

# THE VASSAR COLLEGE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

Issue 5-Spring 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

Sessi Kuwabara Blanchard and Henry Krusoe  
*Co-Editors-in-Chief*

Each year, *The Vassar College Journal of Philosophy* contributes to the intellectual life of academic institutions—public and private, national and international—by offering a platform with a provocative thematic orientation. To celebrate the fifth year of the *Journal's* life, we chose the theme of “Borders.” This theme was selected in the hopes that the undergraduate submissions it solicited would offer rich insights into the social, political, and critical ecologies of 2018. After an extended process of review and composition, it is into these ecologies that the *Journal* shall now be released. Assembled between 2017 and 2018, the *Journal* grew amidst the inauguration Elizabeth Bradley as Vassar College's eleventh president, the rise of the neo-fascist Trump presidency, and the intensifying globalization of the liberal arts, all of which have profound resonances with borders.

The *Journal's* contents engage the theme through many different frames, both historical and theoretical: from the arena of the nation (Stohlman-Vanderveen) to the intra-continental Nazi death camps (Blanchard), from the perspective of semantics and concepts (Collins) to social dynamics and culture (Collao). All four essays use the topic of borders to grapple with issues of inclusion and exclusion, defining what is and what is not. The *Journal* is further extended by the diverse nationalities reflected in this year's submissions, ranging from Austria to Canada to Russia. The *Journal's* context, content, and production attest to the significance of borders, and the ways in which they are being fortified and redrawn.

The first two essays in this edition, by Mauricio Collao and Sessi Blanchard respectively, examine the formation of concepts and narratives, and the ways they are intrinsically incomplete. Collao links Badiou's ontology of multiplicities and Warner Brother's “Potter Wars,” the serial enforcement of copyright law waged against *Harry Potter* fans. Blanchard problematizes the familiar narrative that photography captures the world as it is. By considering photographs of the Dachau death camp, she examines how their regime of representation excludes the olfactory dimension of experience.

While Collao and Blanchard draw attention to the contested experiences of borders, Rory Collins turns to a classical question in Western epistemology: can definite conceptual borders be drawn? Finally Maryellen Stohlman-Vanderveen looks at the social and political significance of national borders, and their ethical ramifications.

In addition to publishing four essays, this “Borders” issue reviews two books in the tradition of critical theory that elaborate borders in the aesthetic and geopolitical perspectives. Kirk Testa engages with *Taste* by Giorgio Agamben, a concise reconstruction of the contours of a historically denigrated mode of sensation, and the reframing that such an investigation brings to aesthetics and philosophy at large. Griffin Scott-Rifer unpacks Jasbir Puar’s *Right to Maim*, a text that provokes a reconsideration of disability, its national formations, and its transnational exportations.

Lastly, we have marked the fifth issue of the *Journal* with an interview dedicated to this publication’s institutional home: Vassar College. Our Faculty Advisor, Giovanna Borradori and we, the editors-in-chief, spoke to newly-inaugurated President Bradley about the past and the future of Vassar College, her scholarship on Grand Strategy, and the globalization of the liberal arts. We are proud to have broadened the exchange between our community and its recently-inaugurated President, even in the face of a set of heavy deletions on her part that reduced the spontaneity of the original transcript.

“Borders” promises to be our most timely and politically-engaged issue to date. The undergraduate scholarship assembled here resonates across times, spaces, and intellectual traditions that have newfound relevancy in 2018.

**BADIOU'S FAITHFUL SUBJECT  
AND REAL-LIFE TRUTH PRODUCTION:  
A BADIOUAN ANALYSIS OF THE 'POTTER' WARS**

Mauricio Collao  
*University of Calgary*

**Abstract.** In this paper, I explain the main concepts of Alain Badiou's theoretical framework and discuss its practical application. To this end, I have chosen to analyze a case of emancipatory social organization, referred to as "The 'Potter' Wars" by media analyst Henry Jenkins in his 2006 book *Convergence Culture: Where New and Old Media Collide*. This name was given to a 2003 movement initiated by Harry Potter fans, whose websites and other fan-related activities such as fan fiction writing had come under legal attack at the hands of Warner Bros. The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, to map the theoretical terrain of Badiou's ideas on being, the event, truth, and subjectivity; second, to demonstrate that the fan movement features key elements of Badiou's theoretical framework and serves as an adequate example for the practical application of his philosophy; third, to show how revolutionary new ideas can open a space for greater equality and inclusion by expanding the limits of what is possible within certain social and political situations.

In *Being and Event*, Alain Badiou articulates a mathematical approach to ontology grounded in set theory. This approach begins with the thesis that being is an infinity of multiplicities with "neither an initial One, nor an ultimate atom."<sup>1</sup> As such, any attempt to pin down a particular entity can do so only by subtracting consistent multiples from the pure multiplicity of being, creating, from these, a consistent set of elements that is itself devoid of being. This means that what 'there is' comes to be through an operation of "counting-as-one" that unifies and organizes consistent multiples into one according to an order of presentation. Accordingly, any presented one (any particular being) comes to be through a type of subtractive operation on the pure multiplicity of being.<sup>2</sup>

The presentation of distinct beings (or multiple-ones) occurs in what Badiou calls a *situation*. Situations have a law of presentation that structures and unifies consistent multiples into one. A situation's law of presentation determines what sets and elements are to be presented or denied presentation. This organizing principle creates "ones" for presentation by limiting the presentation of entities to what is



presentable within its structural parameters, leaving all remaining multiplicity unrepresented and unthinkable both for and by the situation. Thus, from the standpoint of the situation, there is simply nothing outside of itself, only a void which Badiou equates with the pure, inconsistent multiplicity of being.

Each situation is structured by two principles of organization that operate at different levels or orders of presentation. The first of these is the aforementioned “count-as-one” that deals with the composition of elements into sets and their belonging to the situation. This primary structure of presentation is itself structured by a metastructure or “state” that secures the consistency of presentation against the shattering presentation of the void. The state of a situation tries to ensure that all the elements of the multiples of the situation are themselves included in the situation, creating what Badiou calls a “count-of-the-count.” The count-of-the-count is a count of the subsets included in the situation, a re-presentation of presented multiples that organizes and maintains the distinction between what is possible and what is not possible within its structural parameter.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, the goal of the state is to give the situation control over the parts or subsets of its presented multiples. A multiple that is both presented and represented will remain stable and exist harmoniously in the situation, thus minimizing the risk of encountering the shattering inconsistency of the void. Badiou associates multiples like this with nature. Metaphorically, all the elements of a natural situation are fully accounted for by its initial structure and metastructure. As a result, everything that happens in nature can be said to happen within nature. Nature, therefore, has a monopoly over possibilities that effectively prevents anything to happen to it from outside of nature.

Social and historical situations are different, however. In these, we find multiples that are presented but not represented by the state of the situation. Badiou calls these *singular* multiples. Although they are counted in the situation, singular multiples are not reducible to separate subsets and show the state’s failure to recount everything in the situation. The singular is, in other words, “that upon which the state’s metastructure has no hold. It is a point of subtraction from the state’s re-securing of the count.”<sup>4</sup> Badiou uses the example of a French family to illustrate this. He says:

A family of people is a presented multiple of the social situation (in the sense that they live together in the same apartment, or go on holiday together, etc.), and it is also a represented multiple, a part, in the sense that *each* of its members is registered by the registry office, possesses French nationality, and so on. If, however, one of the members of the family...is not registered and remains clandestine...it can be said that this family, despite being presented, is not represented. It is thus a *singular*.

If all the family members were clandestine, the family-multiple that is presented in the social situation would be an *evental site*.

### Evental Site, Event, and Intervention

*Evental sites* are *maximal* singular multiples whose subsets are not presented in the situation. As Badiou puts it, “the site itself is presented, but ‘beneath’ it nothing from which it is composed is presented.”<sup>5</sup> This means that, although the site is presented in the situation, the multiples that make up the site are, from the point of view of the situation, nothing. Because of this, evental sites are said to be “*on the edge of the void*.”<sup>6</sup> To go back to the example used above, an evental site would be a family that is presented publicly in the social situation but whose members are *all* clandestine. This family is presented but not represented, making it “a set that contains elements that are not presented in the situation, but that is still itself present in the situation.”<sup>7</sup>

The event-multiple “*is composed of, on the one hand, elements of the site, and on the other hand, itself*.”<sup>8</sup> When it appears in the situation, the event presents both its site and itself under its own signifier, indicating the shattering arrival of something new in the situation that is partly composed of the unrepresented elements of its site. The event does this by “mobilizing” the elements of its site while adding its own presentation to the mix.<sup>9</sup> On their own, these elements do not constitute an event. It is only when an event presents them under its own signifier that they acquire an evental status and appear in the situation as something new and unprecedented.

Now, because the event does not exist for the situation, its belonging to the situation is undecidable.<sup>10</sup> The situation does not have

the resources to determine whether or not the site's elements truly constitute a radical new multiple capable of introducing novelty and change into the situation. Therefore, deciding that the event belongs to the situation is ultimately a wager.<sup>11</sup> Badiou uses the example of the French Revolution to illustrate this uncertainty. For him, the French Revolution was an event whose evental site was the various organizations and tumultuous happenings of eighteenth-century France, unified under signifiers such as "troubled times."<sup>12</sup> These occurrences were present in France's social and political situation but did not alone constitute or guarantee the unfolding of a revolution. Although some of the site's elements seemed to be constitutive of a revolution, whether or not these happenings were truly elements of a revolution was undecidable from the standpoint of the situation. The site indicated only the presence of something whose status within the situation was undecidable. Accordingly, in the moments leading up to the eruption of the French Revolution, the revolution itself was only a *possible* multiple in the social and political situation of eighteenth-century France. When the event-multiple finally appeared in the situation, it presented both its site and itself under its own signifier: The French Revolution. This presentation challenged the constitution of France's social and political situation by presenting for it a radical new multiple that could only belong to a new situation.

For an event to have consequences in a situation, its possibility must first be actualized— or, to use Badiou's term, *produced*. The event itself does not produce its possibility, however. It only *proposes* it, making it up to the subject to produce it. In the case of the French Revolution, the event only proposed a revolution. The revolution itself and the consequences that unfolded from it were the result of an active production of the possibility of the event by those who recognized it as such. To produce the possibility of the event, the event must first be recognized as a multiple of the situation. But because the event does not yet exist for the situation, deciding that an event-multiple belongs to the situation is ultimately a wager.

Badiou uses the term "intervention" to refer to the procedure (or wager) by which a multiple within a situation is recognized as an event.<sup>13</sup> Because the event's belonging to a situation is undecidable, intervention requires a decision to be made on behalf of the event: that

the event belongs to its situation.<sup>14</sup> This decision is expressed in a strategic naming of the event that allows the event to acquire some sort of presence in the situation. The name of the event must be chosen from the unrepresented elements of the evental site, otherwise the event will fall within the count of the situation and lose its “eventhood.” This feature shows that what is being circulated is a radical new multiple that escapes the situation’s law of presentation. The event itself is not the same as its name, however. The name that the event is assigned is only the means by which the event can become available for decision and, thus, effective in the situation.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, nomination does not affirm the existence of an event (this is, after all, undecidable from the standpoint of the situation). Instead, the role of nomination is to circulate the signifier of a posited event-multiple in the situation to make the event susceptible to the unfolding of its consequences. An event-multiple that is allowed to have consequences in a situation can be produced into a truth.

### **Fidelity, Truth, and The Theory of the Subject**

Badiou calls a produced event-multiple a *truth*.<sup>16</sup> The event’s possibility becomes into a truth through “truth procedures” such as *fidelity*. Fidelity is a situated process of examination whereby a subject is convoked by the event to inquire into the terms of the situation and decide which of these are connected or compatible with the event. To say that fidelity is a “situated” procedure of truth is to say that its operation always takes place within a particular situation and in relation to a nominated event-multiple. To be faithful to an event is to think a situation according to it by separating those multiples that are related to the event from those that are not.<sup>17</sup> This results in an abstract positing of “a kind of *other* situation, obtained by the division in two of the primitive situation.”<sup>18</sup> This *other* situation is made of those multiples that are related to the event and the event-multiple itself. These multiples are then mobilized by the subject to produce a truth that can only belong to a *new* situation that counts the truth of the event.

The term *subject*, for Badiou, “designates something that emerges with a truth procedure.”<sup>19</sup> The subject is not substantial in any particular or lasting manner, and it need not be a single individual but can be the sum of individuals incorporated in a truth procedure, e.g. an

artist in an artistic situation or a social collectivity in a political situation. One does not enter into the composition of a subject until an event calls for it by proposing a possibility of novelty and change in the situation that *demand*s a decision to be made regarding the event's belonging to the situation. Therefore, a subject does not come into being until it is convoked by the event to produce and introduce its truth into a situation. For this to occur, two conditions need to be met. First, an event needs to be introduced into the situation through intervention. Second, the multiples of a situation need to be "mobilized" in accordance with the name of the event through a process of fidelity. The encounter of these two operations gives rise to the subject that will produce the truth of the event and create a situation to which this truth can belong.

The truth that the subject produces is generic: it cannot be categorized according to the situation in which it came to be and is "without any differential trait that would allow it to be placed in a hierarchy on the basis of a predicate."<sup>20</sup> The production of this truth cannot be guided in a particular direction as the procedure that produces it (fidelity) is itself generic. Instead, truth unfolds itself in egalitarian anonymity without letting itself be interpreted by the situation or qualifying the multiples it embraces. For Badiou, this means that truth is on the side of the Same: it is "*indifferent to differences*" and "*the same for all*."<sup>21</sup> Truth can oppose dominant opinions that benefit some rather than all by demanding a disposal of the prevailing structural count of the situation "in accordance with the law of a specific fidelity to an event."<sup>22</sup> This means that, by faithfully producing the event's truth, the subject helps change the situation from one of structured difference to one of the same, undoing, through fidelity, the finite categorical propositions under which its situation is organized. The subject must do this in order to become a part of a situation in which equality prevails; an equality that "neither designates nor presumes the advent of totality"<sup>23</sup> but does justice to one's infinite constitution. This, however, can only be achieved by doing things that escape the law of the situation, as a militant of the truth of the event. This is precisely what a group of individuals in a subjective configuration did in 2003 when, after buying the rights to make the *Harry Potter* movies, Warner Bros. began to legally threaten the fans'

capacities to actively participate in the imaginative expansion of the *Harry Potter* world.

### **The ‘Potter’ Wars: Fans vs. Warner Bros.**

In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, media analyst Henry Jenkins discusses the changing relationship between media producers and media consumers in today’s technological age. The preceding explication of Badiou may be brought to bear on Jenkin’s discussion of *Harry Potter* fans. Jenkins tells us that, when Warner Bros. bought the film rights to the *Harry Potter* books in 2001, the studio began to police and legally censor fan activities that used copyrighted or trademarked material. This involved attempts to suspend or shut down fan sites that showcased content that was deemed inappropriate, offensive, or simply incompatible with the studio’s view of the franchise. Many of those caught up in this legal struggle were children and teens who lacked the means to defend themselves against the studio’s controlling practices. Because of this, Heather Lawver, the young editor of an online *Harry Potter* fan-based newspaper formed an organization called Defense Against the Dark Arts whose aim was to help protect fans from the studio’s legal actions.

The organization argued that “fans had helped to turn a little-known children’s book into an international best-seller and that the rights holders owed them some latitude to do their work.”<sup>24</sup> They felt that Warner Bros. was trying to strip fans of their creative capacities to actively engage with the story by producing and sharing related works of their own. This meant not only the fans’ right to exercise their creative capacities was at stake, but also their freedom to express and communicate their thoughts and ideas about *Harry Potter*. As Lawver put it, the studio was “daring to take away something so basic, so human, that it’s close to murder.”<sup>25</sup>

To justify the studio’s actions, Diane Nelson, senior vice president of Warner Bros. Family Entertainment, stated: “When we dug down under some of these domain names, we could see clearly who was creating a screen behind which they were exploiting our property illegally... You hate to penalize an authentic fan for the actions of an inauthentic fan...”<sup>26</sup> What is remarkable about this

statement is not only the fact that the studio was accusing these young *Harry Potter* followers of *exploiting* their legal property, but also the distinction it made between “authentic” and inauthentic fans. It seems that Warner Bros. considered authentic fans to be those who engage passively with media content, while those who actively participate in its imaginary expansion are “inauthentic fans” whose exploitative practices must be legally sanctioned.

*Harry Potter* fans did not share the studio’s idea of what a fan should be and through the support and activities of their online communities, these fans had developed an alternate understanding of what it means to be a fan. They collectively conceived of a new type of fan with a full range of creative capacities and the right to share ideas and actively engage with media content by producing and sharing related works of their own. This reconceptualization of “the fan” did better justice to their creative capacities and opened the media-production-and-consumption situation to greater participation.

When Warner Bros. refused to accept the fans’ request for “latitude to do their work,” fans resorted to a “call to arms” against inappreciative studios.<sup>27</sup> Immediately, they began circulating a petition that received 1,500 signatures in two weeks and showed Warner Bros. the interconnectedness and organizational power of the books’ fandom. As a result, Warner Bros. felt pressured to negotiate with fans and “publicly acknowledge that the studio’s legal response had been ‘naïve’ and ‘an act of miscommunication.’”<sup>28</sup> The studio then decided to develop more collaborative policies for engaging with fans.

## Discussion

What occurred here was the introduction of a new multiple into a media-production-and-consumption situation whose law of presentation did not count creatively active fans as fans. Although they belonged to the situation, their presentation was prohibited by the situation’s law of count. The situation only counted as fans those who engaged passively with media content; meanwhile, creatively active fans were denied their status as authentic fans and were instead treated as unlawful exploiters of legal property. The creatively active fan, therefore, simply did not exist for the situation.

The creation and sharing of fan-produced content suggested the presence of a new multiple in the situation that was incompatible with the latter's law of presentation: a creatively active fan with a full range of creative capacities and the freedom to share its thoughts and ideas regarding the *Harry Potter* world. This new fan was an event-multiple whose eventual site consisted in the various creative practices and sharing, unified under signifiers such as that of "inauthentic fandom." This event-multiple was composed of, on the one hand, those fan activities that involved the creation and sharing of fan-produced content, and, on the other hand, itself. As such, the event's presentation in the situation would indicate the presence of creatively active fans as well as a wide range of unprecedented possibilities for fans and their relations with media producers.

As an event-multiple, the creatively active fan was initially only a possibility whose production in the situation would conflict with the latter's law of presentation. If properly produced, this multiple could only belong to a new situation in which the event was counted. But to create this situation, the truth of the event first needed to be produced. To do this, *Harry Potter* fans had to first wager that their event-multiple did, in fact, belong to their situation. This required a decision to be made on behalf of the event, as well as a name under which the event could be put into circulation in the situation.

Because the event is self-referential, the name under which it is circulated in the situation must come from the unrepresented elements that compose it. In this case, the event was named after the elements of the eventual site that indicated the presence of a creatively active fan-multiple that did not exist for the situation. Once named, this new multiple began to acquire a (problematic) presence in the situation, making it susceptible to a division of its elements. What fans needed to do then was decide whether or not the production of this new multiple was something worth pursuing. If so, they would need to produce the event's possibility into a truth and create, with it, a new situation to which their truth could belong.

The production of the truth of the event was made possible by the fans' faithfulness to their eventual discovery. Driven by their eventual fidelity, *Harry Potter* fans decided that they belonged to a situation that did not do justice to their creative capacities. This meant that, to make



the possibility of the event a reality, they would need to create a new situation altogether. To do this, they resorted to a call to arms against inappreciative studios. If they succeeded, their eventual fidelity would lead to the creation of a new situation that counted creatively active fans and did justice to fans' creative capacities. Their success would bring into presentation unrepresented capacities without which they could not be faithful to their infinite human constitution.

The truth of the event seized fans, collectively turning them into the subject of the truth of the event. This truth was generic in that it did not seek to establish or reinforce a particular order in the primitive situation. Rather, the truth of the event sought only to introduce in the situation something whose presentation had been denied by the situation's law of presentation. To do this, the finite categorical propositions that made up the fans' situation and mediated their relations with media producers needed to be eliminated. The disposal of these was not the product of an attempt to empower fans or aid them in their struggle against the controlling practices of media producers, but to simply create a situation in which fans could exercise their creative capacities. The fans' truth, therefore, was on the side of the Same: it sought to present capacities whose presentation had been denied by the state of the situation while being indifferent to the situation's established difference and the finite categorical propositions under which it was organized. The result was an opening up of possibilities for both fans and media producers that allowed fans to exercise their creative capacities and interact with media producers in more collaborative ways.

## **Conclusion**

What occurred in this case was an eventual convocation of *Harry Potter* fans into subjects that resulted in the creation of a new situation that counted creatively active fans. Initially, fans belonged to a situation in which their active, creative engagement with media content was regarded as an illegal exploitation of private property and a sign of "inauthentic fandom". The production of the fans' truth, however, shattered the structuring principles of this primitive situation, giving way to a series of new possibilities regarding fans and their relations with media producers.

Driven by their eventual fidelity, fans contributed to the “humanization” of their situation by collectively working towards the creation of a situation that did justice to their creative capacities. The product of this eventual fidelity was the creation of a new present that embraces fans’ human constitution. In this new situation, fans can share their thoughts, feelings, and creative works without being subjected to sanctions and legal threats by media producers.

Creatively active fans were able to do this by participating in the conflict that arose from their clash with Warner Bros. without partaking in it as the “inauthentic fans” that they were for the situation. Instead, they prescribed new forms of fandom and producer-fan relations from *outside* presentation, not as “inauthentic fans,” but as a new unrepresented type of fan with a wide range of rights, freedoms, and creative capacities. The circulation and production of this new fan-multiple challenged the constitution of its current situation, making it susceptible to change in favor of equality and inclusion.

The lesson to be learned from this is that it takes an unwavering collective effort to produce the truth of the event and create new, more inclusive and egalitarian situations. This also makes notable a need to let ourselves be seized by the event’s possibility and be willing to follow it to the very end. “If any serious uncertainty lingers on [the] subject,” says Badiou, “the only possible outcome is an inevitable return to the existing order.”<sup>29</sup> This is what would have happened if *Harry Potter* fans would have let themselves succumb to the law of count of their previous situation. But, because they understood that the order of the world does not have a monopoly over possibilities, when the possibility of introducing a new multiple into the situation presented itself, they were ready to create a situation to which their truth could belong.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Alain Badiou and Fabien Tarby, *Philosophy and the Event* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 137.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Pluth, *Badiou: A Philosophy of the New* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), Kobo edition.

<sup>3</sup> Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis* (London: Verso, 2015), 183.

<sup>4</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 183.

- <sup>5</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 183.
- <sup>6</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 183.
- <sup>7</sup> Pluth, *Badiou*, Kobo edition.
- <sup>8</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 188.
- <sup>9</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 191.
- <sup>10</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 211.
- <sup>11</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 211.
- <sup>12</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 189.
- <sup>13</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 212.
- <sup>14</sup> Pluth, *Badiou*, Kobo edition.
- <sup>15</sup> Hollis Phelps, *Alain Badiou: Between Theology and Anti-Theology* (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 57.
- <sup>16</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, 2012), 54.
- <sup>17</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 41.
- <sup>18</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 250.
- <sup>19</sup> Badiou and Tarby, *Philosophy and the Event*, 60.
- <sup>20</sup> Alain Badiou, *Conditions* (London: Continuum, 2008), 174.
- <sup>21</sup> Badiou, *Ethics*, 27.
- <sup>22</sup> Badiou, *Conditions*, 163.
- <sup>23</sup> Badiou, *Conditions*, 173.
- <sup>24</sup> Badiou, *Conditions*, 195.
- <sup>25</sup> Badiou, *Conditions*, 195.
- <sup>26</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 194.
- <sup>27</sup> Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 194.
- <sup>28</sup> Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 196.
- <sup>29</sup> Badiou and Tarby, *Philosophy and the Event*, 36.

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## THE OLFACTIC HORROR OF DACHAU

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**Abstract.** The photographic images of Dachau and the Nazi death camps, as captured by American photographer Lee Miller, are fertile sites of scholarly inquiry regarding the possibilities and limitations of witnessing and testimony as well as the organization of visual imaginaries. I take to task the “lacunae” present in Miller’s visual testimony by raising the problematic of olfactive experience, or sensory encounter through smell. I seek to reflect upon the question: how is the olfactive simultaneously obscured by and embedded within the visual field?

“I could never get the stench of Dachau out of my nostrils,” Lee Miller confessed in her biography.<sup>1</sup> Although Sharon Sliwinski, a scholar of photography, aptly reflects in her article, “Visual Testimony: Lee Miller’s Dachau,” on the visual trauma that Lee Miller, an American photographer, registered in her photography of the Dachau concentration camp, Sliwinski does not account for the modes of sensation beyond the visual that haunted Miller and others, particularly the “stench” that remained “uppermost in the memories of those who took part in the liberation.”<sup>2</sup> Reading through and beyond the “paradox” of visual testimony, I am intrigued by the potency of the olfactive horror and nauseous indigestibility experienced by Miller and the Allied soldiers arriving in Dachau. I want to push Sharon Sliwinski’s account further, beyond the limits of Miller’s visual testimony by exploring the specter of the “cloying, terrible stench.”<sup>3</sup> The visual field obscures, yet is perhaps organized by, the olfactive experience. Here, I propose that uncovering the relationship between the olfactive and the visual clarifies the ontology and function of photography.

Olfactive experience is an immersion within a material scene.<sup>4</sup> Odorous ligands swarm nostril interiors, intimately intermingling. The “terrible, cloying stench”<sup>5</sup> that Sliwinski refers to is a singularity, contingent upon the material formations of the “bodies impossibly tangled in rags, blood and excrement” at Dachau.<sup>6</sup> The olfactive requires a material proximity and intimacy between the olfactive subject and the inhalant. In contrast, visualization, and by extension,

photography, is a remote process, one that gifts the viewer with distance and removal from an intimate encounter.

Necessitating the submersion of its subject within the scene at hand, olfactive experience is an impossibility for projects of representation and communication. By attending to the olfactive experience of Dachau, the “paradox of witnessing” and representing is amplified. Giorgio Agamben describes the paradox of witnessing as “the essential lacuna of testimony,” that which is “impossible to bear witness to.”<sup>7</sup> I suggest that the lacuna of olfactive experience within photography illuminates “the breakdown in understanding [that] occurs *between* the medium of representation and the truth it attempts to convey.”<sup>8</sup>

The olfactive can be the object of discourse, verbalized by way of analogy, but not materially reproduced in its contingent specificity. Sliwinski explains that “The camp was filled with nameless dreads, things for which there was not yet language.”<sup>9</sup> While Sliwinski is referring to the nameless meanings and particularities of the horrors at Dachau, I contend that “the terrible, cloying stench” experienced by arriving Allied soldiers is, via Agamben, “the sound that arises from the lacuna”<sup>10</sup> of olfactive experience within photography.

Lee Miller’s photograph of a cremation oven at Buchenwald is a site of multiple erasures. The contents of the cremation oven are centered as the subject of the photo, yet their true impact, the olfactive horror, is concealed by the sterilized photograph. The horror of burned flesh is inadequately verbalized through a soldier’s analogy of “when his mother would hold freshly killed chicken over the gas flame in the kitchen to burn off the pinfeathers.”<sup>11</sup> Namings, like “the stench” or “burning chicken,” despite offering terms for mental reconstruction, cannot capture and transmit the particular smell of cremated human flesh, given that they are not material rehearsals of the olfactive experience. Miller’s photographic image is a naturalistic fantasy that is exceeded by nauseating stenches.

In contrast, photography, although a bearer of unintelligible scenes, and a container of an “absolute Particular,” offers the viewer a semblance through the sensory experience, visualization, in which the scene was originally witnessed.<sup>12</sup> While it may provide a distorted or obscured re-presentation, photography offers the potential for

visual testimony, an "anchor" of a world.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's formulation of smooth and striated space can assist us in understanding the ontological relationship between the olfactive and the optic. Simply, smooth space is undifferentiated and disorganized while striated space is distinguished and measured. Deleuze and Guattari exemplify smooth and striated space through the comparative difference between the haptic and the optic. I suggest that, through the olfactive's material intimacy, the olfactive is a synecdoche for the haptic, thus making Deleuze and Guattari's formulation applicable here.<sup>14</sup> The olfactive is indeterminate, smooth, fugitive, always close yet always already taking flight, foreclosed to an epistemo-sensory distinction between stench and body, horror and self. In contrast, the optic lends itself to the striation of the visual field, where subject and object, self and other, and spectator and spectated are clearly enunciated.

Olfactive reality of trauma and horror is a singularity, and the production of a semblance of an olfactive testimony is a near impossibility.<sup>15</sup> My assertion here emerges from an intuition: artificial scents are incommensurable with their authentic counterparts. The horror of a malodorous rotting corpse seems to be intuitively irreproducible, a consequence of the smooth ontology of olfaction itself. The olfactive experience is dependent on the intimate relationship between the authentic odorous body, its emitted ligands, and the inhaling subject. Attempts to vaporize, and thereby reduce spontaneous odors for the purpose of mass dissemination fails to capture the contingency of olfactive intimacy.

Keeping in mind the aforementioned intimacy and the non-representability of olfactive experience, the visual lends itself towards an impersonal consumerism.<sup>16</sup> Sliwinski refers to Barbie Zelizer's account of concentration camp photography "as the pre-eminent tool for bearing witness to distant horror."<sup>17</sup> While the Dachau photography happens to represent a geographic "distant horror" for the Anglo-American audience, I suggest that an ontological distance pervades all photographs and visualizations with regard to their objects. Photography functions mechanically through the reflection of immaterial light, whereas olfactive experience involves the material grazing of odorous ligands with the body's facial interior.

The distance of visual testimony lends itself to the photograph's presentation "out of context to the times and places in which they had been taken."<sup>18</sup> The audience situated beyond the horror of war and genocide can experience a semblance of the scene without material contact with that world. While I don't intend to reify the force of materiality over that of the visual, the olfactic induces a certain unavoidable reality.

Both Zelizer and Sliwinski would agree that photography enables a de-contextualization, and perhaps sanitization, of a scene. Given the proliferation of visual testimony in *Vogue*, as well as *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Picture Magazine (PM)*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Illustrated London News*, and *Daily Mail*, the photographic representations of Nazi concentration camps are sterile semblances.<sup>19</sup> Claude Lanzmann, a director who refused to use photographic images of the Nazi death camps in his documentary, *Shoah*, considers photographs to be "images without imagination," windows into "unreal realities,"<sup>20</sup> devoid of sound and smell, "inciting a false sense of knowledge, all the while protecting the spectator from the true horror."<sup>21</sup> The commercial magazine reader can look upon images of Dachau without being assaulted by the "strange odor in the air, a very strong odor" that saturated the scene.<sup>22</sup>

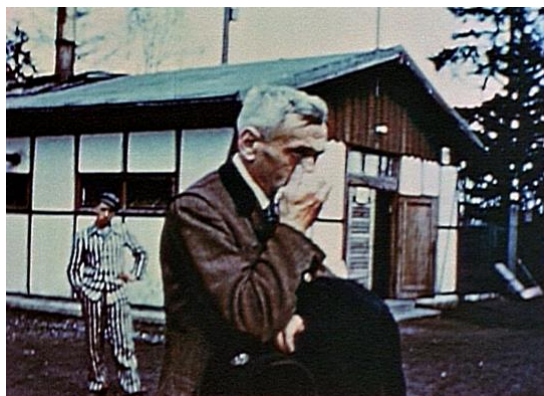
To illustrate the affective potency of the photographically-unmediated encounter, the Dachau scene triggered nausea in the arriving soldiers, who "vomited uncontrollably at the sight."<sup>23</sup> Although witnessing a horrific scene first-hand, versus through a photograph, bears a particular unnameable trauma, this witnessing is accompanied by the stench of corpses. With this violent indigestibility of the Dachau scene, how does olfactic intimacy function as a disruption to remote visualization? Lee Miller and other arriving witnesses "thought at first that the camp was a grotesque propaganda stunt faked by their own side."<sup>24</sup> Once the foul ligands of corpses penetrated the witnesses, the speculated falsity was dissipated by the stench, which "was not something that could be held in mind, or indeed, digested."<sup>25</sup>

Lee Miller's photography of Dachau, and perhaps photography writ large, presents images that were "unintelligible" for



her contemporary audiences.<sup>26</sup> Simultaneously, Miller's photographs are "inscribed" or "marked" with the horror of Dachau.<sup>27</sup> These obscured inscriptions and markings of Dachau stain the photograph with "the significance of these sites and the crime that they embodied."<sup>28</sup> Given the non-representability of olfactory experience, we must question whether it is possible to recuperate olfactory horror from visual testimony by way of its "inscriptions," similar to Sliwinski's encouragement of the spectator to "interpret this mark as a disquieting resource for thinking through the paradoxes of witnessing in the age of the camera."<sup>29</sup> The iconic image of two Allied soldiers peering into a train car spilling with bodies figuratively expresses this epistemo-sensory rupture, yet demands our speculation. The alterity of the witness' encounter is imaged through the soldiers' obscured faces and the pitch-black interior of the horrific box. Interpreting the photograph elicits a spectator's speculation, and perhaps fabulation of the soldier's facial contortions. Language and image fail and continue to fail us, but critical interpretation and experimentation can produce unexpected insight.

I propose the challenge to trace, "to listen to,"<sup>30</sup> the "visual symptoms"<sup>31</sup> of the traumatic "stench" in Miller's photography. How is olfactory horror, given its contingent immediacy, difficult to visually register?<sup>32</sup> Is the olfactory force potent enough to rearrange visual and photographic frames? How do photographic images reduce our imaginaries of Dachau to the visual, concealing the horrific olfactory intimacies of the death camp? And



*Figure 1 Man looks on as dead bodies are loaded into a cart at the Dachau Concentration Camp in Dachau, Germany.*

how can, and must, we uncover the acrid traces and realities of Dachau?

As a means to reflect upon my self-directed provocations, I turn to archival footage that captures the Allied disassembly of Dachau. For over a minute, the video follows unidentified laborers hurling bare bodies from a pile into wheelbarrows. A German civilian, who presumably had not endured the camp given his attire, looks on at the horror, clenching his nose with a handkerchief. I snap this still for reflection. The impossibility to represent the subject's horrific experience is presented in this still. While the viewer of the footage is aware of the object of horror that the nose-clenched man witnesses, the olfactive intimacy of the scene is foreclosed, only made legible through a gesture, the hand over the nose.

In addition, the manifold layers of spectator and spectated, distant and proximal, and subject and object ripple across this still. Clad in a Dachau prison uniform, a figure stares from the background at the nose-clenching man. The foreground, the proximal space of the photographic still, is occupied by a subject visually witnessing and gesturally responding to olfactive horror, a figure both ontologically and spatially distant from and intimate with the scene. In the distant space of the photograph's composition, the former Dachau prisoner, a near-constituent of the pile of fungible bodies that is the object of the subject's foregrounded gaze, returns the nose-clenched voyeur's gaze that is directed at his fellow prisoners. The Dachau prisoner and the nose-clenching man are both rendered simultaneously object and subject. The entanglements of olfactivity and visuality trouble the boundaries between the self and other, enclosed body and diffuse aromatic corpse. While this scene of contesting smooth olfactive and striated visual horror ferments, the still's visual audience reduces and comports the image to the status of a flattened organized object.

The problem I set forth is twofold: one, how do we understand and tease apart an image to account for the sensuous encounters captured therein? And two, what are the ontological and phenomenological contradictions that emerge from a consideration of our material intimacy and distance from the world? This project

implicates and perhaps destabilizes the claim that the 21st century is an epoch of hyper-visual consumption, production, and mediation. What are the undergirding and organizing senses, affects, and haptic intimacies that produce our optic consciousness?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Burke, *Lee Miller: A Life* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005), 367.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," *Journal of Visual Culture* 9, no. 3 (December 2010), 395.

<sup>3</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 395.

<sup>4</sup> Note on terminology: I use "olfactory" to refer to the qualitative characteristics of smelling and "olfactive" to the action of smelling.

<sup>5</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 395.

<sup>6</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 395.

<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "The Witness," in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York, Zone Books, 1999), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 391.

<sup>9</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 402.

<sup>10</sup> Agamben, "The Witness," 38.

<sup>11</sup> "Searing Memories Of Nazi Germany's First Concentration Camp." NPR.org. <https://www.npr.org/2015/04/29/402971452/2-dachau-survivors-reflect-on-nazi-germany-s-first-concentration-camp>.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, Hill and Wang, 2010), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 402.

<sup>14</sup> Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1987), 479.

<sup>15</sup> While there are some recent attempts to digitize scent, as reported in [Wired Magazine](#) and [Vice](#), the reproducibility of olfactory experience remains elusive.

<sup>16</sup> I'd like to direct our attention to John Waters's *Polyester*, in which he used Odorama, a parody of the attempt by previous film makers to enhance the cinematic audience's viewing experience by way of scent simulations.

<sup>17</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 403.

<sup>18</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 403.

<sup>19</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 403.

<sup>20</sup> Melanie Klein's concept via Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 402.

<sup>21</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 392.

<sup>22</sup> "Searing Memories Of Nazi Germany's First Concentration Camp." NPR.org.

<sup>23</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 395.

<sup>24</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 395.

<sup>25</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 398.

<sup>26</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 392.

<sup>27</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 392.

<sup>28</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 391.

<sup>29</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 392.

<sup>30</sup> Agamben, "The Witness," 13.

<sup>31</sup> Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau," 397.

<sup>32</sup> Here, I am thinking particularly of someone covering their nostrils, turning away, or even holding their breath. These gestures seem to be fleeting and easily erased from the photographic frame by way of proper photographic posture.

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## ON THE BORDERS OF VAGUENESS AND THE VAGUENESS OF BORDERS

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**Abstract.** This article argues that resolutions to the sorites paradox offered by epistemic and supervaluation theories fail to adequately account for vagueness. After explaining the paradox, I examine the epistemic theory defended by Timothy Williamson and discuss objections to his semantic argument for vague terms having precise boundaries. I then consider Rosanna Keefe's supervaluationist approach and explain why it fails to accommodate the problem of higher-order vagueness. I conclude by discussing how fuzzy logic may hold the key to resolving the sorites paradox without positing indefensible borders to the correct application of vague terms.

Suppose in front of you is a heap of sand. You remove one grain and toss it aside. The collection is, of course, still a heap; a single grain surely could not make the difference between it being or not being one. So, you remove another grain, followed by another, and another, until eventually a single piece of sand—clearly, not a heap—remains where the heap once was. But how could this be, given you only removed a grain at a time? This problem takes the form of a sorites paradox and can be expressed more explicitly as follows:

P. 1: A 1,000,000-grain collection of sand is a heap.

P. 2: If a 1,000,000-grain collection is a heap, so is a 999,999-grain collection.

P. 3: If a 999,999-grain collection is a heap, so is a 999,998-grain collection.

...

P. 1,000,000: If a 2-grain collection is a heap, so is a 1-grain collection.

C.: A 1-grain collection of sand is a heap.

This argument is paradoxical since a seemingly unacceptable conclusion follows from apparently acceptable premises and reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Similar versions can be made using examples other than a

heap. Suppose there are a million patches of color ranging from blue to yellow across a long wall, with those on the far left being blue, those on the far right being yellow, and those in the middle being various shades of green. Each patch is visually indistinguishable from those adjacent to it. Starting with the leftmost patch, one would be forced to conclude that, if this is blue, then so is the patch to its immediate right; by extension, the yellow patch on the far right must also be deemed blue, which is patently false.

The problem elicited by these and other sorites paradoxes concerns the vagueness of language. Terms like “heap,” “blue,” “short,” and “bald” are vague since they allow for borderline cases where, despite having all the information normally considered sufficient to determine whether the word may be used, it remains unclear whether or not to apply it.<sup>2</sup> We could count exactly how many grains are in a collection or measure the precise wavelength of a patch of color, yet still be unable to determine with confidence whether it is a heap or whether it is blue. Therefore, any solution to a sorites paradox must account for the nature of vagueness itself.

To resolve a paradox, one of four approaches may be taken: denying the paradox is logically possible, accepting the conclusion, claiming the reasoning is invalid, or denying the premises are all true.<sup>3</sup> For sorites paradoxes, the first option seems unviable since many forms of the paradox are clearly possible and can even be modeled in real life. The second option appears only slightly better since it implores us to accept that a single grain may be a heap. Peter Unger argues along these lines that due to widespread and inherent flaws in our language, there are in fact no such things as heaps: vague concepts are “incoherent.”<sup>4</sup> He notes, however, that due to the unattractiveness of this solution, accepting the conclusion ought only to be a last resort if other approaches prove unfruitful.<sup>5</sup> The third strategy of attacking the reasoning seems unlikely to yield success since the argument relies exclusively on iterations of *modus ponens*. If all premises are true, it follows deductively that a 1-grain collection is a heap. This leaves only the fourth approach: denying the truth of at least one premise. Since the conclusion is absurd, yet the reasoning is valid, it looks to follow by *reductio ad absurdum* that at least one premise must be false.

Some who opt for this approach assert that despite contrary appearances, vague terms draw a precise border between their correct and incorrect application. Thus, one conditional premise of the form “if an  $n$ -grain collection is a heap, so is an  $n-1$ -grain collection” must be false since there is an exact minimum number of grains  $n$  required to make a heap.<sup>6</sup> Defenders of this so-called epistemic theory maintain that the number  $n$  is unknowable. We are necessarily ignorant of the borders drawn by vague predicates.<sup>7</sup> Chrysippus advanced this view in ancient Greece and the theory has been more recently developed by Roy Sorensen and Timothy Williamson.<sup>8</sup> Sorensen describes the boundaries of vague terms as an ‘epistemic blindspot’: a proposition which is wholly consistent yet inaccessible to us.<sup>9</sup> It is merely our ignorance to the limits of vague words’ referents which gives the illusion of a paradox.

Critics might object that the claim we cannot know the boundaries to vague terms suggests these sharp boundaries do not exist in the first place.<sup>10</sup> Given sufficient time and effort, we would surely be able to figure out where the borders to vague terms lie—if they are real. It seems more probable, then, that vague terms do not draw mysterious precise boundaries, but rather the limits of their application are also vague.

However, this objection subtly endorses a verificationist theory of meaning, which is itself implausible.<sup>11</sup> If we look at a borderline collection of sand and state it is a heap, we have no way of checking whether we have applied the word correctly. By the verificationist theory of meaning, describing objects using vague language would be meaningless. This theory was popularized by A. J. Ayer and other logical positivists some decades ago, but has since been criticized for a plethora of reasons. Notably, W. V. O. Quine argued that the analytic-synthetic distinction central to verificationism appeals to the synonymy of different terms, which in turn requires that such terms be necessarily interchangeable.<sup>12</sup> But this invokes the notion of analyticity in order to define it, so the verificationist account is circular.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Quine noted that we cannot empirically test claims in isolation, but only in conjunction with numerous background assumptions,<sup>14</sup> so a clear-cut verification condition often cannot be established for individual statements.<sup>15</sup> If the epistemic theory of vagueness is to be refuted on



these grounds, verificationism must first be resurrected from the philosophical graveyard.

Moreover, Williamson accounts for why we cannot know whether a vague term applies in borderline cases. He argues our limited cognitive and sensory abilities are necessary to gain knowledge about the world since knowledge requires being non-accidentally right.<sup>16</sup> If I believe I will be dealt a royal flush on my next poker hand, and this belief is subsequently proven true, I could not claim to have known I was going to receive those cards. Likewise, if I stated, “this is a heap” about a borderline collection with exactly  $n$  grains, I could not claim to have known that either. If the collection had slightly fewer grains and was therefore just below the heap threshold, my vision is not sufficiently precise to have noticed the difference. I would still have remarked “this is a heap,” but this time I would have been wrong. Because knowledge requires being non-accidentally right, I could not claim to have known the collection was a heap in the first case: I was only right through luck. According to Williamson, we can only know a claim is true—be that “this is a heap,” “he is bald,” or “she is tall”—if such a claim would be true in all similar cases, that is, cases falling within a margin for error.<sup>17</sup> This excludes the possibility that we could know if we are using vague terms appropriately in borderline cases.

Williamson also explains how vague terms may generate sharp boundaries of reference. He asserts that the meaning of a word must be determined by how it is used in a language.<sup>18</sup> It certainly seems plausible that no specific combination of sounds or squiggles would have a meaning until a linguistic community began using the word to express a particular claim.<sup>19</sup> Consider the word “smartphone,” which, just decades ago, had no accepted meaning since it had not been created and used by English speakers to refer to a type of technological device. The meaning of “smartphone” has changed over recent years too. Whereas being able to send emails and play Tetris qualified a cellular device to be a smartphone some years ago, nowadays more advanced features such as Bluetooth or GPS would be required. Thus, the meaning of “smartphone” is not completely fixed, but rather its definition has developed alongside our use of the term. As Williamson puts it, there is “no difference in meaning without a difference in use.”<sup>20</sup>

But, how might we calculate meaning from use? For vague terms like “heap,” perhaps the meaning could be determined by how “heap” has been used by speakers of English in the past. If a parent used the word “heap” to refer to their child’s sandcastle of exactly 14,832 grains, this would promote the meaning of “heap” as including collections of this size, so long as other English speakers had not refrained from using the word in similar situations. The past use of a vague term may be what determines whether it applies correctly or incorrectly to a particular situation.

There may be times when we may confront a borderline case slightly different to all those experienced and described before. In such cases, we must think hypothetically and consider whether speakers of the language would tend more towards applying a vague term or not. This involves considerations of context—presumably, a collection of pumpkins requires fewer objects to qualify as a heap than does a collection of sand. Still, if in any given situation the majority of English speaking people would accept that the word “heap” may be used to describe a collection, then perhaps we could say that the meaning of “heap” would include that particular collection. There is, of course, no way of testing this in real life, but it remains a fact—albeit unknowable to us—whether the majority of speakers in a linguistic community would either agree or disagree with using a vague term to describe a borderline case.

However, this approach is too simplistic. Considering the vague word “thin,” Williamson notes we may systematically misjudge people by their body size or clothing.<sup>21</sup> Most English speakers might classify somebody as thin when they are in fact wider than somebody else who would be considered not-thin. Meaning cannot just be reduced to statistics about whether or not people would apply a term. Williamson acknowledges we cannot know how exactly to derive meaning from use since “there is no algorithm for calculating the former from the latter.”<sup>22</sup> He claims this is not a problem for the epistemic theory since we can still maintain that there exists a sharp border separating where vague words do and do not apply based on use; it is just unknown to us.

Williamson’s argument fails since linguistic communities which supposedly determine meaning through their dispositions are not

themselves bounded with any precision. Timothy Endicott notes there are many borderline cases for who should be included in a speech community: speakers of other languages who know some English, children with partially developed vocabularies, or just certain individuals too eccentric in their word usage.<sup>23</sup> Even within a community, there will be variation in word usage corresponding to ethnic, social, and gender differences among speakers. If we consider these innumerable linguistic varieties as separate languages, it remains unclear which language is being used in any particular circumstance.<sup>24</sup> An individual may make a vague statement which is true in the language of their age group, but false in that of their town, yet true in that of their country overall. The dispositions of speakers from these various communities would together form slightly different compositions and hence draw the cut-off point for a vague term differently. The epistemic notion that sharp boundaries can be determined by the collective dispositions of a group rests on being able to decide which language community is the correct one for any given situation. But, as Endicott notes, there is no non-arbitrary way to establish which individuals should comprise a speech community.<sup>25</sup>

The epistemic solution to the sorites paradox appears unconvincing, but another method of rejecting the premises may hold more promise. Supervaluationism maintains that the meaning of vague terms is incomplete, so there are various plausible ways to draw precise boundaries to their scope.<sup>26</sup> Rosanna Keefe asserts that this theory provides an account of vagueness which “does vastly better than its rivals” at balancing intuitions and linguistic practices alongside theoretical considerations.<sup>27</sup> According to supervaluationism, borderline cases are confounding because vague terms do not contain sufficient meaning for us to know whether or not they apply.<sup>28</sup> Consider the word “short.” There are many ways we could make the word (as it applies to an adult male) more precise, such as by claiming it refers to men below 5’4”, or 5’6”, or 5’8”. Each of these proposed cut-off points appears a reasonable way of clarifying the meaning of “short.” In supervaluationist terminology, this is called “sharpening” the term. Under each sharpening, it is still clear that a man who is 4’6” is short and a man who is 6’6” is not.

Likewise, we could sharpen “heap” to refer to collections of at least 7,103 grains of sand, or 11,518, or 20,973. Whichever is accepted, a 1,000,000-grain collection will be deemed a heap and a 1-grain collection will not since it is obvious on any sharpening whether the word heap does or does not apply in definite cases. Somewhere in the borderline cases, however, for any given sharpening, a conditional premise will not hold. Unlike the epistemic theory, which posits a single correct boundary, supervaluationism maintains there are many potential candidates, each drawing a different border between heap and non-heap.

Keefe argues vague statements are true if and only if they are true on every possible sharpening, false if and only if they are false on every possible sharpening, and neither true nor false otherwise.<sup>29</sup> This commits supervaluationism to acknowledging truth-value gaps—statements which are neither true nor false—since borderline cases for “heap,” “blue,” or “bald” will inevitably be true on some sharpenings yet false on others. However, Keefe notes that despite rejecting the principle of bivalence, supervaluationism still preserves most of classical logic since statements such as “either this book is yellow or it is not yellow” remain true, even though neither disjunct will be true if the book is a borderline color.<sup>30</sup> This appears to sidestep the difficulty faced by epistemicists of different individuals and speech communities generating different borders to a vague term’s scope. By acknowledging that vague terms are incomplete in their meaning, supervaluationists need not assert a single mysterious boundary. In noting, that on any sharpening, there will come a point where a vague term ceases to apply, we resolve the sorites paradox by rejecting at least one premise.

However, there are several problems with supervaluationism. One of the theory’s most serious shortcomings is its inability to account for higher-order vagueness.<sup>31</sup> Even if we accept there are many plausible ways to sharpen a vague term, the notion of sharpening is itself vague. We may still ask whether a collection of sand is *definitely* a heap or whether it falls within the range of borderline cases.<sup>32</sup> In other words, we may ask if a reasonable sharpening could be made which would exclude the collection of interest. Supervaluationism merely duplicates the problem faced by epistemicism, positing an unclear

border between a vague term and potential sharpenings, as well as a border between definitely or definitely not applying. One could, for instance, ask whether a man who is 5' in height is definitely short or whether a reasonable sharpening might be made to exclude those above 4'11". Allowing all possible sharpenings would make vague terms meaningless. If "short" were sharpened to include only those below 3' in height, this would be wholly inconsistent with our understanding and use of the word. Without providing conditions for what qualifies as an acceptable sharpening, supervaluationism fails to define vagueness convincingly.

If resolutions to the paradox based on rejecting the premises are unsuccessful, the next best approach would be to target the reasoning itself. At first glance, this seems near impossible: the first premise, "a 1,000,000-grain collection of sand is a heap," is clearly true, and subsequent premises merely repeat *modus ponens*; thus, the absurd conclusion appears an undeniably valid result. But perhaps the concept of truth could be adapted to accommodate vague statements. Classical logic permits just two truth-values: totally false and totally true, which may be represented as 0 and 1, respectively.<sup>33</sup> Fuzzy logic, on the other hand, allows for infinitely many truth-values between 0 and 1 to represent borderline cases that are neither definitely true nor false.<sup>33</sup> A statement with a truth-value of 0.95 would be almost but not entirely true. This could explain the paradox as arising due to many of the conditional premises being less than completely true.<sup>34</sup> As *modus ponens* is applied down the chain of reasoning, a certain "leakage" of truth occurs.<sup>35</sup> While the number of grains in a collection decreases, so does the truth-value of the claim that the collection is a heap. By the time the collection is sufficiently small to be considered definitely not a heap, the truth-value will have reduced to 0.

Fuzzy logic, I would argue, coincides better with common understandings of vagueness than other logical varieties permit. Suppose I celebrate finishing this paper with a twelve-pack of beer. After taking the first sip, I will not be drunk. But imagine I keep drinking steadily until I finish the last bottle. By then, I will definitely be drunk. Throughout my evening, however, there will be a period during which it is not clear whether or not I am. It seems reasonable that if somebody asked, "Are you drunk?" when I have finished six

beers, that I reply “Well, that’s *somewhat* true.” To respond with a definite “yes” or “no” seems inconsistent with the experience of becoming gradually intoxicated. Giving the claim “I am drunk” an intermediate truth-value between 0 and 1 seems to better represent real-life experience and natural language describing drunkenness than classical logic allows. Figure 1 illustrates this.

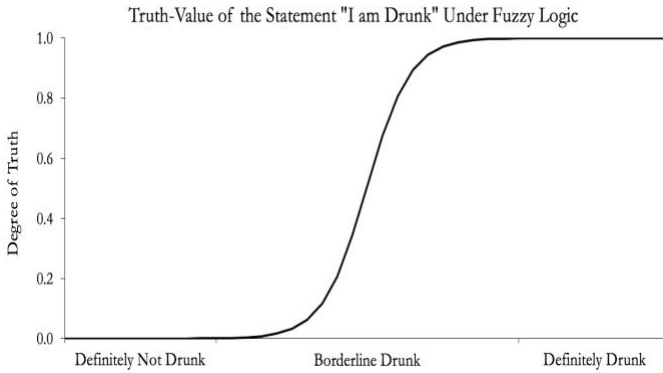


Fig. 1: Truth of vague statements according to fuzzy logic.

Several philosophers have noted that fuzzy logic may fare no better than supervaluationism at explaining higher-order vagueness.<sup>36, 37</sup> The sharp boundary between truth and falsity posited by the epistemic theory has been avoided, but we still may ask whether it is definitely true that somebody is drunk, or that a collection is a heap. Fuzzy logic seems to trade a single arbitrary border for one either side of the range of indeterminate truth-values, and hence fails to explain vagueness suitably.

Fuzzy logic can accommodate higher-order vagueness by assigning additional truth-values to statements so the borders between indeterminate and determinate truth-values are blurred. Suppose statement  $A$  is assigned a truth-value of 0.8 so that  $V(A) = 0.8$ . We might then ask, “What is the truth of the claim that  $V(A) = 0.8$ ?” If it is completely true, we could express this as  $V(A) = (0.8, 1)$ ; if it is true to degree 0.9, we could write  $V(A) = (0.8, 0.9)$ . This process can be extended so that the infinitely many levels of higher-order vagueness are accounted for.<sup>38</sup> The border between indeterminate truth and determinate truth could be smoothed over by going from  $V(A) = (1, 0.98)$  to  $V(A) = (1, 0.99)$ , and likewise for third-order vagueness,

fourth-order vagueness, and so on *ad infinitum* by adding additional levels of truth-values. The implausibility of epistemic and supervaluation theories suggests that perhaps continuing to search for sharp boundaries to vague language is futile. Likewise, our inherent uncertainty when using words such as “heap” or “bald” to describe borderline cases may signify a lack of clear-cut limits to the correct application of vague terms. By extending our definition of truth to include values between 0 and 1 where appropriate, fuzzy logic may succeed in blurring the boundaries between truth and falsity without creating additional sharp ones, thus providing a satisfactory account of vagueness and resolution to the sorites paradox.

There are some limitations to this form of logic. For one, it is unclear how we could accurately assign indeterminate truth-values.<sup>39</sup> However, an inability to express and categorize truth-values accurately is hardly an objection to their existence; the truth of a statement is unrelated to our descriptive aptitudes.<sup>40</sup> If the meaning of vague terms is constructed by their common use, as Williamson suggests, it is still quite possible for an individual to apply these words incorrectly. One may mistakenly describe a woman wearing high-heeled shoes as tall or misjudge the degree to which a vague term such as red applies to a borderline-red strawberry. Even under classical logic, we may make incorrect judgments by asserting a true statement to be false or vice versa. For instances of vagueness, indeterminate truth-values could be estimated by comparing borderline cases with one another.<sup>41</sup> Given two borderline short men, the shorter of the pair can be assigned a higher truth-value for “is short” even though the truth-value for each is less than 1.

Fuzzy logic also appears to generate incorrect truth-values for certain expressions.<sup>42</sup> If somebody is borderline bald, the statement “He is bald and he is not bald” may have a truth-value between 0 and 1 under fuzzy logic. In many situations requiring logical analysis, however, only determinate truth-values of 0 and 1 are needed, so standard logical theorems can still be applied. Despite fuzzy logic having some problematic aspects, it appears to provide a notion of vagueness that is consistent with experience and natural language while managing to blur the boundaries between truth and falsity even at higher levels of vagueness. Consequently, it appears a more promising

method of resolving the sorites paradox than epistemic or supervaluationist approaches.

Williamson's epistemic theory posits a sharp boundary between the correct and incorrect application of vague terms. However, language is not used in a way that could determine sharp borders to a vague word's meaning. The supervaluationist theory that Keefe defends accommodates the plurality of ways to draw a line between truth and falsity, but the invocation of a single indeterminate truth-value fails to account for higher-order vagueness. Fuzzy logic resolves the sorites paradox by claiming the reasoning is flawed: the conditional premises "leak" truth, which eventually generates a false conclusion. Though often thought to be susceptible to higher-order vagueness, fuzzy logic can blur the boundaries between determinate and indeterminate truth such that higher-order vagueness is taken into account. Vague terms, then, appear not to have precise borders to their sphere of reference. Instead, the borders are themselves vague—or at least fuzzy.<sup>43</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> R. M. Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Dominic Hyde, "Sorites Paradox," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2014 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 2014).

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/sorites-paradox/>.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Unger, "There Are No Ordinary Things," *Synthese* 41, no. 2 (1979): 118, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20115446>.

<sup>5</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 49.

<sup>6</sup> Likewise, there is an exact maximum number of hairs required to be bald, a minimum height to be tall, an exact cut-off point for a color to be blue, and so on for other possible sorites paradoxes.

<sup>7</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Rosanna Keefe, *Theories of Vagueness*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), ProQuest Ebook, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Roy Sorensen, "Contagious Blindspots: Formal Ignorance Spreads to Peers," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2015): 335, <http://apq.press.illinois.edu/view.php?vol=52&iss=4&f=sorensen.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 50.



- <sup>12</sup> W. V. O. Quine, "Main Trends in Recent Philosophy: Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *Philosophical Review* 60, no. 1 (1951): 29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2181906>.
- <sup>13</sup> Quine, "Main Trends in Recent Philosophy," 34.
- <sup>14</sup> Quine, "Main Trends in Recent Philosophy," 38.
- <sup>14</sup> When testing the melting point of a newly discovered substance, say, it would be necessary to assume that the thermometer is working, that the substance has not been tainted, and so on.
- <sup>15</sup> Timothy Williamson, *Vagueness*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), ProQuest Ebook, 217.
- <sup>16</sup> Timothy Williamson, *Vagueness*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), ProQuest Ebook, 226.
- <sup>17</sup> Williamson, *Vagueness*, 206.
- <sup>18</sup> Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar, "Ludwig Wittgenstein," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2016 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 2016). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/wittgenstein/>.
- <sup>19</sup> Williamson, *Vagueness*, 206.
- <sup>20</sup> Williamson, *Vagueness*, 207.
- <sup>21</sup> Williamson, *Vagueness*, 206.
- <sup>22</sup> Timothy Endicott, *Vagueness in Law*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 109.
- <sup>23</sup> Endicott, *Vagueness in Law*, 108.
- <sup>24</sup> Endicott, *Vagueness in Law*, 108.
- <sup>25</sup> Linda Claire Burns, *Vagueness: An Investigation into Natural Languages and the Sorites Paradox*, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 66.
- <sup>26</sup> Rosanna Keefe, "Vagueness: Supervaluationism," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 2 (2008): 316, doi:10.1111/j.1747-9991.2008.00124., 152.
- <sup>27</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 51.
- <sup>28</sup> Keefe, "Vagueness: Supervaluationism," x.
- <sup>29</sup> Keefe, "Vagueness: Supervaluationism," x.
- <sup>30</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 55.
- <sup>31</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 55.
- <sup>32</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 57.
- <sup>33</sup> Petr Cintula, Christian G. Fermüller, and Carles Noguera, "Fuzzy Logic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2017 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 2017). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/logic-fuzzy/>.
- <sup>34</sup> Cintula, Fermüller, and Noguera, "Fuzzy Logic"
- <sup>35</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 58.
- <sup>36</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 62.
- <sup>37</sup> John MacFarlane, "Fuzzy Epistemicism," in *Cuts and Clouds: Vagueness, its Nature, and its Logic*, ed. Richard Dietz and Sebastiano Moruzzi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), ProQuest Ebook, 455.
- <sup>38</sup> Jack Copeland, "Indeterminacy" (lecture, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, October 9, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> R. M. Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 61.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Copeland, “Indeterminacy” (lecture, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, October 9, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> Roy Sorenson, “Vagueness,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2016 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University, 2017).

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## **BORDER POLICY BEHIND THE VEIL: CHALLENGING WELLMAN'S RIGHT TO EXCLUDE**

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**Abstract.** The following paper examines one of the central arguments defending restrictive border policies: Wellman's argument for a nation's right to exclude. I seek to present the argument that Wellman's conception of the right to exclude fails to meet the egalitarian obligations which Wellman claims it does, as it never accounts for the practical ramifications of the exportation of justice. By employing the framework of Rawls's original position with an analysis of the failures of the Border Industrialization Project (BIP) and the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) projects, I further deepen the critiques of Mendoza and Wilcox and illustrate exactly how Wellman's argument ultimately fails under its own commitments. Should a state claim a subscription to egalitarian values, there are certain obligations it must fulfill through the adoption of a more open border policy.

“Europe is being inundated by hundreds of thousands of refugees. Donald Trump is calling to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. And all the while, walls are going up right and left. In fact, three-quarters of all border walls and fences were erected after the year 2000,” wrote journalist Rutger Bregman for *Fortune* magazine. “Here we are, 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and from Uzbekistan to Thailand, from Israel to Botswana, the world has more barriers than ever.”<sup>1</sup> It seems counterintuitive that in a world so driven by communication, innovation, and collaboration, countries would have something to gain by keeping immigrants from coming across their borders. Yet, governments across the globe, motivated by the idea that there may be something to lose, are instituting new policies and practices designed to keep foreigners out.

Christopher Heath Wellman is known for his philosophical work regarding a nation's right to limit immigration based on a claim to free association. His argument for the right to exclude is often regarded as one of the most intuitive arguments against open borders.<sup>2</sup> My analysis will thus begin with an explication of Wellman's argument, before combining the direct objections of contemporary thinkers José Mendoza and Shelley Wilcox to elucidate their central objection – that

Wellman's view fails to fully answer the egalitarian concerns it raises. Drawing upon the work of Joseph H. Carnes and the tradition of non-ideal theory, John Rawls's notion of the veil of ignorance will be evoked in order to illustrate the ways in which adoption of Wellman's view point leads to a failure to meet the obligations of a legitimate state. The practical considerations of the efficacy of material aid, as well as the ethical implications of border policy enforcement, will be utilized in showing that, should a country claim to be either a legitimate state or a liberal democracy, there are certain obligations which must be fulfilled through the adoption of a less restrictive border policy. Although Wellman claims compatibility between the right to exclude and egalitarian values, his provisions for the exportation of aid fail to ultimately meet such a standard, as they fail to fully consider the practical implications of accepting the right to exclude.

### **Wellman's Argument**

In "Immigration and Freedom of Association," Wellman defends a state's right to limit immigration based on a claim of freedom of association, characterizing free association as a collective group's right to limit and exclude potential members. He argues that a legitimate state has the right to restrict immigration on the basis of the right to free association.

Freedom of association is a crucial part of self-determination, Wellman explains. Since all legitimate states have a right to self-determination, they also have a right to *not* associate. Wellman cites Stuart White in his argument, explaining: "Freedom of association is widely seen as one of those basic freedoms which is fundamental to a genuinely free society. With the freedom to associate, however, there comes the freedom to refuse association... What makes it their association, serving their purposes, is that they can exercise this 'right to exclude.'"<sup>23</sup> Just as a state could never force one individual to accept another individual in matrimony, a state should never be able to force a community of individuals to accept a foreigner into their community.

For Wellman, this is a fundamental right of any collective association of individuals. Legitimate states are entitled to reject all potential immigrants, even those desperately seeking asylum from

corrupt governments. Part of his argument holds that both egalitarian and libertarian moral considerations do not outweigh a legitimate state's right to freedom of association, and that the obligations of such a conception are not in conflict with his view, as they could ultimately be fulfilled through the exportation of aid.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note here that Wellman believes this freedom ought to apply to all groups, not just states claiming legitimacy or liberalism as a value. In arguing against his detractors, Wellman states that "anyone is entitled to freedom of association." He posits that it is not against the obligations of a "healthy democracy" or "equitable welfare state" to uphold this value and that it would be wrong to infer that only large or homogeneous populations have this right. Wellman claims that his argument will be satisfactory against any egalitarian consideration.<sup>5</sup>

Part of Wellman's ability to reach this conclusion is rooted in the distinction he draws between "luck equality" and "relational equality." He claims that the first type of equality is to be considered in situations between two independent societies. Members of one of these societies can be much more well-off than members of the other, but as long as members of both societies are not aware of the difference, neither is affected. This type of "luck equality," "matters considerably less" than the other type of equality.<sup>6</sup>

This other type of equality, relational equality, is that which Wellman wants to shift focus to. Relational equality concerns equality within a single society. He claims that inequalities that exist within a unified political community are of more concern to him than those existing between independent societies. The lack of a "robust relationship" between the constituents of a wealthy state and the citizens of a poorer country means that luck inequality does not generate sufficient moral obligation to necessitate a wealthy state opening its borders. This is so long as "nothing but luck explains why those living outside of the territorial borders have dramatically worse prospects of living a rewarding life."<sup>7</sup>

Wellman grants that there are some relational egalitarian considerations that necessitate a state's obligation to foreign peoples, but there is no substantive egalitarian obligation to adopt less restrictive border policies, since any obligation of that nature should be

fulfilled through an “exportation of justice.” He effectively avoids claiming a direct responsibility to accept refugees by suggesting that egalitarian obligations can, and ought to, be “exported” through material aid. “I adopt this stance not because I am unmoved by the plight of asylum seekers but because I am not convinced that the only way to help victims of political injustice is by sheltering them in one’s political territory,” he explains.<sup>8</sup>

The following section will seek to explicate exactly why situations of luck equality do not apply to modern day border and immigration policies, and why Wellman’s provision for exporting justice fails under practical consideration. This section will begin with an examination of John Rawls’s conception for the obligations of a liberal state in relation to the legitimate state as characterized by Wellman, which will help to ground the arguments of José Mendoza and Shelley Wilcox within the context of the current debate. An exploration of their responses to Wellman will help to deepen the argument that the right to exclude is incompatible with an egalitarian framework, as cases of current global inequality are always relational and equality cannot simply be exported.

### **Characterizing Objections**

In order to properly examine objections to Wellman’s defense of the right to exclude, it is important to first understand the definition of a “legitimate state” as used by Wellman, compared to that of a “liberal democracy” as understood by Rawls and most modern-day philosophers.

A liberal democracy is widely defined as a democratically-governed state that operates under the principles of liberalism. Liberalism as a political philosophy holds that the purpose of government is to protect individuals and uphold values of civil liberty, as well as those of political and economic freedom. In his work *Justice as Fairness*, Rawls conceives of liberalism as a political doctrine which “supposes that there are many conflicting and incommensurable conceptions of the good, each compatible with the full rationality of human persons, so far as we can ascertain within a workable political conception of justice.”<sup>9</sup> When the definitions of a legitimate state and a



liberal democracy are considered together, a legitimate liberal democracy can be understood as a political community which recognizes its purpose as to uphold and protect human rights, civil liberties and personal freedoms.

We are able to interrogate Wellman's defense of the right to exclude according to the principles of this definition, as Wellman explicitly states that egalitarian concerns do not outweigh his argument, and are even accounted for within his conception.<sup>10</sup> The following discussion of Mendoza and Wilcox's critiques of Wellman's defense of restricted borders will utilize this definition of a legitimate, liberal democracy in illustrating why his right to exclude is not substantiated by his appeal to freedom of association.

In "Enforcement Matters: Reframing the Philosophical Debate over Immigration," Mendoza engages directly with Wellman's argument, positing that Wellman's conception does not hold against true egalitarian consideration. Mendoza utilizes the definition of a legitimate state as a political community, respectful of human rights, to argue that a state's right to exert discretionary control over its own borders ought to be restricted by the ethical limits of the state's enforcement of its border policy. In other words, a state's ability to ethically enforce border policy must be considered when determining immigration law.<sup>11</sup> This claim is the root of Mendoza's objection to Wellman, and it aids in further illustrating the way in which Wellman's argument fails to consider practical implications of certain aspects of immigration and border policy.

Mendoza characterizes Wellman's distinction between luck inequality and obligations regarding relational equality as a sort of unsubstantiated appeal to liberal values. He writes that "while Wellman gives great lip service to respecting individual freedom and universal equality... the rest of the argument seems ready to sacrifice these liberal principles for the sake of democratic autonomy."<sup>12</sup> Wellman may claim a subscription to egalitarian values, but if his theory does not actually fulfill the obligations of this commitment in application, it seems as though the exportation of justice may be a less than genuine attempt at making his conception acceptable to egalitarians without an actual incorporation of the necessary values.

Exploring Shelley Wilcox's criticism helps to further illustrate the incompatibility of the right to exclude with a society's fulfillment of certain egalitarian duties. Wilcox notes in her work "Do duties to outsiders entail open borders? A reply to Wellman" that material aid is often not enough support, or even harmful, for those who it intends to help.<sup>13</sup> Wilcox utilizes the examples of the Border Industrialization Project (BIP) and the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to suggest that Wellman's solution is insufficient in light of egalitarian concerns and the reality of our transnational economy.

Wilcox explains the way in which economic integration has led to the creation of "a complex web of structural relationships" among states that participate in a regional economy through globalization and technology. Economic relations between the U.S and Mexico present a prime example of this sort of complex relationship.<sup>14</sup> U.S.-owned corporations employ Mexican workers in their Mexico-based operations; moreover, migrants from Mexico have long served as a source of labor for the U.S. agricultural industry.

Wilcox explains that BIP replaced the Bracero Program, which had previously allowed for Mexican laborers to legally work within the United States' agricultural sector up until its end in 1964. Following the end of the Bracero Program, the Mexican government was in need of a means of employing returning laborers, while the United States was in need of a source of cheap labor for its growing industry. BIP allowed for U.S. corporations to export manufacturing operations to Mexico with the intention of targeting unemployment around the U.S.-Mexico border. In exchange for Mexico reducing restrictions on foreign investments, the United States reduced duties and taxes on imported products to encourage business development.

The introduction and adoption of NAFTA would later eliminate nearly all duties, taxes, and special fees on international trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Supporters of NAFTA and BIP believed that by encouraging economic development in Mexico, such programs would reduce undocumented immigration to the United States.<sup>15</sup> What supporters failed to consider was that, due to the inherent inequalities in opportunity and power, these programs would only serve to perpetuate a state of economic imperialism

between these two nations and their peoples. Oppression and inequalities can arise in many forms within relationships where some parties dominate, exploit, marginalize, or inflict violence upon another. Even when the success of one group is not the direct result of the suffering of another group, morally problematic relationships can still exist due to the forms of social oppression that occur between nations.

The failings of programs such as BIP and NAFTA to reduce illegal immigration and improve quality of life serve to illustrate that aid or justice cannot simply be “exported” as Wellman would like to claim.<sup>16</sup> The state of globalization and the interdependent nature of our economies have created a “complex web of structural relationships among participants in the regional economy... these relationships are morally problematic because they tend to foster the forms of social oppression that relational egalitarians reject.”<sup>17</sup> Due to the integrated nature of the world’s economies, policies that allow for the movement of goods and not people are unjust because of the systemic inequalities they perpetuate. Wilcox explains:

... North American trade liberalization has created a single, de facto transnational society, encompassing (at least parts of) the United States and Mexico. Within this new transnational society, existing national borders enforce a kind of apartheid, segregating ethnic groups and enforcing the kind of caste system *that egalitarians reject*. Thus, the duty to eliminate oppression can be discharged only by opening the U.S.–Mexico border *because the border itself promotes oppression*.<sup>18</sup> [emphasis added]

The state of our interdependent, global economy renders it so that situations of “luck inequality” no longer exist. It is an unavoidable fact that we live in a world of transnational societies and that strict enforcement of national borders in such a society serves only to create, enforce, and maintain a system of inequality and oppression. The failure of programs seeking to export justice through changes in economic policy only perpetuate the exploitation of labor in less-developed countries. Structures of inequality are perpetuated, as long as only goods and not people are allowed to move freely, because closed borders and restrictions on immigration serve to defend and

maintain the hierarchy of power that has long existed between developed and developing nations. As long as developed nations continue to use the people of developing nations as a source of cheap labor, without allowing them the same freedom of movement afforded to the products they produce, no justice occurs.

Therefore, if a nation claims to be a legitimate state that takes egalitarian concerns seriously, sending material aid in order to “export justice” does not sufficiently fulfill its commitment to human rights. Furthermore, there is no room for a restrictive immigration policy that defends this “kind of apartheid... caste system.”<sup>19</sup> In the following section, I will introduce the Rawlsian conception of the “veil of ignorance,” drawing upon the argument of Joseph H. Carens, and will employ this concept to further illustrate that nations claiming to be legitimate, liberal states must adopt less restrictive border and immigration policies if they claim compatibility with liberal values.

### **Bringing in the Veil**

While Wellman tries to claim that a right to freedom of association grants states a right to close their borders and limit immigration, an application of the veil of ignorance will help to show that our current conceptualization of borders was created through, and with the intention of, preserving imperialist international hierarchies. When one considers the role of colonial power dynamics in the creation and maintenance of these systems, as well as the realities of effectively exporting aid, it becomes clear that states claiming compatibility with egalitarianism have an obligation to adopt more open borders. Otherwise, they fail their obligation and actually serve to perpetuate inequality through unjust border or economic policies.

The fundamental idea behind the veil of ignorance is that an individual is most capable of determining a fair social order for a society when the individual does not know which position one will hold in that society. In “The Law of Peoples,” Rawls describes the veil of ignorance as the “original position,” a model to help consider the specific requirements by which members of a society may come to agree upon fair conditions and specify laws and terms for a just conception.<sup>20</sup> The purpose of such a device is to remove the possible

influence of social factors and position which are often at the root of the societal structures at hand.

While it may appear that Rawls's conception is only applicable to homogenous societies, Carens makes the case that we may extend the veil of ignorance beyond the context Rawls originally intended. Rawls's concept is ultimately useful in addressing inequality between societies for the very same reasons it is useful in addressing just formations of a single society.<sup>21</sup> It can be certain that Wellman's position is inherently susceptible to analysis via the original position, given that Wellman himself claims his provision for exporting justice answers all egalitarian concerns.<sup>22</sup>

In his examination of this thought experiment, Rawls concludes that people in the original position "behind the veil" would agree upon certain principles of justice, such as that people are free and independent, and that this freedom and independence ought to be respected by others. This thought experiment is useful as one does not want to be influenced by motivations particular to one's current position when determining what would be the fairest or most just policy for all of society. The idea that all human beings ought to be treated equally is a basic presupposition of the veil of ignorance.<sup>23</sup>

In extending Rawls's concepts and applying them to the question of immigration, we find that there must be an obligation to adopt immigration policies more closely resembling open borders for countries that claim compatibility with egalitarian values. This is because the cost to any given privileged society does not outweigh the value it affords members of disadvantaged societies.

When one considers possible limitations of freedom, particularly freedom of movement, one must assume the position of a person who would be the most negatively affected by such restrictions. Within the framework of ideal theory, one is able to ignore the long history of injustices and systems that created perpetual inequalities both within and between nations. However, as Carens notes, there is actually "little room for restrictions on immigration in ideal theory" because, even though Rawls allows for the restriction of liberty "for the sake of liberty," the hypothetical threats posed by immigration on a single state are not enough to warrant such a restriction on individual freedom. Although such a threat carries at least a "reasonable

expectation” that an increase in immigration could lead to a loss of public order, this loss would have to be the direct result of the arrival of newcomers, rather than the result of current citizens’ negative reactions to incoming refugees or immigrants, in order to tilt the analysis in favor of restrictive borders.<sup>24</sup>

While it is clear there is little room for the endangerment of public order under an ideal framework, there is also little room for an endorsement of restrictive borders in a non-ideal framework. Once historical inequalities and contexts are considered, the case against Wellman’s claim that the right to exclude is compatible with egalitarian values becomes even stronger.

Wilcox’s critique of Wellman can be incorporated within the Rawlsian framework to further illustrate how the “exportation of justice” through policies like BIP and NAFTA does not sufficiently fulfill commitments to egalitarianism. Such policies ultimately allow large corporations and countries at the top of the global hierarchy to benefit from further exploitation of non-developed nations.<sup>25</sup> A state’s commitment to make trade deals and export labor, rather than adopt less restrictive border policies, illustrates that their commitment to maintaining current structural hierarchies outweighs their commitment to egalitarian values. Arguments such as Wellman’s illustrate the way in which modern-day defenses of restricted immigration fail to uphold egalitarian standards given real-world considerations.

Rawls himself explained that, “Since the boundaries of people are often historically the outcome of violence and aggression, and [since] some people thereof are wrongly subjected to others, the law of peoples in its nonideal part should, as far as possible, contain principles and standards - or at least some guidelines - for coping with these matters.”<sup>26</sup> Restrictive immigration policies that enforce these borders, born from a violent colonial history, serve to perpetuate wealth disparity between developed and less developed nations. Wellman’s provision for exporting justice effectively fails to address these matters, leading to a failure in his system to fully consider and meet the standards of an egalitarian commitment.

## Conclusion

While Wellman tries to claim that a right to freedom of association grants states a right to close their borders and limit immigration, an exploration of counterarguments, combined with an application of Rawls's veil of ignorance, illustrates how our current conceptualization of borders perpetuates systems of inequality that are ultimately incompatible with the duties of a legitimate, liberal state. Wellman's argument for the right to exclude rests on the idea that there is no obligation to provide aid in situations of luck inequality, and that when there is an obligation, it can be fulfilled through an exportation of material aid. However, the introduction of a non-ideal framework illustrates that situations of luck-equality do not really exist due to a long history of imperialism and the development of a global economy. All examples of global inequality are ultimately relational. A further examination of the ways in which nations provide material aid through policies such as BIP and NAFTA shows exactly how Wellman's argument for the state's right to exclude fails.

When one examines the process through which borders are maintained and the power dynamics that led to their formation, it becomes clear that states claiming to be both legitimate and liberal have a duty to adopt less restrictive immigration policies. As only goods and not people are allowed to move freely, a true commitment to egalitarianism can never be fulfilled. Restrictive border policies preserve and protect the existence of relational inequalities between peoples. Nations that claim to be either legitimate nations or liberal democracies have a responsibility to adopt immigration policies more closely resembling open borders than the policies they currently adopt. In maintaining restrictive border and immigration policies, developed nations perpetuate historical and economic inequalities between developed and undeveloped nations, and the practice of "exporting justice" fails as a sufficient justification for such a policy.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Rutger Bregman, "The Surprisingly Compelling Argument for Open Borders," *Fortune*, Time Inc., April 17, 2016, <https://www.fortune.com/2016/04/17/immigration-open-borders>.
- <sup>2</sup> José Jorge Mendoza, "Enforcement Matters: Reframing the Philosophical Debate over Immigration," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2015): 74.
- <sup>3</sup> Christopher Heath Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," *Ethics* 119, no. 1 (2008): 2-3.
- <sup>4</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 20-21.
- <sup>5</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 10-11.
- <sup>6</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 14.
- <sup>7</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 20-21.
- <sup>8</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 15, 21-22.
- <sup>9</sup> John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985): 248, JSTOR.
- <sup>10</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 10-11.
- <sup>11</sup> Mendoza, "Enforcement Matters: Reframing the Philosophical Debate over Immigration," 73-75.
- <sup>12</sup> Mendoza, "Enforcement Matters: Reframing the Philosophical Debate over Immigration," 76.
- <sup>13</sup> Shelley Wilcox, "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders? A Reply to Wellman," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 169, no. 1 (2014): 130.
- <sup>14</sup> Wilcox, "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders? A Reply to Wellman," 128.
- <sup>15</sup> Wilcox, "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders? A Reply to Wellman," 125-127.
- <sup>16</sup> See study by Global Citizen Trade Watch; "NAFTA's 20-Year Legacy and the Fate of the Trans-Pacific Partnership," *Public Citizen*, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, Feb. 2014, [www.citizen.org/our-work/globalization-and-trade/nafta-wto-other-trade-pacts/trans-pacific-partnership](http://www.citizen.org/our-work/globalization-and-trade/nafta-wto-other-trade-pacts/trans-pacific-partnership).
- <sup>17</sup> Wilcox, "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders? A Reply to Wellman," 128.
- <sup>18</sup> Wilcox, "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders? A Reply to Wellman," 128-129.
- <sup>19</sup> Wilcox, "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders? A Reply to Wellman," 129.
- <sup>20</sup> John Rawls, "The Law of Peoples," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 45, JSTOR.
- <sup>21</sup> Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," *The Review of Politics* 49 no. 2 (1987): 256. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034670500033817>.
- <sup>22</sup> Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," 10-11.
- <sup>23</sup> Of course, the veil of ignorance is a hypothetical ideal. No human reasoning can be



entirely uninformed by an individual's prior experience. As humans, we can only try our best to be neutral and to engage with Rawls's conception 'from the original position,' as he intended. Rawls's believes, and it is a widely-accepted notion, that the vast majority of people, having adopted this position, would desire a society with some conception of equality.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," *The Review of Politics* 49 no. 2 (1987): 256. <https://doi:10.1017/s0034670500033817>.

<sup>25</sup> Considerations regarding the ethical enforcement of border policies introduced by Mendoza in "Enforcement Matters" may be paired with the Rawlsian framework in order to provide further objections to Wellman's argument regarding the right to exclude. While limitations of space prevent this critique from being fully explored here, this subject could serve as the focus of a future investigation.

<sup>26</sup> John Rawls, "The Law of Peoples," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 26, *JSTOR*.

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## A REVIEW OF GIORGIO AGAMBEN, *TASTE*

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When we think of taste, the pleasurable sensations derived from eating often comes to mind. However, our sense of taste does not only apply to food. The word “taste” is also used to convey an agent’s capacity for judgment. For example, in the sentence “She has great taste in books,” indicates a certain degree of knowledge that then allows the judgment of taste. Hence, two polarizing orientations arise from taste, one of pleasure and the other of knowledge. The contested border between taste and knowledge is at the center of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s 1979 book, *Taste*, which has appeared in English only in 2017. *Taste* is certain to be a crucial reading for Agamben scholars but it will also be an important contribution to aesthetics and philosophy at large. By suturing the traditional metaphysical fracture between pleasure and knowledge, this book’s provocative claim is that taste itself is a type of knowledge, which through the ages and across continents relentlessly haunts and preoccupies our experience of the world.

In “Science and Pleasure”, the first section of this five-part essay, Agamben asserts that the Western philosophical and scientific discourse has produced a problematic hierarchy among the five senses. Historically, the senses of sight and hearing have been considered as theoretical senses, those applied to aesthetic matters. Also called “distance senses,” sight and hearing do not require an agent’s direct physical contact with sensory objects. It is this distance that enables the viewer and the listener to engage their faculty of reason, hence their theoretical capacities. Privileging these two senses comes at the expense of taste, which is relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy along with the other practical senses of touch and smell. Taste, touch, and smell are also referred to as “practical” or “proximal” senses because their engagement with sensory objects requires direct, and at times intrusive, contact. Agamben explains that taste is considered the basest sense because it “does not leave its object free and independent,

but deals with it in a really practical way, dissolving and consuming it” (4).

Despite taste’s role in uniting human beings with animalistic tendencies, there is a vocabulary of taste which etymologically and semantically connects taste with “the act of knowledge” (4). For example, Agamben explains that *sapiens* [wise man] is derived from *sapor* [taste] and that the Greek word *sophos* [sage] is etymologically related to *sapio* [taste], *sapiens* [the taster], and *saptes* [perceptible to taste]. For the Greeks, taste did not simply link humans to animals, but simultaneously to wisdom. By looking to history and mediating the trajectory of taste in philosophy, Agamben aims to resist the idea that taste is a lower bodily sense and affirm its role in attaining knowledge.

Agamben proceeds to trace taste’s role as “a metaphorically opposite and additional sense.” Here taste is identified as both a “knowledge that enjoys the beautiful object” and a “pleasure that judges beauty”(5). In short, taste is both the knowledge of pleasure and the pleasure of knowledge. Thus, the philosophical problem of taste, according to Agamben, is that it is a form of knowledge “that cannot account for its judgments but, rather, enjoys them” (5). In distinguishing taste’s role as a paradoxical knowledge, that is, an ideal that presents “the fullest knowledge at the same time as it underlines the impossibility thereof,”(51) Agamben poses one of his essay’s central questions: “Why is knowledge originally divided and why does it maintain, likewise originally, a relation with the doctrine of pleasure, that is, with ethics?” (8)

Throughout the book, Agamben traces how Western culture has established taste as an ideal of knowledge, which transcends the border between complete knowledge and the impossibility of knowledge. He also investigates how the philosophical history of taste as the knowledge and enjoyment of the beautiful deems it an excessive signifier. Through the peculiar type of knowledge provided by taste, a subject does not know because she cannot explain it. Thus, for Agamben, “[taste] is an empty or excessive sense, situated at the very limit of knowledge and pleasure...whose lack or excess essentially defines the stature of both science...and pleasure...” (51)

In an age in which categories produce pointless ranking systems of what should be considered beautiful (i.e. the competitive arena of social media, which is fueled by affirming “likes”), Agamben’s book provides a way to think beyond social and cultural standards of what is good taste. By illuminating taste’s problematic history, Agamben suggests new ways for readers to reorient their subjectivities through taste. This reorientation involves questioning the origins of signification, that is, how human beings attach meaning and significance to things. In adopting a critical gaze towards the significance of any and all phenomena, a subject is able to transcend her confinement within socially and culturally constructed standards of being in the world. Hence, *Taste* is a celebration of subjectivity, particularly stemming from Agamben’s own conceptions of the human subject’s existence as potentiality. By *Taste’s* conclusion, the careful reader may have gained the wondrous conclusion that the beautiful—both inescapable and ungraspable—is also intrinsically borderless.

## **TASTE**

By Giorgio Agamben

Translated by Cooper Francis

96pp. Seagull Books.

## A REVIEW OF JASBIR PUAR'S *THE RIGHT TO MAIM*

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In *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, Jasbir Puar develops a poignant critique of the ways that the United States produces disability worldwide through practices of imperialism and settler-colonialism. Puar's project, in her own words, offers "a much-needed intersectional critique that destabilizes the white, Euro-American, economically privileged subjects that are most likely to be interpellated as "a person with disabilities."<sup>1</sup> Puar departs from the figuration of disability as an identity. She frames it as a *formation* of three vectors: disability, debility, and capacity. Puar understands debility as the systematic limitation of a population's capacity to act. These vectors do not replace each other, or act independently. They complement and interact with each other through assemblages of state and non-state actors, physical infrastructures, and medical technologies. In doing this, Puar draws upon and expands Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics to account for the horrors of colonial violence, which Foucault did not sufficiently address in the concept's original formulation. Using the slogan "From Ferguson to Gaza" (ix) to guide her exploration, Puar offers a transnational analysis of global systems of settler colonialism that brings together mass incarceration in the United States and the Israeli occupation of Palestine, ultimately showing the endemic disability that they both produce.

*The Right to Maim* is written in four chapters, each tackling a distinct theme. Puar begins by looking at the intersection of transness and disability in the context of the US. She then turns to how these identitarian categories have been instrumentalized to create both exceptional and normative subjectivities that serve dominant neoliberal modes of power. In this chapter, she examines the ways in which the exclusion of Gender Identity Disorder and gender dysphoria from the category of disability by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reinforces an identity-based conception of disability. Building upon her first book, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, in *The Right to Maim* Puar expands her theory of homonationalism into

what she describes as “trans(homo)nationalism” (34). Puar posits that the conception of transness as a teleological process, with discrete starting and ending states mediated by medical authorities, ultimately creates a normative trans-subject, one that is white, economically privileged, and able-bodied.

In the second chapter, Puar examines the creation of normative subjectivities in the context of disability. She names this process, by which a normative disabled subject is produced and maintained in biopolitical life, “cripnationalism.” She contends that the liberal empowerment discourses that dominate the disability rights movement, as exemplified by the ADA driven activism and legislation, are part and parcel of cripnationalism, which excludes many other subjects from recognition as “disabled.” The aim of cripnationalism is to regulate the border between inclusion and exclusion by empowering and exceptionalizing those disabled subjects that are included. Here, Puar introduces her conceptualization of debility “as a process rather than an identity or attribute” that challenges the normative disabled-identity formation (73). In *The Biopolitics of Disability*, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder identify a trend in disability studies by which disabled bodies go from “social pariahs” to “objects of care.” Puar sees a cripnationalist element in this reconfiguration, which is further intensified in liberal rights empowerment discourses.

Puar wishes to disrupt cripnationalism through an analysis of how the United States has systematically displaced disability to sites of incarceration and imperial war. For example, she employs Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the “pre-disabled” to analyze how racialized bodies in Afghanistan and Iraq were/are marked by the US as objects of un-care and how the decline of medical neutrality throughout the war has created massive amounts of disability. Puar contends that these forms of disability created by imperialism and settler colonialism are a “constitutive absence” within the field of disability studies (89). Through their commitment to an empowered disabled identity, this powerful trend in disability studies engage in the erasure of what she calls “southern disability” (89).

Puar then moves her analysis to a discussion of the biopolitical landscape in Israel. She opens her third chapter with a comparative analysis of how cripnationalism functions within Israel. In comparison

to the United States, the exceptional disabled subject in Israel is the disabled Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier. Through this figure of the disabled soldier, cripnationalism in Israel relies more upon the spectacle and victimhood of disability than the supposed empowerment that American cripnationalism promises. As an example of this victimization, she points to how the IDF uses the potential maiming inflicted by Palestinian bombings, and the narratives of IDF soldiers and civilians harmed in these bombings. This creates a culture of anxiety within Israel around the constancy of a potential Palestinian threat. This anxiety is then marshalled to support the colonial occupation of Palestine as a necessary measure of security, and to justify violence against Palestinian bodies.

Extending her analysis of homonationalism from *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar analyzes the Israeli assisted reproductive technology industry's efforts to incorporate gay and lesbian subjects into reproductive and family planning narratives, efforts which obscure the industry's encouragement of abortions amongst Arab women and a broader project to control the Arab population. Puar theorizes how gay and lesbian populations and their reproductive capacities are folded into biopolitical management functions to establish a larger Jewish population within Israel.

It is in the final chapter that Puar introduces the titular *right to maim*. The analysis and formulation of the right to maim centers around Operation Protective Edge, a 2014 military campaign by the IDF in which 2,131 Palestinians died and 10,918 were injured.<sup>1</sup> In this campaign, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, medical neutrality was abandoned and infrastructure within Palestinian territories was largely destroyed. Puar contends that these actions represent Israel's claim to a "right to maim" in opposition to a "right to kill" and a "right to life." The right to maim is most explicitly manifested in the IDF's policy of shooting to cripple, not to kill. This is expressed within a liberal rights framework, and is claimed as a liberal, or less violent, practice as compared to the right to kill. However, drawing upon Achille

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<sup>1</sup>Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, "Al Mezan Calls for Accountability for War Crimes and an End to Israel's Occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory."



Mbembe's formulation of a "war on life support," in which the very capacity of the state to preserve and nourish life is targeted, Puar theorizes that, in the context of this assault, maiming is no less violent, considering the intensive targeting of hospitals and life sustaining infrastructure. Puar then situates this analysis of the right to maim within the larger theoretical tradition of biopolitics. She contends that the right to maim adds a key axis, *debilitation*, to the four traditional axes of biopolitics: let live, let die, will not let live, will not let die. Adding debilitation allows the theory of biopolitics to account for the horrors of colonial violence, which Puar claims Foucault largely ignores in his original formulation.

This right to maim is not exclusively employed by Israel; instead, Puar posits it as a key tactic of settler colonialism. Theorizing the right to maim as a settler colonial practice reveals its connections to the US. Puar's compares the right to maim to Wellman's "right to exclude," a theoretical justification for restrictive border policy<sup>2</sup> Current reports from organizations such as No Más Muertes document how US Border Patrol has been systematically destroying humanitarian supplies<sup>3</sup>, including water jugs, left for people attempting to cross the border. By implementing these practices of border enforcement, the US claims an implicit right to maim immigrant bodies. Following Puar's analysis of Israel's "war upon life itself" in Palestine, it could be argued that the US treatment of border crossers along the US-Mexico border employs a similar logic. Water represent a means to life and its confiscation a cause of death for border crossers. This practice neither deports nor excludes, it opts for violently foreclosing the borders crossers ability to survive. In this specific instance, destroying a water supply maims the immigrant body through dehydration, which inevitably produces suffering. There is certainly much more to be explored in this connection, but even this brief sketch reveals how powerful Puar's framework can be to expand on the understanding of settler-colonial violence.

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<sup>2</sup> The right to exclude is characterized and critiqued in "Border Policy Behind the Veil" by Maryellen Stohlman-Vanderveen, an essay included in this issue of the *Journal*.

<sup>3</sup> No Más Muertes, "The Disappeared Report Part II: Interference with Humanitarian Aid"

Puar's work illuminates the integral nature of borders to the history of Palestine/Israel, the violence inherent in the practice of border-drawing, and the displacement of disability across those borders, wherever they are drawn. Puar considers geopolitical borders but also borders that are more abstractly constituted, such as those that control and mediate who is allowed to claim an empowered disabled identity. *The Right to Maim* provides a powerful set of tools to analyze these various sites and discourses, affirming how critique can still contribute to destabilizing violence and potentially reducing it.

### **THE RIGHT TO MAIM**

By Jasbir Puar

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**VASSAR'S BORDERS, WITHIN AND WITHOUT.  
IN CONVERSATION WITH ELIZABETH BRADLEY**

Sessi Kuwabara Blanchard, Henry Krusoe, and Giovanna Borradori

Since its foundation, the *Journal* has sought to open new channels of communication and intensify existing ones, both inside and outside Vassar. While our tradition has been to devote the “scholarly interview” to an exchange with a philosopher, in light of the exceptional moment that Vassar is facing a wide-ranging conversation with its new president seemed befitting.

Elizabeth Bradley is the eleventh President of Vassar College, a role she assumed on July 1, 2017. As an undergraduate, she focused on economics and art history, graduating magna cum laude from Harvard University. She then earned an MBA from the University of Chicago and a PhD in Health Policy and Health Economics from Yale University, where she taught for many years and served as Head of Branford College. A few months into her tenure at Vassar, President Bradley generously agreed to share with us elements of her intellectual biography, some early reflections on Vassar and the liberal arts, and the challenges of upholding a progressive agenda in higher education today.

A central focus of Bradley’s career has been improving health care delivery in the United States and through projects in Ethiopia, China, India, Liberia, Rwanda, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Her work, supported by the National Institutes of Health, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Clinton Foundation, has led to innovations in the delivery of cardiovascular care, long-term and end-of-life care, and health care management. As the founder and Faculty Director of the Yale Global Health Leadership Institute, Bradley has led teams that contributed to transforming Ethiopia’s health care system by restructuring hospital management and enhancing the availability of primary care. Bradley has published extensively in her field and authored three books, including *The American Health Care Paradox: Why Spending More Is Getting Us Less*, appeared in 2015.

From the beginning of 2016 until her departure from Yale to Vassar, President Bradley was the Director of the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy at Yale. The Brady-Johnson Program's goal is to train undergraduates interested in leadership through the theoretical framework of Grand Strategy, which was first articulated by British military historians after World War II. We started our conversation with President Bradley by discussing the core principles and intellectual commitments of Grand Strategy, whose comprehensive approach centers on achieving large ends with limited means. President Bradley pointed out the interdisciplinary scope of Grand Strategy, which draws from fields such as history, political science, and classical literature to address current-day challenges, including security, economic inequality, global health, and climate change. Especially illuminating were President Bradley's views on how the perspective of Grand Strategy might be applied to contemporary issues facing Vassar College and the world of liberal arts education.

The exploration of Grand Strategy led us to reflect on its relevance to thinking globalization and interdependence, two trends that both global health and the liberal arts must reckon with. We then prompted President Bradley to share with us her early impressions on the distinct contexts of Yale and Vassar, and to speculate on how the value of a liberal arts education may be perceived in a globalized world. Finally, we addressed ongoing concerns about sexual assault and Title IX policy at Vassar. We hope that this in-depth interview will help trace Vassar's emerging borders, within and without, which determine the possibilities of a productive engagement between our President and the Vassar community.

*Giovanna Borradori*

When we founded the *Journal* five years ago we had two goals in mind: on the one hand, to build a bridge between the Vassar philosophical community and the global community of undergraduate scholarship; on the other, to create a center of observation and critical thinking about the agenda of the liberal arts as it is advanced by Vassar College, an institution with an important legacy in the history of progressive politics in the United States. To mark the fifth anniversary of the *Journal*'s flourishing with an interview with you, Vassar's new President, it is therefore a great opportunity for which we would like to thank you in advance. At Yale, you were the Head of Branford College, the Founder and Faculty Director of the Yale Global Health Leadership Institute, and the Brady Johnson Professor of Grand Strategy. We are very interested in your impressions of Vassar as filtered through your experience at Yale in all these capacities. And if you are willing to share with us a bit of your intellectual biography, my first question to you would start from a reflection on your engagement as a faculty. How did you encounter Grand Strategy and what role does it play in your present thinking?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

In 2006, I had been tenured already and during a sabbatical leave, in December, the CEO of the Clinton Foundation contacted me. "We've heard you understand hospital administration. We have just been back from Ethiopia and we have a project that we'd like to talk with you about." I was completely shocked by this because I had never been to Ethiopia, had never been to Africa, in fact, and I had no idea. But I thought I would first invite them to Yale and triage the situation by bringing some Africanists to the same room. I figured that I would send them off and say, "Here is the Clinton Foundation, they want you to do something." But as the Clinton Foundation people came and described what they were doing, I realized, "Oh, jeepers, I think I actually could help you." Bill Clinton had met with the Minister of Health in Ethiopia in 2005, a democratizer, someone who wanted to work with the communities to improve healthcare. So, I wrote a grant that the Clinton Foundation funded and I ended up by spending a good chunk of my sabbatical in Ethiopia.

When I got there the Minister of Health said, “I really need a huge strategy. I need to spend this amount of money, here are all our problems, I need to find the very best way to do this. And I want you to help us.” So I did a lot of research on this and when I came back to Yale, I talked to one of my mentors about it. He said, “Have you ever heard of the Grand Strategy Program at Yale?” And I simply said, “No. I’m in the School of Public Health, how would I know about this history program?” And he said, “You must take it. Because they convene huge problems and think over history and ask: how have people tackled these large problems?” That’s when I first encountered Grand Strategy: by taking a course with Professor John Gaddis and Professor Paul Kennedy. As a professor myself, I obviously only sat in on their class. And even though their focus was about military history and people having *military* objectives, and how you used and deployed the military to get these objectives – even though that’s what the course was about, which was not an interest for me at all, and I had no experience in it, they were asking the key question: “How do I achieve large ends with limited means?” Which was exactly the nature of the question I was dealing with: How are we going to bring health outcomes of a middle-income country to this very low-income country? And the possibility of even asking this question fascinated me. Maybe I could learn something from the ways in which, over time, people have solved these very large problems, considering all the individuals, of course, but also their contexts and ecology. So, fast forward, I don’t know how many years, seven or eight years of working with that Program, when John Gaddis, who was about to retire, said: “We would really like you to direct the Program.” At that time, I answered: “Well, I don’t think I am qualified. I don’t study World War I or World War II. But maybe I could write you a two-page memo about how I see it, because I think Grand Strategy can be used for climate change, human rights, poverty, and many other large-scale problems.” So I wrote him a memo about what I’d like to do with the Program, and he told me: “Great. Go to it.” The President agreed, so I got to reshape the Program.

*Giovanna Borradori*

Thank you for sharing this story with us, which, as all great stories, has an element of chance. But to get a little more in depth on Grand Strategy: would you say that World War I and World War II are, pivotal examples for the kind of thinking about historical events that Grand Strategy opens?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Technically, the British came up with this term. There is a book on the history of Grand Strategy that asks precisely this question, because people could argue that Grand Strategy had been developed in more ancient times. Maybe even ever since Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, although not using the same words. But words really do shape the discourse of Grand Strategy too. Lidell Hart claims that Grand Strategy is born just before World War II at a time when people started to ask: "We need a grand strategy for the globe. We, the Allies, need to think about a *global order*." This is the context Grand Strategy has come out of.

It was a very interesting class to teach because it attracted historians, most of them a little right-leaning, which made my presence odd. When I was teaching it, people were puzzled: "What is happening here? Why do we have a public health professor teaching this?" I changed the curriculum considerably, but I still tried hard to keep the conversation going from the far right to the far left. An example of this is Carl Von Clausewitz, a 19th century thinker and war strategist during Bismarck's time. He is really interesting because his book, *On War*, has been interpreted as "us, them, total war! You got a goal: win." But at the end of his life, he rewrote the first three chapters and if you go back to those first three chapters, I think he makes an interesting point: since we are all connected to each other, we have to understand that other people may have other interests, but we can't get what we want unless we get them to get what they want, too. He was much more what we may call today "inclusive" at the end of his life. This is why I love teaching Von Clausewitz, because his writing always surprises people: even someone who was so "us and them," at the end of his life came around to, "Wait, the world is one globe."

This is really central to global health. You're a global citizen and we live on one globe. You see, I find this an intellectually

fascinating question: how do we conceptualize each other, how do we conceptualize the world? Is it us and them, or are we all in one, or both? How do we navigate those different boundaries?

*Giovanna Borradori*

It sounds like the global scale, and perhaps globalization as a historical process, is part of the DNA of Grand Strategy.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Yes, definitely. But what does one globe mean? We did a fair amount of work on globalization, on the good and the bad, who are the winners and who are the losers. And then we would convene that other side of the conversation: we're one globe. Everybody's a loser if anybody is a loser. But it's nice, in the classroom, to allow those different voices to emerge because, on the right, they would be much more like, "No, they're the bad guys, we're the good guys. Done." And then on the left, it would be like, "No, no, no, we're all in it together." I liked having those debates in class. I thought it helped us grow.

There was one other part of the class that I found really important and that I have thought a lot about in anticipating teaching here next year. At Yale, we would teach "heroes." I am putting quotes around this term. For example, Augustus. We would teach the life of Augustus. You read the beginning of Augustus: in his first eighteen to twenty years, he is this amazing kid who gets tapped by Julius Caesar to be the next "Julius Caesar," and he does really cool things. And the way life is often written, you are encouraged to like him. He is twenty years old and students love him. "Imagine if I were given the Roman Empire!" Then you watch him as he decides that he is going to kill four to six hundred people who are his enemies, Cicero being one of them, so that he can get all the land. We just talked about how you liked this guy last week! It allows students and faculty to say, "Wow, the world is really nuanced and people are good and bad at once." They do things that we can't understand even though we really respect them. I think that "ah-ha moment," challenges the idea that everything is only reducible to "This is the good side, this is the bad side." Rather, we are all a blend of good and bad. I always thought that was a really cool class.



*Giovanna Borradori*

And you're going to teach it next term?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

It is going to be called "Strategic Thinking in Global Health." I'm going to use a lot of Grand Strategy concepts but in my field of expertise, which is global health. I might teach Augustus and Von Clausewitz as part of it just for fun. All things are connected.

*Giovanna Borradori*

All things are connected—that is true. So you've encountered global strategy and applied it to healthcare. Do you think that Grand Strategy has a place in the liberal arts? Which place would it occupy in the liberal arts curriculum and can it be of any specific use to thinking critically about it?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Definitely. I think the important part of Grand Strategy is the careful study of moments in time where a group or an individual has achieved amazing things with existing resources. This is what I think is very useful in the liberal arts. Do we need to study all these war heroes? War is always a fascinating thing to understand. How it erupts and how it ends or doesn't end. But the question of how people used resources to achieve some vision and aspiration, and how they have made compromises, because our aspirations are always infinite but our resources are finite, is key. How have people made those determinations over history? This, I think, helps each one of us today, as thinkers, to ask: "Well, I have big ideas too, but I only have these few pennies to put together; what should I do?" And I think those insights from history are still relevant to the world today.

*Giovanna Borradori*

To close the circle on Grand Strategy, if the global as a perspective is one half of its focus, history is the other half.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

History is fundamental. The whole rubric and concept of Grand Strategy have been developed by historians. At Yale it is a year-long course, and the first semester--this was always a very interesting challenge--you just study history. Then you throw people out into the world. Students get summer internships and they see the world. And then in the fall they come back, and we would give them real life problems. "So what would you do, how are you going to think about this knowing the history?" The connection between the history and a current day problem is very exciting. But the history is fundamental and I think we make so many errors if we don't humbly see our little place in the world based on millennia of history; millennia that have a lot of information for us to learn from. I often wish I was more of a historian; and yet, even though I love history, I certainly am not a historian.

*Henry Krusoe*

We were just talking about the liberal arts and about site specificity -- places having deep histories of their own. I was wondering if you could characterize how you see the challenges facing the liberal arts today.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Good question. The way I see the liberal arts, generally, is as being very broad and very open. But also as a very empowering course of education for students -- young adults trying to intersect, or find the intersections, between what they're seeing and experiencing in the world, and a whole body of information that has come before them. I think the liberal arts, by way of allowing students to use primary sources, pushes them to think, "Why? Why is this exactly this way? Why is that that way? Is this connected to that?" The ability to ask any question you want and research it. We always say that the liberal arts develop critical thinking but I think they also develop a certain empowerment, a disposition that "My ideas matter. I am humble because there is all this other good work that's been done but my ideas matter too." Two of us could look at the same piece of art and have a completely different experience of it and that's okay.

I appreciate this aspect especially from the perspective of having taught so much in Africa, where the education is not liberal arts. That is a context in which education comes from the British system and colonization. And the British brought this system of just lecturing at you. And the poor students are supposed to take it. To be a professor teaching in Africa is different because you have to work a long time to convince students that expressing your opinion educates you. That's part of becoming an educated adult. That you look at something, you give an opinion, you maybe got criticized for that opinion, and now you reshape the opinion, and doing that develops leadership, intellectualism, and confidence. I want you to question me. Socrates knew that. The liberal arts came from ancient Greece as the educational system of free people. They wanted people to be able to think and express their voice because they were living in a democracy and they needed people to be educated and be able to say what they think. Otherwise, how could a democracy work? All that fell apart post-antiquity. Anyways, the British educational system is not based on the liberal arts. And in the end, only America really has it. This is really interesting because, if you just talk *at* people and haven't asked them to think for themselves, then you have made them very vulnerable to authoritarianism. Which we Americans aren't immune to. This is why I'm very interested to think about our model of education at Vassar, which can be thought of as something that does make someone free in lots of ways. As individuals, but also as participants in society.

From my perspective, the liberal arts are fundamental at this very juncture in our world, and Vassar is one of the best places where the liberal arts is taught and practiced. I'm inspired by what we can do. After the Nixon-Kissinger era in the 1970s, the U.S. with the opening of China set a framework for accelerated international trade. A middle class is emerging in China, India, and even Africa where US corporations now are invested. While in the US, institutions of higher education in the liberal arts are under fire, international audiences are looking for a liberal arts approach to higher education. And we really should think about our international presence, because it is a model that can be uplifting for a developing country. You are equipping people with power through education. They will be empowered. When I taught in Ethiopia, I always felt this way: there is so much donor

money but the donors just tell you what to do. What if you can enliven young adults and say, “You know what you want. You’ve read; you’ve got to think for yourself. Then maybe you could lead rather than just be told what to do.”

*Henry Krusoe*

And what would you say of the difference of academic contexts in which the liberal arts is taught? Based on your direct experience, which differences strike you most between a small college like Vassar and a large university like Yale?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

They are just so different. The size of the classes and the amount of hours a student gets from a faculty member who is devoted to developing their intellect, their questioning, and their curiosity – well, it is unparalleled here at Vassar. In a big place like Yale, you are going to get some hours of the faculty member’s time each week, in a lecture hall with sometimes another hundred people. And you can ask a few questions and go to their office hours. That is so different than meeting twice a week for an hour and a half and having the faculty member right there with you in the class. That is hours of input into the person’s way of thinking from faculty that you just don’t get in a university setting. And I would say that a student leaving Yale would probably have had a dozen small classes. Here, by contrast, you easily could have as many as thirty-two small classes. The contact time with faculty members is totally different.

The impact of having these small classes is also that students are stimulated by each other’s intellect. The impact of that is that students are much more questioning and much more intense, which is good and bad! They’re much more likely to say, “Hey, why not?” I love the way people are pushing you all the time here, but sometimes I think students can get overly obsessed with making changes and anxious from that. I worry about that sometimes; that we also need to remember that things take a long time and that community is important. In this respect it is not just what individuals want but how a whole community works. That aspect is very strong at Yale. They are very good at branding the whole and maybe less successful in their

focus on each individual. Here, it may be the opposite of that; there's a lot of individualism and less attention to, "Who is Vassar?" and less expression of appreciation for Vassar. I don't know. You need two aspects in society: you need individuals who are free and you need holism. And you sacrifice some of your individual freedom to be part of a whole.

*Giovanna Borradori*

It is interesting to think of what you are saying in relation to Yale's branding on the global scale: I am thinking of Yale-NUS College in Singapore.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Absolutely. They did a ton of international work, including with Singapore, prior to the creation of Yale-NUS. Liberal arts colleges are being asked by China and India whether we will start liberal arts colleges there. I haven't raised this issue with the faculty and I would never do it unless the faculty wanted to do it. It depends a lot on the relationship. Is it born out of authenticity? Or is it merely part of a good business model for one partner?

*Giovanna Borradori*

Well, that's the key [question?], right?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

For sure. So for instance, if our faculty worked in China, had truly authentic relationships with collaborators, and they said, "I think we could work together on creating something." That could be very cool. When money is involved, it is challenging, isn't it? Because there's a lot of wealth in these places. And they'll pay for a lot of things. But I never think it's worth it if you don't have a bond of authenticity. It's just the tail wagging the dog. And really if what we're trying to do is to create an understanding, globally, that is very interesting. Create more peaceful relationships globally—that would be the goal.

*Giovanna Borradori*

What you are saying is interesting in terms of connection to the community, what you called the whole. Where do you think is the whole of a place like Vassar? This is an especially important question when we think of globalizing liberal arts education.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

There is certainly an opportunity to do that but I think we would have to do a lot of self-introspection to figure out what the project is – what are we really trying to do. And we'd have to find partners who we could truly feel together with us in terms of the objective.

*Henry Krusoe*

Right. The liberal arts have a very enriching and powerful effect, and that is in and of itself an asset, an asset that has a certain density in America and even more specifically at Vassar. On the other hand, there is a commitment to trying to see the world as interconnected. And that harbors an impulse to share, because it's so dense here and scarcer in other places.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

I think that sharing is such a good word to use because sharing involves two; you've got this side and that side, and the relationship between the giver and the receiver is an authentic sharing. We have assets, and you're right, it's dense here, but usually, at least in a strong partnership, you recognize the other partner's assets as being weak here and strong there. And then you've got a sharing that is complementary, because as you are using it, you are complementing each other. And if what they are sharing is money, and what we're sharing with them is our heart and soul, is that enough of a basis for real sharing?

*Giovanna Borradori*

These decisions are challenging, for sure. But even more in general, what are the challenges that you have encountered so far and that you expect to still face here at Vassar?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Well, first there are broader challenges than even the liberal arts. I mean, our government is not always supportive, shall we say, of the liberal arts, of non-for-profit, and of higher education. And to run a place like Vassar is expensive; so I think the common person on the street is really wondering why is it so expensive and why can't we do it for cheaper. That's a big threat because when someone says it's really expensive, they are not seeing the value. Our challenge is, then, to be able to articulate the value of a liberal arts education.

Now I think we can do that, because if you look at people who are very successful, presidents, Pulitzer Prize winners, Fulbright scholars, they are much more likely to be liberal arts educated. So, it comes back, but it is a hard sell. Not everyone who gets a liberal arts education is going to be a Pulitzer Prize winner. We need to be able to articulate our story better: to get it up and out is fundamental. The way our globe is going, it faces some dire existential questions. It is precisely institutions such as ours that can really play a role in large-scale questions like these. It can be pivotal in re-escalating, re-elevating the liberal arts to a place of relevance and real value. This is one challenge, which I'll talk about more in future faculty meetings. This challenge is external; but there is also an internal one: how to honor the individualism that is at the heart of free thinking and the liberal arts while also creating a community in which we can listen to and learn from each other, in all our differences.

*Sessi Kumabara Blanchard*

I was wondering if we could take Title IX as a specific case-study, and bringing it in as we talk about different strategies to be deployed in a more holistic or ecological approach, along with the challenge that you are facing: how do we work through the divisiveness of Vassar? How do we bring back a commitment to holism and contain individualism?

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Before getting to Title IX, I think it begins even in Orientation. It's really important to talk and learn about identity and the timing and support structures that are available during that time are also critical. It's a lot easier to talk about identity if already people feel an affinity

for each other, they already have a sense of belonging. If we can work on community early, the identity discussion can be rich and fulfilling. In other words, to first meet through something that brings us together across our diversity and really strengthen that, give it enough common experience. “We all went out to dinner at the same place, or we all ran across the field together, or we all have coffee together at the same place.” In other words, realize, “We like each other because we were just physically put in the same entryway in that house. And we’re part of one group, a fellow group.” This is the first approach and then, once those bonds are made, then you can say, “We’re really interesting because we’re so different from each other.” How do people identify? And only then, I think, there could be identity exercises that are much less a calling out and much more, “We all face times of being identified through our identity but how does that identify me and influence my experience in this group?”

In Grand Strategy, we used to do a very interesting group identity exercise that was done one month into the class because we wanted to make sure that the class bonded as a whole. Once they were bonded, then we would do the identity exercise. And it takes three hours and it’s transformational. And people didn’t come away from it feeling isolated; they came away feeling like, “Oh, I understand you better now. You’re black, I’m white. Or you’re an athlete, I’m not, but I think I understand what you’re about better than I did before.” That is so important, and I don’t know that, so far, we have done that here.

*Sessi Kumabara Blanchard*

We have SAVP (Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention), which is more of a prevention-based program; but Title IX is very much responding to an incident. I am wondering: how do we negotiate students’ desires to not be put in the position of being sexually assaulted and having to deal with that. In other words, Title IX’s primary, if not only, function is to handle the violence after it’s happened. So how do we even get to a point of common ground with a joint interest, when Title IX cannot organizationally see beyond, or think about, sexual assault before it happens?



*Elizabeth Bradley*

Yes, that's a great question. I think you're absolutely right; it's like public health and medicine. Medicine intervenes once you're sick and public health works on prevention. So how do they collaborate? I think the place of collaboration is this: everyone cares about preventing sexual assault and about ensuring if it occurs, we have effective support systems for all parties involved. I am eager to constantly look for and support best practices in this area. We have an amazing SAVP group; our Title IX process is clear and strong, and we have like the country does a lot more work to do in collaboration with students and faculty to figure out how to foster a culture where sexual assault can be discussed, prevented, and I hope one day eliminated.

*Giovanna Borradori*

It is indeed massive. It is massive in our society at large and it is massive here at Vassar. I guess one of the questions that underlies this massive wave is how to engage the context and its local and untranslatable specificity. I think that what you earlier called freedom also depends on that. In this sense, in order to earn a sense of affirmation of who one is and of enabling each one of us to care for the other, it may be useful to start thinking about the history of this place.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

That would be a great project.

*Giovanna Borradori*

I want to put this on the table because, in my twenty-seven years at Vassar, I've seen changes, I've seen waves of transformations, and even tectonic shifts. So I really appreciate your interest in history, because we can look at history from a very large, long-term perspective, but also from a very local one. I am suggesting to look at the local history of this campus to gain some insight into the kind of community that we aim at strengthening.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

I like what you said about the relation between community and time, and the time needed for building community. My point is that we need more time creating community early, before we go into our identities. I think this could really work through the student fellow program, if augmented a bit, and the house fellows. You create community so that people watch out for each other and are equipped and supported to help—through bystander interventions and other programs—to keep their friends and our community safe and healthy.

*Giovanna Borradori*

Which is a good point: no place is perfect. And that should be affirmed. To idealize a nation or an institution has its dangers.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

And you know, in that vein, even in light of some tumultuous times I have had here I remain so impressed with what Vassar is. Here people talk about these difficult things, which does not happen everywhere. So even though we're not doing it perfectly, we've got all the ingredients on the table. No one's afraid to say, "This is a problem." And I just feel like that's so much more optimistic when you can actually face your issues and then start to work on them. Faculty are amazing. The students are so highly committed. The campus is beautiful. We have all the ingredients we need.

*Giovanna Borradori*

But again, we have to look at the past.

*Elizabeth Bradley*

Yes, I agree.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

*The Vassar College Journal of Philosophy* is a student-run publication supported by the Philosophy Department of Vassar College. Dedicated to both quality and accessibility, it seeks to give undergraduate students from all disciplines a platform to discuss and express philosophical ideas.

All those interested in contributing an essay to the issue of the *Journal* to be published in the Spring of 2019 are invited to review the submission guidelines listed below. Every issue of the *Journal* has an overall theme. Submissions ranging across a variety of topics are welcome as long as they can be related to that theme, which this year is “Codes/Secrets.”

“Codes/Secrets” is a theme that can be explored within a variety of philosophical frames, including (but not limited to): philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics, logic, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, social and political philosophy, Critical Theory, and aesthetics. In recent years, the *Journal* has also published essays generated within disciplines and departments traditionally considered exterior to philosophy. So long as an essay engages a specific philosophical problem related to codes or secrets, the *Journal*’s staff will be excited to review and potentially publish relevant writings on literature, history, political science, sociology and anthropology, cognitive science, and psychology. An essay on the theme of “Codes/Secrets” may investigate concepts such as private language, intellectual property, denial and deception, publicity, moral codes, information theory and computer ethics, genetics, and digital art.

### Submission Guidelines

**Format:** 12 point Times New Roman font, 5000 word maximum for the Paper, 100 word maximum for the Abstract. There is no minimum word count, provided that the topic of the paper is suitably addressed. Papers should not include your name or other identifying information. Please provide your paper title, name, email, and major in a separate attachment.

**Citation Format:** Chicago Citation Style. 500-word maximum.

**Topic:** The theme for our upcoming issue is “Codes/Secrets” Any philosophical treatment of this theme is welcome.

**Deadline:** All materials must be submitted via email to [philosophyjournal@vassar.edu](mailto:philosophyjournal@vassar.edu) no later than November 1, 2018. For additional updates, follow [@VCJournalofPhilosophy](https://www.facebook.com/VCJournalofPhilosophy) on Facebook.

**Originality:** We accept only original work. Do not submit already published material. If you have submitted or plan on submitting your paper to publications other than The Vassar College Journal of Philosophy, please, disclose to us that this is the case. We cannot accept submissions failing to meet these guidelines. Any further inquiries should be directed to [philosophyjournal@vassar.edu](mailto:philosophyjournal@vassar.edu).

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