SHPRS UNDERGRADUATE DIGITAL HUMANITIES JOURNAL

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The SHPRS Undergraduate Digital Humanities Journal is a student-run publication that holds pieces from historical, philosophical, and religious studies. It is housed under Arizona State University's School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies. The journal serves as an opportunity for ASU undergraduate students to submit their research work from classes or outside research they have done in the past. Submissions for papers are taken in fall and spring, and the editor team of the journal reviews and chooses the submissions to be published in the journal. The publication is free of cost to access and view. The opinions mentioned in the papers do not reflect the opinions of SHPRS Undergraduate Digital Humanities Journal or the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies. If you have any questions or are interested in submitting your work for the fall semester, please email us at shprsdighumanitiesjournal@gmail.com .

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KYLAN FEDJE, CLASS OF 2022

Hailing from Indianapolis, Indiana, Kylan Fedje is in his third year at ASU and is majoring in History with a minor in Spanish. As a student in Barrett, the Honors College, he's currently working on his undergraduate thesis on the history of Pokémon and the Pokémon fandom. After graduating, Kylan hopes to pursue a career in museum curation. He would currently like to study pop culture history professionally, but he also enjoys studying the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime. Outside of his academic interests, he loves all forms of storytelling and occasionally writes fiction in his spare time.

LEVI SMITH, CLASS OF 2021

Levi Smith graduated from ASU in the Fall of 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and a minor in History. His main philosophical areas of interest are theories of epistemic justification, ontological fundamentality, and personal identity. His main historical interests are the Protestant Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the first World War. Levi is currently planning on continuing to study philosophy in graduate school and aspires to publish more articles on epistemology. Levi lives in Seattle and spends his free time watching historical documentaries, collecting comic books, and visiting the area's many coffee shops.

ARIANNA FIANDACA, CLASS OF 2022

Arianna Fiandaca is a History BA student planning to graduate in May 2022. During her time as an undergraduate student at ASU, she has also completed an Art History minor and Secondary Education certificate. Arianna currently teaches Pre-AP World History at Saguaro High School in Scottsdale, Arizona. Her research interests include Egyptian history, medieval European history, and early American history. She is especially interested in the field of Secondary History Education and hopes to aid in the evolution of history instruction. Her future plans include attending ASU for a MA in History, with hopes of pursuing a PhD.

JACK DREWSEN, CLASS OF 2023

Jack is a third-year Philosophy student who is also studying Biological Sciences. He currently volunteers for ASU's SHOW program and conducts research through the School of Life Sciences that focuses on healthcare treatment disparities across the world. As of this year, he is also a verified Spotify artist. His favorite topics in philosophy are definitely metaphysics and existentialism! After Jack graduates, he hopes to attend medical school to pursue a career in healthcare, which has been his dream for as long as he can remember.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to our second publication of the SHPRS Undergraduate Digital Humanities Journal! We are thrilled to announce our release of our Fall 2021 edition of the Digital Humanities Journal.

The SHPRS Undergraduate Digital Humanities Journal is housed under the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies at ASU. The planning of the journal came underway over the summer of 2020 and the recruitment of editors occurred during fall of 2020.

We put out a call for submissions this past semester, and received about 15 submissions focusing on history, philosophy, and religious studies. Thank you to all of you who expressed interest and took their time to submit their work.

First, we start off with Kylan Fedje's piece on Hollywood Censorship. The paper delves into the history behind Hollywood censorship and how the different codes of conduct have driven self-censorship in the movie industry. In 1930, Hollywood adopted the Motion Picture Production Code, also referred to as the Hay's Code. This code limited the creativity and liberty of the film industry for four decades.

This semester, our two philosophy papers focus on the theory of time and on epistemological justification. Levi Smith responds to the contextualist's solution to the global skeptic's possibility of error argument. Contextualists answer the skeptic's argument that if there is a chance a belief could be mistaken then it is not epistemically justified by saying that the epistemic standard we have for justification is dependent upon context, but, Levi argues, the likelihood of the possibility of error remains constant even for the contextualist.

Russia's icons are a focus of Arianna's paper. This paper looks into the deeper meaning of icons and the role that it plays in the Russian Revolution. Icons played a key role in various different social classes throughout Russia as well as highlighting the significance of religion. The paper also focuses on the lasting cultural and social impact that icons have on Russian society.

Jack Drewsen uses recent findings in the field of quantum physics to respond to Carl Yehezel's claim that it is impossible to experience the passage of time. Jack suggests that it is possible for us to "spontaneously apprehend information" and have an experience in which time does not pass.

We hope you all enjoy these insightful and deep pieces that delve into topics that have been influential in our global world today. Each of the pieces highlight and showcase influential events throughout our history. We want to thank the authors for taking the opportunity to have their work recognized and the time to meet with our editors to finalize their papers.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We want to extend our thanks to Dr. Katherine Osburn in supporting and overseeing the journal as well as guiding us through the process. Our team is gratified to have the support of the SHPRS Social Media team in advertising our journal and promoting our work. We are truly grateful for it.

I also want to thank my editor team who has worked late nights in editing the submissions and working with our selected submissions in improving and making respective edits to their work. I appreciate all your efforts and work you have put into making the journal come out well!

Sincerely,

Anusha Natarajan
Editor-in-chief

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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO RANDOLPH SCOTT: THE HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD CENSORSHIP

Kylan Fedje

Abstract: In response to demands for the early film industry to cleanse itself of its perceived moral failings, Hollywood adopted the Motion Picture Production Code in 1930 as a means of self-censorship to adhere to a certain moral code of conduct in films. This code, often referred to as the Hays Code, was enforced by the Production Code Administration for nearly four decades until it was replaced by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings system that we have today. This essay presents the history of Hollywood self-censorship, examining what forces brought it into being, how it changed over the years under pressures from both within the industry and without, and what effects it had on the films produced by Hollywood during this time. It argues that the Hays Code's ultimate failure was its rigid nature and heavy reliance on interpretive enforcement, and that its replacement with the MPAA ratings system has more or less liberated the industry and allowed it to tell stories in new and innovative ways that would not have been possible under the Hays Code.

Keywords: Hollywood, Production Code Administration, Hays Code, Censorship, MPAA ratings system

I. Introduction

In 1974, the country music quartet of Don and Harold Reid, Phil Balsley, and Lew DeWitt, known as The Statler Brothers, released the song "Whatever Happened to Randolph Scott." The song waxes nostalgic about the Hollywood of the band's youth and adolescence, when the stars of the silver screen were gunslinging cowboys astride their majestic horses on the wild frontier. The band sings of how: "Everybody knows when you go to the show you can't take the kids along / You've gotta read the paper and know the code of GPG [sic] and R and X / And you gotta know what the movie's about before you even go / Tex Ritter's gone and Disney's dead and the screen is filled with sex." The song's final chorus ends with the line: "Whatever happened to Randolph Scott has happened to the industry."[1] While the lyrics do not make it immediately evident, what the Brothers were singing about was the replacement of the Motion Picture Production Code, also called the Hays Code, with the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) rating system. Where the Hays Code actively censored the content of films produced and distributed within the United States, the new MPAA system instead prescribed a rating somewhere on the scale of G, PG, R, and X that advised on how appropriate the film's content was for different audiences.

For those who were of the same mind as The Statler Brothers, this was indicative of a moral decline in the industry; no more were the days of family outings to the picture house. Now, Hollywood's finest were free to swear, drink, smoke, and screw as much as they always had, but now they could film it and screen it as they pleased. The extent to which this is true is a subject of much debate. The changes to the industry that caused and were brought about by this transition are numerous and complex. While the Hays Code was Hollywood's first successful and most extreme attempt at self-censorship, much of its effects can still be felt in the industry today. Even though the MPAA rating system that exists today is less severe, the industry is still influenced by many of the same conservative and religious principles that dictated the adoption and implementation of the Hays Code before it.

II. Hollywood Before the Code

The Hays Code was born of the outrage directed towards the film industry as it boomed in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The advent of synchronized sound in feature films with Warner Bros' *The Jazz Singer* (1927) heralded a new era for cinema: the "talkies." Sound had almost always been a part of the filmgoing experience, but it wasn't until *The Jazz Singer* that dialogue, score, foley, and singing had been synchronized with the images on screen for a feature film. The film was a critical and commercial success, and Hollywood quickly abandoned silent films in favor of this new and innovative manner of presentation. Talkies allowed filmmakers to tell more dynamic stories with their craft. They no longer needed to cut away from the action to an inter title that told the audience what the actors were saying, or that helped fill them in on where the characters were. Now, the actors could speak to audiences in their own voices, with their own personalities and their own inflections. But as talkies swept the nation, resistance to their place as a dominant form of popular media did so as well.

The film industry had been plagued by scandal throughout the whole of the 1920s. Both on and off the screen, industry professionals from actors to writers to directors were infamous for their often boisterous and occasionally illegal behavior. Hollywood was a land of rebels—those who balked at tradition—and they were becoming a major player in the culture of the country. Conservative legislatures across the country saw their growing influence as a threat to their cultural hegemony and sought to censor the burgeoning film industry before too much damage could be done. Historians Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons wrote of the time: "In 1921 alone, solons in thirty-seven states introduced nearly one hundred bills designed to censor motion pictures."[2] These legislators, largely informed by their Christian values and conservative upbringings, wanted the film industry to reflect the America they knew, not the one it was becoming. This was a time when the speakeasy was becoming the beacon of American culture. Jazz music was quickly gaining favor, and the country seemed to be swinging to a new rhythm. But as is evidenced by the conservative backlash to the cultural insurgency of Hollywood, any radical cultural change is inevitably met with resistance. As for the cause of this change, Leff and Simmons describe it as such: "In the late teens of the twentieth century, America lost

her innocence. The Great War not only tarnished her ideals but cast doubt on her national goals. Painters and poets, reporters and Rotarians, laborers and politicians—all experienced the bitter aftershock of the war. Some turned to God, some to pessimism, and some, especially in Hollywood, to the hot-cha-cha." [3]As such, the film industry faced a serious dilemma throughout the whole of the decade: continue with business as usual and risk censorship from external government bodies or censor themselves and save them from any more of the public relations troubles that had already plagued them? Many within the industry were opposed to either option, seeing any censorship at all as compromising their artistic freedom. Most others favored the latter. The question then was: who would be the one to bridge the divide between the clashing personalities of young Hollywood? Enter Will Hays.

Born in Sullivan, Indiana in 1879, Hays would go on to serve as the chair of the Republican National Committee and later as President Warren G. Harding's Postmaster General. He resigned from his cabinet position in 1922 to assume the title of "Chairman of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America" (MPPDA), the organization that would eventually become the MPAA. The organization was created to improve the image of Hollywood after several scandals relating to the personal lives of some of the industry's biggest stars took over the headlines, and under mounting pressure from religious groups for federal censorship of films. Hays' background in Republican politics, as well as his past as a Presbyterian deacon, established his bona fides as the man who would clean up Hollywood. To that end, Hays wanted first and foremost to pull the film industry's image out from the gutter where he had found it. At the time, censorship of films varied from state to state. What was allowed in one state would be cut in another. [4] This resulted in films being constantly cut and retooled to fit with several different sets of laws and moral customs. As the industry grew more and more lucrative, and investment from Wall Street and other conservative coin-coffers increased, it became clear that some degree of moral oversight was needed to keep the industry from collapsing under the weight of its own reputation.

In order to correct the industry's image, Hays developed the "Formula," a list of guidelines to prevent "objectionable plays and novels from being produced as films." [5] He based his rules on the patterns he observed in the cuts made by regional censor boards. The "Formula" was somewhat effective in sanitizing Hollywood's image, but as it depended on the voluntary cooperation of studios, it never quite took hold as Hays had intended. This was in 1924, and later in 1927, Hays introduced the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls," which codified many of the demands made by censorship boards, as the "Formula" was crafted without direct knowledge of said boards' policies.[6] This new set of rules, however, failed for many of the same reasons as the ones before it: voluntary compliance led many studios to interpret the rules as they saw fit, and the backlash to the industry's output only grew as a result.

Prior to the 1930s, calls for Hollywood censorship from outside the industry had largely been

It was not until the late 1920s that small groups of Catholic laymen decided that the industry was in need of regulation and that it was their duty to ensure that. Martin Quigley, owner and publisher of the film industry trade paper *The Motion Picture Herald* and staunch Catholic, believed that the MPPDA under Hays could regulate Hollywood on its own without the need for government oversight. In 1929, he began formulating ideas for how the industry could clean itself up with a strict code of behavior, in collaboration with Jesuit priest Father Daniel Lord. The two would go on to collaborate with Quigley's own priest, Father FitzGeorge Dinneen; active lay Catholic and future director of the Production Code Administration Joe Breen; and Father Wilfred Parsons, the editor of the Catholic publication America, in crafting the set of principles that would guide the creation of the Hays Code. In 1934, the Motion Picture Production Code was adopted by the MPPDA, and the Association's Studio Relations office was converted to the Production Code Administration under the direction of Joe Breen. What set the new Code apart from the previous attempts at industry self-regulation were its well-defined enforcement mechanisms. Studios would be fined $25,000 for releasing a print of a film that violated the Code, the equivalent of roughly $500,000 today when adjusted for inflation. Association members were also barred from screening any films that lacked the Production Code seal of approval.[7] Without a theatrical release, a studio's film would be dead in the water.

III. Censorship Woes

For Hollywood producers, the new rules posed the most significant challenge to date to their existing business model. One of the biggest stars in the years leading up to the Code's adoption was Mae West, who had already established herself as a household name by her emphasis on sex and female sexuality in her Broadway productions before moving over to screen acting. Her play, *Diamond Lil,* was a smash hit when it debuted on Broadway in 1928, touring well into 1929.[8] Hollywood producers eyed it as an excellent opportunity to infuse some sex appeal and easy money into their production schedule, but even then, they knew censors would come down hard on such a risqué and sexually charged adaptation. In the fall of 1932, *Diamond Lil* was added to Paramount's tentative production lineup.[9] The following months for the studio were characterized by a near-constant back-and-forth between Paramount producers and the MPPDA's Studio Relations Office. As it became clear that any direct adaptation of the play would need to be heavily censored should it even have a chance at gracing the silver screen, West, John Bright, and other screenwriters began work on *She Done Him Wrong*, which Leff and Simmons describe as essentially *Diamond Lil* by another name.[10] *She Done Him Wrong* went into production in late 1932 and released in January 1933 after significant revision from the Studio Relations Office, ensuring that the film did not resemble *Diamond Lil* too closely for regional censor boards.

Ultimately, the film was allowed to be released under the condition that the original play was not to be referenced in any of the marketing for the film. Upon its release, the film generated a great deal of

outrage among conservative and Christian critics. Father Lord and his allies were particularly horrified, and he wrote to Hays to say that he had drafted the Code to prevent such films from ever being made. After Hays dismissed his concerns, citing positive fan and critic responses to the film, Lord organized a youth boycott of the film. Protests against the film emerged across the country. In Atlanta, *She Done Him Wrong* was banned. In Haverhill, Massachusetts, the local clergy derided West as "demoralizing, disgusting, suggestive, and indecent." [11] West was a provocateur, no doubt, and her predilections for double entendre made her a target for censorship advocates everywhere.

As far as West's career was concerned, however, those in favor of censoring the types of films she produced would not have to wait long; the adoption of the Production Code quickly fizzled her star from a red giant to a white dwarf. This was the exact intent of the Code's authors, as historian Gregory D. Black explains:

> Although the code is most often discussed as a document that prohibited nudity, required married couples to sleep in twin beds, and effectively ruined the movie career of that saucy favorite Mae West, its authors intended it to control much more. Lord and his colleagues shared a common objective with Protestant film reformers: They all wanted entertainment films to emphasize that the church, the government, and the family were the cornerstones of an orderly society and that success and happiness resulted from respecting and working in this system. [12]

From this, it is evident that the people behind the Code's creation firmly believed that the film industry ought to be reined in, that its output should be retooled to abide by more conservative sensibilities regarding the acceptance of society as is, and that films should not challenge societal norms in any way that matters. Black continues to explain the religious roots of these attitudes and their context with regards to the law and to government:

> They believed that entertainment films should reinforce religious teachings that deviant behavior, whether criminal or sexual, costs violators the love and comforts of home, the intimacy of family, the solace of religion, and the protection of law. In short, they believed films should be twentieth century morality plays that illustrated proper behavior to the masses. [13]

Upon reading the text of the Production Code, as adopted in 1930, it would appear that they had been successful in achieving their stated goals. After a short preamble, the Code begins by outlining the "General Principles" upon which the Code's foundation is built. These principles are:

1. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.[14]

The Code follows this declaration of principles with a section of "Particular Applications," which enumerates all that the Code prohibits in more specific detail. This section is divided into different sections, each with subsections that describe what of that section is prohibited or limited. These sections are:

- Crimes against the law
- Sex
- Vulgarity
- Obscenity
- Dances
- Profanity
- Costume
- Religion
- National feelings
- Titles
- Repellent subjects

Certain specific content banned by these categories include but are not limited to:

- Miscegenation
- Illegal drug traffic
- "Sex perversion"
- White-slavery (sex trafficking)
- Obscenity
- Pointed profanity
- Complete nudity
- The ridicule of religion. [15]

To its credit, the Code was not a purely black-and-white document in its censorship. Certain crimes like robbery, arson, and the use of firearms were permitted, though they could not be depicted in extensive detail. Other acts that would otherwise be objectionable like the use of liquor, adultery, "scenes of

passion," and seduction or rape were permissible so long as they are necessary to the plot.[16] From reading the text of the Code, one can easily identify its roots in the particularly American brand of conservative Christian values. But that can only tell so much about the Code's effects on the industry. And with an industry as lucrative and personality centric as Hollywood, the nascent Production Code was bound to meet with considerable resistance.

IV. Cracks Begin to Show: *Gone With the Wind* and *The Outlaw*

The history of the Code's greatest impacts on the industry begins not in 1930 with its adoption but rather in 1934 with the establishment of the Production Code Administration (PCA) under the leadership of Joe Breen. With the MPPDA's headquarters located in New York city, a continent away from the center of film production in Los Angeles, Breen would serve as the liaison between the producers and the censors. He would be the one responsible for making sure the films Hollywood produced adhered to the Code as closely as possible. This would not be an easy job, and he would have to compromise and allow content that might otherwise hit the cutting room floor. One such example is the production of the film *Gone With the Wind*.

Based on the 1936 book by Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* is one of the most iconic films in the history of cinema. As the highest-grossing film of all time when adjusted for inflation, the film holds a significant place in the legacy of the industry. Its path to that point was not an easy one, however. The production was fraught even before the cameras started rolling on the first day of filming. The process of taking the lengthy novel and turning it into a film of reasonable length was difficult enough—producer David Selznick wanted screenwriter Sidney Howard to trim the fat and omit certain expendable plot points, like Scarlett O'Hara's marriage to Frank Kennedy—but most challenging of all was preserving the novel's salacious scenes while still meeting the PCA's censorship standards. After Selznick submitted the first draft of the screenplay to Breen's office in October 1937, Breen created a list of the material the Code and local censorship boards would find objectionable. Leff and Simmons summarize these points as such:

> He cautioned Selznick, Howard, and [director George] Cukor against the "undue exposure" of Scarlett during the dressing scenes, against the characters making the sign of the cross (a sore point with the British Board [of Film Censors]), against the close shots of the dead and dying. He told them to cool Rhett down; Captain Butler should not want Scarlett, he should think more of her. Likewise, however down-at-the-heels she became, Scarlett should not offer her body to Rhett in exchange for the money to restore Tara. [17]

The task of faithfully adapting Mitchell's novel while also abiding by the rules of the Code seemed insurmountable. A flurry of writers were brought in over the course of pre-production to rewrite and revise the script. At times, Selznick took it upon himself to rework whole sections of the film. Eventually, only Howard would receive any official credit for the screenplay. Of the film's pre-production woes, however, none would be more important in hindsight than the battle over its now iconic final line, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn." The Code stated that "pointed profanity or vulgar expressions, however used, are forbidden."[18]Seeing as the line indeed included pointed profanity, Selznick needed to convince Breen to break the rules he was being paid to enforce should the line be kept in the final cut. For months, Breen refused to budge. Replacement footage was shot where Clark Gable, as Rhett Butler, read the line as "My dear, I don't care," in case Selznick was unsuccessful in convincing the PCA to allow his "damn" line in the final cut. Breen's decision to axe "damn" was appealed to the MPPDA, where production company executives and independent producers agreed to let the "damn" line stay. Fearing retribution from censorship hounds within the US Justice Department, the Production Code was amended to ban the use of "damn" and "hell" except when their use:

> Shall be essential and required for portrayal, in proper historical context, of any scene or dialogue based upon historical fact or folklore, or for the presentation in proper literary context of a Biblical, or other religious quotation, or a quotation from a literary work provided that no such use shall be permitted which is intrinsically objectionable or offends good taste. [19]

The "*Gone With the Wind rule*" as it's often called was added specifically to allow Selznick to include the line in the film while not breaching the terms of the Code. Industry legend tells that Selznick was fined $5,000 for the "damn" line, but given the rewriting of the Production Code to allow for the line's inclusion, this is likely just another part of the myriad of myths surrounding the already fabled production of one of Hollywood's most lucrative films.

What the "damn" saga in the production of *Gone With the Wind* proved was that the Code that Hays wrote was not impervious to attack. With the right pressures, applied by the right people at the right time and in the right places, the Code could be molded, if not broken. Leave it then to maverick filmmaker and aviator Howard Hughes to truly test the durability of the Hays Code with his independent production *The Outlaw*.

Figure 1: Poster for *The Outlaw* (1943)

Based on the life of infamous outlaw and Western icon Billy the Kid, *The Outlaw* was finished and granted the Production Code seal of approval in 1941 (after several cuts were made to reduce the amount of on-screen cleavage exhibited by lead actress Jane Russel) but did not premiere until 1943. But with an advertising campaign that placed Russell's sex appeal at the forefront—posters often prominently featured Russell in loose-fitting clothing, sometimes more prominently than the titular outlaw (Fig.1)—the film was sure to generate controversy upon its release. For his part, Hughes wanted to play into that aspect of the film as much as he could. He deliberately did not submit the film's advertising materials to the PCA for approval. This incensed both the PCA and the MPPDA, as a film that bore the Production Code seal was to have both its content and its marketing approved by the Code office; Hughes had neglected to comply with the latter.[20] After years of struggling to get his film playing in theaters, netting a few short runs that made headlines but generated little financial gain, Hughes received news that would send his attempt at upending the Code careening off of a cliff. On September 6, 1946, the PCA withdrew the seal from *The Outlaw.*[21] While this did not preclude theaters from screening the film, many theaters remained reluctant to screen films that lacked the Administration's seal of approval. This was a time when many of the major theater chains were owned or operated by production studios. As such, the looming specter of external government regulation replacing internal self-censorship frightened enough studios into abiding by the Code's terms, limiting the number of unapproved films that could be screened. As Peter Dart puts it, "Removal of the seal, then, was tantamount to removal of the picture from theatres controlled by the major studios." [22] By all accounts, it would appear that the Code's Catholic creators had succeeded in their desire to "clean up" the industry. The Code's word was essentially gospel, and any film released without Joe Breen's approval would be dead in the water.

While this episode may have sunk *The Outlaw's* chances at box office gold, it nevertheless struck a nerve within the industry. The cracks that had begun to show with the release of films like *Gone With the Wind* were beginning to grow. Over the years, filmmakers would continue to test the bounds of the Hays Code. The Code would be rewritten and reinterpreted several times over, depending on what inflection point the latest spirited writer, director, or producer wanted to test, but the Code would not yet break — that is, not until the late 1960s.

V. The Death of the Code and the Birth of the Ratings System

By the time of the release of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1966, the MPPDA had been renamed and reorganized into the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and the Code was a far cry from what it had once been. Virginia Woolf was quite a faithful retelling of the stage play from which it had been adapted, vulgar language, violence, and all. The PCA, now under the direction of Geoff Shurlock after Breen's passing in 1965, only reluctantly granted the film the seal with a carefully worded exemption:

> 1. The film was not designed to be prurient. This film document dealing with the tragic realism of life is largely a reproduction of the Edward Albee play, which won the New York Drama Critics Award in 1963 and has played throughout the country.
> 2. Warner Brothers has taken the position that no person under eighteen will be admitted unless accompanied by a parent…
> 3. …This exemption does not mean that the floodgates are open for language or other material… [23]

While the last point may have made it seem that this exemption would be a one-time occurrence, that sentiment would not hold true. In September 1966, the MPAA board began the transition away from the hard censorship of the Hays Code over to an advisory ratings system with the introduction of the "Suggested for Mature Audiences" (SMA) label for certain films.[24] When, in the wake of this policy change, full frontal nudity came back to the big screen (from major studios) after a nearly four-decade hiatus, it was immediately clear that the times were changing. Following the monumental decision to eschew many of the constraints of the Hays Code, 1967 became a benchmark year for the industry. As historian Thomas Doherty puts it:

> Many of the films in the 1967 vintage packed a wallop that could come only from transgressing conventions etched in concrete since 1934. Suddenly, Code-reared babies were thrust into free-range adulthood. Anyone who saw these movies with a crowd back in the day will recall the wild, stunned, or shattered reaction to an unprecedented scene, the jarring impact of being totally bushwhacked by something never before seen or heard on screen. [25]

Films like *Bonnie and Clyde* and *In Cold Blood* shattered conventions and ushered in the period of filmmaking known as "New Hollywood." By June 1968, these New Hollywood filmmakers had all but eviscerated the Code of Old Hollywood's heyday. The MPAA decided on August 9, 1968 to finally abandon the antiquated Hays Code and replace it with a classification system not too dissimilar from the one familiar to filmgoing audiences today. The Production Code Administration, having been rebranded to the Motion Picture Code and Rating Administration, was no longer responsible for sanitizing the pictures. Now, it was their responsibility to classify every film that came before them into one of four categories: G, for general audiences; P, for parental discretion (later PG, for parental guidance); R, for restricted; and X, where no one under the age of eighteen would be permitted.[26] Thus, the Hays Code finally met its end. After nearly four decades of consistent Code enforcement, Hollywood had finally broken free of its self-imposed shackles. Now, filmmakers could more freely manifest their vision on the screen; it was up to audiences to decide, based on the rating given by the MPAA, whether or not the content of a film would be appropriate for them. And in the volatile cultural and political climate of the late 1960s, a little more flexibility in entertainment was exactly what the country needed.

1968 itself was a tumultuous year for the United States, even beyond the Hollywood hullabaloo surrounding the Code's decimation. The assassination of Democratic presidential candidate Senator Robert F. Kennedy mere months after the assassination of civil rights icon Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. rocked the nation. The anti-war movement was gaining steam and images of violent confrontations between police and student protestors headlined newspapers and saturated the airwaves. As Bob Dylan famously sang in his 1965 song, "the times they [were] a-changin'."[27] America was challenging the social and moral norms that defined the Code. If Hollywood wanted to remain the barometer of popular culture, it would need to adapt in order to survive. Thus, they determined that the Code needed to die. However, more time was needed to fully exorcise its persisting influence on the industry, even after the rise of "New Hollywood" filmmakers.

VI. A Liberated Hollywood and the Rise of the Blockbuster

The introduction of the MPAA rating system brought with it a whole host of new challenges for the matured film industry. Would audiences be receptive to the more lenient guidelines put forth by the ratings system? While it is now considered one of the most reputable films of the early ratings era, Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* was the subject of much controversy upon its release in 1972. The film prominently features full frontal nudity, both male and female, including several depictions of rape, in addition to a plethora of other violence and drug use, all of which is committed by the protagonist, Alex, who also narrates much of the film.[28] The film initially received an X rating, but that was brought down to an R after Kubrick trimmed roughly thirty seconds of sexually explicit scenes and replaced them with footage that

would be less controversial.[29] Needless to say, a film like *A Clockwork Orange* could never have been made under the Hays Code.

While the film does not present Alex's actions as morally correct, it does not give a definitive statement on the morality of his (or any of the story's principal actors for that matter) actions. This grey area, one that would not have existed as easily under the Production Code, is where *A Clockwork Orange* received the most backlash. One critic, John Nordquist, writing in the magazine *The Alternative*, describes the film as a "technical masterpiece." He writes: "There can be no questioning of its cinemagraphic brilliance. The images are masterfully chosen and presented. Stanley Kubrick must rank with Russell and Fellini as a genius of powerful visual [sic] imagery. Lighting, camera work, color, sound, and casting are all flawless."[30] But he does not hold back in decrying the film's content as obscene. In discussing his belief that the film might inspire others to mimic Alex's criminal activity, Nordquist writes: "Obviously then, this is a film which should not be seen. By anyone. We fool ourselves when, in our sophistication, we imagine that we are the exception; that because of our superior intellect, stability, moral strength, or what have you we can handle it. We can't. No one can."[31] Nordquist does not, however, conclude that the film ought to be censored. While *A Clockwork Orange* was not without its controversy, reviews like Nordquist's prove that the kind of religious zealotry that had spurned the Code's creation back in 1930 was not as strong in 1972 as it had been then. The nation had changed. Hollywood had changed. The position of the religious conservatives who had once successfully lobbied the film industry into strict self-censorship had been significantly weakened, and now Hollywood could try to stretch its legs.

The initial influx of films that pushed the envelope of what was considered acceptable in the immediate aftermath of the Code's demise did not result in the commercial success that the Code's breakers might have envisioned. It wasn't until the release of up-and-coming director Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* in 1975 that Hollywood found a business model that worked: the blockbuster. Film historian Charles Acland writes that the term "blockbuster" has its origins as a nickname for the large-scale bombs used during the Second World War; it wouldn't be until the 1950s that it was first used to describe films that were financially successful. He acknowledges that Jaws' release was a watershed moment for the industry and a catalyst for the explosion of blockbuster cinema that would characterize the following decades of Hollywood film production.[32] What the blockbuster did for the industry was create a model where filmmakers no longer needed to rely on controversy to net a positive return on investment. Now, there was a clear market for films that banked on spectacle in a non-provocative way to become a critical and commercial success.

The blockbuster boom can be credited largely to the abandonment of the Hays Code and its replacement with the ratings system. The degree of suspense and horror present in a film like *Jaws*, which gripped audiences everywhere, would not necessarily have been possible ten or more years

prior under the Production Code. The ratings system not only allowed filmmakers the flexibility to make the films they wanted to make, but also gave audiences the comfort of knowing what to expect from their films. *Jaws'* PG rating let parents know that the content might not be suitable for children, and that they ought to check what issues they might encounter should they decide to bring their children along to the movies.

The PG rating itself would not be infallible forever. Now, audiences are familiar with a different rating that did not exist at the time of *Jaws*' creation (though it may very well have applied to the film if it had): PG-13. The PG-13 rating was created in 1984 following the release of the films *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* and *Gremlins*. The films were given a PG rating after their respective submissions to the MPAA, but were both met with criticism upon their respective releases for their darker tones that seemed unbecoming of films bearing PG ratings. Spielberg, the director of the former and producer of the latter, suggested the creation of a new rating to the then-president of the MPAA, Jack Valenti. R would have been too harsh for films like *Temple of Doom* and *Gremlins*, but PG seemed too soft. Thus, PG-13 was born.

Over the years, PG and PG-13 became the target rating for filmmakers looking to have their work become a blockbuster hit. The G rating was often given to films targeted at family audiences. For example, every animated Disney film released during the era known as the "Disney Renaissance" (from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) to *Tarzan* (1999)) received a G rating. While they were all critical and commercial successes, other films released in that time that bore PG-13 ratings soared to the top of the list of highest-grossing films of all time. Namely, Spielberg's 1993 smash hit *Jurassic Park* and James Cameron's 1997 film *Titanic* would both end up topping the list by decade's end. *Jurassic Park* would top the record Spielberg had previously set with *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) with an estimated $870 million worldwide gross in its first year in theaters.[33] As for *Titanic*, it would claim the title of the first film to gross more than one billion dollars in 1998, only to be topped by Cameron's own *Avatar* (2009) over a decade later.[34] The PG/PG-13 blockbuster formula had become the industry standard by the turn of the century. This trend would continue into the present day, though with a slightly different flavor from that of the decades prior.

Blockbuster films like *Independence Day* (1996) made their bank on the spectacle of cities being leveled by unstoppable alien invaders. Iconic American buildings like the Empire State Building, the White House, and the Capitol building were depicted being exploded in an instant, all for the sheer spectacle of it. Disaster movies like these were relatively commonplace in the 1990s. However, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the film industry, along with the rest of American society, took a sharp turn away from what it once had been. Science fiction author and video essayist Lindsay Ellis discusses this phenomenon by comparing *Independence Day* to *War of the Worlds* (2005).

While both films deal with the subject of an alien invasion, they approach their subject matter in notably different ways. To borrow from her analysis, the kind of city-wide destruction seen in *Independence Day* could not work in a post-9/11 America. It would feel all too real. This does not mean that director Steven Spielberg shies away from alluding to 9/11 in *War of the Worlds*; in one scene, protagonist Ray Ferrier is depicted covered in dust after the initial alien invasion, an image that strikingly resembles many of those broadcasted on television screens everywhere in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center.[35] What this change in presentation demonstrates is the film industry responding to changing cultural perceptions, something that would not have been as easily accomplished under the Hays Code. Hollywood was able to adjust its approach to storytelling within the bounds of the ratings system by giving filmmakers control of their own self-censorship, instead of handing it over to an administrator, largely separated from the filmmaking process, to decide what content would be allowed in their films.

VII. The Successes and Failures of the Ratings Era

The rating system has not been without fault, however. For much of its early history, many of the Hays Code's attitudes towards certain types of content persisted. Under the Hays Code, depictions of gender and sexuality that deviated from the cisheteronormative attitudes of the Code's authors and enforcers were almost entirely prohibited.[36] Characters that deviated from this norm were to be cast as villainous, lest the audience begin to feel sympathy for LGBT+ characters. One famous example of this phenomenon is Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*. The film depicts Norman Bates as a man who cross-dresses as a woman when he murders young women who stay at the motel he owns and operates.[37] Many critics have read his character as a depiction of a transgender character in Code-era cinema, albeit not a terribly sympathetic one. Lindsay Ellis is one of these critics, covering this trend more broadly in her video essay "Tracing the Roots of Pop Culture Transphobia," in which she discusses Hollywood's tendency to depict gender non-conforming characters as mentally ill individuals who will kill to cope with their sexual frustrations.[38] As she explains, the trope of "transgender" killers continued long after the end of the Hays Code, most notably in the horror classic *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), in which the main villain kidnaps women and skins them in order to create a suit of female skin to wear so he might become a woman himself. Gender non-conforming characters like these are often conflated with homosexuality, and the persistence of this trope past the death of the Hays Code demonstrates how the replacement of strict censorship with a voluntary rating system did not solve every issue inherent in the film industry's handling of previously taboo subjects. Depictions of LGBT+ characters have notably improved over the years, both as a response to and an encouraging factor in social change that has led to greater acceptance of LGBT+ individuals. While the ratings system did not necessarily encourage this change, it did not inhibit it either.

In comparing the effects of self-censorship under the Hays Code and under the ratings system, it is

important to look at how these systems have affected the film industry financially. As has been previously stated, any film that did not receive approval from the Production Code Administration was a guaranteed failure. Now, however, any film released with an MPAA rating has an equal chance to be successful. Or do they? An analysis performed by David M. Waguespack and Olav Sorensen demonstrates that films released between 1992 and 2006 that received PG and PG-13 ratings generated, on average, 76% more revenue than films with an R rating. [39] Because the blockbuster model has been so historically dependent on PG and PG-13 ratings, having a film be rated R is seen as a kiss of death by some. As such, directors and producers might edit their scripts and their films to meet the criteria for a PG-13 rating if it would otherwise receive an R. This trend, however, seems to be fading. Recently, R-rated films like *Deadpool* (2016) and *Joker* (2019) have become highly successful films financially, with the latter being the first R-rated film to gross over one billion dollars worldwide. [40] This, however, could be attributed more to these two films falling into the comic book genre, a genre which has proven to be monumentally successful in producing blockbuster hits in the past two decades. Still, an R rating is no longer the kiss of death it once was. It appears that Hollywood may finally have a system of self-censorship that allows filmmakers the flexibility to create as they please, while ensuring they remain mindful of audience attitudes towards certain types of films and certain content.

VIII. Conclusion

While the Randolph Scotts of the industry may have fallen out of favor with the end of the Hays Code, that is not to say that the spirit they embodied does not persist to this day. Particularly within the superhero genre, audiences are regularly treated to stories of larger than life heroes locked in a near-constant battle between good and evil. Nevertheless, something of the "golden years" of the Hays Code and Old Hollywood was indeed lost when the ratings system took over. In the Hollywood of today, filmmakers are much more free to experiment not only with how stories are told thanks to innovations in technology, but also what kinds of stories are told due to the advent of the ratings system and the death of the Code. Furthermore, by allowing audiences more freedom to determine for themselves whether or not a film's content is appropriate, the industry has been rewarded with both critical and commercial success in new genres and styles that could not have been possible under the strict censorship of the Hays Code. Hollywood and the ratings system of today is not perfect. The consolidation of the industry into a select few massive studios has limited the diversity of creative expression allowed in wide-release films. However, the history presented here shows that with the right pressure from the right people in the right places and at the right times, changes have occurred and will continue to occur as long as the cameras stay rolling and the money keeps flowing.

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PROTECTING THE EPISTEMIC STANDARD

Levi Smith

Abstract: Global skepticism is the belief that it is universally impossible to reach the epistemic standard of knowledge. The most common form of global skepticism is the possibility of error argument which states that if there is a chance a belief could be mistaken then it is not epistemically justified, and since any belief about the external world could be mistaken, we thus have no knowledge about the external world. In response to the possibility of error argument contextualists argue that the epistemic standard we need for knowledge is dependent upon the context, and thus we can claim to have knowledge about the external world. In this paper, I will argue that contextualism does not adequately respond to the concerns made by global skeptics. My argument is warranted by the claim that a justified response to global skepticism must claim that because we understand said response our beliefs are less likely to be at error. Because our understanding of the likelihood of the possibility of error remains constant with a contextualist response, it is entailed that contextualism cannot be epistemically justified.

Keywords: Epistemology, Contextualism, Standard View of Epistemology, Global Skepticism, Robin McKenna, the Problem of Error, Cartesian Skepticism

I. Introduction to the Contextualist Resolution of Skepticism

The goal of this essay is to determine whether contextualism is an adequate response to the problem of global skepticism. Global skepticism is in summary the belief that it is universally impossible for anyone to be able to reach the epistemic standard of knowledge. I will exclusively focus on the possibility of error argument as my method to explain and endorse global skepticism. The possibility of error argument states that because there is a chance that any belief could be mistaken that therefore we have no knowledge about any belief. Contextualism is a response to global skepticism that in its most basic form argues that the required justification for knowledge is context driven and thus arguments of global skepticism do not possess the universal scope that global skeptics claim. After much analysis, I will conclude that contextualism does not adequately respond to the concerns raised by global skeptics. In order for contextualism to be epistemically justified, contextualism must increase our likelihood of understanding the external truth value of a belief which is questioned by global skepticism. But because the possibility of error in said belief remains externally constant—whether contextualism or global skepticism is correct—contextualism cannot be epistemically justified.

In section II of this essay, I will review all necessary background information, in section III I will analyze a contemporary argument for contextualism presented by Robin McKenna, in section IV I will present my objection to contextualism, and finally in section V I will present and rebut the likely objections that a contemporary contextualist would make against my argument.

II. Contextualism and Global Skepticism in Context

Global skepticism is fundamentally an argument which completely challenges the standard view of epistemology. The standard view of epistemology makes two primary claims; "We know a large variety of things" and "our primary sources of knowledge are perception, memory, testimony, introspection, reasoning, and rational insight."[1] Essentially, the standard view states that there are a variety of epistemic claims we can know, and we have a variety of methods to know said epistemic claims. Global skepticism states that "nobody knows anything at all … [it is a form of skepticism that] is universal in scope" and for this paper I will solely focus on skepticism from the view of the possibility of error argument which simply states that if there is a chance a belief could be mistaken then it is not justified as knowledge, and any belief about the external world could be mistaken, thus we have no knowledge about the external world.[2] The possibility of error argument has been a prominent argument for centuries, it was initially made popular by Descartes and many skeptics simply refer to said argument as "Cartesian skepticism."[3]

Compared to the problem of error, contextualism is a recent development in epistemology developed and popularized by philosophers such as Gail Stine (1976), Stewart Cohen (1988), and Keith DeRose (1992). The central idea of contextualism is that the epistemic "standard for applying the word 'knows' vary from one context to another."[4] Robin McKenna—a contemporary philosopher whose paper I will be analyzing at great length—defines contextualism as the stance that the "truth conditions of sentences of the form … 'S is justified in believing P" … depend on features of the conversational context … such as which error possibilities are salient, or how much is at stake."[5] The primary aim of contextualism is to defend the standard view by stating that the necessary amount of justification of knowledge is dependent upon the context of the statement. There are many different contextualist stances on how to determine what level of epistemic justification ought to be required, however I will ignore the specific varieties of contextualism as this essay will solely focus on analyzing the core similarities shared between all types of contextualist arguments.

This essay will focus on whether contextualism properly refutes global skepticism. I will not be analyzing whether global skepticism is a sound theory, but I will be analyzing whether contextualism is a sound rebuttal to global skepticism. Thus, if contextualism is determined to be true we ought to conclude that the standard view of epistemology is defendable against global skepticism, and for the purposes of this essay, if contextualism is false we ought to conclude that

the standard view of epistemology fails to respond to global skepticism.

III. An Overview of McKenna's Arguments for Contextualism

McKenna sets forward a highly appealing argument for those who are made uncomfortable by the thought of global skepticism by stating that the justification of knowledge varies based upon the circumstance.

McKenna states a very common argument for global skepticism for the purpose of using a framework to critique. His framework for global skepticism is a formal way of stating a specific example of the problem of error argument I discussed earlier, however you can substitute the words "brain in a vat" and "handless" to describe any object known empirically or mind externally. For the sake of consistency, McKenna's formalized version of the problem of error will be the definitive argument for global skepticism analyzed in this paper. Here is McKenna's rendition of the argument:

> "Premise 1: I don't know that I'm not a handless brain in a vat.
> Premise 2: If I don't know that I'm not a handless brain in a vat, then I don't know that I have hands.
> Conclusion: I don't know that I have hands."[6]

McKenna acknowledges that the argument is indeed valid and that the two premises seem obvious, however in order to combat this McKenna must refute one of the premises, McKenna states that "the contextualist says that the second premise is true in all contexts" however the contextualist will only claim that the first premise is true "in some contexts – contexts where skeptical hypotheses are up for discussion."[7] From a contextualist standpoint, the first premise would only be true in some circumstances, but not because you are absolutely certain in some circumstances that you are not a brain in a vat, but rather that the justification required to attain knowledge changes based upon the context of the evaluated statement.

McKenna gives a two-part analogy to justify how context can change the definition of knowledge or the justification required to attain knowledge depending on the urgency of the situation, the low urgency analogy says,

> "Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit a cheque. It's not important that they do so, as they have no impending bills. But, as they drive past the bank, they notice that the lines inside are very long. Realizing that it isn't very important that the cheque is deposited right away, Hannah says, 'I know that the bank will be open tomorrow. I was there just two weeks ago on Saturday morning. So, we can deposit our cheque tomorrow morning'.[8]

The first part of this analogy involves these characters doing an action with low priority, and because the act of taking their cheque to the bank is not urgent McKenna states that they are epistemically justified. Thus, contextualists consider the contextual factors of a situation—such as the pragmatic consequences—into account when determining whether the belief meets the epistemic standard of justification. The second part changes the situation to a more urgent situation and thus claims that the characters are less justified in their knowledge as urgent situations increase the epistemic standard of justification:

> Hannah and Sarah have an impending bill and very little in their account, so it's very important that they deposit their cheque by Saturday. Hannah notes that she was at the bank two weeks before on a Saturday morning, and it was open. But, as Sarah points out, banks do change their hours. Hannah says, 'I guess you're right. I don't know that the bank will be open tomorrow'. [9]

McKenna claims that "both Hannah's knowledge ascription and her 'knowledge' denial are intuitively appropriate" which from a commonsense viewpoint seems logical.[10] However, I believe strongly that the argument that McKenna describes equivocates two different types of normative statements relating to the word "justification." The only contextual difference between the two parts of the analogy is that in the first part Hannah is not rushed for time when in the second part Hannah is, thus there should be no difference in an epistemic justification so the epistemic normative statement should remain constant, however the difference is in urgency so the only difference must be in another type of normative statement. There are different types of normative statements that need justification in their own way however the justifications for different types of normative statements are not transitive.[11] For example, someone could say that it is ethically normative that "I ought to believe that my best friend is talented," however at the same time it may be epistemically normative to say, "I ought not believe that my best friend is talented." The ethically normative statement does not contradict the epistemically normative statement because the statements have different domains. This is because the ethically normative statement pertains to the goal of staying ethical, so perhaps it ought to be our ethical duty to be supportive in belief to our friends, however the epistemic normative statement pertains to the goal of reaching epistemic justification, so perhaps we simply have no epistemic reason to believe our friend is talented. Those two statements are not contradictory because they pertain to different normative statements.

In this next section I will show how contextualism does not meet the epistemic justification required to attained knowledge. Although Hannah and Sarah may be justified (in some sense) in both cases, they are not epistemically justified in the low urgency case as the normative statements that apply to their justification do not pertain to epistemology.

IV. My Rebuttal of Contextualism

Building upon my brief response to McKenna's argument in the previous section, I will formalize and expand upon my argument against contextualism. As you will see shortly, my argument supports my thesis and concludes that contextualism cannot be epistemically justified.

> Premise 1: Either the assumed correctness of contextualism reduces the possibility of error or the assumed correctness of contextualism won't increase the chances of a belief being externally true.

Firstly, I must define what I mean when I say, "the assumed correctness of contextualism." The assumed correctness of contextualism refers to the possible world in which contextualism is indeed true. Secondly, the concept of being "externally true" can be used—for the most part—synonymously with the concept of something being true, the reason my argument makes said distinction is because I do not want to apply this argument to truths which are dependent upon one's own thought.[12] With those two definitions in place this seems to be a solid premise. The "possibility of error" and the "chances of a belief being externally true" are opposite statements. Thus, if the "possibility of error" is not reduced then the "chances of a belief being externally true" will not go up as there is no reduction in the "possibility of error."

> Premise 2: The assumed correctness of contextualism does not reduce the possibility of error.

This also seems to be an obviously true premise. Contextualism—as described in the previous section—does not argue that there is a change in the possibilities of something in the external world being actually true, it merely argues that you are justified in believing something even if you are not certain if your belief is externally true.

> Premise 3: Therefore, the assumed correctness of contextualism won't increase the chances of a belief being externally true.

This premise is a valid inference that follows from premises one and two.

> Premise 4: If the assumed correctness of contextualism won't increase the chances of a belief being externally true then there isn't an increase in epistemic justification by the assumed correctness of contextualism.

I am going to describe "epistemic justification" in this context as reason to believe that something is true, in this case we are just focusing on the external world, so it is the reason to believe that your belief of the external world is true. This seems to be a true premise as well. If there is not an increase of the chance that your belief of the external world is true, then there is no reason to believe that said belief is true.

Conclusion: Therefore, there isn't an increase in epistemic justification by the assumed correctness of contextualism.

This conclusion is a valid inference that follows from premises three and four.

This argument is significant because—assuming my premises are true—it proves that contextualism provides no epistemic justification for one's beliefs. Global skepticism is an epistemic belief, so if contextualism provides no epistemic justification then it is not a proper response against global skepticism.

Because I assumed—for the sake of argument—a dilemma between global skepticism and contextualism, now that I have refuted contextualism we ought to conclude that global skepticism is sound and thus the standard view of epistemology is false. In the next section I will rebut potential objections that contextualists may have to my argument.

V. Potential Objections by Contextualists

I can see two main potential objections that contextualists could make to my premises. The first would argue against my second premise by saying that justification can be included in the possibility of error, and the second would argue against the fourth premise by saying that other types of normative statement can impact an epistemic normative statement.

Premise 2: The assumed correctness of contextualism does not reduce the possibility of error.

A contextualist could respond to this premise by arguing that the possibility of error includes error regarding your justification, and as contextualism aims to argue for the flexibility of justification this premise could be proven incorrect.

I believe that this is a weak argument for two primary reasons. Firstly, I do not believe that contextualism avoids the possibility of you being wrong in your justification, if you can be wrong about anything then surely you can be wrong regarding your justification. A justification itself could be seen as something that has a truth value attached to it, thus even if you are to linguistically claim that you are justified you still are as mistaken as you were before. Secondly, I could simply change the premise to say, "the possibility of error relating to the external world."

Premise 4: If the assumed correctness of contextualism won't increase the chances of a belief being externally true then there isn't an increase in epistemic justification by the assumed correctness of contextualism.

A contextualist could potentially respond to this premise by claiming that other types of normative statements can impact epistemic justification if you differentiate epistemically normative statements from epistemic justifications. If this was the case, then there could be an increase in epistemic justification while using a contextualist model.

I believe that this is a better argument than the proposed objection to premise two simply because I cannot reframe this premise to ignore this potential problem. However, I do not believe this is a sound objection. In order to prove this objection, you would need to differentiate the concept of epistemic justification from normatively epistemic, I believe that these two statements are synonymous and if you were to state that they are not synonymous then it would open the floodgates to several epistemically problematic questions. For example, how can something not be an epistemic matter but still dictate epistemic justification?

VI. Conclusion

In this essay I have introduced the challenge of global skepticism to the standard view of epistemology. If global skepticism is true then surely the standard view of epistemology would be incorrect as the standard view claims that we can know certain things and we have methods to know, however global skepticism contradicts said claim. In order to see if we could combat global skepticism, we have reviewed an argument in favor of contextualism written by philosopher Robin McKenna. However, due to the fact that my argument illustrated that contextualism does not adequately respond to global skepticism, as in order for a belief to be epistemically justified it must increase the likelihood of the external truth value of that belief—and because the likelihood of the possibility of error remains constant whether contextualism or global skepticism is correct, contextualism cannot be epistemically justified. Thus, following the dilemma presented in Section II, I must reject the standard view of epistemology.

Many people may find my rejection of the standard view troublesome as it embraces global skepticism. Most people have a knee-jerk reaction to the idea of global skepticism, they may think that if it is impossible for us to truly know anything, we must then reflect that skepticism in our day-to-day actions. Although this essay argues that contextualism as an epistemic theory is not justified, and that we are thus epistemically justified in believing global skepticism, it is important to note that an epistemic normative statement is not transitive to normative statements of action. For example, although it may be the case that we ought to epistemically embrace global skepticism, it may not be the case that we ought to act like we have no hands, or that we are merely brains in vats.

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[12] Truths which are dependent on one's own thought are often considered to be outside the realm of the possibility of error argument. For example, it is arguable that it is impossible for me to be in error over the sentence "I feel happy right now," because the truth value of that statement is dependent on my own conscious thought.

WINDOW INTO WORLDS: RUSSIA'S ICONS BEFORE AND AFTER REVOLUTION

Arianna Fiandaca

Abstract: The impact of the Russian Revolution on Russian culture has been widely studied, but rarely through the lens of Russian icons. This paper serves to explore how religious art of the Eastern Orthodox Church inspired Russians to maintain their cultural traditions in the face of Soviet religious oppression. Grounding the study in an overview of major Russian religious works, the paper illustrates the versatility and comprehensive functions of Russian icons. In order to understand the unique Russian relationship with these religious artworks, it is essential to then examine the role of the icon in the everyday life of the peasants and nobility. Lastly, the post-Revolutionary response to icon ownership by both authority and laity seeks to demonstrate the prominence of religious artwork in Russian cultural traditions.

Keywords: iconography, Eastern Orthodox Church, 1917 Revolution

On the 22nd of May, 1831, Princess Anna Fedorovna Golitsyna was pronounced dead. Despite this proclamation, she opened her eyes once more and demanded she be presented with an icon of Christ. Once Anna was presented with the icon, she issued another demand, requiring all those in attendance at her miraculous resurrection to kiss and revere the image of Christ as though it were the savior himself.[1] Following the completion of her requests and a brief conversation with her husband, Anna was lifeless once more. Anna's mysterious revival is documented in an eyewitness account that emphasizes the role of icons as miraculous. Icons are said to have played an important role in Anna's everyday life prior to her initial death, and an icon's presence was Anna's main request upon her return to life. [2]

The Russian icon exists as a key element of the Eastern Orthodox Church's beliefs and practices. The Eastern Orthodox Church was created as the result of a split within the religion of Christianity—the Great Schism in 1054. Although the use of icons in worship is not unique to the Eastern Orthodox Church, icons play a more significant role in church services here than in other sects of Christianity. Icons are paintings, typically on a wood panel, that depict religious imagery and are often placed in Churches or other places of worship, including homes. These icons are traditionally seen as a communication point between believers and the saints represented in, or associated with, a given icon. Icons that depict a saint's life are known as Hagiography icons. Beyond their religious functions, icons are also commonly viewed as pieces of artwork and culture. Icons were commonly mass-produced in

all villages prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, resulting in increased veneration and reverence of religious imagery.[3] With the arrival of the Soviet Union, religious activities including the production and reverence of icons was discouraged by the communist government. This paper will examine the changing role of the Russian icon in the eyes of the laity before and after the Revolutions of 1917.

In selecting the icons discussed in this paper, several icons with varying backgrounds, styles, and subjects were explored in order to account for the most relevant examples. Many of the icons explored date back to an era before, and including, Imperial Russia, with few surviving 20th century examples. The icons chosen represent different facets of icon veneration in Imperial Russia, with examples ranging from the everyday usage of a liturgy calendar to the famous *Theotkos of Vladmir.* This distribution of icon selection is directly related to a decline in the production of icons following the rise of the Soviet government. The written sources utilized were selected for their direct relation to miracle-working icons and icon reverence, as well as their English accessibility to the author. The peasant petitions relay the relationship of non-elite citizens to icons, and the death of Anna Golitsyna provides an eyewitness account of a miracle-working icon. Harvard Soviet Social Project interviews are utilized, providing a glimpse into post-1917 Soviet society based on oral interviews, recorded in English, taking place during the 1940s. These interviews serve to illustrate the common attitude towards icons in the wake of revolution, in a unique primary light.

This paper has been divided into three distinct subsections. The first explores the Russian icon as a work of art and cultural artifact, providing an analysis of varying icon archetypes. The second subsection discusses the icon as it relates to Russians prior to revolution, exploring their relationship with icons and the icon serving as an idealized image of Holy Russia. The third and final subsection of the paper revolves around the treatment of icons post-1917, with a special emphasis on the changing attitudes surrounding Russian icons in the 20th century. This organization allows for an analysis of Russian icons from the Imperial Period to the post-Revolution period beyond a superficial discussion of stylization and symbolism. The purpose of this paper is to examine the persistent role of the Russian icon in the lives of the laity before and after the Revolutions of 1917. The persisting relevance of the Russian icon reveals the broader truth about the ability of tradition to survive an all-encompassing revolution, demonstrating the power of a cultural tradition despite social and political upheaval.

An Exploration of Russian Icons

There are many categories and types of icons associated with the Eastern Orthodox religion and broader Russian culture. In order to understand the history associated with the icons, it is essential to analyze and discuss the icons themselves. The usage and placement of icons were an integral part of everyday life in Imperial Russia, forming a cornerstone of Russian culture prior to the Revolution and the subsequent Soviet Union. Icons were worshipped in different ways in different places, but the main ideas remained consistent across regions and time periods.

A prime example of icons functioning as a tool of lifestyle is that of the *Minyeia* or Menology liturgical year calendar. Although the liturgical year calendar as a concept is not unique to the Russian icon, and is rather a broader concept within Christianity, a special emphasis was placed on the Russian *Minyeia* within Russian culture. Several iterations of the iconographic calendar exist, but Russian yearly calendars were often separated into panels by month, allowing more detailed representation of the saints present in the panel. Individual saints were most often represented, although it was not uncommon for an artist to include continuous narratives within the structure of the *Minyeia*.[4] There are few surviving *Minyeia*, but those that remain from the 19th century follow Byzantine iconographic conventions: exhibiting golden backgrounds and rich hues of green and red. The deeply devout population of Imperial Russia would have looked to these depictions of rare saints on their daily *Minyeia* calendar, thus demonstrating the permeation of religious iconography into the realm of timekeeping.

Far more common in the study of Russian icons is the motif of the Mother of God clutching a young, infant Jesus to her chest or to her cheek. This style of icon was the most popular style, often mass-produced by craftsmen of several trades in various villages as a means of earning income and sold to the laity.[5] The Mother of God is often referred to in the title of these artworks, and by the Eastern Orthodox church overall, as Theotokos. One of the most famous examples of this iconographic style is the Virgin of Vladimir, or Theotokos of Vladimir. Originating in the 12th century world of Byzantium, this miraculous icon has been overpainted and restored several times, and has been moved between museums and cities within Russia just as often. The Virgin of Vladimir depicts a contemplative Theotokos, as she is gazing neither upon Christ nor upon the viewer, but rather in an unspecified direction.[6] Christ may be placed gently upon the cheek of Mary, but he is dressed in the clothes of a grown man, rather than a child or baby, securing his

status as the wise leader believers know him to be. Despite the fact that this icon in particular originated outside of the Russian realm in Constantinople, it remains one of preeminent pieces of Russian iconography.

Not all icons featured divine subjects; icons were also used to depict a strong relationship between Russia's royal family and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Known under a variety of names, The Planting of the Russian State Tree by Simeon Ushakov was painted in 1668. This icon features a subject unique to the style of the Russian icons, consisting of a genealogical tree depicting various saints with the royal family gazing up at the tree.[7] The most striking element of this particular icon is the acknowledgement of the act of icon veneration within the icon itself. Placed neatly at the center of the icon and demanding the viewer's immediate attention is a small, but accurate, representation of the Virgin of Vladimir. The Planting of the Russian State Tree serves to not only validate the religious practices of the royal family of Russia, but validate the act of icon veneration itself. Beyond the obvious subject matter, intense symbolism was employed by Ushakov, who chooses to place individual saints inside the "fruit" of the tree.[8] This is an interesting compositional choice, suggesting the saints as the "fruit" of Christianity. Although the icon is not a traditional continuous narrative, such as the popular Mother of God motif, it tells a story through composition that is unique within the genre of Russian icons.

Although these icons serve as an introduction and brief overview of the traditional canon of Russian Icons, the variants and quantity of artwork produced under the umbrella term of "icon" is immense, and should not be understated. Icons were produced all over Russia by various members of the church at varying levels of society and depict a wide range of saints and other church figures. Individual icons do well to illustrate a momentary belief system of a region or artist, as well as the worship practices present in that region where the icon was created or resides. It is perhaps most important to note that the icons as whole, their existence, and their creation, serves as a unifying force for a people and a culture who were broadly spread out across a massive Empire. The existence of icons in Russian culture is influenced partially by the art itself, but furthermore the intricate practices of the people creating and venerating the icon.

Icons in Imperial Russia

The relationship between the laity and the icon throughout Holy Russia was varied, but generally strong. Witnessed in "the Miraculous Revival and Death of Princess Anna Fedorovna Golitsyna," it is clear that icons were a part of daily life outside of worship occurring within a church building or within church activities.[9] The eyewitness account given in the case of Anna Golitsyna's death does not hesitate to mention the role of icons in the miraculous occurrence, underscoring the regularity with which icons were seen or used in the lives of many. The attribution of miraculous qualities to the physical icon served later as just cause in the eyes of the laity to preserve their ownership of these important artifacts.

Several icons were said to possess miraculous qualities, such as defending an entire town from a siege or military attack by merely being present. Eastern Orthodox church officials had the power to move or repossess icons said to exhibit such miraculous qualities.[10] In August 1904, the Holy Synod received a petition dealing directly with the repossession and displacement of a miraculous icon, written by a peasant named Nikolai Antonov Zelenyi.[11] This petition outlines the miraculous renewal of an icon said to be antique and previously "indiscernible," and the following events that led to the icon being donated to a nearby village church in order to allow pious individuals to visit the icon.[12] However, church officials had declared that the renewed icon should be moved to a monastery for safekeeping, a decision with which the villagers disagreed vehemently. Despite the signatures of "fifty persons," the church still sent police to repossess and redistribute the icon, which the Kuznicki peasants cited in a follow-up petition as contradicting the teachings of the church.[13] The petition from Zelenyi and resulting turmoil in his small village serves to illustrate not only the importance of possessing icons, but also possessing miraculous icons in the imperial era.

The Holy Synod ultimately reserved the right to declare the icon's miraculous nature and wished the icon to remain in their care. With these images being so heavily valued and venerated, they generated tourism, income, and notoriety for the villages in which they resided. The decision of the church to remove the icon from Zelenyi's village of Kuznicki ultimately emphasizes the overarching power the Holy Synod possessed regarding the movement of these artworks. Beyond the church's initial decision, however, the actions of the peasants in Kuznicki is even more telling. Although the petition did occur in the 20th century, it is rare for a pious population to desire to question the authority of the church in which they practice. It is clear that the villagers truly wanted to keep the renewed icon in their possession, but the church wanted to retain their power over the ownership and designation of miraculous icons. Regardless, the case of Kuzniki's renewed icon illustrates the far-reaching influence of icons into the everyday lives of peasants and peasant's homes.

Beyond the presence of icons in smaller villages, the Romanov family possessed a great deal of icons. The last Tsarina even covered the walls surrounding her bed with religious imagery, a demonstration of

genuine piety in a private space.[14] Icons were often privately owned by believers, although some were donated to churches, monasteries, and other non-secular structures.[15] One of the most important roles of these icons found within private homes and collections was providing a sense of identity with the church for members of the laity.[16] Every peasant was expected to own and display an icon in his home for veneration, regardless of their socio-economic status.[17] Church activities reinforced a strict hierarchical structure within Holy Russia, and despite icons belonging to that structure, they provided a more individualized experience of religious practice. This is not a unique concept to Christianity or to the Eastern Orthodox church, but it did serve to reinforce religious fervor in an environment that would later suppress it.

Zeleyni's petition was not the only miracle-working icon petition of the early 20th century, as one appeared over a decade later from another village, requesting input on an entirely different matter. A petition from a peasant named Vasilii Novoselov, written in 1916 just prior to revolution, was created to ask the Holy Synod for "due veneration" of an icon known as the Mother of God "Multiplier of Grains."[18] Novoselov recounts a vivid dream in which he was inspired to procure a copy of the "Multiplier of Grains" miracle icon and venerate it in his village. The icon features the image of Mary resting on clouds above a field of grain, with a standard gold-gilded background.[19] The clergy of his village demand the icon be covered with a sheet so as to prevent veneration of the icon since it does not possess a "special hymnography."[20] Despite the church's opinion of the icon, the laity continued to demand that it be treated like other icons of the Mother of God.[21] Unlike the previous petition, this one deals with icon censorship, as the icon was denied a chromolithographic image reproduction, and the Holy Synod decided to take no action on Novoselov's case.[22]

Despite the idea of icons belonging to the people and being created by the believers in the Orthodox Church, the clergy in this case were concerned about the title "Multiplier of Grains." The power of this icon was thus censored, demonstrating that the church wanted to control the veneration and distribution of icons regardless of their craft origins and mass-production across villages. These two petitions showcase two entirely different sides of icon veneration in Imperial Russian culture: their desire to venerate and procure their own copies of religious imagery, and their success and failure in doing so. Icons thus served as part of an illusion of belonging, or personal control within the church, seeing as icons were censored and controlled by the Holy Synod and other local clergy members in the early 20th century. A shift in attitude is first seen here, moving away from icons being one of the central practices of the Russian Orthodox Church, and towards a state where the clergy could determine who and what icons were allowed to be official subjects of veneration.

Icons post-1917

If the Holy Synod had reservations about the "Multiplier of Grains" moniker, then they would certainly have possessed a great deal of concern regarding the fate of icons after the Revolutions of 1917.

The state of icon veneration was not immediate doom and gloom, but rather a repossession effort by the Soviet government that determined all icons were state property, regardless of their status in private collections big or small.[23] This period of blatant icon repression served as an intermediate period before the state became fervently critical of icon veneration.

Russians themselves did not immediately adopt secular, iconoclastic views. In a series of interviews conducted by Harvard university researchers with former Soviet citizens immediately after WWII, first-hand accounts reveal the fate of icons post-Revolution. One man described the social economics courses in his school where "anti-religious views" were stressed, alongside being told by an instructor to "go home [and] burn the icons."[24] Another, younger man recounts children being told to go to their parents and espouse the idea taught by their school teachers, "you must take off the icons."[25] These lessons, taught to post-Revolutionary school children reveal attitudes toward religion in the earlier years of the Soviet Union. Clearly, religious individuals who wished to continue their participation in the church following the revolution were not immediately persecuted. Instead, the government had decided upon bold messaging in the classroom designed to discourage further believers, and effectively shame current ones. Icons seem to be a particular point of social tension, as there is direct and clear messaging distributed in the classroom "that it was wrong to keep icons in the house."[26] These lessons are careful to not demonize the believer, but rather the icon, and are part of a larger effort by the Soviet Union to discredit religion in the eyes of the formerly devout Russians.

Further interviews reveal that subliminal messaging to parents of school children was not enough to quell the presence of icons in the Soviet Union. Communists are said to have "poured petroleum on the icons and burned them" despite the icons having been "from peasant's houses."[27] In the case of a religious woman who married a man working directly for the party, she "covered [the icons] with a cloth in the corner."[28] These two examples illustrate a more extreme iconoclasm, or destructive actions towards icons, a major shift in attitude that was not to be ignored. Covering icons with a cloth in the home of a devout Russian would have been unthinkable just decades earlier, but it does provide a work-around for Russians seeking to continue their icon veneration without attracting attention. Attitudes had shifted, however, in the favor of the Soviets, and these actions were anything but outrageous—they were to be expected by the people who had witnessed them.

While the legacy of the icon was dismantled within the borders of the Soviet Union, abroad the Soviet party itself was working to drum up veneration for Russian icons and sell them to western countries for a quick profit.[29] The idea of the icon, what it stood for, who made them, who owned them, and the base function of the icon itself, were all altered by this political and social upheaval. Despite changes throughout the Imperial era, and the larger history of Eastern Orthodox religion, the icon in the world of Soviet Russia was destroyed or hidden away in large, state collections too big to be catalogued. Some icons retained their original function, protected by believers who hid a small number of icons

despite the broader societal shift. The Russian icon today is venerated in functioning churches across Russia, since a large number of icons survived the Soviet period. Various reproductions have been created and new icons painted in the old style are being sold globally in the 21st century. The presence of the Russian icon in modern churches is an important cornerstone of Russian culture.

The Russian icon is a genre of religious artwork with a rich and varied history. Although icons come in many styles, sizes and qualities, they all serve the same basic function of saintly communication and religious veneration. The icon has remained especially important in Russian culture, even after the fall of the Soviet Union, due to its rich history as a craft of the laity and the clergy throughout the Imperial Russian era. Icons have belonged to the people, to the church, and to the state, without changing form or function—just hands. Icons appear visually the same to any viewer, but to Russians throughout the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary eras, their importance cannot be understated. The persisting relevance of the Russian icon in the broader culture of Russia despite an all-encompassing revolution demonstrates the power of tradition over political change.

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THE INSTANTANEOUS EXPERIENCE

Jack Drewsen

Abstract: Supporters of the B-theory of time believe that an experience of the passage of time is an illusion and an unsound reason to believe in the A-theory of time. Yehezkel 2003 provides an argument which holds that it is impossible to experience the passage of time. In this essay, I will argue that the experience of the passage of time is possible and a correct interpretation of our reality. My argument relies on recent findings in the field of quantum physics that suggest a spontaneous apprehension of information is possible, and a thought experiment in which a subject with a human brain is spontaneously created and destroyed in front of a vivid sunset. Because this subject will have experienced the sunset, I argue that it is possible to have an experience in which time does not pass, and hence it is possible to have an experience in which time does pass. Yehezkel's argument therefore fails to prove that experiencing the flow of time is impossible.

Keywords: A-theory, B-theory, contingent, impression of the self, experience, spontaneous

I. Introduction

An important feature of our conscious experience is the passage of time. The consensus that time seems like it is passing is a convincing reason to believe that time does in fact pass. A- theorists adhere to this consensus and hold that the present is metaphysically distinguished from the past and the future. D. C. Williams claimed that the most persuasive support of the A-theory of time is, "...simply that we *find* passage, that we are immediately and poignantly involved in the jerk and whoosh of process, the felt flow of one moment into the next,".[1] B-theorists, like Yehezkel, deny the metaphysical significance of the present moment and describe the nature of time differently. B-theorists describe time as mind-independent and not flowing. Events can be ordered *before* and *after* each other. Most importantly, some B-theorists deny that it is possible to experience the passage of time.

In this essay, I will argue that the experience of the passage of time is possible and a correct interpretation of our reality. I do not intend to argue for who is right concerning the true nature of time. I will offer an objection to Yehezkel's argument concerning the nature of an experience and provide a thought experiment to better illustrate such an experience.

Yehezkel's argument serves to emphasize the lack of credibility of an experience that supports the A-theorist's view of time. This experience is the experience of the passage of time, the essential 'flow' of events from the present and future into the past. The changes in the attributes of these events are a salient feature of the A-theory view of time. The philosopher's argument holds that the experience of the flow of time is an illusion and does not constitute a possible experience. Challenges to the soundness of the claim that it is possible to experience the passage of time pose problems for supporters of the A-theory of time.

Yehezkel draws from other philosophers who have worked on the issues surrounding opposing theories of time. She draws from David Hume's claim that an individual's impression of the self as the subject of experience is an illusion. The impression of the self is that which seems to cognize, to will, and to value at any given moment. The inferences made from these experiences may simply be coherence of the impressions arising from the senses.[2]

To argue for the experience of the passage of time, I offer a charitable extraction of Yehezkel's argument and provide an explanation and support of the basic premises and the inferences made. In the sections following, I provide a criticism of their argument and offer a counter example: the instantaneous experience.

Both sides of the debate can agree that the conscious experience of the passage of time is a facet of our reality. The experience of the passage of time can be described as the sensation of time moving, or the conscious perception of somehow moving through time.[3] The word 'experience' is used loosely in Yehezkel's argument and is meant to be taken at face value. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the Merriam-Webster definition of experience as "the act or process of directly perceiving events or reality,".

Extraction

The following is an extraction of Yehezkel's argument provided in their article titled "The Illusion of the Experience of the Passage of Time". Yehezkel relies on David Hume's definitions of impressions of the self to carry the weight of a few premises. Impressions of the self are contingent — they are neither necessarily true nor necessarily false — and leave open the possibility of experiencing the opposite; for example, if I am experiencing hunger, it is possible to experience fullness.[4] Experiencing the passage of time as the subject of experience, as an impression of the self, is similar to stating "I am experiencing time to be passing,". According to Hume, all our impressions are separable and can exist at the same time without contradiction.[5] For the purposes of this extraction, φ will represent an impression of the self as the subject of experience. The extraction is as follows:

(1) If it is possible to experience that φ, then it is possible to experience that not- φ. (Basic)
(2) According to the A-theory of time, the passage of time is a necessary condition for one to experience an event as the subject of experience. (Basic)
(3) If, according to the A-theory of time, the passage of time is a necessary condition for one to experience an event as the subject of experience, then, according to the A-theory of time, one cannot experience an event as the subject of experience without the passage of time (Basic)
(4) Thus, according to the A-theory of time, one cannot experience an event as the subject of experience without the passage of time. (MP 2, 3)
(5) If, according to the A-theory of time, one cannot experience an event as the subject of experience without the passage of time, then, according to the A-theory of time, it is impossible to experience as the subject of experience that time does not pass. (Basic)
(6) Thus, according to the A-theory of time, it is impossible to experience as the subject of experience that time does not pass. (MP 4,5)
(7) Thus, according to the A-theory of time, it is impossible to experience as the subject of experience that time does pass. (MT 1, 6)

Analysis

This extraction of Yehezkel's argument uses two known valid inference rules: Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens. There are 4 underived premises in this charitable extraction−(1), (2), (3), and (5). In the following section I will unpack and explain each of the premises to offer a clearer understanding of the extraction.

According to premise (1), the possibility of experiencing φ allows for the possibility of experiencing not- φ. The contrapositive of premise (1) states that if it is impossible to experience not- φ, then it is impossible to experience φ. To render (1) as false requires φ to be either a) a necessary truth or b) a necessary condition for the subject to have an experience.

If φ were a necessary truth, it would hold true in all possible worlds. Yehezkel argues that φ is a logical truth and experiencing not- φ would be self-contradictory and impossible. Since contradictions cannot characterize a feature of our experiences, φ cannot be a necessary truth and it is possible to experience not- φ. The claim stating contradictions cannot characterize a feature of our experience, can be challenged. However, that is not what I will be focusing on in this paper.

For b) to apply to Yehezkel's argument, φ would have to be a necessary condition for the subject to have an experience. In the case of Yehezkel's argument, φ represents an impression of the self as the subject of experience. If we adhere to Hume's description of impressions of the self as the subject of experience, an impression of the self is in fact necessary to analyze an

experience as its subject. Stating "I am experiencing there to be no impression of the self" is a logical contradiction, as the subject must first identify that I, the self, is experiencing something. This is only possible with an impression of the self, rendering φ as a sufficient condition for the subject to have an experience [6] Both Yehezkel and I agree on (1) in the case that φ is an impression of the self.

Premise (2) brings up a basic definition that characterizes the A-theory of time. McTaggart's famous argument about the nature of time dictates that there could be no A-theory without time itself. [7] It follows that temporality is a necessary condition for the A-theory of time, and, if the A-theorist were to have an experience, it would require temporality.

Following from (2), Yehezkel suggests that the absence of temporality during an experience would render such an experience impossible. Premise (3) is an entailment conditional which claims that it is impossible to have an experience as the subject of experience if time is not passing, as having an experience requires temporality. Using modus ponens, (2) and (3) can be synthesized to offer the valid inference made in premise (4). Yehezkel concludes that the A- theory of time cannot allow for an atemporal experience.

Premise (5) uses the inference in (4) to work towards the conclusion in premise (7). In (5), Yehezkel dictates that a subject cannot experience the event of time not passing. As an atemporal event is an event in which time is not passing, Yehezkel argues that experiencing this is impossible. In support, Yehezkel states, "It is very difficult to see how there can be any temporal experience which does not allow a use of the distinctions between past, present, and future. According to the A-theory of time, it is impossible to experience…without these distinctions…," 6 . Premise (4) affirms the antecedent of (5) and through Modus Ponens produces premise (6). Yehezkel concludes that because it is impossible to experience time not passing, it is impossible to experience time passing. This was achieved through Modus Tollens and the combination of premises (1) and (6).

Thus far, I have charitably extracted Yehezkel's argument against the possibility of experiencing the passage of time. Each inference is made using known valid inference rules and the only weak points lie in the support of the basic premises. Yehezkel's conclusion insinuates that a seemingly basic facet of our experience, the feeling of the flow of time, is really an illusory aspect of our reality. In the following section, however, I focus on premise (4) and offer a counterexample to show that Yehezkel's argument is unsound. This defense offers some support of the view that the flow of time can be experienced.

Atemporal Experiences

An atemporal experience is one in which the subject experiences reality to be unchanging. In the argument, Yehezkel quickly strikes down the possibility of an atemporal experience, as observing things to be unchanging would require time to persist in the first place. I will cede that this is a reasonable conclusion. However, I argue in favor of another interpretation of an atemporal experience: an experience in which a human subject (or a subject with a human brain) is spontaneously created and destroyed. For added imagery, this subject will be created and destroyed in a place in which the subject has a perfect view of a vivid and magnificent sunset. This instantaneous moment would not have any duration and can be considered an atemporal event. I argue that this subject could have experienced the vivid and magnificent sunset.

To better support my argument, I draw from findings in the fields of quantum physics and quantum biology. A commonly held tenet in empiricist philosophy is that nothing in the mind exists, that was not first in the eye. However, recent findings in the field of quantum physics suggest that spontaneous apprehensions, articulated by Laszlo 2009, exist, and are rooted in physical reality. Laszlo 2009 provides a thorough explanation of this physical event. The quantum domain carries information, which is created when material objects excite and deform the ground state of the quantum field.[8] When wavefronts of information meet, nodes and interference patterns are created, much like interference of light beams. With support from multiple fields studying quantum physics, quantum biology and quantum brain research, these nodes of interference patterns can be accessed by the human brain spontaneously 8 . Concerning quantum receptivity in the brain, Laszlo holds that, "This information propagates quasi-instantly throughout the living organism and does not require classical channels of signal transduction...It is nonlocality: the correlation of quanta beyond the classical limits of space and time,".[8] These quantum events occur beyond the dimension of time and can be instantaneously apprehended. Because these quantum events contribute to conscious experience, I offer a simple argument in response to Yehezkel's argument:

(8) If it is possible to experience that φ, then it is possible to experience that not- φ. (Basic)
(9) If the human brain can spontaneously apprehend information, then it is possible to experience an event in which time does not pass. (Basic)
(10) The human brain can spontaneously apprehend information. (Basic)
(11) Thus, it is possible to experience an event in which time does not pass. (MP 9, 10)
(12) Thus, it is possible to experience an event in which time does pass. (MP 8, 11)

Premise (8) is a repeat of Yehezkel's premise (1) and is included in this extraction for additional clarity. Support for premise (8) can be found in the Analysis section.

In support of (9), I will use Merriam-Webster's definition of "spontaneous" as: "developing or occurring without apparent external influence, force, cause, or treatment". An event without a cause does not

need time to pass for the event to begin to occur; one instant, the event has not occurred, and the next, the event occurs. Further, if this event itself does not require time to pass for the event to begin to occur AND this event has no duration (in the case of a subject that is simultaneously created and destroyed), this event can be reasonably dubbed as instantaneous and an event in which time does not pass. Thus, a spontaneous event with no duration is an atemporal experience. Additionally, for (9) to be false, a situation in which the human brain can spontaneously apprehend information and yet not be able to experience an event without the passage of time would be necessary. Such a situation is very hard to imagine, as spontaneously apprehending information takes no time at all.

Using valid inference rules this extraction of my own argument proceeds towards the conclusion of the possibility of experiencing an event in which time does pass. Referencing Laszlo 2009 and the enthralling findings the paper provides, premise (9) can be considered as a basic premise. Premise (9) is a conditional that states: “If the human brain can spontaneously apprehend information, then it is possible to experience an event in which time does not pass”.

The implications of premise (11), which concludes that it is possible to experience an event in which time does not pass, support the A-theorist’s view of time, and provide a further reason to believe that the experience of the passage of time is a correct interpretation of our reality and argue that such an experience is more than possible. The subject who was created and destroyed in the same moment that a colorful sunset painted the sky was able to experience this sunset even though they experienced the sunset in the same instant that the subject was both created and destroyed.

Conclusion

The consensus that time seems like it is passing is a commonly held view among A- theorists and has long been a prima facie reason to support the metaphysical significance of the present moment. In contrast to the conclusion of Yehezkel’s argument provided in the article “The Illusion of the Experience of the Passage of Time”, I hold that it is possible to experience the passage of time, as it is possible to experience an event in which time does not pass. From the support of quantum physics, a spontaneous apprehension of information in the quantum field has a physical basis that forms the foundations of life and experience. Our natural intuition about the nature of time is correct, and the illusion of the experience of the passage of time can be dispelled.

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