



(ATINER)

The Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts



(ATINER)

Volume 6, Issue 3, July 2019

Articles

Front Pages

SELÇUK ARTUT

[Using a Machine Learning Algorithm to Create a Computational Artwork: Variable](#)

PAUL LETSCH

[The Meaning of Life: The Major Philosophical Aspects Hidden Behind a Fundamental Question of Human Existence](#)

RICHARD MCDONOUGH

[Melville's New Seafarer's Philosophy in Moby-Dick](#)

BARBARA B. PEMBERTON

[Creating Sacred Spaces: The Power of Rap Music on the Religious Consciousness](#)



ATHENS INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

8 Valaoritou Str., Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece.

Tel.: 210-36.34.210 Fax: 210-36.34.209

Email: info@atiner.gr URL: www.atiner.gr

Established in 1995



(ATINER)

(ATINER)

Mission

ATINER is a *World Non-Profit Association* of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent **Association** with a **Mission** to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, **as well as engage with professionals from other fields**. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to *Plato's Academy* and *Aristotle's Lyceum*. Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, *"Athens" ... is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing*". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*). It is ATINER's **mission** to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. *Education* and *(Re)searching* for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why *Education* and *Research* are the two core words in ATINER's name.

The Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts
ISSN NUMBER: 2241-7702 - DOI: 10.30958/ajha
Volume 6, Issue 3, July 2019
Download the entire issue ([PDF](#))

<u>Front Pages</u>	i-xiv
<u>Using a Machine Learning Algorithm to Create a Computational Artwork: Variable</u> <i>Selçuk Artut</i>	173
<u>The Meaning of Life: The Major Philosophical Aspects Hidden Behind a Fundamental Question of Human Existence</u> <i>Paul Letsch</i>	183
<u>Melville's New Seafarer's Philosophy in Moby-Dick</u> <i>Richard McDonough</i>	211
<u>Creating Sacred Spaces: The Power of Rap Music on the Religious Consciousness</u> <i>Barbara B. Pemberton</i>	235

Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts

Editorial and Reviewers' Board

Editors

- **Dr. Stephen Andrew Arbury**, Head, [Arts & Culture Research Unit](#), ATINER, Professor of Art History & Director of the RU Art Museum, Radford University, USA.

Editorial Board

- Dr. Nicholas Pappas, Vice President of Academic Membership, ATINER & Professor of History, Sam Houston University, USA.
- Dr. David Philip Wick, Director, [Arts and Humanities Research Division](#), Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER) & Professor of History, Gordon College, USA.
- Dr. Jayoung Che, [Head, History Research Unit](#), ATINER & Deputy Director of Research, Korean Academy of Greek Studies, South Korea.
- Mr. Benjamin Lewis, Founding Director, The Philology Institute, Wilmore, USA.
- Dr. Corinne Ness, Dean, Division of Arts and Humanities & Associate Professor of Voice, Director of Music Theatre, Carthage College, USA.
- Dr. Tatiana Tsakiropoulou-Summers, Director, [Athens Center for Classical & Byzantine Studies \(ACCBS\)](#) & Director, UA in Greece, Summer Abroad Program, Department of Modern Languages & Classics, The University of Alabama, USA.
- Dr. Marié-Heleen Coetzee, Head, Drama Department, & Chair of the Arts Cluster, University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- Dr. Victoria Tuzlukova, Head of Professional Development and Research Unit, Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman.
- Dr. Ariel T. Gutierrez, Academic Member, ATINER & Chair, Social Sciences Department and Music, Arts, Physical Education & Health Education Dept., Angeles University Foundation-Integrated School, Philippines.
- Dr. Michael Paraskos, Academic Member, ATINER & Provost, Cornaro Institute, Cyprus.
- Dr. Nursel Asan Baydemir, Professor, Department of Biology, Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Kirikkale, Turkey.
- Dr. Aieman Ahmad AL-OMARI, Professor - Ph.D. Higher Education Administration, Hashemite University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Educational Foundations and Administration, Jordan.
- Dr. Poonam Bala, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Amity University, India.
- Dr. Mounis Bekhadra, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, University of Tlemcen, Algeria.
- Dr. Jean M. Borgatti, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Benin, Nigeria.
- Dr. Rachana Chakraborty, Professor, University of Calcutta, India.
- Dr. B. Glenn Chandler, Professor of Music Theory and Fellow to the Effie Marie Cain Regents Chair in Fine Arts Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music, The University of Texas at Austin, USA.
- Dr. Christine Condaris, Academic Member ATINER and Chairperson & Professor, Department of Fine & Performing Arts, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, USA.
- Dr. Michael Devine, Founder/Director, Centre for Alternative Theatre Training (CATT) & Full Professor, Acadia University, Department of English & Theatre, Canada.
- Dr. Yukihide Endo, Professor Emeritus in English, Department of General Education, School of Medicine, Hamamatsu University, Japan.
- Dr. Edward F. Mooney, Professor Emeritus, Syracuse University, USA.
- Dr. Galina Bakhtiarova, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor of Spanish, Department

of World Languages and Literature, Western Connecticut State University, USA.

- Dr. Rodrigo Gouvea, Professor of Philosophy, Federal University of São João del-Rei, Brazil.
- Dr. Hank Hehmsoth, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Texas State University-School of Music, USA.
- Dr. Christine James, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Valdosta State University, USA.
- Ms. Jill Journeaux, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor of Fine Arts Education, Coventry University, UK.
- Dr. Bogdan Ataullah Kopanski, Professor, International Islamic University, Malaysia.
- Dr. Irena Kossowska, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor of Art History, Polish Academy of Sciences, Copernicus University in Torun, Poland.
- Dr. James L. Lawton, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Michigan State University, USA.
- Dr. Jennifer Logan, Professor, Occidental College, Music Department, USA.
- Dr. Margarita Lianou, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, University of York, UK.
- Dr. Henrique Marins de Carvalho, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Federal Institute of Science, Education and Technology of Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- Dr. Nicholas Meihuizen, Professor, School of Languages, English Department, North-West University, South Africa.
- Dr. Angela M. Michelis, Philosophy and History Teacher in High School in Italy, PhD (University of Turin), National Italian Title of Professor in Moral Philosophy of II level (associated), Italy.
- Dr. Christopher Mitchell, Professor of Theatre Arts, Eastern Illinois University, USA.
- Dr. Anabela Moura, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo, Portugal.
- Dr. Mechthild Nagel, Professor, SUNY Cortland, USA.
- Dr. William O'Meara, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.
- Dr. Eloise Philpot, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor of Art, Radford University, USA.
- Dr. Alexandria Pierce, Professor, Art History, Savannah College of Art and Design, USA.
- Dr. Laura Virginia Radetich, Professor of History, Faculty of Philosophy and Literature, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Dr. Giovanna Daverio Rocchi, Full Professor of Greek History, Department of Historical Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Milan, Italy.
- Dr. Luiz Paulo Rouanet, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Methods, Federal University of Sao Joao del-Rei, Brazil.
- Dr. Nancy Lee Ryuter, Dance Historian, Teacher, and Choreographer, & Retired Professor of Dance, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California, Irvine, USA.
- Dr. Elia Saneleuterio, Professor, University of Valencia, Spain.
- Dr. Gleisson R. Schmidt, Professor of Philosophy, Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná, Brazil.
- Dr. Nicholas D. Smith, James F. Miller Professor of Humanities, Lewis and Clark College in Portland, USA.
- Mr. Marco Aurelio da Cruz Souza, Professor & Choreographer, Regional University of Blumenau (FURB), Brasil, and PhD Candidate, Faculty of Human Kinetics (FMH), Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal.
- Dr. Maria Urma, Professor, University of Art "George Enescu", Romania.
- Dr. Bart Vandenabeele, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor of Philosophy (Aesthetics & Philosophy of Art), Ghent University, Belgium.
- Maja Vukadinović, Professor, Higher School of Professional Business Studies, Serbia.
- Dr. Suoqiang Yang, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Chinese Calligraphy

Department, Director, Institute for Interdisciplinary Research of Calligraphy Art and Information Technology, Xi'anJiaotong University, China.

- Dr. Panayotis Zamaros, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Academic Counsellor, University IFM, Switzerland.
- Dr. John Doerksen, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs & Students), Western University, Canada.
- Dr. Blaine Garfolo, Chair, Academic Advisory Committee for the DBA Program, Northwestern Polytechnic University, USA.
- Dr. Catie Mihalopoulos, Visiting Professor, Department of Environment, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, USA.
- Dr. Marius-Mircea Crisan, Associate Professor, West University of Timisoara, Romania.
- Dr. Emanuela Ilie, Associate Professor, Faculty of Letters, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania.
- Dr. Eglė Jaškūnienė, Associate Professor & Vice-Dean for Science, Faculty of Creative Industries, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania.
- Dr. Nicoleta Calina, Associate Professor, University of Craiova, Romania.
- Dr. Aldo Dinucci, Associate Professor, Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil.
- Dr. Fatma Çelik Kayapinar, Associate Professor, School of Physical Education and Sport, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Turkey.
- Dr. Soubhik Chakraborty, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Mathematics, Birla Institute of Technology, India.
- Dr. Caterina Pizani, Academic Member, ATINER & Instructor, University of Calgary, Canada.
- Dr. Mariana Cojoc, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Faculty of History & Political Sciences, Ovidius University, Romania.
- Dr. Sarah L. Cole, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Framingham State University, USA.
- Ms. Jenefer Davies, Associate Professor of Dance, Director of the Dance Program, Washington and Lee University, USA.
- Dr. Christopher Dreisbach, Associate Professor, Johns Hopkins University, USA.
- Dr. Michael Eisman, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Temple University, USA.
- Dr. John Freeman, Academic Member, ATINER, Associate Professor & Head of Theatre, Falmouth University, UK.
- Dr. Rebecca Gillan, Associate Professor, (RT) Baton Rouge Community College, USA.
- Dr. Ensiye Baqeri, Academic Member, ATINER & Faculty Member and Assistant Professor, Encyclopedia Islamica Foundation, Iran.
- Dr. Ahmed Ghanem Hafez, Associate Professor, University of Alexandria, Egypt.
- Dr. Sophia Gilmson, Associate Professor of Piano Pedagogy, The University of Texas at Austin, USA.
- Dr. Christian Göbel, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Assumption College, Worcester, USA & Research Associate, The Von Hügel Institute, St. Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, UK.
- Dr. Ebru Gokdag, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Performing Arts Dept., Anadolu University, Turkey.
- Dr. Samar Mostafa Kamal, Associate Professor, Tourist Guidance Department, Faculty of Tourism & Hotels, Minia University, Egypt.
- Dr. Yuemin Hou, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Institute of Design Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Tsinghua University, China.
- Dr. Michele Kahn, Associate Professor of Multicultural Education, Studies in Language and Culture, University of Houston-Clear Lake, USA.
- Dr. Douglas J. King, Associate Professor, Gannon University, Department of English, USA.

- Dr. Simonetta Milli Konewko, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Department of French, Italian, and Comparative Literature, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, USA.
- Dr. Ana Ktona, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Tirana University, Albania.
- Dr. James Latten, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor of Music & Director of Instrumental Music, Juniata College, USA.
- Dr. Gina Marie Lewis, Associate Professor, Art Coordinator, Studio Art, Department of Fine and Performing Arts, Bowie State University USA.
- Dr. Maureen O'Brien, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, St. Cloud State University, USA.
- Dr. Margo Apostolos, Academic Member, ATINER, Associate Professor, USC Kaufman School of Dance, & Co-Director, Cedars-Sinai, USC Glorja Kaufman Dance Medicine Center, University of Southern California, USA.
- Dr. Laura Osterweis, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Communication Arts Department, Framingham State University, USA.
- Dr. Sayyed Rahim Moosavinia, Associate Professor, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran.
- Dr. Georgeta Rata, Associate Professor, B.U.A.S.V.M. Timisoara, Romania.
- Dr. Barbara Sicherl Kafol, Associate Professor of Music Didactis & Chair of Music, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- Dr. Emily Shu-Hui Tsai, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan.
- Dr. Nisha Bala Tyagi, Associate Professor, Delhi University, India.
- Dr. Laura Wayth, Associate Professor of Theatre, School of Theatre and Dance, San Francisco State University, USA.
- Dr. Sander Wilkens, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Berlin University of Technology, Germany.
- Dr. Baruch Whitehead, Academic Member, ATINER & Associate Professor, Ithaca College School of Music, USA.
- Dr. RajyaShree Yadav, Associate Professor, Government R.D. Girls College, India.
- Dr. Barbara Botter, Academic Member, ATINER & Adjunct Professor, Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES) – Vitória, Brazil.
- Dr. Fatima Susana Mota Roboredo Amante, Invited Adjunct- Professor, Higher School of Education of Viseu, Portugal.
- Dr. Damian Islas, Invited Profesor, University of Toronto, Canada.
- Dr. Athena Rebecca Axiomakaros, Assistant Professor, Art History, State University of New York - Nassau Community College, USA.
- Dr. Ewa Bobrowska, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Arts, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, Poland.
- Dr. Tugba Celik, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, Nigde University, Turkey
- Dr. Kathleen Downs, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor of Theatre & Drama, American University of Kuwait, Kuwait.
- Dr. Chrysoula Gitsoulis, Academic Member, ATINER & Adjunct Assistant Professor, City College, City University of New York, USA.
- Dr. Sinem Elkatip Hatipoğlu, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Istanbul Sehir University, Turkey.
- Ms. Alma Hoffmann, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, University of South Alabama, USA.
- Dr. Michael James Matthis, Professor & Director of Philosophy Dept. of English & Modern Languages, Lamar University, USA.

- Dr. Vassiliki Kotini, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, Zayed University, UAE.
- Dr. Jamshid Malekpour, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Mass Communications, Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait.
- Dr. Lejla Music, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Dr. Esra Cagri Mutlu, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, Yuzuncu Yil University. Turkey.
- Dr. Sri Ram Pandeya, Assistant Professor, Ramjas College, University of Delhi, India.
- Dr. Anne Peterson, Assistant Professor, University of Utah, USA.
- Dr. Hany Sallam, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, Theater Department, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, & General Director, National Center for Theater, Ministry of Culture, Cairo, Egypt.
- Dr. Mahdi Shafieyan, Assistant Professor of English Literature & Islamic Hermeneutics, Imam Sadiq University, Tehran, Iran.
- Dr. Abbasuddin Tapadar, Academic Member, ATINER & Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Delhi, India.
- Dr. Mostafa Younesie, Assistant Professor, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran.
- Dr. Deborah S. Nash, Full-Time Philosophy Teacher, Marquette University, USA.
- Mr. Nick Higgett, Principal Lecturer, Digital Design & Programme Leader, MA Digital Design, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK.
- Dr. Bianca Predoi, Academic Member, ATINER and Architect & Associate Lecturer, Ion Mincu University of Architecture & Urbanism, Romania.
- Dr. Eric Francis Eshun, Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication Design, Faculty of Art, College of Art & Built Environment, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Tech., Kumasi, Ghana.
- Dr. Mike Fox, Senior Lecturer, Limerick School of Art and Design, Ireland.
- Dr. Vasileios Adamidis, Lecturer, Nottingham Trent University, UK.
- Ms. Georgina Gregory, Academic Member, ATINER & Lecturer, University of Central Lancashire, UK.
- Dr. Siu-lun Lee, 李兆麟, Head of Academic Activities Division & Senior Lecturer, Yale-China Chinese Language Center, Chinese University of Hong Kong, China.
- Ms. Lillian Nave Goudas, Academic Member, ATINER & Senior Lecturer, University College, Appalachian State University, USA.
- Dr. Angela McCarthy, Senior Lecturer in Theology, University of Notre Dame Australia, Australia.
- Dr. Joseph Naimo, Senior Lecturer, School of Philosophy and Theology, University of Notre Dame Australia, Australia.
- Dr. Ebunoluwa Olufemi Oduwole, Academic Member, ATINER & Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria.
- Dr. Daphne Vidanec, Senior Lecturer, Baltazar University of Applied Sciences, Croatia.
- Dr. Doaa Sayed Abdel Azim, Lecturer of English Literature, Faculty of Languages, October University for Modern Sciences and Arts (MSA), Cairo, Egypt.
- Dr. Tsarina Doyle, Academic Member, ATINER & Lecturer, National University of Ireland-Galway, Ireland.
- Dr. Michail Mersinis, Lecturer of Fine Art Photography, the Glasgow School of Art, UK.
- Dr. Orel Beilinson, Academic Member, ATINER & Lecturer, Harari College Worldwide, USA.
- Dr. Jonas Ciurlionis, Lecturer, Vilnius University, Lithuania.
- Dr. Nursilah, Lecturer, Department of Dance, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
- Dr. Oseni Taiwo Afisi, Academic Member, ATINER & Lecturer, Department of Philosophy,

Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Nigeria.

- Dr. Edeh Peter Daniel, Lecturer 1, Department of Philosophy, University of Abuja, Nigeria.
- Dr. Ogunbiyi Olatunde Oyewole, Lecturer, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Dr. Declan Patrick, Lecturer, Liverpool Hope University, UK.
- Dr. Nur Silah, Lecturer, Dance Department, Negeri Jakarta University, Indonesia. Dr. Stephen Steinberg, Lecturer, University of Pennsylvania, USA.
- Dr. Ensa Touray, Academic Member, ATINER & Lecturer, University of the Gambia, Gambia.
- Dr. Margherita Dore, Adjunct Lecturer in English (Translation Studies), Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies, University of Rome "La Sapienza", Italy.
- Dr. Eleni Tracada, Academic Member, ATINER & University Principal Tutor in Built Environment, Faculty of Art, Design & Technology, College of Engineering & Technology, University of Derby, U.K.
- Dr. Yakup Mohd Rafee, Coordinator, Fine Arts Program, Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Malaysia.
- Dr. Tanja Tolar, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, UK.
- Dr. Susana Furphy, Honorary Research Fellow, The University of Queensland, Australia.
- Dr. Alessandra Melas, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of History, Human Sciences and Education, University of Sassari, Italy.
- Dr. Douglas Lucas Kivoi, Researcher/Policy Analyst, the Kenya Institute for Public Policy and Research Analysis (KIPPRA), Kenya.
- Dr. Margot Neger, Academic Member, ATINER & Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Salzburg, Austria.
- Dr. Sabitha.S.R.Najeeb, M.Phil, Ph.D., University of Dammam, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Dr. Nasrin Daftarchi, Ph.D. of French Literature, Iran.
- Mr. Sanjit Chakraborty, Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.
- Dr. Pritika Nehra, Academic Member, ATINER & Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, India.
- Mr. Richard Finn, Academic Member, ATINER & Program Director, Stage and Screen Arts, Whitireia NZ, New Zealand. Dr. Arunima Roychoudhuri, Research Scholar, University of Kalyani, India.
- Dr. Christina Papagiannouli, Academic Member, ATINER & Research Assistant, Faculty of Creative Industries, University of South Wales, UK.
- Dr. Rossana Raviola, Department of Humanities, Philosophy Section, University of Pavia, Italy.
- Mr. Hugh O'Gorman, Director, Athens Center for Theatre Studies (ACTS) & Professor and Head of Performance, California State University, Long Beach, USA.
- Ms. Viviana Soler, Academic Member, ATINER & Research Professional, National Research Council (CONICET) & Sur National University (UNS), Argentina.
- Ms. Subha Marimuthu, Academic Member, ATINER & Research Scholar, Bharathi Women's College, India
- Ms. Arunima Roychoudhuri, Academic Member, ATINER & Full Time Research Scholar, University of Kalyani, India.
- Dr. Inma Garín, University of Valencia, Spain.
- Dr. Manoranjan Mallick, Academic Member, ATINER & Lecturer, Post-Graduate Department of Philosophy, Utkal University, India.
- Dr. Christina Banalopoulou, PhD Student, University of Maryland, USA.
- Dr. Julijana Zhabeva-Papazova, Academic Member, ATINER & Musicologist/Independent Scholar, FYROM.

- Dr. Pablo Villavicencio, PhD in Communication and Semiotics, University PUC-SP (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo), Brazil. Mr Methodi Freddie Motsamayi, PhD Candidate/Researcher, Centre for Visual Art, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- Mrs. Danielle K. Garrison, MFA Dance Candidate-Aerial Dance Track, University of Colorado-Boulder, Aerialist, Dancer, Choreographer and Teacher, Artistic Director and Founder/DKG Dance, Director of the Student Company and Performer/Frequent Flyers Productions, Inc., Teaching Artist/Colorado Ballet, USA.
- Ms Sandra Philip, Academic Member, ATINER, PhD Candidate & Associate Lecturer, Edge Hill University, UK.
- Ms. Christine Staudinger, Academic Member, ATINER & PhD Candidate, University of Vienna, Austria.
- Ms. Raluca-Eugenia Iliou, Academic Member, ATINER & Doctoral Research Fellow, Brunel University, UK.
- Mrs. Aleksandra Tryniecka, PhD Student, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland & Research Fellow, ATINER, Greece.
- Ms. Stephanie Rennick, Teaching Assistant, University of Glasgow, UK.
- Mrs. Tiffany Pounds-Williams, Academic Member, ATINER & Tufts University, USA.
- Mr. Mark Konewko, Academic Member, ATINER & Director of Chorus, Marquette University, USA.

- **General Managing Editor of all ATINER's Publications:** Ms. Afrodete Papanikou
- **ICT Managing Editor of all ATINER's Publications:** Mr. Kostas Spyropoulos
- **Managing Editor of this Journal:** Ms. Zoi Charalampous ([bio](#))

Reviewers' Board

[Click Here](#)

President's Message

All ATINER's publications including the e-journals are open access without any costs (submission, processing, publishing, open access paid by authors, open access paid by readers etc) and are independent of the presentations made at any of the many small events (conferences, symposiums, forums, colloquiums, courses, roundtable discussions) organized by ATINER throughout the year. The intellectual property rights of the submitted papers remain with the author.

Before you submit, please make sure your paper meets some [basic academic standards](#), which include proper English. Some articles will be selected from the numerous papers that have been presented at the various annual international academic conferences organized by the different [divisions and units](#) of the Athens Institute for Education and Research.

The plethora of papers presented every year will enable the editorial board of each journal to select the best ones, and in so doing, to produce a quality academic journal. In addition to papers presented, ATINER encourages the independent submission of papers to be evaluated for publication.

The current issue of the Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts (AJHA) is the third issue of the sixth volume (2019). The reader will notice some changes compared with the previous issues, which I hope is an improvement.

Gregory T. Papanikos, President
Athens Institute for Education and Research



Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

11th Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts 8-11 June 2020, Athens, Greece

The [Arts & Culture Unit](#) of ATINER is organizing its 11th Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts, 8-11 June 2020, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts](#). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of visual and performing arts, and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2020/FORM-ART.doc>).

Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

- Dr. Stephen Andrew Arbury, Head, [Arts & Culture Unit](#), ATINER and Professor of Art History, Radford University, USA.
-

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **5 November 2019**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **11 May 2020**

Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/2019fees>



Athens Institute for Education and Research
A World Association of Academics and Researchers

5th Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology 25-28 May 2020, Athens, Greece

The [Humanities & Education Division](#) of ATINER is organizing its **5th Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology, 25-28 May 2020, Athens, Greece**. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of Religion, Theology and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2020/FORM-REL.doc>).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **22 October 2019**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **27 April 2020**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. William O'Meara**, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.

Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

More information can be found here: <https://www.atiner.gr/social-program>

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€

Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/2019fees>

Using a Machine Learning Algorithm to Create a Computational Artwork: Variable

Selçuk Artut*

As computational systems have become an integral part of our daily lives, we often see that contemporary art also has adapted itself with the newborn technological changes in diversified dimensions. Machine Learning, which has recently become a remarkable development in science, has also begun to manifest itself in various artistic works. As accordingly, the artwork that has been created by the author of this article named "Variable" stands as an interactive work of art that embraces machine learning algorithms within its compositional structure. The artwork was extensively influenced by the sophisticated discourse of German philosopher Heidegger's book "Being and Time." Consequently, Being and Time text has been taught to a machine learning system, and thus the system has been able to automatically generate new original contents when the viewer interacts with the touch of a button. The generative system performs its Machine Learning Markov Chain operations with the implementation of a Python programming language-based library named Markovify. The work constantly redefines its own artistic title and statement with the use of a machine learning framework. In this article, the contribution of machine learning to the production of artworks is being examined while focusing on various implementations.

Introduction

Machine Learning has received a notable amount of attraction in the past few decades. With the introduction of Bayes Theorem, the underpinnings of the concept may refer to the early 19th century, but its framework has been progressively developed and substantial accomplishments have been achieved over the course of couple years. Machine learning aspires to mimic human intelligence while gathering data from previous experience and suits them in a reasonable structure with associated outcomes. Unlike the common sense of computers as being a well-defined deterministic system, machine learning uses the given set of data to interpret statistical reasoning with no explicit design of a deterministic system. Machine learning extensively applies computational methods to perform statistical operations that puts suitable models for interpreting explicit results. With the employment of computational statistics, Computer Science has been hosting the science of machine learning to formulate new findings in various fields of applications. Some of the popular applications of use would be in Bioinformatics, Computer Vision, Economics, Insurance,

*Assistant Professor, Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design, Sabanci University, Turkey.

Search Engine Engineering, Financial Market Analysis etc.¹ Correspondingly, machine learning has a far-reaching potential to be investigated with diversified implications in solving complex problems. As an example, medical scientists have been investigating how to use machine learning for early detection of terminal diseases such as cancer and aids. The researchers imply that the machine learning is helping to improve basic understanding of cancer development and progression.² Additionally, various researchers have been analyzing stock market predictions using machine learning paradigms.³

According to Arthur Samuel,⁴ machine learning is a field of computer science that gives computers the ability to learn without being explicitly programmed. Géron⁵ defines machine learning as the science and the art of programming computers so they can learn from data. Mitchell⁶ defines machine learning as a field that examines how computer programming can be set up so that computers can evolve automatically from experience. To formulate algorithms based on exploratory data analysis, researchers have been implementing various methods of data sciences. Previously symbolic/knowledge-based systems have been accepted as more capable of machine learning systems. However, with the recent abundance of data, more research was studied to generate experience-based systems for getting effective results.

1. A. Waibel, T. Hanazawa, G. Hinton, K. Shikano, and K. J. Lang, Phoneme recognition using time-delay neural networks. *IEEE Transactions on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing* 37, no. 3, (1989); D. Pomerleau, and T. Jochem, Rapidly adapting machine vision for automated vehicle steering. *IEEE Expert* 11, no. 2 (1996); G. F. Cooper, C. F. Aliferis, R. Ambrosino, J. Aronis, B. G. Buchanan, R. Caruana, et al., An evaluation of machine-learning methods for predicting pneumonia mortality. *Artificial Intelligence in Medicine* 9, no. 2 (1997).

2. Joseph A. Cruz, and David S. Wishart, Applications of machine learning in cancer prediction and prognosis. *Cancer Informatics* 2 (2006); Sung-Bae Cho, and Hong-Hee Won, Machine learning in DNA microarray analysis for cancer classification. In *Proceedings of the First Asia-Pacific bioinformatics conference on Bioinformatics* 19 (2003).

3. Robert P. Schumaker, and Hsinchun Chen, Textual analysis of stock market prediction using breaking financial news: The AZFin text system. *ACM Transactions on Information Systems (TOIS)* 27, no. 2 (2009), 12; Paul D. Yoo, Maria H. Kim, and Tony Jan, Machine learning techniques and use of event information for stock market prediction: A survey and evaluation. *International Conference on Computational Intelligence for Modeling, Control and Automation (CIMCA 2005)* (835-841) (Piscataway, NJ: IEEE, 2005); Jigar Patel, Sahil Shah, Priyank Thakkar, and K. Kotecha, Predicting stock market index using fusion of machine learning techniques. *Expert Systems with Applications* 42, no. 4 (2015).

4. Arthur L. Samuel, Some studies in machine learning using the game of checkers. *IBM Journal of Research and Development* 3, no. 3 (1959).

5. Aurélien Géron, *Hands-On Machine Learning With Scikit-Learn and Tensor Flow: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques to Build Intelligent Systems* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2017), 4.

6. Tom M. Mitchell, *Machine Learning* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

As humans, we frequently address learning to enhance our thinking to harvest knowledge. Nevertheless, humans generally learn things unconsciously and as a result, it becomes quite difficult to simulate the structure of a human intelligence deeply. Due to the increasing demand from related fields of study, researchers in this field are extensively working on building efficient algorithms to digest statistical data with machine learning structures. However, it is not only the science applications benefitting from implementations of machine learning. Progressively artists are starting to seek how machine learning can be employed in the process of art-making. Consequently, machine learning can be used to drive new and compelling ideas for the arts community as equally as well.

Related Work

Computational systems have become an integral part of our contemporary lives and arts also has been deeply influenced by the recent technological advancements in machine learning. As a consequence, there is a growing number of artists who are ambitious to create new forms of art with the use of machine learning. As a composer of interactive electronic music, Laetitia Sonami is best known for her live-performances with the use of an electronic apparatus named Lady's Glove. Lady's glove consists of various electronic sensors and actuators that are used to manipulate sound elements located on a connected computer. In the same manner, Sonami later created the Lady's Glove's successor the Spring Spyre with a different computational structure. Spring Spyre employs a machine learning tool named Wekinator that is a free, open-source software developed by a researcher named Rebecca Fiebrink. According to Fiebrink,⁷ Wekinator lets users create new musical systems with data provided by gestural components.

Sonami, in 2016, defines her experience as a gained flexibility with the fun of exploring exciting results. Previously with the Lady's Glove, her performances have relied on explicit rules defined apriori by the artists' decisions in building an interactive system. Therefore she needed to apply certain filters to separate various types of gestures from the each other. Later with the addition of machine learning, Sonami was allowed to reverse the decision-making orientation by teaching performative gestures to the system and after recalling them during her live performances (Figure 1).

7. Rebecca Fiebrink, Machine Learning as Meta-Instrument: Human-Machine Partnerships Shaping Expressive Instrumental Creation. In *Musical Instruments in the 21st Century*, ed. Till Bovermann, Alberto de Campo, Hauke Egermann, Sarah-Indriyati Hardjowirogo, and Stefan Weinzierl (137-151) (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

Figure 1. *Spring Spyre* by Laetitia Sonami

Similar to Sonami, Gene Kogan is an artist working with programming skills to find cross sections of computer science with arts. Kogan has been working on developing a free educational resource "ml4a" for artists who would want to integrate machine learning into their art projects. In addition to his academic activities, Kogan creates distinctive works of art with extensive machine learning influence. Kogan's artwork titled Doodle Tunes⁸ enables the users to turn simple hand drawings of musical instruments into computer-based sound sample players (Figure 2).

Figure 2. *Doodle Tunes* by Gene Kogan

Kogan implements convolutional neural networks to analyze the hand-drawings with computer vision techniques and classifies them into musical instruments with certain prediction values. In another work titled Neural

8. *Doodle Tunes*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2zHllra>.

Synthesis, in 2017, Kogan experiments with a technique called neural synthesis. According to Kogan, neural synthesis manipulates bitmap images with a pixel-based optimization technique to attain some desired level of activations in a convolutional neural network. In his video artwork submitted to an Annual Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems,⁹ it is observed that the dream-like hallucinogenic visual content reminds us the similar processing technique that was used in the famous artwork "Deepdream" by Alexander Mordvintsev. Similarly, we are observing a certain kind of a visual abstraction with the use of the neural synthesis technique. In Deep Dream example, Mordvintsev et al.¹⁰ have trained an artificial neural network with millions of training data to adjust the system to deliver the desired set of classification schemes. Based on this classification scheme, researchers then require the system to give them a qualitative sense of the level of abstraction which they name "Inceptionism." As a result, the machine learning enables the researcher to deliver unexpected visual contents within an iterative process (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Deep Dream*



Likewise, Markov Chains have been implemented in a project called The Mansfield Reporter by Max Lupo.¹¹ According to Lupo, The Mansfield Reporter is a simple device that creates new texts generated from some of history's greatest authors like Friedrich Nietzsche, William Shakespeare, or Gertrude Stein etc. Based on the previous corpus of texts, the algorithm uses statistical methods to create similar texts that have a structural resemblance to well-known authors

9. *Neural synthesis*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2DvzQ5c>.

10. Alexander Mordvintsev, Christopher Olah, and Mike Tyka, *Inceptionism: Going deeper into neural networks* (June 17, 2015). Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2M5NfAg>.

11. Max Lupo, *The Mansfield Reporter* (November 1, 2015). Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2OWoRD8>.

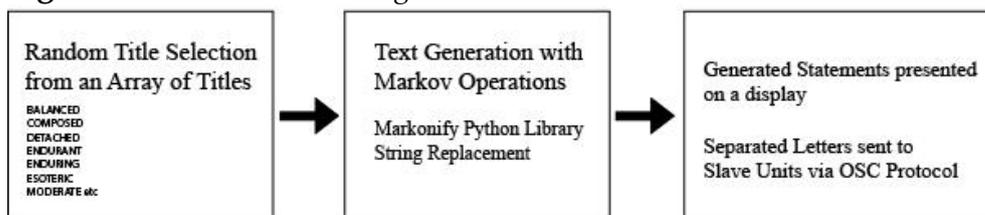
of the past. With a substantial amount of previous data, Markov Chains enable us to stochastically forecast probabilistic models with a reliable outcome.

Methodology

The work presented in this paper was manifested as a piece of interactive art, taking the form of an installation within a group show at the Futuretellers Exhibition, Zorlu PSM Istanbul in 2017. This piece is built on establishing an environment that utilizes Machine Learning algorithms to generate artistic discourse based on multiple computational systems. Because of the distributed computational necessities required by the art piece, the idea of having a hub of interconnected computers have been pursued to handle the results of the machine learning algorithms. In particular, nine micro-size computers (Raspberry) were interconnected to a local network and the communication traffic was accomplished with the use of a network protocol named Open Sound Control (OSC).¹² OSC is a networking protocol developed to establish data communications between a variety of multimedia devices optimized for computers. Originally when the protocol was created, its essential task was to use it with musical systems for performances. Later with its widespread acceptance, the same protocol applies to the communication of data of any sort such as text, images, sound etc. (Figure 4).

The main computer performs Markov Chain operations in real time and creates a new content when a spectator presses a button. The representation of display interfaces and the OSC network communication were developed in the Processing Development Environment.¹³

Figure 4. Text Generation Algorithm



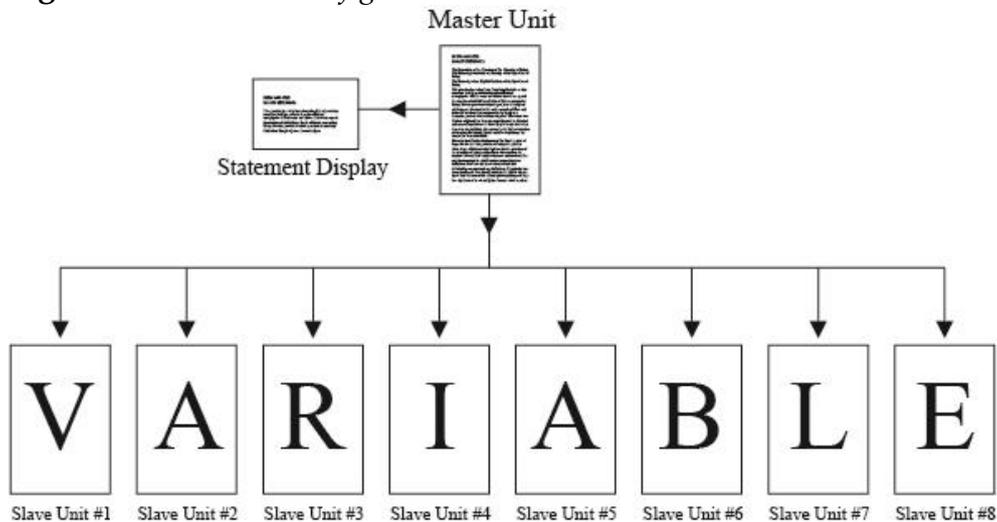
Markovify is a simple Markov chain generator that generates random sentences from a given text. According to Singer-Vine, Markovify works

12. Matthew Wright, Open Sound Control: an enabling technology for musical networking. *Organised Sound* 10, no. 3 (2005).

13. Casey Reas, and Ben Fry, *Processing: a programming handbook for visual designers and artists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2007).

efficiently with considerably large, well-punctuated contents.¹⁴ Consequently, Being and Time text was organized with necessary punctuation structuring that is required by the Markovify Library (Figure 5).

Figure 5. *Data Flow Configuration*



The main structure of the installation is built on a facade of a stainless reflective steel with dimensions of 60 cm to 170 cm. With its minimalist view, its facade serves as a mirror reflecting its gallery space and all its sophisticated technology have been hidden at the behind. Thus, visitors to the exhibition are invited to become an immersive element for the artwork with their reflected images on the reflective surface.

As seen in Figure 6, very slim white fluorescent lights have been installed in between the LCD screens as solid separators. The aesthetical decision made for the choice of fluorescents aims to enhance the feeling of contrast between the artwork' tactile materiality and digital non-materiality. In addition to the main structure, a smaller LCD display was placed in a black housing and it was positioned to the right hand side of the piece to display conventional information about the art piece. Participants were permitted to use the button on the box to generate new versions for the piece.

14. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2xQFVnE>.

Figure 6. *Variable (from an exhibition)*

With the use of the Machine Learning algorithm, a new title and a statement is generated instantly as soon as a person interacts with the artwork. Simultaneously, the generated title word is split into its letters and they are placed on each of the display screens separately accompanying a flowing text animation. Since the new generated texts are commonly contained with ontological questions based on the concept of "being," the frequent use of the words "being" are replaced by the generated artwork's titles with a string operation. Correspondingly, the artistic statement encapsulates a new ontological content that discusses on a new title for the artwork based on Heidegger's philosophical point of view.

Conclusion

Inevitably technology has a great impact on shaping the way we perceive art with many intertwined dimensions. Needless to say that it is not an unexpected result since it has always been true for the cases in which we observe the inclusion of technology in the art-making process. Previously it could have been the invention of a new painting technique with the use of an emerging apparatus, today it is just another advancement in the technical implementation and most likely that it is based on concurrent digital technologies. Similarly, when machine learning became available for the artists to investigate, its creative potential has been intensively explored by the group of artists who are excited with the utilization of technology in the art-making process. This study aims to describe the methodologies behind the way in which the artwork "Variable" has

been produced. In addition to all the research that has been studied in the field of machine intelligence, this artwork aspires to bring about an opportunity to discuss the notion of authenticity. As a result of the attempt to make art with the use of machine learning techniques, it is observed that we have limited information about human intelligence functions when we consider the boundaries of the creativity taking place in the arts.

Bibliography

- Cho, Sung-Bae, and Hong-Hee Won. Machine learning in DNA microarray analysis for cancer classification. In *Proceedings of the First Asia-Pacific bioinformatics conference on Bioinformatics 19* (2003), 189-198.
- Cooper, G. F., C. F. Aliferis, R. Ambrosino, J. Aronis, B. G. Buchanan, R. Caruana, et al. An evaluation of machine-learning methods for predicting pneumonia mortality. *Artificial Intelligence in Medicine* 9, no. 2 (1997), 107-138.
- Cruz, Joseph A., and David S. Wishart. Applications of machine learning in cancer prediction and prognosis. *Cancer Informatics* 2 (2006), 59-77.
- Fiebrink, Rebecca. Machine Learning as Meta-Instrument: Human-Machine Partnerships Shaping Expressive Instrumental Creation. In *Musical Instruments in the 21st Century*, ed. Till Bovermann, Alberto de Campo, Hauke Egermann, Sarah-Indriyati Hardjowirogo, and Stefan Weinzierl, 137-151. Singapore: Springer, 2017.
- Géron, Aurélien. *Hands-On Machine Learning With Scikit-Learn and Tensor Flow: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques to Build Intelligent Systems*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2017.
- Mitchell, Tom M. *Machine Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997.
- Patel, Jigar, Sahil Shah, Priyank Thakkar, and K. Kotecha, Predicting stock market index using fusion of machine learning techniques. *Expert Systems with Applications* 42, no. 4 (2015), 2162-2172.
- Pomerleau, D., and T. Jochem. Rapidly adapting machine vision for automated vehicle steering. *IEEE Expert* 11, no. 2 (1996), 19-27.
- Reas, Casey, and Ben Fry. *Processing: a programming handbook for visual designers and artists*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2007.
- Samuel, Arthur L. Some studies in machine learning using the game of checkers. *IBM Journal of Research and Development* 3, no. 3 (1959), 210-229.
- Schumaker, Robert P., and Hsinchun Chen. Textual analysis of stock market prediction using breaking financial news: The AZFin text system. *ACM Transactions on Information Systems (TOIS)* 27, no. 2 (2009).
- Waibel, A., T. Hanazawa, G. Hinton, K. Shikano, and K. J. Lang. Phoneme recognition using time-delay neural networks. *IEEE Transactions on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing* 37, no. 3, (1989), 328 - 339.
- Wright, Matthew. Open Sound Control: an enabling technology for musical networking. *Organised Sound* 10, no. 3 (2005), 193-200.
- Yoo, Paul D., Maria H. Kim, and Tony Jan. Machine learning techniques and use of event information for stock market prediction: A survey and evaluation. *International*

Conference on Computational Intelligence for Modeling, Control and Automation (CIMCA 2005), 835-841. Piscataway, NJ: IEEE, 2005.

The Meaning of Life: The Major Philosophical Aspects Hidden Behind a Fundamental Question of Human Existence

*By Paul Letsch**

The question of the meaning of life is one of the most crucial questions that the human mind is able to produce. The way we respond to it determines the way we design and arrange our life and our culture. So, what exactly do we mean when we talk about the meaning of life? Behind this expression is hiding a set of very diverse philosophical ideas. Analytic philosophy can be the tool to bring these ideas to the surface, clarify their content and study the conceptual compatibility between each other. My reflection starts off with inserting all philosophically relevant historical answers to this question into five categories that serve as references for the whole context. A summarised conceptual and linguistic analysis is then applied to a number of concepts and issues connected to our topic, such as the concept of meaning itself, the moralistic fallacy, the eudemonistic issue etc. This allows to construct a semantic and conceptual network that brings a great deal of clarification and the possibility to find more precise common grounds for discussion about this highly abstract question. The results of this analysis are used to produce, as a personal outlook, the proposal of a new theory concluding that the demand for life's meaning should be placed in a non-religious, non-teleological and intersubjective narrative for normative purposes.

Introduction

This is the best possible candidate for the meaning of life:¹

The meaning of life is what you can wish to happen in the most favourable case in an unforeseeably faraway future, without having to rely on a God (or something alike), a hereafter or the immateriality of your own person, and the attempt of contributing in the most effective way to its fulfilment.

The paper exposes the reflection leading to this proposal through the clarification of the underlying philosophical concepts of what humanity came up with as answers to the question of the meaning of life. It constitutes one part of the research of a more substantial work in progress for a PhD dissertation.

A synoptic table of categories, a very brief summary of the analysis of the 'hidden' philosophical concepts (a compilation of the arguments from the

*PhD Student, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and Philosophy Teacher, European School of Brussels III, Belgium.

1. In terms of coherence and consistency according to the argumentation presented in the ongoing writing of my dissertation and the far less elaborated summarised extract of it in this paper. No quote, my own outcome.

relevant literature mixed with my own personal reflections) and the new proposal, which is then defended on the basis of the previous analysis and which can be seen as the synthetic contribution to this field of research, are included in this paper.

The objective of my research is to achieve a coherent and consistent outcome for a particular linguistic expression (i.e. 'the meaning of life') and for a philosophical field of concepts connected to this expression. Having them spread out in front of us, we can see if they in themselves make any sense, if they are comprehensible and consistent as such, and if it makes sense to combine these concepts in the way that people have done in the past. This approach should ideally produce progress that corresponds to both of the two questions mentioned by Thaddeus Metz:

"When the topic of the meaning of life comes up, people often pose one of two questions: "So, what is the meaning of life?" and "What are you talking about?" The literature can be divided in terms of which question it seeks to answer."²

The focus lies in a non-exclusive way on the Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy, even though it is far from clear what exact methodology this philosophical school of thought is putting forward.³ I also want to emphasise that I exclude serious considerations of ancient Greek philosophy, though knowing perfectly well that the origins of this subject can also be found in it. This should definitely be done by other scholars that have more expertise in this field in order to make this research more complete.

Overview of the Historical Solutions to the Question of the Meaning of Life

All the historical attempts for solving the demand for life's meaningfulness contain the tendency to express its fundamental metaphysical structure in as few principles as possible.⁴ The categorisation of these attempts is heuristically useful. We can establish two distinct approaches in the form of two pairs of opposites (supernaturalism/naturalism ↔ objectivism/subjectivism) plus one category for the negation of life's meaningfulness.

2. Thaddeus Metz, "The Meaning of Life," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2007), <https://stanford.io/2PeOmPC>, introduction.

3. Michael Beaney, "Analysis," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2003; substantive revision 2014), <https://stanford.io/2KLhtck>, chapter 9.

4. Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Works on the Meaning of Life," *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (July 2002), 783; Thaddeus Metz, "The Meaning of Life," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2007), <https://stanford.io/2PeOmPC>, chapter 2.

This generalised overview is as such already instructive through its emphasis on the key ideas of these conceptual frameworks, but the categories serve above all as referential shortcuts within the analysis of the hidden concepts behind ‘the meaning of life’.

The four positive solutions are not strictly distinctive groups because depending on what answer is to be considered, a certain group might become a sub-group of another, which is for instance mostly the case for objectivism and naturalism. This categorisation is largely inspired by Thaddeus Metz, Elmer Klemke and Joshua Seachris.

<i>Positive solutions</i> (→ <i>there is a meaning of life</i>)		<i>Negative solutions</i> (→ <i>there is no meaning of life</i>)
Supernaturalism ⁵	Naturalism ⁶	Nihilism, pessimism and specific forms of existentialism
Objectivism ⁷	Subjectivism ⁸	

In his articles, T. Metz divides for instance supernaturalism into a theistic and a non-theistic conception.⁹ The latter having less of an impact in society due to its relatively lower popularity, this differentiation is largely neglected here.¹⁰ The most representative ideas of the supernaturalist approach in general are at the same time the most relevant ideas of monotheistic religions and the possible theoretical implications they establish onto the world and the whole universe: the idea of God, the idea of an immaterial soul and the idea of an immaterial hereafter.

In principle, Elmer Klemke’s categorisation approximately matches with the one from Metz inasmuch as Klemke establishes the pair of opposites ‘theistic’/

5. “Supernaturalist theories are views that meaning in life must be constituted by a certain relationship with a spiritual realm.” [Thaddeus Metz, “The Meaning of Life,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2007; substantive revision 2013), <https://stanford.io/2P8U59n>.]

6. Naturalists are “those who believe that a significant existence can be had in a purely physical world as known by science.” [Ibid.]

7. “Objective naturalists believe that meaning is constituted (at least in part) by something physical independent of the mind about which we can have correct or incorrect beliefs.” [Ibid.] Although, I believe that the supernaturalist theories also belong to the category of objectivism.

8. “According to this view, meaning in life varies from person to person, depending on each one’s variable mental states.” [Ibid.]

9. Thaddeus Metz, “The Meaning of Life,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2007), <https://stanford.io/2PeOmPC>, introduction; Thaddeus Metz, “Recent Works on the Meaning of Life,” *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (July 2002), 783.

10. Conceptually speaking, the discussion about the main ideas of theism covers more or less the discussion about the fundamental ideas of supernaturalist non-theism.

‘non-theistic’ when ‘theistic’ is understood as supernaturalist and ‘non-theistic’ as naturalist and only if, as mentioned before for my own approach, the difference between non-theistic supernaturalist theories and theistic supernaturalist ones is not taken into consideration.¹¹ Metz does formulate this in a more precise way because it is more consistent to see theism merely as a sub-idea of supernaturalism. Supernaturalism is the broader concept and as such it is used in this paper. Klemke also adds the semantic examination of the studied expression as an entire independent category.¹² In contrast to this, Metz pursues the linguistic analysis outside his approach of generalising the historical solutions.

It is interesting to notice that Metz does not draw up a 2x2 table for the positive solutions (as I am proposing above) but splits up his category of naturalism into objectivism and subjectivism.¹³ This approach can be problematic when a certain form of objectivism is seen as a supernaturalist answer, a circumstance that is mentioned in his own article when claiming that Robert Nozick’s naturalist theory is tending towards supernaturalism.¹⁴ But the approach of Metz can be agreed upon when the only form of objectivism that is being discussed is exclusively a *naturalist* objectivism. For this reason, it is helpful to explicitly distinguish between ‘objective naturalism’ and ‘subjective naturalism’ – like Seachris does¹⁵ – to avoid misunderstandings.

Summarised Analysis of the Relevant Underlying Concepts of the Expression ‘The Meaning of Life’

The Concept of Meaning

The problematic part in the expression ‘the meaning of life’ is not so much ‘life’. ‘Life’ can be completed with ‘my life’, ‘our life’, ‘the life of human kind’, ‘the life of all living creatures’, or it can be substituted with ‘existence’ in general, with ‘the totality of the universe’ or even with ‘being’: the expression will still preserve a very similar signification and will still address the same topic. The more problematic part in our studied expression is the concept of meaning. For the second part in this expression – probably for anthropocentric reasons –

11. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn, *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

12. Ibid.

13. Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Works on the Meaning of Life," *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (July 2002), 792. His position stays the same in his more recent articles.

14. Ibid., 799.

15. Joshua Seachris, "Meaning of Life: The Analytic Perspective," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011), <https://bit.ly/2rwZkq0>, chapter 3.c.

almost all the studied literature targets our human life, be it individually or collectively.

The concept of meaning in our specific context, as in ‘the meaning of life’ and not as in ‘the meaning of the word bike’, has a close connection with the concept of *purpose*¹⁶ and with the concept of *value*¹⁷. A. J. Ayer, for instance, states that purpose represents in general the matter of an intention that one considers to be desirable, and meaning the attempt to realise the desirable objective.¹⁸ This is very convincing. But in order to associate purpose with the question of life’s meaning, it has to be understood as a freely chosen purpose, as a purpose that we humans determine ourselves if we do not want it to be confounded with the concept of *function*.¹⁹ It is important to note that ‘purpose’ is not used in this article as in ‘purpose theory’ which can be seen as a certain kind of supernaturalist theory.²⁰

‘Meaning’ in our expression includes necessarily also a direction, as Jean Grondin points out.²¹ The purpose that we want to set up in order to ascribe meaning to our life (or to existence in general) is an objective that lies chronologically ahead of us.

Furthermore, according to Ronald Hepburn, analytic philosophers refuse to assign one single purpose to life when people talk about its meaningfulness. Actually, we always have to deal with multiple purposes that are commonly bundled in the concept of purpose in our context, and all of those purposes are connected to each other in a semantic and conceptual network.²² Semantically speaking, could for instance the meaning of life be considered sufficiently covered by the idea of survival? This has to be denied. But it is a necessity to include it.

Hepburn confirms the above by saying that the analysed expression can only be precisely understood when it is connected to a purpose-ascription that

16. Volker Gerhardt, "Sinn des Lebens" (Meaning of Life), in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, vol. 9 (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1995), column 815.

17. Ibid.

18. Alfred J. Ayer, "The Claims of Philosophy," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 199.

19. Kurt E. M. Baier, *The Meaning of Life: Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Canberra University College on 15 October 1957* (Canberra: The Canberra University College, 1957), 20 sqq.

20. Thaddeus Metz, *Meaning in Life. An Analytic Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 77-118.

21. Jean Grondin, "Le sens de la vie : une question assez récente, mais pleine de saveur" (The meaning of life: a quite recent question, but full of flavour), *Théologiques* 9, no. 2 (2001), 12.

22. Ronald W. Hepburn, "Questions about the Meaning of Life," *Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (April 1966), 126.

targets objectives that we desire. At the same time, Hepburn reveals the link to moral judgements.²³

“To say that 'making life meaningful' is a matter of 'pursuing valuable, worthwhile ends' is to say that it is an activity that indispensably involves value judgment. The description of cosmic patterns, tendencies or trends does not obviate the need to make autonomous judgments about the worthwhileness or otherwise of following, or promoting or opposing any of these.”²⁴

Seachris confirms this viewpoint by saying that most Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophers approach the question with some sort of amalgam that consists of concepts like purpose, value, worthwhileness, meaningfulness, death, futility etc. Besides the moral aspect (right/wrong), also to be considered are aesthetic (good/beautiful), eudemonistic (happiness) claims and the various connections between these aspects.²⁵

Normativity

Meaningfulness gains a lot of transparency when we separate the descriptive *Is*-dimension from the prescriptive *Should*-dimension. But the conceptual circumference of one of those two dimensions is not always completely clear: Seachris for instance undertakes a distinction between an explanatory and a normative dimension where ‘explanation’ means more than just the description of facts.²⁶ It means finding out what our different statements mean without necessarily referring to real facts, understanding what we deal with when we look into a matter.²⁷ It is very well possible to determine in an explanatory way the meaning of some theory about a cosmic purpose without being able to find describable facts that underlay the existence of this cosmic purpose. On the other hand, it is rather unproblematic to understand ‘prescriptive *Should*-dimension’ and ‘normative dimension’ as the same thing.

Meaning in our sense contains necessarily a normative request and must be distanced from a purely descriptive narrative. We can agree that the occurrence of merely having or owning a purpose (and thus possibly discovering it) does not yet create this normativity, but *setting up* or *creating* a purpose does. The latter would exactly be the kind of purpose that we need for having it connected with our ‘meaning’. Both ‘purpose’ and ‘meaning’ only make sense in this context

23. Ronald W. Hepburn, "Questions about the Meaning of Life," *Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (April 1966), 127.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Joshua Seachris, "Meaning of Life: The Analytic Perspective," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011), <https://bit.ly/2rwZkq0>, chapter 1.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

when we assign them to ourselves and not when it is imposed on us. The act of ascription lies already within normativity if we draw a categorical line to neurological descriptions that could be considered the origin of this act. For instance, the expression 'to be alive' (when nothing jeopardizes this life) is a lot harder to associate with the meaning of life than 'to survive'. This is due to the specificity of 'meaning' within 'the meaning of life'. Trying to survive implies the possible case of not surviving, thus dying. Just merely being alive does conceptually not necessarily imply this because it can be seen as the mere result of a causal chain of something just happening in this universe. The fact that there is an option between survival and no survival gives us the possibility to set up the purpose (which formulated like this is only choosing between one or the other). This is exactly what normativity implies: the possibility for setting up a direction to head to for our actions or thoughts with the necessary existence of one or more alternatives, and thus without being bound by the mere causality of nature, or at least without feeling of being bound by the mere causality of nature.²⁸ Another example: it is impossible to see the Christian paradise as meaningful without having a hell (or another alternative) as its counterpart. If paradise would come in any case whatever we do, we could not anymore assign a purpose (in our sense) to it. It might be meaningful for God having created a paradise without a hell for whatever reason that we ignore, but not for us human beings, and this is so because we cannot avoid assigning to 'meaning' its conceptual and semantic specificity.

Finding meaningfulness objectively (whether supernaturalist or naturalist) in an either blindly evolving universe or an intelligence/consciousness-impregnated (usually immaterial) sphere behind or within this universe fails. The reason for me to exclude pure objectivism from the establishing of a new theoretical proposal is less to be found in the impossibility of explaining the signification of those philosophical theories or in the impossibility of finding hard empirical facts for it, than rather in the impossibility of explaining them without major flaws in putting together their conceptual components in a coherent and consistent way, and especially associating the set of all their components with a correct understanding of 'meaning' (see above): a purpose must be assigned by a subject (be it one individual or a group or the whole society) that consciously sets up a desirable intention, himself and in a non-coercive way, and the attempt of realising this intention creates the meaningfulness of it. In that respect, it does not matter if a cosmic conscious intelligent entity exists or not.

If we cannot associate meaning with objectivism and we need to associate it with a normative request, are we compelled to adopt subjectivism? It is tempting to assign to any normative request the aspect of subjectivity and to any fact

28. This does not necessarily mean that one cannot be a determinist in order to agree with this.

description (and maybe also *explanation* as such) the aspect of objectivity. But I believe that these associations cannot be upheld rigorously. Every normative request is indeed connected to a decision that, at some point, must be based on our will, based on something that we want. If what we should do or what we should not do is determined by our will, we might want to determine if this will has to be seen as our own individual will independently of others or if we can consider a harmonisation with others, and then we leave the field of pure subjectivity and we enter the one of intersubjectivity.²⁹

Rationality, Emotionality and the Moralistic Fallacy

Are the requests of our will based exclusively on emotions? Is thereby every normative claim irrational? Does unemotional rationality even exist? A part of the early analytic philosophy with Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle and A. J. Ayer denied any form of rationality towards the 'meaning of life' and all other value-based and normative requests.³⁰ It was often attempted to refute this radical claim, although it is true that we do not really know (yet) how to justify a fundamental normative request.

We have to separate the *reasoning about* something from the *motivation for* something to clarify this issue. We may perfectly well accept the scientifically very convincing hypothesis that every will is the product of a neurological state of potentially descriptive and causally determinable facts, nevertheless, it is still right to assume that the foundation of a normative request (that stands for the starting-point of a broader narrative) is solely emotionally motivated:³¹ *strictly logically* speaking, even if everybody finds it completely 'unreasonable' to wish for our whole species to die out, the last judging instance for finding this 'unreasonable' is the emotion not to *want* to die out. Logic has nothing to do with not wanting to die out, logic has only something to do with how we possibly will not die out if we wish not to die out. Pure coherent and consistent description of facts does not need any emotions involved for the description process (except for the fact that making this description in the first place is emotionally motivated, otherwise we would not do anything). But normative requests need both emotionality and rationality:

- a. The most basic foundation of the normative request, or the most fundamental

29. Daan Evers and Gerlinde Emma van Smeden, "Meaning in Life: In Defence of the Hybrid View," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 3 (Sep. 2016).

30. Winfried Löffler, "Sinn" (Meaning), in *Neues Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Petra Kolmer and Armin G. Wildfeuer, vol. 3 (Freiburg and München: Karl Alber, 2011), 1995.

31. An emotion that can be scientifically described does not make it less of an emotion.

value to be pursued, needs an emotional motive.³²

- b. This first value³³ is the starting-point (or maybe in the other direction the final consequence) of a reasoning that constructs a conceptual network of arguments, and the different elements of this network need to be put together by rationality to fulfil the criteria of coherence and consistency.

The biggest problem in this discussion is not that every normative claim (and thus that the most fundamental purpose being established for a theory about the meaning of life) is, at some point, based on an emotion, it is rather the fact that some conceptual approaches for the meaning of life *confound* the establishment of a purpose based on our will with some objectively real thing that is assumed to exist in the universe or beyond.³⁴ This confusion can be called *the moralistic fallacy*.³⁵ The latter allows at least as much arbitrariness as human-will-based or human-mind-created purposes, probably even more arbitrariness. Supernaturalists, for instance, delegate the will, i.e. what we want, to an external conscious intelligence on a cosmic level. This does not solve anything concerning the meaning of life because the moment we find out that the supernaturalist theory has taken away our responsibility for the purpose-ascription, we realise that we have lost the moral status that we necessarily must possess in order for the meaning of life to make real sense. If the ‘meaning’ is not ‘our meaning’ anymore, the concept of meaningfulness for our life loses its specific definition.³⁶ The supernaturalist’s ‘meaning of life’ is merely a ‘function of life’.

32. The following statement, for instance, defends this approach: “But what counts as a worthy object cannot be determined either from a totally neutral and impersonal point of view.” [Susan Wolf, "Meaning in Life: Meeting the Challenges," *Foundations of Science* 21, no. 2 (June 2016), 279.]

33. “first value” not to be confounded with ‘intrinsic value’.

34. Karl Popper calls those theories “kritikimmun” and are therefore dangerous. [Winfried Löffler, "Sinn" (Meaning), in *Neues Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Petra Kolmer and Armin G. Wildfeuer, vol. 3 (Freiburg and München: Karl Alber, 2011), 1998.]

35. Justin D’Arms and E. C. Moore talk about the moralistic fallacy. [Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, no. 1 (July 2000); Edward C. Moore, "The moralistic fallacy," *Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 2 (1957).] The term has assumingly been applied toward its present meaning by Bernard B. Davis through the article "The moralistic fallacy," in *Nature*, vol. 272 (1978). Retrieved from <https://go.nature.com/2E7daH4>.

36. Ronald W. Hepburn, "Questions about the Meaning of Life," *Religious Studies*, 1, no. 2 (April 1966), 127: “Religious and metaphysical statements are still statements of fact, and therefore logically cannot in themselves be answers to questions about meaning. Second: if human life is given purpose by virtue of man’s fulfilling the task assigned to him by God, it will be ‘purpose’ in the autonomy-denying, dignity-destroying sense.”

The Eudemonistic Issue

The will for something or wanting something is often perceived as directly linked to what can possibly make us happy, whatever this 'being happy' means. Happiness is certainly one of the most popular meaning-ascribing notions that we know of and as such it is one of the hidden aspects of various maxims or theories expressing meaningfulness. The Christian notion of paradise (e.g.) does not make any sense if we could not project a state of perfect (hedonistic) happiness in it. For eudemonistic ethics such as conceived by Aristotle, it is not a hidden aspect but rather the central notion of the narrative. Though, this does not mean that it is always patently linked to the expression of the meaning of life.

Kurt Baier wrote that those who are in search for a meaning of life are evidently looking for a positive meaning.³⁷ Hereby the transition to and the visible connection with the context of ethics is confirmed, and the link to the notion of happiness is established. Seachris confirms in his overview article that both ethical, esthetical and eudemonistic requests are contained in the demand for meaning, and that all of them are in certain ways related to each other that have yet to be discovered.³⁸

The eudemonistic issue is in some respect more or less present in all the conceptual approaches of the positive solutions, as well for supernaturalists, objective naturalists and subjectivists. Even in the group of the negationists, such as pessimism, the aspect of happiness does play a role too, at least as a denied positive aspect, one that we aspire to, but one that the universe cannot provide us with.³⁹ This approach assumes the unquestionable characteristic of the human being of requiring happiness, which is similar (if happiness is situated in or close to a hedonistic narrative) to saying that we aspire to a life devoid of suffering and pain or a life with as little suffering and pain as possible, even if this condition is seen as unreachable (the credo par excellence of Schopenhauer).⁴⁰ It is indeed difficult to imagine that the human being creates willingly a purpose that excludes completely the aspect of happiness.

Of course, talking about happiness should include the study of what happiness consists of, and not only eudemonistic ethics deal with this question. This object of study is not part of this work. But the human being does not

37. Kurt Baier, *Problems of Life & Death. A Humanist Perspective* (Prometheus Lecture Series) (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1997), 50.

38. Joshua Seachris, "Meaning of Life: The Analytic Perspective," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011), <https://bit.ly/2rwZkq0>, chapter 1.

39. Jean Grondin, "Le sens de la vie : une question assez récente, mais pleine de saveur" (The meaning of life: a quite recent question, but full of flavour), *Théologiques* 9, no. 2 (2001).

40. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The world as will and representation*), complete works and definitive version from Ludger Lütkehaus, 4th ed. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008).

always opt for happiness as the most important thing to be pursued in life. Our will can target other worthwhile values: another very different candidate for instance is *authenticity*. A convincing argument to exclude the eudemonistic aspect as the predominant one from the context of life's meaningfulness is put forward by Robert Nozick's thought experiment called 'experience machine'.⁴¹ He invites us to imagine living in a virtual machine that feeds our minds with experiences that subjectively produce perfect happiness and a state of absence of complaints, without ignoring though that an 'un-virtual' real life exists outside this machine. Nozick argues that we would not necessarily want to continue to stay in this machine because this kind of life lacks authenticity, this kind of life is a lie. Being aware of this could be enough reason for us to choose to abandon this state of perfect happiness.⁴² Martin Heidegger is also mentioning authenticity as primordial for human existence.⁴³ It can be argued that for the meaning of our life, the strongest purpose-giving instance is not happiness but authenticity or maybe even something else that is still to be elaborated. Another question that has to be addressed is if authenticity ascribes happiness to life or vice versa, and how they, if at all, are linked to each other.

Possibly happiness does not constitute the primary value for establishing life's most consistent meaningfulness if we consider imagining a hierarchy of aspects that constitute this meaning. But happiness can at least be considered a bonus candidate that should be included if life's meaning is found to be constructible in multiple alternative ways, which is for instance feasible when we put life's meaningfulness in a subjective or an intersubjective narrative. A possible new theory about the meaning of life should allow some conceptual space for including it.

Meaninglessness and Absurdity

The two notions of meaninglessness and absurdity can be used synonymously, and the authors who do so connote both notions with something

41. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 42 sqq.

42. Thaddeus Metz, "The Meaning of Life," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2007), <https://stanford.io/2PeOmPC>, chapter 1. But the inverse argument can also be defended, which is done, for instance, in a scene in the movie *Matrix* (1999; directed by the Wachowski brothers) where Cypher offers to the agents to betray Neo in order to be put back into the Matrix with a privileged life.

43. Charles Guignon on Heidegger: "To live authentically, then, is to [...] direct oneself towards the fulfilment of one's own life story with clarity, integrity and steadfastness, and [...] to take responsibility for what one's own life is adding up to, resolutely holding to one's own chosen life-defining commitments by carrying forwards [...] what one has been in one's undertakings." [Charles Guignon, "Martin Heidegger: Being and Time," in *Central Works of Philosophy*, vol. 4, ed. John Shand (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 101.]

negative and irrational. Or they can be conceptually and semantically separated if this is useful for clarification purposes. ‘Meaninglessness’ can be distinguished from ‘absurdity’ as being the difference of for instance ‘*the universe or some divine entity does not provide us and life in general with some kind of purpose*’ and ‘*I don’t feel (subjectively) any purpose in my life*’ (as in a state of depression). The difference lies between *externality* (outside the mental sphere) and *internality* (inside the mental sphere). Approximatively, the first notion would be a conceptual component of an objectivist narrative, be it supernaturalist or naturalist, and the second notion a conceptual component of a subjectivist narrative. Joel Feinberg for instance talks about the difference between “absurdity *in* life” and “absurdity *of* life”.⁴⁴ The first would correspond to the above mentioned ‘absurdity’, the second to ‘meaninglessness’. Thomas Nagel distinguishes also the “in our life”-perspective from the “outside our life”-perspective, whereas both perspectives combined are producing absurdity in his opinion.⁴⁵ Thaddeus Metz gives preference to the formulation also used in this article when he says that “Nagel distinguishes between the meaninglessness of a life and its absurdity”.⁴⁶

This differentiation is helpful to extract the hidden objectivist approach from the narratives defending a life of absurdity. The considered authors are inferring their absurdity from a meaningless universe in the sense described before,⁴⁷ and there is no logical necessity to do so when meaning is to be produced by a conscious future-projecting mind that establishes it. On this point for instance, Camus and Sartre disagree with each other, although Sartre also bases his reflection on a partly contingent universe.⁴⁸ But he does not deduce the absurdity of human existence from this contingency. On the other hand, a subjectivist may have a much harder job to believe in the inevitability of absurdity because his choice of replying to the demand for meaning depends entirely on himself and his liberty of constructing it.

Again, the blindly and unconsciously evolving universe not having by itself a meaning is as such evidently only problematic for objectivists. Either they wish for a phenomenon to contain something that is by its true nature merely a

44. Joel Feinberg, "Absurd Self-Fulfillment," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 155.

45. Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145.

46. Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Works on the Meaning of Life," *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (July 2002), 811 (footnote).

47. Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde (The Myth of Sisyphus: An Essay on the Absurd)* (Collection folio essais, no. 11) (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Jacques Monod, *Le hasard et la nécessité. Essai sur la philosophie naturelle de la biologie moderne (Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

48. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme (Existentialism is a Humanism)* (Collection Pensées) (Paris: Nagel, 1946).

product of our mind (which can thus be called moralistic fallacy) and which – not finding it – will turn them into defenders of absurdity without necessarily being consistent enough to permanently stay in this state of resignation, or they recur to the hypothesis of a cosmic intelligence and wish, as supernaturalist objectivists, to delegate the establishing of meaning to this cosmic intelligence that has that (very human) faculty of planning into the future and setting up an intuitively felt positive goal towards which we should head to. This undertaking can be considered an anthropomorphism and is therefore as such a dubious thought process for our context.

Jean Grondin underlines the circumstance that the negationists are only able to discover absurdity because they are hiding their very strong wish for life to have a fulfilling meaning without discovering it and thus without being able to avoid a feeling of resignation.⁴⁹ The cosmic irrationality assigned by Camus and Monod upon existence can be solved by simply giving up objectivism.⁵⁰

Probably the most famous portrayal of absurdity has been done by Albert Camus and his *Myth of Sisyphus*.⁵¹ Richard Taylor and Joel Feinberg studied this myth to elaborate a further understanding of the approach of denying meaningfulness to life.⁵²

The Perspective

For Thomas Nagel, the concept of absurdity has its origin in our mental faculty to adopt different perspectives for looking at ourselves and our own life.⁵³ The two extremes of the spectrum of possible perspectives, the view from within our own mind and the view from an outside point in the universe, collide with each other.⁵⁴ The subjective perspective is the one we usually adopt in everyday life. Nevertheless, the human being has also the capacity to zoom out of this

49. Jean Grondin, "Le sens de la vie : une question assez récente, mais pleine de saveur" (The meaning of life: a quite recent question, but full of flavour), *Théologiques* 9, no. 2 (2001), 7.

50. Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde* (*The Myth of Sisyphus: An Essay on the Absurd*) (Collection folio essais, no. 11) (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Jacques Monod, *Le hasard et la nécessité. Essai sur la philosophie naturelle de la biologie moderne* (*Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology*) (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

51. Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde* (*The Myth of Sisyphus: An Essay on the Absurd*) (Collection folio essais, no. 11) (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

52. Richard Taylor, "The Meaning of Life," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 134 sqq.; Joel Feinberg, "Absurd Self-Fulfillment," in *ibid.*, 154 sqq.

53. Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

54. *Ibid.*, 145.

inner mental world to a spatial and temporal endlessly faraway point and moment in the universe (called *sub specie aeternitatis*).⁵⁵ *Sub specie aeternitatis*, we can look back at us in a completely objectivised way, in a “detached amazement”,⁵⁶ from where we start to question ourselves, our actions, our habits, our possessions and our values. Without being able to ignore that we still are that person, that tiny element that we look at, the feeling of contingency overwhelms us. For Nagel, the discrepancy of these extreme viewpoints produce absurdity in a philosophical sense.⁵⁷ The more external our perspective is, the more we have to increase the frame in which we try to establish meaningfulness.⁵⁸ Embracing God as frame does not necessarily solve the problem either,⁵⁹ he being supposed to exist beyond all imaginable frame. In his later work *The View from Nowhere* from 1986 although, Nagel tries to overcome his own dilemma by setting up an ethical approach:

“far enough outside your own life to reduce the importance of the difference between yourself and other people, yet not so far outside that all human values vanish in a nihilistic blackout”.⁶⁰

I see in this approach of irreconcilable perspectives a similarity to the *Myth of Sisyphus*.⁶¹ Camus also speaks of a conflict between two different tendencies of our mind: on one hand, the tendency to reduce everything down to general rational principles, on the other hand, the tendency to see the universe as something irrational and contingent. Both Nagel and Camus see philosophical reflections as the source of inevitable absurdity and its immediate effect on the psychic constitution of the human being. Camus fights this absurdity off with a particular state of mind that includes defiance and rebelliousness.⁶²

I think that this type of discrepancy between perspectives or between conflictual mental tendencies is merely another approach of the very old amazement about our self-awareness or self-consciousness, only substituted by a new model of explanation. Our mental capacities produce reflections that make us see humanity and ourselves as ridiculously unimportant in the overwhelmingly vastness of the universe. But assessing meaningfulness of our

55. *Ibid.*, 146.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*, 147.

59. *Ibid.*; Volker Gerhardt, "Sinn des Lebens" (Meaning of Life), in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, vol. 9 (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1995), column 821.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde (The Myth of Sisyphus: An Essay on the Absurd)* (Collection folio essais, no. 11) (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

62. *Ibid.*, 77-78, 167-168.

life by measuring an inappropriate kind of importance that depends on our smallness within time or space is not necessarily consistent, because both are distinct categories. This does not mean though that the aspect of time does not play *any* role in the necessary components of meaningfulness.⁶³

The Standard

Iddo Landau shows in a convincing way that the assessment of meaningfulness depends on the evaluation standard that we assign to this meaningfulness,⁶⁴ rather than on the fearful and exaggerated proportion we are supposed to adopt within a certain spatio-temporal scale.

By the definition of standard itself, the one for meaningfulness is evidently set up by ourselves and can thus – depending on who sets it up and how he does it – vary strongly. It is quite easily imaginable to demand a very moderate standard for the cosmic perspective, even *sub specie aeternitatis* in an objective and impersonal way,⁶⁵ since one cannot be necessarily deduced from the other. The assumption of smallness and very low impact upon the universe *sub specie aeternitatis* does not necessarily imply that life has to be seen as meaningless.⁶⁶ Pessimists establish unreachable and god-like standards for life, without really justifying these standards. They set up a threshold for meaningfulness around aspects like absence of suffering, permanent or quasi-permanent presence of happiness, immortality etc. Though, establishing these exaggerated standards can be regarded as completely arbitrary and not standing up to critical questioning.⁶⁷ It equals what could be called the imaginary fantasy of the theists without being able to recur to immaterial phenomena and thus failing meaningfulness as such in their sense. Kurt Baier claims already in 1957 that also Christianity contains unjustified exaggerated evaluation standards of life.⁶⁸ This is also the reason why it is so difficult to refute pessimism in a consistent way when we discuss with them. We realise that our arguments will not convince them precisely because of the relativity of the standards which might have been set up by people from a very different theoretical, psychological or cultural

63. See below under the chapter "The Infinite Regress".

64. Iddo Landau, "The Meaning of Life Sub Specie Aeternitatis," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89, no. 4 (December 2011); Iddo Landau, "Standards, Perspectives, and the Meaning of Life: A Reply to Seachris," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 17, no. 3 (June 2014).

65. Iddo Landau, "The Meaning of Life Sub Specie Aeternitatis," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89, no. 4 (December 2011), 727.

66. *Ibid.*, 727, 733.

67. Paul Edwards, "Life, meaning and value of," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 4 (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 473.

68. Kurt Baier, *The Meaning of Life: Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Canberra University College on 15 October 1957* (Canberra: The Canberra University College, 1957), 27.

background. Spinoza for instance argues the complete opposite, that a completely miserable life has to be preferred over the inexistence of life, and logically speaking there is nothing wrong with this claim either.⁶⁹

Value, Intrinsic Value and the Worthwhileness

Is the evaluation standard completely arbitrary? Can we just make it up out of nothing if we are not allowed to connect it with a spatio-temporal perspective? Assigning a standard to something, as well as assigning a purpose to something, must necessarily depend on the values that we cherish. Though, this does not yet prevent arbitrariness because now it is the value that depends on us, our feelings and thoughts. Both ‘meaningfulness’ on one side and things like ‘value’ and ‘honour’ on the other side are not to be discovered in nature itself.⁷⁰ The latter is a belief that the value-objectivists defend, for instance by stating that the human mind is also part of nature (which I completely agree with), but unless one does not reduce everything to a descriptive ethical approach – the human mind included – this position lacks the justification of having a cause for discussion in the first place.⁷¹ ‘Having meaning’ and ‘having value’ share the same sort of characteristic as established ideas in order to present adequate significations for our context. Though constructed by our mind, these ideas seem to present a high degree of persistence. It is for instance possible to radically modify all of a sudden one’s ideology (which could also be a religious faith) without neither losing life’s meaningfulness nor one’s basic values for life.⁷² Values and their corresponding meaningfulness might be of a more fundamental nature than political or religious ideologies, even if both dimensions are possibly connected to each other in some way.

Humans seem to know intuitively what matters to them for their life, i.e. what is valuable. Prominent candidates for values are creativity, performance, substantial contribution for diminishing suffering of ourselves and others, promotion of happiness or well-being, human relationships etc.⁷³ K. Baier adds

69. Paul Edwards, "Life, meaning and value of," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 4 (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 475.

70. Ronald W. Hepburn, *Christianity and Paradox* (Critical Studies in Twentieth-Century Theology) (London: C. A. Watts, 1958), 152.

71. Joseph Runzo, "Life, meaning and value of [addendum]," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006), 358; Susan Wolf, "Meaning in Life: Meeting the Challenges," *Foundations of Science* 21, no. 2 (June 2016), 233.

72. Joseph Runzo, "Life, meaning and value of [addendum]," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006), 358.

73. Robert Audi, "Intrinsic Value and Meaningful Life," *Philosophical Papers* 34, no. 3 (Nov. 2005), 333-334.

other notions to this: discoveries, inventions, admiration and respect.⁷⁴ The concept of liberty that is put forward by Bertrand Russell is also noteworthy, a concept that he defines as an approval of one's own ideals.⁷⁵

In the reviewed literature, the notions 'value', 'intrinsic value' and 'worthwhileness' are recurrently being discussed. 'Value' and 'worthwhileness' seem to be often treated synonymously. It is more relevant to figure out if 'value' must be understood in the sense of being intrinsic or in the sense of being dependent on and being deduced from other human and social phenomena and/or other values and thus if values should be seen for our purposes as being elements of an interconnected network of concepts.

Based on statements from K. Baier, R. Hepburn suggests furthermore that meaningfulness includes both hedonistic and non-hedonistic objectives.⁷⁶ If meaningfulness must include more than just hedonistic values (the most immediately felt ones and thus very good candidates for being intrinsic), than the values that have to be considered here could be ones that emerge from a set of human and social phenomena or other values that are interdependent. In this case, one value gets its justification by deducing it from others. Even so-called intrinsic values are seen as being the top of a hierarchy of secondary or intermediate values, as it is for instance done by Aristotle for his *happiness*. Thus, a determining connection within a justification chain of arguments does exist for 'intrinsic' values, making them less intrinsic than they are supposed to be.

The same reflection – needing a coherent network of arguments and basing concepts on the principle of interdependency – constitutes also the foundation for overcoming arbitrariness, and not merely by claiming that they cannot possibly be products of our mind. A final describable justification for something does not have to exist. The only thing that matters is that the network holds together coherently and consistently and the fact that it can potentially be constructed endlessly. Implementing values in this network also means that we have to refuse to see values as intrinsic at least for our context.

The Infinite Regress

Building up an endlessly vast network of arguments and concepts faces the critic of not being able to avoid the infinite regress. Every justification, every argument must be supported by yet other ones and so on. But at this point, it can

74. Kurt Baier, *The Meaning of Life: Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Canberra University College on 15 October 1957* (Canberra: The Canberra University College, 1957), 27.

75. Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 58-60.

76. Ronald W. Hepburn, "Questions about the Meaning of Life," *Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (April 1966), 128.

be asked if the infinite regress as never-ending argumentation chain has to be considered an enemy to reason or philosophical reflection. I plead to see the validity of an argumentation in the consistent connections of its semantic and conceptual network that is being constructed, not in the circumstance of not having precise boundaries of that network.

It is possibly just a matter of modesty to overcome the idea of necessarily having those boundaries, those starting- or end-points that seem to give peace of mind. Knowing that we can never have a first reason *per se* does not mean that we have to resign from the motivation of creating more and more knowledge, also philosophical knowledge. This is the same approach as the one they have in hard sciences. And this approach is also the most beneficial aspect of contemporary analytic philosophy in regard to the question of the meaning of life.

For seeing philosophical knowledge as constructing a strong conceptual and semantic network, I also disagree with the following kind of claim:

"First, life does not consist of a sequence of activities each of which has as its purpose some later member of the sequence. Chains of justification come repeatedly to an end within life, and whether the process as a whole can be justified has no bearing on the finality of these end-points."⁷⁷

The opposite might be true: life *does* consist of a sequence of activities (especially, for instance, for a successfully developed life), and existence as a whole *is* a sequence of lives. Already in everyday life, the planning of family matters consists of not seeing things as isolated activities. And the more we overcome seeing things as isolated phenomena, the better we can face the difficulties for the years to come and for the generations after us. If this was not true, then we have to see everything as secluded systems which only makes sense when we keep in mind that we have them artificially set up for specific purposes (like in scientific experiments) without really believing that the universe contains them as such. It is irrelevant if we ever find a final end-point, but it is very relevant that we extend our knowledge continuously without necessarily ever having to arrive somewhere final, which we could call *asymptotic approach*. Though, dogmatically thinking to find an objectively existing final end-point and establishing a hypothetical and temporary final end-point for normative reasons is a very different thing.

77. Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 144.

Death and Immortality

Already Kohelet complained about the fact that the beautiful things in life come to an end with death.⁷⁸ This is one of the arguments recurrently put forward by the theists pleading to overcome this circumstance through believing in a life after death.

The fear of death as an inevitable end to individual life and the wish for immortality play a dominant role in the discussion of the demand for life's meaningfulness. Antony Flew's studies about Tolstoy's *Confession* give us confirmation.⁷⁹ And all it precisely proves is that we are not able to completely endorse the intrinsicity of values or the detachability of human activities for this context. As meaning-ascribing beings, we establish projections far into time, and preventing us from pursuing those projected situations scares us. It is precisely death that prevents this future projection. But only a specific notion of death, even though a very popular one, embraces this particular signification: death of the *individual person*. Because the difference between death of an individual person and death of humanity or even death of biological life as such is an essential one in this context. Antony Flew states the following:

"The contention is that our lives can have meaning only on the assumptions of the existence of God and of human immortality."⁸⁰

Twenty-one years before writing this, he had already given an explanation why this approach lacks validity:

"It is at least no less rational to hold that it is precisely our mortality which makes what we do, or fail to do, so overwhelmingly important. And there is not the slightest warrant for suggesting that this alternative and opposite reaction is possible only for those who are lacking in imagination."⁸¹

Elmer Klemke agrees with Flew: the absence of life's meaningfulness through seeing life coming to an end has as much and as little validity as the opposite claim.⁸²

78. Kurt Baier, *The Meaning of Life: Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Canberra University College on 15 October 1957* (Canberra: The Canberra University College, 1957), 24.

79. Antony Flew, "Tolstoi and the meaning of life," *Ethics* 73, no. 2 (Jan. 1963); Lew Tolstoj, *Meine Beichte* (My Confession), trans. Alexis Markow (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2010).

80. Antony Flew, *God, Freedom, and Immortality. A Critical Analysis* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984), 155.

81. Antony Flew, "Tolstoi and the meaning of life," *Ethics* 73, no. 2 (Jan. 1963), 113.

82. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn, *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

I share with Flew and Klemke the opinion that an individual life does not decrease its meaningfulness by having to end, but for another reason, a reason that can best be labelled with the expression “the stream of life”, an idea asserted by Bertrand Russell.⁸³ Russell sees the individual life’s meaning in being inserted in a stream of multiple individual lives, of attached generations that follow each other, and precisely not in the idea of seeing lives as secluded entities: like billiard balls that are never being nudged and thus are never colliding with other balls, which would be a precondition for not being able to play a game. Again, seeing any kind of phenomena as secluded entities does not match with empirical reality and lacking foresight of what could be targeted does not help to establish normativity. Seeing any kind of phenomena as secluded entities does e.g. also not match with Heidegger’s disagreement of the “assumption that Being [as such] is defined by enduring presence [...] [which] continues to be taken as self-evident throughout the history of mainstream Western thought”,⁸⁴ especially in the case of human life as such. Charles Guignon writes:

“[Heidegger’s] claim is that instead of thinking of humans as individuals, persons, selves or subjects, or even as collectives, we should think of human existence as the emergence of an open “space of meaning””.⁸⁵

Meaningfulness in the sense of a being pulled towards an ascribed purpose can only emerge when life is inserted in bigger systems without necessarily adopting an inconsistent supernaturalist connotation. The system in which we insert meaningfulness can very well be an earthly one, one that is happening in this physically describable world or universe.⁸⁶ This view is consistent with inserting meaningfulness into a conceptually interconnected network. But does an open-end network-based justification for values and meaningfulness not collide with the assumption that humanity has also to end sometime, even if only in a very far future? Russell does for instance predict an end for humanity from cosmic incidences, and it feels contradictory to accept the stream of life and at the same time being forced to restrict one’s projection into the future, whatever timespans we are dealing with. Therefor Russell shifts the emphasis of his notion of meaningfulness to intrinsic values. But he is consistent in doing so, because if he is begging for life’s meaningfulness and if he is convinced that our life might end someday, then there is probably no alternative. My question to him would then be: why coming up with the concept of *the stream of life* in the first place?

83. Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2006), 175.

84. Charles Guignon, "Martin Heidegger: Being and Time," in *Central Works of Philosophy*, vol. 4, ed. John Shand (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 94.

85. *Ibid.*, 98.

86. Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2006), 175.

Intrinsic values can rather arbitrarily be placed on anything that the human being cherishes, like a happy moment, a tasty meal or a single scientific discovery. As discussed before, *meaninglessness* or absurdity is indeed inevitable if the stream of life has to stop without being deviated to an immaterial sphere or to a possible intrinsicality of values.

But there are three things to be considered here:

- 1) Do we know for sure about these cosmic incidences that bring the end to humanity? No, we do not. The big cosmic theories in physics have changed quite often in the last decades, there is no certainty about those general cosmic future predictions. In addition to this, mathematical chaos theory proves that an accurate future prediction for highly complex systems is impossible. We simply cannot predict things of that scale: a newly discovered parameter can change everything in our predictions. And this is quite fortunate since we claimed that the infinite regress has to be considered as auxiliary and not as adversary. John Kekes had made a very interesting reflection on this: “[...] through placing my happiness in something durable and distant, in which some progress might always be making, while it could never be exhausted by complete attainment.”⁸⁷ If we substitute in this quote “my happiness” with ‘the meaningfulness of my life’, then it would express exactly what has been said above.
- 2) Does requesting a projection with a potentially temporal open-end contradict with the denial of Nagel’s discrepancy of perspectives? No, because when we assume an open-end-projection, we are not talking about spatial smallness (which leads to insignificance according to Nagel). Neither are we talking about situating us in an endless timeframe and measuring our *proportion* to this infinity, but we consider a never-ending time in the sense that we are not allowing ourselves to arbitrarily determine a precise moment for the purpose of ascribing normativity to our life. We are actually not talking about significance at all. If we wish so, significance can just emerge from standards that we are ascribing to the world.
- 3) Does death of the individual person mean the end of this future projection that we are requesting? No, if we are modest enough to set up more accurate standards, then we must admit that *everything* we do leaves traces behind, and even the apparently most negligible traces have in some respect an impact on that stream of life which could be all we need for ascribing meaningfulness to our life and which could be all we need for motivating us to develop or increase a possibly positive impact on the universe. A simple example would be the attempt to give a good

87. John Kekes, "The Meaning of Life," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 241.

education to one's children. But, of course, it can also be something completely different.

Teleology

Since the teleological approach requires a finality in a cosmic sense, its defenders consequently assert that this finality has to be *discovered* as an external goal toward which everything is being pulled without necessarily having this goal considered as a divine plan. Within the frame of this approach, this is not contradictory as such, but we have clarified further above what 'meaning' has to mean. We remember that 'purpose' and 'meaning' must be established by ourselves in a non-coercive way for it to be accurately called that way in our context. A. J. Ayer adds that this is true even if we are more or less coincidentally able to comply with this cosmic purpose imposed on us.⁸⁸ Furthermore, a teleological explanation does in this respect not differ from a causal explanation, whether the reason for something's existence is being determined by an incidence in the past or in the future: in both cases, we deal with a mere description, at least in principle, and as such it must be refuted for life's meaningfulness.⁸⁹

A Proposal for a New Theory about the Meaning of Life

Considering the previous analysis, my proposal for a new theory about the meaning of life⁹⁰ can be understood and defended with the following points:

1. The proposal consists of two parts (separation point at "and"). The first part of the proposal contains the purpose-ascription, the second one the more specific normative request that calls for action.⁹¹ Both parts contain an ethical normative dimension, on the one hand the aspect of expressing our will, on the other hand the aspect that one should act effectively in accordance to this will.⁹² These parts are not to be separated if compatibility with the analysis should be maintained.

88. Alfred J. Ayer, "The Claims of Philosophy," in *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, ed. Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 199.

89. *Ibid.*

90. See beginning of article (Introduction).

91. I am not excluding that the first part also represents a normative claim, it is maybe just less visible, hidden behind the purpose-ascription (which is as such, as we have seen, also normative).

92. Cf. Charles Guignon on Heidegger: "To live authentically, then, is to [...] direct oneself towards the fulfilment of one's own life story with clarity, integrity and steadfastness, and [...] to take responsibility for what one's own life is adding up to, resolutely holding to one's own chosen life-defining commitments by carrying forwards

2. The proposal is not a knowledge of external facts. The only thing that could possibly be discovered as facts within this issue is the neurological process of the active mind expressing its will, but it is useful, and probably even necessary, to separate the category of normative statements from the category of statements of facts in order to get results for this field of research. I believe that these categories *have to be* ‘artificially’ separated in order to avoid a stagnant loop of reflection since the studying subjects and the studied objects happen to be the same thing in this context: us human beings.
3. Even if our supposedly free and independent emotion-based will⁹³ is to be considered the source of the purpose-ascription, it seems to be clear that the proposal hardly justifies complete arbitrary decisions about the construction of a wishful ideal future projection. The imagination and the projection of an ideal future must comply, as the starting-point (or as a final consequence), with a vast conceptually network-based justification that does not allow incompatibility with both the external and internal human reality (for instance that we are emotional beings in need for love, affection, shelter, food etc.) and the reality on the whole (for instance that a healthy diversified nature is a precondition for our survival and maybe for life itself). And even if some individuals can possibly wish for our species to die out, it does not seem to be the case for *life* as such, us human beings for the vast majority included.
4. A temporal restriction of the projection that assigns purpose has to be put aside (which we do with “*in an unforeseeably faraway future*”⁹⁴) if we want to do justice to the infinite regress, avoiding thus at some point falling into the trap of question-begging. R. Hepburn defends this approach:
 - a. “[...] there seems nothing logically impossible in human beings setting themselves infinitely distant goals of aspiration; even although they might prove unrealizable in full, and even although there existed no perfect being who either realized them in his own person or who set those goals before humanity. To be able to pursue perfection does not entail that perfection exists; any more than the procession of natural numbers demands that there exists some last and greatest number of all.”⁹⁵

[...] what one has been in one’s undertakings.” [Charles Guignon, "Martin Heidegger: Being and Time," in *Central Works of Philosophy*, vol. 4, ed. John Shand (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 101.]

93. The belief in the actual existence of a free will in a metaphysical sense is not required. The freedom of choice in this context can be merely seen as the absence of political, social and physical coercion.

94. See beginning of article (Introduction).

95. Ronald W. Hepburn, *Christianity and Paradox* (Critical Studies in Twentieth-Century Theology) (London: C. A. Watts, 1958), 179.

- b. “The atheistic-romantic conception of man as ceaselessly striving for an ultimately unattainable, but infinitely desirable goal, is not [...] a self-demolishing one.”⁹⁶
5. The projection of an ideal situation *in an unforeseeably faraway future* allows the proposal to be seen in a sufficiently general and universal way in order to avoid a normative request that would be too detailed for not taking into account the connections and the complexity of a very broad (maybe the broadest) context which is being addressed by the expression ‘the meaning of life’. But this does not exclude the possibility for normative detailed specificities to be validated by this proposal.
 6. This proposal does indeed put forward the idea that the meaning of life has to be seen as a projection of ideals that the human being chooses with the awareness of him having an impact on the future, as small or futile this might seem in the vastness of the universe surrounding him, though without being of complete irrelevance. An impact, as small as it might be, is still an impact, and for that reason has a *raison d’être*.
 7. The proposal has to be seen as the starting-point of the above-mentioned network-based justification approach. This implies that every element (theory, thought, maxim etc.) in this network has to be connected to the others in a coherent and consistent way. Within this network, rational argumentation is required to assure this.
 8. Why “*without having to rely on a God (or something alike), a hereafter or the immateriality of your own person*”⁹⁷? The belief in a supernaturalist world, a God or immaterial phenomena in general does not allow a contradictory free reasoning in our context. The supernaturalist hypothesis is furthermore unnecessary when establishing a very convincing meaning of life.⁹⁸
 9. The part “*the immateriality of your own person*”⁹⁹ contains a thought element that has been addressed among others by Kant with his Categorical Imperative and by John Rawls.¹⁰⁰ The idea is that, in order to establish moral and normative content, one has to neglect the importance and the relevance of his own person alone and of his own interests alone. Furthermore, with ‘immateriality’ I want to avoid clinging to one’s own individual person in a hypothetical life after death.

96. *Ibid.*, 180.

97. See beginning of article (Introduction).

98. The following article is supporting my argument: Jason Megill and Daniel Linford, "God, the meaning of life, and a new argument for atheism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (February 2016).

99. See beginning of article (Introduction).

100. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd ed., trans. James W. Ellington (London: Hackett, 1993); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

10. “What you can wish”:¹⁰¹ the combination of ‘to be able to’ and ‘to wish’ might in some respect make an allusion to Kant’s Categorical Imperative formulation “whereby you can at the same time will”,¹⁰² but a correct interpretation of Kant’s deontology is not intended here, even though there might be a similar idea behind it for this part of the proposal. For my means, I combine the ideas of ‘being able to’ and ‘wishing for’ to express that the purpose-ascription should not be completely arbitrary and completely subjective. The freely and independently expressed wish of one human being or all the human beings as a whole should be ‘harmonised’, not by a political or social authority nor an impulsive instinct or egoistic emotion, but by a reflective and well-considering mind within an intersubjective approach.¹⁰³

Conclusion and Possible Ideas to Be Pursued

The theoretical proposal with its defending arguments is the result of an analysis of the philosophical aspects that are gathered within the main historical approaches in philosophy that address directly or indirectly the question of the meaning of life.¹⁰⁴ I think that the analytic approach allows much clarification on this topic. It brings forward the intertwined ramifications that this topic contains. The proposed theory has predominantly the achievement of setting some conceptual limits by excluding ideas which are useless and even destructive if the expression has to make any real sense. Another positive outcome of this conceptual and linguistic investigation is the fact that the refusal of both the supernaturalist and the strictly naturalist approach does neither necessarily lead to a depressively felt absence of meaningfulness in life nor to a superficial and merely directly felt subjectivist theory that is just not taking enough into account the broader implications of all the philosophical aspects involved. This positive outcome was not being begged for, but it appeared as such through the investigation. A self-projecting ascription of purposes should be considered both

101. See beginning of article (Introduction).

102. “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction.” Immanuel Kant [1785], *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd ed., trans. James W. Ellington (London: Hackett, 1993), 30.

103. Thaddeus Metz is referring to a promising theory of Stephen Darwall. [Thaddeus Metz, “Recent Works on the Meaning of Life,” *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (July 2002), 795; Thaddeus Metz, “The Meaning of Life,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, (2007), <https://stanford.io/2PeOmPC>, chapter 3.]

104. The work (in German) on which the PhD dissertation (that this article has partly summarised) is based on and that contains this is freely available at: <https://bit.ly/2Ed0WwJ>.

as a motivation and as real-existing mind-products that can be partially objectivised by an intersubjective approach.

I think that one of the biggest misguidances in matters of argumentation is what can be labelled ‘moralistic fallacy’. The building up of the proposed theory is predominantly an attempt to avoid this trap. Throughout the history of philosophy, emotions and logic were tried to be kept apart to allow progress in thinking, and I believe that this matter is still a very big issue. Emotions are as such a very important part of human reality and it has to be considered in the investigation of the wishes and needs of the human being, but the reflection on this investigation itself, the meta-level, should not be misled by emotional fallacies if the fundamental principles of coherence and consistency are to be implemented in the thought process.

In the near future, neurosciences might produce some very interesting outcomes about the neurological process of establishing purpose and meaningfulness inside the human mind, and philosophical conclusions will probably have to be modified and improved upon these outcomes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express sincere thanks to the VUB University, to my PhD supervisor Marc Van den Bossche, to my friends Aikaterini Lefka, Ian Brown and Paul Sharry, and to my wife Barbora Rutová for supporting my research.

Bibliography

- Audi, Robert. "Intrinsic Value and Meaningful Life." *Philosophical Papers* 34, no. 3 (Nov. 2005): 331-355.
- Ayer, Alfred J. "The Claims of Philosophy." In *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, edited by Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Baier, Kurt E. M. *The Meaning of Life. Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Canberra University College on 15 October 1957*. Canberra: The Canberra University College, 1957.
- _____. *Problems of Life & Death. A Humanist Perspective*. Prometheus Lecture Series. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1997.
- Beaney, Michael. "Analysis." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2016 Edition. First published 7 April 2003, substantive revision 19 March 2014. Retrieved from <https://stanford.io/2KLhtck>.
- Camus, Albert. *Le mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde (The myth of Sisyphus. An essay on the absurd)*. (Collection folio essais n° 11). Paris: Gallimard, 1985.
- D'Arms, Justin, and Daniel Jacobson. "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' of Emotions." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, no. 1 (July 2000): 65-90.
- Edwards, Paul. "Life, meaning and value of." In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards. Vol. 4. New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967.

- Evers, Daan, and Gerlinde Emma van Smeden. "Meaning in Life: In Defense of the Hybrid View." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 3 (Sep. 2016): 355-371.
- Feinberg, Joel. "Absurd Self-Fulfillment." In *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, edited by Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Flew, Antony. *God, Freedom, and Immortality. A Critical Analysis*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984.
- _____. "Tolstoi and the meaning of life." *Ethics* 73, no. 2 (Jan. 1963): 110-118.
- Gerhardt, Volker. "Sinn des Lebens" (Meaning of Life). In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, edited by Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer. Vol. 9. Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1995.
- Grondin, Jean. "Le sens de la vie : une question assez récente, mais pleine de saveur" (The meaning of life: a quite recent question, but full of flavor). *Théologiques* 9, no. 2 (2001): 7-15.
- Guignon, Charles. "Martin Heidegger: Being and Time." In *Central Works of Philosophy*, edited by John Shand. Vol. 4. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006.
- Hepburn, Ronald W. *Christianity and Paradox*. (Critical Studies in Twentieth-Century Theology). London: C. A. Watts, 1958.
- _____. "Questions about the Meaning of Life." *Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (April 1966): 125-140.
- Kant, Immanuel [1785]. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W. Ellington. 3rd ed. London: Hackett, 1993.
- Kekes, John. "The Meaning of Life." In *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, edited by Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Klemke, Elmer D., and Steven M. Cahn. *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Landau, Iddo. "Standards, Perspectives, and the Meaning of Life: A Reply to Seachris." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 17, no. 3 (June 2014): 457-468.
- _____. "The Meaning of Life Sub Specie Aeternitatis." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89, no. 4 (Dec. 2011): 727-734.
- Löffler, Winfried. "Sinn" (Meaning). In *Neues Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, edited by Petra Kolmer and Armin G. Wildfeuer. Vol. 3. Freiburg and München: Karl Alber, 2011.
- Megill, Jason, and Daniel Linford. "God, the meaning of life, and a new argument for atheism." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (Feb. 2016): 31-47.
- Metz, Thaddeus. "The Meaning of Life." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2013 Edition. First published 15 May 2007, substantive revision 3 June 2013. Retrieved from <https://stanford.io/2P8U59n>.
- _____. "The Meaning of Life." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2008 Edition. Published 15 May 2007. Retrieved from <https://stanford.io/2PeOmPC>.
- _____. "Recent Works on the Meaning of Life." *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (July 2002): 781-814.
- _____. *Meaning in Life. An Analytic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Monod, Jacques. *Le hasard et la nécessité. Essai sur la philosophie naturelle de la biologie moderne (Chance and necessity. An essay on the natural philosophy of modern biology)*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970.
- Moore, Edward C. "The Moralistic Fallacy." *Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. 2 (1957): 29-42.
- Nagel, Thomas. "The Absurd." In *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, edited by Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

- _____. *The View from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Runzo, Joseph. "Life, meaning and value of [addendum]." In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Donald M. Borchert. 2nd ed. Vol. 5. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.
- Russell, Bertrand. "A Free Man's Worship." In *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, edited by Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- _____. *The Conquest of Happiness*. Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2006.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'existentialisme est un humanisme (Existentialism is a humanism)*. (Collection Pensées). Paris: Nagel, 1946.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (The World as Will and Representation)*. Complete works and definitive version from Ludger Lütkehaus. 4th ed. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008.
- Seachris, Joshua. "Meaning of Life: The Analytic Perspective." In *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Published 2011. Retrieved 27 Sep. 2014 from <https://bit.ly/2rwZkq0>.
- Taylor, Richard. "The Meaning of Life." In *The Meaning of Life. A Reader*, edited by Elmer D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Tolstoj, Lew. *Meine Beichte (A Confession)*. Translated by Alexis Markow. Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2010.
- Wolf, Susan. "Meaning in Life: Meeting the Challenges." *Foundations of Science* 21, no. 2 (June 2016): 279-282.

Melville's New Seafarer's Philosophy in *Moby-Dick*

Richard McDonough*

Although Herman Melville's Moby-Dick is often viewed as a philosophical work, the paper argues that though it deals with philosophical issues, it is not a philosophical work in the traditional sense of producing arguments for theses. Rather, inspired by ancient Greek philosophy and ancient Babylonian myths, Moby-Dick seeks to disclose a kind of poetic philosophical truth that is more basic than propositional truth per se. The fundamental philosophical conviction that underlies Moby-Dick is the microcosmic view that traces to ancient Greek philosophy, roughly, the view that all mortal living organisms, including human beings and whales, are miniature images of the whole cosmos. The paper begins with a discussion of the main character and narrator of the book, the "ideal democratic man" and wanderer, Ishmael. Second, the paper explains the neglected microcosmic view in Moby-Dick. Third, the paper explains the "moral" dimension of Moby-Dick's microcosmic view, specifically, its view that knowledge of these ultimate cosmic truths is unattainable by human beings and that it is even dangerous to attempt to fathom such ultimate truths. Fourth, the paper argues that Moby-Dick is best seen as a kind of philosophical poetry rather than a standard argumentative philosophical work. Fifth, referring to the "old quarrel" between philosophy and poetry discussed by Plato, the paper invokes certain Heideggerian ideas to explain how, in opposition to Plato, there can be a coherent kind of philosophical poetry of the sort found in Moby-Dick. Finally, the paper argues that it is one of the fundamental aims in Moby-Dick to distinguish between the safe, civilized, rational philosophy of the "landsman" and the more adventurous dangerous poetic philosophy of the seafarers, thereby anticipating some of Nietzsche's views about a new kind of seafarer's philosophy in Thus Spake Zarathustra by almost a half century.

I look upon metaphysical ideas as ... flashes of light in ... a dark night; and that ... is all we can hope of metaphysics. It seems improbable that the first principles of things will ever be thoroughly known. The mice living in a few little holes in an enormous building do not know if the building is eternal, who is the architect, or why the architect built it. They [only] try to preserve their lives ... We are the mice; and the divine architect who built the universe has not ... told the secret to any of us.

Voltaire¹

Moby Dick is generally known as an adventure story about a monomaniacal Captain Ahab who sets off on a suicidal mission of revenge to kill a giant white whale (Moby-Dick) that took his leg in an earlier voyage. However, Ishmael, the narrator of the book, raises numerous philosophical issues.² Indeed, some of

*Adjunct Professor, Arium School of Arts and Sciences, Singapore.

1. Voltaire, "First Letter to Frederick," *Letters of Voltaire and Frederick the Great*, trans. Richard Aldington (Paris: Brentano, 1927), 26.

2. By "philosophy" is here meant the metaphysical views that concern the *ultimate* nature of the universe, who, or what, created it (if it was created at all), how it was

Melville's acquaintances lamented that he often wanted to talk less about his novels than he did about Greek philosophy, in particular Plato and Aristotle.³ The paper argues that, apart from some very general *convictions* about the nature of the universe, *Moby-Dick* does not state any precise philosophical *theses*. Rather, it belongs to that rare genre of philosophical works, including Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and some of Heidegger's later writings, that attempt to set the limits of philosophy.⁴ There are four main claims in the paper. The first is that *Moby-Dick* advances the Ancient Greek *microcosmic* view that living organisms, like human beings and whales, are miniature copies of the whole cosmos.⁵ The second is that understanding ourselves and the cosmos is beyond the limits of human comprehension, indeed, that it is suicidal to attempt to fathom ultimate cosmic truths. The third, concerning that "old quarrel between philosophy and poetry,"⁶ is that *Moby-Dick* is more akin to poetry than to philosophy as ordinarily understood. The fourth is that *Moby-Dick* distinguishes between the traditional conception of rational philosophy, at home the land, and a more daring poetic philosophy that emerges from life on the chaotic seas of life.

The paper first discusses the philosophical significance of Ishmael's role in *Moby-Dick*. This is followed by a discussion of *Moby-Dick*'s microcosmic View. The paper then argues that *Moby-Dick* holds that knowledge of the cosmos and microcosms is unattainable and dangerous for human beings. On this basis, the paper argues that *Moby-Dick* is really a kind of philosophical poetry rather than a novel proper. The paper proceeds to argue that *Moby-Dick* attempts to disclose a kind of poetic truth that is more fundamental than propositional truth. Finally, the paper argues that that *Moby-Dick* expresses a new kind of "seafarer's" philosophy that anticipates Nietzsche's view of philosophy in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

created, for what purpose, and in what sense, if any, it is good or beautiful. Derivative philosophical issues concerning proper behavior, taste, and the like are not at issue here.

3. Mark Anderson, "Platonic and Nietzschean Themes of Transformation in *Moby-Dick*," in *Melville Among the Philosophers*, ed. Cory McCall and Tom Nurmi (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 27-31.

4. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (6.54, 7) holds that there are "mystical" things that cannot be "said" in words. Heidegger states that Heraclitus and Parmenides were not philosophers because they were "the greater thinkers." Heidegger sees metaphysical thinking as a decline from superior thinking of the Pre-Socratics. [Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Jean Wilde and William Kluback (New Haven: College and University Press, 1956), 53.]

5. For a brief account of Plato's notion of the Microcosm see McDonough [Richard McDonough, "Plato: Organicism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [I], §2.b. Retrieved from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/platoorg/>.

6. Plato, *Republic*, trans. Alan Bloom (New York and London: Basic Books, 1968), 607b-c.

Just Call Me Ishmael

Moby-Dick is founded on Ishmael's capacity for wonder ...
Bender⁷

The justly famous opening line in the book, "Call me Ishmael," is particularly important for the present paper because, if anyone in *Moby-Dick* is a philosopher, it is Ishmael. Note, however, that Ishmael does not say that his name is Ishmael, but only that one can "call" him that. This indicates that his real name, and thus his real identity (his real name might be "Bob") are not important in the book. Ishmael is, therefore, the ideal "democratic" person.⁸ For example, Ishmael admits that he has had a Presbyterian background, but he distances himself from it by treating all religions, even the most foreign, equally (Chap's. 10, 17). Thus, Ishmael, as the representative of that which is common to all humanity, is the guardian of the novel's deepest values:⁹ "If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities, ... then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God!" (Chap. 26).

The second point is that the very name "Ishmael" connotes an outcast.¹⁰ According to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, Ishmael was the first son of Abraham, not conceived by his barren wife Sarah, but by her Egyptian handmaiden, Hagar. Thus, it is destined that the biblical Ishmael "shall be a wild donkey of a man" (Genesis 16: 2).¹¹ Similarly, Melville's Ishmael, like his Biblical counterpart, is a wanderer and a homeless person.¹² He is as comfortable with the Polynesian cannibal Queequeg as he is Presbyterian forbears. After being forced, with some trepidation into sharing a tiny bed with this unknown tattooed harpoon carrying cannibal stranger, Ishmael remarks, "Upon waking next morning ..., I found Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost thought I had been his wife." (Chap. 4).¹³

7. Bert Bender, "Moby-Dick, An American Lyrical Novel," in *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 105.

8. Brian Way, *Herman Melville: Moby Dick* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 53.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Roland Sherrill, "The Career of Ishmael's Self-Transcendence," in *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 73.

11. The Biblical References in paper are to the *American Standard Bible*, but any reputable translation will do.

12. Way, *Herman Melville: Moby Dick*, 55.

13. Referring to the communal practice of squeezing the waxy whale spermaceti into a more manageable liquid, Ishmael remarks: "I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands

Ishmael, is not, however, merely the narrator of the book. For *Moby-Dick* is "born of Ishmael's capacity for wonder" (see epigraph above). At the end of Chap. I, he states that by joining the whaling voyage "the great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open." Since, as Plato¹⁴ explains, philosophy begins in wonder, it seems that Ishmael resembles a philosopher—and a wide range of philosophers, including, Pythagoras (Chap's 1, 98), Plato (Chap's 35, 55, 75, 78, 85, 101), Pyrrho (Chap. 85), Cato (Chap. 1), Aristotle (Chap's 32, 110), Seneca and the Stoics (Chap's. 1, 75), Descartes (Chap. 35), Locke (Chap. 73), Spinoza (Chap. 75), Kant (Chap. 73), and Burke (Excerpts and Chap. 24) are mentioned in *Moby-Dick*. Thus, the book is grounded in the specific kind of wonder experienced by this "ideal democratic person."

It is significant that *Moby-Dick's* "wonder-world" is encountered at sea, not on land, and that it is entered via "flood gates," that is, by water, not by an ordinary door on Main Street. The opposition between the land and "the watery part of the world" (Chap. I) is crucial in the book.

The beauty-terror dichotomy ... is often a contrast between physical appearances such as cats and tigers, days and nights, the ocean's surfaces and depths, male and female. These physical opposites frequently possess a metaphysical significance by symbolizing the difference between such concepts as thought and emotion, inner realities and outer appearances, truth and illusion. The novel is ... replete with dual oppositions—good-evil, order-chaos, Christian-pagan, and so forth.¹⁵

Whereas the land represents the safe, superficial, part of the world, the sea represents the more dangerous deeper part of the world. The sea has a clear surface bathed in sunlight (Chap's. 81, 134), and a dark primordial deep inhabited by monsters (Chap. 14). Similarly, whereas the land symbolizes civilized order, the sea symbolizes primordial chaos.¹⁶ These dichotomies also map onto the human psyche. The land symbolizes the "outer appearances," the bright orderly surface reason of humanity, while the sea symbolizes the unconscious chaotic

in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. ... Would that I could go on squeezing that sperm forever!"

14. Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. M. J. Levett (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 155c-d.

15. Frank Novak, "The Metaphysics of Beauty and Terror in *Moby-Dick*," in *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1986), 119-120.

16. *Moby-Dick* here follows the ancient Babylonian mythology in which the primeval goddess of the sea, Tiamat, personifies chaos [Lorena Stookey, *Thematic Guide to World Mythology* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2004), 106, 117, 141, 174]. Significantly, Tiamat is sometimes identified as a sea serpent [Thorkild Jacobson, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 1 (1968)]. Tiamat is also described as "the glistening one" [Joseph Campbell, *Occidental Mythology* (New York: Penguin Campbell, 1991), 77], and *Moby-Dick* describes both the sea and whales as "glistening" (Chap's. 54, 59, 61, 74, 133).

irrational "inner reality" of the human psyche.¹⁷ Thus, Ishmael's choice to go to sea is the choice to eschew the safe, civilized, orderly rational world in favor of the darker, irrational, chaotic more dangerous part of the world. Since these features of the world are reflected in the human psyche, Ishmael's choice to go to sea, rather than stay on land, is also the choice to eschew the surface rationality of human existence in order to explore its darker largely unconscious irrational dimensions.

One must not, however, be hasty. To say that philosophy begins in wonder and that Ishmael experiences wonder at the "watery part of the world" world, does not mean that Ishmael is a philosopher proper. Philosophy may begin in wonder, but that does not mean that everyone who experiences wonder becomes a philosopher. For though many philosophers are mentioned in *Moby-Dick*, "the idealist metaphysician and transcendentalist philosopher[s]" are "almost always figures of fun in Melville's" works.¹⁸ Indeed, in Chap. I of *Moby-Dick*, Melville singles out metaphysicians generally for fun. Referring to the "magic" of water, where water is "wedded forever" to "meditation," Ishmael remarks that if one is "athirst" in a caravan out "in the great American desert" that "happens to be supplied by a metaphysical professor" one will find that they will immediately "lead you to water." There are multiple levels to the joke here. First, Ishmael's remark that if one "happens to be supplied" with a metaphysical professor, just as it might happen to be supplied with a plumber, suggests that a metaphysician is not exactly an essential part of a caravan. Second, if water is essential for meditation, it seems that this "most absent minded of men plunged in his deepest reveries" has put himself in the place most unsuitable for meditation. Third, if one is really "athirst" in a desert, one hardly requires a metaphysical professor to lead one to water when anyone else on the caravan would do as well. Melville's philosophers are often so unworldly than that, like Thales, they are so abstracted that they cannot even see the well, the water needed for meditation, at their feet.¹⁹

Third, although one normally thinks that philosophy is a choice, Ishmael begins *Moby-Dick* with the remark that going to sea "is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship" (Chap. 1). One normally assumes that philosophizing is a free choice, not an alternative to suicide. Indeed, Ishmael's choice to go to sea is explicitly distinguished from Cato's "philosophical" act of suicide, which suggests that philosophy, *normally understood*, is akin to a kind of intellectual suicide. It

17. Jung following the alchemists, saw sea-water as a symbol of the collective unconscious, a mysterious all-pervading soul or essence (the "*anima mundi*"). [Carl Jung, *Mysterium Conjunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 278.]

18. Way, *Herman Melville: Moby Dick*, 12.

19. Reginald Allen, *Greek Philosophy: Readings in the History of Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 27.

seems that philosophizing is a kind of falling on one's sword. Whereas a philosopher, like a metaphysician searching for a drink of water in a desert before returning to their safe dry offices on College Avenue, is at home on land, Ishmael chooses the deeper and more dangerous path to the "wonder-world" at sea. Ishmael here suggests a possible distinction between two very different kinds of philosophers, the philosophers of the "landsmen" and the philosophers of the seafarers. But what is that fundamental sort of wisdom that can only be acquired at sea?

The Microcosmic View in *Moby-Dick*

The ship [the *Pequod*] is a microcosm—a little world that symbolizes the world at large. The voyage is one of self-discovery, for the crew, and for you, too, as you think over the events of the journey.
Fish²⁰

The doctrine of the microcosm is, roughly, the view that living organisms are a miniature copy of the whole cosmos, or, as Schopenhauer²¹ puts it, that a person's "inner being also exhausts the inner being of the whole world, the macrocosm." It is, therefore, a corollary of the microcosmic doctrine that "if one looks deeply enough into oneself, one will discover not only one's own essence, but also the essence of the universe."²² If the self is a microcosm, then by achieving self-knowledge one *ipso facto* achieves knowledge of the nature of the world. The reverse is also true. One can learn about one's own nature by learning about the world. By coming to know the sea, or the whale, one comes to know oneself.

Some scholars see the first beginnings of the doctrine in Anaximenes, but there may even be a glimmer of the idea in Thales.²³ The Pythagoreans held that the *polis* is a microcosm of the cosmos.²⁴ However, the first sophisticated formulation of the cosmological view is in Plato²⁵ (see also Conger,²⁶ Cornford,²⁷

20. Peter Fish, *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick* (Hauppauge: Barrons Educational Series, 1987), 48.

21. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. J. F. Payne (New York: Dover 1968), I, §29.

22. Robert Wicks, "Arthur Schopenhauer," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2017, §4. Retrieved from <https://stanford.io/2N2svhR>.

23. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Representation*, vol. 1, I, §29; Peter Adamson, *Classical Philosophy: A History of Western Philosophy without any Gaps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

24. John Mansley Robinson, *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy* (Houghton Mifflin College Division, 1968), 78-81; Rosemary Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2013), 56-57, 70-72.

25. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 41d, 81a-b.

and Carone²⁸). The doctrine is found in Neoplatonism and Leibniz,²⁹ and in Wittgenstein.³⁰ It also appears in various forms in a plethora of philosophers from ancient times to the present and in certain "mystical" arts like astrology and alchemy.³¹

On Plato's view, mortal living organisms form a hierarchy of less to more perfect where the higher an organism is on this scale of perfection the more closely it resembles the whole cosmos,³² e.g., a human being and a frog are both miniature images of the cosmos but since a rational human is more perfect than a frog, it is more like the cosmos than the frog. Fish (see epigraph above) sees the microcosmic doctrine in *Moby-Dick* insofar as the ship, the *Pequod*, is a microcosm of the whole world, and that, therefore, the voyage on the ship is a voyage of self-discovery. However, *Moby-Dick's* microcosmic doctrine is "metaphysically" much deeper than that.

Since the microcosmic doctrine is reflected throughout *Moby-Dick*, only a few of the key passages can be indicated here. It is stated in general form in Ishmael's remark: "O Nature, and O soul of man! how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! not the smallest atom stirs or lives on matter but has its cunning duplicate in mind" (Chap. 70). Not only is the soul of human beings analogous to Nature, but even the smallest *parts* of nature, atoms, have a soul that resembles the souls both of Nature and of human beings. The microcosmic doctrine is even present in Ishmael's reference to "the tornadoed Atlantic of my being." That is, my being, the being of the microcosm, is the same as that of the "tornadoed Atlantic" in the external world.

The doctrine is also found in Ishmael's remark, referring to the gold coin or "doubloon" with "strange figures and inscriptions stamped on it" that Ahab nailed to the mast as a reward to the first sailor who spotted Moby-Dick, that "this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self" (Chap. 99). The doubloon is a small image of the whole world ("the rounder globe"), but it is also a mirror in which each human sees the reflection of "his own mysterious self." Since the *doubloon* resembles the whole world, but also resembles the human soul,

26. G. P. Conger, *Theories of Macrocosmos and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), 7-11.

27. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 39, 244, 328 n 4.

28. Gabriela Roxana Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 97-100, 140, 153, 158.

29. Stuart Brown, and N. J. Fox, *Historical Dictionary of Leibniz's Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), xxxvi, 94, 148, 165.

30. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus-logico-philosophicus*, trans. David Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 5.63.

31. A. Roob, *Alchemy and Mysticism* (Köln: Taschen, 1997).

32. A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (London: Routledge, 2017), 42, 59, 61, 252.

each human being's image also resembles the whole world—and that is the microcosmic view. The passage continues: "Pity if there is nothing wonderful in signs, and significant in wonders! ... Look you, Doubloon, your zodiac here is the life of man in one round chapter ..." The strange figures and inscriptions stamped on the *doubloon* are a "zodiac," a circular path around the heavens that, according to astrology, mirrors "the life of man." The doubloon pictures the heavens, which, in turn, pictures human life. This microcosmic analogy between self and world is an occasion for "wonder." Thus, for Ishmael, philosophy begins, not in just any kind of wonder but in wonder at the analogy between the human microcosm and the macrocosm.³³

The Ungraspable Phantom of Life

And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.
Moby-Dick (Chap. 1)

There is no need to speculate about the "key" to *Moby-Dick*. The novel identifies it as "the ungraspable phantom of life" portrayed in the story of Narcissus. That is the story from ancient Greek mythology of the beautiful but proud young man, Narcissus, who, when he saw his image reflected in water, fell so in love with it that he stared at it until he died,³⁴ a cautionary tale about the dangers of self-love and pride. However, the tale is given additional metaphysical meaning in *Moby-Dick* where Narcissus, seeing his beautiful image in water, is compelled to *understand* it, and, in the attempt to do so, plunges into the water and drowns.

Since, in *Moby-Dick*, "the watery part of the world" represents a key part of the cosmos, and, therefore, a key part of the microcosm, this means that when Narcissus looks into the watery part of the cosmos, he sees himself reflected there. The beauty of our own images reflected back to us from the water torments us to understand our own image reflected there. That means that we are tormented by this microcosmic fact to embark upon the quest for *self-knowledge* by plunging into the sea. Unfortunately, this quest is destined to fail, for the "phantom" of cosmic life, our life, is "ungraspable." But this quest is not merely ungraspable in the

33. Cameron approaches this point when, without, unfortunately, using the word "microcosm," she states that "the central philosophical subject of *Moby-Dick* is ... the identity of the self" with "what lies outside the self." [Sharon Cameron, *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1981), 2.]

34. Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

sense it must fail. For the attempt to grasp the elusive phantom of life is so far beyond human capacities that it inevitably results in death. The quest for self-knowledge is tantamount to suicide.

Since, beginning with Socrates, the quest for self-knowledge is a central aim of philosophy,³⁵ the moral of *Moby-Dick* is that this core *philosophical* project is destined to fail. This philosophical project initiated by Socrates and continued by many other philosophers is not only a prideful "narcissistic" exercise in futile self-love. It is suicidal. Recall that Nietzsche³⁶ wrote that "Socrates wanted to die." *Moby-Dick* explains why this is no accident. Socrates attempted to "counter the dark appetites with a permanent ... daylight of reason."³⁷ However, this is impossible. The idea that genuine self-knowledge can be achieved in the "daylight of reason" is a fantasy. Since Socrates was destined to fail, and, since that was his distinctive mission, he was destined to give up on life. If one were actually to attempt to do what needs to be done in order to achieve self-knowledge, one would have to plunge into the darkness of one's own depths, symbolized, not by the bright daylight of Socratic rationalism, but by the sea. But this too is beyond human capacities. This is illustrated in *Moby-Dick* by the case of the timid "small black boy" (Chap. 40), Pip, who, having been lost at sea, and drifted alone for several hours before being rescued by chance, was "carried down alive to wondrous depths," where, "among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw ... God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and, therefore, his shipmates called him mad. So man's insanity is heaven's sense; ..." (Chap. 92). Alone with the ocean for so long, Pip saw things about the wonderous cosmic life that humans are not capable of understanding and, therefore, went mad—although there is a sense in which this madness is in fact a wisdom "too high for man."³⁸ Pip represents what happens to humans who exceed their proper limitations.³⁹ Deep knowledge of the nature of the cosmic life is denied to humans (except on penalty of going mad). Jerry Fodor's *The Language of Thought*⁴⁰ is a fine book. But the idea that one might achieve genuine self-knowledge by such products of the bright "daylight of reason" is a fantasy.

35. Christopher Moore, *Socrates and Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

36. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols. The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1968), 479.

37. *Ibid.*, 478.

38. The quoted words are borrowed from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross (Digireads.com, 2005); Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941)].

39. The fact that Melville puts this heavenly knowledge into a "timid black boy" is one of Melville's ways of illustrating that the "just Spirit of Equality" has "spread one royal mantle of humanity" over all human beings.

40. Jerry Fodor, *The Language of Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Can one can achieve such metaphysical knowledge by some other means ...
poetry perhaps?

***Moby-Dick* as "Philosophical" Poetry**

Moby-Dick is not so much as a book *about* Captain Ahab's quest for a whale as it is an experience *of* that quest. This is only to say what we say of any true poem, that we cannot reduce its essential substance to a subject, that we should not intellectualize and summarize it. ... In these terms, *Moby-Dick* seems to be far more of a poem than a novel.
Kazin⁴¹

D. H. Lawrence⁴² described *Moby-Dick* as "one of the strangest and most wonderful books ever written" and "the greatest book of the sea ever written." William Faulkner⁴³ confessed that he wished he had written it himself. Although Melville died largely unrecognized and in relative poverty, *Moby-Dick* is now often seen as "the" great American novel.⁴⁴ However, it a very strange novel. For though *Moby-Dick* has a "principle of coherence," it has no plot in the traditional sense.⁴⁵ One might think that the principle of coherence is that the various stories told in the book are united by their connection with Captain Ahab's voyage of the *Pequod*. However, the actual battle with Moby-Dick occupies only a few somewhat anti-climactic chapters at the end of the book, and many of the chapters in the book are not essential to the story of that battle. Thus, the true principle of coherence in *Moby-Dick* is not in a plot as such, but in the interiority, which is not merely psychological, but something "metaphysically" deeper (see "The Microcosmic View in *Moby-Dick*" and "The Ungraspable Phantom of Life" above), of the main characters of the book. For though *Moby-Dick* treats of philosophical issues, it never advances philosophical theses. For example, though Platonism is mentioned several times in the book, one will not find a new thesis

41. Alfred Kazin, "Introduction to *Moby-Dick*," in *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase, 2007), 9.

42. D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Reprinted London: Penguin Books, 1923), 168.

43. William Faulkner, "I Wish I Had Written That," *The Chicago Tribune*, 16 July 1927. Reprinted by Harrison Parker, and Hayford Hershel, ed. *The Writings of Herman Melville* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

44. Cornel West, "A Time to Break the Philosophic Silencing of Melville," in *Melville Among the Philosophers*, ed. Cory McCall and Tom Nurmi (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 213ff.

45. Way, *Herman Melville: Moby Dick*, 23.

about Plato's theory of Forms in it.⁴⁶ *Moby-Dick* is philosophical in a sense, but not by providing arguments or theses. Rather, it attempts to produce certain kinds of philosophically illuminating experiences, in much the way that the great philosophical poets, like Wordsworth and Shelley, in their poems, do.⁴⁷ That is, such ultimate "metaphysical" truths are only available to human beings, not in the form of demonstrable philosophical theses, but only in the form of flashes of poetic insight in the darkness.

Towards this end, *Moby-Dick* employs the kind of archetypal imagery one finds, not in typical philosophical texts, but in many philosophical poems. In any standard philosophical work, these sorts of archetypal oppositions, beauty-terror, order-chaos, male-female, truth and illusion, and the like (see "Just Call Me Ishmael" above), would be immediately subjected to withering philosophical analysis. What does one mean by "beauty" and "terror"? Why is terror, rather than ugliness, the opposite of beauty? Is this opposition causal or conceptual? What is meant by "order" and "chaos"? Is it not true that "order" and "chaos" are relative terms, that what seems chaotic from one perspective can be seen as orderly from another? Is it so clear that the concepts of male and female are so clearly defined? Are these concepts really mutually exclusive and exhaustive? Might these not reflect power relations that are now viewed as outdated ... and so on?

It is entirely fair to raise such questions, but it is important to recognize that *Moby-Dick* is not purporting to make philosophical theses that might be refuted by appeal to other philosophical (or scientific) theses. If, for example, *Moby-Dick* portrays the *Pequod* as largely male and orderly and the sea as largely feminine and chaotic, that does not mean that the literary value of *Moby-Dick* depends on the factual accuracy of this imagery any more than the literary value of *Paradise Lost*⁴⁸ depends on the literal truth of the Biblical creation story. Rather, *Moby-Dick* is written within a long literary tradition in which, as in the ancient Babylonian epics, the sea is represented as female, irrational and chaotic, and contrasted with the orderly rational male dominated land. The literary and philosophical value of *Moby-Dick* must be understood against the background of this tradition, even if these archetypal dichotomies are clearly outdated.⁴⁹ The "truth," whatever it is, expressed in *Moby-Dick*, is largely *symbolical*, and does not depend on the

46. For a concise readable sketch of Plato's Theory of Forms, see Brickhouse and Smith [Thomas Brickhouse, and Nicholas Smith, *Plato (427–347 B.C.E.)*, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [I], §6.b. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2x2p7sK>.

47. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), Chap. V.

48. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003).

49. Since the crew of the *Pequod* is male, most of the pronouns in *Moby-Dick* and the present paper are male. The feminine comes into the novel primarily *symbolically* in the person of the sea. See notes 16, 50 and 70.

question whether, for example, the female is actually more "irrational" than the male.⁵⁰

In summary, *Moby-Dick* functions more like philosophical poetry than it does like a standard argumentative philosophical text. *Moby-Dick* employs various archetypal dichotomies without requiring that these are factually accurate to reality anymore than any poem is required to be factually accurate to reality. Thus, *Moby-Dick* is philosophical, not in the sense of asserting philosophical theses, but in the sense that it employs classical archetypal dichotomies in order to provoke the reader to see the cosmos and themselves in a new way.

The "Old Quarrel" between Philosophy and Poetry

Let us further [admit] ... that there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry. ... [Thus,] if poetry directed to pleasure and imitation have any [good] argument ... that they should be in a city with good laws, we should be delighted to receive them back from exile from exile ... But it isn't holy to betray what seems to be the truth.
Plato⁵¹

If *Moby-Dick* is more like a work of poetry than a work of philosophy, and if it purports to express a philosophical perspective, this raises a certain ancient question. Plato saw an "old quarrel" between philosophy and poetry because he holds that poetry is not concerned with virtue or truth but with pleasure and imitation (which are inimical to virtue and truth). If poetry can only produce pleasant deceptive imitations of wisdom, and if philosophy is concerned with genuine wisdom and truth, how is philosophical poetry possible?⁵²

50. It is worth noting that though *Moby-Dick* represents the sea as feminine and chaotic, it also reverses the usual evaluation and views the chaotic and irrational more positively as a creative force. That is, *Moby-Dick* agrees with the spirit of Nietzsche's remarks that "truth is a woman" [Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), Preface] and that "one must still have chaos in one to give birth to a dancing star" [Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1968), Preface, § 5]. This is a key point of the book. Indeed, Nissim-Sabat argues that many scholars have "repressed" the "maternal, feminine, cosmic" principle in *Moby-Dick*—but that issue must be left for another occasion. [Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, "Melville's Phenomenology of Gender," in *Melville Among the Philosophers*, ed. Cory McCall and Tom Nurmi (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 134.] See notes 17 and 49 above!

51. Plato, *Republic*, 607b-c.

52. The present section follows Griswold's (2016) excellent summary of the basic facts about Plato's account of the "old quarrel" between philosophy and poetry. [Charles Griswold, *Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/>.]

In his *Ion*,⁵³ Plato's Socrates argues, roughly, that the poets and rhapsodes (reciters of poetry) do not actually understand what they say, and forces the main character, Ion, a rhapsode, to choose between the claim that poets have a kind of human wisdom or a kind of divine inspiration. Ion chooses the latter. Socrates counters that he himself aspires only to the kind of wisdom available to human beings, which requires consistency, giving reasons, and accuracy to reality. Ion admits that he opts for the view that poets are divinely inspired because it sounds "lovelier," thereby tacitly admitting that his criterion is not truth but pleasure. But if wisdom requires truth, then poetry cannot lay claim to be a species of wisdom.

Plato continues this argument in the *Republic*. In Book II, he is concerned with the role of poets, which he describes as "myth makers" or "makers of tales," in the education of the citizens. His two key points, argued by his character, Socrates, are, first, that the poets are not guided by truth in fashioning their myths, and, second, that false myths, especially learned when one is young and uncritical, can promote bad conduct. For example, the poets often represent the gods in ways that are both false and corrupting. Socrates replies against the poets that "There is no lying poet in a god" (382d9). What is most important to Plato for present purposes is that the poet must not promote the "tragic world view," the view that the cosmos is not structured to reward virtue, because "the tragic world view" that the unjust are rewarded and the just punished, provides no reason to be just, resulting in more unjust people.

In book III, the argument is specifically directed against the bad effects of *mimetic* poetry, the sort of poetry that involves *imitating* bad or ignoble things. Plato holds that if one imitates something repeatedly since youth, one tends to become like it (395d1-3), e.g., if one imitates weak people, one tends to become weak. A similar objection applies to poets who imitate all things good and bad (like, for example, the mixed cast of characters on the *Pequod*). Plato makes an exception, however, for poets who *only* imitate decent things (398a1-b4).

Book X represents the culmination of the argument because Plato's theory of Forms has by that point been introduced. Since the only things that are completely real and rational are the Forms, the only genuine truth is the truth about the Forms, and since poets only produce images of the imperfect things that participate in the Forms (e.g., images of humans rather than the Form of Humanity), they are three removes from reality and truth (597e3-4, 6-7). In "the Divided Line" in Book VI (509d-511e), images are identified as the least real items in the scale of being and imagination (the domain of poets) is identified the most deficient species of awareness. The poets not only cannot lay claim to wisdom but are the furthest removed from the genuine wisdom of the philosophers. The idea of a philosophical poet appears to be an impossibility.

53. Plato, *Two Comic Dialogues: Ion and Hippias Major*, trans. Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1983).

Plato's argument that poetry is the opposite of truth, however, presupposes his own extreme view of the nature of truth and knowledge grounded in his theory of Forms, and it is safe to say that no living philosophers would defend Plato's extreme realist view of the reality of Forms as he articulated it several thousand years ago. The question, for present purposes, is this: If one can no longer accept Plato's extreme Platonic realism, what becomes of Plato's view that poetry can have no share in truth or wisdom, and what would a genuine alternative to Platonism be like?

In the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche accuses Plato of "standing truth on her head." But if Plato stood truth on its head, then Plato's "Divided Line"⁵⁴ (*Rep.* 509d-511e) must also be inverted. In that case, what Plato conceived as the most real, the eternal unchanging world of Forms, is seen by Nietzsche as "the last smoke of an evaporating reality."⁵⁵ Similarly, whereas Plato disparaged imagination, and, with that, poetry, Nietzsche⁵⁶ identified his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a new kind of long poem, as his own greatest work. Since Nietzsche inverts Plato's "Divided Line," the things that, for Plato, were furthest from reality and truth, images and imagination, and with that, poetry, become the locus of reality and truth insofar as these are accessible to human beings. But what could that mean?

Heidegger suggests that what most philosophers consider to be truth, the truth of propositions, is not the most basic kind of truth. Referring to the ancient Greek notion of "the kind of truth that flashes out in the word *aletheia*," he develops a notion of truth as an opening of a "clearing," a "lighting," an "open center" within which things are encountered.⁵⁷ This kind of clearing or lighting is something that "happens," for example, in Van Gogh's painting of the peasant's shoes.⁵⁸ But how does "truth" "happen"?

The [Van Gogh painting] that shows the peasants shoes [and] the poem [C. F. Meyer's poem "Roman Fountain"] do not just make manifest what this isolated being as such is—if, indeed, they manifest anything at all; rather, they make unconcealedness as such happen in regard to what is whole.⁵⁹

That is, a work of art, like a poem or painting, lights up the clearing as a "whole" within which particular things like a peasant's shoes are uncovered. This means that in a work of art, a "kind of truth," denoted by the ancient Greek notion

54. Plato, *Republic*, 509d-511e.

55. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols. The Portable Nietzsche*, 481.

56. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 219.

57. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 50-53.

58. *Ibid.*, 56.

59. *Ibid.*, 56.

of *aletheia*, can "flash out." The poem lights up a clearing within which a whole world, like the "world" of a peasant or of a whaler, is disclosed. Heidegger's idea is that propositional truth, like the proposition that the shoes are wooden, applies to the things illuminated within this clearing, and that it is, therefore, less basic than this more primordial kind of truth. On his view, poetry is not, as Plato thought, as far removed from truth as possible. Rather, poetry can bring about the happening, the "flashing out," of the primal truth, the whole "world," within which particular things are disclosed.

In fact, *Moby-Dick*, using some of the same language as Heidegger, illustrates Heidegger's view almost two hundred years before Heidegger developed these views. Just as the word "wonder" is one of Melville's favorite words in *Moby-Dick*, it is no accident that another of his favorite words is "flashes." Consider the following passage from (Chap. 42), more reminiscent of passages in the Homeric epics than of American literature of Melville's day,

Most famous in our ... Indian traditions is that of the White Steed of the Prairies; ... He was the elected Xerxes of vast herds of wild horses, whose pastures in those days were only fenced by the Rocky Mountains and the Alleghanies. ... The flashing cascade of his mane, ... invested him with housings more resplendent than gold and silver-beaters could have furnished him. A most imperial and archangelical apparition of that unfallen, western world, which to the eyes of the old trappers and hunters revived the glories of those primeval times when Adam walked majestic as a god, bluff-browed and fearless as this mighty steed.

Consider also the passage from Chap. 118,

Towards evening ..., the *Pequod* was torn of her canvas, and bare-poled was left to fight a Typhoon which had struck her directly ahead. When darkness came on, sky and sea roared and split with the thunder, and blazed with the lightning, that showed the disabled masts fluttering ... with the rags which the first fury of the tempest had left for its after sport ... Starbuck was standing on the quarter-deck; at every flash of the lightning glancing aloft, to see what additional disaster might have befallen the intricate hamper there; ...

In the second of these passages Melville describes how a "flash" of lightning literally discloses the dangerous world of the whaling voyage. In the first, the "flashing" cascade of the horse's mane discloses, simultaneously, the "worlds" of the native American "Indians" and the "unfallen" primeval world in the book of Genesis, linked, as these are, by the innocence that preceded "the fall." Borrowing Voltaire's words (see epigraph at the beginning of the present paper), many of the chapters in *Moby-Dick* are brief "flashes of light in the darkness" that momentarily illuminate a world, the primeval "world" of the Native Americans, the world of Genesis before the fall, the surprisingly humane and innocent "world" of Queequeg the cannibal, and so on. Thus, what *Moby-Dick* offers is precisely such

poetic flashes in the darkness of human life that briefly illuminate these various "worlds" within which human beings dwell. It is in this sense that *Moby-Dick* is a work of philosophical poetry. However, *Moby-Dick* also has a very particular conception of its own primordial poetic philosophy.

The Philosophy of the "Landsman" and the Philosophy of the Seafarers

If I am fond of the sea, and of all that is of the sea's kind, and fondest when it angrily contradicts me; if that delight in searching which drives the sails towards the undiscovered is in me, if a seafarer's delight is in my delight; if ever my jubilation cried, "The coast has vanished, now the chain has fallen from me, the boundless roars around me, far out glisten space and time; be of good cheer old heart!"

Nietzsche⁶⁰

It is pointed out in "Just call me Ishmael" above that *Moby-Dick* employs various interrelated "metaphysical" dichotomies in order to illuminate the "wonder-world" that Ishmael encounters at sea, order-chaos, civilized-uncivilized, beauty-terror, illusion-truth, surface-depth, and the land-sea dichotomy with which frames all the others. Since philosophy begins in wonder, but since the kind of wonder Ishmael pursues is that encountered at sea, not on land, and since the right entry in each of the above dichotomies is associated with the sea, while the left entry in each is associated with the land, Ishmael distinguishes between two fundamentally different species of philosophy, one for the "landsman" and one for the seafarers. Fodor's *The Language of Thought*⁶¹ is a good candidate for the former. For that very rational civilized book seems entirely out of place on the dangerous chaotic "world" of the whaling voyage.

Zarathustra, by contrast, envisages a philosophy of the seafarers that even "delights" in being contradicted, as Ahab and the whole crew of the Pequod eventually were, by *Moby-Dick*. Ishmael expresses his own version of Zarathustra's seafarer's delight,

Oh! shipmates! on the starboard hand of every woe, there is a sure delight; and higher the top of that delight, than the bottom of the woe is deep. ... Delight is to him—a far, far upward, and inward delight—who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him, when the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth, and kills, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges. (Chap. 9).

60. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche*, 342.

61. Fodor, *The Language of Thought*.

Ishmael's ethic is also reminiscent of that of Tennyson's Ulysses, who "enjoys life" even as he "suffer'd greatly," who is determined to "follow knowledge like a sinking star beyond the utmost bounds of human thought," who never finds it "too late to seek a newer world." Ulysses' way of being in the world is altogether different from that of the "landsman." Tennyson's Ulysses contrasts his own way of being in the world from that of his own son Telemachus,

This is my son, mine own Telemachus, ...
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 [His] labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail
 In offices of tenderness, and pay
 Meet adoration to my household gods,
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

Whereas Ulysses craves the danger and freedom of the sea, new worlds to conquer, and transgressing the boundaries of thought, Telemachus, ruled by "common duties," is "prudent," "decent," "soft" and conventionally pious. Telemachus "subdues" the people to the "useful" and the "good," that is, he suppresses their freedom. He would not dare to pursue knowledge beyond the bounds of human thought. Whereas Telemachus, with his emphasis on the "useful," is a utilitarian committed to the "common good," Tennyson's Ulysses' way of being in the world is more akin to the Nietzschean ethic in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.⁶²

To be sure, there are differences between Ishmael's and Nietzsche's views. Whereas the latter holds that God is dead,⁶³ the former "acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven." Despite the fact that Melville himself seems to have retained a belief, though a fluctuating and troubled one, in a kind of God,⁶⁴ Ishmael's seafarer's ethic is in many respects similar to Nietzsche's.

The key point for present purposes is that Ishmael's conception of philosophy is quite different from that of a "landsman" like Telemachus. The "landsman's" philosophy is rooted in the decent prudent common logic and ethic of a civilized people. The seafarer's philosophy cultivates exploration, adventure, standing "against the proud gods and commodores of this earth," and even attempts to transgress the bounds of human thought. The difference between the

62. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*; Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche*.

63. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche*, Preface.

64. Bender, "Moby-Dick, An American Lyrical Novel," 100.

seafarer's and the landsman's two species of philosophy is reflected in the difference between Ulysses' and Telemachus' respective philosophies.

Whitehead's⁶⁵ distinction between two different notions of reason in the Western tradition helps to clarify the distinction between these two very different notions of philosophy. The one species of reason traces to Plato and the other to Ulysses. The first is "theoretical" reason understood in abstraction from the animal body, the latter an operation of an animal body in the world. Plato's theoretical reason is a "godlike faculty" that "surveys, judges and understands" the world from above it. Ulysses' reason, by contrast, is involved "in the welter of process,"⁶⁶ that is, it is a species of reason that operates in the process of life in the world. As Tennyson's Ulysses puts it,

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.

Ulysses' reason discloses his new "wonder-world," not by thinking, but by *action* ("when I move"). Ulysses may not be interested in Fodor's *The Language of Thought*⁶⁷ but is not hobbled by the lack. Rather, Ulysses' animal reason opens the archway to "gleaming" new worlds. Plato shares Reason with the Gods, Ulysses with the foxes.⁶⁸ The former discloses lifeless abstract essences. The latter discloses "gleaming" new worlds of life via action.⁶⁹

Moby-Dick's view of philosophy is akin to Ulysses' view. Recall that metaphysicians appear in *Moby-Dick* as figures of fun. Indeed, Plato himself might find himself to be a figure of fun were he to be sharing a bed with Queequeg on the *Pequod*, for the obvious reason that Plato's magnificent philosophical work is of out of place on a whaling voyage. Ishmael even uses some of Ulysses' language to describe his voyage "beyond the utmost bounds of human thought,"

In the distance, a great white mass lazily rose, and rising higher and higher, and disentangling itself from the azure, at last gleamed before our prow like a snow-slide, new slid from the hills. Thus glistening for a moment, as slowly it subsided, and sank. Then once more arose, and silently gleamed. It seemed not a whale; and yet is this Moby-Dick? thought Daggoo. Again the phantom went down, ...⁷⁰

65. A. N. Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 9-11.

66. Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*, 9.

67. Fodor, *The Language of Thought*.

68. Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*, 10.

69. It is noteworthy that another of *Moby-Dick's* favorite words is "gleams" (Extracts, Chap's. 8, 41, 44, 59, 66, 70, 119, 128, 139).

70. Recall again that *Moby-Dick* uses the word "glistens" from the ancient Tiamat myths and uses the word "gleams" from Tennyson's "Ulysses" to describe to describe the

Although this "wondrous phenomenon" of the deep ocean turns out to be a giant squid, not Moby-Dick as the crew had first thought, it is just another manifestation of "the ungraspable phantom of life" that, as stated in Chap. 1, "is the key to it all." For this, ultimately, is the difference between philosophy of the "landsmen" and that of the seafarers. Whereas the former seek the eternal unchanging truths of theoretical reason, the latter must chart a course through the "ungraspable phantom of life." The former discloses its appropriate dimension of the cosmos by advancing philosophical theses and defending them with argument and evidence. But what is the appropriate means for disclosing the ungraspable phantom of life?

Croiset⁷¹ writes that "All the poetry of the Greeks is, in a word, the poetry of life." That is, it is human action, expressed in primordial poetry, that produces the lightning "flashes in the dark" that briefly illuminates (discloses) the "ungraspable phantom of life" before the dark closes in again. If one is also to disclose this ungraspable phantom of life, one requires, with Ulysses and Zarathustra, a seafarer's philosophy. Since, however, in *Moby-Dick*, the sea symbolizes the ungraspable phantom of life, this means that one requires a primordial seafarer's poetry of life—but that is precisely what *Moby-Dick* purports to be.

Moby-Dick is not committed to the view that the philosophy of the "landsmen" is worthless or false. Indeed, Ishmael's reference to the life of the "landsmen" living on Tahiti as a "half known life" (Chap. 58) suggests that the philosophy of the landsman, such as Fodor's *The Language of Thought*,⁷² or, perhaps, books like it, may be appropriate for capturing that sunlit rational part of human life. Indeed, Ishmael even advises human beings that it might be wiser to stay on land: "God keep thee! Push not off from that isle [Tahiti], thou canst never return!" (Chap. 57). One is advised to content oneself with Fodor's *The Language of Thought*⁷³ rather than taking to the sea. The problem is that the landsman's philosophy neglects the other, deeper, half of human life. If one is to look, not just into the rational sunlit half of the cosmos, but into that other deeper half, one must set sail on the much more dangerous chaotic seas of life.

Finally, although *Moby-Dick* refers to the life of the landsman as a "half-known life," it is clear that the book does not really regard to two parts as equal: "two thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer's" (Chap. 14). The reference to two halves of the world is merely a literary device not to be taken literally. The view that emerges from the pages of *Moby-Dick* is that the two parts of the cosmos are not even close to being equivalent. In *Moby-Dick*, the world of the "landsmen" is only, again reverting to Ancient Greek and Babylonian

sea. See note 14 above! The point here is these words are used to describe the "flashing" out, the uncovering (*aletheia*), of a "whole" world as explained by Heidegger.

71. Maurice Croiset, "The Greek Race and its Genius," in *The Greek Genius and its Influence*, ed. Lane Cooper (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 97.

72. Fodor, *The Language of Thought*.

73. *Ibid.*

imagery, a speck floating on a wild boundless sea. The fundamental feeling that pervades *Moby-Dick* is that all of our best philosophy, indeed the whole civilized world of the landsman, is merely a bit of ephemeral white foam that exists for a brief moment in the sunlight on the surface of a chaotic boundless sea—a sea of which human beings are, at best, only dimly aware, for an ephemeral moment in a few brief flashes of poetic insight, before that speck of foam disappears forever into the unfathomable depths. The final words of *Moby-Dick* proper, after the entire *Pequod*, with Ahab and his impotent mad vengeance, is dragged down by Moby-Dick into the darkness never to be seen again, are these: "Now small fowls flew screaming over the yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (Chap. 135).⁷⁴ That is the final humbling message taught by *Moby-Dick*'s seafarer's philosophy to "the proud gods and commodores of this earth."

Summary

All nature is akin
Plato^{75,76}

The paper argues that though *Moby-Dick* deals with philosophical issues, it is not a philosophical work in the traditional sense of producing arguments for theses. Rather, inspired by ancient Greek philosophy and ancient Babylonian myths, *Moby-Dick* is a kind of philosophical poetry that seeks to disclose a more primordial kind of philosophical truth. The paper begins with a discussion of the main character and narrator of the book, the "ideal democratic man" and wanderer, Ishmael. Second, the paper explains the microcosmic view, according to which there is an analogy between all living things on the one hand and the

74. Melville's language of a "yawning gulf [or abyss]" here conjures Hesiod's description in the *Theogony* of the creation of the cosmos [Andrew Gregory, *Ancient Greek Cosmogony* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2008), 22-23]. However, that language is used here to describe the reverse. For what makes the sea birds scream here is the destruction, not the creation, of a microcosm.

75. Plato, *Meno*, in *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle*, trans. W. K. C. Guthrie (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 81d.

76. Compare Plato's remark in the *Meno* with Ulysses' remark to Achilles in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (Act III, Scene iii): "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Note, however, that Ulysses appears to mean his remark in a very different sense from Plato. Whereas Plato's remark alludes to his microcosmic doctrine, Ulysses seems to mean that one should value the glitter of the specious present rather than the true gold of the past. [William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 253.]

whole cosmos on the other. Thus, the "metaphysical dimension of Ishmael's "democracy," and the most basic value in the whole book, is illustrated by Ishmael's recognition of this microcosmic kinship between all living things and the whole cosmos. Third, the paper explains the "moral" dimension of *Moby-Dick's* microcosmic view, specifically, that genuine human self-knowledge of the sort sought by traditional philosophers is beyond the capacities of human beings and that it is suicidal for human beings to attempt to achieve such self-knowledge. Fourth, the paper argues that *Moby-Dick* is really a kind of philosophical poetry rather than a standard argumentative philosophical work. Fifth, the paper invokes certain Heideggerian ideas about poetry to explain how, in opposition to Plato's view that philosophy and poetry are incompatible, there can be a kind of philosophical poetry of the sort found in *Moby-Dick*. Thus, the "metaphysical" knowledge disclosed in *Moby-Dick* is not embodied in precise theses but in brief primordial poetic flashes of insight. Finally, the paper argues that it is one of the fundamental aims in *Moby-Dick* to distinguish between the safe, civilized, rational philosophy of the "landsman" that corresponds to philosophy normally understood, and the more adventurous dangerous poetic philosophy of the seafarers. In this respect, *Moby-Dick* anticipates some of Nietzsche's views about a new kind of seafarer's philosophy in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by almost a half century.

Bibliography

- Adamson, Peter. *Classical Philosophy: A History of Western Philosophy without any Gaps*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Allen, Reginald. *Greek Philosophy: Readings in the History of Philosophy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.
- Anderson, Mark. "Platonic and Nietzschean Themes of Transformation in *Moby-Dick*." In *Melville Among the Philosophers*, edited by Cory McCall and Tom Nurmi, 25-44. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by W. D. Ross. Digireads.com, 2005.
- Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
- Bender, Bert. "Moby-Dick, An American Lyrical Novel." In *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, edited by Harold Bloom, 97-106. New York: Chelsea House, 1986.
- Brown, Stuart, and N. J. Fox. *Historical Dictionary of Leibniz's Philosophy*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006.
- Campbell, Joseph. *Occidental Mythology*. New York: Penguin Campbell, 1991.
- Cameron, Sharon. *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1981.
- Carone, Gabriela Roxana. *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

- Conger, G. P. *Theories of Macrocosmos and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1922.
- Cornford, F. M. *Plato's Cosmology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
- Croiset, Maurice. "The Greek Race and its Genius." In *The Greek Genius and its Influence*, edited by Lane Cooper, 85-97. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952.
- Fish, Peter. *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*. Hauppauge: Barrons Educational Series, 1987.
- Faulkner, William. "I Wish I Had Written That." *The Chicago Tribune*, 16 July 1927. Reprinted by Harrison Parker, and Hayford Hershel, ed. *The Writings of Herman Melville*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.
- Fodor, Jerry. *The Language of Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Gregory, Andrew. *Ancient Greek Cosmogony*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2008.
- Gantz, Timothy. *Early Greek Myth*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Heidegger, Martin. *What is Philosophy?*. Translated by Jean Wilde and William Kluback. New Haven: College and University Press, 1956.
- Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." In *Poetry, Language and Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
- Jacobson, Thorkild. "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 1 (1968), 104-108.
- Jung, Carl. *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull, and edited by Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Kazin, Alfred. "Introduction to *Moby-Dick*." In *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, edited by Harold Bloom, 7-18. New York: Infobase, 2007.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Reprinted London: Penguin Books, 1923.
- Lovejoy, A. O. *The Great Chain of Being*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- McDonough, Richard. "Plato: Organicism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [I], §2.b. Retrieved from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/platoorg/>.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1999.
- Moore, Christopher. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003.
- Novak, Frank. "The Metaphysics of Beauty and Terror in *Moby-Dick*." In *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea, 1986.
- Nissim-Sabat, Marilyn. "Melville's Phenomenology of Gender." In *Melville Among the Philosophers*, edited by Cory McCall and Tom Nurmi, 129-148. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo*. Translated by Water Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche*. Edited and Translated by Walter Kaufmann, 112-439. New York: Viking, 1968.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols in The Portable Nietzsche*. Edited and Translated by Walter Kaufmann, 463-563. New York: Viking, 1968.
- Plato. *Republic*. Translated by Alan Bloom. New York and London: Basic Books, 1968.

- Plato. *Two Comic Dialogues: Ion and Hippias Major*. Translated by Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1983.
- Plato. *Meno*. In *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle*. Translated by W. K. C. Guthrie, 97-128. New York: The Free Press, 1966.
- Plato. *Theaetetus*. Translated by M. J. Levett. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.
- Plato. *Timaeus*. Translated by Donald Zeyl. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.
- Robinson, John Mansley. *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy*. Houghton Mifflin College Division, 1968.
- Roob, A. *Alchemy and Mysticism*. Köln: Taschen, 1997.
- Shakespeare, William. *Troilus and Cressida*. Edited by David Bevington. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Sherrill, Roland. "The Career of Ishmael's Self-Transcendence." In *Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, edited by Harold Bloom, 73-95. New York: Chelsea House, 1986.
- Stookey, Lorena. *Thematic Guide to World Mythology*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2004.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and as Representation, vol. 1*. Translated by E. J. F. Payne. New York: Dover 1968.
- Voltaire. "First Letter to Frederick." *Letters of Voltaire and Frederick the Great*. Translated by Richard Aldington. Paris: Brentano, 1927.
- Way, Brian. *Herman Melville: Moby Dick*. London: Edward Arnold, 1977.
- West, Cornel. "A Time to Break the Philosophic Silencing of Melville." In *Melville Among the Philosophers*, edited by Cory McCall and Tom Nurmi, 213-220. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017.
- Whitehead, A. N. *The Function of Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus-logico-philosophicus*. Translated by David Pears and B. F. McGuinness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Wright, Rosemary. *Cosmology in Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Creating Sacred Spaces: The Power of Rap Music on the Religious Consciousness

Barbara B. Pemberton*

Rap music is the sound and soul of the Hip Hop culture—a powerful social, musical, and political phenomenon of the late twentieth century. Born among the youth in the poor districts of New York, the genre has extensive roots: Puerto Rican, Latino, and Jamaican sounds, African tribal drumming, spoken poetry of the 1930s Harlem renaissance, blues music, spirituals, slam poetry, and oratory of the Civil Rights Movement. Developing right along-side this musical genre was the Five Percent Nation, a relatively unknown off-shoot of the Nation of Islam, that embraced the hip hop culture from its inception. God Hop, as some call the rap associated with the Five Percenters, became a natural conduit for the Nation's belief system. This paper will employ contemporary spatial theory to reveal how this unique symbiosis aided the construction of three categories of sacred space for the Five Percenters and how rap continues to serve as the glue that unites the group and also captures the imagination of new generations. More than just the public face of this new religious movement, rap provides physical gathering space, establishes ideological sacred space by articulating and contextualizing sacred history, and continues to cast a vision for creation of a new, idealized just world order. Extensive new research traces the genre from its inception among marginalized, inner-city youth to the powerful prestigious rap artists of today, including Jay Z, Busta Rhymes, and the Wu Tang Clan. Both the Nation and Hip Hop have gone global, with Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim rap artists also creating new cultural spaces while spreading a powerful, positive counter-culture message for social change—proving the adage: never underestimate the power of music on the religious consciousness.

Introduction

This paper will use contemporary spatial theory to gain a new perspective on how rap music, the sound of the Hip Hop culture, has been instrumental in building multiple layers of sacred space for the Five Percent Nation, or Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE). This controversial off-shoot of the Nation of Islam may be categorized as a new religious movement located in orally constructed sacred space, manifest wherever their beliefs are being affirmed. Just as the three great monotheistic traditions were first orally transmitted, the Nation has relied heavily on the faithful oral reproduction of its message, passing sacred truths from disciple to disciple through their "each one - teach one" methodology. Identity is tied to place, which does not necessarily require a physical, geographical location. Scholars in the social sciences, humanities, and philosophy agree space may be defined in other ways, such as social context, power structures, or by art and literary imagination. More than just the public face of a relatively unknown black

*Professor of World Religions, Ouachita Baptist University, USA.

nationalist movement, rap music has provided physical gathering spaces, establishes ideological sacred space by articulating and contextualizing sacred history, and continues to cast a vision for a new, idealized, just world order. This cultural production creates "imagined" space: not "imaginary," but space that can be construed and/or experienced in no other way, yet space that still holds sway over group inclusion and exclusion, over behavior, and ultimately over eschatological hope. This study reinforces the adage: never underestimate the power of music to quicken the religious consciousness.

In this paper we will first take a brief look at contemporary spatial theory and use it to construct a rubric for analyzing the contribution rap music has made in constructing NGE sacred spaces. Three categories of space will emerge: physical or geographical, ideological or psychological, and visionary. To locate the Nation geographically it is important to first explore its history, including biographies of men most instrumental in the development of the ideas and stories that would become foundational to Five Percenter beliefs. This ideology will construct the next category of space, that of perception—the ideological or psychological. The Nation, and rap, offer a powerful counter-culture message of black supremacy primarily for poor, marginalized African American youth. As is the practice of many new religious movements, the Nation has incorporated into its stories geographical locations universally recognized as holy spaces, including Jerusalem and Mecca, (re)visioned for their own sacred history—Harlem is the New Mecca and New Jersey is the New Jerusalem. Last we will look at the ideals this movement has set out in their quest to establish a new, just world, a sacred space we will label visionary. Just as the Five Percent Nation has spread beyond the borders of the United States, Hip Hop culture, though often grossly misinterpreted and now declining to a degree on the American scene, is resurfacing elsewhere as a global agent for social critique and change.

Spatial Theory and Sacred Space

The concept of "space," and particularly "sacred space," has been studied by key thinkers from many disciplines, all employing their own field's particular vocabulary, often adding new terminology to explain a fresh perspective. Spatial theory in some ways parallels linguistic speech-act theory, recognizing words have the power to shape and transform environments. Recent sociological scholarship in spatiality offers an intriguing perspective: ordering space and its production into three categories. This paper will employ the categories used by New Testament scholar, Patrick Schreiner: physical or social space, ideological or

mental space, and visionary or imagined space.¹ Within the field of religious studies all three categories may be considered "sacred space."

A religious movement may be located within each of the three categories of constructed space. "Physical space" is space that is empirically comprehended by adherents. Sacred history establishes the second category, "ideological space," or psychological space. It is the space of lived experiences filled with mental associations: some personal, some drawn from stories that inform the group's theology. It is the realm of perception—how the space is conceptualized: welcoming, or hostile, comfortable or oppressive. "Visionary space," or creative space, is the imagined world where the hopes and aspirations of the group are realized. In the religious context, visionary space may be construed as the idealized, utopian sacred cosmos. Physical space and ideological space may be contested, with visionary space offering a new reality, a place and identity powerfully communicated through story-telling. It is a place constantly under construction—real, yet not fully established. These relationally oriented categories are fluid by their very nature, and all three spaces may be experienced simultaneously.

Employing "space" as an analytical rubric, the Five Percent Nation may be situated within each of the three categories, with rap music instrumental in the cultural production of all three. NGE history does not only reveal physical space. The development of black racial consciousness and the personalities who drove it help explain the source of the sacred history which constructs their ideological space. Rap music, or "God Hop," by (or influenced by) Five Percenters, has served as a powerful change agent and tool for propagation, as well as a source for psychologically building up the people. The movement and music also offers visionary space, an ideal space of return to black dominance—back to the way things used to be—that is both/and, now real and experienced, yet still imagined and becoming through the black community. While living within the physical and ideological spaces, members have rejected injustice and corruption, choosing instead to embrace emancipatory identities as part of the Five Percent. Their visionary space is social subversion that crafts a new present reality and offers a glimpse of a new future social structure. This utopian ideal is the stuff of hearts and imagination and is therefore most powerfully communicated through cultural production—stories, art, and music.

But is the Five Percent Nation a new "religious" movement? Its own texts eschew the title, offering at first read an optimistic, Afro-humanism, intentionally rejecting any invisible god worshipped by the traditional revealed religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, although it should be noted that some members of the Five Percent Nation adhere more closely to a form of traditional Islam than do others. According to their teachings, these western monotheisms project

1. Patrick Schreiner, *The Body of Jesus: A Spatial Analysis of the Kingdom in Matthew* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 19, 54.

"whiteness" upon an image of a god revealed through white prophets, men who are also to be revered and followed. These now dominant religions are said to have been developed as intentional systems of oppression forced on black people through both secular and missionary colonizers and are antithetical to the truth and restoration of the black man to his original dominant status. That said, the Nation directly employs biblical references and Islamic terminology, as well as the ancient esotericism of the perennial philosophy, making new religious movement a legitimate classification.

Physical Space

Among many theological predecessors to the Five Percent Nation, the Moorish Science Temple appeared during the post-reconstructionist period of social upheaval as disenfranchised southern African Americans began to migrate north in search of jobs and a better way of life. New Jersey, "New-ark," or the New Jerusalem, was the site of the first Moorish Temple, or "The Canaanite Temple," established in 1913 by Noble Drew Ali. Shedding the social mores of the south, including traditional religious practices, these men and women were open to new ideas. One of many purveyors of unconventional spirituality was Noble Drew Ali, né Timothy Drew, born in 1886 in North Carolina. His biographical details, though vague, are said to include a Moroccan father, a Cherokee mother, a childhood spent with gypsies, and a teenage experience of Egypt where he was initiated into the ancient mysteries of the pyramid of Cheops. Ali drew his "Islamism," which he distinguished from the "slave oriented" "Arab-Islam," from his *Circle 7 Koran* [later, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* (1927)], full of black nationalism, Masonic symbolism, gnostic philosophy including Buddhist and Confucian references, and Islamic terminology. Most significantly, life with the Temple offered a new identity defined by place, complete with new Temple manufactured "passports:" blacks were not "African negroes" at all—but Moors, people of Moroccan descent, having roots going back to the Moabites, themselves descendants of the biblical Ruth. These ancient Moors controlled territory that included much of what is now known as the Americas, giving American blacks, or as they came to be called, the "Asiatic Blackman," pride of place, warranting full societal recognition and respect due original people—something unimaginable in the 1920s.

Temples were established throughout the South and mid-west, including Detroit and Baltimore. Ali opened his Chicago headquarters in 1928, where he taught a question-answer catechism, similar to the Masonic model, that clearly stated Allah is actually Man. Along with a fez, each member received an additional identity signifier—new surnames, "Bey" or "El"—the psychological importance of which cannot be overemphasized. Moral expectations and regulations also distinguished members of the community: no pork, tobacco,

alcohol, shaving, or cosmetics. Whereas black nationalist Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) urged racial separation and a return to Africa, Noble Drew Ali's Islamism offered a positive message focused on black pride, spiritual renewal, and a new political society in America. After Ali's still unexplained death, the congregation was eventually absorbed by other movements. Scholars argue over the extent of influence the Moorish Temple had on future movements. However, some concepts, especially the message of black empowerment, do continue in the theology of the later, more recognized group, the Nation of Islam (NOI).²

Another mysterious character figures prominently in the history of the Five Percent Nation: Master Fard Muhammad (one of over fifty aliases). His contested biographical details, like those of Noble Drew Ali, include an ambiguous ethnicity including having an Asiatic Blackman father and white Muslim mother. As the Depression stole both jobs and hope, Master Fard appeared in the ghettos of Chicago, in the summer of 1930, as a door-to-door peddler of silk, African goods, and, as it would turn out, a renewed faith and identity for African Americans. His timely message, delivered amid enthralling stories of faraway Muslim lands, was well-received and spread to other cities. Some sources say he had within his new "Nation of Islam" over 8,000 followers in Detroit by 1933, including many adherents from the post-split Moorish Science Temple.³

W.D. Fard offered black supremacy delivered with Islamic terminology, featuring "scientific proof" that white people are devils created by the wayward young scientist Yacub. Fard asserted as well that white religion was intentionally developed as a tool to control blacks. Whites would rule for 6,000 years. Fard explained that at that time the original black people were not yet ready to rule; they were still trapped in the "wilderness" of North American and were following a "hocus-pocus" religion offering them only heavenly rewards in the "by and by." Fard had come to offer them hope in the here and now, and to proclaim the current grace period for the devil—one he prophesied would end with a return to black domination in 1934.

Fard reinforced his teachings by creating a unique language environment—expecting followers to memorize his series of 154 orally transmitted secret lessons collected in his *Teaching for the Lost Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way*. Written in a question-answer format, these lessons contained esoteric rituals for initiates only, doctrines of the godhood of the Black man, and an explanation of the black man's status as the progenitor of the entire human race. Just as his predecessor Ali disappeared mysteriously, so did Master Fard in 1934. But unlike Noble Drew Ali, Fard is said to have prepared a successor: Elijah Muhammad (born Robert Poole in Sanderville, Georgia, in 1897). Fard's congregation split,

2. Felicia M. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 1, 9-12.

3. *Ibid.*, 13.

some members continuing to honor their Master as a prophet. But the community that chose to follow Elijah Muhammad deified Fard as the latest incarnation of Allah, and it is this group that became what is now known as the Nation of Islam.⁴

Drawing most of its membership from the streets, the NOI had few professional people in the early days. The one noteworthy exception was Dr. Abdul Salaam (Dr. Leo McCallum), Elijah Muhammad's dentist.⁵ During a skyped interview with the doctor, he gave participants in an academic institute on American Islam a detailed personal account of his experience in the NOI. Abdul grew up in Newark, New Jersey, in a staunchly Methodist Christian home. He said, "Sunday morning is the most segregated time in American." Friends began to come by with lessons, asking him questions about his identity he could not answer, even with all of his college degrees. They took him to the Temple where he met Malcolm X and learned that "Islam" meant freedom, justice, and equality. He soon was invited to go to Chicago to meet with "the Honorable Elijah Muhammad" himself. What he discovered was that, with all his education, he knew nothing about himself. Truths about man's African origins had been "covered up." He described Elijah Muhammad as a master at helping people be all they could be – and Elijah Muhammad called what he delivered Islam. The draw of this socio-religious movement was the relevance of the message: Do for yourself! When teaching, Elijah Muhammad used the Bible because it was what the people knew; he also knew enough from English translations of the Qur'an to incorporate relevant passages from it as well. And, since both his dad and granddad were preachers, he could deliver! Rather than focus on religious rituals, the NOI built an impressive infrastructure—a bank, the largest black businesses in the history of America, restaurants, schools—all to foster self-sufficiency and black empowerment.

Like so many of the black leaders of the day, Elijah Muhammad spent time in prison, a period about which little is known. Dr. Salaam claims Elijah Muhammad confided in him that he crafted the stories that held the Nation of Islam together while he was in prison. This revelation does not bother the now orthodox Sunni Dr. Salaam, because he thoroughly believes Allah used Elijah Muhammad to help the community. What does grieve Dr. Salaam is that Malcolm X gets so much more attention than Elijah Muhammad—the real visionary who deserves recognition for empowering the black community.

As the NOI grew, more temples were built, and more leaders were trained, including Malcolm X, who became the national spokesman in 1963 and minister

4. *Ibid.*, 11-14.

5. Skyped interview with Dr. Abdul Salaam, Thursday evening, July 23, 2016, as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute: American Muslims: History, Culture, and Politics, July 13-31, 2016, held at George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

of Temple #7 in Harlem. The 1960s were tumultuous for the Nation, the tumult brought on in part by accusations of Elijah Muhammad's fathering several children through multiple affairs. In 1964 Malcolm X left the Nation after embracing Sunni Islam. Elijah Muhammad's own son Wallace, like Malcolm, also studied orthodox Islam, and would, following his father's death in 1975, take most of the NOI with him into what may be described as Sunni orthodoxy.

Birth of the Five Percent Nation

Another important defection from the NOI Temple #7 was that of Clarence 13X, born Clarence Edward Smith in 1928 in Danville, Virginia, founder of the Five Percent Nation. Members of the NOI take an X, representing their unknown original family name, to replace their former names associated with white slave owners. The "13" indicates Clarence was the 13th Clarence to join Temple #7. Known to chafe under the strict morality rules of the Nation, and for his love gambling and alcohol, Clarence 13X also had theological differences with the Nation. Thinking through NOI doctrine, he came across several contradictions. In particular, he wrestled with the divinity of Fard—that Fard was Allah incarnate. He reasoned that, if the creator is the Blackman, then how could Fard, a white Arab at worst and a man of mixed parentage at best, be Allah? NOI doctrine also supposedly rejected any "mystery god," teaching instead that God is the Blackman. How could Fard be Allah if no longer present—and not black? Elijah Muhammad had proclaimed Fard's divinity in an article of 1934 entitled "A Warning to the Blackman of America:" "Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad for our day of deliverance is come ... because our savior is in the midst of us and is doing great things. He will make everyone that hates him and disregards his call confess that he is God."⁶

Clarence's questioning led to his resignation, or by other accounts, expulsion in 1963, and his fiery speech led to the formation of a new movement, the Five Percenters. Ironically, his followers came to regard him as Allah in the flesh and gave him the title Father Allah.

The Five Percent Nation was born during the rough days of the 1960s—a time fraught with gang violence, race riots, and numerous radical organizations. It has its own checkered history of gang activity, violence, run-ins with the police, and even infiltration by the FBI. Clarence 13X did attract hardcore street youth, dropouts, and other outcasts and social misfits. Father Allah's first young disciples came to be called "The First Born." Each was expected to find ten other

6. Abdul Salaam, *Is the Whiteman Still the Devil?: Myths vs Realities An Islamic Perspective* (Victoria, BC, Canada: Friesen Press, 2013), 106-7. Some Five Percenters teach Fard's mixed racial heritage was purposeful; Fard would be welcomed by African Americans and his whiteness would allow him to navigate through cities unnoticed by white people. Pen Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers* (San Bernardino, CA: 2007), 15.

neophytes to teach personally. As the numbers grew, the emerging movement became known as "Allah's Five Percenters." Misinformation fostered constant apprehension on the part of society at large, for the new organization's members were young, trained in karate (through their earlier affiliation with the Fruit of Islam of the NOI), and associated in some way with the often misunderstood religion of Islam.

Clarence 13X was himself a notorious figure, hated by many groups: by the gangs because he was anti-gang, by drug dealers because he spoke out against drugs, by black power groups because he worked with city government officials, the NOI because he divulged the secret lessons, and the Sunni Muslims because he called himself Allah. The FBI kept a close eye on Clarence, even though he was a highly decorated Korean War veteran. After his arrest on marijuana possession and second-degree assault in March 1966, he was taken to the Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane where he was diagnosed with "paranoid schizophrenia with delusions of religious grandeur," but was released because he had been confined without trial.

In 1967, a time when Five Percenters were labeled nothing short of criminals, New York City mayor John V. Lindsay sent Barry Gottehrer, who was at the time in charge of the Urban Action Task Force, to establish a rapport with Father Allah. Together they organized city-wide activities and established the Allah's Street Academy at 2122 Seventh Avenue in Harlem – or Five Percenters' Mecca – which is still used as the movement's headquarters today. Other geographic locations were renamed by the Five Percent Nation: Brooklyn became Medina and Queens, the Desert.⁷ Linguists call this renaming of locations "semantic inversion." Scholar of African American Vernacular English Geneva Smitherman calls it an "act of linguistic empowerment."⁸

Five Percenters share many beliefs with the Nation of Islam and retain a few ties to al-Islam (Orthodoxy), often including important locations in their lyrics. "Mecca" (the birthplace of al-Islam) and "Medina" sometimes mean the cities of Saudi Arabia, but often refer to "Harlem" (the birthplace of the Five Percent Nation) and "Brooklyn" respectively, but the distinctions are not always obvious. Rakim raps in "The 18th Letter:" "bring a praise from Mecca, make a phrase for the better."⁹

Clarence 13X was murdered on June 13, 1969, his assailant remains unidentified. He left no successor to the movement, trusting all his male followers would be leaders of themselves, their families, and the group that would, in 1976

7. Other cities include: the Bronx is Pelan, Los Angeles and Louisiana are both Love Allah, Hew Haven is New Heaven, Atlanta is Allah's Garden, San Francisco is West Asia, C-God is Chicago. New Jersey has the distinction of being the New Jerusalem.

8. Geneva Smitherman, "The Chain Remains the Same: Communicative Practices in the Hip Hop Nation," *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 1 (September 1997): 17.

9. *Ibid.*, 4.

declare itself a "Nation," a nation of black men and women, a Nation of Gods and Earths.

Birth of God Hop

In the poor districts of New York there emerged—right alongside the Five Percent Nation—"one of the most powerful cultural forces of the late twentieth century: rap music."¹⁰ What became the Hip-Hop culture took root among the youth in neighborhoods across the city and the Five Percenters embraced it from its inception. The genre actually had extensive roots: African tribal drumming (the "talking drum"), spoken poetry of the 1930s Harlem renaissance, blues music, spirituals, slam poetry artists, and even spokespeople of the Civil Rights Movement. Smitherman describes the rap artist as the "postmodern African griot, the verbally gifted storyteller and cultural historian in African society. As African America's "griot," the rapper must be lyrically/linguistically fluent; he or she is expected to testify, to speak the truth, to come wit it [sic] in no uncertain terms."¹¹

Following the FBI's suppression of the radical black groups of the 1960s and the waning of gang wars, a new generation began to express itself on the streets through four elements that combined to create the Hip Hop phenomenon: DJing (deejaying), MCing (emceeing), B-Boying (break dancing), and writing (graffiti). Free outdoor block parties drew in huge crowds of young revelers; but these fetes were often illegal on two counts: no permits and the huge amplifiers were powered by the city grid. KRS-One raps about the early days in "South Bronx:"

Now way back in the days when hip-hop began
 With Coke LaRock, Kool Herc and then Bam
 B-Boys ran to the latest jam
 But when it got shot up they went home and said "Damn
 There's got to be a better way to hear our music every day
 B-boys getting blown away but
 coming outside anyway"
 They tried again outside in Cedar Park
 Power from a street light made the place dark
 But yo, they didn't care, they turned it out
 I know a few understand what I'm talking about

Hip-hop historians date the origins of the genre back to 1967, when the "Father of Hip Hop," DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell, said to be of Herculean stature), moved to New York, bringing with him memories of the rhythm and competitive nature of the musicians of his native Jamaica. As the story goes, in 1973 Clive and his sister Cindy decided to move the block party inside, by

10. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 1.

11. Smitherman, "The Chain Remains the Same," 4.

holding a dance in the rec room of their West Bronx apartment.¹² The objective was simple: fun for the dancers; admission was 25¢ for ladies and 50¢ for gents. Since his dad was a record collector working for a local band, music and equipment were readily available. Kool Herc would later say, "This first hip-hop party would change the world." About the relationship with the Five Percenters he said, "a lot of Five Percenters ... used to come to my party ... you might call them "peace guards," and they used to hold me down [promise me protection]: "Yo Herc, don't worry about it." So we was havin' a good time."¹³ Black youth at that time were just trying to have fun, but they could hardly escape their ghetto situation and the need for cultural renewal. Hip hop culture and its rap music became a social, musical, and political mix. According to KRS-One: "Rap is something you do, hip-hop is something you live."¹⁴

The original DJ "Holy Trinity" were Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa (credited by some for having first used the term Hip Hop as a culture), and Grandmaster Flash, but by 1977 other artists were center stage. DJs, or turntablists, developed ways to use two turntables and a mixer to keep the music going. Meanwhile, a friend would also work to keep the party alive by encouraging the dancers, and so the "MC" was born. Early MCs took the role and ran with it—their entertainment style of moving the crowd developing into what became "rap."¹⁵

As DJs and MCs teamed up, the stiff competition made artists eager to develop new styles and hone their skills. At first, rap was only performed live, but in 1979 the first single was produced, "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugarhill Gang, and it went top-ten worldwide. In 1982 socially-conscious rap, exposing social ills like poverty and crime, became the rage. The mid-eighties are considered the golden age of hip hop featuring rap icons like LLCool J. By the late 80s studios were using drum machines, synthesizers and sampling (taking a section of music or other material—like a speech—and recording it for insertion in another composition). Early 90s producers added audio editing software, providing a way for new styles of alternative Hip Hop like jazz rap to develop. Most successful in the 90s were the hardcore rap of New York and the gangsta rap and G-Funk of Los Angeles, with the Five Percenter Wu-Tang Clan creating one of the first hardcore styles as they filled their lyrics with symbols and descriptions of gangster life.

Back when the party scene first moved from the streets indoors, it was the Five Percenters who stepped up and served as "peace guards," maintaining order and taking care of the new Hip Hop DJs. These events provided a physical gathering place for members of the Nation, a sacred space where they felt at

12. In 2007 the rec room at 1520 Sedgwick was recognized as the official birthplace of Hip Hop.

13. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 21.

14. *Ibid.*, 143.

15. Some MCs prefer the title "mic controller" to term "rapper" or the original "master of ceremonies."

home, as well as unique "classrooms" where their message was taught and affirmed. Members circled around the teacher/preacher DJ, a practice they called "building in the cipher (circle)," creating an inner "sacred circle." In 1987, Rakim Allah, became the first Rap MC to reveal his Five Percenter affiliation, and God Hop was born. Other MCs came out at the same time as members of the NOI, that religious movement having been reorganized under the leadership of Louis Farrakhan, who became instrumental in bridging the gap between the Five Percenters and the NOI. Bold rap artists continue to address the black youth audience as clearly stated by Chuck D, lead MC of Public Enemy: "I try to bring the youth into a level where they'll be interested to even begin to get into what the minister's speaking and the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, the reason for self-sufficiency in America, and the curiosity to learn more about themselves."¹⁶

Ideological Space – Perception from Sacred History

Five Percenter sacred history defines what may be called ideological space for this new religious movement, their stories providing a powerful counter-identity, particularly for poor, marginalized, "devil-indoctrinated" youth searching for respect. The NGE provides its community both a physical and mental location offering dignity, purpose, and opportunity, constructed by black prophets sent to rescue the "lost" tribe of the original people. Their creed, or in this case, "lessons," including Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet (see below), masterfully carve out sacred space by receiving and enculturating members through mentorship and the spoken word. The Nation's faithfully memorized lessons are condensed and delivered in rapid repetition reminiscent of "spoken-word" genre and rap music. Both rap and spoken-word focus on word flow and story-telling, but different rules apply. Rap focuses on rhythm, rhyme and musicality; poetry and spoken word do not have to rhyme. With rap you may take away the words and there is still a complex musical component—rap needs the beat. One member explains the benefits of the Nation's rhetorical technique: "By utilizing Supreme Mathematics and Alphabets we elevate our intelligence, improve our memory and develop great oratorical skill."¹⁷

Not only is psychological, ideological space "built" by the lessons, but Gods and Earths are said to "build" their minds in dialogue as they "drop science," or share theological information.

Through the lessons Five Percenters learn who they "really are" and must "show and prove" their allegiance by verbalizing mathematical truths in a

16. Joseph D. Eure and James G. Spady, *Nation Conscious Rap* (New York: PC International Press, 1991), 359.

17. Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers*, 2. Five Percenters also are known for carrying around treasured photocopies of the lessons.

recognizable pattern in order to be welcomed into Nation space, showing and proving their true identity. Everyone, including the children, wake up to the cadence of the memorized lines. "A Five Percenter renews history at the start of every day, determining in advance how s/he will live out the day's reality with a blend of text and imagination."¹⁸

God Hop rap artists attract young audiences with their music and image, then teach them, often subliminally, Five Percent theology. According to their sacred history, the Universe was originally triple blackness: only the black of space, water, and divinity. The human race began in pre-continental separation Asia, or what would become Africa. These original people were, like the original Universe, black, or "hue-mans," the high levels of melanin in their skin enhancing their mental capacities. From among the original people there arose a young, evil scientist named Yacob who, while exiled on the Island of Patmos,¹⁹ extracted a gene from a black person and thereby created white people, a physiologically inferior race, that would multiply and eventually plague future generations of the original people. This devilish white race would rule over the planet for 6,000 years, misleading and subjugating the original people until they had forgotten their true origins and identity.

The "lost-found" original peoples were moved, and became lost in the wilderness of North America where they have not thrived due to lack of opportunity, education, and self-awareness of their divinity. A prophet of their own, Master Fard, has now "found them" and shown them their original, natural way of Islam or peace; he came to reveal through mathematical percentages their true identities. According to the Lost-Found Lesson no. 2, questions 14 through 16, eighty-five percent of the people are uncivilized, people who do not know who the Living God is and are hard to lead. Ten Percent are bloodsuckers, the "rich slave-makers of the poor" who teach the lie that God is an invisible "spook." This "Ten Percent" are responsible for stripping Africa of its resources and damaging the black psyche; they also killed Jesus for preaching equality and justice. Islamic Arab invaders, part of the Ten Percent, enslaved Blacks before Europeans did and still treat them as second class. Moreover, both Islam and Christianity mislead their adherents to worship white people: a white Jesus and a white Muhammad. The Ten Percent continue to harm Blacks by encouraging homosexuality and birth control, both for population control.²⁰

The Five Percent are the "poor righteous teachers," "Muslims and Muslim Sons," the civilized people who know the truth that God is the Black Man of Asia,

18. Michael Muhammad Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2011), 181.

19. In the Bible, the Apostle Paul was exiled to the Island of Patmos from Ephesus around the year 95 CE and it is where he is said to have written the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:9-10). The Island is now part of Greece.

20. Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers*, 46-47.

and who teach Freedom, Justice, and Equality to all peoples.²¹ The task of the Five Percent is to "civilize the uncivilized," and to do so they practice what they preach by "staying in the pit of oppressions and hell (the streets) in order to raise people into the (mental) heaven of truth and Black justice."²²

Hip Hop culture provides the platform and rap gives voice to the Five Percent as they create ideological space, for the faithful. The rap group Wu-Tang Clan explains, ending "Wu-Revolution" with a lengthy spoken, not rapped for effect, section from the Lost-Found Lessons:

It was a hundred percent of us that came on the slave ships.
 Eighty-five percent of our people was uncivilized, poison animal eaters;
 they're slaves of the mental death and powers.
 They don't know who the true living God is, nor their origins in the world.
 So they worship what they know not,
 and they're easily led in the wrong direction,
 far fewer men than right. Now you got the ten percent,
 who are rich slave makers of the poor,
 who teach the poor lies to make the people believe
 that the Almighty true and living God is a spook in the sky,
 and you can't see him with the physical eyes.
 They're also known as blood suckers of the poor.
 And then you got the five percent, who are the poor righteous teachers who
 do not believe in the teachings of the ten percent,
 who is all wise and know the true and living God and teach that the true
 and living God is the Supreme Being, Black man from Asia.
 Otherwise known as civilized people,
 also Muslims, and Muslim sons.

There are several sets of lessons to be mastered by Five Percenters in order to realize and live out their true identities as "scientists"—able to show and prove their knowledge and doctrinal understandings. Priority is given to the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabet with the intention of these principles guiding their daily lives by showing and proving factually what others would have to take on faith. If things appear to be going wrong, Lord Jamar raps in "Ain't No Mystery" by Brand Nubian: "Mathematically that just don't go."²³

21. Yusef Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," in *Muslim Communities in North America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, 109-132 (Albany: NY, 1994), 115-116. Also Master Fard Muhammad, "The Supreme Wisdom Lessons." Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2EXNpLr>.

22. Some of the NGE believe that people of any race may be part of the Five Percent. Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers*, 6, 44.

23. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 25.

Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet are used to "break down" words, or interpret them in Five Percenter parlance, sometimes with acronyms or by adding the numbers represented by each letter according to their place in the alphabet. Breaking down "Allah"—the Five Percenter deciphers Allah to mean "Arm, Leg, Leg, Arm, Head" which is interpreted to show and prove Allah is human. Islam is broken down via acronym to mean "I Self Lord Am Master." Breaking it down for the woman it reads: "I Self Love Allah Mathematics."²⁴

Identifying themselves as Allah incarnate leads Five Percenters to live self-directed lives, or as they would say, living within their own individual self-defined orbit. There is no need for rules, or formal orthopraxy, for their form of Islam is not a religion but the original natural life of peace. NGE members may be distinguished from NOI members by their lack of dress code. Five Percenters break-down Sunni Muslim as "soon to be Muslim"—as one who has not yet gotten past believing in rules and archaic rituals.²⁵

Because of the Supreme Mathematics, numbers are important, useful tools for rappers and are considered by some Five Percenters to be the very language of the Creator, having symbolic power on their own. Some artists use the Supreme Mathematics and break down numbers to express new meaning in various ways. For example, rather than saying the number sixteen, an artist may add the digits to come up with seven which represents God. Or the rapper may incorporate the meaning of each number in the verse. For example: the number one represents "knowledge" and six represents "equality." So when rapping "knowledge-equality," the Five Percenter may mean sixteen. For example, Brand Nubian raps in "Wake Up:" "I wrote this on the day of wisdom power," meaning the twenty-fifth. The flexibility of both systems, the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet, allows artists more latitude in their lyrics and personal exegesis of the Lessons provides ample material. Even variations in spelling can be creatively applied.

The symbolism of the Nation's flag serves to inform visually the identities for the Five Percent: the sun represents man (God), the moon, woman (Earth); the star, the child: The Nation of Gods and Earths. The rap group Poor Righteous Teachers identify themselves in "Strictly Ghetto:" "The sun, the seven, the moon, and the star/Supremely shows and proves who we are." King Sun raps in "Universal Sun"²⁶

The Sun is knowledge, knowledge is first
Who's the man in your family for relevance
Since you're learning man means intelligence
The foundation of all that exists ...
The moon, secondary factor in life

24. Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers*, 4.

25. Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 129.

26. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 28.

The sun and moon are like man and wife ...
 And the woman I'm made to own and to claim
 Reflects reality as highly supreme
 Secondary, but most necessary ...
 In conclusion, the moon is queen
 Earth is mother as far as I've seen
 Man and woman make up to the Zig-Zag
 Completes two fourths of the Universal Flag.

To flourish in their constructed ideological space—realizing their true identities—Five Percenters are to live with the pride and self-confidence that comes from the awareness that they are the descendants of the original people of the planet; that they are the Fathers and Mothers of civilization; that their Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabet unlock all the mysteries of the universe; and that through their education they can and should be, self-sufficient people. The Nation also supports healthy living practices and moral living. Pork is banned, for, according to Clarence 13X, the pig is "one third dog, one-third rat, and one-third cat," and who would eat that?²⁷

Five Percent ideology upholds a strong patriarchal family order. "Earth" is Mother of Civilization, Queen of the Universe. She brings forth life, has her own lessons, and just as the planet has one sun, so the Earth has one Man. As King Sun raps, she is regarded as "secondary, but absolutely necessar."²⁸ In summary, members' lives should communicate that the Blackman is God, Allah; that the family unit is key; and respecting and educating their children is the future of the Nation.²⁹

Each Five Percenter should also take seriously the mandate to "each one, teach one" according to their knowledge of the system, relying on elders to explain the deeper knowledge. Rap aides the memorization process and gives the lessons credibility. Farrakhan, speaking to rappers from both the NOI and the Five Percent Nation said that "one rap song is worth more than a thousand of my speeches."³⁰

Gangsta rap icon Jay-Z delivers Five Percent teaching in "Heaven:"

Arm, leg, leg, arm, head – this is God body
 Knowledge, wisdom, freedom, understanding, we just want our equality
 Food, clothing, shelter/help a nigga find some peace
 Happiness for a gangsta, ain't no love in these streets

27. Barry Gottehrer, *The Mayor's Man: One Man's Struggle to Save Our Cities* (Garden City: NY: Doubleday, 1975), 97.

28. Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers*, 41.

29. "What We Teach," *Word* 1, no. 2 (July 1987), 12. Quoted in Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters," 113.

30. Quoted in Fahiyim Ratcliffe, "Common Ground," *Source*, no. 144 (September 2001): 72.

Artist Lakim Shabazz uses the same lessons to stress his duty to each one-teach one:

Rhymes I make are designed to reach the youth,
I gotta teach, that's why I speak the truth
Some waste time dwelling on the past
It's time they know, that we're the lost tribe of Shabazz.³¹

Visionary Space - A World that Can/Should Be

Visionary space is the utopian ideal, a mental and cultural resurrection, as imagined by the movement. This vision has been set out as the Nation's goals entitled "What We Will Achieve." Hoped for are the following: first, National Consciousness, meaning achieving a universal awareness of the reality of who they are as a people and therefore living with that awareness under a new, Universal Government of Love, Peace, and Happiness for all. Second, Community Control, defined as the people themselves controlling the important aspects of their society, such as education, health care, economics, and media. As Gods and masters of their own destinies, of course they should be in control of everything that effects the community. When in control, the Nation will show and prove the greatness of their Divine Culture, which is Freedom. And third, Peace. Peace is defined as a lack of chaos or confusion. This means Order; Law and Order flow from the Supreme Mathematics, which is also the Science of Islam, or Peace. The ultimate goal is peace for all—"ourselves, our communities, in our nation, and in the world."³²

Five Percenters add to these aspirations "Twelve Jewels:" Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding, Freedom, Justice, Equality, Food, Clothing, Shelter, Love, Peace, and Happiness. One Five Percenter has developed a long list of practical ways in which this visionary space may be realized: by taking an active role in the community, by entrepreneurship to become a producer rather than merely a consumer, by promoting charter schools that teach strong life skills and foster personal development, by pursuing a higher education to be of service to the community, by involvement in cultural production to enhance the Black image; by voting and seeking unity with the global black community.³³

31. The tribe of Shabazz is said to be the original tribe occupying the earth 60 trillion years ago before it split to create the moon. After surviving an attempt to wipe them out, the tribe discovered and settled on the "best part of the planet," the Nile Valley and Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Elijah Muhammad [Elijah Poole], *Message to the Blackman in America* (Chicago: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2, 1965), 31.

32. Linked off the homepage at <http://www.ibiblio.org/ngel>.

33. Black, *Gods, Earths and 85ers*, 58-62.

This message of peace and redemption has best been articulated and propagated by God Hop, expanding the Five Percenter Universe throughout the globe. Major figures include Rakim Allah, the Wu-Tang Clan, Poor Righteous Teachers, Brand Nubian, Queen Latifa (formerly a member), and Busta Rhymes. The memorized lessons provide an extensive repertoire from which artists may draw, employing their practiced verbal skills to captivate audiences and entice them to further inquiry, always with the intent to civilize the uncivilized. Nation terminology and methodology have resonated as relevant with contemporary culture and have made their way into common parlance, including phrases like "What's up G"—meaning "What's up God" (not gangsta)—and "Peace" (which broken down means "proper education always creates energy"). Not all references are equally clear, and some are slipped in merely for effect. However, Five Percenter MCs are upheld as authoritative teachers, and their work not only informs and unites their community, but also bonds them with other like-minded groups.³⁴ In "We Dat Nice" Wise Intelligent explains:

We ain't just rappers, we changers of black situation
Teaching this Nation the way to conquer damnation
My occupation, to stimulate your elevation
To motivate and navigate the revelation.

Personal testimonies are key tools, such as in "B.I.B.L.E (Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth)" by GZA which he begins with: "Knowledge this wisdom, this goes back to when I was twelve." GZA uses "knowledge" in the imperative mood, as in "listen up." Rappers "drop knowledge" through their lyrics. His story continues as he raps about his disenchantment with his Christian childhood upbringing, and his enlightenment to self-awareness at twelve. Other artists describe life experiences that confirm their street credibility; in the rap universe authenticity challenges can be brutal. In "Ghetto We Love" Poor Righteous Teachers rap:

Rats in my front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley running sale for the crack.
It was ill on the real, I be still buggin' off it
in the ways I was walking, so today I can talk.

Some rappers have used the language, but the message did not take for these "jive pretenders," as confessed by Grammy-winning rap star LL Cool J: "at its core there is strict religious doctrine, but we weren't following that. We were just

34. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 42.

using the Five-Percent label as a shield to do our dirty work—fighting and eventually robbing."³⁵

On the other hand, the Wu-Tang Clan, made up of nine emcees, take their teaching seriously, in spite of their apparent hedonistic life-style "ruling their own orbits." Wu-Tang MC Method Man teaches:

I fear for the 85 that don't got a clue
how could he know what the f--- he never knew?
God CIPHER Divine come to show and come to prove
a mystery god, that's the work of Yacub
the holy ghost got you scared to death kid, boo!³⁶

Rap artists are skilled at employing other techniques as rhetorical strategies, including syncopated rhythms, sampled sounds (including special effects and excerpts from famous speeches, sermons, or movies), flow, layering, punctuating ruptures, and even scratching. Hip hop scholar Tricia Rose finds within the use of these expressive techniques "a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation."³⁷ Ethnomusicologist and God Hop expert Felicia Miyakawa reminds the audience of rap's complex techniques' aesthetic value, which, added to the social value, "create a song's groove, and in so doing establish a participatory musical community within which the Five Percenter message can be effectively heard."³⁸ Groove is the underlying rhythmic feel of music most often carried by the drums or base instruments. Black cultural production is also known for its use of repetition as a unifying device, employed not only in music, but also in dance and language. Ethnomusicologist, anthropologist, and linguist Steven Feld identifies repetition as the "glue holding together form, content, and groove," while others argue variations are equally important, "Rap works rhetorically because it grooves."³⁹ Rap artists and producers are all aware that the participation of the audience with the musicians is also important in order to plant seeds of doctrine. One should never underestimate the power of music on the religious consciousness, a concept producers of God Hop thoroughly comprehend and employ in order to "civilize the uncivilized" and bring the audience into the Nation. Even album art and organization serves a didactic purpose of introducing and/or reaffirming Five Percenter doctrine.

Envisioning the ideal, conscious rap developed as a sub-genre in the 80s providing social commentary, promoting social protest, and exhorting African

35. LL Cool J, *I Make My Own Rules*. Quoted in Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Five Percenters: Islam, Hip Hop and the Gods of New York* (London: Oneworld, 2007), 50.

36. Knight, *The Five Percenters*, 183.

37. Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 88.

38. Miyakawa, *Five Percenter Rap*, 73.

39. *Ibid.*, 98.

Americans to unity, self-sufficiency, and anti-materialism. In the face of black-on-black violence, Brand Nubian raps as follows in "I'm Black and I'm Proud:" "Do the knowledge, black, look at the way that we act/Smoking crack or each other with a gat/The only race of people who kill self like that." Still, ultimately Five Percenters "define their own orbit" in the Nation's Universe.⁴⁰

The primary, life enhancing, self-empowering, nation building, community locating message, that the black man is God, is proclaimed by Brand Nubian in "Ain't No Mystery:"

See me and my people been lost for over 400 years
And done tried this mystery God and all we got was
Hard times, hunger and nakedness from the snake that hissed
Beaten and killed by the ones who said
Look to the sky for your piece of the pie
They didn't wanna tell you that God was yourself.

In "Butt Naked Booty Bless" Poor Righteous Teachers rap: "Praises are due to Allah, that's me." Rakim offers affirmation of this gnostic notion drawn from the Bible and the Qur'an in "Mystery:"

Which brings us back, to the mystic question, who is God?
Sixty-six trillion years since his face was shown
When the seventh angel appears, the mystery will be known
Check Revelations and Genesis, St. Luke and John
It even tells us we are gods in the Holy Qur'an
Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty, one of the meanings of God
G.O.D. you and me, Gomars Oz Dubar,
Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding, Sun, Moon, Star
Man, Woman, and Child, and so is Allah.

Doctrines define and establish the ideal Nation's boundaries, as explained in the chorus of "Inner City Boundaries:" "Once we have the knowledge of self as a people then we could be free/and no devil could ever enter the boundaries."

Conclusion

Hip Hop, or God Hop as some call the rap associated with the Five Percenters, developed right alongside the Five Percent Nation, and became a natural conduit for the Nation's belief system. It can be argued that rap aided the construction of three categories of space, particularly as it drew youth, and continues to serve as the glue that binds the imagination of new generations,

40. *Ibid.*, 71.

providing a powerful voice to the already established verbal nature of the movement. Rap articulates their geographical location with vivid images of life in the hood - physical space. It then teaches the sacred history, (re)imagining the Black identity and providing a new self-image to take to the streets—ideological space. Then rap imagines for the Nation a world that can/should be, one of justice and equality for all—visionary space. All this "builds" within one well produced anthem by Brand Nubian, arguably the most obvious promoters of the Five Percent Nation: "Allah and Justice:"

Peace to the Gods, peace to the Earths,
Peace to the positive people of the Universe
Brand Nubian came to work it like this
Ya see, each, and every day
Each, and every way
We're gonna show and prove
Teach you the righteous way.

Peace, to Allah, and Justice, and justice, justice!
Peace, to Allah, and Juuhhhhstice! (repeat these two lines throughout the song)

The knowledge, is, the foundation
The wisdom is the way
The understanding shows you
That you are on your way

The culture, is I-God
The power is the truth
Equality only shows you
That you have planted your roots

God, came to teach us
Of, the righteous way
How, to build and be born
On, this glorious day

The knowledge, of, the cipher
Is, to enlighten you
True that true that true that you
know
That God is right inside you

No longer a dominant force in the music industry, Hip Hop culture began its decline in the 1990s for many reasons, starting with the LA Rebellion of 1992 (Rodney King decision) which fostered less tolerance in the recording industry for rebellious language. In 1993 a new style surfaced, with thuggish elements from the drug culture and the popularity of "bling-bling." Also in 1993, the 1st

World Trade Center bombing brought a growing suspicion of anything Islamic. The rap "rallying issue" of South African apartheid ended in 1994, further hindering the movement, with a hard blow coming in 2001 with the attacks of 9/11. Religious studies scholar Michael Knight quips, "It's a known fact that white people ruin everything. If there was really a decline of hip-hop, it began when music executives realized that white kids were buying records."⁴¹

Though not as popular or mainstream in America as it was, Five Percenter/NOI influenced rap continues to have a positive influence on culture with no one accepting the use of extremist messaging, even as they consider much of their work a "*jihad* of words." However, artists do not hesitate to call out people in control, speaking truth to power. Knight writes, "What a religion stands for is often measured by what believers find themselves standing against, and the religion's demands that become emphasized are those that mark it as different from other traditions and communities."⁴² And while the lyrics often sound provocative, rap artists encourage the uninitiated listener to take the words metaphorically. When they "drop a bomb," meaning knowledge bomb, to "sweep the Devil off the earth," they are "bringing evidence" that the devil of injustice ("white devil" is anyone unjust) needs to be eliminated.

Hip Hop has gone global, defining space in England and France, part of what has been called a "transglobal Islamic underground," where young Muslims are facing difficulty constructing cultural spaces for themselves.⁴³ Watching the spread of the movement has been called "hiphopography." The Five Percent Nation is also global in reach, holding its annual "Show and Prove" gathering the second week of June in Harlem. Rap's popularity in the Arab world has afforded the US State Department the opportunity to employ "Hip Hop Diplomacy," in its counter-terrorism efforts to defeat ISIS, offering a powerful, positive counter-message to Muslim youth.⁴⁴

41. Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter*, 88. However, some Five Percenter literature insists the lessons are for "all human families." There is no much more to Hip Hop Culture than the four elements of break dancing, graffiti, DJing and MCing. A whole industry has grown up around it, including clothing lines and trendy food products.

42. Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter*, 74.

43. H. Samy Alim. *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38.

44. Rashad Hussain, lecture "American Muslims and Foreign Policy" Thursday, July 30, 2016 at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute: American Muslims: History, Culture, and Politics. Rap has been called a "weapon of mass culture." The rap of al-Islam, be it Sunni, Shiite or Sufi, tends to spin threads globally, whereas African American rap has Pan-African outreach. Recognizing music is *haram* (forbidden) to many orthodox Muslims, some *al-Islam* rap groups like Native Deen produce acceptable, *nasheed*, rap using synthesizer and drum, to bridge the generational and cultural divide. Women on the mic is also new.

The Nation's worldview has also matured for the twenty-first century: anyone fighting for social justice may be considered a Five Percenter. First Born Bisme Allah writes: "Whenever there were masses of people who were being oppressed or used, abused and exploited by those who held power (10%) the Five Percent (5%) emerged to bring the masses out of their world of suffering."⁴⁵

Rap "Gods" performing around the world create venues for like-minded people to gather to enjoy their music and imbibe the message drawn from their now decades old sacred stories. The music transforms the audience into a self-aware, self-confident people ready to take on the problems that plague their societies. The visionary world of the Five Percent is one of peace and justice. The hope for its realization rests primarily with all our children.

From "Children R the Future" Big Daddy Kane raps:

On and on and on and on
Me say the beat don't stop until the break of dawn
Nor does the growth of our young world
Yes the children, be building, each boy and girl
Cause you are the cream of the planet earth
The new birth, now take that for what it's worth
And give the child room, to blossom and bloom
Livin large, it's your destiny to consume
To take flight and ignite to a brand new height
Cause that's your goalin life – am I right? (Yeah!)

45. *The Five Percent Concepts: Allah World Manifest*. Quoted in Knight, *The Five Percenters*, 196.

Bibliography

- Alim, H. Samy. *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Black, Pen. *Gods, Earths and 85ers*. San Bernardino, CA, 2007.
- Eure, Joseph D. and James G. Spady. *Nation Conscious Rap*. New York: PC International Press, 1991.
- Gottelrher, Barry. *The Mayor's Man: One Man's Struggle to Save Our Cities*. Garden City: NY: Doubleday, 1975.
- Knight, Michael Muhammad. *The Five Percenter: Islam, Hip Hop and the Gods of New York*. London: Oneworld, 2007
- Knight, Michael Muhammad. *Why I Am a Five Percenter*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2011.
- Miyakawa, Felicia M. *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Muhammad, Elijah [Elijah Poole]. *Message to the Blackman in America*. Chicago: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2, 1965.
- Nuruddin, Yusef. "The Five Percenter: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths." In *Muslim Communities in North America*, edited by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, 109-132. Albany: NY, 1994.
- Ratcliffe, Fahiyim. "Common Ground." *Source*, no. 144 (September 2001).
- Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.
- Salaam, Abdul. *Is the Whiteman Still the Devil?: Myths vs Realities An Islamic Perspective*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Friesen Press, 2013.
- Schreiner, Patrick. *The Body of Jesus: A Spatial Analysis of the Kingdom in Matthew*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Smitherman, Geneva. "The Chain Remains the Same: Communicative Practices in the Hip Hop Nation." *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 1 (September 1997).

