Anamnesis

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Mission Statement & Ackowledgements

Letter from the Editors

In the fourth volume of Anamnesis, we decided to organize essays around the theme of "Perspectives." This decision was inspired by a desire to accommodate essays that are not thought of as traditionally within the discipline of philosophy, but still follow a philosophical line of thought. Our goal in this issue is to challenge the reader's conception of the role of philosophy in everyday life. Philosophy is too often written off as inaccessible or even irrelevant outside the realm of academia. With "Perspectives," we hope to emphasize the ways in which individual subjective experience can be understood philosophically. We aim to break out of tradition and highlight different directions in which undergraduates are taking philosophical concepts.

We begin the issue with an essay by Matt Rosen, a sophomore at Colorado College, who we hope will inspire readers to reconsider the significance of progressive political philosophy. Following this, we have Amanda Pinto's essay on ableism in the college classroom, which is a fresh perspective on an issue many of us have grown too familiar with. Max Chiaramonte provides us with our third essay, which complicates our relationship with videogames by looking at them through the lens of object-oriented ontology. Finally, we conclude with an interview with Sharon Krishek, who offers a unique perspective on the role of Kierkegaard's philosophy of love and faith in today's world. As this publication continues to grow, we hope it will attract students who are inspired by the diversity of perspectives our world has to offer. Thank you to everyone who submitted, and to those who helped us through the production process. We are excited to see where Anamnesis goes in the future.

In Praise of Welcoming

Remarks on the Ethics of Politics

By **Matt Rosen**
Colorado College

If we are going to speak of perspectives in the plural, it is imperative that we speak of welcoming. It is imperative that we speak of what is happening outside the invisible yet solid walls of our campus, what is happening in this city and this state, this country, and ultimately, what is happening in a truly global sense.

The plurality of perspectives has never been more prominent, and yet this remains an uneasy time to be classed as 'different.' Difference proliferates, but it does so in the shadows. Here at Colorado College, the word is 'diversity,' but it is a word with no referent. It masks the troubled space in which desire for otherness and fear of otherness intersect, in which a student body yearning for new perspectives and an institution tasked with capitalist accumulation meet. Since 'diversity' refers to no one in particular, it's safe, but it can never be acted on. It is only about the count of bodies. There is nothing to do with it, and its impact on discourse is indirect at best. It is a purely theoretical locution that never forces us to pose the question of practice, even the practice of theory.

In Colorado Springs, difference is in peril. We all know this to be the case; we call it 'conservativism,' but what we mean is that the status quo, the same, is always conserved. Strangers are expected to conform in some way, to enter into communal bonds in which they can be categorized and set into place. Taxonomy carries the day. You are either 'with us' or 'against us,' you are either part of 'us' or one of 'them.' The community itself is to be preserved, even at the cost of locked gates and high walls.

This rhetoric is also the rhetoric of our nation. Our southern border is being fortified to keep out the veritable other, the other who apparently threatens our nation's stability, although we can't quite say why or how. Visas are more challenging to obtain, citizenship seems a farther stretch for many than it used to, and some have already begun to leave. At the

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helm of our nation, we've placed a man terrified of outsiders, terrified of difference in any form whatsoever. The law of the land is being rewritten: "conform or leave." "Either be 'like' us by a degree of not-too-many standard deviations or go somewhere else."

But it is not just our nation that is closing the door to the stranger. In the rest of the world, borders are defended by increasingly substantial military presences, travel is increasingly costlier and more dangerous, and migration is increasing-

ly seen as a threat, not only to national security but to the security of families, communities, neighborhoods, and so on. Nationalism, which is just the political form of xenophobia, is on the rise, and it's not hard to see why. If we permit someone who is totally unlike us to speak, they may dissent, they may seek to rupture the bonds that hold us together as a nation, as a people, as a community, as a cohesive unit. And yet, these bonds have never seemed more fragile or more illusory then they do now.

Differences in perspective have become (or have remained) a thing to be rooted-out. In the re-education-through-labor of our school system, children are taught to think and act alike, to work together insofar as their goals and the stipulations of the project at hand are shared, but only in that case. We must all use the same grammar, speak the same language, learn the same material ('core curriculum'), and prepare ourselves for the same future. We must all chant the same pledge of allegiance to the same country, a country with values that we all must share: 'one nation, indivisible.'

In lieu of egalitarianism, the liberal capitalism of 'democracy' runs amok. Our politicians are not humans among humans, but the first of humans, the chosen representatives who can conjure up what is in our best interests better than we can, or so we are told. Unity of voice and mind trumps alterity. Showing hospitality to others is a gamble, so we choose the angst of the self-same instead. "Who cares if the world looks bleak and desolate, if it is characterized by a boredom with no parallel, as long as everyone speaks, acts, and thinks like I do?" And if we're feeling especially generous, we call this I, 'we.' But

Philosophy cannot think the position of the ordinary person because it always thinks it as a position.

'we' remains a singular subject; 'we' remains univocal and must. The linkage of 'like me, like us' is taken to be prior to difference, more important than difference.

And in this world devoid of difference, in a world in which otherness is the fear par excellence, we refuse to imagine that things could be otherwise. Not only do we expel the stranger, but we expel along with the stranger the possibility of another relationship with the future. We expel the capacity for change or novelty. We do not seek a 'new symbolization,' a new way of being in the world, either because we think that this is the best it can get and we're comfortable here, that this is the best it's ever been, or else because we are afraid that the project of re-imagining the world is just too risky to undertake. Under the mark of 'liberty,' or some 'realistic' principle, we dismiss the egalitarian hypothesis as ineffectual or fantastical, as a youthful dream. We set aside the youthful 'idealism' to which, instead, we must stake a claim as the only true realism.

In the war against perspectives that differ, and sometimes radically, from our own, the Academy is not a bastion of openness and hospitality. Indeed, philosophy has long perpetuated the insider/

outsider, us/them dichotomy; philosophy has long been culpable in the locking of doors and the shutting of gates, or else it has remained silent. Philosophy cannot think the position of the ordinary person because it always thinks it as a position. The generic thought of the person is given another name and thought as that name: Being, the One, the All. Even the exceptions to the name are thought as inhuman, naming what cannot name the person: the Event, Contingency, Void, the Real.

Philosophical ethics replace people with principles or think people structurally, as implicated always in systems or apparatuses larger than themselves. In the last instance, philosophy always poses the question of the structure, the question of politics, and dispenses with anything generically human as naïve.

Kant tells us that people have dignity and deserve respect insofar as they can be deemed rational; a person is an 'end in themselves' only if a principle (rationality) can be validated. Bentham and Mill posit a principle of utility that measures people in a qualifiable, even quantifiable, manner. Ethics becomes calculation, the weighing of a scale, a cost/benefit analysis. Aristotle and Confucius determine ethics in the position of virtues, the oscillation towards a virtuous mean of thought and of behavior. In each case, the generic person is re-thought according to an inhuman apparatus: the quality of rationality, the principle of utility, a list of virtues. In each case, those who are different must conform to the given arbiter of worth in order to be seen as ethical subjects. The southern border gets renamed: rationality, utility, virtue. But the problem is the same; the gates of our discipline should

read 'no one who is too different shall enter here.'

Philosophical ethics, as embodied in Kant, Mill, and Aristotle, among others, poses a single question: how do we think the stranger? But the question of generic ethics, of the ethic of the ordinary person, is different: how do we think with the stranger? How do we think alongside the stranger?

Around the world, tragedy remains and becomes a feature of life; affliction is a fact outside of the control of people and in the hands of those who do not have to live it. The victim of this affliction is, for philosophy, the unthinkable; the victim is impossibility itself. Philosophy cannot think with the victim but can only think the victim under one of its other guises, in the donation of another name: Utility, Dignity, Rationality, Moral Worth. That which is rigorously human, through and through, is unavailable to a philosophy that always determines the person in advance as part of a structure, as implicated in a system, or as a participant in a shared 'yes/no' discourse of 'reason' or 'common-sense.'

It is not fashionable to ask the question of the human, to speak of people. Today, the post-human, the after-human, the inhuman, are in vogue. But the generic person should not be confused with the disastrous humanism that proved so horrific in the twentieth century. The person is not a conception of the person because the person cannot be thought under one of its other philosophical names that would be its concept, such as Being or the One. The person refuses the violence of subsumption under the logic of the concept. The human that I am speaking of is the human in the most general of terms,

the human of a lived experience which is not at all open to a philosophy which demands that it be thought in terms of its abstraction. This is the human who always flies under the philosophical radar.

It is easy to fall back into the conceptualization of the victim, the other, the migrant, the person in any sense, when they appear only on the television, in the news, as a headline which speaks of some faraway place. Philosophy triumphs in the distance between us and the victim. But sometimes the victim is you, sometimes it is someone or something you love, sometimes it is right next door, in your home, your neighborhood, your community. And in this case, the distance of philosophical ethics, the thinking of all perspectives under a new and unifying name, seems strange and problematic. Suddenly, the question of the victim is absolutely immanent; it is an immediate matter. It is in this moment that a generic ethic is called for, it is in this moment that welcoming is really no longer a question at all because the person who cannot be seen by philosophy is, all of a sudden, the clearest thing in the world, the supreme unquestionability.

A generic ethic does not seek to explain or re-create a law by which the human can be set-into-place, a law in which differences of perspective can be reconciled. But it is also not a relativism; it does not say 'to each, their own.' It rather demands that each be welcomed in a no matter what fashion, without regard to the qualities or identities that they bring to the table. For a generic ethic, the words 'you are welcome here because' or 'you are welcome here despite' signify a return to the philosophical ethic. Welcoming pays no attention to predicates but is universal

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towards every singular thing. These gates read: 'let each enter here.'

But this does not mean that tolerance is also universal, that we must surrender and give ourselves over to whomever we encounter. There are times in which welcoming calls for, even demands, resistance. Imagine welcoming two people, a refugee and a nationalist. As we have said, a generic ethic which thinks alongside the ordinary person and does not think them under another name demands an absolute hospitality; both the refugee and the nationalist must be welcomed in a no matter what fashion. But this does not mean that the refugee's perspective and the nationalist's perspective, that all of their qualities as distinguished from whatever they may be in themselves, also must be welcomed.

Welcoming strips away all of the qualities of those who are shown its hospitality, it pays no attention to them. In welcoming both the refugee and the nationalist, we may find that the nationalist's qualities impose a form of colonization

onto the refugee, thinking that refugee under a non-generic name such as Enemy, Opponent, Danger, Terrorist, and so on. In this case, welcoming both the refugee and the nationalist condemns us to resist the nationalist's predicative imposition, the nationalist's violence towards the refugee. And since there are always many strangers at our door, it is often the case that resistance can be derived from the absolute hospitality of a generic ethic.

In a world filled to the brim with undeniable difference, our politics and our philosophies often aim precisely at its denial. And since alterity is undeniable at the level of ordinary people, these politics and philosophies strike us as utterly inhuman, as structural or systemic, as out-of-touch or out-of-control. So let this be a call to action, a call to theoretic arms, an ode in praise of welcoming: let each, no matter who they are, enter here. Instead of thinking each and every other under a name or perspective which is our own, which is given by a givenness which is self-same to us, may we think alongside all of those others who philosophy pronounces as inexistent, who philosophy denies. May we think with the other who we have welcomed in a no matter what fashion. ●
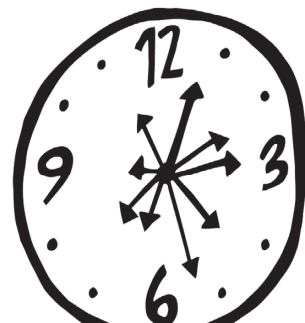
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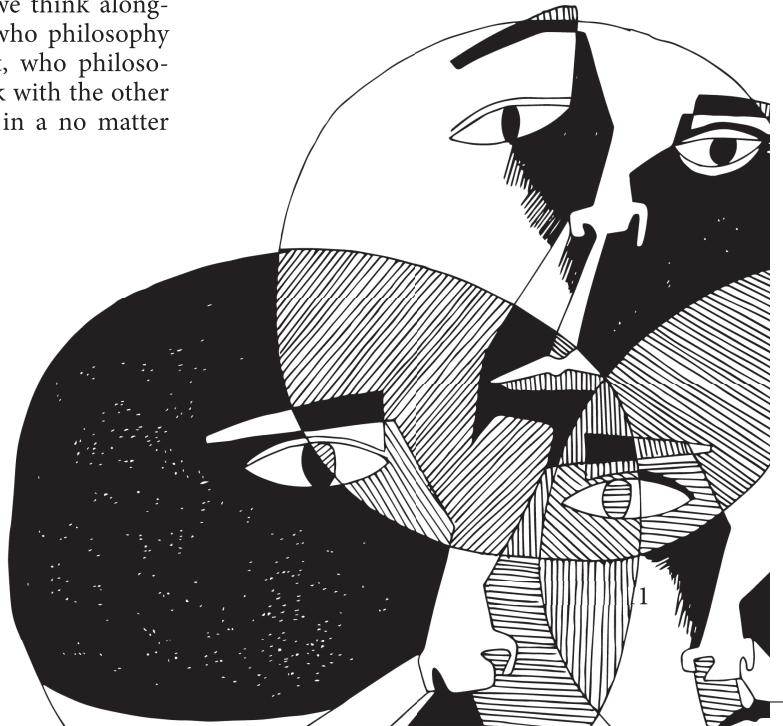
University Classroom Access

A Curricular Criphystemology of Anxiety
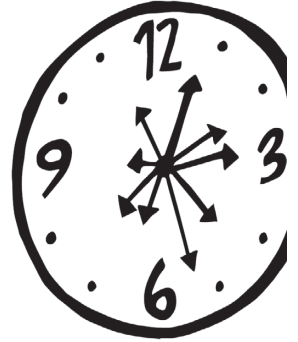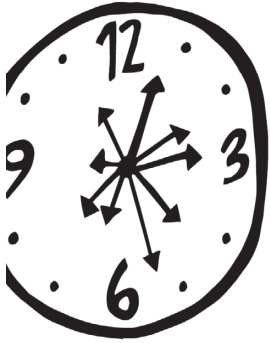
By **Amanda Pinto**
Appalachian State University

Undocumented disabilities are impairments that are not apparent to the casual viewer and "not definitively measurable by mainstream Western medical technologies" and includes many different impairments: from chronic back pain to post-traumatic stress disorder. Within the university environment, students with undocumented disabilities routinely have their applications for disability benefits denied or are unable to utilize the free counseling centers due to a lack of trained professionals. These students are presumed to be "hysterical," or unable to make sense, by not being able to justify their symptoms or provide a diagnosis. One common undocumented disability that affects students on university campuses is anxiety. How does the anxious student affect access in the classroom? In this paper, I will use the concept of criphystemology developed by Mollow, combined with a curricular cripistemology discussed by Mitchell, Snyder, and Ware to demonstrate that university classrooms fail to provide access to students with the undocumented disability of anxiety. A "politics of wonder" will be used to guide suggestions and thoughts for future approaches to disability in academia.

Curricular Criphystemology

The phrase "curricular criphystemology" is my own combination of the concepts that Mollow and Mitchell and colleagues created. However, in order to understand curricular criphystemology, a definition of cripistemology must first be understood. Cripistemology is a broad theoretical position within disability studies that generally works to think about epistemology from a "critical, social, and personal position of disability." Cripistemology includes an attentiveness to disabled bodies caught in modes of exploitation as well as an understanding that knowledge production of disability "comes not only from being disabled but from being with and near disability."

Mollow's development of criphystemology takes the broad theoretical position of cripistemology and specifies it in

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direct response to assumptions of "hysterical" symptoms or idea of "faking it" involved with undocumented disabilities. The "hyst" was added into cripistemology to call attention to this "hysteria" assumption. Criphystemology is a "mode of analysis that disrupts accepted conceptions of disability in three overlapping ways." First, it investigates hysteria from a disabled perspective and demonstrates its role in the oppression of disabled people. Second, it challenges the common cultural assumption that subjects with undocumented impairments are deficient in self-knowledge. Third, "criphystemologies

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hystericize dominant cultural representations of disability" by using Freud's discussions of hysteria and repression to critique the process by which people are marked hysterical.

Curricular cripistemology, from Mitchell and colleagues, seeks to position disability as a site for active learning and diminish dependency on "neoliberal inclusion schemes" that seek to "achieve equality through the flattening out of embodied differences." Curricular cripistemology critically assesses the ways communities limit the participation and facilitation of disabled people's embodied experiences. While social spaces, such as classrooms, present themselves as open to all, curricular cripistemology demonstrates how spaces actually police and exclude different types of bodies. For Mitchell and colleagues, there is no strategy of inclusion that makes non-normative bodies fit normative expectations. A curricular cripistemology accepts—and actively pushes for—a failure of inclusion and accommodations. With this understanding of curricular cripistemology, I combine it with the concept of criphystemology to critique the accepted conception that an anxious student is "attention-seeking" or undeserving of accommodations and demonstrate its connection with the failure of inclusion schemes within the university classroom in an effort to push for acceptance and welcoming of students.

Anxiety

There are many connotations associated with the word anxiety. The affect ranges from a one-time, temporary feeling to a more consistent and de-stabilizing feeling of an anxiety disorder. Within the United States, forty million people are diagnosed with anxiety, with women being twice as likely to be diagnosed than men. The etiology of anxiety is mostly unknown with focuses on neurotransmitter imbalances as well as social influences. Those placed on anti-anxiety medications are also on antidepressants, since the same medication is used for a variety of illnesses. One does not have to be officially diagnosed with an anxiety disorder to be medicated. Psychologists typically use therapies, such as cognitive behavior or acceptance/ commitment, to work with mental illness; yet they can only suggest medications for the patient. Only a psychiatrist or general doctor can prescribe medication. In fact, just filling out a form at the doctor's office may lead to a suggestion of antidepressants or other medications without additional input from a mental health professional. A person can be on medication and presenting with depression while having stronger symptoms of anxiety. In many instances, especially with women, depression co-occurs shortly after the onset of anxiety, yet research exclusively on anxiety is lacking.

Due to these biological imbalances that contribute to anxiety, people with anxiety will also be referred to as neuro-atypical. The term neuro-typical is used in conjunction with Hamraie's "normate template" which describes "the complex, critical notion that the world was designed with normate inhabitants in mind." Those who are "normate" or within the "normate template" are typically unmarked persons that are "culturally positioned as expected, and are thus taken as definitive human beings." The neuro-atypical, or those with undocumented disabilities, are outside of the normate, thus they are typically unaccounted for when creating classroom structure. For Hamraie, this can be seen within physical architecture: Who is expected to sit in a

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classroom? The measurement of how big desks and chairs should be is based on dimensions of who a "normal" student looks like as far as weight and height goes. A similar template is made within the syllabus and designed for neurotypical students.

Classroom Access

This brings us to the question of "access." Titchkosky conceives of access as "an interpretative relation between bodies" and as "tied to the social organization of participation, even to belonging." Access extends further than a spatial lack of inclusion, it is "also a way of perceiving, talking, and acting." With this definition of access, the classroom creates, or limits, access through both the syllabus requirements for participation and the perception and/or acceptance of the students within the class. The classroom is built for and made most accessible to the normate university student.

The "steep steps metaphor," from Dolmage, "describes how the university has been constructed as a place for the very able." The use of steep steps suggests that access is a movement upwards, towards an ivory tower of ideals and standards. The bodies that reach the ivory tower and survive the steep steps, that get through the gates of access for the university are the able and neuro-typical bodies. There is a history of universities removing, or not considering, students with diagnosed mental illnesses as it risks the university's reputation and possible graduation rate. The list of accommodations at the end of every syllabus copied directly from the Office of Disability Services (ODS), as well as the ODS itself and the hoops one must go through to receive their recognition, demonstrates how the university is not for inclusion of these bodies, but as protection from students. This structural ableism, built into the school, causes accommodations to be seen as something additive, rather than necessary. It does not function as a way for different bodies and students to work within the classroom, but instead points out the student who does not fit the normate template.

This structure requires students to approach the professor, name their disability, and prove accommodations are needed. However, even if a student goes through this process, it is still not guaranteed that they will receive access to accommodations. Most students with disabilities find that professors do not believe them, or think that they are asking for additional "unfair" advantages over the rest of the class, thus discouraging students from asking in the future. In this way, the syllabi and professor's responses to disability function as "defeat devices." Defeat devices are designed to meet legal standards but, in reality, serve only to mask other forms

of discrimination. Professors deciding to use only the bare minimum accommodations required or assuming that they know better than the disabled student both work as defeat devices. Both responses assume that accessibility is available, while ignoring the agency and self-knowledge of the student. The professor decides that the accommodations and accessibility has been provided without acknowledgment of the student's actual needs. This becomes more of an issue in the case of anxiety and other undocumented disabilities. What proof of an anxiety attack can be provided to justify missing a class or a deadline that will not result in the disbelief and dismissal by a professor? In the case of accommodations, without a note from ODS, which a student with an undocumented disability may not be able to receive, the professor has to decide if they believe the student and, more importantly, if they will do anything outside of their requirements to work with said student.

This retrofitting, of adding more structures in an attempt at accommodation, still has issues. For the retrofit to be employed, for the professor to decide on accommodations, for the ODS to approve of a disability, all assume "that the individual rhetor will be able to make sense of her world for an audience." Rhetoric is a part of each individual's life, it is the way we communicate from speaking to facial expressions and more so, it is "who we are… [and] who we are allowed to be." The world is constructed by the language an individual uses and our perception is shaped by this language. This assumption is predicated on the ability for a subject to make sense. Those with undocumented disabilities face a conundrum in which doctors dismiss physical and emotional suffering

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as "attention-seeking," and the media and general public believe that it is "all in our heads." Even if they are able to put their suffering into words, to discuss one's anxiety and the feelings that prevent them from completing assignments or participating in class, there is still a likely possibility that they will be seen as "hysteric," which in turn invalidates the knower.

Thus the current methods to promote inclusion nevertheless fail. Retrofits and accommodations do little to nothing to give access to the undocumented disabled student and to recognize their position, but rather seek to mold them into the template of a normate student. Access in the university classroom is exclusive and limiting to students with undocumented disabilities. The structural ableism that creates a space in the university where accommodations are seen as additional services that must be requested make it difficult for students with undocumented anxiety to travel through and exist. They either must present themselves as neu-

ro-typical or push for accommodations and come under scrutiny for their ability to know themselves. The perception of students with undocumented disabilities limits their access, if one cannot "make sense" in the rational way that professors expect from college level students or if one "cannot be 'listened' to" because they are unable to participate in discussions then they are doubted for their self-knowledge and awareness by professors. Therefore, the university classroom and professor limits access for the anxious student, through the syllabi, the class structure, the resistance to accommodations, and the denial of the student as a knower of oneself.

Suggestions for Improvement of Access

In line with curricular cripistemology, I advocate for a recognition of the failing of normalization practices that are placed within the classroom. This failure demonstrates that normalization practices, such as retrofitting, were never obtainable. It seeks only to mold the non-normate student into the normate template. To put their words and experiences into a preconceived notion of "rationality." Granted, the use of a retrofit is predicated on the notion that the anxious student will be recognized and validated by the professor. As criphystemology demonstrates: "to be hysterical, after all, means not to know one is so" and the subject is "presumed deficient in self-awareness." By being declared "hysterical," the anxious student is denied epistemological credibility and the possibility to obtain access, socially and academically.

However, to say something is purely deficient is not enough. "To reorient what counts as knowable, there is also a need to attend to the scene where the meaning of disability can be observed." How can the university classroom reorient

their space and understanding of disability to accept undocumented neuro-atypical students? Price describes listening as a tactic used by other professors in the classroom for a "more ethical rhetorical conduct." While Price acknowledges the issue of students who cannot be listened to still remains, listening and working with students to understand what might be their ways of knowing can be helpful for professors. "Mere awareness is not enough" as "our actual practices rarely enact this attention." There must be effort incorporated into pedagogy and, as Price suggests in regard to writing courses, perhaps to "welcome emotion in the classroom" and reject the presumption of normative rationality.

Another suggestion is provided in which curricular cripistemologies shift the educational emphasis to respect for non-normate students through four ways. The first way is by asking professors and other academics to "take experiences of embodiment seriously" rather than remove one to the ableist, rational realm. The second being not requiring new materials to be purchased. The most common counter to additional accommodations is the cost. Titchkosky discusses the "stories-at-the-ready" provided in response to a questioning of the lack of accessibility. Universities always take into account cost, students are measured on a basic income unit (BIU) and spaces were designed with normative people in mind. By not requiring new materials to be purchased, these "stories-at-the-ready" are no longer applicable. The third way is an acknowledgment of diversity in neuro, bodies, sexualities, and experiences that does not force students to leave behind their disabilities. Finally, to situate the non-normative students as foundations for teaching methods

instead of failed exceptions or to think "perhaps better yet, they are failures because they take exception to the rule." The method here is to draw out the traditional rhetoric, to ponder normativity, and to make its questioning a foundation for building a non-normative classroom.

Titchkosky describes an approach in regard to non-normate students: "a politics of wonder" in which "what is required is that we attend to our interpretations of disability and, in so doing, pay attention to the politics we make use of to respond to the place of disability in our society."

> "What is required is that we attend to our interpretations of disability and, in so doing, pay attention to the politics we make use of to respond to the place of disability in our society."

Wondering about our preconceptions of access and anxiety or other neuro-atypical undocumented disabilities is the first step to imagining different ways of knowing and the meaning of people. With this in mind, improving access in the classroom can take many forms. None of these are definitive answers, of course, but rather suggestions from other knowers.

Conclusion

The use of generic terms such as neuro-atypical and non-normate were used to draw attention to the fact that while anxiety is my focus, there are many who do not fit into the normate template of a university student. There are other undocumented disabilities that are affected by access in the classroom. Depression can easily be included in this analysis, as symptoms of anxiety and depression tend to coincide. However, there are differences between how students with either of these disabilities may present, which should be acknowledged. In this discussion with curricular criphystemology, my goal was to suggest an awareness and consistent acknowledgement of limitations in the classroom towards anxious students. A "politics of wonder," wants to analyze and uncover the meaning that lie within what is already being done in the name of access. This paper works to encourage wondering about how people, events, things, and space have already been set up to exclude and limit access. Then through such wondering, to imagine a different socially organized world and classroom that validates the self-knowledge of those with undocumented disabilities. ●

Endnotes

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[49] Price, 38.

[50] Mollow, 191.

[51] Titchkosky, 70.

[52] Price, 42-44.

[53] Price, 44.

[54] Price, 45.

[55] Price, 46.

[56] Mitchell et al, 304.

[57] Mitchell et al, 304.

[58] Mitchell et al, 304. Titchkosky, 34.

[59] Titchkosky, 71.

[60] Titchkosky, 31.

[61] Mitchell et al, 304-305.

[62] Mitchell et al, 305.

[63] Mitchell et al, 306.

[64] Titchkosky, 129.

[65] Titchkosky, 131.

[66] Titchkosky, x.

[67] Titchkosky, 131.

Heaven on Our Screens

Video Games as the Garden of Eden

By **Max Chiaramonte**
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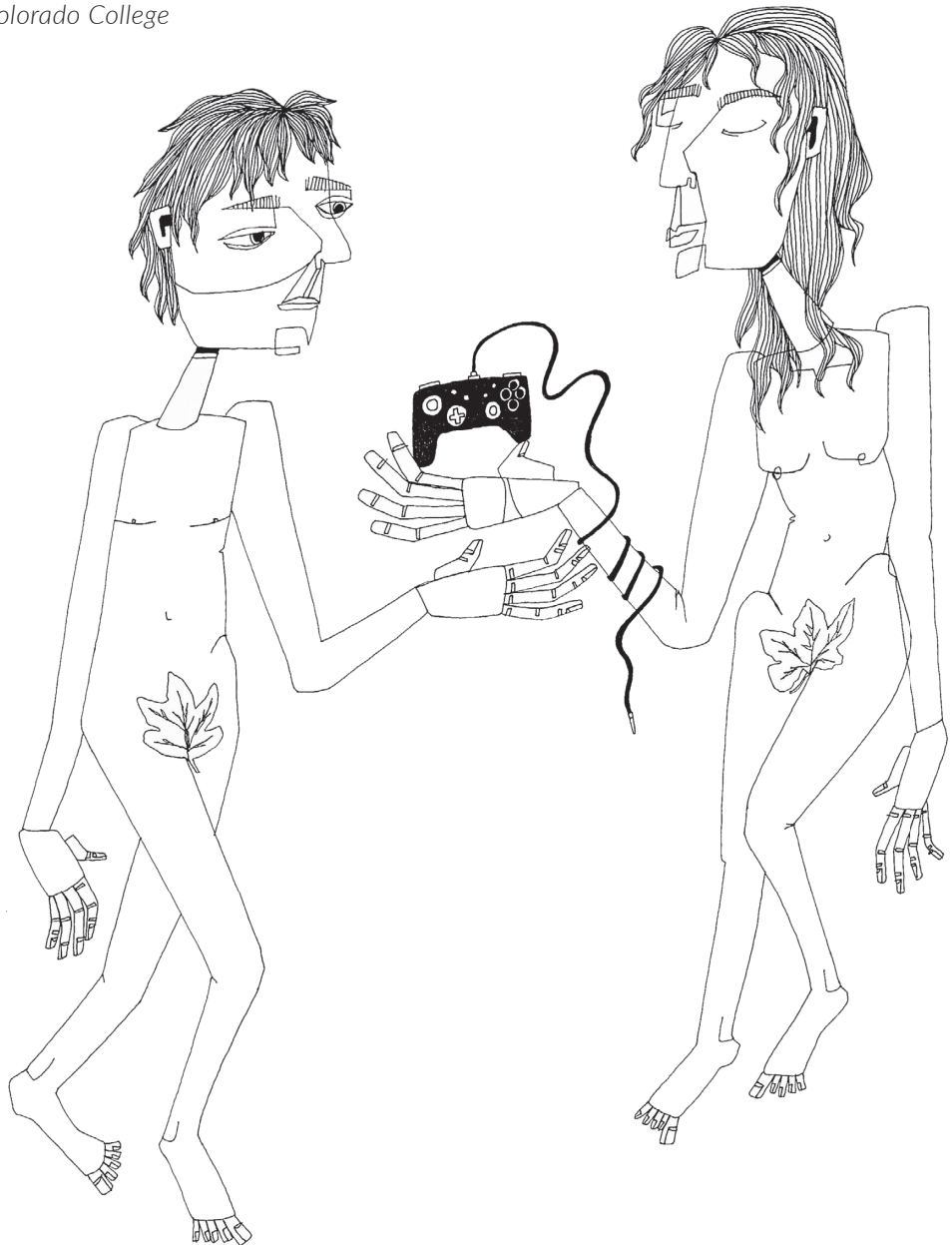
Games, particularly board games, have been played by different peoples for an extremely long time. Chess originated in India during the sixth century, and a game called 'Go' has been played in China since approximately 500BC. And what a treat it was that during my brief research on games I came across a source entitled The Game of Go: Speculation on its Origins and Symbolism in Ancient China; after studying so-called 'Speculative Realism' the word 'speculation' caught my eye. Speculative Realism is a term given to a recent development of philosophical thought that attempts to escape Kant's correlation between thought and being. Instead of always relating 'what is' to 'what we think', many speculative thinkers attempt to actually think about 'what is' independently of human thought. One especially influential speculative thinker, Quentin Meillassoux, uses the problem of 'Ancestrality' to explore problems with Kant and this seemingly necessary correlation between being and thought.

Ancestrality is a problem that arises as soon as we try to think philosophically about a time before thought was present. How is it possible to think, through Kant, about the extinction of the dinosaurs without somehow necessitating our existence as thinkers thinking about the extinction of the dinosaurs? Meillassoux, and frankly myself, think that speculative thought, or a stance of metaphysical realism that allows for speculation about and knowledge of the world independently of our thoughts, allows for this kind of ancestral thinking. Peter Shotwell, author of The Game of Go seems to me to be thinking ancestrally.

While the people of ancient China were certainly humans and thinkers, they were certainly different than contemporary human thinkers and are thereby 'resurrected', to use Rosenian language, as somehow similar in thought to us. When Shotwell attempts to answer the question of why these people played Go so long ago, he is speculating.

Even if we turn our discussion to ourselves more specifically the question surrounding games persists: why

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do we play? The reasons have certainly changed as society has evolved, but in an attempt to minimize my necromancy I will focus on what I perceive to be the contemporary reasons that we play games/.

Today the games of old make many bored and so people created Video-= Games (VGs). The problem of why human-objects became bored with past games is not my focus. My aim with this essay is to enter an analysis of the object VG, oriented largely through the Object Oriented Ontology of Graham Harman, a Philosophy professor at SCI-Arc. I

am a human-object intimately related to VGs as I, like many other young human-objects, enjoy dwelling in carefully designed digital environments; I am anxious for my analysis. I suspect that this exploration will proceed, as a lot of Speculative or Object-Oriented analyses do, to a place of sober hopelessness.

Let me start by distinguishing between two different polarities that can be used to classify VGs: 'immersive' versus 'casual', and 'narrative' versus 'competitive'.

A highly 'immersive' VG would typically contain an explorable digital-world of digital-sensual objects, let you accumulate an identity/character over time within this digital-world, and likely mimic many aspects of the "normal" human-object experience. A highly 'casual' game, on the other hand, would likely fit into the average human-object experience as a small set of objects to interact with, as opposed to the massive number of objects that make up the digital-world of the immersive VG. Similarly to board games, casual VGs can only be so complex, normally having extremely easy-to-learn rules so as to attract as many potential players as possible. 'Casual' can be applied most fittingly to VGs created for smartphones, as the games are simple, repetitive, and briefly exciting. The first commercial VGs were casual, because of both technological restraints and imaginative limits (who could have imagined the virtual-reality producing devices of today, let alone the fully three-dimensional worlds of the past couple decades, during the advent of commercial VGs?). These poles of 'immersive' and 'casual' I will call the poles of intensity of a VG. I am referring to the

intensity of the experience relative to the phenomenological world, which I hold as extremely intense ; therefore, immersive VGs are more intense than casual VGs. VGs have only gotten more intense since their popularity, and this trend towards greater intensity continues today with the creation of virtual-reality (VR) VGs.

A highly 'narrative' VG relies on a narrative or narratives to entertain the player. Like works of fiction or poetry, narratives in VGs can be told from a variety of perspectives and the form that the experience takes place within can be altered. One highly acclaimed narrative VG is Half Life 2, a game that takes the player on a first-person journey through a dystopian future as a rebel scientist determined to destroy an evil corporation which has taken over earth. Narrative VGs, like works-of-fiction or myth, can retain some of their entertainment value even upon translation into another form (for example, synopsis).

It is first-person in two respects. It is first-person in the traditional sense that the player understands events from the perspective of one character, but it is also first-person in its in-game perspective. What the player sees in a first-person VG is what the character that they are 'playing as' sees. Three other common perspectives within VGs are third-person, top-down, and two-dimensional. During a third-person VG, the player watches from just above and behind whatever entity the player is 'playing as'. During a top-down VG, the player watches from above the digital-events taking place. During a two-dimensional VG, the player watches a two-dimensional plane wherein the events take

place. Two-dimensional VGs can contain three-dimensional elements, the important point is that the events take place exclusively within the two-dimensional plane.

A highly 'competitive' VG, as opposed to a 'narrative' VG, relies on some sort of competition between opponents to entertain its player. Usually competitive VGs need a minimum of two human-object players to really become enjoyable, but VG creators also create Non-Player Characters (NPC's) to allow for a single-player experience. Competitive VGs can mimic competitions IRL, as in FIFA 18, a game in which players role-play as a digital-professional soccer player, or invent their own digital-competitions, as in Rocket League, a game in which players pilot digital-rocket-powered cars and attempt to hit a large digital-ball into their opponent's goal. These poles of 'narrative' and 'competitive' I will call the poles of interhumanity of a VG. While some narrative VGs allow two players at once to play, thereby creating an interhuman experience, the true activity of a narrative VG takes place between the VG and the player(s). The activity of a competitive VG, on the other hand, takes place between two or more players within the VG itself; therefore I can say that competitive VGs are more interhuman than narrative VGs.

Highly intense, interhuman VGs create a highly detailed digital-space within themselves wherein players can interact, both as friendly and hostile objects. Graham Harman, in his essay On Vicarious Causation, outlines a "weird realism" that allows for interaction between different kinds of objects. I find a striking similarity between the digital-worlds of

Highly intense, interhuman VGs create a highly detailed digital-space within themselves wherein players can interact, both as friendly and hostile objects.

intense, interhuman VGs and the phenomenal-world of our experience.

For Harman, a real object can never interact with another real object, instead, only sensual objects interact with one another. Harman writes:

"Whereas real objects withdraw, sensual objects lie directly directly before us, frosted over with a swirling, superfluous outer shell. But this difference seems to give sensual objects the opposite causal status of real ones. Given that real objects never touch directly, their causal relations can only be vicarious. But sensual objects, far from being withdrawn, exist side by side in the same perceptual space from the outset, since we encounter numerous phenomena simultaneously."

Besides the phenomenal world of common human-object experience, intense, interhuman VGs also contain spaces, albeit digital-spaces, wherein sensual, albeit digital-sensual, objects

lie "side by side in the same perceptual space". What Harman is trying to accomplish is an explanation of the always "vicarious, asymmetrical, and buffered" interactions between real objects that take place within the sensual realm; but are there any real objects whose interactions are necessarily "vicarious, asymmetrical, and buffered" within an intense, interhuman VG? No! What takes place within intense, interhuman VG's digital world is interactions between the players, operating as a digital-sensual object within a digital-space, and the digital-sensual-objects of the VG that are not bound up in any reality, and are therefore not buffered in their interactions. When I play a VG, I am operating within an unbuffered, immanent digital-world.

Now we reach the sober hopelessness of this analysis in the answer to a question: why are immersive, interhuman VGs so popular? The answer lies precisely in their lack of reality. A VG player inhabits a space that maintains the security of a Kantian metaphysics in which the laws dictating that space are necessary for its proper functioning. For Kant these necessary laws were the natural laws themselves; he believed that the phenomenal world would be unintelligible and unable to sustain consciousness if the laws of things-in-themselves, of the noumenal, were necessarily as they are currently are. Meillassoux, however, shows that the natural laws are not necessary, but that they are radically contingent and factual. By illustrating how Kant not only noticed the correlation between our subjectivity (thought) and the noumenal (things-without-us), but made it absolute and therefore the only

Now we reach the sober hopelessness of this analysis in the answer to a question: why are immersive, interhuman VGs so popular? The answer lies precisely in their lack of reality.

type of thing that could possibly exist under a Kantian framework, Meillassoux illuminates an error that the West hasn't noticed for nearly two hundred and fifty years. We all, like Kant, understand the correlation between our thought and the world as the only realm where reason is appropriate, in other words, we are correlationists. While the correlations between our subjectivity and the noumenal are all that we can experience, these correlations are not all that we can know about, and certainly not the only things that exist. This realization that reality is not correlationist is deeply troubling to a contemporary human-object because it brings into the realm of possibility the extinction of thought, the radical shifting of natural laws, and the destruction of the hierarchies of objects (always with humans at the top) that humanity consistently reinscribes.

For a VG, however, the laws are necessarily the way they are, and there is no possibility of truly radical change occuring. VG creators carefully design digital-laws (lines of code) in order to properly direct interactions between

digital-sensual-objects towards something that they have deemed worthy of occuring digitally. Immersive, inter-human VGs create digital-spaces unobliged to any real objects except for the players themselves, who are transformed into digital-sensual-objects by their playing the VG (inputting certain information by pressing buttons, moving joysticks, etc.). VG creators act like the God we correlationists desperately wish we could discover. When we play VGs we enter a secure space of interaction within which whatever we experience is all there is, unrelated to reality. The correlation between my thoughts and the digital-sensual-objects of a VG is the only thing worth worrying about, the only thing capable of interacting in this digital-space. What this means is that we live out our correlationist fantasies within VGs. This is not to say that we live out our fantasies of flying, or having super-powers, or killing others, although of course we do all this as well. This is to say, also and more importantly, that the only place where our correlationist expectations of experience can hold true, the only place where we can properly, as correlationists, understand anything, is within a designed world of nothing real: within a Video-Game.

What we have pointed to is a large-scale Stockholm syndrome that has developed in Western thought since Kant. What are we to do with this desire to be trapped/plugged into an entirely predictable environment? Unfortunately our sober hopelessness guides the final moments of this discussion. If we take this realization to political realms we must weep, because it points to the tendency of human-objects to want strict

and unchanging structures guide our experiences. We want, as Kantians, to live in a world designed by a benevolent fascist God who knows the goal, who makes things unchanging, who gives us just enough freedom to satisfy us and just enough bondage to keep us safe. When I play I feel, almost, as if Adam and Eve never ate the apple. ●
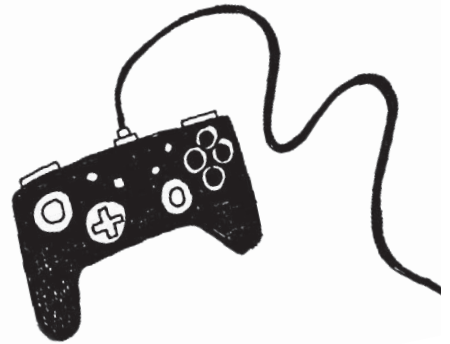
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Endnotes

[1] H. J. R. Murray, A History of Chess (Massachusetts: Benjamin Press, 1985).

[2] Peter Shotwell, The Game of Go: Speculations on its Origins and Symbolism in Ancient China (American Go Association, 1994), 6.

[3] On page 10 of After Finitude, Meillassoux defines 'ancestral' as "any reality anterior to the emergence of the human species — or even anterior to every recognized form of life on earth." While Meillassoux is interested in this clear distinction between the human species and anything else at all, I use this point loosely to illustrate that our own history is, in a way, ancestral to contemporary thought.

[4] I was lucky enough to have Matthew Rosen visit during one of my undergraduate classes in Philosophy. During his visit he talked about his forthcoming book, Speculative Annihilationism, and I borrow the language from there.

[5] These 'characters' or 'identities' that players can accumulate over time within an immersive VG add an interesting point to the discussion that Katherine Behar has started with her talk "Personalities Without People". Behar focusses on OCEAN profiles, or personality data (collected online through social media analytics) that can be used to predict the actions of individuals with extreme accuracy. The most startling point that she makes is to point out that these OCEAN profiles "are becoming stand-in political subjects". The data is guiding political and economic decisions without being necessarily correlated to any actual human-object. In the political system, our OCEAN profiles have more agency, in a VG system, these accumulated characters have all the agency as, typically, the player enters the VG 'through them' or 'as them'.

[6] See Figure 1.

[7] See Figure 2.

[8] I'm here thinking of VGs like Pong and the early arcade cabinets of the 1970's. Typically, a session on an arcade cabinet starts off extremely easy, becomes challenging after the first in-game accomplishment, and then increases in difficulty at an increasing rate until the player fails. VG creators wanted as many quarters as possible from the arcade patrons, designing experiences that were short, enjoyable, challenging, and addictive.

[9] I use intensity here to mean not that there is a lot of pressure, or that there are large consequences of actions in usual phenomenal experience, but instead that there is an incredibly high quantity of sensual data almost constantly. While VGs have become extremely good at simulating realistic digital-worlds, I would point out the difference in sensual intensity between Pong and any virtual-reality experience.

[10] See Figure 3.

[11]See Figure 4.
[12]See Figure 5.
[13]See Figure 6.
[14]See Figure 7.
[15]I use the term 'interhuman' instead of 'intersubjective' because the concept of the subject is irrelevant to an Object Oriented analysis except as just another object among many (becoming synonymous with human-object or human when seen as an object).
[16]While the players' interactions between one another are interhuman, these interactions are not what create the entertainment value of the narrative VG. The narrative [17]VG exists and entertains as an extended interaction between the player(s) and the digital-world.
[18]Graham Harman, "On Vicarious Causation", Collapse II (November 2007): 187.
[19]Harman, "On Vicarious Causation", 195.
[20]Harman, "On Vicarious Causation", 200.
[21]While one could hold that the real object that the digital-sensual-objects "allures" to is in some way the 'real' electrons and metals that renders the [19]VG on the player's screen, I disagree.
[22]Quentin Meillassoux, After Finitude, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 89.
[23]This is the goal of Meillassoux's After Finitude, and his argument proper takes place over multiple chapters. The most important chapters for my point here are "The Principle of Factiality" and "Hume's Problem".

On Kierkegaard and Non-Preferential Love

*An interview with
Sharon Krishek*

Dr. Sharon Krishek is a professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She specializes in the role of religiosity and philosophy of love as it relates to the wellbeing of humans. She is a scholar of the 19th century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and the author of Kierkegaard on Faith and Love. During her visit in March, we had the opportunity to ask her about her philosophical views on Kierkegaard, love, faith, and subjectivity. We found her interpretation to be an interesting and provocative take on one of the most influential existentialists. We felt her perspective on the topics we discussed would provide a unique philosophical experience for the readers of Anamnesis.

Anamnesis: Why is Kierkegaard specifically relevant to us today? What can Kierkegaard tell us about the world socially and politically?

Sharon Krishek: I think that good philosophical work is always relevant. There are some truths about human existence and the nature of reality that are always calling for our attention and are always relevant. In that sense, Kierkegaard is an existentialist. What he has to say about human nature, the nature of existing with other people, and with reality is unfathomable in many ways. Of course, it is as relevant today as it was in the 19th century. He wasn't a political philosopher, but I think that he is extremely relevant today regarding questions about how to treat people. For him, love was the center, and I am being careful here because it can easily sound like a cliché. But here I am in disagreement with him: He thinks that if we want to understand the nature of love, we have to turn to the commandment of love: "you should love thy neighbor as thyself." I think that the commandment of love is extremely important, but neighborly love is only one kind of love. It doesn't capture the essence of love. It is one important manifestation of this phenomenon of love. But if you think

about this commandment, of course it is extremely relevant to the state of politics today with all the suspicion and hostility. So, I'm not a political scholar either, but I am very interested in how morality is important to politics. Kierkegaard gives us a very difficult moral ideal to fulfill, but I think it is a very admirable thing to truly love any given person. It sounds strange. What does it mean to love any given person? We hardly know what love is when we think about romantic love, about parental love, about friendship. It is difficult enough to understand what love is given these experiences. To take these experiences and then say "okay, take this love and give it to any given person including your enemy--" this sounds as if we are enduring some confusion here. But I think not. I think we can actually love. Of course, it's not romantic love, it's something else. But it's love. So if we listen to Kierkegaard, if we are convinced by this ideal, I think the world would be a much better place. In that sense I think it's very important.

A: It has been said that Kierkegaard's thought sometimes tends to be sexist or chauvinistic. Do you agree with this, and if so, how would you sort of reconcile Kierkegaard's philosophy with our under-

standing of sexism today? Is there a way to "save" Kierkegaard from being sexist?

SK: I don't see anything sexist at all actually, but you should remember the context: It was the 19th century, and yes, there are things that he says that to our ears may sound sexist, but I don't think that, essentially, he's sexist. He's a humanist, and you cannot be truly humanist [if you are sexist]. Maybe in his personal life he was sexist, I don't know, I don't care. From a philosophical point of view, it would have been inconsistent of him to develop humanistic ideals and then be sexist. Here and there you can find sentences that are sexist. Surely today we would have expected him to phrase things differently. But I think it is more a result of the time that he was writing, and not something essential in his work. This is true with regards also to his anti-Semitic sayings. You can find them here and there, but I don't think it's interesting. To focus on that is like putting too much emphasis on something that is marginal to his thought. I think the same is true with all the 19th century philosophers. For example, Nietzsche has sayings that you could think "wow what a chauvinist, what a sexist," or "what an anti-Semite he was." But I think you should go and see the essence of his philosophy, and if part of his philosophical thesis was chauvinistic, that would be a problem. But the sayings here and there about woman being, I don't know…

A: Needs to love.

SK: The need to love, the need of love he attaches to every human being.

A: But he describes the essence of women as "needing to love."

SK: I think he describes the essence of every human being as [needing to love].

This is in Works of Love. It is true here and there he can say something like "yes, the man does this and that, and the woman, she needs that the man will love her." Or something like that. First of all, it's not very repetitive. You find it here and there, and it's not part of the major ideas.

A: I am curious about how that plays an important role in this idea of non-preferential or neighborly love. Is there a specific metaphysical framework required to uphold this category of "human" that you described as all-desiring of that baseline level of love? How do you come to that category, and is there room for flexibility? For instance, coming at it from outside of a humanistic perspective, is there a way to talk about preferential love without having to come to a definition of a human subject?

SK: I'm not very sure I understand the question, but I think that part of being human is to have preferences. I think there is something misleading and very problematic in Works of Love that drove this dichotomy between preferential and neighborly love. I think part of it is for the purpose of rhetoric…I think Kierkegaard is confused. On the one hand, he does affirm preferential love. He does say specifically that it is okay to love in this way. On the other hand, he contrasts it with neighborly love. There is a very complicated story going on there, and I think that Works of Love is unsatisfying. But I think, of course this neighborly love and preferential love are reconcilable. I mean, there is no contradiction. Of course we have to understand there are many questions we have to ask before we can address your question. We have to understand what love is. What are we talking about when we are talking about

love? And then we have to see what is the common basis between neighborly love and, for example, romantic love, and then we can see whether it is reconcilable or not. Under a certain understanding of love which is not entirely Kierkegaard-ian, but it is reconcilable with things that Kierkegaard is saying. Under a specific understanding of love, you can both love any given person in a certain way and you have special relationships and different kinds of love with other people. It's like friendship and romantic love, they work together, right? You can have ten friends and one husband or wife, right? It's not a problem. You can have this attitude. It's very difficult of course, but in principle you can love any given person and that does not mean that you cannot romanti-cally love only one person.

A: What about something that is non-human?

SK: What do you mean by…

A: Kierkegaard's thought and your thought kind of takes for given that we are only talking about humans. What distinguishes humans—and I'm assum-ing you mean from other forms of life—is that humans have this ability to love.

SK: Yes. You mean like animals?

A: Sure, let's use animals.

SK: No, that's a different question. And I admit that I don't think Kierkeg-aard is interested in that question. For him, the affirmation of life and of the world includes not just humans. But when he speaks about love, he is interest-ed, first of all, in love for God and then in love for humans. Because he is going with the two commandments: love God, love your neighbor. So, when he talks about love, this is what interests him. It doesn't mean he doesn't think we can have love

> # Kierkegaard gives us a very difficult moral ideal to fulfill, but I think it is a very admirable thing to truly love any given person. It sounds strange. What does it mean to love any given person?

for animals, love for nature, love for the world--he even talks about love for nature when he wants to give an example how you can have the same kind of love while acknowledging the diversity of objects. He says, consider love for nature. When you love nature, you love the lily and you love the tree, and on each level of nature you will see the difference between differ-ent kinds of flowers and different kinds of trees, but you love them in the same love. So, he wants to say the same is possible in regard to humans. But he doesn't give us a theory about what it means to love ani-mals and nature, even though of course he doesn't exclude them. It doesn't mean you can love only humans.

A: We were hoping to talk about a problem we saw with preferential love: You talked about preferential love being potentially selfish. If you choose to love someone preferentially because of certain characteristics, couldn't that slip into a justification for avoiding certain races, or groups of people, or other religions, and avoiding preferential love because of

stereotypes? Matt Rosen, a student in the Junior Seminar class wants to know: "Today, at a time during which it seems that welcoming the stranger is very much in peril as a practice and as an ideal worth upholding, do you worry that preferential love sometimes gets in the way of loving those who are truly other to us?" So obviously, we have the neighborly love thing going on, but what about how preferential love privileges certain people, and what if I only choose to love other people that are like me?

SK: So, of course this is wrong in Kierkegaard's point of view. When he condemns preferential love, this is precisely because he is afraid that we will love only those that it comes naturally for us to love. We have natural tendencies, natural inclinations, but he condemns that, of course. First of all, I think he would say that nobody is really other than us because we are all humans, and you should love the enemy as well, [even though] your inclination is not to be with him, but even there Kierkegaard demands you to love him. So, of course, the idea of neighborly love or universal love addresses this concern. And, as I said, I think that both are reconcilable. I mean, it's not either/or. Kierkegaard doesn't so much tell us a lot about the nature of love, he more tells about how it is correct to love, and part of loving correctly is to have this openness to loving any given person. Nobody expects you to love everybody romantically, right? It's not desirable. So, it's not a problem that you will romantically love only one or two or three. Nobody in any moral theory expects that everybody will be your friends. No, this is not the point. There is a certain attitude that you are required to address to any given person

and the interesting question is why to call this love. I think there is an answer to that question.

A: What would you say to people who don't agree with the basic premise in Kierkegaard's thought that he's working from a religious, specifically Christian, framework? I know we talked about this in the seminar, but people are concerned that if you don't accept this initial truth, then how can you accept the rest of it? And what would you say to someone who is fundamentally against that first premise?

SK: This is a very difficult question. Again, it goes beyond Kierkegaard. As a theistic person myself, I wonder--and this is, again, these are open questions for me—I don't have an answer yet. But, I wonder if you can truly be moral, you know, to fulfill morality at its highest, if you are not theistic. I know that many people, of course, will disagree with me. But again, this is why I frame it as a question. I'm not saying that this is my claim. But, specifically with Kierkegaard it depends on what kind of atheist you are. I mean, if you are an open-minded atheist, then you can, you know—again, my colleagues in Israel are all atheist, and they read my work and can communicate with me even though they don't accept my conclusions. This is part of my challenge: to show how basic things that are most important for me can resonate if you do not accept the theistic framework. But it is difficult. It is difficult, and I think that for someone who is an atheist there will be a point in Kierkegaard that he will not be able to move forward. He will say, 'this is where our ways depart.' And this is fair enough. Sometimes you just don't share the same assumptions. It doesn't have to

be theism against atheism. I mean, someone who has a material worldview and someone who has an idealistic worldview will maybe not be able to find a common language. Yeah, this is disturbing because we believe—I believe that there is truth, OK? And, and so we all have the access to the truth, but, yes, I suppose that part of our finitude and limitedness is that those of us who don't agree with each other, maybe we will have to continue to try to show [our logic]. What I'm trying to do—and I have many students who are atheists—I'm trying to show them the logic. You can even take it as a thought experiment: just for the sake of this discussion let's assume that there is a loving god. What do we gain by that? Now of course this is not enough—this is not enough at all because we want to know the truth: if there is God or if there isn't a God. I don't know if I can do this, philosophically, maybe this is something like the leap of faith. But I think that if you're open minded enough so that you can at least try to listen, what you can learn about reality or how your attitude to reality can profit by this. OK, don't agree with me, just listen. Just see that this is, again, brings us back to the uniqueness of Kierkegaard and why I love Kierkegaard so much. You know he's not a dogmatic philosopher. Of course, he has these dogmas, he has these beliefs, and as I said in the seminar he doesn't bother to justify these beliefs: "this is what I believe in: take it or leave it." But he doesn't start with that, he starts with something universal, with existential concerns that are related to theists and atheists alike, and then he's showing us how a religious framework addresses these concerns. You can maybe be convinced by that, or you can say, "no

this is not good enough for me because I want something more…" you know, more convincing. This gives me a more harmonious way to live with the world. But to be truly religious as Kierkegaard demands of you it's not an easy life. It demands a lot of sacrifice. So, again, it is a very complicated question and, you know, I still struggle with it myself.

A: So, you would at least hope that the atheist isn't completely turned off by Kierkegaard and at least entertain this possibility of a God, and to even read a lot of his work not looking to maybe get the same thing out of it that you are. Certainly it's beautiful writing, and there are other things about it that you can gain—

SK: And again, I think you can go a long way with him before you should decide if you are committed to his theism or not. This is his existentialism, you know, he does a lot of existential work before getting in the theistic framework that addresses this existential work. So in that sense I think, yes, that many people can find many interesting things in Kierkegaard, but of course if you are not in some sense attracted to a spiritual kind of thinking then that's fine, it's not that everybody has to love Kierkegaard or to find value in him. I think it's a shame but OK, people with different sensitivities will find they are not drawn to Kierkegaard.