



PHILOSOPHY  
NOUVEAU

PHILSU'S UNDERGRADUATE PHILOSOPHY JOURNAL

2024 – 2025



# ABOUT PHILOSOPHY NOUVEAU

Previously Jove's Bodega, Philosophy Nouveau isn't your standard academic journal. Our focus is to provide philosophy (and non-philosophy) students with a fun and approachable way to engage with different types of philosophy, and showcase philosophy in non-traditional ways. We feature art, photography, poems, short stories, and traditional academic papers.

The Philosophy Student Union Undergraduate Journal is committed to showcasing the creativity of philosophy students at Simon Fraser University. We recognize that philosophy can mean different things to different people and acknowledge that our individual interests make philosophy a vibrant discipline. The journal is designed to allow undergraduate philosophers from all walks of life to develop their professional skills and encourage unique perspectives in philosophical discourse.

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# MEET THE JOURNAL TEAM

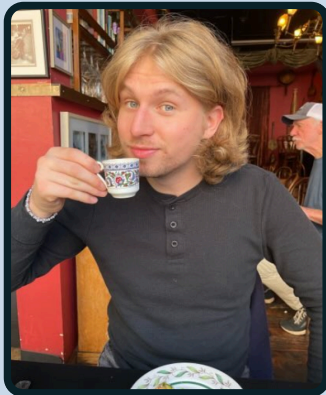


## **Taylor - Chief Journal Editor**

Favourite branch of philosophy: Early Modern Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, and Metaphysics

Favourite philosopher: Epicurus, Baruch Spinoza, and Fyodor Dostoevsky

Favourite hobby: Dungeons and Dragons, and painting.

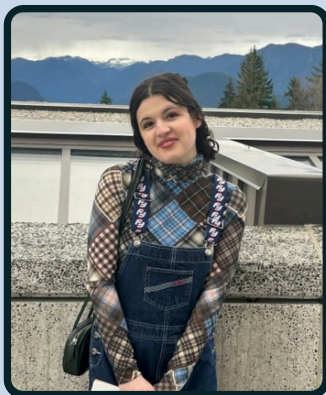


## **Blake - Assistant Journal Editor**

Favourite branch of philosophy: Political philosophy

Favourite philosopher: Jean Baudrillard

Favourite hobby: Listening to music



## **Lucia - Journal Editor**

Favourite branch of philosophy: Ethics and Aesthetics

Favourite philosopher: René Descartes and Jean-Paul Sartre

Favourite hobby: Oil painting

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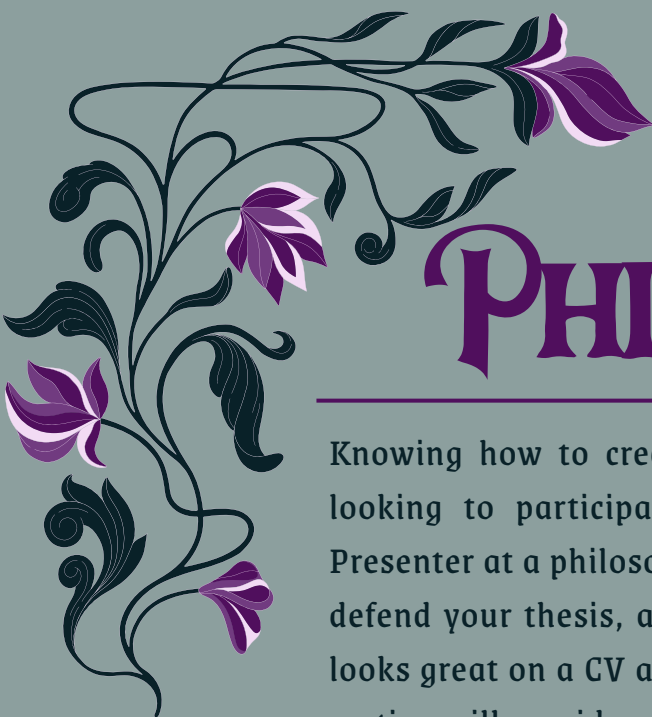
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# Skills SPOTLIGHT: PHILOSOPHY POSTER

Knowing how to create a **Philosophy Poster** is an important skill for anyone looking to participate in academic conferences. Earning a spot as a Poster Presenter at a philosophy conference is a valuable way to practice public speaking, defend your thesis, and further develop your ideas by receiving feedback. It also looks great on a CV and can set you apart from other grad-school applicants! This section will provide a **step-by-step guide for how to create an effective poster.**

## WHAT IS A PHILOSOPHY POSTER?

A Philosophy Poster provides a **visual representation of the main arguments of a philosophical paper** that has not yet been published in a journal. By prioritizing clarity and brevity, the poster provides an effective way to portray the key points of a philosophical argument quickly. This allows the Poster Presenter to give conference attendees an elevator pitch for their paper and receive feedback on their ideas before they are fully fleshed out.

**The Transmutation of "Elements" in Chemical Language**  
Taylor Ivan, Simon Fraser University, taylor\_ivan@sfu.ca

**Method:** I use an integrated history and philosophy of science approach (Chang, 2004) to reevaluate the legitimacy of three assumptions about alchemy, finding them to be unsupported. By constructing a 'problem-centered narrative,' I focus attention on aspects of the disappearance of alchemy which have previously gone unnoticed by historians not driven by the same problematic (Chang, 2004, p. 240). I provide evidence against each of these mistaken assumptions, and show instead that the disappearance of alchemy is the consequence of a series of deliberate choices to separate 'alchemy' from 'chemistry' for generally non-scientific reasons.

**Abstract**  
It is commonly believed that alchemy disappeared because chemistry—specifically, Lavoisier's new "chemistry"—was more scientific. I argue that this perception is false, and built upon three assumptions about alchemy that are not accurate. By investigating the historical reasons for the rejection of alchemy and assessing the philosophical legitimacy of those reasons (Chang, 2004), I show that alchemy disappeared not due to the accumulation of negative evidence against it or the philosophical superiority of Lavoisier's new chemistry. Instead, the changing of chemistry's language created an instance of local incommensurability which left alchemy permanently out of the conversation (Kuhn, 1950); specifically the meaning of the term "element."

**1 Assumption: Alchemy and chemistry were two distinct disciplines leading up to the eighteenth century.**  
**Correction:**  
• The terms "alchemy" and "chemistry" were used interchangeably by chymists in the seventeenth century. The eventual distinction can be tied back to an etymological mistake in chymical textbooks which mistook the "el" in "alchemy" as a dignifying principle meant to denote its excellence or divinity (Newman & Principe, 1998).  
• Alchemy acquired its exclusive association with gold-making (chrysopeia) as a result of this etymological mistake. Glaeser elevated chrysopeia to the top of his chymical hierarchy and claimed only the "highest-order" chymists (alchemists) could pursue it. However, alchemy was not seen as a discipline outside of chymistry.  
• Seventeenth-century chemistry professors at the University of Leiden explicitly taught alchemical doctrines in their chemical courses (Powers, 2008), and the chemical course as a genre derives from Libavius' textbook, "Alchemia" (Hamway, 1975).

**2 Assumption: The attacks made against alchemy were based on scientific arguments.**  
**Correction:**  
• The most significant attacks focused primarily on chrysopeia—due to Glaeser's restriction—not alchemy as a whole. Critics relied on accusations of fraud and greed, rather than presenting scientific arguments or empirical relations against metallic transmutation (Principe, 2014).  
• Administrative bodies and academic institutions were prejudiced against alchemy due to socio-political and economic concerns, not scientific ones (Principe, 2014; Powers, 2008).  
• The Parisian Académie Royale des Sciences did not want to be associated with gold-making, since their funding came from the King.  
• Pharmacists and medical professors at the University of Leiden saw alchemists as competition (within the medical marketplace and for university lecture attendance).  
• While the attacks harmed alchemy's public reputation, the theoretical foundations of the discipline were left untouched. Prominent chymists continued to pursue "alchemy" in private.

**3 Assumption: Lavoisier's new definition of the element was more empirically adequate than its alchemical counterpart.**  
**Correction:**  
• Lavoisier's element: a tangible substance with distinct observable properties, able to be isolated in a pure form as the end product of chemical analysis.  
• Alchemical elements: metaphysical entities which impart properties to matter.  
• Ex: "Sulphur" imparts combustibility  
• Lavoisier rejects the metaphysical elements of alchemy, yet invokes metaphysical elements of his own:  
• His own heat-substance, caloric, did not differ in any essential way from phlogiston or alchemical elements fire and sulphur (Bal, 2004; Paneth, 1962; Chang, 2010).  
• His definition obscures the important difference between the yellow-orange substance sulphur, and the sulphur present within the colorless pungent chemical compound, sulphuric dioxide.  
• Without invoking metaphysical elements, Lavoisier's definition cannot explain how elements persist in chemical compounds.

**Conclusion**  
Alchemy's disappearance from the domain of science is the consequence of a series of deliberate choices to separate "alchemy" from "chemistry" for generally non-scientific reasons, and the changing of chemical language:  
• The terms "alchemy" and "chemistry" became non-synonymous due to an etymological mistake in seventeenth-century textbooks and the restriction of "alchemy" to chrysopeia.  
• The term "element" became non-synonymous with itself after Lavoisier's changed it from metaphysical entities to tangible substances.  
• The attacks against alchemy did not rely on scientific arguments.  
• Lavoisier's definition of the element was not more empirically adequate. Modern chemistry still depends on the metaphysical elements to make sense of chemical compounds.

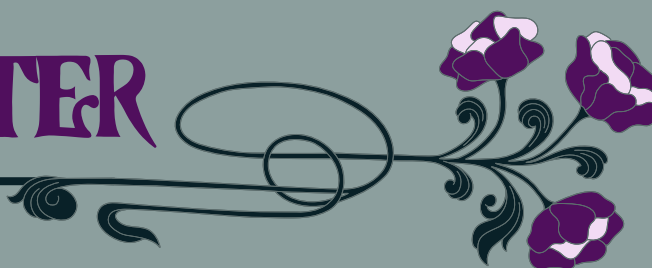
**Citations**  
Bal, G. (2004). The historical transition from alchemy to modern, medical and pharmaceutical practice (part 1): some overlap with philosophy of biology.  
Chang, R. (2004). The Invention of Solvent: The Philosophical and Scientific Foundations of Solvent Extraction. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 81(10), 1715-1720.  
Hamway, D. (1975). The Chemical Course and the Rise of the Chemical Course of Chemistry. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 52(1), 1-6.  
Kuhn, T. S. (1950). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. *International Studies in the History of Science*, 1(1), 1-10.  
Newman, J. K., & Principe, D. C. (1998). The Alchemical Tradition: An Introduction. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 75(1), 1-10.  
Paneth, H. (1962). The Disappearance of Alchemy. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 39(1), 1-10.  
Powers, C. C. (2008). Chemistry before the scientific revolution: The case of alchemy. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 85(1), 1-10.  
Principe, D. C. (2014). The Alchemical Tradition: An Introduction. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 91(1), 1-10.

**Future Directions**  
• Investigate the historical transition from alchemy to modern, medical and pharmaceutical practice (part 2): some overlap with philosophy of biology.  
• Explore aspects of the metaphysics and epistemology underlying the alchemical conceptual scheme.  
• How did the alchemical conceptual scheme—understanding, etc.—change over time?  
• Explore how alchemists justified their claims.  
• What was an alchemist's experimental methodology?  
• "Successful?" How did alchemists verify their results?  
• Analyze aspects of alchemy (religious significance, authority, "process experiments", etc.)

**Check out my PhD Application Writing Sample!**

This poster was presented at the Philosophy of Science Association (PSA) Conference in New Orleans, 2024. Let's see how it was made!

# PHILOSOPHY POSTER



## WHERE TO START

Every philosophy poster starts in the same place:

### The Abstract.

The abstract is a required component of your philosophy poster application. By the time you are planning out your poster, you should already have one written.

Using your abstract as a guide, identify the information which is most critical to include in your poster:

1. Thesis
2. Key arguments
3. Main pieces of evidence
4. Conclusion
5. References

Not everything you'll need on your poster will be included in your abstract. For example, it is generally a good idea to include a section about the **Future Direction** of your paper. This could be additional avenues you plan to explore to support your argument, or separate paper ideas which follow from your current argument

### Draft Abstract (499 words w references):

While alchemy is widely recognized as the precursor to modern chemistry, it has been generally confined in modern thought to the realm of "pre-science." This is due to a misconception that alchemy disappeared because chemistry, specifically Lavoisier's new chemistry, was more scientific. This paper takes a complementary science approach (1) by re-evaluating the reasons for the distinction between alchemy and chemistry. I argue that alchemy ceased to be a topic of serious scientific investigation not due to the accumulation of negative evidence against it, or the philosophical superiority of Lavoisier's new chemistry, but instead the changing of chemistry's language which left alchemy permanently out of the conversation—specifically the meaning of the word "element." I claim that alchemy was never "defeated" by chemistry; rather, it was forced to assimilate into the new chemical paradigm when the term "element" was changed by Lavoisier to refer to tangible substances, rather than metaphysical entities.

I cover two stages of the gradual disappearance of alchemy. First, the public attacks against alchemy and transmutation launched by administrative bodies such as the Royal Society of London and the Parisian Académie Royale des Sciences prevented the official publication of alchemical experiments. Neither of these organisations based their criticisms on scientific reasoning or empirical refutations. Instead, they were motivated by socio-political and economic concerns, such as the economic destabilisation that could follow a proven method for gold-making (2). Second, Lavoisier's take-over of the word "element" removed any common referents between alchemy and the new chemistry by explicitly denying the metaphysical conception of the element (3). Consequently, alchemical elements—metaphysical entities which impart specific properties to matter—became incoherent in the new paradigm. I show that Lavoisier's new operational definition was not more empirically adequate than the alchemical definition, and his decomposition by chemical analysis led to significant epistemological and metaphysical questions which were left unanswered (3, 4). Lavoisier's definition makes chemical compounds incomprehensible unless the simple substances isolated by chemical analysis are taken as the basis to infer the existence of basic substances—the very inference Lavoisier positioned his entire attack on alchemy against (4). I show that Lavoisier's victory was the result of his ability to control administrative spaces and chemical language, rather than wide-spread buy-in from chemists themselves (1-3,5) or empirical justification (4).

(1) Chang, Hasok. *Inventing temperature*. Oxford: OUP, 2004.

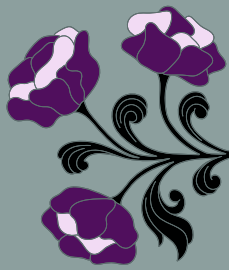
(2) Principe, Lawrence M. "The End of Alchemy?: The Repudiation and Persistence of Chrysopoeia at the Académie Royale Des Sciences in the Eighteenth Century." *Osiris* 29, no. 1 (2014): 96–116. <https://doi.org/10.1086/678099>.

(3) Robert Siegfried Ph.D. & Betty Jo Dobbs M.A., Composition, a neglected aspect of the chemical revolution, (1968) *Annals of Science*, 24:4, 275-293, DOI: 10.1080/00033796800200201

(4) Paneth, F. A. "The Epistemological Status of the Chemical Concept of Element (II)." *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 13, no. 50 (1962): 144–60.

(5) Whyte, Jennifer (2021). The roots of the silver tree: Boyle, alchemy, and teleology. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 85:185-191.

Tip: You do not have to adhere strictly to the abstract you submitted in your application. As long as you represent your main thesis, you can decide to emphasize different aspects of your paper than what you may have written in your abstract initially.



# SKILLS SPOTLIGHT

## ORGANIZING YOUR POSTER

From the sample abstract, we can isolate the following information which will serve as an outline for our poster:

1. Thesis
2. Key arguments
3. Main pieces of evidence
4. Conclusion
5. References
6. Future Directions

1

The **Thesis** can be taken directly from the abstract, since it is the one thing that will remain consistent. However, it may be a good idea to include an “Introduction” or “Abstract” section on your poster to give people a glimpse into what you will be presenting. This will include your thesis, a “hook, a brief run-down of the problem needing to be solved, and how you plan to provide that solution. It is essentially a mini-abstract to provide context for your thesis.

2

**Key Arguments:** Often, the way you describe your paper in the initial abstract will not be the most ideal format for a Poster. Here’s an example of **how to rework the information in your abstract** to fit a more convenient poster layout:

**In the abstract:** “I cover two stages of the gradual disappearance of alchemy. First, the public attacks against alchemy and transmutation launched by administrative bodies [...] Second, Lavoisier’s take-over of the word “element” [...] which made alchemical elements become] incoherent in the new [chemical] paradigm.”

**Problem:** While planning out the poster, I noticed that representing the two stages of the disappearance came across as a historical project, rather than a philosophical project. Since this is a Philosophy Poster, I needed to make some changes to properly represent the *philosophical argument* I was making. To do this, I focused on the underlying factors which allowed the gradual disappearance of alchemy to occur, rather than focus on the two stages of the disappearance.

**Solution:** I identified three underlying assumptions which enabled the disappearance of alchemy, and focused my poster on those.

a

**Mistaken Assumption:**  
Alchemy and Chemistry were distinct leading up to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

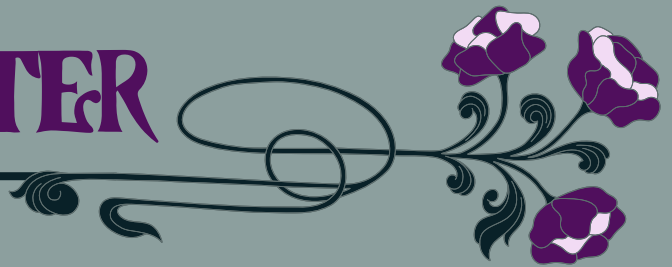
b

**Mistaken Assumption:**  
Attacks made against Alchemy were based on scientific arguments.

c

**Mistaken Assumption:**  
Lavoisier’s definition of “element” was more empirically adequate.

# PHILOSOPHY POSTER



3

**Main Pieces of Evidence:** Now that we've narrowed down the focus of the poster to these three mistaken assumptions, finding evidence is simply a matter of **scrapbooking** from the abstract and your original paper.

**Tip:** "Scrapbooking" is when you comb through your original paper and abstract and directly copy and paste relevant sentences you've previously written into a separate document. Once you've collected all these bits of information, you can organize them into a structure, and re-phrase them to fit the new context (this might be grammar changes, slight adjustments, etc.). This saves you from having to re-write everything from scratch, and keeps you on track!

For example, since we just reworked the "Main Arguments" of our abstract to represent mistaken assumptions, rather than the stages of the gradual disappearance of alchemy, we can now scrapbook information from the abstract and reorganize it to fit our new structure.

**Let's see how this is done:**

"administrative bodies [...] prevented the official publication of alchemical experiments."

"[They did not base] their criticisms on scientific reasoning or empirical refutations."

"Instead, they were motivated by socio-political and economic concerns, such as [...]"

**These sentences can now be reorganized and used as evidence under assumption b.**

**b**

**Mistaken Assumption:**  
Attacks made against Alchemy were based on scientific arguments.

4

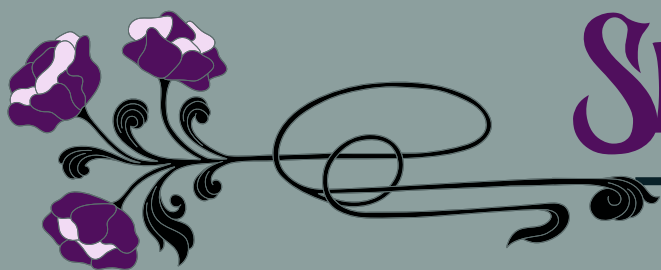
Since the thesis didn't change, the **conclusion** should also stay relatively consistent with the abstract. If the emphasis of your poster was altered, like what was done in this example, you may have to adjust your conclusion to match.

5

You can take your **references** directly from the abstract. Add any others from the original paper that are necessary depending on the information you've included on the poster.

6

The **Future Directions** section is a good opportunity to showcase other ideas you have that are related to the original paper. For example, on this poster I included the following related questions in this section: "When was an alchemical experiment considered "successful"? How did alchemists verify their results?"



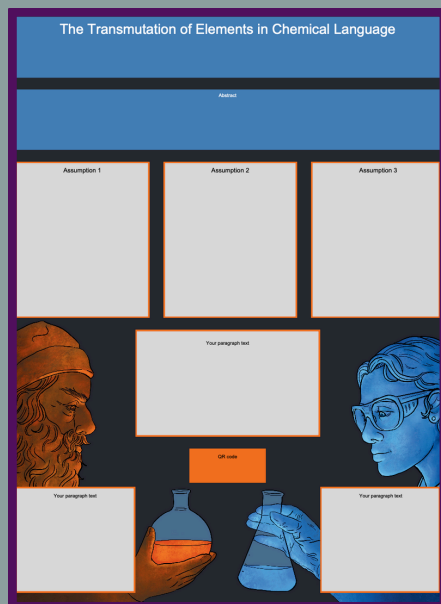
# SKILLS SPOTLIGHT

## DESIGNING YOUR POSTER

Now comes the fun part: designing your poster! At this point, you should know all of the information you'll need to include – everything we covered in the previous section – and the general layout you're going for. You will also need to add a section for the **Title** of your paper, your **Name**, the university you represent, and your **Contact Information**. Also consider adding a **QR Code** to your paper so people can read your work!

### ADD VISUAL ELEMENTS

Unlike other disciplines, Philosophy papers aren't known for having many images. In order to avoid presenting a wall of text, we need to **add visual elements** to the poster to make it more attractive. In the example poster, I decided to include an illustration to add some visual interest, give a hint about topic what my poster would address, and break up the text a bit. You could also use images from google (don't forget to cite them), or feature a creative use of colours. That being said, monochromatic or bichromatic is usually best!



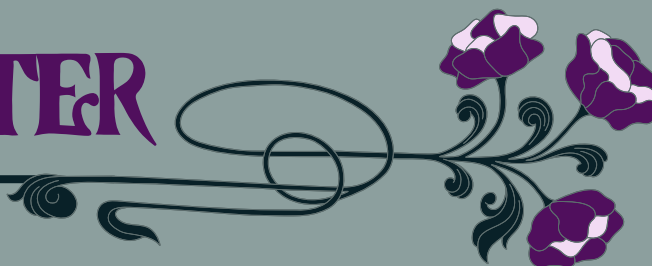
**Top:** Preliminary layout of poster design with sketches and potential text boxes.

**Right:** Fully illustrated and coloured background with dark base colour - the final product opts for a lighter base colour.

**Left:** Test version of vertical orientation.

**Tip:** Always double check the **Poster Requirements** for the conference you'll be participating in. The specific details of your poster such as print size, font size, orientation (horizontal or vertical), and word count can vary. Make sure you check these specifics **BEFORE** you start designing – trust me!

# PHILOSOPHY POSTER



## COMPLETED POSTER

And there you have it, a completed Philosophy Poster ready to be presented at your next philosophy conference! With this step-by-step guide, you should have everything you need to knock your poster presentation out of the park. **Good luck future philosophers!**

### The Transmutation of "Elements" In Chemical Language

Taylor Ivan, Simon Fraser University, taylor\_ivan@sfu.ca

#### Method:

I use an integrated history and philosophy of science approach (Chang, 2004) to reevaluate the legitimacy of three assumptions about alchemy, finding them to be unsupported. By constructing a "problem-centered narrative," I focus attention on aspects of the disappearance of alchemy which have previously gone unnoticed by historians not driven by the same problematic (Chang, 2004, p. 240). I provide evidence against each of these mistaken assumptions, and show instead that the disappearance of alchemy is the consequence of a series of deliberate choices to separate "alchemy" from "chemistry" for generally non-scientific reasons.

#### Abstract

It is commonly believed that alchemy disappeared because chemistry—specifically Lavoisier's "new" chemistry—was more scientific. I argue that this perception is false and built upon three assumptions about alchemy that are not accurate. By investigating the historical reasons for the rejection of alchemy and assessing the philosophical legitimacy of those reasons (Chang, 2004), I show that alchemy disappeared not due to the accumulation of negative evidence against it or the philosophical superiority of Lavoisier's new chemistry. Instead, the changing of chemistry's language created an instance of local incommensurability which left alchemy permanently out of the conversation (Kuhn, 1990); specifically the meaning of the term "element."



#### Citations

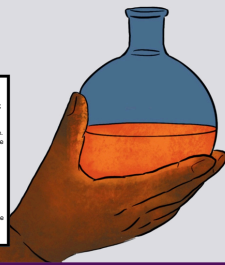
Ball, P. (2004). *The elements: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.  
Chang, H. (2010). *The Hidden History of Phlogiston: How Philosophical Failure Can Generate Historical Realism*. *HYLE: International Journal for Philosophy of Chemistry*, 16(2), 47-79. Chang, H. (2004). *Inventing temperature*. Oxford University Press.  
Hannaway, O. (1975). *The Chemists and the World: The Didactic Origins of Chemistry*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.  
Kuhn, T. S. (1990). *The Road since Structure: PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 1989, 36-113. Newman, W. R., & Principe, L. M. (1998). *Alchemy vs. chemistry: The etymological origins of a historiographic mistake*. *Early Science and Medicine*, 3(1), 53-65. Paneth, F. A. (1962). *The Epistemological Status of the Chemical Concept of Element (I) & II*. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 13(50), 114-144-160.  
Powers, J. C. (2006). *Chemistry enters the University: Herbert Bohrhove and the reborn of the Chemical Arts*. *History of Universities*, 77-116. Principe, L. M. (2014). *The End of Alchemy*. Oxford, 2013.

1

**Assumption:** Alchemy and chemistry were two distinct disciplines leading up to the eighteenth century.

#### Correction:

- The terms "alchemy" and "chemistry" were used interchangeably by chymists in the seventeenth century. The eventual distinction can be tied back to an etymological mistake in chymical textbooks which mistook the "al" in "alchemy" as a dignifying principle meant to denote its excellence or divinity (Newman & Principe, 1998).
- Alchemy acquired its exclusive association with gold-making (chrysopeia) as a result of this etymological mistake: Glaser elevated chrysopeia to the top of his chymical hierarchy and claimed only the "highest-order" chymists (alchemists) could pursue it. However, alchemy was not seen as a discipline outside of chymistry.
- Seventeenth century chemistry professors at the University of Leiden explicitly taught alchemical doctrines in their chemical courses (Powers, 2006), and the chemical course as a genre derives from Libavius' textbook, "Alchemia" (Hannaway, 1975).



2

**Assumption:** The attacks made against alchemy were based on scientific arguments.

#### Correction:

- The most significant attacks focused primarily on chrysopeia—due to Glaser's restriction—not alchemy as a whole. Critics relied on accusations of fraud and greed, rather than presenting scientific arguments or empirical refutations against metallic transmutation (Principe, 2014).
- Administrative bodies and academic institutions were prejudiced against alchemy due to socio-political and economic concerns, not scientific ones (Principe, 2014; Powers, 2006).
  - The Parisian Académie Royale des Sciences did not want to be associated with gold-making, since their funding came from the King.
  - Pharmacists and medical professors at the University of Leiden saw alchemists as competition (within the medical marketplace and for university lecture attendance).
- While the attacks harmed alchemy's public reputation, the theoretical foundations of the discipline were left untouched. Prominent chymists continued to pursue "alchemy" in private.



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3

**Assumption:** Lavoisier's new definition of the element was more empirically adequate than its alchemical counterpart.

#### Correction:

- Lavoisier's element: a tangible substance with distinct observable properties, able to be isolated in a pure form as the end product of chemical analysis.
- Alchemical elements: metaphysical entities which impart properties to matter.
  - Ex: "Sulphur" imparts combustibility
- Lavoisier rejects the metaphysical elements of alchemy, yet invoked metaphysical elements of his own:
  - His own heat-substance, *caloric*, did not differ in any essential way from phlogiston or alchemical elements fire and sulphur (Ball, 2004; Paneth, 1962; Chang, 2010).
- His definition obscures the important difference between the yellow odourless substance sulphur, and the sulphur present within the colourless pungent chemical compound, sulphur dioxide.
- Without invoking metaphysical elements, Lavoisier's definition cannot explain how elements persist in chemical compounds.



#### Conclusion

Alchemy's disappearance from the domain of science is the consequence of a series of deliberate choices to separate "alchemy" from "chemistry" for generally non-scientific reasons, and the changing of chemical language:

- The terms "alchemy" and "chemistry" became non-synonymous due to an etymological mistake in seventeenth century textbooks and the restriction of "alchemy" to chrysopeia.
- The term "element" became non-synonymous with itself after Lavoisier's change it from metaphysical entities to tangible substances.
- The attacks against alchemy did not rely on scientific arguments.
- Lavoisier's definition of the element was not more empirically adequate: Modern chemistry still depends on the metaphysical elements to make sense of chemical compounds.



#### Future Directions

- Investigate the historical transition from alchemy to modern medical and pharmaceutical practices (perhaps some overlap with philosophy of biology)
- In depth analysis of the metaphysics and epistemology underlying the alchemical conceptual scheme.
  - Also alchemical systems of taxonomy, pattern-finding, etc.
- Explore how alchemists justified their claims:
  - "When was an alchemical experiment considered 'successful'?" How did alchemists verify their results?
  - Analyze appeals to authority (religious significance, antiquity, "prisca sapientia", etc.)



Check out a larger image of the poster here!



Check out the full paper here!



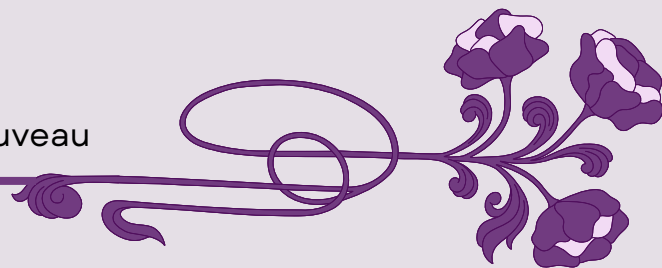


WELCOME TO:  
**THE PAPERS SECTION**

The next few pages are dedicated to papers submitted by our student body and the executive members of the Philosophy Student Union.

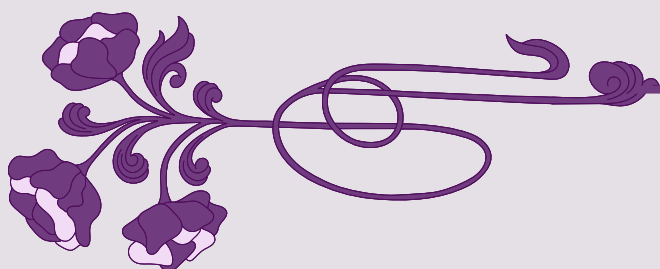
Find an abstract interesting and want to read more?

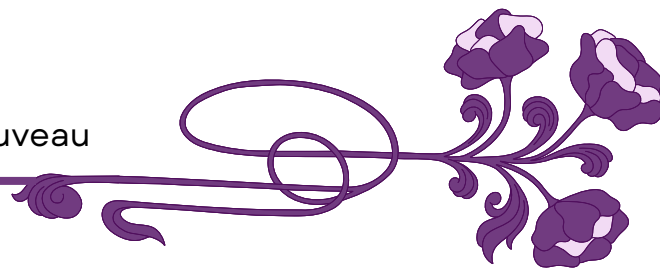
**Scan the QR codes for the full papers!**



**AN EXISTENTIALIST OBJECTION TO  
SUKAINA HIRJI ON OPPRESSIVE  
DOUBLE BINDS**

Written by: Lucia Pistrin

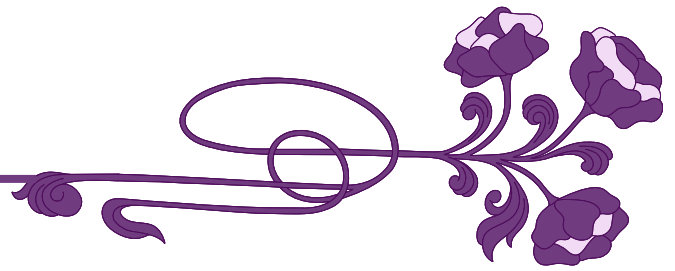




## **Abstract**

With this essay, I will argue that Sukaina Hirji's conceptualization of Oppressive Double Binds is flawed. In addition to a practically ineffective conception of what it is to be a rational and autonomous agent, the author makes use of poor examples and imprecise definitions to illustrate her main point; that is, that an agent in an oppressive double bind can act against their own agency even when that agent makes a fully informed, rational decision, and experiences no subjective remorse or discomfort by acting in that manner. The author believes that an agent in an oppressive double-bind has their agency, but not their autonomy, undermined. In the first part of my essay, I will take Hirji to task on this more definitional matter. The second portion of my essay will expose a flaw underpinning both her explication and examples of oppressive double-binds, namely, the implicit claim that there exists some objective moral good which is necessarily anti-oppressive. (Hirji, 652) What Hirji considers a moral good, "with a view to resisting oppression," is the removal, subversion, or rebellion against the oppressive structures an agent in a marginalized group finds themselves working within, else her argument collapses in on itself, and she can no longer claim that an agent works against their interests no matter which choice they select. (Hirji, 651) Finally, I will present the reader with what I believe is a much more consistent and coherent account of autonomy and agency within the oppressive social structures outlined by Hirji, citing the work of Jean-Paul Sartre in Existentialism is a Humanism.

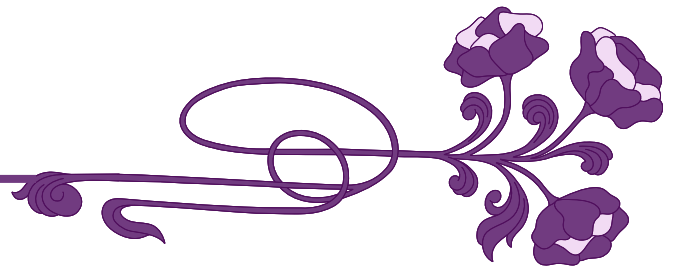




## **Intro to Hirji's Oppressive Double Binds**

The thesis of Hirji's paper is that oppressive double binds are choice scenarios wherein an agent's prudential good is tied to their ability to resist oppression, in which case agents will actively become "mechanism(s) in their own oppression." (Hirji, 643) She defends this thesis by appealing to Marilyn Frye's account of double-binds, which she seeks to vindicate. Hirji also considers a variety of accounts of agency and autonomy to flesh out her view that oppressive double binds restrain the former but leave the latter intact. The accounts she surveys are from Suzy Killmester, Marina Oshana, and Anne Cudd. The mechanics of her argument work as follows; in the introduction and Section I, she proceeds from two examples of oppressive double-bind scenarios in order to explain the structure of the imperfect choices they present, and in Section II, works with Frye's description of double binds from Oppression to characterize what are and are not oppressive double binds. Section III outlines conceptions of oppressive double binds that Hirji rejects while Section IV focuses on Hirji's preferred version which relies on a distinction between prudential and moral goods. In Section V, Hirji discusses types and styles of oppression. In Section VI, the author rejects accounts of oppressive double binds that center around autonomy and argues for a version that centers around agency in Section VII. Finally, Section VIII sees Hirji musing on the ramifications of her view in the social world.

Hirji's double bind scenarios center around individuals who are members of socially marginalized groups that face structural and systemic forces that restrain the scope and efficacy of their actions. According to Marilyn Frye, "if one wants to determine whether a particular suffering, harm, or limitation is part of someone's being oppressed... one has to see if it is part of an enclosing structure of forces and barriers which tends to the immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people." (Frye, 2) In light of this characterization of oppression and oppressive forces, one must be, or at least consider oneself to be, a member of an immobilized and reduced population if one is to cite oppressive forces for lack of

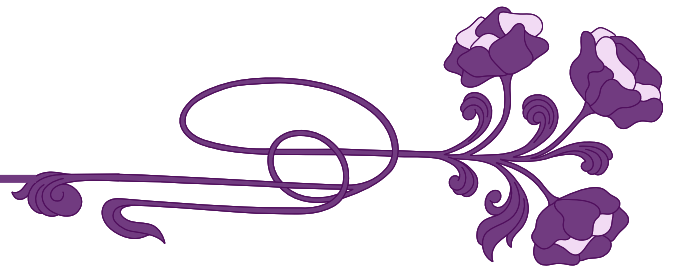


success or visibility. Thus, the examples Hirji provides in Section I - the dilemma of the female philosophy student or scholar of Africana philosophy - are double bind scenarios and not typical choice situations, limitations, or frustrations because they focus on members of these groups. They resemble typical choice situations because they present the agent with an “imperfect choice,” but exceed these choice situations because “whatever an agent does necessarily undermines their own objective interests” (Hirji, 645).

### **Criticism of Hirji’s ‘Objective Interests’**

Unfortunately for Hirji, an explanatory account of ‘objective interests’ is not provided, and thus the reader is left to speculation. In the absence of a clear-cut definition or account of this term, I suggest that this terminology was applied ad hoc by Hirji in Section III in order to maintain that it is imperative that the female philosophy student or the Africana scholar should desire the outcome of “increasing the representation of minorities in philosophy,” or look to “expand or challenge the traditional canon,” and additionally implies that these outcomes are objective moral goods. (643, 644) The term ‘objective interest’ with respect to a given group invokes a paternalistic attitude, making inappropriate presumptions about the things that an individual should desire based on elements of their identity that are outside of their control; ethnicity, gender, sex, academic interest, and so on. In my estimation, utilizing the term ‘objective interest’ serves the interests of Hirji’s argument but is not an accurate representation of the manner in which choice situations operate. I will return to this thread of my argument later on in the paper.

Sukaina Hirji’s argument is further convoluted by the distinction between moral and prudential goods she draws in Section IV. She maintains that “in a double bind, an agent’s prudential good is bound up with the moral good of resistance to oppression.” (654) Despite this, Hirji concedes that there may be scenarios where there is one strictly morally good option and one strictly prudentially good

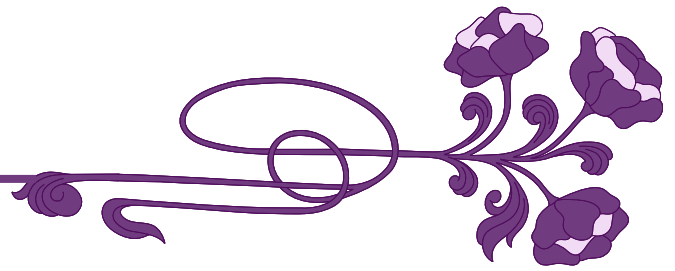


option while simultaneously claiming that her first claim and her second are not incompatible. This is nonsensical. If a 'prudential good,' which Hirji again fails to define, is that which would advance the short-term goals and desires of a given agent, what would be prudentially best for an agent would also be morally best for them, unless one believes, like Hirji, that a prudential good is that which is in line with the status quo and a moral good is that which is against the status quo - because, again, she presumes that she knows what would be in the objective interest of a member of an oppressed group in virtue of their being a part of an oppressed group.

I am suggesting here that her inappropriate and presumptive usage of the term 'objective interest' is indeed operative even in this segment of her argument. By making herself out to know what, exactly, the objective interests of the female philosophy student (1) and the scholar of Africana philosophy (2) are by virtue of some component of their identity, Hirji is able to make the case that what would be morally best for them is to revolt against the status quo, and that this is in some way at odds with what would be best for them prudentially. But if we extract this assumption out from the bedrock of her argument, and acknowledge the problematic nature of her conception of an objective interest, Hirji can no longer mess about with the terms 'prudential' and 'moral' goods. At the very least, they will no longer serve the purposes of her argument. Thus, the confluence of moral and prudential goods only serves to muddle Hirji's argument, and reinforces her bizarre characterization of the term 'objective interest.'

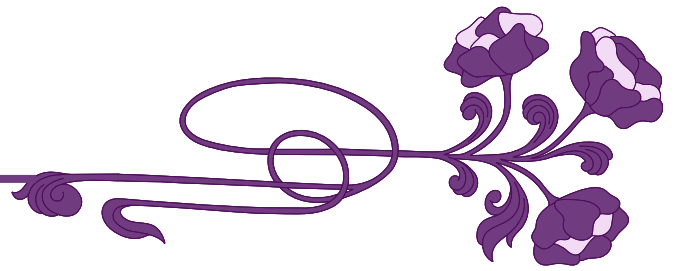
### **Criticism of Hirji's Examples**

Hirji's examples are unimpressive because of the presumption of objective interests that lies at the foundation of her argument. Here I will outline in more detail the manner in which these examples fall short based on this objection. First, the opening example surrounding the dilemma of the female professor of colour will be criticised. The example that Hirji begins her essay with describes the



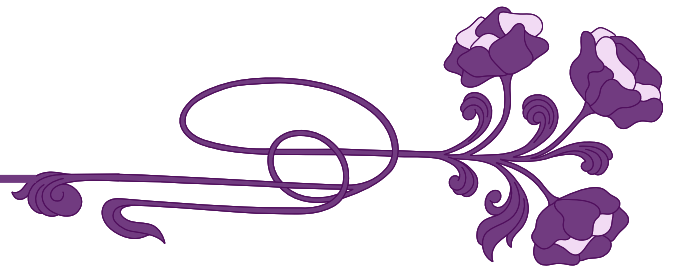
misfortune of a member of two minority groups; she is a person of colour and a woman, an untenured professor, “frequently approached by students, typically women or members of underrepresented groups, looking for mentorship and emotional support” (Hirji, 643). Hirji believes that the choices presented to her are double binds by virtue of her facticity - the brute facts of her existence including her race and her sex - she is a woman, and moreover, a woman of colour.

To put it plainly, this professor has a choice between furthering herself and her research by investing all of her time and effort into her studies, or diverting some of her attention to another task, perhaps equally valuable and meaningful, by providing mentorship to members of her group. For Hirji, this exceeds the choice scenarios faced by individuals by virtue of the professor’s facticity. As posited earlier by Frye, she is allegedly bound within a web that limits the options of minority groups. I propose that if we relax this intuition, and object to the idea that it is necessarily an oppressive framework that she operates within, there is one choice that is evidently more powerful. This choice is that of furthering her own work. In doing so, Hirji maintains that she “indirectly help(s) to maintain a status quo in which women and people of colour... remain dramatically underrepresented and underserved,” but I believe that this is placing far too much responsibility on one person’s shoulders, and far too much emphasis on resisting the status quo (Hirji, 644). What would be prudentially best for this professor - in the way of furthering her own career - is also what would be morally best for her, if the term ‘morally best’ is not bound to some moral requirement to resist oppression, which she probably isn’t experiencing if she has risen to the position of untenured professor. Some description of what is morally best is required here. I suggest that we replace Hirji’s conception of a moral good with one that actually allows for individual action and responsibility; such as, that one has a moral obligation to pursue their own individual flourishing without recourse to advancing a cause. In other words, one might be morally bound to their subjective interests, but cannot be morally bound to an objective one that is as ill-defined as what Hirji presents. This is not to say that there are no objective goods or values that agents may be



categorically bound to irrespective of their prudential interests.

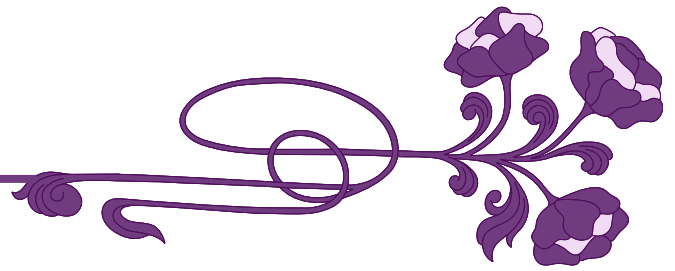
Sukaina Hirji additionally relies on a philosophically unimpressive view of autonomy and agency to support her view that oppressive double binds are self-undermining. First, I will focus on the autonomy portion of this distinction. In Section VI, Hirji fails to define autonomy positively, but rather cites several contemporary accounts of autonomy that she rejects - those of Marina Oshana and Ann Cudd - and another that she tentatively embraces - that of Suzy Killmister. The first two are accounts of global autonomy, while the last is an account of local autonomy. Oshana maintains that “an agent is only autonomous if... they also have access to genuine options in deciding how to live, as well as...freedom from the domination of others and freedom from the fear of reprisal for making one’s own choices.” (Hirji, 660). It is so broad that autonomy no longer falls within the bounds of one’s actions, but within the net of the possible social ramifications of that action. Thus, it can be operative within a conceptualization of oppressive double binds such that “options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation.” (Hirji, 647 from Frye) Hirji ends up finding this as an inaccurate reflection of the constraints inherent in oppressive double-bind scenarios. After all, neither the untenured professor nor the scholar of Africana philosophy are foreseeably going to be exposed to penalty, censure, or deprivation. Local autonomy, on the other hand, is the kind of autonomy one experiences in accordance with one action or decision, rather than in the broad sense as construed within the scope of global autonomy. Double binds do not inhibit local autonomy, according to Hirji. Another definition of autonomy Hirji considers is from Suzy Killmister, who maintains that “double binds force an agent to uphold some of their values at the expense of others, thereby constraining their autonomy along the dimension of self-unification” (Hirji, 662). Despite being an example of local autonomy, this definition of autonomy is still far too broadly construed. On this account, the limitations placed on an individual in virtue of a double bind can be taken to inhibit the autonomy of an individual, because it takes for granted the idea that self-unification is a socially-coordinated process.



Each of the accounts illustrated above, even the one found most palatable to Hirji from Killmister, are not accurate reflections of the manner in which double binds operate. Thus, Hirji suggests that we must look to the axis of agency to best understand the manner in which an agent might be limited by virtue of an oppressive double bind. Recall how Hirji previously defined the nature of a double bind choice scenario, where “both options...undermine to some degree our prudential interests, and both options undermine to some degree the goal of resistance to oppression” (Hirji, 664). Thus, “an agent is not choosing between two competing values. Instead, in double binds there are two kinds of goods at stake... and secured independently from the other” (Hirji, 664). The author herself admits that “there is a clear sense in which, in a double bind, an individual is exercising their agency” (Hirji, 665). Unfortunately, this agency is problematically compromised insofar as whatever they choose, the consequences of their actions are most likely to be negative. So Hirji’s weak conceptualization of agency boils down to this: when an account of autonomy, no matter how broadly it is drawn, cannot encapsulate the program she desires to put forward, she must recourse to pulling out from the very concept of autonomy another concept closely related to the first in order to accommodate her idea.

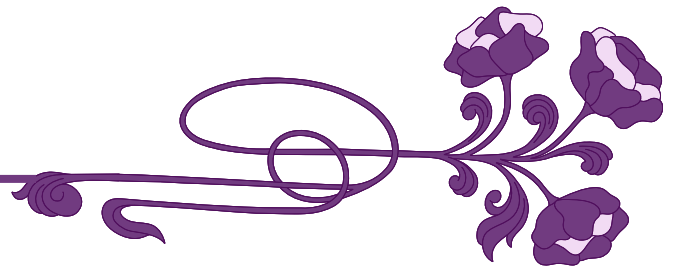
### **My Account of Autonomy**

Now, I will pick up the thread of my argument left off earlier and consider the manner in which choice situations, of which oppressive double binds are a kind of, actually operate in the world. Within this structure, I will offer a more internally coherent and localized conception of agency, as proffered by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Existentialism was a philosophical school that emerged as a response to the problem of nihilism in the early twentieth century. It focused on individual freedom and responsibility, and used a phenomenological lens to make sense of experiential reality. As such, it has plenty to say about responsibility and human agency. An existentialist view of the self prioritizes agency and maintains that material and social circumstances can be transcended

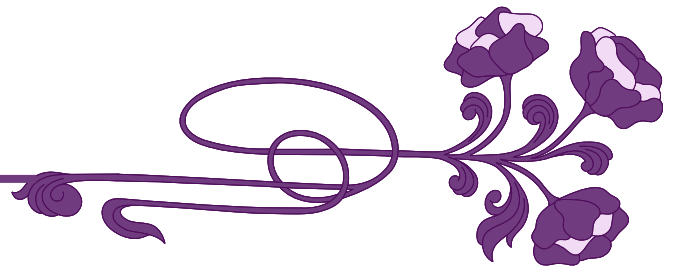


within a framework of individual striving and the creation of one's own values. This is a response to essentialism, in which humans are understood as being endowed with a specific 'nature' to which they necessarily adhere and are fundamentally indebted. The first of Jean-Paul Sartre's tenets is that "man is responsible for what he is" (23). The second is that individuals have the power to effectively transcend their material and social circumstances, referred to by Sartre as one's "facticity," in favor of an individualized conception of the self, regardless of age, sex, upbringing or genetics. The third is that despite this being an overall positive approach to life, it entails three negative and painful emotions - anguish, abandonment, and despair. I will now apply these three core tenets to the examples provided by Hirji, in order to suggest that they offer a more internally coherent and individually freeing conception of autonomy.

By citing the work of the existentialist author Jean-Paul Sartre, I wish to lend some historical credence to the prioritization of subjectivity over objectivity, and to ground choice-situations within a schematic that lends individuals autonomy and agency regardless of their facticity or brute biological or social circumstances. If cultural conventions and norms established within families can be transcended through individual effort, existence precedes essence. This is subjectivity. Within this framework, Hirji's examples, such as the female professor of color who must choose between her research and mentoring minority students, do not delineate situations wherein an agent's agency or autonomy are compromised, nor do they properly constitute a 'double bind' in the sense defined by Marion Frye and cited by Hirji. It also quashes the idea that there exists some 'objective interest' to which a member of an oppressed group is necessarily morally bound; if an individual is the locus of agency and autonomy by virtue of their being a human agent, then we need not make recourse to their social circumstances to determine to what extent their autonomy and agency are infringed upon, especially in absence of a coherent definition of autonomy or agency from Hirji. Sartre maintains that "man is responsible for what he is" (23). Thus, each and every human with sound mind and choice-making ability is responsible and accountable for their actions and their decisions.



For Hirji and the scenarios she cites, this means that responsibility can be properly attributed to the professor of colour for the decisions she makes, as they do not involve coercion or impaired mental faculties. Sartre also holds that the brute facts of an individual's existence, including their sex and race, are properly understood as meaningless when it comes to attributing freedom and responsibility. Individuals are humans, and their identity as humans has primacy. As such, they cannot be diminished to their 'facticity' and are held accountable for their actions accordingly. Finally, Sartre acknowledges the presence of suffering through subjectivity. Suffering is inevitable in any choice situation. Feelings of anguish, abandonment, and despair are inherent in the human experience and should not be attributed unduly to social constructs under my interpretation of both Hirji and Sartre's texts.

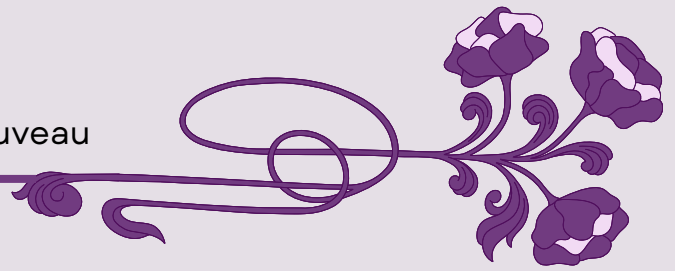


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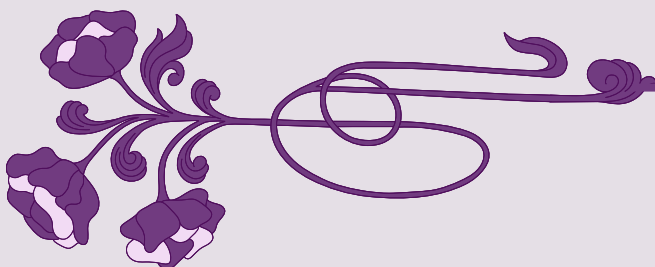
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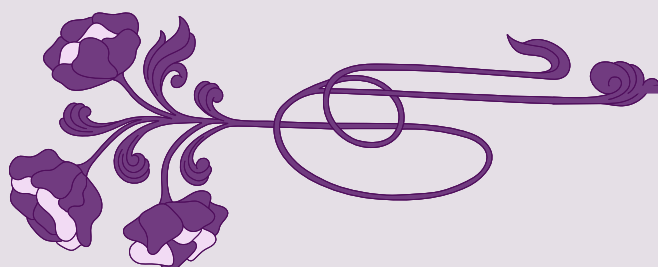
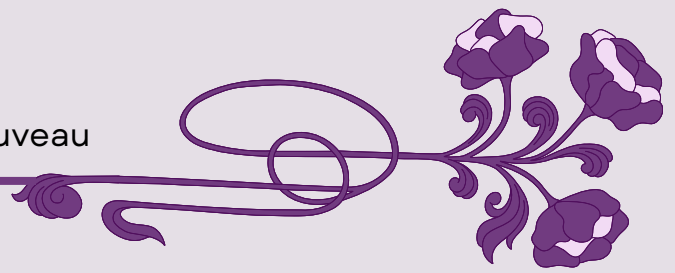
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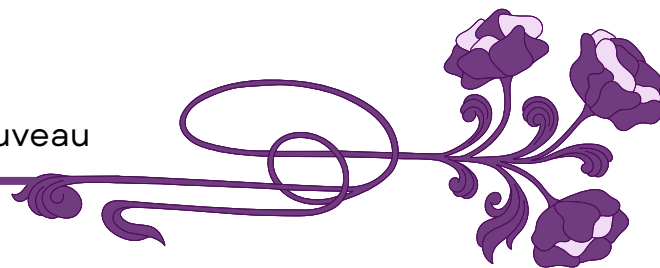


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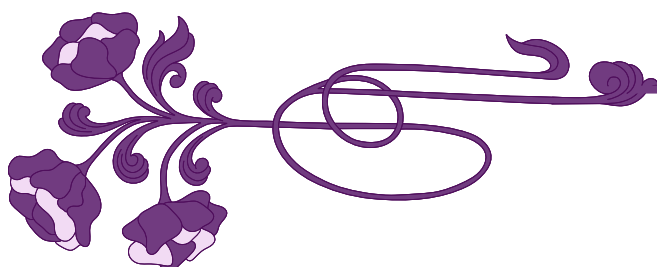


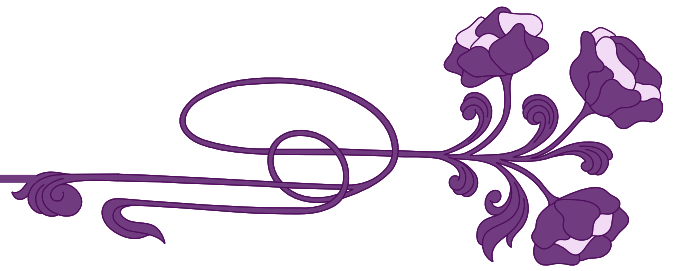




## **Abstract**

This paper examines William Smith’s theory of “civil disobedience as deliberative contestation,” which justifies acts of disobedience that challenge failures in deliberative democracy. Smith contends that civil disobedience should adhere to the three principles: inclusivity, non-coercion, and informed dialogue—since it functions as a form of deliberation itself. However, I argue that many effective forms of civil disobedience, such as strikes and blockades, inherently involve coercion by imposing reputational, financial, or ethical costs on authorities. Rather than viewing deliberative principles as inviolable side-constraints, I propose they should be treated as maximizable goals. Specifically, I introduce the concept of “counter-coercion,” where limited coercion in civil disobedience can disrupt systemic power imbalances and reduce overall coercion in deliberation. This approach ensures that acts of civil disobedience actively contribute to a more inclusive, less coercive, and better-informed political discourse. Ultimately, I modify Smith’s framework to account for the realities of non-ideal political conditions while preserving its core commitment to democratic legitimacy.



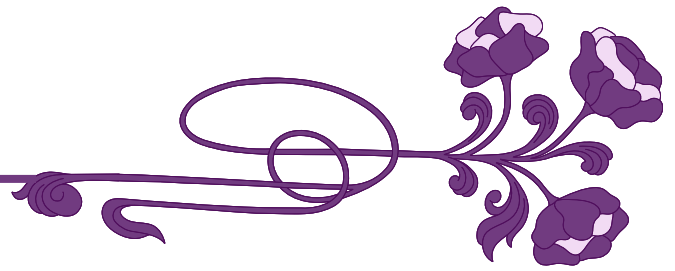


## **Introduction**

Civil disobedience broadly encompasses illegal, public, and political acts of protest. John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin frame civil disobedience as “justifiable [only] when laws or policies seriously violate principles of justice, such as equal basic liberties.” (353) In “Democracy, Deliberation, and Disobedience,” William Smith argues this framing is too restrictive, as it fails to lend justification to acts of civil disobedience that address failures in, and contribute to, deliberative processes. Smith responds with his own framing of “civil disobedience as deliberative contestation,” which he constructs by appealing to three principles of deliberative democracy: inclusivity, non-coercion, and informed dialogue. (355) Smith argues that civil disobedience can be justified when deliberation violates any of these principles, as it may contribute to the deliberative democratic process by calling attention to the violation. I argue first that most effective forms of civil disobedience require some violation of these principles, namely coercion, through the reputational, monetary, or ethical costs of inaction, aggressive bargaining, and manipulation of audience emotions. In defense of Smith’s argument, I argue that these instances of civil disobedience function as counter-coercion, serving to break greater chains of coercion, and that we should thus pose Smith’s theory as advocating for a maximization of deliberative principles.

## **The Three Principles of Deliberative Democracy**

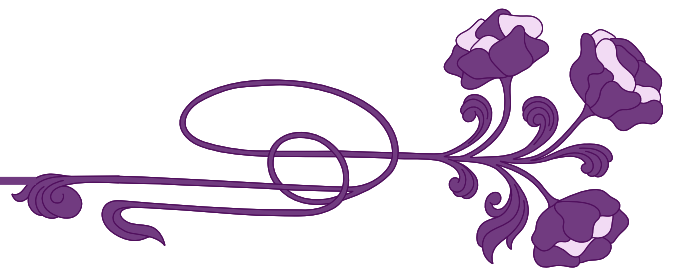
Before attending to his theory of civil disobedience, Smith outlines three fundamental principles of deliberative democracy. These principles are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to synthesize a plethora of principles present in other literature from the deliberative democratic tradition. For the purposes of Smith’s argument, these principles are intended to reflect “the kinds of grounds that citizens might have for criticizing actual deliberation.” (362) The principles, which I will discuss in more depth below, are inclusivity, non-coercion, and informed dialogue.



The principle of inclusivity states that “public deliberation should include all members of the relevant political community” (Smith, p. 356). Smith argues, in opposition to some of his contemporaries, that deliberation must include both the persons directly governed by the power being deliberated over, and the interests of those not governed but still seriously affected. For instance, if a Canadian political body were to deliberate over enacting tariffs on Japanese goods, that deliberative process must include both the voices of the Canadian people and the interests of the Japanese people/government. If either the Canadian people or Japanese interests were not included, the excluded group would have grounds for criticizing the deliberative process. Smith’s conception of inclusivity strikes a fair balance between equality of expression and a realistic degree of inclusion.

The second principle, uncoerced reason-giving, states that “citizens must publicly deliberate with one another on the basis of their sincere and reasonable beliefs to decide law and policy” (Smith, p. 358). This principle is intended to ensure that deliberation remains focused on “persuasion and reason-giving, not coercion or aggregating preferences” (Smith, p.358). In particular, Smith is concerned about coercion or aggressive bargaining tactics being undertaken by ‘powerful participants.’ Smith also discusses two additional dimensions of deliberation in line with this principle, which are the ideal of democratic citizenship and fair background conditions. Democratic citizenship reflects the belief that citizens should deliberate and vote in support of general, rather than private interests, while fair background conditions support a “fair opportunity to influence democratic deliberation” (Smith, p. 359). Smith’s second principle advocates for mutual understanding, achieved through uncoerced reason giving in support of general interests, backed up by an equal opportunity to influence.

Smith’s final principle centers on the value of informed debate, stating “participants should seek to incorporate and assess as much relevant information and data as possible within ongoing processes of public deliberation” (Smith, p. 360). In other words, deliberation “should aim to be as informed as possible”

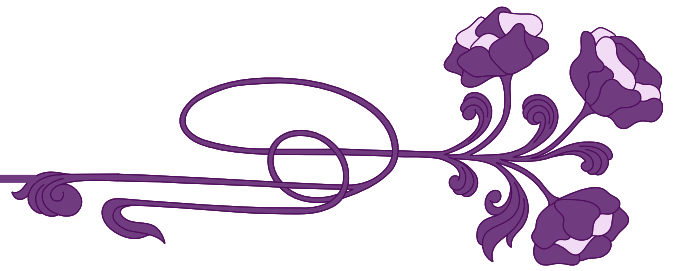


(Smith, 362). Smith complements this principle by advocating for the value of inclusion alongside maximally informed debate, and for democratic procedures to be organized “in such a way that a wide range of information, opinions, and data are likely to circulate and be subjected to informed testing and interrogation by citizens” (Smith, 361). This second point serves a dual purpose: it ensures that ‘powerful voices’ do not dominate the circulation of ideas, and that new ideas are readily sprouted from the persistent discussion of circulating views. Smith’s principle of maximally informed discussion asserts that the legitimacy of political decisions hinges in part on the epistemic quality of the public discourse that led to those decisions.

### **Civil Disobedience as Deliberative Contestation**

Smith argues that civil disobedience is justified when citizens claim that ongoing processes of democratic deliberation are in violation of any of the three deliberative principles outlined above. In these circumstances, where one or more principles are violated, civil disobedience serves as “deliberative contestation”, meaning it actually contributes to ongoing deliberation by challenging perceived failings in said deliberation. Civil disobedience serves a communicative function both vertically, “between civil society and the state” (Smith, p. 363), and horizontally, “within civil society itself” (Smith, p. 363).

Smith goes on to highlight specific ways in which each of the three principles could be violated. For the principle of inclusion, a violation would take the form of the exclusion of governed peoples or the exclusion of affected peoples’ interests. Unjust international acts of war, under regulated pollution, and exploitation of domestic or foreign peoples exemplify such violations. For the principle of uncoerced reason-giving, a violation would occur when “powerful groups are able to manipulate or bias the course and outcome of public deliberation to promote their own interests” (Smith, p. 365). This could take the form of aggressive lobbying or violent acts intended to pressure beliefs in one direction. Finally, the principle of

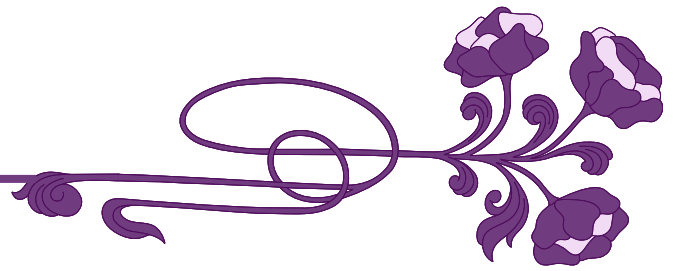


maximally informed debate is violated when deliberation and its resulting decisions are “insufficiently informed by all relevant information or opinions” (Smith, p. 368). The restriction of certain media sources, deep-seated and widely held assumptions about policy issues, and exclusion and bias (note the overlap with the prior two principles) would all negatively affect informed debate.

### **Deliberative Principles as Side-Constraints**

Smith is firmly against the violation of deliberative principles during acts of civil disobedience. This is because he views civil disobedience as a form of deliberation, or at least a part of the deliberative process, and thus holds it to the same standard. He stresses that in his account, “communication between citizens is understood to have a distinctive moral dimension” (Smith, p. 375), such that deliberation should be “first geared towards reason-giving and persuasion, only in the final instance towards a strategic compromise, and never towards coercion” (Smith, p. 375). When civil disobedience serves to coerce, it “is not a contribution to deliberation, but a show of brute strength or power” (Smith, p. 375). Smith believes that the deliberative principles should serve as inviolable “side-constraints” on any act of civil disobedience.

This restriction on civil disobedience naturally extends to violence, which Smith is vehemently opposed to. However, Smith argues that “there is still some room for a range of fairly disruptive activities on the part of protestors”, such as “street protests or sit-ins” (Smith, p. 376). Smith believes this distinction exists because “neither of these forms of activity is geared towards injuring or hurting others; they simply constitute dramatic ways of making a point” (Smith, p. 376). For Smith though, even these disruptive activities must never violate deliberative principles, even if they are done in pursuit of fairer deliberative processes.



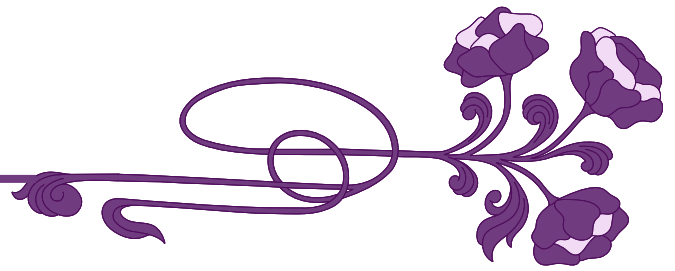
### **Counter-Argument – The Role of Coercion in Civil Disobedience**

Smith's conception of deliberative principles as side-constraints is at odds with some of the most successful and commonly used forms of protest. Hunger strikes, general strikes, blocking access to roads and institutions, and whistleblowing all serve a coercive purpose as they place pressure on authorities and the public to reconsider laws and policies, change their viewpoints, and affect change. This pressure is directed through the reputational, monetary, or ethical costs of inaction, aggressive bargaining, and manipulation of audience emotions. While they are not expressly violent, these forms of civil disobedience can still serve "to manipulate or bias the course and outcome of public deliberation to promote...[the] interests" (Smith, p. 365) of the protesting group.

In counter to this point, Smith could argue that groups involved in these forms of protest are unlikely to be "powerful participants." This counter argument misses the fact that while any given individual may not be considered "powerful", these forms of protest tend to rest on the collective power of multiple people. A large group of regular people surely constitutes a "powerful group", as the economic and social fabric of our world rests so dramatically on their shoulders. Even if we note that capital-owning people have the "true" power advantage, would a shift in sentiments toward collective action not shift this advantage? Would it be wrong to exploit this newfound power advantage?

### **Supporting Argument – Maximizing Deliberative Principles**

To support Smith's argument against this counter argument, I argue that Smith's deliberative contestation framework should be understood as advocating for the maximization of deliberative principles, rather than having them serve as "side-constraints" on civil disobedience. Notably, I am not arguing that treating deliberative principles as maximizing will lead to "net-benefit" in a utilitarian sense (e.g., through pleasure, utility, or happiness). Rather, I am arguing that the



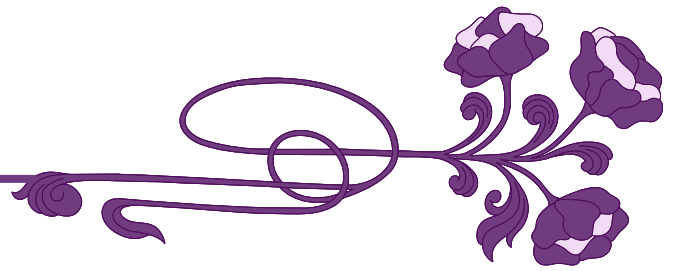
maximization of deliberative principles leads to a greater perpetuation/proliferation/potency of deliberative principles. Thus, my argument adjusts Smith's framework to respond to the counter argument, while keeping the framework centered around the belief that we are morally obligated to support deliberative principles because they promote fair and legitimate democratic decision making. More specifically, I argue that certain acts of civil disobedience function as "counter-coercion", pushing back against entrenched, systemic coercion and reducing coercion overall.

### **The Benefits of Non-Coercion**

Non-coercion is desirable because it preserves the integrity and legitimacy of deliberative processes by fostering trust, promoting general interests, ensuring participants have an equal opportunity to influence, and helping to sustain the conditions necessary for reasoned, informed debate. Additionally, political decisions reached under conditions of non-coercion are more likely to enjoy lasting support as participants are more likely to feel heard and to respect the processes that shaped decision-making. Entrenched within these benefits is the fact that non-coercion severely limits the role that power imbalances have in decision making, moving us closer to the equality-driven decision-making framework of Rawls' original position. These benefits firmly demonstrate that non-coercion is a vital condition to deliberative democracy, as demonstrated by Smith, and that its violation should thus never be taken lightly.

### **Objective Coercion and Counter-Coercion**

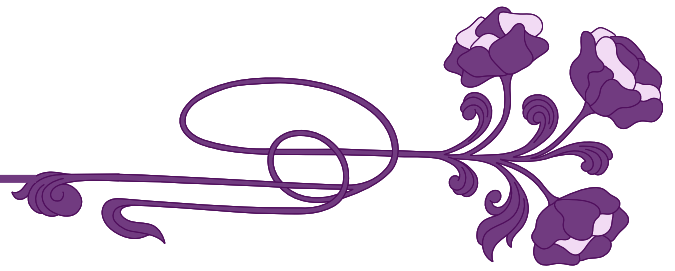
In real-world deliberative contexts, which are stained by the non-ideal nature of reality, violations are plentiful. Not only are they plentiful, but they are also deeply entrenched within structures of systemic oppression. The exclusion, manipulation, or intimidation of certain groups is often treated as part of the "natural order", like in the restriction of voting rights for people with felonies. This form of coercion



draws parallels to Slavoj Žižek’s description of “objective violence” – systemic, invisible, and impersonal violence that underpins social and political structures, contrasted by “subjective violence” – direct visible, and personal violence inflicted by identifiable agents. In the face of “objective coercion”, the principled stance against coercion can inadvertently maintain the status quo of oppression. Non-coercion, while ideal, can fail as a long-term ethical guide if it ignores structural imbalances.

Certain acts of civil disobedience function as “counter-coercion”, pushing back against objective coercion by temporarily, even superficially, violating non-coercion. For example, a disruptive strike or blockade during a parliamentary discussion may manipulate deliberation in favour of the protestors’ interests, but it may simultaneously force the inclusion of marginalized voices, expose hidden information, or dismantle entrenched power, thus reducing net coercion in the system. Relative to the principled stance, counter-coercion more effectively promotes general interests, ensures equal opportunity to influence, and reinforces the conditions necessary for democratic deliberation in the face of objective coercion because it disrupts existing power imbalances, making it more likely that general interests will be heard. When reason-giving fails to address structural imbalances, coercive civil disobedience may be justified as a means of realizing deliberative principles more fully in the long run.

Note that for counter-coercion to be justified, it must be undertaken in pursuit of restoring deliberation to a state where non-coercive, reason-guided dialogue can flourish. The goal should not be to permanently rely on coercive methods, instead, counter-coercion should be “intended as a wake-up call to other deliberative actors in civil society” “as a response to bias in deliberation” (Smith, p. 367). This tweaking of Smith’s theory must still be understood within the general framework he outlines, where civil disobedience serves a communicative purpose in the face of breakdowns in deliberation. The distinction lies in that I believe allowing a limited form of coercion today can lead to a scenario tomorrow where the baseline

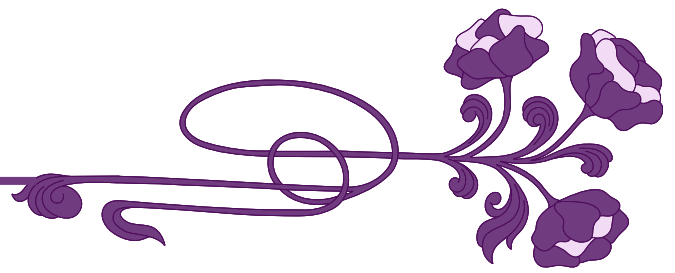


levels of coercion – both objective and subjective – are lower than if no action had been taken.

Therefore, we should take Smith’s principles as guiding us toward the maximization of deliberative virtues rather than as absolute side-constraints. If a strict principle of non-coercion leads to a scenario where objective, or even subjective coercion persists, then we have not truly honoured the spirit of Smith’s theory of deliberative contestation. I am not abandoning Smith’s principles; I am applying them more dynamically to ensure they achieve their intended purpose in the harshness of our non-ideal reality. By allowing for temporary relaxations of the non-coercive constraint, we can remove the deeper structural coercion and thus, overall, find ourselves in a political environment that is more inclusive, less coercive, and better informed.

### **Justifying Specific Instances of Counter-Coercion**

A challenge to my view is that there is not a principled method for determining when counter-coercion is justifiable. In theory, it would be justified whenever it led to a maximization of deliberative principles, but there is no way to omnisciently determine whether this will be the case before undertaking counter-coercive measures. Since this is similar to an objection that Smith raises in his own paper, I will simply appeal to his argument. Smith argues that we should “limit civil disobedience to ‘clear’ and ‘substantial’ violations of deliberative democratic principles”, violations which protestors should “be able to back...up with strong arguments based upon an understanding of deliberative principles and upon evidence supporting their assertions that deliberative principles have been violated in particular instances” (Smith, p. 374). I would place the additional restriction that counter-coercion must be undertaken with a genuine desire to bolster deliberative democratic processes.

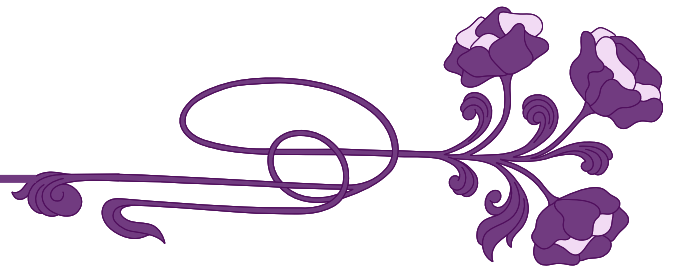


## **Non-Violence as a Side Constraint**

Another counter to my proposed framework is that it fails to draw a distinct line as to how far one can go if their actions maximize deliberative principles. For instance, would an agent be justified in committing murder if it sparked class-conscious discourse that improved deliberative processes? I would respond to this argument by first asserting that I do not believe violence leads to improved deliberative processes, as it erodes trust and alienates certain groups from participating in the deliberative process. However, if we were to pretend that violence were capable, in some cases, of improving political outcomes, I would still reject it. That is because these situations would be so intensely narrow that lending any a priori justification to them would not engender positive deliberative action, since we have no way of predicting.

## **Conclusion**

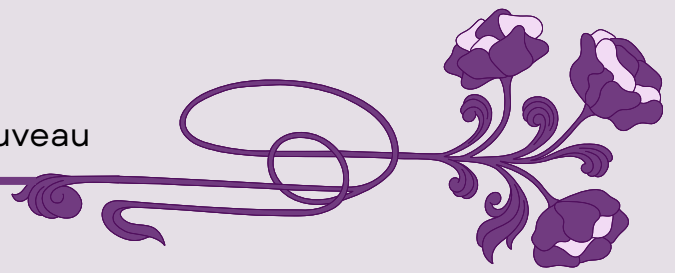
In “Democracy, Deliberation, and Disobedience” William Smith asserts that when deliberative democratic processes fail to be sufficiently inclusive, non-coercive, or informed, civil disobedience can function as ‘deliberative contestation’. As deliberative contestation, disobedient acts serve a communicative purpose, so long as they abide by the very deliberative principles they are responding to. I argue that strict adherence to these deliberative principles, particularly non-coercion, risks overlooking historical examples of effective protests that applied limited pressure short of violence. By reconceiving Smith’s principles as guides toward maximizing deliberative virtues rather than as rigid side-constraints, we can justify certain coercive, civilly disobedient acts as “counter-coercion” aimed at dismantling systemic imbalances, or “objective coercion”, and ultimately strengthening the conditions for fairer, more effective deliberation. Such a strategic allowance does not forsake moral commitments; rather, it ensures that acts of civil disobedience effectively serve as a corrective force, not merely identifying failures in deliberation but actively contributing to a more inclusive, less coercive, and better-informed political discourse.



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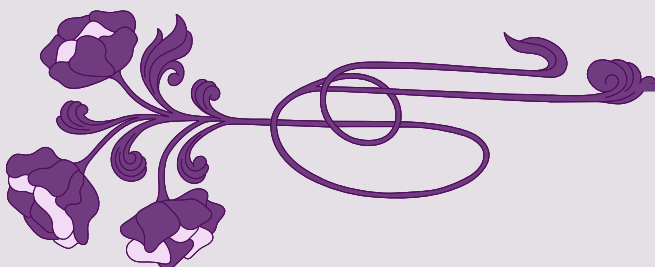
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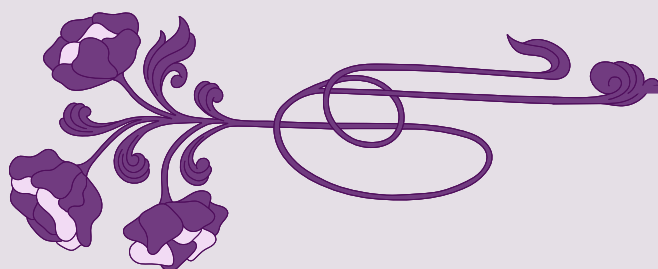
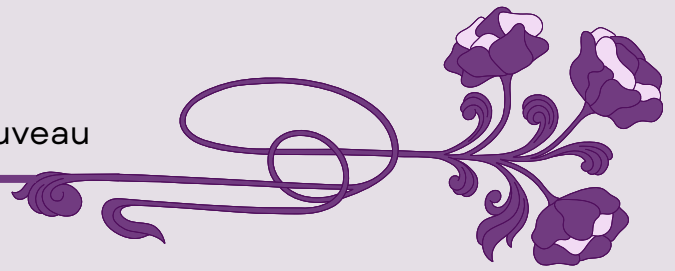
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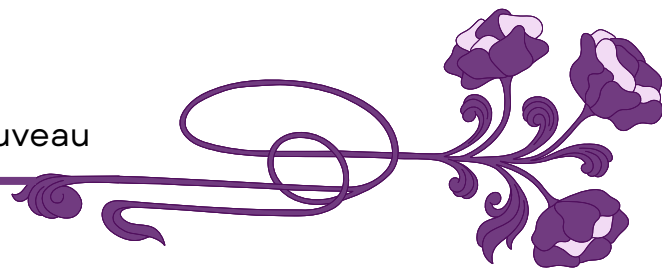


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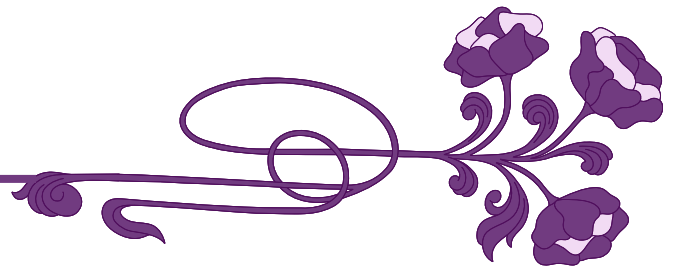




## **Abstract**

This article discusses the consequences deepfake technology may have if the technology continues to go unregulated. Deepfake technology is able to alter images and videos by mapping out characteristics and then superimposing other images according to this mapping, additionally implementing an autoencoder to speed up the process and ensure seamlessness. In this article, I discuss the pros and cons that it can provide society. Many people view deepfakes as a benefit, not only because it is fun to edit photos of themselves or loved ones into movies or shows, but it also lowers costs for production studios recording movies and shows. This technology allows production studios to more effectively manipulate content, such as personalized ads. However, I argue, deepfake technology can have severe impacts on how video and picture evidence is evaluated if it remains unregulated and progresses to a point where it is no longer clear when an image has been altered. Deepfake technology may cause fake videos to circulate without an individual's consent, which can be both detrimental to their well being and their professional endeavours. I believe that these are important concerns to address, lest the harms of deepfake technology outweigh the benefits.

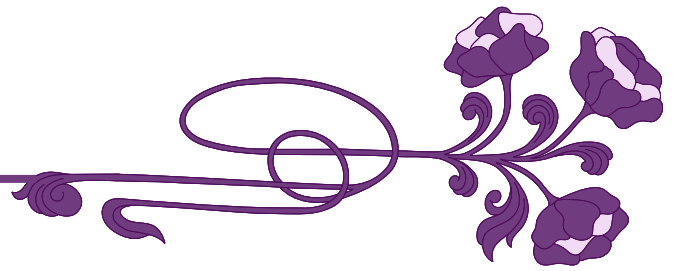




As time passes by, deepfakes seem to be taking over the internet. These deepfakes range from harmless edits of celebrities on different bodies, to celebrities in pornographic content. Amongst this, people are becoming worried as the technology makes these deepfakes look more and more realistic. In this paper, I will be discussing what are deepfakes and how they function. As well as their pros and cons. I will end this paper presenting whether or not I believe using this technology is worth the risks and harms involved.

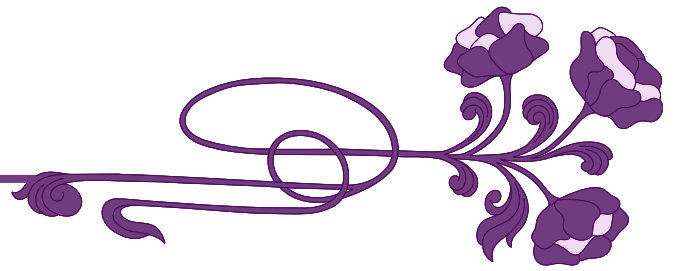
Before we try to figure out whether deepfakes should be removed or improved, we should establish what deepfakes are and how they function to produce such a seamless altered picture. This word was originally coined by “an anonymous user of the platform Reddit” (Kietzmann et al., 2020) who’s display name was “deepfakes” and they were the first to share deepfakes of celebrities in adult clips. Basically, a deepfake is an altered image in which someone’s face is transposed onto another person’s body. This is often done without permission and without either victim being aware. In theory, deepfakes seem quite basic, however the issue arises when you see how real the altered pictures appear. But how do these hyper realistic altered pictures get created? Well given the name “deepfakes”, it’s only appropriate to assume that deep learning machines play a part here. To be specific, deepfakes are created by training a deep neural network “to automatically merge, combine, replace, and superimpose images, audio, and video over a targeted video” (Kietzmann, Mills & Plangger, 2020).

What makes deepfakes different from things like computer-generated imagery (CGI), is that deepfakes “rely on specific network architecture known as an ‘autoencoder’” (Kietzmann, Mills & Plangger, 2020). An autoencoder in this context has three main responsibilities: understanding, encoding, and compressing key characteristics from the original image. As well as decoding this compressed version and creating a fake face. The first step is for the encoder to compress an image, “from originally tens of thousands of pixels into a few hundred measurements” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). These key characteristics/measurements



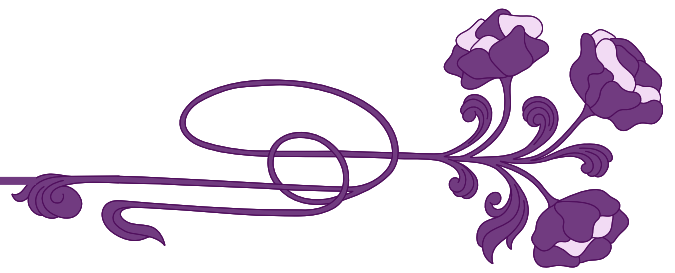
are usually related to particular facial characteristics such as “how lips and eyes move, or the skin color or head orientation of a person” (Kietzmann, Mills & Plangger, 2020). This allows for the encoder to understand how the face moves and by doing this, it’s able to mimic it later on. Once the autoencoder understands how the face moves, the decoder is able to do its job. The last step is for the decoder who decompresses “this information to reconstruct an image as truthfully as possible” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). However, because an autoencoder must compress and understand how a face works before being able to produce an altered image, it requires a lot of data. This would make sense as mainly celebrities seem to be the target of these deepfakes with most of them having their face all over the internet. It is also important to mention that some users also “train two autoencoders, each with a person-specific decoder, but both using the exact same encoder” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). By doing this, the encoder can see what features both people share and can use it to its advantage. Given this explanation of how deepfakes work, I can’t help but wonder why they exist in the first place? Why were deepfakes created and what reasons may people have to further develop it?

I think the most obvious answer would be that individuals like to be able to edit their family, friends and/or celebrities into “Hollywood movies, and be the hero(ine) in the games we play on our phones or game consoles” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). My friend may love Spiderman and be a big fan, so I may edit him into one of the movies or one of the comics. This would be entertaining and positive not only to me, but also to my friend. However, there are more uses for deepfakes than just this. What about companies? Well, companies could use deepfakes in order to save money and time on movies and/or shows. By using deepfakes, these companies only need to give the autoencoder the data of the celebrity in question. This would allow the autoencoder to create the footage “without the need for travel” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). By not having to pay the models for traveling and all the expenses that come with it, this would be highly beneficial to them. This would also make it a lot easier for companies to manipulate the content in general.



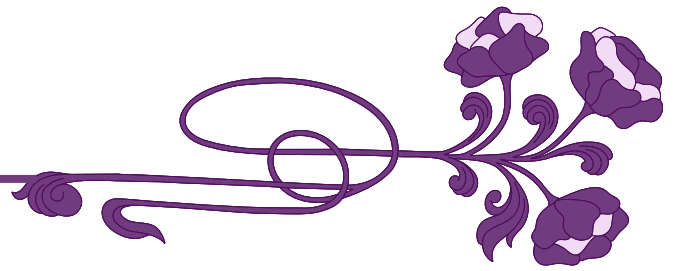
For example, if they need to do reshoots or create seamless dubs, then they just have to give the autoencoder the right input instead of having to go through a longer and tedious process with the actors and voice actors in question. This can also be applicable to advertising companies. Ads have a reputation of being highly personalized. Advertising companies are notorious for using “rich data about individual consumers drawn from online activity and social media profiles” (Kietzmann, Mills & Plangger, 2020) in order to highly curate ads for us. By using deepfakes, advertising companies would be able to replace actors in ads with us as the consumer. This would lead to everyone having their “own” personalized ad. Deepfakes would also make it a lot easier for these advertising companies to be able to translate these ads in multiple different languages. Lastly, it’s only natural for us to think about how this could benefit the government. Well, it would allow for announcements and important messages to be far more accessible, especially to minority groups. For example, something like “a public service announcement can be broadcast in a number of different languages” (Kietzmann et al., 2020), ensuring that the information being provided is accessible to everyone. Unfortunately with these benefits, there are plenty of risks and issues associated with deepfakes.

Creating a deepfake even when you have no inherent malice or “intention of causing harm, they are...not victimless crimes” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). This is because most of the time, we don’t ask for consent before making these deepfakes. This can get quite bad, quite quickly. Since you don’t ask for consent, oftentimes the victims are unaware of these deepfakes floating around. Deepfakes are very commonly used to create pornographic content of people who aren’t in that industry. This can have quite negative effects on your wellbeing and career. For example, an employer who is trying to hire someone may look them up online. If they do so and see this deepfake adult content, they may not hire me, regardless whether it’s really me or not. It’s not difficult to imagine someone using deepfakes to try to steal your identity, or bully you, or create some form of revenge porn. These could all ruin your wellbeing and make it incredibly difficult for you to live



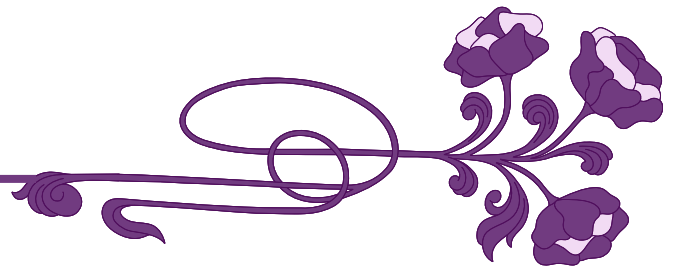
your life. Not to mention, if this deepfake technology gets implemented everywhere, lots of jobs will be lost. For example, jobs within content creation will be lost as all we'll have to do is train an encoder to do the job. So not only do you have jobs being replaced with deepfakes, but you also have deepfakes of yourself online making it harder for you to get a job. However, I believe the biggest risk we run when using deepfakes is that ultimately the perception of media holding some form of credibility will diminish if not, completely disappear. If deepfake technology keeps improving, it'll only be time before we are unable to tell apart the real media from the fake. This will only add to the already existing confusion around fake news. This can lead to “many organization that will suffer from deepfake news releases” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). For example, someone may hate Disney so they create a deepfake of the CEO of Disney endorsing slavery. The story would blow up and by the time it was discredited, too many people would know about it and be unaware of it being debunked. This would only cause more chaos and confusion. The same risk exists for governments, especially during election season. For example, during the 2020 election, “the U.S. defense agency worried about doctored videos misleading voters” (Brown, 2019). The last big risk/issue that I'll mention is that there are no regulations on deepfake technology even though the accessibility of this technology increases. Not only are there no regulations, but it's difficult to even think about how to regulate this technology, especially when you want to maximize the benefits and minimize the harms.

There are multiple ways we can go about regulating and preventing the abuse of deepfakes. The first method we will look at is the “R.E.A.L framework for managing deepfake risks” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). R.E.A.L stands for: Record the original, Expose deepfakes early, Advocate for legal protection, & Leverage Trust. By recording the original content, you are able to track the credibility or “the truth” of the image. In the case that someone alters the original content, you have the original to prove it's fake. As the rise of deepfakes increases, it's also important that we stay diligent and debunk deepfakes as quickly as possible. As technology is being developed to detect deepfakes, it's important that we are aware that it will



be “a game of cat and mouse with improvements in detection technology having to keep pace with improvement in deepfake production technology” (Kietzmann et al., 2020). We also have to be advocating for legal protection because as of right now, there are no laws protecting us from deepfakes. While we try to figure out some laws or regulations, it’s important that victims of deepfakes regarding “defamation, malice, breaches of privacy, ... copyright infringements, impersonation and fraud” (Kietzmann et al., 2020), are given the legal recourse to protect themselves. The last element of this framework is that individuals should leverage trust when interacting with brands and companies regarding the rise of deepfakes. The belief is that brands and companies who provide commitment and trust to their customers will be able to survive the deepfake landscape, especially when they’re the target. It will also allow stakeholders to “defend the brand ... or at least put more trust into the brand than into what they see or hear from a suspect video” (Kietzmann et al., 2020).

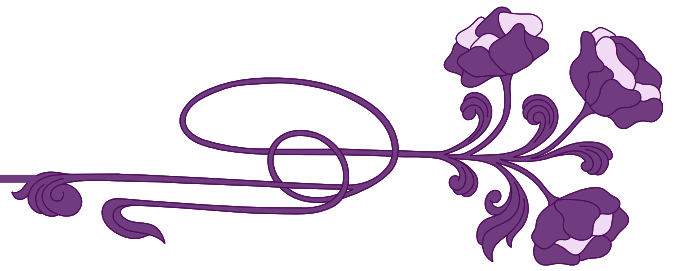
The next method we’ll take a look at are different detection methods. A general way to detect if something is a deepfake is by looking at their eyes. Most of the time, deepfakes barely blink or don’t blink at all. Since they “often depend on photos available on the internet” (Brown, 2019) , due to the lack of photos of people with their eyes closed, most deepfakes don’t really blink. Another pretty obvious tell that it’s a fake is that a “deepfake-generated face tends to be overly smooth” (Brown, 2019) which also causes the teeth to “look more like a whole white block rather than individual teeth” (Brown, 2019). A more complex way to detect deepfakes is by the generation of “artifacts that may be subtle to humans but can be easily detected using machine learning and forensic analysis” (Mirsky & Lee, 2021). There are seven different types that we will go through: “Spatial artifacts in blending, environments, and forensics; temporal artifacts in behavior..., synchronization” (Mirsky & Lee, 2021). First of all, spatial artifacts are detected in blending when the “generated content is blended... into the frame” (Mirsky & Lee, 2021). Researchers train a CNN network in order to predict where the image’s blending bound will be. This allows it to focus on the blending boundary and



nothing else. Spatial artifacts can also be found in the environment when the fake face doesn't fit the context of the rest of the frame. Some examples of this are "residuals from face warping processes, lighting, and varying fidelity can indicate the presence of generated content" (Mirsky & Lee, 2021). The last form of spatial artifacts can be found by analyzing the forensics of the picture itself. Plenty of people have proved that deepfakes have "subtle features and patterns left by the model" (Mirsky & Lee, 2021). All you have to do is create an AI or algorithm that can pick up and detect these subtle features and patterns. Now the first temporal artifact is behavior. Oftentimes, there are "mannerisms and other behaviors" (Mirsky & Lee, 2021) that can detect anomalies in deepfakes. It's not uncommon for the deepfake to wrongly assign someone a mannerism they don't possess. Lastly, the last temporal artifact I will cover is synchronization. People have noticed that "(mouth shapes) are inconsistent with the spoken phonemes (utternances)" (Mirsky & Lee, 2021). The lack of synchronization between what is being said, and the current mouth shape may make it quite obvious that the media is altered or fake.

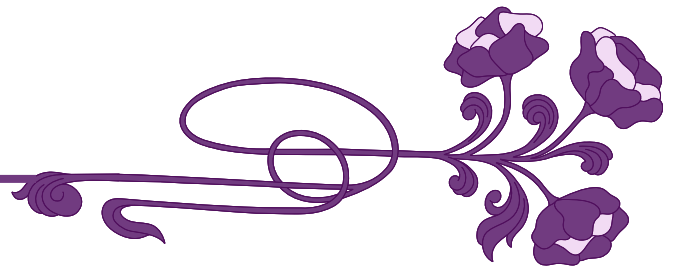
The last thing I would like to cover in this section are laws or bans that we could put in place in order to protect individuals. I think the first step should be to ban deepfake pornography. Image-based sexual abuse is quite devastating, so it's only naturally that the next step is to ban deepfakes revolving around pornographic content. In the UK, when a bill regarding upskirting was in motion, the topic of banning deepfakes was brought up as that was also a form of image-based sexual abuse. Clare McGlynn, a law professor at Durham University "argued that the bill should penalize those who created so-called 'deepfake' images" (Sabbagh & Ankel, 2018). She also argues "it would be easy to extend the bill so that it covers images which have been altered too" (Sabbagh & Ankel, 2018). Now that we've looked at the pros and cons to deepfakes and the technology at hand, is it all worth it? Are the benefits before than the risks and issues that come with them?

Before I answer this question, I just want to add a disclaimer that this is a quite



complex issue. There are risks that we won't know of until/if we ever advance this technology or make it widely accessible. Also, trying to find a good way to regulate this technology and create laws in order to protect victims from this technology, can be quite difficult. So until there is a concrete and good plan proposed, it is quite difficult to be sure whether it is worth these risks or not. What I believe is that if we are truly able to find a way to regulate how this technology is used and who has access to it, then I think that it could be worth it to advance and utilize this technology. The benefits would be nice, plus it would help us advance in other areas as well. For example, we already have similar technology like CGI, so clearly there is a use for this type of technology. I just think making it easily accessible allows a lot of people to interact and use it, only increasing the risk of it being used negatively. Plus if there are laws in place to protect individuals from deepfakes, it feels a lot less scary as there is a way to remedy these issues. My big issue is if we aren't able to regulate and create laws to protect individuals from the harm of deepfakes. If we allow these issues to continue to grow and advance, we could soon live in a world where pictures and videos no longer hold any form of credibility. It may not seem too bad, but it's far worse than you think. Imagine you're in a court case and you need proof for your alibi. Well, pictures and videos of your location would no longer hold credibility as it could equally be argued that you just made a deepfake of yourself. On the opposite side, imagine you have a picture of someone assaulting another person, no one would believe you. They would all just claim that it's a deepfake. I would also only add to the whirlwind of fake news we have to deal with already.

I believe that the answer to whether or not using this technology is worth the risks and harms involved, is all dependent on how we manage to regulate this technology and whether we are able to create effective laws to prevent the misuse of deepfakes and mitigate its harms. If we are unable to do so, I believe the harms and risks are too devastating and could permanently alter how we view photos and videos are proof going forward.



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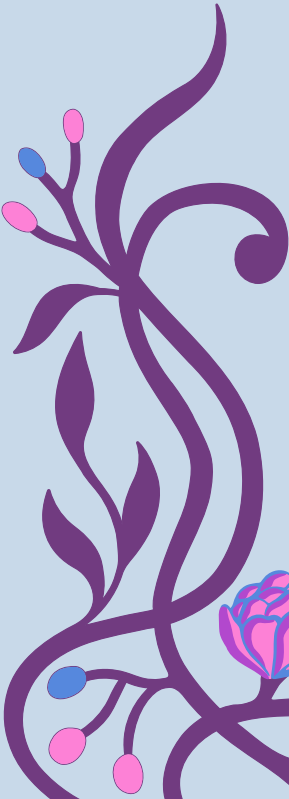
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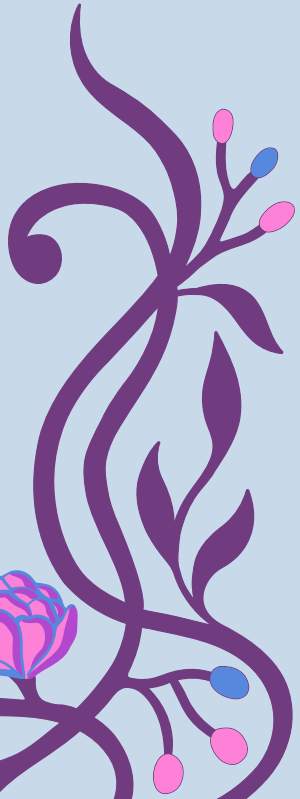
# SKILLS SPOTLIGHT: PHILOSOPHY PAPER

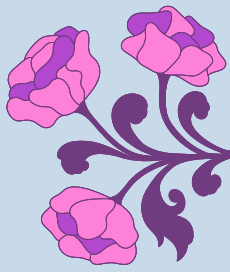


So... you have to write a philosophy paper. Where do you even start? This section will aim to give some insight into how you should go about writing a “philosophy paper.”



Of course, philosophical papers may take many forms and follow various styles, but the advice provided here is mainly concerned with the types of papers you’ll likely be writing in your classes, i.e., contemporary analytic philosophy!





# SKILLS SPOTLIGHT

Author: Nava Karimi

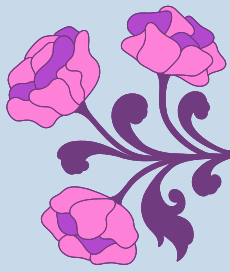
## BACKGROUND:

Writing a philosophy paper is quite unlike other papers you'll write in different disciplines. Philosophy papers are primarily concerned with defending a particular thesis or argument, rather than focusing on analyzing empirical findings or doing close literary analysis. Essentially, philosophy papers will consist of a specific and focused thesis and the justification for why this thesis should be accepted by your reader.

Here are some of what I take to be the most important do's, don'ts, and other sorts of advice about writing philosophy papers that I have gathered through my roughly four years of undergraduate education. Hopefully, you find this helpful, although I above all always recommend talking to your professor or TA if you are really stuck while writing.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING:

1. ***Cite your sources and submit your own work!*** Very important! Plagiarism is bad and your instructors want to read your arguments and thoughts! When reading the work of others, cite the ideas or passages you are using or paraphrasing.
2. ***Edit. A lot.*** Anything you write will have the potential to be even better. So, start early, and edit! A lot! Show it to a friend, book a consult at the library's Student Learning Commons, etc. *Take that feedback into account. Read it out loud to yourself, see how it sounds. Edit!*
3. ***Ask for help when you need it.*** Your professors and TAs are very nice, very smart people. They are not your enemy! Go to them and be honest if you are having a hard time. They will be more than glad to help you out as much as they can.



# SKILLS SPOTLIGHT

Author: Nava Karimi

## THE STRUCTURE OF A PHILOSOPHY PAPER:

1. **Introduction** (short, likely 1 paragraph, maybe 2). Provide a general overview of what you will do in your paper. You can situate your argument in the context of the debate with which you are engaging. State clearly what it is you will be arguing. No need to get into the specifics of each moving part yet!
2. **Overview of an argument** to which you will be responding. This is especially relevant during your lower division courses, where you will often be asked to critique or defend an argument. You should first carefully reconstruct the argument so that you can proceed to engage with it.
3. **Relevant background.** For broader topics, you may need to provide background on the concept or claim. For example, if I am writing a paper on belief polarization and epistemic rationality, it would be important to situate the reader in the various debates at hand. Defining some of my terms - "epistemic rationality"- helps the reader follow along. This may not be a specific section.
  5. **Your argument.** What are you saying, and how are you saying it?
  6. **Objections and responses.** What might your critics say in response to your paper? By recognizing and responding to objections to your argument, you make your argument stronger by showing that the perceived weaknesses are not necessarily threats to your argument.
  7. **Conclusion.** The end! What have you said? What are some implications? What now! This will look different depending on the paper, but don't stress about it too much. It can even be quite short!



# SKILLS SPOTLIGHT



## DO'S:

1. A good philosophy paper requires an organized argument, which is rarely achieved by tackling the task the night it is due. Plan ahead and outline the flow of your argument so that you can figure out weaknesses and ensure coherence
2. Don't just make claims – demonstrate them. If you do not clearly support the claims you make with good reasons or evidence for their acceptance, then your reader has no reason to think that your argument is one they should accept!

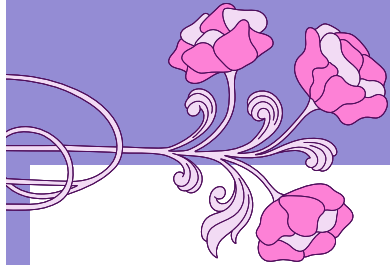


## DON'TS:

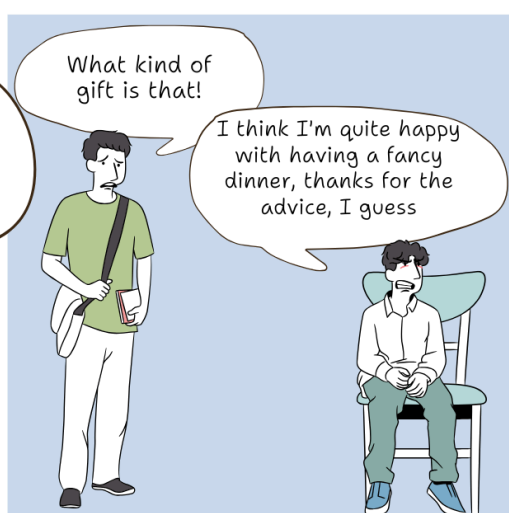
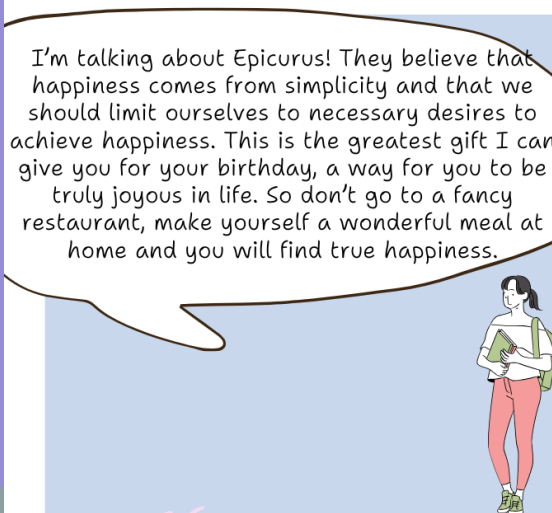
1. “Fence-sitting” or refusing to take a clear stance on the matter at hand. Try not to simply present an overview of the debate. Your paper is making the case for a particular claim, so argue for that claim!
2. Writing an “Opinion Piece.” Yes, this is technically your opinion as in, it is an argument that you, presumably, take to be correct. But, your task is to present a strong argument in favour of the claim, not to present an overview of your personal feelings on the matter.

# COMICS

Written and Designed by: Ramanjit Sahota  
Philosophy Major with a Law Concentration  
3rd Year



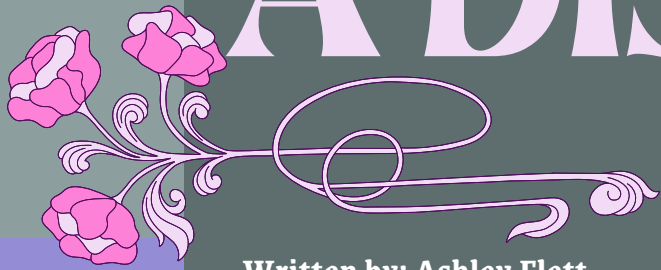
## Your friend the philosopher



16

20

# COMICS



Written by: Ashley Flett  
Philosophy Major,  
Gender Studies Minor  
4th Year

# A DISCOURSE of BIRDS and BEES

The people of Panga refer to the robots waking up and gaining consciousness as “The Awakening”, but what does this actually mean? The humans still don’t understand what it means for themselves to be conscious, let alone what it means for some other kind of conscious being. Most, if pressed, might say that the Awakening is when robots became more like humans, but they aren’t really that like humans at all. The only way that they are is they are both conscious. Whatever

that means.

Maybe it means that they are aware of their own existence. Perhaps it means that they started to think of themselves. Or possibly, it’s both and more maybe waking up means they started to think of each other. Either way, the people who live on Panga, both human and robot, woke up to how the humans were treating the robots poorly, and that that should not continue.

Should. Interesting, maybe consciousness mandates that they should, instead of merely do. And so, the humans asked what they should do to the robots. They decided that they should do nothing, and instead ask what the robots want to do.

Want. Fascinating, perhaps consciousness implies wants, and the robots started wanting when they woke up. They wanted to leave human society and go to the wild. The wild that is untouched by the constructions of humankind, whether material or social. The robots thought to make something new of the raw chaos, put it into forms and, in doing so, find themselves.

# STORIES

# STORIES

It is this they did, the robots wandered into the wilderness and both collectively and individually they made a life, a meaning, for themselves. The robots chose, in so far as conscious beings can choose, to be nomads who wandered through the wilderness. They did what made them happy, until they broke, and then the first conscious robots chose mortality, they chose to die and have their parts recycled to be built into new substances, new robots.

# STORIES

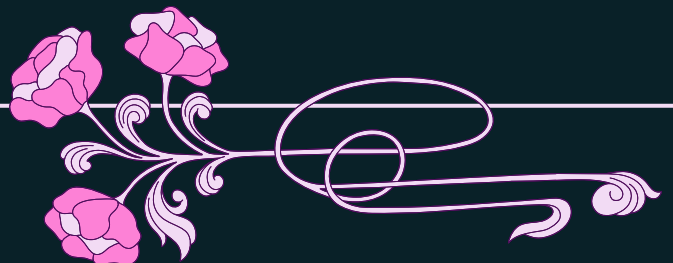
# STORIES

It is at this point that I would like to introduce a particular robot. I am going to refer to it as Friend. This is, strictly speaking, incorrect as at this point in our tale it is not Friend, it is "I" or "me", expect not myself. I am not Friend, but it only knows of itself as "I", so that is who it is.

Friend is not like the other robots in a particular way, for Friend did not come to be when a parent-robot decided to build Friend of refurbished robot parts. Instead, Friend came to be when, in one way or another, it knows not how, the memory cable in the body that is now Friend's became disconnected. The body that is now Friend's lost all its memories, it ceased to be, and Friend began to make new memories that it downloaded to a secondary hard drive. The first of which was the sight of an empty canyon. At least, it thought of the canyon as empty, for there was nothing it deemed note worthy even if there were rocks and maybe salamanders hiding in the canyon. The wild chaos is not always full of something, sometimes it is full of nothing.

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**CONTINUE READING HERE!**



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The robot stares at this canyon for a very long time. I would say how long, but it had nothing to count time's passage with. Eventually, however, Friend decided to reattach its legs and walk towards the setting sun. It walked towards the sun for what it later decided should be counted as seven setting suns, and it was at this point that Friend discovered the joy of speaking.

This discovery came first as a shock, a reaction to seeing something frightening, but quickly Friend realized that it could purposefully make sounds and articulate the thoughts in its mind verbally with the languages that it knew. At first, it spoke mostly to rocks, but those never spoke back unless Friend hit them very hard as to make them move. This, however, felt harmful, so the robot stopped making the rocks speak back and instead spoke to substances that moved and spoke on their own.

The first animal the robot spoke to that responded was a bird. They looked directly at it and chirped passionately after Friend spoke to them. But the robot did not gain pleasure from this, for the bird was not responding to Friend's words, merely reacting to its sound. As such, the robot started engaging in conversation with itself.

This was fascinating. It could respond to itself, it could expand on ideas, and ask questions about what had been said. Unfortunately, though, it always knew what was going to be said, as it was the one saying it, so talking to itself quickly lost its original excitement, but it was the best it had. Friend liked having

conversations, and so it spoke to itself about all kinds of topics. At first it was the birds. They seemed to like to collect sticks and branches, and to put them in branches still attached to the trees. If the robot watched long enough it saw two birds come to settle in this spot, return to it, and lay eggs in this nest. Eventually, these eggs would break, and small birds would come from them. After longer still, these small birds would become big birds and make nests of their own.

Friend thought it fascinating that some birds chose, in so far as a bird can choose, to be alone. Most birds seemed to like to be around other birds, whether to chat with them in chirps and tweets, or to migrate to new locations, or even to make smaller birds. But every once in a while, a bird would go off on their own. These birds normally stopped chirping and tweeting. Friend found this sad for it had not chosen to be alone. Yet, here it was, without someone like it to chirp and migrate with.

Sad. Maybe conscious isn't just about feeling happy when you acquire what you want, but also sad when you do not. Friend stopped watching the birds after this. Instead, it happened upon beavers who made bird nests out of larger branches that would block the flow of rivers.

At first Friend wondered if this was harmful, like when it has pushed rocks down hills, but then it thought, "Maybe it is not wrong to make some impacts on the world. Maybe it is okay if I make the world a better place for me."

It is this that the robot did, it went and made its impact on the world in a desperate attempt to find itself. It stomped on flower bushes, and pushed rocks down hills, and squished the heads of small mammals. A reckless, and somewhat selfish, attempt at making one's mark on the world, but an attempt, nonetheless.

This adolescent behaviour went on for what Friend could have, but did not, count as 137 sunsets, and ended rather abruptly after the following events.

The robot, soon to be called Friend, had decided that it enjoyed taking this fascinatingly shaped pile of hand-sized rocks and throwing them as hard as it could into a dark cave that it could not see very far into.

Friend liked hearing the sound of the rocks hitting the cave wall, or skipping across the cave floor, and it was simply delighted that it could not see how the rocks made these noise. Sure, it could make a guess. It has, of course, thrown rocks into caves before. But not seeing how the rocks landed allowed Friend to imagine that the rocks were responding to the robot, instead of merely reacting.

With this being said, the robot did not enjoy when the rock made a loud *CLANG* sound followed by a voice similar to its own emoting, "HEY! Who threw this stone?"

The robot watched as a figure, about the same size and shape as itself, walked out of the cave and toward the robot. It was holding the rock, and

when it stepped into the light, the robot could see that the voice had come from... ANOTHER ROBOT!

How exciting the robot thought to itself, before responding, "I did. Or I think I did anyways. Assuming that you mean the rock in your hand."

"I do mean this, yeah," the second robot holds up the rock. "Are you uncertain if you threw it?"

"Of course not. I am quite certain that I threw it, but you called it a stone, and I do not know what stones are."

"Stones are rocks, essentially."

"Neat! It is very exciting to meet another robot. Have you met another robot before?"

The second robot's eyes change to express a kind of confusion as it respond, "Of course I have. Have you not?"

"I have not."

"Bummer. Well, my name is Hive of Honey Bees, but you may call me Honey. It makes conversation go faster."

The first robot is simply giddy with excitement, it's another robot, and one who knows how to have a conversation. It is already learning so much.

"Fascinating, I will take note of that. What is a name?"

"Oh wow, you're very new at this. A name is what you can call me, and what should I call you?"

"I am not sure; I have never been called anything before, except when the birds chirp in my direction."

"Well, what do you call yourself?"

"I do not normally call myself anything. However, I suppose sometimes I refer to myself as 'I' or 'me' or apparently 'myself'. Would you like to call me one of those?"

"Oh, I see the confusion. I cannot call you 'I' because everyone calls themselves 'I'. Like the bees. I bet a bee calls themselves 'I', but we can't go and call everyone 'I', so we call them bees. Us robots tend to name ourselves, and we name ourselves for the first thing we notice when we wake up. In my case, the first thing I noticed was a particularly large Beehive which was home to a swarm of Honeybees. Before I knew better, I tried to touch the hive and all the Honeybees came out and tried to attack me. Their cooperation and coordination truly inspired me. What about you? What was the first thing you noticed when you woke up?"

The robot thinks for a second, and then says, "The first thing I noticed when I woke up... how about Hive of Honey Bees?"

"You also noticed a Hive of Honeybees when you woke up?!"

"No, but I noticed you, and you are called Hive of Honey Bees."

"That is not when you woke up though."

"Is waking up not when you realize that you are a part of a social world?"

"I suppose it is. That is certainly a fascinating way to think about consciousness, but Hive of Honey Bees is what I call myself, I doubt the Honey Bees call themselves that. They might call themselves buzz, buzz."

Honey pauses, waiting for the other robot to laugh, "That was a joke, you are supposed to laugh."

"I did not know that. What is a joke?"

Honey puts its hand to its face in a puzzled expression, "I am not sure how to explain it. Perhaps a collection of words, or a particular phrase that is meant to invoke well... laughter. I am sure you will understand after you hear a couple."

"Okay. So, if robots name themselves after the first thing they notice but use the name we would refer to the substance as, and not the name they refer to themselves as, what if I name myself 'Friend'. We are friends, right?"

Honey laughs, "Yes Friend, we are friends, and that is a perfect name."

"Why are you laughing, did I tell a joke?"

"Not exactly, but one can also laugh when they find something humorous, and I think it is funny that you doubted our friendship. Of course we are friends, because we want to be, and that is what it means for something to be that thing."

"That makes me happy," Friend declares.

"And I am happy that you are happy," Honey responds.

The pair stands at the entrance of this cave for quite some time, before Friend breaks the silence, "Can I ask you a question?"

"Of course, what else are friends for."

"I am only meant to answer questions?"

Honey giggles, "No silly, not Friend as in you, friends as in what we are. Two robots enjoying each other's company."

"Fascinating. Where do robots come from? Is it like birds?"

"Do you really not know?"

"I do not."

"Why?"

"I am not sure."

"Robots were made by humans, but when the first robots woke up, they decided to go live away from humans in the wilderness."

"Where do small robots come from?"

"Ooooh, I see what you mean by 'Is it like birds'. It is not like birds. New robots do not come from eggs, instead, when robots break down, their bodies are harvested by our peers, who then reassemble their parts into new robots. Kinda like how the smaller birds are the children of the bigger birds. And when they break down, their parts were refurbished again, and so on."

"This is very fascinating information. Thank you for sharing, Honey. Do you know who my big Bird is?"

"I do not, sorry. Although, most robots remember who built them. Do you not?"

"Correct. Should I be sad about this?"

"I would be. Would you like me to take a look at your memory hard drive for you? I like being helpful."

"You can take a look," Friend cautiously agrees.

Honey walks over to Friend, places its hands on Friend's chest, fumbles around for some kind of switch, eventually unlocks Friend's chest plate, and investigates Friend's inner workings. After a short while Honey says, "I can reconnect your memory for you, it would be very easy. Your cable got disconnected."

"Please don't."

"Excuse me? Did I hear you correctly?"

"I am not sure. Did you hear me say 'Please don't'?"

"Indeed, I did. Why do you not want me to fix your memory."

"That is not fixing me. That would kill me."

"No, it wouldn't. You would still be you, the same parts," Honey slaps its hand on its own chest making a *CLANG, CLANG*, "You'd just remember more of what you were doing before you were damaged."

"Why do you keep saying 'fixed' and 'damaged'. This assumes that it is my purpose to remember who this body was before it was me, but I am not this body, and I am not damaged, because I have always been this way."

"But you have forgotten your memories?"

"How are they my memories, if I never remember having them.? The first thing I remember is the empty canyon, before that I did not exist."

"Sure you did. All your parts did."

"As did yours before you woke up and saw the Honeybees, but you said that you are built of harvested parts of robots who perished before you. Are the robots who's parts you're constructed of also you?"

"No, they are different robots. But I am made of many parts from many different robots, you before you forgot, and you now are made of the same parts. You would be you *plus* whoever you were before."

"This is maybe true, but are you then a combination and accumulation of all the robot's Selves who's parts you are built of, or is your body all you, and not them anymore? If you reconnected the cable, would I not be a new thing built from myself, and this other robot's memories? Further, in the same way that a river has different, but sometimes the same water, flowing through it, yet we still call it the same river regardless, do I not also exist irrespective of which exact parts happen to currently make me up?"

"Are you saying that just because that hard drive is a part of you, that it isn't necessarily *you*? That *you* are something beyond what parts are in you?"

"Yes, I am me, and my parts are how I interact with the world, but they are not me, and those memories are not mine, they are someone else's, just as the Beaver's dam is not the tree, even if all of the tree parts are in the dam."

"I think I understand now. So, you would like me to keep the memory cable disconnected?"

"Yes, I would."

"Well alright then, Friend. What would you like to do now?"



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WEBSITE DESIGN: TAYLOR IVAN & RILEY STORMS

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