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Function, Vagueness, and Parthood
Sözeri Şahin (Koç University)

The Problem of Subjective Equivalences or How Pragmatism can Improve Common Ontologies
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Editor's Introduction

The past year has presented us, the world, with challenges we did not face before, and not excluding the inaugural staff of *Ergon*. We have had times where we felt exhausted, incapable, and unmotivated. Nonetheless, the support we have received from the wonderful people of the Koç University Philosophy Club and the Philosophy Department has helped us in retaining our determination, as Koç University philosophy undergraduates, to contribute to undergraduate philosophy at large. The inaugural staff of *Ergon* is proud to present the first issue of Koç University's undergraduate philosophy journal. Without the collaboration and encouragement we have received both from our College and our Department this issue and journal would not have been possible.

After two triple-blind-review phases of carefully considering the submissions received over the past 3 months, we have selected four articles for publication for their originality, argumentative clarity, and philosophical insightfulness. The selection pool was full of quality work, consisting of over 15 undergraduates across 3 continents. The first issue of *Ergon* features articles that fall under the topics of mereology, common ontologies, pragmatism, Wittgenstein, moral principles, and Hegel.

We would like to thank the authors that feature in the first issue of *Ergon*: Sözeri Şahin for his submission titled 'Function, Vagueness, and Parthood', Ahmet Akkoç for his submission titled 'Problem of Subjective Equivalences or How Pragmatism can Improve Common Ontologies', Justice Cabantangan for his submission titled 'Wittgenstein and an Ethics without Moral Principles' and Cenk Çelik for his submission titled 'The Slave Self-Consciousness' Quest for Freedom: The Transition from "Freedom in Work" To "Freedom in Thought".

We are deeply indebted to the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Philosophy Department at Koç University. We would like to express our gratitude particularly to Dr. Robert Howton for his help in the day-to-day running of the journal and to Gizem Bekil who has helped us a great deal in establishing the necessary contacts in starting the journal.

Ongun Kılıç
Editor-in-Chief

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Functionality, Vagueness, and Parthood

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1 Introduction

The [1] dominant view in contemporary mereology is universalism, which holds that two disjoint objects will compose a third object regardless of what they are. Even though universalism causes many undesirable consequences—metaphysicians seem to love making comments about how absurd it sounds to claim that one of their organs or pieces of clothing composes an object with a famous building, a subatomic particle, or a celestial object—it is still generally preferred over nihilism because of its compatibility with our everyday experiences and over restrictivism because it is untainted by the problem of vagueness. Micheal C. Rea argues for a very particular version of universalism as the answer of what Peter van Inwagen named "special composition question;" he suggests that if we are to accept van Inwagen's claims about why living beings are composite objects, then—as one could attribute a function practically to any combination of objects—we should expand this to all material objects.

In this paper, after beginning with an explanation of why functionality is a better candidate for being the criterion for parthood compared to "contact" and "dynamical interconnectedness;" I will consider Rea's criticism. I will argue that even though Rea is right in arguing that certain objects—such as computers—should be counted as composite objects, he goes too far when he uses this observation to argue for universalism. Even though I will start by elaborating on why functionality is more promising compared to other criteria for parthood, I will move on to explaining why Rea's argument is problematic, particularly by attacking the second premise, namely the claim that "every way of arranging

[1] I want to thank Lu Chen for introducing me to the topic and always being able to hit the mean between being encouraging and challenging. I also want to thank the reviewing team of *Ergon* for turning the process of feedback into a continuous philosophical conversation. Last but not least, I want to thank F. Yelda Şahin, Mustafa Şahin, Sim Elif Şahin and Beyza Çakmak for all the love and support.

objects can be kind constituting." After analyzing Rea's criticism concerning vagueness and vagueness argument in general, I am going to give a functionality-based restrictivist account of parthood that does not suffer from the weaknesses of Rea's understanding of functionality.

2 Problems of Other Popular Accounts

Let me begin by explaining why I will be working on functionality as the criterion of parthood by pointing out the problems of two of the most popular accounts, namely, "contact" and "dynamical interconnectedness." Both of them have their unique problems, contact—the claim that two things that are physically in contact are parts of a whole—admits pretty absurd entities into our ontological universe such as the object formed out of "tower + nose + corridor of connecting air." Also, since it can be argued that particles that we take to construct an atom are not in real contact, this approach leaves pretty common-sensical entities out [2].

Even though it is much more promising, similar problems exist in the case of dynamical interconnectedness—the claim that when a part of a whole is affected, the other part will be affected as well. Van Cleve's example to present the plausibility of the argument is the difference between the effect of a movement of someone's nose has on the tower compared to the effect of a movement in the front of a car has on its back. However, houses that were built appropriately, for example, can have parts that remain unaffected even if we take some of its building blocks out [3].

3 Comparison of "Functional Organization" with "Contact" and "Dynamical Interconnectedness"

Furthermore, even if we could find solutions to these individual problems, there is a further problem these two approaches have in common. Adapting Ted Sider's argument, Van Cleve formulates the argument in the way it is quoted below [4]:
(1) If in some cases composition occurs and in other cases it does not, then there are cases in which composition occurs that are connected by

[2] James Van Cleve, "The Moon and Sixpence: A Defense of Mereological Universalism," in Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics, ed. Theodore Sider and Dean W. Zimmerman (John Wiley Sons, 2013), 327.
[3] Ibid., pp 328
[4] Ibid., pp 327

a continuous series with cases in which composition does not occur.
(2) There is no sharp cut-off point in any such series. That is, there is no pair of adjacent cases such that composition (definitely) occurs in one and (definitely) does not occur in the other.
(3) It is always determinate whether composition occurs. That is, in every case, either composition (definitely) occurs or it (definitely) does not occur.
Conclusion: Either composition always occurs or it never occurs.

This is pretty similar to the famous argument concerning baldness; if we rephrase this argument in the language of baldness, the first premise—which will be falsified by the following two— asks us to imagine a line of people standing side by side, going from someone with absolutely no hair to someone who is not bald, one hair at a time. Van Cleve successfully applies this problem to composition; when does a hook, a line, and a pole compose a fishing rod? We are likely to think that after the technical procedures to tie parts up occur, we will have a composite object. However, this brings many questions similar to the baldness example, such as "What happens before the knots are tight?" "What if the diameter of the knots is several times that of the pole so that lifting the pole leaves the line behind?" or "What if the diameter is now one millimeter less?" This is an attempt that can be categorized under what can be named as the "vagueness" criticism—possibly the most popular criticism of restrictivism—which argues that we need a principle to restrict composition and all possible candidates "incur objectionable arbitrariness or vagueness, or both" [5]. The functional organization is promising because it has a good answer to this question; one could simply say that they compose a further object when you can catch a fish with it. However, Rea argues that functional organization leads us to very similar conclusions, forcing us to accept universalism.

4 Rea's Argument for Universalism

Rea's formulation goes as follows [6]:
(1) For any kind K, arranging objects K-wise is both necessary and sufficient for bringing an object of kind K into existence.
(2) Every way of arranging objects can be kind constituting.
(3) If every way of arranging objects can be kind constituting, every

[5] Van Cleve, "The Moon and Sixpence," 327
[6] Michael C. Rea, "In Defense of Mereological Universalism," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 58, no. 2 (1998): 352, doi:10.2307/2653513.

way of arranging objects is kind constituting. (Premise.)
(4) Every way of arranging objects is kind constituting. (From 2,3)
(5) The members of every set of disjoint objects are arranged in some way or other. (Premise.)
Conclusion: The members of every set of disjoint objects compose something. (From 1, 4, 5)

The most crucial premise for the argument appears to be the second premise, and Rea begins defending it by appealing to our intuitions about living beings being composite objects. The reason he gives for this common-sensical claim is that living beings are "functionally organized;" that is to say, all parts function collectively in order to sustain the existence or the livelihood of the whole [7].

5 Against "Nihilism with Exceptions"

This is in line with van Inwagen's position, what Kriegel calls "nihilism with exceptions" [8]; Van Cleve formulates this position as "there is something that the xs compose iff the activity of the xs constitutes a life" [9]. Rea claims that, as presented by the case of living beings, a functional organization is sufficient to construct a parthood relationship with a whole, and we can see this in the case of inanimate objects such as computers or bicycles [10]. I think this position can be substantiated further; Van Cleve, for example, claims that restriction concerning what constitutes life is likely to be vague since there probably is not a stage where we can pinpoint life in the activity of a growing embryo or death in the case of a damaged brain [11]. Also, consider the case of selective dog breeding; is it plausible to differentiate the ontological status of the parts of a dog that has been produced mainly to help blind people and a machine with the same purpose [12]? Furthermore, with the developments in technology, the vagueness argument is likely to become even more relevant as we increasingly see cases such as "digital organisms," which are computer programs that can "mutate, reproduce and compete with one another."

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[7] Ibid., pp 354

[8] Uriah Kriegel, "Composition as a Secondary Quality," Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 89, no. 3 (2008): 380, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0114.2008.00326.x.

[9] Van Cleve, "The Moon and Sixpence," 329

[10] Rea, "Mereological Universalism," 354.

[11] Ibid., pp 332

[12] Pieter E. Vermaas and Wybo Houkes, "Ascribing Functions to Technical Artefacts: A Challenge to Etiological Accounts of Functions," The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 54, no. 2 (2003): 270.

Other interesting cases on the other side of the coin include "robo rats" that can be directed with electrodes, "bacterial batteries" that are used to produce electricity, or "genetically engineered viruses" that are used against cancer cells as "search and destroy missiles" [13]. Rea seems to be right when he claims that someone who involves living beings into the category of composite objects should do the same for at least some inanimate objects.

6 Rejecting Universalist Understanding of Functionality

However, the step I find to be problematic is when he claims that if we admit some inanimate objects to our ontology, we should admit them all. He argues that we could find someone that would attribute some "purpose and function" to any organization; so, it seems arbitrary to admit some functional bundles into our ontology while leaving others outside. This seems to be his way of applying the problem of vagueness to functionality.

I think Rea's argument is not sufficient for us to accept universalism, even though it is enough for us to reject nihilism and nihilism with exceptions. In the sections below, I offer a more nuanced version of functionalism after I develop two lines of attack against universalism.

6.1 Empirical Implausibility

To play Rea's game, I argue that no person can make a functionality claim about infinitely many objects because one cannot comprehend such a number of objects, let alone connect them logically. For a nihilist, that would not have been much of a problem because s/he could simply say that we should reject all parthood relations since there is no objective criterion of parthood. This is not the case for Rea, the burden of proof is on him, and no one has to accept this argument until someone could construct a proper functionality relationship between one million—and I am being quite generous here—different randomly selected objects. Furthermore, even if a person was successful in this task, s/he should give a different reason of functionality compared to one million minus and plus one objects because we need a reason why that one-millionth object was added to the functional organization. We should keep in mind that for the argument to work, this explanation of functionality

[13] Lynne R. Baker, "The Shrinking Difference Between Artifacts and Natural Objects," American Philosophical Association Newsletters 07, no. 2 (2008): 7.

should be in the same level of "arbitrariness" as, let us say, "heart is a part of the body because it keeps it alive." I think it is much more plausible to argue that some objects compose a further object based on the functional organization while others do not.

6.2 Functionality in Motion

When scholars talk about compositions, they often imagine stable objects. When we see the world from a universalist perspective, we realize that the assumed whole's functionality is reduced by certain combinations. To give an example, a combination of handlebars, a seat, two pedals, wheels, and a wall on the way is much less functional compared to a combination of handlebars, a seat, two pedals, and wheels. It seems reasonable to claim that the bicycle is a whole and the wall is a separate entity that will reduce the functionality of that whole if we think the world in motion. Functionality seems to be in contradiction with universality.

We can also think of functionality in relation with time alongside space. Universalist argument seems to be analyzing a snapshot without focusing on what happens when the functionality is lost. For example, imagine scissors that are composed of sharp metal and plastic handles. As time goes by, the metal will cease to be sharp, while the scissors' organization will not change. Using universalist functionality as our primary metric, we will have to say that the scissors do not compose a whole anymore even though their composition did not change at all.

7 Developing a Novel Approach

When I first started thinking about functionality and vagueness, I assumed it would be a much easier problem to solve because I mistakenly thought that when analyzing functionality, one should simply understand the smallest group that makes the function possible. When analyzing a cell, for example, we tend to include the particles that construct the mitochondria, as the organism would not function otherwise since it would lack the chemical energy required, whereas adding a particle outside the cell would not make sense because it does not contribute to the functionality of the object. This perspective does not have the power to stand against an example raised by Mellor; he argues that we have no better reason than unmotivated prejudice to argue that the light that goes through a window—and its photons—is not a part of the

window [14]. At some point in time, these photons are inside the window and they affect it by fading its colors, to give an example.

Influenced by this one-sidedness and all the problems above, I claim that two things are part of the same thing if and only if a raise in the functionality of one raises the functionality of the other and the fall in the functionality of one decreases the functionality of the other. This is also true for the part-whole relationship; for us to argue for such a relationship, the relation should be reciprocal. I call this "co-dependency restrictivism." Going from less controversial examples to more controversial ones, I think this position indeed works on living beings such as humans; for example, a rise in the eye's functionality significantly raises the functionality of feet and vice versa. The position becomes even more plausible when considering the relationship of feet or eyes with the body itself. This seems to help with the famous question of the Tibbles problem as well [15]; the fur is a part of the body because if its functionality rises, it is better for the body, and raise in functionality in the body will probably make the fur more functional. Coming to each hair on the fur, even though I agree with Mellor that one single hair will not affect the whole cat's functionality much, the relationship still exists. That is to say; the position does not suffer from the vagueness problem of "contact" and "dynamical interconnectedness" that was exemplified by the case of baldness. The argument also seems to work with inanimate objects such as computers or bicycles because of very similar reasons and more basic objects such as chairs. A problem with the legs will indeed affect the seat's functionality and the chair as a whole.

The approach is also preferable to the universalist understanding of functionality because it is free from the last two criticisms. The wall and the bicycle example suits really well in the framework; the better the wall is at being a restraint to those coming to that way, the more likely the bicycle functionality will fall. The same goes in the example of the light as well; the better the light functions—the more powerful it is or, the better it is in going through the window—the more it will harm or fade the window—at least we can be sure that it will not raise the window' functionality. Finally, this position works with the issue of time, even if one part of the scissors will lose its ability, they are still parts because any improvement in the functionality of the metal part, such as us sharpening it, will make the handle part and the whole scissors more functional.

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[14] David H. Mellor, "Micro-Composition," Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 62 (2008): 68, doi:10.1017/S1358246108000581.

[15] Ibid., pp 71

8 A Fair Objection

One way to attack this line of thinking is what I will call the "implement argument". According to this argument, this approach is too liberal in its classification as it includes objects such as "pilot and the plane s/he flies," "me and the laptop I write with," and "gardener and the garden implement s/he uses." I find Mellor's questioning of why we do not count pilots as parts of the planes they are flying while we assume that built-in autopilots are parts of the plane quite thought-provoking [16]. Even though I think the existence of such objects in our ontology is not ideal, I have two responses.

The most obvious way to respond seems to be claiming that the relationship between such tools or devices and human-beings is not reciprocal even though it can be argued that this interaction raises the functionality of the given person. A perspective from the other side of the spectrum could be the claim that we cannot admit being a part of whole due to our human prejudices. We seem to attribute wholeness to other combinations formed by living beings and inanimate objects. Consider the example of a horse-carriage, we tend to identify both the horse and the carriage as parts of the vehicle but we tend to privilege human subjects as interpreters and creators of functionality.

Also, even if we would accept that the criterion for functionality is vague, that should not let almost infinitely many objects into our ontology as it can be argued that universalism also suffers from vagueness. Imagine you are baking, and you are breaking an egg over the flour. How many objects do you have a) when you slightly break the egg, b) when you separate the shells, but parts of white and yellow components are still inside different shells c) when the liquid is falling, but yellow and white parts are still not parted d) when they are parted e) when a portion of the liquid meets with the flour f) when rest of it meets with the flour, g) when you blend them with a spoon h) when you bake them? Many universalists will disagree on these points because universalism's criterion concerning what counts as an independent object is also ambiguous. Even if one could claim that universalism does a slightly better job in terms of not being vague, since restrictivism is much better in terms of ontological parsimony [17] and appeal to intuition, we should prefer a restrictivist understanding of functionality.

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[16] Mellor, "Micro-Composition," 72.

[17] (Quantitative) ontological parsimony is the principle that suggests one should aim to have "as few things as possible in one's ontology" (Effingham 73).

9 Conclusion

In this paper, I argued against Rea's argument that if we are willing to attribute parthood to parts of living beings, we should also attribute it to any other object as one could claim functionality for any composition. Because I believe that functionality is the best candidate for being the criterion of parthood, as I discussed in detail above, I compared universalist and restrictivist understandings of functionalism. After discussing why universalist criticism of vagueness is not sufficient to prefer this position over restrictivism, I presented how the novel approach I named co-dependency restrictivism seems to solve problems that were crucial for universalist understanding of functionality.

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The Problem of Subjective Equivalences or How Pragmatism can Improve Common Ontologies

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1 Introduction

Ontology, the study of existence and reality, has for a greater part of history remained one of the most abstract fields of philosophy. The objective of ontology, as a field, has often been to describe what is what, for the sake of explanation and better understanding, for the past two millennia. While countless approaches have been devised, the nature of any results extrapolated from ontological pursuit have largely remained symbolic. The results of ontology would only signify what they do, to the degree of meaning and significance ascribed to them.

Such had been the case, until the advent of communication technologies and thinking machines. Today, the form of knowledge has transcended representation, metamorphosing into tangible transmission. For the sake of relevance, a smartphone application could be considered a contemporary example. We can ensure that the piece of code that an app is built on, will have the same features and near-identical behavior consistently when running on different devices. Although only a small team has composed this knowledge, compiled this data, its digital form can be transmitted indefinitely, without loss or degradation, to devices all across the world. So with knowledge, or information, having now taken on a more concrete and less abstract form, then ontology, as the study of *what knowledge is*, can be expected to follow suit, tending towards models and systems rather than remaining purely conceptual.

Knowledge as transmission is not only an important development to spite the likes of Gorgias [1] who might have once argued for the inability to communicate knowledge, but it is a stark paradigm shift which has given rise to wholly new knowledge representations and organization techniques. Notably, digital ontologies have emerged as browsable encyclopedias and masses of relational data for developing artificial

[1] Gorgias, "On Non-Existence" : Sextus Empiricus, "Against the Logicians" 1.65-87, trans. Bruce McComiskey (n.d.; repr., Philosophy Rhetoric Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997)), 45-49.

intelligence agents. A particularly interesting variety of digital ontologies are *common ontologies*, which are systems of knowledge developed as a joint-effort by multiple contributors. While two minds might not be able to read one another, the premise of a common ontology is to achieve the next best thing: a mutually accessible knowledge base.

The dream of building common ontologies for amassing shareable and reusable knowledge [2] has persisted for at least the last three decades. Yet the promise of common ontologies bring with it a number of challenges, such as that of consensus. When centuries of ontologists can hardly agree on anything, how can we expect the people working on common ontologies to form a common world view? What would happen if one person argued two objects to be distinct while another person insisted that the two were identical? I term this dilemma the *problem of subjective equivalences*. As an observer of the data science community and as a contributor to several common ontologies myself, I have frequently encountered conflicting or contradictory *subjective equivalences*. Unfortunately, these conflicts are often either sidestepped or left unresolved. Thus in hopes of demonstrating this problem of subjective equivalences to a wider audience and exploring a possible solution, I turn to Charles Sanders Peirce's pragmatism [3]. In Sections 2 and 3, we shall examine how it might be possible to engage with the crowd behind a common ontology, employing Peirce's pragmatic maxim, and then redefine the problem of *subjective equivalences* in the light thereof. In Sections 4 and 5, we will observe real world examples of *subjective equivalences* and analyze the conflicts they introduce. In Section 6, we will explore a possible solution, and extensions therefrom, on how we might go about resolving *subjective equivalences*. Finally, in Section 7, we will conclude with further contextualization on how resolving *subjective equivalences* can pave the way for reliable and self-consistent common knowledge.

2 Arguing with the Commons

Let us begin by formally defining a general-purpose common ontology:
1. A common ontology consists of items and associated properties.
2. The common ontology grows if and only if at least one contributor decides to add a new item or associate a new property to a previous item.

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[2] Thomas R. Gruber "The role of common ontology in achieving sharable, reusable knowledge bases." Kr 91 (1991): 601-602.

[3] Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 12, pp. 286–302., 1878), 293.

3. The common ontology is modified if and only if at least one contributor is unsatisfied with an item's previously given definition or associated properties.
4. The common ontology is pruned if and only if at least one contributor demonstrates an uncontested reason that an item or property is not a piece of common knowledge.

The first proposition is innately true, not only for common ontologies but for ontologies in general. Any ontology, at the very least, represents things and relationships. To demonstrate the second and later propositions, it must be understood that a common ontology cannot think for itself, thus it is not an agent but the work of external agents. In the case of a common ontology, we most often refer to these agents as *"contributors"*, who contribute to the common ontology by extending, altering or trimming it. If we take a snapshot of the entire common ontology on two separate days and if the total number of items in the ontology differ, it must be that at least some contributor, somewhere, added new items into this ontology. Likewise, we may extend this line of reasoning for the cases of modification and deletion as well.

Contributors to a common ontology nowadays are seldom trained ontologists or philosophers. So when discussing the factuality of a common ontology, we are not debating thinkers or assertions, but rather a collective of people and perspectives. Every common ontology is organized in a unique manner, but the most essential component is invariantly the contributors. For if there is no one to add or modify information the ontology would be completed, reaching its final form, but it would no longer be a representation of common rationale. Then if we are in pursuit of critiquing a common ontology, it is the contributors who we are to take as its agents. At this time, I shall not discuss accountability, roles or hierarchies which might place the individual contributors in different positions. I will take every contributor to hold their own subjective worldview and assume each to operate on the common ontology in the light of said subjective view.

Then in analyzing a common ontology we look at the world as has been collectively perceived, conceptualized and finally expressed by different people. Clearly, a tool is needed to translate this massive conceptualization into an argumentative form. To that end, I will be adapting Peirce's pragmatic maxim: [4]
Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings,

[4] Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", 293.

we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

As far as the ontology itself is concerned, we can interpret the present state of any given item to be a statement of the collective conception of said item. This conceptualization is gradually updated under further consideration of contributors who have taken note of new effects, properties or features of the item which have a practical bearing. Thus, I argue, a common ontology conveys information as if it were a pragmatist of sorts. To reason regarding the items within a common ontology, we can debate conceptions based on effects. If we can demonstrate an item's properties to have been conceived in a manner consistent with the rest of the ontology and the outside world, then we might conclude that these properties provide a realistic conceptualization of the item. If not, we ought to seek a resolution to remedy internal or external inconsistencies.

3 Objectifying Subjective Equivalences

William James, one of Peirce's contemporaries, tells in his book *Pragmatism* the story of a man chasing after a squirrel around a tree, unable to catch up to it [5]. One group of people claim the man is clearly going around the squirrel, whereas another group argue that the man cannot be going around the squirrel seeing as he cannot reach it. James reasons as follows:
Which party is right depends on what you practically mean by 'going round' the squirrel. If you mean passing from the north of him to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and then to the north of him again, obviously the man does go round him, for he occupies these successive positions. But if on the contrary you mean being first in front of him, then on the right of him then behind him, then on his left, and finally in front again, it is quite as obvious that the man fails to go round him, for by the compensating movements the squirrel makes, he keeps his belly turned towards the man all the time, and his back turned away. Make the distinction, and there is no occasion for any farther dispute. You are both right and both wrong according as you conceive the verb 'to go round' in one practical fashion or the other.

We may thus conclude that both statements describe the same real-

[5] William James. "What Pragmatism Means". Lecture 2 in Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking. New York: Longman Green and Co (1907), 17-32.

ity, with the difference between the two options being merely at a verbal level. I shall henceforth denote such a relationship as a *subjective equivalence*. We might all utter the word "hello", yet no two *hellos* are the same at the physical level; they will differ in articulation, enunciation, pronunciation, amplitude, duration, environment and by speaker, emotion and context. Despite all these objective differences, the word *"hello"* and its pronunciational variants are all *subjectively equivalent* to anyone with a basic familiarity of English.

While James' example employed the pragmatic maxim to gain a better grasp of reality itself, our topic of discussion will have us focusing on the internal conceptualization thereof. For a given thing, the addition of its corresponding item within the ontology will often precede the listing of its essential properties. The addition of an item requires minimal *internal justification*, that is, new entries do not have to be compared against existing entries and associations. Suffice to say, a tenuous claim that a given item exists in the outside world is often sufficient. However, this new item is soon subjected to *internal scrutiny*, where contributors to the common ontology might find contradictions or other logical issues which render the item inconsistent with the rest of the system. Depending on the situation, this item may or may not be removed. For instance, common ontologies have duplicate items removed to avoid redundancies, in effect *merging subjective equivalents*. Conversely, common ontologies also have new items added to mend inadequacies, in effect *dissolving subjective equivalents*, as it is no longer consistent with the world as represented by the ontology.

In the case of a project such as Wikidata, this essence for an item is established as edits are piled over time and made manifest in the form of a lengthy Talk page. An item in the ontology isn't ever fully realized, it is constantly updated to reflect a broader common understanding of said item. Those items which are deemed unfit, for whatever reason, are removed by lack of notability or through moderator intervention [6]. This removal can be a deletion, but it can also be a merge in the case of alleged redundancies.

Yet it is not always clear when merging or splitting should be done, the contributors to an ontology all have a mind of their own after all, so *subjective equivalences* will *subjectively* vary from person to person. This presents us with *the problem of subjective equivalences*: How can we identify and analyze *subjective equivalences*? If so, how can we resolve a case when

[6] See `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Wikidata:Notability` and `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Wikidata:Requests_for_deletions`

different *subjective equivalences* are in conflict with one another?

I shall present two classes of *subjective equivalences* in the following sections to tackle the first half of the problem. Once we have established the identifiably of *subjective equivalences* we will then move onto the task of going about to resolve them.

4 Perspective Equivalences

There are situations where two people can be led to an entirely different perception of the world. As an analogy let us consider a house, with all of its windows facing the same direction. An observer will see a different perspective of the same outside world, depending on which window they peer through. Each of these windows will restrict and construe the world in its own way and the viewer might be misled when trying to discern where one structure on the outside ends and another begins. I would like to denote this situation as a *perspective equivalence*, where a *subjective equivalence* has emerged as a result of a difference in perspective. In the case of a common ontology, how such a difference in perspective might emerge is not immediately obvious, the digital world is often called ubiquitous, unchanging from place to place. A blind spot, I will argue, is the case of localization differences.

Let us consider the aforementioned Wikidata, a common ontology associated with the Wikimedia foundation. Wikidata places an emphasis on multilingual availability, contributors may translate the label of a given item into over 200 languages. In hopes of promoting language diversity, Wikidata occasionally holds translation challenges. In 2019's Menu Challenge, Wikidata contributors were challenged to translate (or add an image label) for as many items as they can to appear on the food menu to be served at that year's Wikimania [7]. One of the items on the menu for the Menu Challenge was *seed* (Q40763) [8]. Many seeds are edible either raw or roasted, often offered as a side dish. The peculiarity of seeds is that some languages call seeds differently depending on whether they are used for agricultural purposes or consumed as food. For instance, in Turkish *çekirdek* (chekirdek) refers to seeds for consumption, whereas *tohum* refers to seeds for planting. Likewise, in Belarusian there is a distinction between (shyemechki) and (nashyenny) in the same vein. The trouble is, the menu item for seed covers both usages.

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[7] See `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Wikidata:Menu_Challenge/Wikimania_2019`

[8] Wikidata item for "seed" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q40763`

Q40763 is considered both a subclass of *plant structure* (Q20011319) [9] and *food* (Q2095) [10]. To resolve the ambiguity, both the Turkish and Belarusian translations use the general term for a biological seed: *tohum* and . The catch was that the menu items were rendered as the non-edible terms. Now if the average Wikidata contributor were to evaluate this under the pragmatic maxim, they would see no problem. A seed is a seed, whether it be used for planting, eating or studying under a microscope; there is no clear effect to distinguish the single conception of a seed. As for any person who has had the misfortune of seeing the Turkish or Belarusian menu, a problem is apparent without any need for consciously applying the pragmatic maxim. The effect of having chosen one word over another is that the reader will see a mistranslation, which they might falsely attribute to the shortcomings of modern machine translation, unbeknownst to the underlying erroneous association made in the ontology.

Thus, the equivalency or distinctiveness of seeds based on purpose can be called a *perspective equivalence*. Such an equivalence exists only when the items are perceived in a particular manner. The failure to provide an accurate translation here is not caused by speakers of different languages perceiving the world differently, as the Whorfian school might argue[11], rather it is thus exposed. It is not the choice of language which is the cage confining the logic here, but the overall structuring of the ontology. To demonstrate this, consider how the presence of the mistranslation will persist even when a user switches languages, remaining only visible to those who have chosen to render the item in the languages it has been mistranslated into, regardless of ability to comprehend said language.

Let us now consider a counter-example where the perspective equivalence has been split into separate items to circumvent a problematic equivalence. Consider the item for *rice* (Q5090) [12]. Similar to the case of seeds, in some languages rice too is called differently depending on what purpose it is meant for. The distinction is not typical of English, however, the unusual terms *pilaf* and *cooked rice* are sometimes employed in colloquial speech, a loanword and neologism respectively. So in addition to *rice*(Q5090), additional items have been designated for *pilaf* (Q485796)

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[9] Wikidata item for "plant structure" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q20011319`

[10] Wikidata item for "food" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q2095`

[11] Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Science and Linguistics", Indianapolis, IN, USA:: Bobbs-Merrill, (1940), 207-219.

[12] Wikidata item for "rice" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q5090`

[13] and *cooked rice* (Q523224) [14] which can be used to distinguish rice dishes from the biological species. Then clearly, we see that the limitation on the *seed* item is not due to in-translatability issues so much as contributors' negligence of *perspective equivalents*.

5 Interpretive Equivalences

There might also be cases where two people might perceive the same object, or a pair of related objects, in the same manner but internalize it, or them, entirely differently. Thinking back to one's childhood, one might recount bedtime stories or nursery rhymes they have heard time and time again. Even the most patient storyteller will enjoy adding some variety, so it is not uncommon for a parent or nanny to change the story from time to time. Story characters might be made to humorously break character and *talk* to the child. I ask, would this altered story be considered a distinct story, or merely a retelling of the original? I would like to denote the premise that these two retellings of the same story are identical as an *interpretive equivalence*, where a *subjective equivalence* emerges as a product of conceptualization over perception.

More notably, we sometimes see books republished as second editions or movies being remade. The general purpose of a re-release is often to make slight quality adjustments. Notably, the *Star Wars* franchise is infamous for frequent re-releases. It is often contested whether movie rereleases are retellings of the same story or re-imaginings. TMDB is a community-run database of movies and TV shows. Searching for *"Star Wars"* will yield over 100 movies, most of which are documentaries or fan films. The core Star Wars series itself spans 9 films, each called an episode, all of which are listed. In 1997, the very first Star Wars movie, Episode IV: A New Hope, was rereleased as a Special Edition, in honor of the original 1977 movie's 20th anniversary. This 1997 version featured additional scenes, in addition to overhauled special effects. There was, however, one infamous change in this version which went on to become a cultural phenomenon in its own right. In one scene gunslinger Han Solo is held at gunpoint by the outlaw Greedo. In the 1977 original, Solo distracts Greedo long enough to grab his own gun and shoot him before Greedo can make a move. In the 1997 remake, Greedo takes his shot first, although he misses. Ever since, many fans of the original movie

[13] Wikidata item for "pilaf" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q485796`

[14] Wikidata item for "cooked rice" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q523224`

have protested "Han shot first", arguing that this revision makes a cold-blooded gunshot seem as if it were a self-defensive retaliation, leading to a far different interpretation of the character. To further complicate matters, for many countries the 1997 remake was the first screening of Episode IV their audiences received. The change has been so controversial that subsequent releases have altered the scene over and over again [15]. Can we say that the 1997 Special Edition is its own movie, or is this divergence negligible? We might call this too an *interpretive equivalence*, where the matter is whether or not to interpret the changes as significantly distinguishing. The TMDB community takes the two versions to be equivalent, and has elected to merely list the Special Edition as a 1997 release of the 1977 original [16].

However, TMDB also has a counter-example where two versions of a movie are considered distinct from one another. *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* [17] is considered separate from its infamous bootleg, *Star War: The Third Gathers: The Backstroke of the West* [18]. Revenge of the Sith was released in May 2005. Months later bootleg copies emerged and Backstroke of the West in particular received a lot of attention for its inane dialogue [19]. This is thought to be a result of back-translating into English from an unofficial Chinese translation of the original movie. TMDB gets away with listing *Backstroke of the West* as a different movie by providing a different plot summary, and different names for the characters which do not align with the original *Revenge of the Sith*. Again, we see that limitations here are not absolute, conveying information differently can totally re-conceptualize an item. Then we can say that if it is possible to interpret the differences between two items as sufficiently distinctive, we can dissolve an *interpretative equivalence*. If not, we can form an interpretative equivalence.

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[15] `https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/movies/2019/11/12/star-wars-disney-plus-changes-controversial-han-solo-greedo-scene/2576097001/`

[16] TMDB item for "Star Wars" available at `https://www.themoviedb.org/movie/11-star-wars`

[17] TMDB item for "Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith" available at `https://www.themoviedb.org/movie/1895-star-wars-episode-iii-revenge-of-the-sith`

[18] TMDB item for "Star War: The Third Gathers: The Backstroke of the West" available at `https://www.themoviedb.org/movie/810086-star-war-the-third-gathers-the-backstroke-of-the-west`

[19] Blogger Jeremy Winterson's blogpost on Backstroke of the West is the earliest known coverage: `http://winterson.com/2005/06/episode-iii-backstroke-of-west.html`

6 A Possible Solution: Evaluating Changes on the Pragmatic Maxim

Given the subjective nature of how we relate things to one another, it seems a daunting task to construct a common ontology which feebly attempts to objectify these relations. Going back to Sections 2 3, we discussed how the pragmatic maxim could be used to make sense of the collective, that the conceptualization of properties associated with a given object can be considered a conceptualization of the entire object itself. I will now argue that, in fact, a more rigorous adherence to the pragmatic maxim will allow for the recognition of redundant and/or unique objects.

Recall that the dissolving of a *subjective equivalence* is possible through the demonstration of a difference in practical bearings, the properties associated with an item in our case. For a *perspective equivalence*, if examining an item in a different regard from the pre-established perspective alters the properties we can ascribe to it, then the initial properties can be declared merely circumstantial. As for the case of an *interpretative equivalence*, if and only if we are able to ascribe non-identical properties to two items, may we differentiate them. Then, if we deliberately check for whether such equivalences have been constructed, we might go about resolving them.

In Section 3, we stated that an item's addition to a common ontology will precede a deeper analysis to frame said item in an ontologically consistent manner. We noted that common ontologies attempt to resolve redundancies and negligences as new items are added. Alas, this process rarely addresses the problem of *subjective equivalences* directly. Instead ambiguities are resolved based on the common ontology's own policy, which may or may not respect different perspectives and interpretations. In place of these, a policy which requires a conscious evaluation of the pragmatic maxim, when first adding an item and later deciding how to contain it, would entail less arbitrary decision making by openly addressing the root problem of *subjective equivalences*.

As an example, let us take Wikidata's aforementioned *seed* (Q40763) item. To reiterate, the issue here was that we encountered a misapprehended *perspective equivalence*. The labelling of the *seed* item into *tohum* and , in Turkish and Belarusian respectfully, drew a false association that the item was necessarily *food* (Q2095). Whereas the actual terms for edible seeds were *çekirdek* and . Currently on Wikidata, translating the name of a given item into another language is only a matter of clicks. The main translation of the item is referred to as the label and any alternative

translations are listed as aliases. Indeed, the general terms for a seed are labeled correctly; the issue arises because of what is assumed to be a universal subclassing of *seed* (Q40763) from *food* (Q2095). If there were a check during this editing process, for the translator to verify that all listed properties for the item are also ascribable to the translation, only then could we confidently say that the original label and new translation are equivalent. If such an equivalence cannot be established, the item ought to be split, similar to the case of *rice* (Q5090) and *pilaf* (Q485796). This method does not need to be exclusive to translations; likewise, similar checks on whether an image depicts and exemplifies pre-established properties of its associated object could be used to verify that the item's visual representation is accurate. In short, if different representations of the same item do, in fact, exhibit equivalent properties, we have on our hands a perspective equivalence consistent with the common ontology.

Next to go about resolving *interpretive equivalences*, let us take the aforementioned two versions of Star Wars - Episode IV, the 1977 original and the 1997 remake. Recall that TMDB lists the remake as merely a re-release of the original. One might consider this to be a reasonable association, others might not. If we believe this to be a misconstrued *interpretative equivalence*, we ought to prove that the two movies have distinctive properties. Recall how TMDB gets away with having the Backstroke of the West mistranslation listed as a different item from the original Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith. The Backstroke of the West item gives the mistranslated plot as the plot summary and uses the mistranslated role names for the characters. For instance, the Revenge of the Sith characters *Obi Wan Kenobi* and *Chancellor Palpatine* are replaced with *Ratio Tile* and *Speaker D* for Backstroke of the West. In a similar vein, one possible way to force a distinction between the two versions of Episode IV would be to add a new item for the 1997 remake, which includes snippets from the story changes in the plot summary. Conversely, if we believe another pair of items to be redundant, we can unify the distinctive properties to merge the two into one. We know the Backstroke of the West to be a mistranslation, ergo one who argues that it ought to be considered the same movie as the Revenge of the Sith could harmonize the associated properties which distinguish the two. For starters, the character names for Backstroke of the West might be updated to agree with the character names for Revenge of the Sith, seeing as the credits uses the same character names as the original, then other differentiating properties can be brought into agreement until the two items are practically identical. Then if a single item in the ontology can be demonstrated to represent multiple entities in the real world,

which share identical properties, we have on our hands an *interpretive equivalence* consistent with the common ontology. Likewise, a group of items may be reducible to a single item, by virtue of their identical properties.

Either of these approaches offers a fairer compromise compared to existing policies. Appealing to moderation verdict to resolve conflicts is not without its merit, after all intuition comes with experience. That being said, while a Wikidata moderator who is an astrophysicist might be suited to classify Pluto (Q339) [20] and Eris (Q611) [21] as distinct astronomical bodies, they might be less credible when delineating between micro-organisms such as SARS-CoV-1 (Q85438966) [22] and SARS-CoV-2 (Q82069695) [23], unlike a microbiologist. By consciously invoking the pragmatic maxim, instead of always relying on moderators, we can continue to receive input from contributors while negating moderator-bias. Thus may ontologies become more consistent systems and less prone to logical deadlock.

7 Conclusion

In the age of information, only skeptics will reject a notion of common knowledge. Let the thinkers keep thinking to themselves, while the doers toil, constructing common ontologies and knowledge bases of their own. This is certainly a task with many nuances, as we have discussed above. The knowledge stored in a common ontology isn't only available to humans, a good portion of it is also exposed to software agents through what we call the *Semantic Web*. We might not realize it, but common ontologies have already begun reshaping our world, feeding data into browser searches and personal assistants. This is all the more reason we ought to pay attention to developments surrounding common ontologies. *Data poisoning* can be used to trick software agents, who might later pass on false information to humans. We often see this in the case of *Google Bombing*, where a humorous term is forcibly associated with a real world person. The implications of misconstrued

[20] Wikidata item for "Pluto" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q339`

[21] Wikidata item for "Eris" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q611`

[22] Wikidata item for "SARS-CoV-1" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q85438966`

[23] Wikidata item for "SARS-CoV-2" available at `https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q82069695`

data include disastrous AI Racism [24] which has caused problems in banking and law enforcement. As common ontologies continue to grow as sources of data, their reliability becomes all the more essential.

In line with the pragmatic maxim, the *subjective equivalences* we establish or dissolve can allow us to achieve higher cohesion and reliability. The end results might not always agree with real world consensus or even reality, but this is not the immediate goal of a common ontology. It is understood that this is an iterative process, all that we have discussed here today can serve to accelerate its progress. While the problem of *subjective equivalences* has yet to be recognized in name, *interpretive equivalences* regarding versioning are starting to receive minor attention. Wikidata has begun introducing properties to represent versioning, such as P9237 for musical reissues [25]. I can only hope that the methodology I have outlined here will supplement this underlying consciousness.

A radiant future of knowledge sharing awaits us, so long as we, people of all disciplines and interests, pitch in together. In having defined this problem of *subjective equivalences* and offered a possible solution, I hope to have initiated dialogue not merely on a digital or engineering problem, but on a human one. I doubt that it is only a pragmatist's perspective which can address *the problem of subjective equivalences* and I eagerly anticipate deeper exploration on the matter itself, and broader discussion on digital ontologies in general.

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Wittgenstein and an Ethics without Moral Principles

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Despite not directly addressing morality, the later Wittgenstein's thought as presented in the *Philosophical Investigations* has influenced some impressive movements in moral philosophy–being an inspiration to moral philosophers like Stanley Cavell and conceptually motivating moral anti-theorists. Wittgenstein's dense discussion on rule-following, in particular, can be used in moral discourse. In this paper, I will argue that seriously considering all of the nuances of Wittgenstein's thought, a Wittgensteinian ethics based on rule-following yields an ethics without moral principles. I will explicate on Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following, criticize James Pearson's analogy between Stanley Cavell's moral perfectionism and Wittgenstein's thought, construe an ethics more faithful to Wittgensteinian rule-following, and discuss what distinguishes this position from moral relativism.

To get a sense of Wittgenstein's discussion on rule-following, let us sketch out an example. Picture a chessboard with pieces configured as they would be at the start of a game of chess. The woman seated at one end of the board takes only a moment to think before moving one of her pawns forward by two squares. Indeed, she must be playing chess. Seated opposite the woman is her child, who without hesitation picks up their knight and takes the piece off the board and onto the table, making gallop sound effects as they slide this piece towards the woman and back onto the board to knock down all of the other pieces irrespective of color. What am I to make of this now? Did the child do something wrong? We can say that perhaps this child's behavior is not consistent with the rules of chess, but is not this child's behavior consistent with *something*? After all, this knight piece is, in fact, shaped like a horse, and horses, in fact, make gallop sounds as they travel. This knight piece, this symbol in the shape of a horse, *means* what a horse means to this child, and the way this child uses it shows that is the case. This knight

piece to the woman, however, means what the knight piece of chess *means* to the woman, and the way she uses this piece will also show that is the case. While the woman uses the wooden piece as the knight-piece-of-chess, the child, on the other hand, is using their piece as the knight-piece-as-horse. In an odd way, this child has actually followed the rules quite faithfully. However, while the child's mother would receive this situation with lighthearted laughter, this child's behavior would be wholly unacceptable at an international chess tournament. In this case, the community of chess enthusiasts seemingly reserves the right to chastise the child's nonsense and we will assume that they do.

This difference between the reception of the child's behavior in these two different spaces sheds light on Wittgenstein's philosophy regarding rule-following and the role of practices therein found in the *Philosophical Invenstigations*. The point of the chess analogy was to emphasize the importance of a surrounding practice in distinguishing what is right and wrong. In her reading of Wittgenstein, Marie McGinn writes, "We don't find the basis for this distinction where we're inclined to look for it- in the rule itself, or in something that accompanies the saying of the rule -but in the field that surrounds the giving of the order and the response that is made to it"[1]. In other words, when it comes to someone being right or wrong about the meaning of something (such as the meaning of the knight piece) we find that the rule itself (that the knight can only move in such-and-such a way) is not sufficient grounds to make a judgement. The conflict, in this case, is not between the child and the chess rule book but between the child's and the chess community's practice.

To stay with our example of chess, let us take a look at the rule "the knight moves in such-and-such a way". How do we go from this text to the moving of a piece of wood on a checkered flat surface? It seems as though further explanation is due. Maybe we should write something like "the knight moves in such-and-such a way, and you should move it in a way that will facilitate your victory, and the way you facilitate your victory is by setting up the opponent's king into a situation where it cannot escape, and a situation where one cannot escape is one that... ", and so on. Let this rule go on to explain how to use the knight piece in as much detail as possible and we will see that the rule could go on ad infinitum. Most importantly, however, we will see that the rule will never be able to bridge the gap between itself and the application. At

[1] Marie McGinn, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein: and the Philosophical Investigations*(London: Routledge, 1997), 101.

no point will the rule itself be able to cause my moving of a piece of wood on a checkered flat surface. Wittgenstein thinks the link between a rule and the application of the rule is but a mythological one; rather, what causes the application of the rule is one's training. It is the child's training that causes the child to move the horse-shaped piece in the way they do; they use symbols in a certain way insofar as they were trained to do so.

Speaking further on training, Wittgenstein writes, "a person goes by a sign-post only insofar as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom" [2]. We use a signpost, because there exists a customary practice to use a signpost in such-and-such a way; we understand the rules of using the signpost through the relevant community's practice. The training through which it can be said we understand a rule is the act of practicing within this custom. The community facilitates this training by providing an external anchor, bodies separate from ours to be the living example of how we should use our bodies in response to symbols such as the signpost. To assume that the signpost taken by itself is enough to make me follow it is to assume that there exists the mythological connection between rule and application. It is to assume that I already know what a signpost is, what it means for a signpost to be shaped the way it is, what the words on the signpost mean–most importantly, it is to assume that I already know what to do with my body in response to the signpost. So, how is the child supposed to use their body in response to symbols that look like "the knight-piece moves in such-and-such a way"? To assume that the child need only this rule to move the knight piece in such-and-such a way is to assume that the child already knows what to do.

In the examples afforded to us by chess, however, the distinction between right and wrong seems black-and-white, so to speak. You either move the knight piece in such-and-such a way or you do not move the knight piece in such-and-such a way while playing chess. However, what is right and wrong becomes more ambiguous in the case of morality. In his article, 'Wittgenstein and the Utility of Disagreement', James Pearson analogizes Wittgenstein's philosophy with Stanley Cavell's moral perfectionism to elaborate on certain features of Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following. Although I am not responding directly to his conclusions with respect to the utility of disagreement, I will be critically analyzing the account of morality that he provides as an example of a practice

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 198.

through a Wittgensteinian framework.

According to Pearson, the practice of morality is rooted in the community. For Cavell's broader project of moral perfectionism, an individual must come to know themself in order to partake in the journey of perpetual self-improvement, striving toward an "unattained but attainable self" [3]. Pearson writes, "for Cavell, self-knowledge (of our own concerns and commitments and those to which others hold us) is only attained through dialogue with others, when we are invited or pressed into the process of justification" [4]. When making a moral decision (a decision that can be morally scrutinized), a person must also take into consideration the concerns and commitments of others in the community they are in, and one must participate in difficult community dialogue in order to do this. According to Pearson, while we may disagree as to what concerns and commitments are relevant in each situation, the way we frame these concerns and commitments in the justification that we use to arrive at a conclusion is an "agreed upon procedure" decided by the community [5]. The community upholds certain criteria as to what counts as valid moral justification. A good action, according to Pearson, is "one that best coheres with these [criteria] insofar as it either facilitates [the person's] goals and well-being or fulfills her commitments" [6]. A good action is one that can be justified according to the criteria upheld by the community. Although Cavell's ethical philosophy takes inspiration from the *Philosophical Investigations*, I argue that it is not necessarily a compatible philosophy with the later Wittgenstein's thought as Pearson suggests.

To be clear, I am not making the claim that there are problems with Cavell's moral philosophy; rather, I am arguing that the way Pearson analogizes it with Wittgenstein's thought regarding rule-following yields an inaccurate analogy. Let us suppose there is a moral rule book that tells us what is good and bad. Just as a chess rule book would tell us what actions are and are not permissible without further justification, this sacred text, so to speak, would tell us what actions are and are not morally permissible without further justification. Cavell's criteria for moral justification, Kant's categorical imperative, and Aristotle's

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[3] Russell Goodman, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, November 2, 2018), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/emerson/.

[4] James Pearson, "Wittgenstein and the Utility of Disagreement," *Social Theory and Practice* 42 (January 2016): pp. 1-31, https://doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract20164211, 18.

[5] Pearson, 17.

[6] Pearson, 18.

law of moderation are among the many other things that would be appropriate to write into this moral rule book. Within this rule book, let us lay down a rule to tell us how to act ethically according to Cavell's criteria. We shall write something like this: "Acting ethically consists in acting such that the action can be justified according to the community's criteria, the community's criteria is as follows ...". Much like the rule of how to use the knight-piece from our previous discussion, this rule could go on ad infinitum. Most importantly, we will see that this rule will never be able to bridge the gap between itself and its application. At no point will these moral principles themselves cause me to act a certain way. The connection between the principles found in this rule book and my actions is mythological. Pearson suggests that Cavell's moral philosophy is Wittgensteinian because the community sets the rules of what is ethical by establishing criteria of what counts as moral justification. Thus, the moral agent can appeal to these criteria to prove their action ethical. However, just as I cannot appeal to the signpost for my use of the signpost the way I do, one cannot appeal to Cavell's criteria for their use of it. Wittgensteinian ethics is not about rules or moral principles like Cavell's criteria.

However, if acting ethically, or according to the rules, comes from our training within a certain custom, then how do we reconcile what is good and what is bad from all of the different customs that constitute our world? This Wittgensteinian conception of ethics seems to commit to moral relativism, but I argue that there is an important point that separates these two positions: their view on moral judgements. To generically summarize this point for a moral relativist "the truth or falsity of moral judgments, or their justification, is not absolute or universal, but is relative to the traditions, convictions, or practices of a group of persons" [7]. This Wittgensteinian position, on the other hand, holds that it is not appropriate to predicate truth or falsity of statements classified as moral judgements at all. Moral judgements do not hold the weight that the moral relativist would like to ascribe to them. While the relativist holds that there is a moral rule book relative to each community or custom through which a moral judgement's truth or falsity can be proven, this Wittgensteinian position holds that moral judgements are merely expressions of one's training.

To illustrate this point further, let us reintroduce ourselves to the situation of the child playing chess with their mother, comfortably away

[7] Chris Gowans, "Moral Relativism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, April 20, 2015), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/moral-relativism/.

from the international chess tournament. Perhaps now they are sitting together at a picnic table, other children populating the vast green of the park they occupy. The grand display of the chess board and pieces draw in a crowd of children, who place their passionate faith in the child. The child makes the first move, once again picking up the knight and wreaking carnage on the chess board. We can imagine some of the children applauding with delight, surely the child sat upon this picnic bench is the hand of God. Now, why are their judgements so different from those of the chess community? Are these the wrong judgements? The relativist holds that they are wrong according to the chess community's rule book but correct in the children-spectators' rule book. The position I put forward holds that there is a conflict between the chess community's practice and the child's and no such conflict between the children-spectators' practice and the child's. This position *does not* make a moral claim about the child's behavior. Rather than the child's behavior being good or bad, the child's behavior is either in accord or discord with certain practices.

The *Philosophical Investigations* contains a remark on psychological language in which Wittgenstein provides an example suitable for this discussion: "I tell someone I am in pain… let us assume he says: 'It's not so bad.'—Doesn't that prove that he believes in something behind the outward expression of pain?... Imagine not merely the words 'I am in pain' but also the answer 'It's not so bad' replaced by instinctive noises and gestures" [8]. Appropriated for our discussion, we will let the child behave the way they do at the chess tournament. The chess community reacts the way they do and utters something to the effect of "that behavior is not allowed". Does this utterance prove that there exists some standard according to which the behavior is not allowed? Cannot the truth or falsity of this judgement be proven by some rule book? Imagine not merely the child's behavior but also the response replaced by instinctive noises and gestures. The child waves their hands in the air and screams, and, in response, the chess community does jumping jacks and sings the Star-Spangled Banner. Are these noises and gestures true or false? The utterance "that behavior is wrong" does not contain content that allows it to be true or false, it is an expression of one's training. The moral relativist can go on to say that even if a moral judgement was merely an expression of one's training, it can still be compared to how the community reacts. Even if the moral judgement is jumping jacks and singing the Star-Spangled Banner, it can be compared

[8] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 310.

to whether their community would also do jumping jacks and sing the Star-Spangled Banner in response to the same situation; if their community would respond in the same way, then their response is true. However, this would only be the case if when I say "the sky is green" and my community would also say "the sky is green", then it becomes true. Further, what does it mean to see someone do jumping jacks and sing the Star-Spangled Banner and call those actions true? Although they are actions that my community's practice has no conflict against, they are, in no means, what could be called true or false relative to anything. These moral judgements are neither true nor false, they are an expression of conflict between different practices.

In a posthumous collection of remarks, Wittgenstein writes, "Well, there is no mention of punishment [in moral doctrine], but rather a kind of natural law. And anyone to whom it is represented in such a light, could derive only despair or incredulity from it. Teaching this could not be an ethical training...you would have to teach the doctrine after the ethical training, and represent it as a sort of incomprehensible mystery" [9].

To assume that one can learn to act ethically through some moral principle is to assume that they already know how to act ethically. Moral principles, like those found in our hypothetical moral rule book, are not the foundation of ethical action. To act ethically, is not to consider what is good and what is bad as our community defines it; this is the mistake Pearson makes in his analogy. We act ethically just as we act in situations that are not ethical problems, we act according to our training. Although the chess-playing child's practice conflicts with both the mother's and the chess community's practice, it is the chess community that decides to express this conflict through harsh judgement. They do not meet the child where their practices intersect. The loving mother, on the other hand, decides to express this conflict with lightheartedness, a recognition of the child's humanity (that their behavior is a result of their training). The mother shows the child the ropes of the practice, becoming the external body through which, the child can be initiated into the practice of chess. She meets the child where their practices intersect.

By exploring Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Philosophical Investigations*, I have shown that rule-following is about practicing within a custom among the relevant community of fellow practitioners. Through

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. Alois Pichler and Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 92e-93e.

my criticism of Pearson's use of Wittgenstein's thought and contrasting it with an ethics more faithfully based on Wittgensteinian rule-following, I explain that Wittgensteinian ethics is not based on moral principles like Cavell's criteria. Lastly, by comparing this position with moral relativism, I clarify what distinguishes one from the other, and show that the mythological connection between our actions and moral principles is what tempts us to think that moral judgements or decisions are different from actions that are not. Wittgensteinian ethics as presented in this paper, in accordance with the ideas found in the *Philosophical Investigations*, is not about principles of morality. It is, as Wittgenstein conceives all of philosophy to be, a reminder of what ethical practice consists in: human beings doing their best to practice together.

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Slave Self-Consciousness' Quest for Freedom: The Transition from "Freedom in Work" To "Freedom in Thought"

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1 Introduction

In this essay, I aim to explain how the conditions of slave consciousness transform slave consciousness into Stoic consciousness. I believe it is necessary to examine the conditions in which slave consciousness exists before explaining this transformation or transition because understanding the conditions that create slave consciousness will guide us to grasp the structure of Stoic consciousness. In addition, I will examine what 'freedom in thought' within Stoic consciousness refers to by comparing it to 'freedom in work' within slave consciousness. Finally, I will show how the thesis of Stoic consciousness "the criterion of reality is thought," puts Stoic consciousness into a cyclical explanation, and then I reveal the point at which Stoic consciousness dissolves.

2 Slave-Master Dialectic

The transition to Stoic consciousness is about the transition from the one-sided practical attitude of desire and the master to the theoretical form that the slave grasped. Stoic consciousness is the state of consciousness in which it is suggested that the external world is governed by mental principles and that those principles depend on its way of thinking. Thus, the Stoic consciousness is the thinking consciousness, and the fact that anything is fundamentally important depends on how it thinks it is.

The reason for the appearance of Stoic consciousness "Stoic consciousness can emerge in an age of universal fear and slavery"[1]. To explain this expression, the slave-master dialectic should be studied in more detail: In the slave-master dialectic, one of the consciousnesses

[1] G.W. Hegel,*Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press), §199/121.

is revealed as a dependent consciousness, slave, and the other as an independent consciousness, master. The slave consciousness transforms the objects it encounters for the desire of its master, and its activity here is called the *universal formative activity*. The reason its activity is universal is that the act of the slave is mediated only by the needs of the master. Its actions do not take place for any particular desire of its own, and therefore its activity has a universal aspect.

But this formative activity of slave consciousness is a liberating activity at one point and a restrictive and negative activity at another. The master consciousness no longer encounters the negative and resisting sides of things, for these aspects of things now concern the slave consciousness. In this context, while the master consciousness enjoys the mere enjoyment of things and is confident of its own independence against them, the slave consciousness encounters their resistance in the activity of transforming them. Here, the way both consciousnesses encounter the thing is to negate it, but the negation of what the slave encounters is to transform it for its master. On the other hand, although the negation of the master is a dominant, denying force, this negation is not transformative but a destructive activity, since its negation is about enjoying the thing. And this point reveals that the slave, unlike its master, has no absolute denial force over things. It's free to transform things for its master, but it is incapable of completely denying them or destroying them. Therefore, although the slave's activity liberates it while working on something, this freedom is limited to transforming and giving form to them.

Also, another point that constrains the slave is that the slave transfers its own form to the thing while working on it, and the slave is aware that the form of this transformed thing is its own. This part is important for the slave to recognize its transformative activity because this awareness of the slave makes it feel that it is playing a transformative role vis-à-vis the things. In this context, the slave consciousness makes its independence from the thing open to itself. At some point, it feels free, but this independence of the slave from the thing does not make it the absolute owner of the thing because although the form of thing is the embodiment of the activity of the slave, the slave's ownership and independence on the thing ends with the master consuming that thing. Hence, the freedom of the slave consciousness here or its independence from the thing disappears when the master's arbitrariness is engaged. Ultimately, the freedom of the slave is revealed to be a limited freedom.

On the other hand, the slave consciousness transforms things because it still feels the *fear of death* manifested in the life and death

struggle. Its concern about its life is its motivation to transform things. In that struggle, the absolute denial power of death appears in the master itself as a representation. Also, the slave consciousness is aware of this representation that emerges in the master, and every encounter with its master causes the slave's anxiety for life and hence it continues its service for the master. The fear of the slave consciousness here is more of a general fear of extinction or loss of existence than of a fear of something particular. Its concern of existence is a general and universal concern.

3 Life and Death Struggle

In the life and death struggle, it is observed that both consciousnesses try to remove the other's independence. There, the two consciousnesses relate to the other by risking their own independence as they seek the independence of the other, thus putting their own life at risk. However, as it is known, while one consciousness is dependent on its own life, the other consciousness shows that it is more than its life. I think it is possible to understand consciousness, which is dependent on life, as a consciousness that can be limited with its life because it has not shown that consciousness in this position can be separated from its own life. It is certain that life has an essential importance for the establishment of a free self-consciousness, but when consciousness does not show its independence from its life, dependent consciousness emerges and this type of consciousness is far from being free self-consciousness. Therefore, this struggle can be understood as a struggle for independence. While the master consciousness imposes its own independence on the other, the other -the slave consciousness- comes across with its own dependency and leaves this struggle.

4 Transition to Stoic Consciousness

As stated above, the slave consciousness encountered limited freedom in its formative activity, since its freedom is manifested in its own work, but when this work is presented to the master consciousness as a service, the embodiment of the slave's independence also disappears because the master can abolish it at his will. In this respect, the slave consciousness is practically but limitedly independent in its own life. The limited freedom that the slave consciousness acquired in the face of life and things, and its inability to be revealed as an absolute denier in its rela-

tionship with its master constitute the conditions for the transition to Stoic consciousness. It should not be forgotten that self-consciousness is a search for freedom. At this point, where the slave is, consciousness still has to be exposed to the negativity of things and work to realize it's freedom. However, as Hegel stated, "the Stoic consciousness is negative towards the relationship between master and slavery... This consciousness neither finds the reality of activity in its slave from the master's point of view nor from the slave's point of view, it finds its reality at the master's will and in service to the master" [2]. "The stoic consciousness stage of self-consciousness tries to move away from the binding, passive structure of all individual existence by retreating to the simple essentiality of thought"[3]. Hence, its independence is not only against things or life, but against all vital factors in general. I will detail this general independence below.

One of the points I consider important here is the desire of consciousness to move from a finite freedom like that of a slave to an eternal freedom. Such a thing is not a search for freedom of the kind found even in master consciousness. For the independence of the master consciousness is an independence of the consumption of things and the servitude of the slave to it. Its independence is again an independence of what is formed in life, in vital conditions, so the master consciousness is dependent at some point on the continuation of the service of the slave. However, the search for freedom that emerges in the Stoic consciousness is a freedom in thought, unlike the search in the life and death struggle and the dialectic of the slave master.

Stoic consciousness emerges as a form of self-consciousness drawn into itself from the determinations and coercive conditions of life. I believe Hegel's concept of infinity is related to this point in one context. Franco Chiereghin [4] states, that "the infinite for Hegel is not "something" to be placed alongside or outside the finite, rather it is the act with which everything finite, and thus every limit, transcends itself in its being"[5]. As far as I have observed, the issue of transcending the self's own determinations is seen in Stoic consciousness because Stoic consciousness tries to gain its own independence through its own way of thinking by withdrawing from life. For this reason, the Stoic move

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[2] ibid. §199/121.

[3] ibid. §199/121.

[4] Franco Chiereghin, Chapter 3: Freedom and Thought: Stoicism, Skepticism, and Unhappy Consciousnes in *The Blackwell guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* ed. Kenneth Westphal (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 56

[5] ibid. 56.

appears again as an activity of transcending its own conditions. But this attempt at the freedom of self-consciousness is about transcending itself by moving from a practical stage to a theoretical stage, i.e.,the intellectual stage, because Stoic consciousness is consciousness that tries to reveal that it is essential not to the vital conditions but to the way of thinking. Therefore, Stoic consciousness is drawn into its own thinking, indifferent to the way in which the living conditions are realized. And as long as it stays in thought, it can stay with itself because its way of thinking happens conceptually and conceptual thought, as Hegel explains, does not require mediation with an external factor, since the concept belongs to consciousness. Franco Chiereghin states [6], that what Hegel calls the concept is "based on the identity of the subjective and the objective, or in other words, the form of subjectivity and the structure of objectivity are the same ". The emphasis I want to make here is that Stoic thought grasps the subject and the object in an identical structure and claims that structurally the subject is not dependent on the object but the object is dependent on the subject and hence the subject is not dependent on the living conditions. But in Stoic consciousness, since the content that is transformed into a form of thinking is external to consciousness, Stoic consciousness is in some sense a consciousness dependent on this content, because Stoic consciousness is not a consciousness stage that can give itself content. The fact that Stoic consciousness is actually dependent on its content and the issue of subject-object identity will be addressed further in the text. For now, I give priority to addressing the structure of thinking that is revealed in Stoic consciousness.

5 The Structure of Stoic Consciousness

Perhaps it is necessary to distinguish between conceptual and representational thinking here. As Hegel claims that "the Stoic consciousness does not move with a representative content… while objects present themselves to thinking in representations, on the other hand, they can present within concepts… Concepts are things that thought can reach immediately and exist identical to consciousness itself,"[7]. However, the presentation of the object to the thought in representation causes consciousness to be associated with something other than itself since the object in representation carries the form of something other than con-

[6] ibid. 57

[7] G.W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press), §197/119, 120-21.

sciousness. If the object presents itself to thought in concept, it enables consciousness to remain in itself because concepts are forms of consciousness itself. What I am trying to explain is this: thinking in representation would direct consciousness into something other than consciousness itself, and consciousness would have to remember what that representation belongs to. Therefore, consciousness would recall movement towards vital conditions and life. Consequently, the liberation of consciousness in thought could not be achieved through representational thinking. However, since the conceptual thinking of consciousness will keep consciousness within itself, there is no need for consciousness to remember life in conceptual thinking. As Hegel explained, "moving between concepts is a movement of consciousness itself" [8]. So Stoic consciousness seeks such a way of thinking because only such a way of thinking can provide it with independence from externality. But as I mentioned above, the Stoic consciousness will not gain absolute independence from the externality, since although Stoic consciousness thinks conceptually, it is not a consciousness that can give itself content. Thus, the content that the Stoic consciousness transforms into the concept is external to Stoic consciousness, and this issue will cause its dissolution and reveal that it is in fact not a free consciousness but a consciousness dependent on content. Consequently, Stoic consciousness's claim of "freedom in thought" will collapse because consciousness is dependent on external content.

Let's put this dependence aside and continue to examine the freedom offered by the Stoic consciousness. As Hegel puts it in [9], "it will still be able to remain free whether it is on the throne or in a chain" because the Stoic form of consciousness does not try to establish its freedom in something external to it, or in life, but in its own way of thinking. Therefore, this way of thinking is not only of the slave consciousness but also one that can be revealed in the master consciousness. However, it is obvious that the approach to freedom in thought emerged in the turn of the slave consciousness to itself, because the slave consciousness did not emerge as a form of consciousness that can negate life in the life and death struggle, and therefore it has to negate life in its own thought. It tries to establish its own freedom to the extent that it can stay in its thought and avoid other external factors there in the thought.

What I want to elaborate here is that the reason Stoic consciousness is a consciousness withdrawn from life has to do with the position of the

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[8] ibid. §197/119, 120-21.
[9] ibid. §199/121.

slave consciousness in relation to the master and the thing. That is, the vital conditions necessarily reveal Stoic consciousness: while the slave consciousness gives new forms to things through its universal forming activity, these forms are external to the slave consciousness, and these forms are only particular forms. Therefore, these forms dissolve by being exposed to the effects of contingent events outside. For example, they can be abolished according to the requirements of master consciousness. The forms produced by the slave consciousness are the particular forms that occur in things, and they are not permanent things that the slave can keep under its guarantee. In this context, the world created by slave consciousness outside is dependent on some kind of contingency. Therefore, the slave consciousness acquiring freedom through its own work is a contingent attainment, because as mentioned, the new form appearing in the thing is contingent. Consequently, the slave consciousness which cannot establish the permanence of its freedom in the world, is forced to pass into a form of consciousness in which externality cannot affect in order to make itself independent from this contingency of life. The spread of Stoicism during the Roman Empire may be the most obvious example of this strain since the Roman Empire is a society where slavery was common. From this point of view, it seems historically justified that the Stoic consciousness is a form of consciousness that is just after the slave-master dialectic.

In addition, a kind of subject-object identity is revealed in Stoic consciousness that we have not encountered in earlier chapters of phenomenology, and Stoic consciousness strives to establish its own independence through this identity. This identity takes place in thought. Let's take it from the beginning and explain this identity in detail. Elif Çırakman states, that "the slave consciousness sees itself in the form it gives to the *object* in the first place, but the emphasis is still on the object… later, the slave consciousness sees itself in the form it gives to the object, but this time the emphasis is on *itself*, not the object… and at this point, the stoic consciousness is revealed."[10] Stoic consciousness realizes that the forms the object can take originate from consciousness itself and the relationship that consciousness enters with the object. In this context, Stoic consciousness appears as a form of consciousness that binds objectivity to itself. Consequently, consciousness's comprehension of objectivity as the relation it establishes with the object will appear as thought. Therefore, it is seen that all the truth, meaning and importance of objectivity will be established through the relationship formed with

[10] Elif Çırakman, Lecture presented at *Stoicism and Skepticism* (METU, 2020).

the object encountered. In short, in the Stoic move, what the object is, the essence of the object consists of the relation between the subject and the object. Here we observe that the essence and meaning of objectivity is established only in thought.

Therefore, the subject's being the determinant of objectivity appears for the first time in this form of consciousness. Objectivity depends on how the subject thinks of that object. Consequently, in the Stoic stage, consciousness becomes a consciousness that is withdrawn and puts a theoretical distance from the object with which it is associated. So, consciousness turns to a theoretical move again because Stoic consciousness considers that the objective situation depends on how I think it. At this stage, the object and the subject are identified for the first time. This may be expressed as follows: the essence of the object and the form of my thinking about it are in one and the same content. That is, the phrase "the object has a separate essence and we are trying to reach it" seems to collapse in Stoic consciousness, and the Stoic consciousness is grasped in the form of pure thought, how the object is and its essence. At this stage, what the consciousness perceives as the essence of the object is in fact itself. In Stoic consciousness, the concept becomes the basis of both objectivity and consciousness of the subject's own activity. That is, there is no difference between the content of the concept and the content of the object, on the contrary, they are one and the same. In the slave consciousness, the slave was separated from the object it formed. However, in Stoic consciousness this distinction disappears. Elif Çırakman declares, that "by the fact that the object is produced, the productive activity is one and the same for the observer, but the slave consciousness as a productive activity is separated from what it forms. The distinction between universal formative activity and the form of the particular object disappears in stoic consciousness[11]."

6 The Contentlessness and Dissolution of Stoic Consciousness

Stoic consciousness has an attempt to rationalize life, but its judgments about life are general judgments. As Hegel states, "when asked about the truth of its own judgments, for example, what is goodness, virtue, or wisdom, its answer is nothing more than an empty universal because it

[11] ibid.

is not judgments that send particular judgments[12]". The reason for this is that since it is a consciousness that is indifferent to life and returns to itself, it has nothing to do with a particular, concrete example. It is precisely at this point that Stoic consciousness's claim to freedom turns into an intangible claim that has no counterpart in life. Thus, Stoic consciousness only created the empty concept of freedom, but was unable to demonstrate its freedom in a practical way.

As Hegel states, "the fact that something can be real and good depends on the consciousness acting as the thinking essence because the truth of the thing being good or real is attributed to it by thought[13]." Here consciousness emerges as a thinking entity, and thinking tries to bring together the diverse and differentiated structure of life in its own thought. At this point, it thoughtfully abolished the otherness of things and made the otherness of the thing itself. Accordingly, the natural existence of things or its own natural existence is unimportant to it. Consciousness has acquired its intellectual independence here, and as Hegel puts it in, "freedom in thinking takes pure thought as reality to itself[14]." However, its freedom in thought is a freedom that emerges different from the contingent structure of life. Its freedom is a freedom without life. Thus, Stoic consciousness only offers us the concept of freedom.

For Stoic consciousness, the entire vibrant universe appears against the consciousness, depending on a system or principle that arises from thought. At this point, the Stoic consciousness becomes a form of consciousness that understands life in principle. And it assumes that the principle of life is not in the nature of things, but in their own thought. Thus, the otherness of things or their having a structure independent of consciousness disappears for the Stoic consciousness. It makes life a principle by making the entire movement and diversity of life its own movement. However, Stoic consciousness's comprehension of life in a purely principled integrity causes it to make general and contentless judgments about life.

At this stage the Stoic begins to dissolve: when asked the question "what is the criterion for reality?" Stoic consciousness's answer is that "the criterion of reality is thought." Since Stoic consciousness is introduced as a thinking consciousness, the question posed to Stoic consciousness is also a question posed to thought at some point. In this

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[12] G.W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press), §200/121-22.

[13] ibid. §198/121

[14] ibid. §200/121-22

case, the fact that thought determines the criterion of reality as thought is a circular justification because while the thinking consciousness says that the criterion of reality is thought, the answer or justification again appears as an assertion of thought. To make the situation clear, let's give an example, reducing the criterion of reality to thought corresponds to the thought: "The criterion of reality is thought because thought is the measure of reality." At this point, thought cannot go beyond giving us a circular answer about the criterion of reality.

This is precisely where the Stoic consciousness begins to dissolve, because the claim that thought itself determines the reality falls on the domain of thought alone, so thought remains alone with itself and cannot show whether the reality it constructs refers to a practical reality beyond a mere reflective claim. Parallel to this, since the Stoic consciousness cannot produce its own thought contents, it has to obtain its content from outside. Also although Stoic consciousness transforms this content into thought form, this thought cannot produce its own practical self-determinations. That is, the Stoic consciousness cannot change its vital conditions through thought. It is precisely at this point that consciousness feels alien to life because it is not certain whether the principles it produced are principles of reality. The emergence of this uncertainty is mainly due to the Stoic consciousness being indifferent to life. In light of all this, the withdrawal from life was not a salvation for Stoic consciousness, but rather this move of Stoic turned the subject into a lifeless island far from the churning sea of being.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the living conditions in which the slave consciousness is involved are effective in the transition to Stoic consciousness. The slave consciousness realized that, seeing that the form in the thing is its production, its own work liberates it from things. Unfortunately, the slave's claim to "freedom in work" did not provide a permanent freedom to consciousness, since its liberating activity was removed by the consumption of the master consciousness. For this reason, Stoic consciousness has tried to reduce its relation with externality to its internal determinations, that is, forms of thought. Namely, consciousness has attempted to make the non-permanent forms that it creates in practical life completely own and permanent in thought. At this point, it has been observed that consciousness has passed to a theoretical stage again. But the fact that consciousness reduces things to its own thought forms has

compelled it to remain indifferent to living conditions, because what is essential to the Stoic consciousness is how and what it thinks. But since Stoic consciousness cannot be a consciousness that produces its own thought content, it has not fully detached from externality and is dependent on external content. In other words, its claim of "freedom in thought" remained inconclusive due to its dependence on the content of thought. In addition, the argument that "the criterion of reality is thought" could not go beyond an empty judgment, since this claim has no equivalent in the practical world. The fact that Stoic thought has no counterpart in the practical determinations of life has brought up the issue of whether the principles created by it are compatible with reality. And given that it is an inward consciousness, whether thought is the criterion of reality remains a question that the Stoic consciousness cannot answer with content.

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