeting moments, they project and loom. Sometimes they ruminate in marshes. Sometimes they are prophecies.[7] When they are lying down, they await a power to-come, and when they are standing, they point from power to the excess of power which power often seeks.

I predict that the obelisks' popularity will continue to wane in the coming decades. During the 20th century, any number of sovereign peoples and places appropriated obelisk symbology, Mussolini among them. After World War II, however,

---

[7] "In the interwar decade, democratic Czechoslavakia commissioned a gigantic obelisk to stand in front of the Prague Castle. In transit from the quarry, the obelisk fell down an embankment and split in half. This split has long been viewed as a prophecy of the state's split to come (Curran, Grafton, Long, Weiss 289).

the obelisks' popularity declined. Today, Western powers continue to decentralize in lieu of horizontal corporate bodies and technological apparatuses which present themselves as 'for the people' and 'pro-individuality/difference.' At least overtly, the guiding principles of power in the late 20th and the 21st centuries are laterally distributed. There is no room left for these maximalists, the obelisks, who scream their domination for all to hear. Today, nodes of power are often better left hidden.

As a closing remark on the obelisks, I ask you to consider *Broken Obelisk*, a sculpture designed by Barnett Newman in 1967. It consists of an inverted, bisected obelisk balanced precariously on top of a pyramid. Like much of Newman's artistic corpus, the sculpture is easily cast in a political light (Jones). Soon after it was introduced, it caught the eyes of two art collectors, Dominique and John de Menil, who tried to convince the city of Houston to let them pay to place the monument in front of City Hall, where they insisted it should be dedicated to the memory of the recently-assassinated Martin Luther King (Jones). Houston declined the offer, mostly out of opposition to the dedication. These events, which are by no means extraordinary in the almost endlessly fascinating history of the obelisks, are, at the very least, telling. *Broken Obelisk* speaks to shattered dreams of racial harmony in America, to the aporias of a democratic nation, to a vertiginous inversion of values, and all this without any direct reference to the artist's intentions. Despite its spontaneous, but oddly familiar (at least by contrast), associations, *Broken Obelisk* also points to a new beginning for the obelisks, to a new dormancy, perhaps, but also to a future that has yet to be decided. *Broken Obelisk* does not signify an irrevocable break, for if the obelisks do one thing, they endure. They await new meanings. Generations to come will marvel at their hieroglyphs, their simple and singular bulk, and yes, perhaps the people of the future will laugh and deride, like we do today, their overtly phallocratic, unificatory project. But even so, how could these people also not recognize and respect in the obelisks that which exceeds them, that unique ability to point at a power far greater than anything they can capture or deny, a power as infinite as the sun.
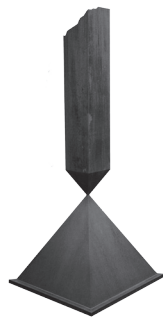
Works Cited

Baines, John. *"Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society."* ORA - Oxford University Research Archive. University of Oxford, 1981. Web. 07 Feb. 2016.

Cixous, Hélène. *"The Laugh of the Medusa."* New French Feminisms: An Anthology. By Elaine Marks and Isabelle De Courtivon. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981. N. pag. Print.

Curran, Brian A., Anthony Grafton, Pamela O. Long, and Benjamin Weiss. *"Obelisk: A History."* Cambridge, MA: Burndy Library, 2009. Print.

Derrida, Jacques, and Michael Naas. *"Rogues: Two Essays on Reason."* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *"Nomadology: The War Machine."* New York, NY, USA: Semiotext(e), 1986. Print.

Gorringe, Henry H. *"Egyptian Obelisks."* London: John C. Nimmo, 1885. Print.

Gray, J. Glenn. *"Introduction."* Introduction. What Is Called Thinking? By Martin Heidegger. New York: Harper, n.d. N. pag. Print.

Habachi, Labib, and Van Siclen Charles Cornell. *"The Obelisks of Egypt: Skyscrapers of the Past."* New York: Scribner, 1977. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *"What Is Called Thinking?"* Trans. J. Glenn Gray. New York: Perennial Library, 1968. Print.

Jones, Jonathan. *"Newman's Broken Obelisk: The End of a Political Dream."* The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, 22 Oct. 2008. Web. 09 Feb. 2016.

"The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin." New Series, Vol 50, No. 4, The New York Obelisk or How Cleopatra's Needle Came to New York and What Happened When It Got Here (Spring, 1993), pp. 1+3-72).
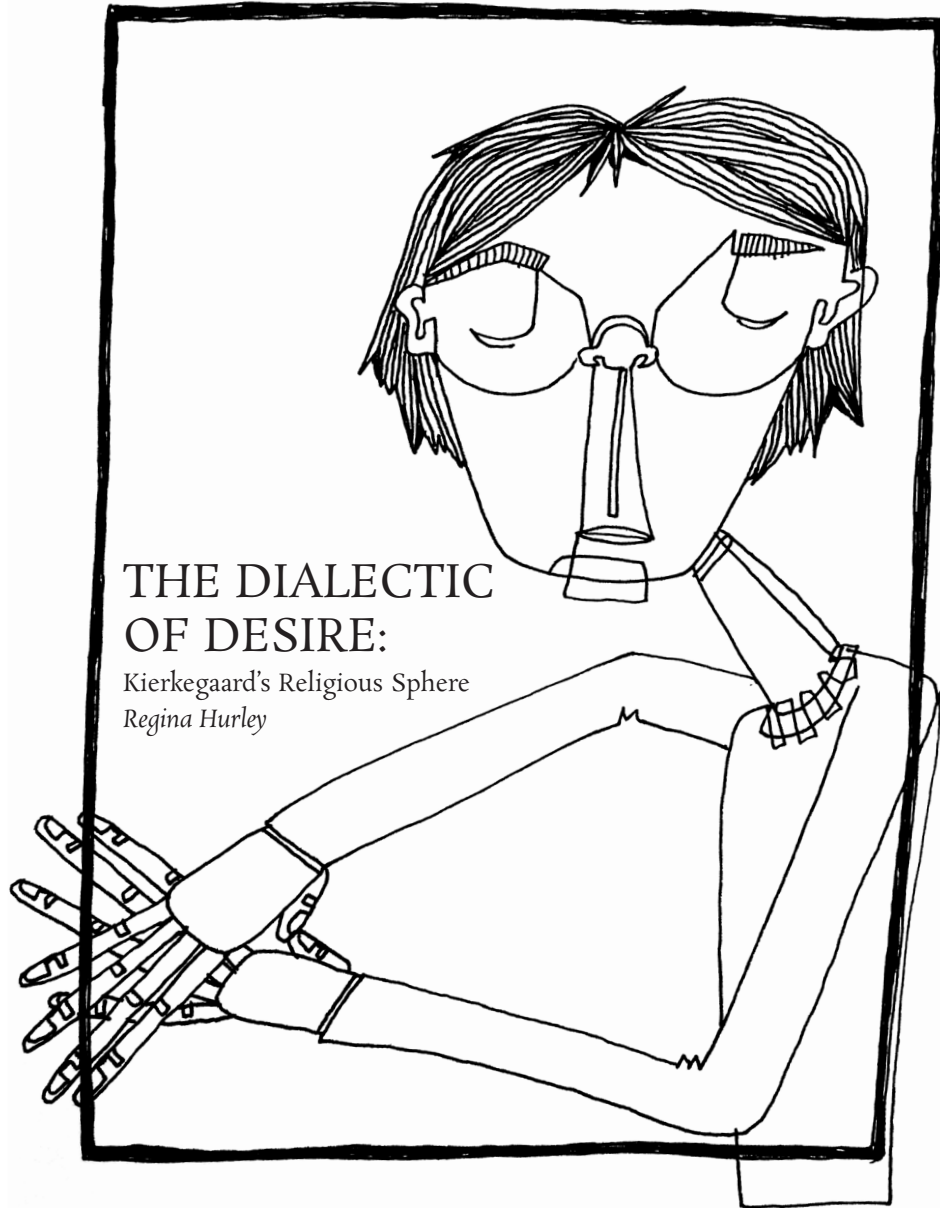
THE DIALECTIC OF DESIRE:

Kierkegaard's Religious Sphere

Regina Hurley

Part I: Introduction

Our humanity comes with an inexhaustible list of desires: for food, money, success, happiness, and that desire upon which I intend to focus: for God. This particular desire is radically different from the multifarious temporal desires that might arise throughout the day. In fact, the two are what Søren Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, calls "absolutely different," as the former are readily grasped, known, and situated in time, while the latter is always beyond our grasp, beyond full knowledge, and transcendent of time (CUP, 217).[1] Elsewhere in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus notes the incommensurability of these desires and accentuates the difficulties of someone who seeks to satisfy both, saying: "religious existences is suffering, and not as a transient element but as a continual accompaniment" (288). I argue that Kierkegaard himself does not endorse such a conflictual view of the relationship between temporal and eternal desires. On the contrary, I will show that Kierkegaard's larger project in the religious sphere takes the form of a dialectic in which the desires for temporal goods and God, while they initially appear to be in tension with one another, are ultimately reconciled in such a way that a desire for God is fulfilled in and through the temporal world.

My discussion begins with an inquiry from Concluding Unscientific Postscript that explores two possible human relationships with God: "the way of humble diversion and the way of desperate effort, the way to the amusement park and the way to the monastery" (CUP, 492). Climacus presents a character who attempts two different relations to God and the world — the "Monastic" attempt and the "Park-goer" attempt, as I will call them. As a Monastic, he forgoes all temporal desires and attends solely to his desire for God. As a Park-goer, conversely, he desires "temporal diversion," by which he expresses to God his "human lowliness," as he can no longer forgo his desire for temporal goods (492). My goal is to present these two attempts as dialectical opposites (the Monastic as the "thesis" and the Park-goer the "antithesis") in order to show that, ultimately, what Kierkegaard calls for in the religious sphere is a synthesis that will reconcile the desires of the Monastic and those of the Park-goer. Using Kant, I will show that, in the last moment of the dialectic, faith synthesizes these two forms of desire by uniting all temporal objects in God in the same way that, for Kant, an "object" unites all the appearances that compose it in perception. It follows then that the religious person Kierkegaard ultimately envisions is she who is at one and the same time oriented towards both God and the world.

[1] References to CUP are to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1 (Kierkegaard 1992).

To explain the kind of synthesis that I imagine, I will draw on a Kantian account of perception as an analogy for how the desire for God and desires for temporal goods are synthesized in the last moment of the dialectic. Briefly stated, Kant understands perception as a synthetic act whereby the subject perceives various sides, or "appearances," of an object and, by an act of synthesis, attributes the series of various appearances to a single object (CPR, 336).[2] In perceiving an object, the subject is only afforded one appearance at a time (e.g., the subject can only ever see one side of a cup at any given moment), but as she turns the object to see its different sides, the series of appearances are unified in one object through an act of synthesis. For the development of my synthesis of desires, I emphasize Kant's following insight: the whole object to which all appearances are attributed is never itself numbered among its various appearances, but instead, is the underlying and unifying ground for all of its various appearances (CPR, 336-7).

I make this connection in order to show that the religious person in Kierkegaard's works can be understood as preserving a desire for God that endures through and unifies her many temporal desires, analogous to Kant's description of an "object" as that which provides "unity in the synthesis of all the manifold" (101).[3] This will support my thesis that Kierkegaard's account of the religious sphere is one in which the the desires for God and world are not ultimately irreconcilable opposites but are simultaneously fulfillable, the former as the source of unity for the latter. I will conclude by drawing attention to Kierkegaard's "knight of faith" from Fear and Trembling as an exemplar of one who has made this synthesis and lives in such a way that her desire for God and desires for temporal goods are, indeed, simultaneously fulfilled.

Part II: Dialectic Between the Monastic and the Park-goer

The movement to the monastery is the first moment in the dialectic, the "thesis:" an impassioned *renunciation* of temporal desires for the sake of embracing an *absolute* desire for God (*CUP*, 407). Climacus praises the Monastic movement for its wholeheartedness, for its absolute devotion to God because in matters of faith, he exhorts, "the point is absolutely venturing everything, absolutely to stake everything, absolutely to desire the highest *telos* [God]" (404). Nevertheless, as is appropriate for the "thesis" in a dialectic, there is in the Monastic movement an implicit and growing tension between the Monastic's renunciation of the temporal world and his

existence in the temporal world. The Monastic movement, though praiseworthy for its devotion, ultimately fails because it would require a "suprahuman effort to come closer to God" in that it would demand that one "maintain the relationship without interruption, without sleep" (491). The Monastic movement is thereby rejected because it suffocates temporal desires, not allowing desires for God and the temporal to breathe simultaneously in a human being (408).

From this rejection Climacus concludes that the religious person must be able "to relate oneself absolutely to the absolute *telos* [God] and then *at the same moment* to participate like other human beings in one thing and another" (407, my emphasis). In other words, the proper God-relation must include the trivial temporal desires of human existence such as a desire to visit the park. Thus, the Park-goer, the Monastic's dialectical opposite, is the next attempt at a God-relation; one that embraces the temporal world. Though the Park-goer's failure manifests differently, he ultimately will be rejected *on the same grounds as the Monastic*—a failure to synthesize his desire for God in the temporal world.

Fatigued by the constant denial of temporal goods, the Monastic character's "need for a temporal diversion" ushers him into this next moment of the dialectic: he relinquishes his absolute relation to God and resigns to the temporal world, to the park (496). The movement to the park, antithetical to the movement to the monastery, makes explicit the tension that was implicit in the Monastic. The Park-goer acknowledges the "absolute difference" that distinguishes his desires for the temporal and God, and, exhausted, he chooses to desire the former. Although the Park-goer gives in to his desire for temporal goods, this movement is not one of pure hedonism because he turns towards the temporal goods "for the sake of being humble before God;" it is for the sake of admitting to God both his "human lowliness" and that he no longer has the strength to passionately press on denying his temporal objects of desire (497, 484).

Antithetical to the Monastic, the Park-goer is characterized by an inclusion of temporal desires gained by a *mediated* relation to God. The Park-goer has a desire to relate to God, but can only manage the relation through the mediation of his temporal diversion. In contrast with the Monastic, the Park-goer gains the temporal world, but loses the original orientation of the Monastic, who sought an *absolute* commitment to God.

Part III: The Religious Criterion: A Critique of Morris

T.F. Morris sees the park scene as an exhibition of how our human capacity for maintaining a passionate relationship with God can "burn out," which motivates him to interpret Kierkegaard as providing a way for the religious person to "fall away from that passionate concentration gracefully" while still meeting the

---

[2] References to CPR are to *Critique of Pure Reason*, (Kant 1992).

[3] I am indebted to Kierkegaard scholar Eleanor Helms who makes a similar connection between Kant and Kierkegaard in her article "The Objectivity of Faith." As she writes, "Kierkegaardian faith requires an object in just this Kantian sense: the object of faith (the Incarnation) does not directly appear but is implicitly present in all experience" (439). It is by her work that I was inspired to make this connection in my own.

"religious criteria" (378). I present Morris's analysis below and attempt to reveal its shortcomings in order to support my argument that the Park-goer best fits into Kierkegaard's larger project not as a "less intense form of religiousness," as Morris argues, but as the antithesis to the Monastic life and, more critically, as the impetus for a synthesis of the desires directed towards temporal goods and God (381).

Morris argues that the tension between desires for temporal goods and God is resolved in the Park-goer "because he accepts lesser objects with the thought that doing so would be more pleasing to God. Even though he is no longer able to turn passionately toward God, he can still do things for God's sake" (379). In other words, Morris argues that the Park-goer still keeps God as his absolute *telos* because the Park-goer "humbly says 'yes' to a temporal diversion. But, he says 'yes' *as a means to the end of being honest with God*" (375, my emphasis). On my view, the Park-goer's humility is essential to understanding how faith transforms and ultimately resolves the tension between desires for God and world. However, although Morris is helpful on this point, I find several problems with the way in which he developed the "religiousness" of this character, and I argue that treating the world as a mere means to the end of relating to God is an unsatisfactory resolution.

My first objection is to Morris's "religious criteria," which the Park-goer is supposed to satisfy. Though Morris never explicitly defines what he means by "religious criteria," it can be inferred that he means simply "having God in mind," for he opens his discussion by stating "the struggle of the religious individual [is] to continue keeping God in mind as his object of desire. To the extent that he does so, he stays in the religious stage of existence" (372). I first object to this criterion on the grounds that it would hold the Park-goer to an unreasonable standard in that the struggle to keep God in mind at all times would be a feat equally exhausting as the Monastic movement. Where the Monastic demanded a suprahuman effort to keep God as his only object of desire, the Park-goer, held to Morris's standard, would require a suprahuman effort as regards attention, one that would require the religious individual to keep God in mind at all times. If resignation to finitude is the distinguishing feature of the Park-goer, it is unreasonable to demand that he, whenever asked for his thoughts, must respond: "indeed, God is on my mind."

Furthermore, there is something profoundly unsatisfying about a "religious criterion" which requires merely the *mental* presence of God —as if the extent of religious life is to always be thinking about God. I contend that Kierkegaard imagines religious life to be much more sophisticated than Morris's "religious criteria" lets on, and its sophistication lies in the manner in which the religious individual synthesizes her desires for the world and God such that both are fulfillable, not one as a means for the other, but simultaneously.

A second, perhaps more crucial, point that I challenge is Morris's conviction that the Park-goer is, indeed, *absolutely* related to God. I argue that Morris's means-end

interpretation of the park scene does not succeed in demonstrating that the Park-goer keeps God as his absolute telos. Morris argues that the Park-goer *is* absolutely related to God because "he does not see this particular temporal end as an end-in-itself. He is merely relatively related to it, because humbly desiring it is his means of being honest with God" (374). The park, as the temporal object of desire, serves here as a mere means that then diverts the Park-goer back to his proper object, God. But I argue this does not succeed in keeping God as the absolute *telos*; for we are told that the movement to the park "is *not* towards the relationship with God, […] but it is the relationship with God that bids the religious person to seek elsewhere for a moment, as if it were an agreement between God's solicitude and the person's self-defense" (CUP, 497, my emphasis). Morris's analysis is misguided because the Park-goer, in virtue of his "seeking elsewhere," effectively undermines his absolute desire for God. As Climacus points out: "to relate oneself to one's absolute telos once in a while is to relate oneself relatively to one's absolute *telos*, yet to relate relatively to an absolute telos is to relate to a relative telos…Mediation therefore remains outside" (408). The Park-goer "remains outside" in the sense that his desires for God cannot become contemporary with existence; at most, the Park-goer merely contemplates his desire for God, and as such cannot achieve fulfillment in the world—he professes his faith in God, but because he sees his desires for God and world as irreconcilable, his experience of God in the world is empty. Consequently, the Park-goer, in his temporality, only ever experiences his *inability* to fulfill his desire for God. This negative resignation expressed by the Park-goer is only a starting point for its positive fulfillment wherein the desire for God can be fulfilled in the temporal.

Part IV: A Kantian Model for the Synthesis of Desires

The unfolding dialectic has clarified the two desires that must be synthesized: the absolute desire for God (from the Monastic) and the desire for the temporal world (from the Park-goer), but for the religious person who finds herself desiring both the eternal and the temporal, the matter still stands—how should the two desires be synthesized? In light of Kantian insights regarding objects of perception as a "synthesis of apprehension," I will now develop the kind of synthesis that I have in mind.

According to Immanuel Kant, objects of perception are composed of two things: (1) a concept by which an object unifies its parts into the thing that it is (e.g. our concept 'cup' is what brings unity to the various parts of a cup and allows us to identify it as a cup) and (2) intuition (roughly, "sense data") by which the concept is "filled out" in experience (CPR, 580-1). The process of combining concepts and intuition, which is called "cognition," produces what Kant calls a "synthesis

of apprehension:" the perception of various sides, or "appearances," of an object as "belong[ing] to a uniform synthesis, the objects themselves" (CPR, 581). My account of the synthesis of desires is analogous to Kant's insight regarding the "objects themselves." Kant's model of the "object" as that which establishes continuity among various appearances shares the same general structure as the religious person's relation to God which provides unity among various temporal desires.

This Kantian reading of Kierkegaard is not an obvious one, but I make the connection following Eleanor Helms who, in her article "The Objectivity of Faith," reveals similarities between Kant's synthesis of apprehension and Kierkegaard's account of religious faith. Helms points out that, for Kant, "apprehension of an object does point beyond its particular appearances to some unifying ground that is not itself numbered among its representations" (441) and applies this insight to examples of faith from Kierkegaard's work. She demonstrates that "[f]or Kierkegaard, the right attitude of the [faithful] subject correlates to a unity in the object that endures through many incidental variations of impressions, just as for Kant an object of experience persists through a variety of different representations" (441). Where Helms uses Kantian insights to highlight aspects of the object of faith, I draw the analogy to objects of desire, but the relevance of Kant for both of our purposes is his account of a unity of various appearances by virtue of an underlying object that never itself appears.

Kant's synthesis of apprehension models how the religious person's desire for God is not one desire numbered among temporal desires, but is a desire for an "object" that both transcends time and establishes "the continuity without which everything just disappears" (CUP, 312). This is consonant with what Climacus ponders: "I do not know whether one should laugh or weep on hearing the enumeration [of desires]: a good job, a beautiful wife, health, the rank of a counselor of justice—and in addition an eternal happiness" (391). In other words, the desire for the eternal (here, God) should not be conceived as a particular desire that appears fleetingly among the multifarious desires that arise throughout the day but instead as the desire that brings continuity at a deeper level to all temporal desires. This deeper continuity ultimately manifests as a feeling of unity within the subject who is desiring both temporal goods and God.

If Kant's "synthesis of apprehension" is a successful model for understanding the synthesis of desires that Kierkegaard proposes, my ultimate conclusion follows: the religious individual Kierkegaard envisions does not experience her desire for God as in tension with her desires for temporal goods, but rather as that which underlies and constitutes her temporal desire, making a desire for God simultaneously fulfilled in and through the world of temporal goods. It is by this synthesis that she "places confidence in the private knowledge that [s]he is making the ab-

solute distinction with facility and joy" (CUP, 411). In what follows, I will present the "knight of faith" from Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* as an exemplar of the religious person who embodies this synthesis of desires.

Part V: Synthesis of Desires in the Knight of Faith

The knight of faith Kierkegaard sets forth in Fear and Trembling is a rather poor, ordinary man who, walking home one evening, fantasizes about a delicious meal that his wife has prepared for him. A lamb roast, perhaps? With vegetables? His desires swell all the way home, and if, indeed, his wife has prepared for him these delicacies, then "to see him eat would be a sight for superior people to envy and for plain folk to be inspired by, for his appetite is greater than Esau's" (FT, 69).[4] What further reveals his relation to temporal desire, though, is what would happen if he were to arrive home and discover that his wife had not prepared such a meal. Then, how does the knight of faith respond? Even "[i]f his wife doesn't have the dish, curiously enough he is *exactly the same*" (69, my emphasis); he will enjoy even a modest meal with the exact same enthusiasm and gratitude as he would have enjoyed a lavish banquet. What is significant about the knight of faith is how genuinely he takes pleasure in the delights of the world: choral singing, walks in the woods, gastronomic delicacies; it is said that he "belongs altogether to finitude;" he "belongs altogether to the world" (68), and yet, as this story demonstrates, his joy in the temporal world is not dictated by an attachment to any particular object in the temporal world. I take this as evidence that his joy in the temporal springs from something much deeper than the manifest temporal goods, namely, from God.

As Sharon Kirshek explains, the knight of faith's attitude towards the temporal world is achieved by an "essential resignation," a resignation which calls him to simultaneously "renounce everything," but by which he then "*receives* everything" (76). Pertaining to the things of the world, he is completely resigned, and it is by this resignation coupled with his faith in God that he is able to accept, joyously, whatever temporal good that comes his way (93). It is *this* relation to God and the world that I take Climacus to be pointing towards when he claims that "the task is to practice the absolute relation to the absolute *telos* so that one continually has it within while continuing in the relative objectives of existence" (*CUP*, 408). The faith of the knight of faith, so understood, transforms his relation to temporal goods by putting all such goods in view of his absolute *telos*, God, as present in all temporal objects at once.

What distinguishes the knight of faith is his continued "movement of infinity"

---

[4] References to FT are *Fear and Trembling* (Kierkegaard, 1985)

which he makes with respect to his relation with God, for "he makes it with such accuracy and poise that he is continually *getting finitude out of it*" (70). This "movement of infinity" is mysterious to say the least, and even more so when we are told that the knight is impossible to distinguish from "the bourgeois philistine" and that he also "looks just like a tax-gatherer" (67, 68). There is simply no outward aspect that we can use to identify his "moment of infinity." However, remembering Kant's model of perception as analogous, we can see how this movement of infinity does not appear among the knight of faith's ordinary actions, but rather as that which unifies all of his external actions and temporal desires. I take his deep, inward, and absolute relation to God to be precisely this underlying "object" which unites all of his multifarious desires in the world, but remains hidden as the deeper source of their unity and fulfillment. His desire for God, as his absolute *telos*, is not one desire numbered among the multifarious temporal desires, nor is his desire for God banished to mere contemplation; his desire for God is present in and endures through all other desires. The achievement of the knight of faith is that he is completely at home and at peace with the world; he is completely fulfilled in his desires for both the temporal and the eternal.

Part VI: Conclusion

While the desires for God and the world may initially appear as if they are in tension with one another, I have shown that a more inclusive reading of Kierkegaard's works reveals that his larger project holds out hope for a synthesis of the two. The religious individual, as demonstrated by the knight of faith, is not oriented away from the temporal towards the eternal (as the Monastic), nor is he oriented towards the temporal and away from the eternal (as the Park-goer); it is a synthesis of the two: a simultaneous orientation towards the world and God.

I proposed a plausible Kantian model of how the desire for God, like the underlying "object" for Kant, is what unifies and constitutes the manifold of temporal desires that appear in daily life, and showed that the knight of faith is an exemplar of what this life would look like, as he simultaneously fulfills his desires for the temporal and the eternal. This clarifies the process by which a religious person can pursue her religious desires amid temporal ones such that both are fulfilled.

Works Cited

Helms, Eleanor. "The Objectivity of Faith: Kierkegaard's Critique of Fideism." *Res Philosophica* 90. 4 (2013): 238–267.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. 2nd ed. Trans. F. Max Müller. London: The Macmillan Company, 1922.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments."* Ed. and Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Vol. XII of Kierkegaard's Writings. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling,* Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Krishek, Sharon. *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Morris, T. F. "Kierkegaard on Taking an Outing to the park." *Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 48. 3 (2007): 371–38.

An Interview with Shaun Nichols
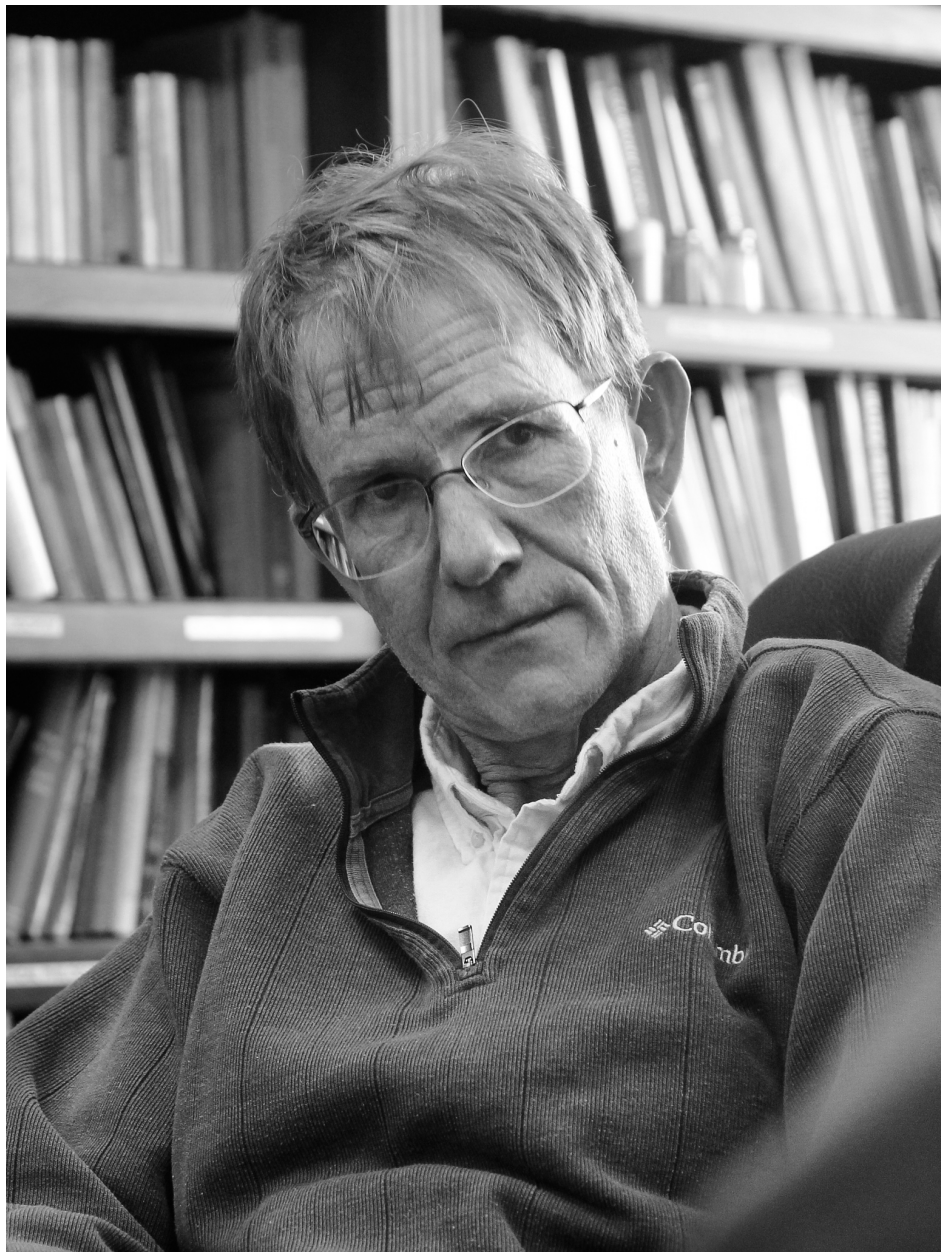
SHAUN NICHOLS
University of Arizona
Feburary 2016

Shaun Nichols is the author of three books, including Mindreading (2003), Sentimental Rules (2004), and his most recent, Bound: Essays on Free Will and Responsibility (2014). Additionally, Nichols has edited several works, and either written or co-authored many academic papers, ranging on topics from the imagination to moral psychology. In his research, Nichols collects empirical data to analyze the psychological underpinnings of philosophical issues. This interdisciplinary method constitutes the new field of experimental philosophy, of which Nichols is a founder. He also teaches philosophy in the graduate program at University of Arizona. We approached Nichols about this interview after a lunch meeting with senior philosophy majors, to which he graciously agreed. He not only answered questions regarding his work, but was happy to engage with the interviewers' philosophical interests.

*Interviewer's questions are in Italics**

We're interested in the trajectory of your career in philosophy. How did you first find philosophy?

Well, I grew up in a small town, and I was interested in issues that turned out to be philosophy. My sister brought home a book on ethics from college, and I was like, "That stuff seems pretty cool." And then I asked one of my high school teachers what philosophy was, and he said, "Oh that's where you study a bunch of dead guys who said things," and I thought, "I don't want to do that." [Laughter] When I got to college I realized that wasn't a full representation of what philosophy was. I was raised Catholic and I was very interested in questions about Christianity, so I thought I'd work on problems I had on various aspects of Christian doctrine. Then, I just loved it – I just love philosophy. As soon as I started taking philosophy in college, I couldn't see a way to stop.

Is there a certain philosopher that jumped out at you early on?

You know, not really. I have always been more problem-driven than person-driven. I think that's why I resisted when my high school teacher told me that philosophy was studying old guys. And it's a little vain – or, at least, it takes hubris to have this view – but my thought was: I want to do stuff! I don't want to think about what other guys say, unless they help me solve these problems. So, I've always been really focused on particular problems, and ways to solve them. Now,

I don't mean to say that I've solved any problems, and I think lots of philosophers have done really important work on problems, and I wish I had done the work; it's just that I always think of it in terms of problems. I'm not good at trying to teach a philosopher. I teach Hume on induction, or Descartes on skepticism. I never teach, like all of Descartes and try to figure out what his worldview is because, frankly, I don't care that much. I care a lot about the particular arguments about skepticism, or induction, or the self; but getting someone's global worldview has never been a top priority for me.

So, how do you think teaching has affected your way of solving problems? Has it?

It definitely has. I taught at a liberal arts college for ten years, and I imagine the classes there were similar to the ones here – they were very small and interactive. I got such a good sense of what kinds of things that students were interested in, and what kind of intuitions they have – the way they thought about these problems. I felt like they thought about the problems the way that I did, so maybe I guided them a little bit in terms of pressuring them into my view; but so much of philosophy – professional philosophy – is working on the details of various theories. When you think about the problem of free will and how that problem has developed, most philosophers who work on it are compatibilists. They think determinism and free will are consistent, but when you talk to undergraduates about it, in the first shot when you explain it to them, none of them says, "Oh, that doesn't matter because choices are determined but they're still free because they're guided by reasons-responsive processes." No one says that! [Laughter] They say, "O, my God! You mean everything may be inevitable because of the past!" But philosophers kind of lose touch with that original horror that you feel when you find out that determinism is actually kind of plausible, and what that means about every decision that you've ever made in your life. So, I like the fact that I was able to keep contact with that sort of fresh reaction to philosophy, and that's really been important for the way I've thought about it ever since I started doing what I wanted. Lately, when I think about what to focus research on, I try to think, "What did I care about when I was eighteen years old? What actually would have interested me?"

We saw that there were five authors of your paper. What did that look like? How did the five of you write together?

Multi-authored papers are really common. I do a lot of co-authoring. One advantage is that I like to work on topics that I'm not really expert on. And you can't publish papers if you're not an expert on an area. I have a new paper on why people think that knowledge is infallible. So, you know, skepticism seems plau-

sible when you start thinking about Cartesian scenarios; it actually seems like I don't know that I'm not a brain in a vat, or I don't know there's a table in front of me, and then you wonder why on earth do I have a concept of knowledge like that? I think there's a psychological story – a learning story – to be told about that. But I knew there's no way I can publish that paper without someone who knows a lot about epistemology. So, I wrote to my friend, Ángel Pinillos, who's at ASU, and said, "I have this idea about how people come to be infallibilists about knowledge, do you want to collaborate on it?" Because he knows the epistemology. So we wrote the paper together. Getting complimentary expertise, it's made for some of the best papers over the last twenty-five years in philosophy. Where one person knows the epistemology, and the other person knows the psychology, that really is a good recipe for making contributions, I think.

Do you think you could tell us more about the findings from that project?

Well, it's not findings as such but I'll tell you the idea. So this is related to the stuff I said today about rational learning. There's a principle in statistical learning that is called the size principle. And fortunately it's really easy to explain. Imagine you have a friend who is a total nerd and he plays Dungeons and Dragons - he has a box of dice that are all different denominations, so one die has four sides, one six one eight one ten. And he takes one out and he rolls it, you don't know which one it is but he rolls it, and he tells you the results as he goes along. So he says it's a three it's a two it's a two it's a three it's a two it's a two it's a one. So do you think it's the four-sided die, the six-sided die, the eight-sided die, or the ten sided die? The results are 3,2,2,3,2,2,1. Which one do you think it is most likely? [No response] Do you think it's the ten-sided die with all those numbers? [Response: No] Why not?

It's less probable that you'd get those numbers again and again.

Exactly! So, when the evidence you have is consistent with the smallest hypothesis you should always favor that. And the more evidence you get consistent with the smallest hypothesis is the one you should favor. So you should think it's the four sided die. Every time you get a roll that's four or less, you will differentiate the advantage of that from the other one exponentially. It's a huge advantage. Once you have ten rolls, it's just hugely probable that it's the four-sided die. So that's the size principle. You should favor the smallest hypothesis consistent with the data. So now imagine you're a kid and you're learning the concept of knowledge. You hear the word "think," and when you hear the word "think" you often hear, "I think but I'm not sure," or, "I think but I could be wrong." When you hear the word "know" do you ever hear that? Well, we actu-

ally looked at this, at this database of child-directed speech, and basically the kid never hears, "I know but I could be wrong, I know but I'm not sure." It's not surprising that they do not hear that, but think about from the kid's perspective. I only hear "know" when there's no qualification, when there's no hedging. Then if I'm trying to decide whether knowledge is infallible or fallible I should think, "It must be infallible otherwise every once in a while someone would say 'I know but I'm not sure'. But they never say that." So that's our explanation for infallibilism. I had that thought. So I called up Ángel and we wrote the paper together. That was awesome. I loved that. It is so much fun to do that.

Most of the work we've read from you confronts this question of personal identity. How did you first encountered this question, and how long have you been struggling with it?

I guess I was in graduate school when I first really started reading some of the stuff on personal identity. I remember that it was graduate school because I remember telling a friend of mine about it and he said, "That's not philosophy." He's a seriously analytic philosopher and was like, "Parfit? That's not philosophy." Parfit pretty much counts as philosophy in my book, but those really hardline analytic philosophers need something more formal. So, I started thinking about it then and I guess off and on I've thought about it. I don't think I ever… I guess I wrote a paper in 2000 about it that was pretty undeveloped, and I've been working on it hard, a lot, over the past five years.

I know you've written about the imagination, so I was curious to know whether or not you think imagination is a necessary jump in order to create something like a self, or to assume personal identity.

It's tricky the question about imagination because there's a strand of work in memory theory in psychology that says future thinking and past thinking are basically the same process. The only difference is the direction. You're doing the same kind of thing in both cases. The future thinking would be a kind of imagination but even if you didn't have that at least it seems conceptually available that you could remember things in the past and that would be enough for you to have a sense of continuity with the person in the past. It just turns out that it might be that the structures that allow you to remember things in the past are also tied up with thinking about things in the future so you can't knock out just one of them. Maybe. The data aren't completely compelling, but it's not like the theory has been overthrown. It's called Mental Time Travel. Somebody had a marketing agent in social psychology I think.

I meant to ask you about your writing process because I know you've published quite a bit. Are there any rituals that you do?

Well, the only thing I do that is systematic is I try to do most of the intellectual stuff in the morning. Or I also take naps and I do it after that. I'm no good really in the afternoon or in the late morning. I mean there's lots of stuff you have to do as an academic that doesn't require anything besides the reptilian brain, so I can do all that stuff. But when I'm really trying to do work I have to be really fresh. So I do it right away in the morning for a couple of hours, and then I take a nap and I work for another couple hours doing real work.

I had a question concerning social media platforms and if you in any way have seen a development in the way people relate to their personas? Have you seen a shift in the way people relate to their selves with the emergence of new technology?

You know, we haven't looked at that at all. I know there are people doing work on that, because I know there are people who have access to Facebook data, but I haven't done any of that myself. A lot of that could be constructive, like exploring the presentation you make to people. For instance, in my Facebook feed… I grew up in this tiny town, so I get these incredibly offensive things from people in my hometown - they're really right wing and I've actually had to block people because I can't bear to look at some of the racist stuff that comes across. But then on the other side with my academic friends if you say anything that is slightly to the right of the most radical position you could take, then you're pilloried.

Do you think that people construct static moral identities because they're conscious of how others view them?

I think it's a lot to do with how people would view you. For instance, those who want to take these more – I wouldn't even say moderate – "less certain" positions, find it difficult to be open about that on social media. It is costly. People shape how they present themselves and I imagine it affects their real identity.

Does that cost social currency, you think?

Yes, it definitely costs social currency. And it also can be a professional cost. In terms of viability for jobs, anything is a reason to discount somebody and if they think that somebody is politically questionable that could be a reason.

We read the introduction to your book Bound, and we were talking about due process and responsibility for actions. You seem to think that a sort of deterministic outlook is compatible with holding people accountable in a judicial setting. I was wondering if you could flesh out, because I feel like intuitively determinism seems in tension with holding people responsible for their actions, and law in general.

Yeah, I agree with that. The view that I take is that we have a lot of conflict that we face in life and in philosophy and sometimes you have to bite the bullet and say, "This conflicts with part of our intuitive framework but we are just going to have to keep going and roll with it." There would be such enormous social cost if we got rid of punishment. Punishment turns out to be important for things like cooperation. And perhaps part of the reason Western society has been so successful is because people punish each other for social injustices and people respond to those punishments. This holds And even for interpersonal injustice, like unfairness - people will punish others for being unfair. And that is plausibly critical to good social functioning. So you weigh that against the fact that there seems to be something also morally wrong about punishing people. Now what the compatibilists do famously is they say, "Oh, you're mistaken to think that there is any conflict." But I think that there really is a conflict. That's why kids shudder when you tell them about determinism in intro to philosophy. Then you have to decide, "So am I going to go with my initial intuition this is wrong, or am I going to weigh that against these other considerations." I think when you do that, the other considerations are just too powerful. You're better off suppressing your natural incompatiablism and going with punishment.

Switching gears: So right now I am in a class on the Holocaust, and we're discussing something called "post-memory." We read an article about second generation survivors that explores identity and how it may be constituted by this trauma. I wonder if there is experience from past generations that also constitutes one's identity.

Something more like the constructivist sense would apply there, more so than the first person sense. I am curious about how much you can get out of the constructivist account. But I would say the stuff I've done would not speak to the second-generation. We did do studies on people who believed they had past lives, because we wanted to see why they thought so. If you look at people who try to prove that reincarnation is real, they say, well this person remembers the cockpit of this plane and there is no way they could remember that unless they were actually in the plane. But if you ask people who think they had past lives, that's not what they say. They say, well it just really seemed like that I was there, that I had that experience; I was there to see the queen do this or that.

Well, I've actually been doing some work with the constructivist approach to memory and it does seem like this theory of post-memory and second-generation trauma would fit nicely into that and I also think when you discussed earlier about when Bo asked his question about how imagination plays a role in memory and how some people will say that there are very similar processes occurring when we're thinking about our future as when we are thinking about our pasts and also with this episodic sense of self, I think that very much is a reconstruction, so I don't think that there are, I don't think we necessarily rely on first-person experiences or first person accounts to remember something. I think often there are these external impulses that find their way into the way that we understand things, so I think it's certainly possible, I mean it happens.

What kinds of memories, can you give me an example? What would an example be of this kind of memory that you have in mind?

The way that I've been thinking about it is that constructed memory is within every episodic memory that we have, within every autobiographical memory. We actively reconstruct it whenever we recollect it because these relationships we have with ourselves and with others and with the world are constantly developing, so those new understandings of those ways of relating to the world find their way into past recollections, so that when we recall it we're not simply looking at that memory itself, but the development of our understanding of that memory. So I think there is a lot of room for imagination in the way that we understand ourselves that is perhaps even more important than this factual, trait-based view that seems more external.

There's a lot of work in psychology on reconstruction. The primary researcher on this Elizabeth Loftus, she's the one who did the initial work on this. She's done tons and tons of work on it. But now there's also work on it on in neuroscience. So for a while it was thought that when you retrieve a memory it automatically becomes unstable and when it gets set back down it will be reformed. So one person described this as, the brain doesn't have a save button, only save as. But it turns out its not quite right. What has to happen is that when the memory is retrieved, if it is retrieved in a similar context then it becomes labile and subject to reconstructive processes, but if it is recovered in a different context then it doesn't. So, that may limit how bad the reconstructive element is. The initial work was done on rats, and then there was work done on humans, it was actually done at Arizona. But one other thing I want to say about trauma and reconstruction is. Did you know that when people remember traumatic events they remember it from the third person? That's obviously reconstructed. I mean they didn't see it from above. They didn't fly outside of their body and look down.

Letter from the Editors

Anamnesis is an undergraduate philosophy journal that aims to provide undergraduate students with a platform both to engage one another's philosophical interests and to forge a philosophical discourse amongst different instit utions. Conversations between Willow Mindich, one of our Editors-in-Chief, and Rick Anthony Furtak, our faculty advisor, yielded the idea to inaugurate such a journal at Colorado College. As Willow reached out to her peers, she found that there was wide interest amongst Colorado College students in expanding philosophical discourse beyond the classroom. Promptly, Willow and three of her peers, Tess Gruenberg, Bowen Malcolm, and Tom Roberts, with interests ranging from poetry and German idealism to the philosophies of technology and memory, came together to found the Colorado College Journal of Philosophy. Soon afterwards, sixteen more undergraduates volunteered to serve on the Editorial Review Board.

During this process, we were in contact with several previously established undergraduate philosophy journals, namely those at Stanford University, Vassar College, and Ball State University, each of which provided us with helpful advice in the establishment of Anamnesis. For the first edition we were fortunate to receive 33 submissions altogether from Colorado College, California Polytechnic State University, Mercer University, The University of Michigan, Boston College, Lewis and Clark College, The City College of New York, The University of North Dakota, Michigan State University, The University of Virginia, Manhattan College, Baylor University, Grinnell College, St. John's University, Rutgers University, The University of Nevada, Kansas State University, and The University of Central Oklahoma. After three thorough blind review cycles, the first stage of which guaranteed that every single essay was read at least twice, we ultimately decided to publish two of the thirty-three submissions. Despite the difficult decision to publish only two essays in the first edition of our journal, we highly encourage students to continue submitting their work. We were honored to receive so many diverse submissions, and each and every one enriched both our review process and our philosophical discourse at Colorado College. Thank you to all of our submitters; we look forward to seeing more of your work!

Call For Papers

Anamnesis is a student-edited journal publishing essays in philosophy from universities and colleges nationwide. This journal seeks to provide currently enrolled undergraduates the opportunity to share academic work with a larger readership, as well as to engender thoughtful discussion on philosophical topics. Students across disciplines are encouraged to submit, so long as their essays deal with philosophical issues. All areas of philosophy are welcome. Please refer to the submission guidelines below.

Format: 12 point Times New Roman font, 4000 word maximum for the paper. There is no minimum word count. Papers should not include your name or other identifying information. Please provide your paper title, name, email, and major in a separate attachment.

Citation Format: MLA

Deadline: All papers must be submitted via email to anamnesis@coloradocollege. edu no later than February 1st, 2017. All documents must be saved in RTF or DOC format. One submission will be accepted per student.

Originality: Only original work will be accepted. Do not submit already published material. If you plan on submitting your paper to publications other than The Colorado College Journal of Philosophy, please keep us informed about its publication status.

For more information refer to our website:
www.ccphil-anamnesis.com

Acknowledgments

Mission Statement

Anamnesis aims to cultivate the philosophical voices of a generation of students whose philosophical spirit is by and large in hibernation. We hold that each and every human soul can resonate with the rhythms of philosophy, and we aim to usher this wild philosophical spirit out of its resting place and into the hearts and minds of undergraduates everywhere. By reawakening young thinkers to philosophy, we hope to stir our peers to rediscover their love of wisdom.

Anamnesis
The Colorado College
April 2016