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SPLIJTSTOF

Editorial

Dear reader,

Hopes and dreams are much more than our imaginations; they are the compasses through which we navigate our lives. They help us find a sense of direction, an understanding of who we want to become, and a glimpse of the effect we want to have on the world. In the university setting, we are surrounded by various experiences and thoughts. Our dreams should be nurtured, and our hopes supported. We are encouraged to think critically, challenge the status quo, and envision a reality that transcends the present limitations.

The concept of hope is intertwined with our understanding of the future. It is a bridge between our current realities and the potential that lies ahead. We hope that our education will open doors, that our efforts will lead to success, and that our contributions will leave a lasting mark. This hope is not passive; it requires active engagement, resilience, and a steadfast belief in the value of our dreams.

Dreams, on the other hand, can be considered the manifestations of our deepest desires and ambitions. They are the ideas that keep us awake at night and push us forward each day. Dreaming shows us that despite our challenges, there is a realm of possibilities waiting to be explored. In the university, our dreams are constantly redefined through our interactions, learning experiences, and the pursuit of knowledge. Yet, hopes and dreams are not without their challenges. The fear of failure, societal pressures, and harsh realities can cast shadows over our aspirations. It is in these moments of doubt that philosophical introspection becomes crucial. By examining our values and questioning our assumptions, we can find the strength to persevere.

A philosophical inquiry into hopes and dreams invites us to consider the ethical dimensions of our aspirations. In a world grappling with inequality, climate change, and social injustice, the dreams we cultivate should not only seek personal fulfillment but also contribute to a better society. As we reflect on 'Hopes and Dreams', let us appreciate the diversity of visions brought to the table. Let us support one another in our pursuits and remain hopeful, even in the face of uncertainty, and let our dreams be a driving force.

Sophie Ingle

Editor-in-Chief



Illustration by Olivia McGrath

Into the Mirror World

Saar Boter

Naomi Klein's new book, *Doppelganger: A Trip Into the Mirror World* (2023), begins with Klein sharing an incident on social media where she was mistaken for Naomi Wolf, a feminist thinker who shifted her views to becoming a conspiracy theorist and engaging with very right-wing thinkers and public figures. This all took place around when the COVID-pandemic hit the world. Throughout the pandemic, Wolf propagated online and in a book that vaccines and public health measures were part of a scheme orchestrated by a "transnational group of bad actors" with intentions ranging from sterilisation to transforming children into drones and undermining the Constitution.

The confusion between the identities of Naomi Klein and Naomi Wolf got so bad that it practically became an internet meme. Naturally, it was disconcerting for Klein, who is known for her serious works like *No Logo* (1999) and *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), to be associated with a figure like Wolf. *No Logo* explores the impact of globalisation and corporate branding on culture, society and the economy. It delves into the rise of multinational corporations and the increasing dominance of branding in consumer culture. In the book, Klein argues that these corporations exploit cheap labour and tax regulations in developing countries, while also homogenising culture and undermining local economies. *The Shock Doctrine* explores the concept of disaster capitalism, a notion in which economic elites exploit crises to push policies that would not be accepted under normal circumstances. Those policies often involve privatisation, deregulation, and cuts in social services. This push benefits the wealthy at the expense of the poor.

Initially, Klein attempts to disregard "Other Naomi," finding the humour in the mix-up and categorising it as one of those things that are confined to the domain of the internet alone. However, she eventually becomes fixated on Wolf's ascent in what she terms the "Mirror World" of conspiracy theories and right-wing paranoia. During the pandemic, Klein isolates herself from her family to closely follow Wolf's discussions on Steve Bannon's podcast. This transforms her analysis of her "doppelganger" into a meticulous exploration of online culture and political duplicity. Rather than giving in to the urge to dismiss Wolf and others in the Mirror World as strange people that should not be taken seriously, Klein undertakes a thorough investigation into their concerns and what makes them so appealing to some.

By looking into what caused the transformation of her namesake and examining other instances of online paranoia that flourished during the pandemic, Klein traces what caused the gap between well-intentioned

liberals and anti-vaxxers. She observes that we distinguish ourselves from one another, yet increasingly find similarities, even to the extent of deeming each other as non-persons.

Her writing in this book remains clear and dynamic even though the

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subject matter is incredibly confusing and has so many layers. The book is therefore a nice, easy read even though the contents could easily be confusing. It is a personal story which makes abstract issues in the political realm concerning conspiracy theorists and anti-vax movements into something tangible. Though Klein explains every step clearly, not expecting the reader to know everything about her, knowing something about who Klein is and the books she has written before adds an extra layer to the story.

While Klein’s language may feel sensationalist sometimes, using terms like “Mirror World” and “doppelgangers”, it is exactly this use of words that makes the book so captivating and fun to read. By using the language of psychological thrillers, she brings her occasionally dense or theoretical content truly to life.

The result of the whole ordeal is that Klein finds herself feeling less attached to who she is perceived as online. She finds it silly, looking back how serious she once took her online persona. As a result, she now feels liberated from her public self. This book precisely documents a journey that is an example of so many of these stories that unfold in this day and age. Klein’s story is a testament to the last couple of years of our world. It tackles socio-political issues that have grown during the pandemic, mostly to do with polarisation, and it adds dimensions of social media and its effects on the public debate. Klein shares her story, in which we can all relate to certain aspects, and puts forward interesting observations and ideas that one can philosophise further, academically and privately.

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Longing for a Fantastical ‘Home’

Self-Reflections on the Problematics for a Queer Tourist
and Future Expat in Budapest

Jonathan Zackor

“And when I’m back in Chicago, I feel it
Another version of me, I was in it
Oh, I wave goodbye to the end of beginning”
(Djo 2022 “End of Beginning”)

In early 2024, the song “End of Beginning” by the artist Djo, more commonly known as actor Joe Keery, started to trend on the social media platform TikTok. Suddenly, the song was everywhere. It refers to the singer’s lived experience in the city of Chicago, at a time before he was famous. He expresses his nostalgic feelings about being back in the city in which he experienced a significant change in his life. A trend was constructed around the song, in which creators posted videos or slideshows with photographs taken of a specific place that they had visited that they have a deep emotional connection with. At this location, they feel like they can be their authentic Self; they can express themselves and grow as individuals; they feel like they have the chance to realise their full potential. The location, often a city, then becomes the stage in which dreams become true, in which one can become a better person just by being there in this magical space. While this message is somewhat removed from the original intent of the song, this interpretation was unanimously accepted by its audience and creators on TikTok.

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In this essay, I would like to talk about my experiences with my own ‘Chicago’. A Chicago that feels like the place I am destined to be, in which I feel like I can grow to be the person I will like the most – my Best Self, so to speak – in which I can teach myself how to be free. A ‘Chicago’ that does not exist for a trans person, and even less so for a trans person in a homosexual relationship: my Chicago is Budapest, Hungary. Budapest has featured in various videos and slideshows shared on TikTok accompanied by Djo’s song, a trend to which I contributed by sharing personal photos that I took during a recent trip to Budapest. Unsurprisingly, all content of Budapest frequently

features its architectural flagships that are recognisable by a larger audience as part of Budapest's regional attractions, framed in a way that underscores a romanticised emotional engagement with those sites. Through this, the city is presented as a space in which individual freedom of expression and movement is implied and encouraged. However, when one further investigates the socio-political discourses surrounding Budapest and the Hungarian nation, peeking behind the façade of romantic tourist engagement, an engagement with Budapest as one's own 'Chicago' reveals a very contrasting view.

The Fantasy

I am not able to explain my fascination with all things Budapest. In my defence, the city is recognised as a city of fairytales, although it is not explicitly marketed as this. As László Puczkó, an economist specialising in Tourism and Logistics, attests: Budapest "embodies the past, the present and the future" of Hungary (Puczkó et al. 2008, 22). The capital embodies the things that are most emblematically Hungarian, signposting what is pertinent to the Hungarian national identity, and developing the building blocks that will shape Hungarian identity in the future. In contemporary times, Budapest stands out through its architectural diversity which contributed significantly to the central city area being taken aboard the UNESCO World Heritage List, with special attention given to the banks of the Danube river (which splits the city into Buda on one side, and Pest on the other), the Buda castle quarter and Andrásy Avenue. According to UNESCO, the area is "one of the world's outstanding urban landscapes and illustrates the great periods in the history of the Hungarian capital" (UNESCO, n.d.). Photographs of the city proliferate on social media platforms, in which romantic imaginations

The capital embodies the things that are most emblematically Hungarian, signposting what is pertinent to the Hungarian national identity, and developing the building blocks that will shape Hungarian identity in the future.

of Budapest flourish. Beautiful architectural sites, flagship attractions of Budapest, become the main points around which these romantic imaginations are anchored. The perhaps most pertinent is the Hungarian parliament building (Országház) located on the Pest side of the Danube river, which the late Queen singer Freddie Mercury jokingly expressed a desire to acquire.

This building, the third-biggest parliament building in the world, is lauded as an architectural icon and is regarded as the country's most famous building. Its mainly neo-Gothic style makes the complex appear to have just been transported out of a fairytale with its mesmerising grandeur: a shining white symmetrical facade with intricate details, stained glass windows, and crowned by a massive central dome. Other architectural sites such as the Fisherman's Bastion, the St Matthias Church and the Chain Bridge (Szechenyi híd), amongst others, carry on this fairytale vibe. During nighttime hours, yet another visitor experience is offered when Budapest's significant architectural landmarks are illuminated in bright orange and white lights (one exemption being the Freedom Bridge (Szabadság híd) which is illuminated in green light). The special architecture and its framing then contribute significantly to the atmosphere of the city. But beyond that, the city also gives rise to the imagination, specifically for a younger audience, with its raging nightlife. The infamous ruin bars in the city's Jewish Quarter (Erzsébetváros) provide the stage for wild nighttime adventures in dilapidated buildings. Another intriguing aspect for visitors is provided by Budapest's rich spa culture, and (which is generally very appreciated by tourists) the cheap prices for wine, beer and hearty meals.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, as with many of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary had run into some issues with its marketing towards tourists. Besides the already existing architectural sites, much of what tourists generally appreciate about Budapest has been initiated since the post-socialist transition years (1989 onwards). To overcome negative stereotypes of 'Easternness', the promotion of a quintessentially European image was highly desirable (Smith and Puczkó 2010, 288), and for Budapest, this meant moving forward to establish a distinct city image. Currently, Budapest aims to attract tourists by moving towards developing a more cosmopolitan, tolerant and dynamic image by including the creative industries and contemporary culture, embodied in part by, for example, the annual Sziget Festival.

Fantasy, Disrupted

Despite the international marketing of the city, national politics take on a dominant role in shaping the city for a tourist audience. Scholars of tourism have often observed that the politics intrinsic to a destination seep into the marketing discourse aimed at tourists in some form or another; tourism has an inextricable connection to politics. This is highly evident from the generally positive effect of tourism on a country's economic capital, and the funds allocated by governments towards the goal of attracting visitors to their country. The ruling ideologies in a destination country also play a

part in tourism, or even shape tourism explicitly, where governments “introduce initiatives to manipulate tourism for political purposes” and tourists are indoctrinated with certain ideologies that promote the political goals of the destination to which they have travelled (Zuo et al. 2016, 177). In Hungary, tourism is governed by the state. The Hungarian Tourism Agency (HTA) is operating under the Ministry of National Development (OECD 2018), and is therefore intimately tied to contemporary political shifts and presences.

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Fig. 1: “99% NEM A MIGRÁNSGETTÓKRA.” Photo taken by the author, 3 March 2024.

In the case of Budapest, perhaps the most obvious tourist sight connected to current politics is the parliament building. A stage for Hungary’s political presence, the parliament houses the national assembly that is led by Viktor Orbán’s national-populist government. In their congregations, laws and legislations are introduced or changed, such as the 2021 anti-LGBT law. The parliament also provides the backbone for Orbán’s selective usage of Hungary’s past and heritage in the attempt to establish unity amongst Hungarian people, in a move to revitalise the country back to its ‘former glory’. In general, a dominant trend of altering historical and social memory through carefully constructed propaganda campaigns is completely inescapable in the case of Hungary, and with that, its capital Budapest. While there are many instances to be pointed out in this essay, I will present a select few here.

My latest visit to Budapest, in March 2024, reveals political sentiments pervading the cityscape of Budapest more openly. Recently, the National Consultation has been completed, a survey that encourages Hungarian citizens to share their opinions on Hungarian government initiatives and



Fig. 2: “99% NEM A GÉN-MÓDOSÍTOTT UKRÁN GABONÁRA.” Photo taken by the author, 3 March 2024.

political sentiments expressed by the European Union. On the 25th of January 2024, Hungarian government published some of the results to the questions of the latest National Consultation, entitled “Szuverenitásunk Védelméről” (trans. “The Protection of Our Sovereignty”), on Facebook, while simultaneously launching a billboard campaign presenting the results in Budapest. While the survey was answered by 1.5 million people, less than a quarter of the country’s 8 million voters, the billboards touted that upwards of 98% of the respondents are in agreement with the government’s position on multiple pertinent issues. These include supporting the stop of weapon transfers to Ukraine (Fig. 3), and opposing: ‘migrant ghettos’ in Hungary (Fig. 1), ‘gender propaganda’, EU membership to Ukraine and genetically-modified Ukrainian grain (Fig. 2), and the support of Palestine, as it is seen as supporting terrorism (Inotai 2023, Dlhopolec et al. 2024). While the National Consultation is presented as a reliable source of the dominant political thoughts for all Hungarian citizens - which can be easily dismissed on account of the number

of respondents - the billboard campaign nevertheless displays prominent anti-EU sentiments in public. These are seemingly taken for granted, as most of the banners are not showing obvious signs of intervention, e.g. by graffiti or other signs of disagreement with its messages.

In another space, anti-Semitism has been a problem in Hungary as the country struggles to come to terms with its role in the Second World War. Two memorial sites, both of which are in close proximity of the parliament, contextualise historical events of the Hungarian past in the 20th century: the Shoes on the Danube River (by artist Can Togay, 2005) south of the parliament, and on the Freedom Square (Szabadság Tér), the “Memorial to the victims of the German occupation” (2014), constructed on Viktor Orbán’s orders. The shoes commemorate the victims of fascist Arrow Cross militiamen, as indicated by a plaque near the monument. In September 2014, multiple of the shoes were stolen. However, the Budapest police did not investigate the case, as no crime had been reported. Shortly before this, the 2014 memorial was erected

on the Szabadság Tér, under the cover of night and against the wishes of a large majority of the public, just two days after Orbán's re-election. His intention with the monument was to honour all victims of the German invasion. With that, his attempts to use history for his own political purposes become visible: the monument portrays Hungary as an innocent victim in the war, while completely dismissing its allyship with Nazi Germany. The monument has now become a permanent protest site and hosts a counter-display, against the "forgery of history" initiated by the Hungarian government. Despite

the amount of anti-Semitic sentiments, Orbán has established friendly relations with the Israeli government and prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu since 2005. In the current genocide against Palestine, Hungary openly supports Israel and has become the only European country banning all Palestine-related demonstrations since the Hamas attacks in October 2023 (Zsurzsán 2024).



Fig. 3: "99% NEM A FEGYVERKÜLDÉSRE." Photo taken by the author, 3 March 2024.

An Implicated Subject

In spite of my knowledge of everything I outlined in the previous paragraph, I cannot help but feel like I will be at home in Budapest. I felt this way before I even visited the city, just by looking at pictures, and the feeling has intensified through three past visits. Even though I need to convincingly cross-dress when I go outside, at least I am not getting cat-called on the street, like I do in any other country that I am visiting as a

tourist or that I am living in as a resident. One of my dreams is to study in Budapest for a semester abroad and learn the language fluently. I have the unshakeable feeling that I will have the chance to feel more at home than I currently do in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, reality, obviously, is not that dreamy. For one, being able to study in Budapest comes at the cost of having to dismiss my own identity and having to pretend to be something that I am not. Dreaming of a life in Budapest, even just for my own life, actively dismisses the existing socio-political tensions in Hungary. Additionally, sharing the positive image I have of Budapest on social media implies, at least to an extent, an agreement with Orbán's LGBTQ-phobic, xenophobic,

anti-democratic policies and sentiments that are openly expressed in the city, for example through the billboard campaign of the National Consultation. One could argue that if an individual like myself feels at home in a location like Budapest there is no inherent harm in that. However, the only group of people who have the privilege of not having to care about politics – because it does not impact them – are the ones who have been enabled by hierarchical structures to be in a dominant position and are actively benefitting from it. To this end, I would like to briefly argue alongside the American literature and memory studies scholar Michael Rothberg, specifically engaging with his category of the “implicated subject” and “implication”. What he calls attention to is the state of being “‘folded into’ events that at first seem beyond our agency as individual subjects” (2019, 1), and how implicated subjects “occupy positions aligned with power and privilege ...; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes” (1). Implicated subjects do not take on either the role of the perpetrator or the victim, but their “actions and inactions help produce and reproduce the positions” (1) of these roles. While one can argue that I could be a potential victim of Hungary’s current

Implicated subjects do not take on either the role of the perpetrator or the victim, but their “actions and inactions help produce and reproduce the positions” of these roles.

politics, in proclaiming my love for Budapest, I see myself as contributing to the perpetuation of these politics. The position I am finding myself in is one produced and kept in place by its tensions: yes, I am in a vulnerable position by being in Budapest, and yet my own position is still one that is in power, as I currently do have the privilege to decide whether or not I want to live in Budapest. The only struggle that I have to fight in this space is having to decide whether I am content with temporarily having to disguise myself as a woman – because nothing Bad has happened to me yet. Other people do not have that privilege.

Conclusion

To revert to the beginning of this essay, and Djo’s song “End of Beginning”, in sharing my personal ‘Chicago’, I am making myself complicit in sharing an image of Budapest that implies the possibility of free expression and freedom – an image that is clearly romanticised and removed from reality. Other people who are sharing their personal ‘Chicago’ to a larger audience,

for example via TikTok, might be perpetuating similar messages. Audiences of this content consume not just the visual material shared by other people, but also their ways of emotionally engaging with specific destinations, which are often mediated through the framing of a romantic fantasy that lies at the centre of the 'Chicago' experience. They might then also be inspired to share their own 'Chicago'. Personal engagements might, as shown here, also serve to overshadow socio-political tensions in specific contexts, establishing a location to be 'safe' and desirable to visit for all audiences, when reality actually looks very different.

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Illustration by Linda Freitag

The Hopes and Dreams of a Student in a Foreign Country

Caetana Ribeiro da Cunha

There is a Portuguese word for a melancholic feeling of remembrance, of longing for someone or something that has passed, the absence of a once pleasing experience that is currently not being lived. The word is *Saudade*. It cannot be translated very well, and perhaps that is what makes it so dear to all of us Portuguese-speakers. The fact that it is something exclusive emphasizes the feeling of togetherness within the Portuguese-speaking community, and gives space for a discussion about all the things that provoke *Saudade* in someone. *Saudade* relates to a particular void you find within yourself – to that empty part of your heart or your soul – because you no longer have something that once gave you joy. Nostalgia might be close, but that only considers the past, it does not provoke a hollowness in you where there once was something so dear and so good.

In an editorial team meeting on the theme of the current *Splijstof* issue, with much discussion, and the permanent, ever-agonizing feeling of *Saudade* in the back of my mind, the editor-in-chief, Sophie, challenged me to write a piece on this feeling exactly. I was asked to think about writing on the concept of living abroad, studying philosophy, and battling many different emotions, all with one end: to follow my hopes and my dreams. How can *Saudade* relate to the future and how can the present accommodate such a feeling of emptiness? The feeling of pursuing a goal is something so thrilling and yet so terrifying. It is part of pursuing your own hopes and dreams and therefore *Saudade* should always be given free rein to carry out its business.

You can have *Saudade* for everything, anything: a person, a place, a vacation, a lost sensation, your favourite pastry, and so on. The first thing that comes to mind, for me, is my home. As a student who decided to leave my country in search of new, different, opportunities, I have to say that the feeling that takes over my body the most is the feeling of *Saudade*. I miss my home, my spot near the beach, my mother, my dog, my daily morning espresso with cinnamon, the traditional and not-so-crass crassness of the man working at the café. I miss speaking my own language, being able to relate on a deeper level with the people walking next to me on the street, exchanging a glance with a stranger and sighing when the line in front of us is too long, being able to express myself in a way that doesn't require an explanation of a term as long as the one I am writing now.

The reality is that I left all of this behind. I had my own ambitions that required moving countries and studying there. This entailed starting a

whole new life in a place that, quite frankly, is extremely alien from all that I had previously known. Mind you, I mean no disrespect towards the life I have now. I have found my own new reality, one which includes a 4 euro Latte Macchiato, a language barrier that makes me slightly uncomfortable – but not enough to make me leave – and an awful lot of biking. I have chosen this life. Whereas the life I had at home was the life that was given to me: a product of the hard work of my parents and the result of years of tradition in an ancient country. I didn't really have a say in the way I lived my life. Even though I do, theoretically, have my own rationality, as an individual, independent thinker, who can choose to do things for myself, the deeper truth is that my old life was based on following a crowd, following all that

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had been done before me. It was based on comfort in tradition, and comfort in what had already been confirmed as efficient and productive.

The fact that one does not move in an autonomous direction but rather in a flow that is not one's own, is a reflection of how small we are. In this world, with one minor decision, your whole life can change. You are suddenly a small fish in the ocean, with endless possibilities, hopes, and dreams big enough to fill the entire ocean. *Saudade* is a way of staying in your own sea, in your own little river, a comfortable place that allows you to not make decisions for yourself, to flow with the current, and still live a relatively comfortable but slightly mediocre life. *Saudade*, in this sense, undermines the rationality that was so vehemently emphasized during the Enlightenment period; a rationality which many people so strongly advocate for today. This is the idea of being enlightened as a way to step out of the minority which life has set upon you. Making haste to consciously decide to grow and develop one's own rationality, without interference, is a very Kantian Perspective of Enlightenment, one which I regard as key for anyone with a big decision on their hands.

To follow my dreams, I chose a new life. I stepped out of the bubble that for so long had coddled me and devised in me a person who loved her nationality, who loved her home, her language, her food, her ability to express the term *Saudade*. I have learned new things; in fact, I might have learned more from the philosophy life has taught me (by suddenly living alone in

a completely different country), than from the philosophy a professor has taught me at a violently early 8:30 a.m. class about Mbembe and his necropolitical philosophical theories.

Choosing to pursue an ambition is a difficult task, one which, I think, is underestimated and taken for granted in the western world. I have found that most people take moving out alone at a mere 18/19 years old to be standard, not necessarily to change countries, but to study and live alone at such a young age is seen as normal. It is a phenomenon that I believe is not discussed on the level it should be discussed. Following your dreams should not automatically entail the pain and anxiety that moving abroad does. From learning what type of olive oil to buy, to knowing that there are certain sweaters that I cannot simply throw in the washing machine, to missing my mother's hug at the end of an endless-seeming day, none of it is easy. It is an excruciatingly painful, slightly boring, definitely confusing, and excitingly curious process. And this rollercoaster of emotions is exactly what we ought to build on.

I feel there ought to be some sort of explanation, a disclaimer about all of these emotions when making a conscious decision of following ambitions. It is important to understand that a long process of hardship, fun, emptiness, partying, loneliness, and sometimes all of them simultaneously, will await students. This was something I was not prepared for.

I was not prepared to follow my hopes and dreams and be met with despair and shocking reality. What perhaps would have helped me were more conversations about how following one's dreams entails a staggering reality check, where my new truth and new reality was not always 'dreamy' and 'hope-y'. The life I had chosen was the opposite of all that I had previously lived, different to all that I had known and that had known me.

I try to put these feelings, these confusions, and pains into words, to talk about them with my friends, to see if there is a way of relating them to me, but verbalizing my anxieties is never easy. And so, I am limited to writing, which is what most people turn to in times of distress. Writing, as a way to get rid of my uncertainties, takes me to poetry:

The seagulls have become crows
The sound of waves has become the sound of trees
The sand has become grass.
The time passes fast, but slow?

The sun remains the same
when it is there, that is.

But the place changed
The habits changed
The friends changed
The house is not the same
The pillow doesn't embrace my heavy head in the same way,
Coffee has a different taste, not exactly good.

But the heart is there.

Split between two places
In a constant crossroads
Not knowing where to belong.
maybe to both, who knows.

My soul longs for something.
I am yet to discover what that is.
I don't know if it is the feeling of having something complete...

For I feel so incomplete
and at the same time so full.

My current reality is bleak, raw, and uncertain. But one thing is for sure: choosing to pursue my hopes and dreams might not have been easy, but it is a changing process, it is an inconstant and beautiful oscillation filled with *Saudade* and one which is strictly necessary for my personal growth. Without the challenges that life gives you, what is your life but an extension of that which came before you? Making your own choices, following your dreams, giving in to your hopes, entails making sacrifices, but at least they are your own sacrifices. Take it as an ode to (Kantian) Enlightenment, to emancipation, to being able to make educated decisions for yourself; that, certainly, looks better on paper.

The Ethopolitics of Reproduction

Biopolitical Strategies and Their Effects on the Reproductive Choices of People with Disabilities, Chronic Illnesses, and Carriers for Genetic Conditions

Charlie Chowdhry

(Content Warning: This essay discusses eugenics, abortion, ableism, disability, chronic illness and genetic conditions in a manner which might be uncomfortable or upsetting for some readers.)

“We face discrimination every day in schools, in the work place and in society. And now thanks to this verdict the judges have upheld discrimination in the womb too.”

In 2021, Heidi Crowter, a woman with Down syndrome, lost her appeal to the UK High Court concerning a law that legalises the abortion of foetuses with Down syndrome up until birth (BBC 2021). In the UK, abortion is legal up until 24 weeks of pregnancy, except when “there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped”. Heidi Crowter and her legal team argued that this legislation does not “respect her life”. Crowter’s appeal was overturned, with the judges of the case stating that the current law balances “the rights of the unborn child and of women [sic]” (BBC 2021).

Biopolitics

Michel Foucault, a celebrated French philosopher and historian, argues that the focus of political power has shifted from a power over death (which he calls sovereign power) to a power to manage and administrate life (Foucault 2013, 44). He terms this new kind of power ‘biopower’, and writes that biopower takes two basic forms: “anatomo-politics” and “bio-politics” (Foucault 2013, 44). The latter form, bio-politics, concerns power over the human species itself and the conditions which influence reproduction, birth, death, longevity and health (44). This essay will engage in a biopolitical analysis of the reproductive choices of disabled and chronically ill people, and carriers¹ of genetic conditions.

I will begin by identifying the biopolitical discourses, policies, technologies and practices associated with the reproductive choices of disabled and chronically ill people and carriers. ‘Discourse’ within the context of this biopolitical analysis should be understood not as the everyday discus-

1 Henceforth, I will refer to people who carry genes for genetic conditions as ‘carriers’.

sions of citizens, but as ideologies and global interpretative frameworks that are introduced by religions, politicians, and other authorities. These discourses have sufficient power to shape or influence policies and technologies. Practices can be understood as lifestyle, and the way in which people tend to behave within a society.

The discourse surrounding health and disability is very visible in the outcome of Heidi Crowter's High Court appeal. Disabilities and chronic illnesses are conflated with suffering, and conversely, health and able-bodiedness are associated with positive well-being. This discourse is biopolitical, since it concerns the management of the human population and their health. In response to the discourse surrounding health and disability, policies have arisen or been amended to respond to the threat of disability. The UK Abortion Act, which permits the abortion of abnormal foetuses after the 24 week mark, is one of many laws of a similar nature – in 2017, 61% of countries permitted legal abortions in instances of “foetal impairment” (United Nations 2020, 1).

Disabilities and chronic illnesses are conflated with suffering, and conversely, health and able-bodiedness are associated with positive well-being.

In order to more accurately predict the health of a potential human being, technologies such as genetic screening and prenatal testing have been developed, and are often recommended as part of family planning and prenatal care (NHS n.d., John Hopkins Medicine, n.d.). The aim of these predictions is to inform prospective parents of the risk of their future children having disabilities or genetic conditions. While online resources are evasive about the next steps once a disability or genetic condition has been discovered in testing, it is safe to assume, given that these tests are offered to those who are planning to start a family, that these tests are intended to be preventative on some level.

To summarise: on the level of discourse, disabilities and ill-health are conflated with suffering and are thus undesirable. On the level of policies, campaigns and laws are put in place to avoid ill-health, and it is increasingly becoming legal to terminate pregnancies on the grounds of “foetal impairment”. Technologies such as prenatal testing and genetic screening exist to identify, and sometimes ‘disallow’ disability and ill-health via termination. Having briefly discussed the biopolitics involved in reproduction, I will explore the ways in which these biopolitical strategies influence the reproductive practices of disabled and chronically ill people and carriers.

Abnormality & Disability in Genetic Screening and Prenatal Testing

In “Biopolitics and Human Reproduction”, Catherine Mills (2017) explores the role of reproduction in biopolitics. Mills writes that 19th and early 20th century biopolitics concerning reproduction involved a great degree of state intervention (283). She concludes that eugenics aims to secure the survival of the nation through “quality control”, and that control over birth entails controlling *who is born*, and also *who gives birth* (288).

Mills argues that today, the principle of procreative liberty ensures that institutions cannot prevent a person from choosing to reproduce (unless the choice will cause harm to others) - a marked departure from the negative eugenics policies of the 19th and early 20th centuries, which directly interfered with the reproduction of citizens (Mills 2017, 283). However, this is not to say that biopolitics is no longer involved in reproduction. Individuals have the freedom to make their own reproductive choices, but their choices make them responsible for the health of society as a whole; “responsibilized” (Foucault 1990, 104-5 in Mills 2017, 284) prospective parents exercise biopolitical control mechanisms on themselves (Mills 2017, 283-4). In other words, the biopolitical responsibilisation of individuals has taken the place of direct intervention into reproduction by institutions.

Mills continues her argument by discussing the role that “normalization” (282) plays in biopolitical discourse and technologies surrounding reproduction. She writes that the parameters for a normal (healthy) foetus as observed through ultrasound technologies are derived from the measurements of other foetuses - a foetus can fall into the “healthy range” if it exists within a norm that has been “derived statistically from pre-existent bodies” (290). This is not to say that ultrasound technology dictates that a foetus that falls outside of normalcy must be terminated; rather, what is “normal” becomes valued and what is “abnormal” becomes devalued (290).

Mills proposes that, as opposed to being an innocent measure to observe whether or not a foetus falls within “normal ranges”, prenatal testing technologies which target “foetal malformations” are responsible for creating an association between the statistical normal and a particular quality of life (Kittay 2006 in Mills 2017, 290). Institutions cannot directly intervene in matters of reproduction, but they can present prospective parents with the results of a test that makes an *a priori* assessment of the quality of life of their offspring, based on associations between statistical normality and the ability to lead a particular kind of life. This association results in the exclusion of the statistical abnormal from the biopolitical community via selective termination (282).

As Mills argues, the medicalisation of pregnancy has meant that those who can become pregnant² have become “moral pioneers”, making decisions about life and death on the basis of medical testing that was unavailable to prior generations” (2017, 289). While the choice to ‘disallow’ life lies with the prospective parents, institutions create and advise on the basis of norms, from which ideas about quality of life, well-being and value are derived (290). As a result of the availability of statistics and predictions about the health of a foetus, prospective parents are made aware of suffering before it happens, and are given the choice to ‘disallow’ it, or ‘allow’ it on the grounds of an ethical obligation to prevent others from suffering through a low quality of life.

The technologies of contemporary biopolitics ensure that individuals are aware of the risks at play in their reproductive decisions. Responsibilised individuals can no longer “passively” choose to reproduce in the presence of the possibility of disability or a genetic condition. Technologies such as ultrasounds and prenatal tests are so ubiquitous that in refusing to be tested, one makes the conscious choice to ignore the advice of biopolitical institutions. Furthermore, since biopolitical discourse posits that some instances of disability and illness can be prevented via biopolitical technologies, prospective parents who make the choice not to “prevent” these instances of disability and illness are rendered responsible for the health of their children. Thus, every individual reproductive choice – even the choice not to engage with biopolitical technologies – is given an ethical significance.

Ethopolitics of Reproduction

Concerning the notion that individual choices have an ethical significance, Nikolas Rose (2001) writes that “contemporary biopolitics is ethopolitics” (2). By ethopolitics, Rose means a political system in which human lives and everyday choices are subject to continual moral judgement by the individual, with the aim of self-betterment (18). In an ethopolitical system, knowledge of one’s own biological and genetic risk factors becomes a part of one’s overall obligation to be responsible (19). Screening technologies allow experts to evaluate or mitigate risk when it comes to individuals’ reproductive decisions; Rose argues that these tests are a way to resolve the difficult ethical choice presented to prospective parents (12). The availability of genetic screening and prenatal testing, and also the possibility to seek an “ethical abortion”, creates a possibility for prospective parents to minimise

2 Mills uses the word ‘women’, but it is more prudent to avoid using gendered language in this instance, as this argument is chiefly concerned with the potential for pregnancy rather than gender identity.

or prevent the suffering that is associated with ill-health and disability. If one's reproductive choices can cause suffering (by fostering life) or prevent suffering (by disallowing life), these reproductive choices become ethical choices.

Evidence of a higher risk (and thus a higher likelihood of the suffering associated with disability and chronic illness) presents an ethical argument, on the basis of biomedical science, against a particular reproductive decision. Rose argues that this has led to the prevalence of screening those

Technologies such as ultrasounds and prenatal tests are so ubiquitous that in refusing to be tested, one makes the conscious choice to ignore the advice of biopolitical institutions.

in a 'high-risk' category for developing particular conditions or passing them on, and the use of amniocentesis³ in order to identify genetic abnormalities in foetuses. Ultimately, "therapeutic abortion" may be offered to parents whose foetus tests positive for a genetic condition (Rose 2001, 12).

However, Rose argues, these risk evaluations are based on probability, not certainty. It is impossible to guarantee the results of prenatal screening – genetic testing can indicate a higher risk of developing a disease, but the tests cannot predict whether or not an individual will develop a condition with 100% accuracy, nor can they predict the severity or timeline of a condition with any certainty (12). Choices surrounding reproduction are evaluated not based on a "clear-cut algorithm", but on a weighing-up of risk. "In this space, biopolitics becomes ethopolitics" (12).

Furthermore, second-trimester amniocentesis has an 0.1-0.3% chance of causing a miscarriage, even if the amniocentesis is performed by a skilled physician (1-3 in every 1000), and the risk is higher in the first trimester (Mayo Clinic 2022). The evaluation of risk hence involves the introduction of an additional risk. For whom could this additional risk be tolerable? Amniocentesis is usually only offered to those who are in a 'high-risk' category, such as those who are disabled and chronically ill, and carriers who have a family history of genetic conditions (Mayo Clinic 2022). The decision to perform amniocentesis in spite of the additional risk involves a judgement of

3 Amniocentesis involves removing amniotic fluid and cells from the uterus. The procedure is sometimes done to test the genes of the developing foetus, or diagnose a foetal infection (Mayo Clinic 2022).

the worth of the foetus. The unmitigated risk of disability or genetic disorder lowers a foetus' worth, meaning the risk of causing damage or a miscarriage in the process of testing for these conditions is ethically permissible.

Rose writes that the power dynamic between prospective parents and influential voices within biomedicine is "pastoral" (2001, 9), rather than outright controlling. The ethics of the "guider" (experts on biomedicine) work in relation with the ethics of the "guided" (prospective parents). Rose argues that this pastoral process, whereby the expertise and ethics of the

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"guider" enter into discussion with the ethics of the "guided" often exacerbates feelings of shame, guilt, and a sense of obligation to a party that is not present and cannot advocate for themselves – the potential offspring of the "guided" (9-10).

There is much to be said about the affective potential of knowing that one could theoretically 'give' one's offspring a gene that causes them to suffer. On the Genetic Alliance UK website, they have made a plea for those who have such a gene "to remember that genes are distributed by chance and having a faulty gene is no one's fault" (Fletcher-Dallas 2016), demonstrating that the link between 'giving' and 'causing' can sometimes be drawn by those who test positive for a particular gene. Some prospective parents could feel as though, since their child is ill or disabled due to a gene they passed on, they have 'made' their child ill or disabled. In other words, if a prospective parent is made responsible for their own genes, by passing these genes to their child, they are responsible for their child's suffering.

In the case of carriers, whom Rose describes as "those individuals carrying the markers or polymorphisms of susceptibility who are neither phenomenologically or experientially 'sick' or 'abnormal'" (12), their understanding of the predicted quality of life of their potential offspring comes from information provided by "guiders", rather than their own experiences. They simply carry genes that increase the risk for a particular condition. Any ethical judgements about the quality of life of their offspring, whether on the level of their medical or societal condition, are guided by the pastoral influences of discourse surrounding disability and abnormality.

Rose argues that, in consultations with biomedical experts about one's reproductive choices, the affected party – the foetus – is not represented (Rose 2001, 9-10). However, while the foetus may not be able to represent

themselves, there may be a person or persons present in the discussion who have an innate understanding of how that foetus would feel should they be 'allowed' to live – the prospective parents, should they be disabled or have a chronic illness themselves, can judge their quality of life *a posteriori*, not *a priori*. They know what it means to be disabled or have a chronic illness in the society they live in, so they understand the implications for the quality of life of their potential children. This, in combination with the pastoral guidance of biomedical experts who offer a host of preventative measures, means that the reproductive decisions made by disabled and chronically ill people are entangled in an ethopolitics of both affect and empathy. When considering having children, disabled and chronically ill people must consider whether it would be ethical to subject another human being to the conditions they are experiencing.

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Disability, Heritability and Labour

Worth and Productivity

In common parlance, the phrases 'quality of life' and 'well-being' are often used interchangeably. Both terms involve an evaluation of a person's life, and these evaluations can be either positive or negative. The frame of reference for both of these evaluations can be based on statistically-derived norms, as this essay has previously explored. In this sense, 'high quality of life' and 'positive well-being' both reflect a valuable life, and thus one can assume that a person with positive well-being also experiences a high quality of life.

However, there is a significant aspect in which these terms diverge in meaning. While 'well-being' concerns an individual's health and happiness, 'quality of life' concerns a much broader range of factors. The World Health Organisation defines quality of life as: "individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns" (WHO 2012, 3).

Positive well-being is associated with high quality of life, but is not the only characteristic of a high quality of life. In fact, the World Health Organisation Quality of Life (WHOQOL) User Manual explicitly differentiates between 'well-being' and 'quality of life', stating that "quality of life cannot be equated simply with the terms 'health status', 'life style', 'life satisfaction',

‘mental state’ or ‘well-being’” (2012, 3). The WHOQOL lists six broad domains that are to be evaluated when considering one’s quality of life: “physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationships to salient features of the environment” (3).

The third domain, ‘level of independence’, is of particular significance in relation to disabled and chronically ill people. In the WHOQOL User Manual, pages 60-61 are dedicated to an explanation of the individual facets of quality of life within this domain. In the explanation of facet 9, ‘Mobility’, it is stated that having to depend on another person for one’s mobility is thought to lower one’s quality of life (60). Facet 10, ‘Activities of Daily Living’, involves an evaluation of a person’s ability to independently perform ‘usual’ everyday tasks (61), again under the assumption that depending on another person to do these tasks lowers one’s quality of life. The assumptions about quality of life inherent to facet 11, ‘Dependence on medication or treatments’, are immediately evident (61). All of these facets involve an assessment of one’s quality of life that is not necessarily concerned with one’s medical or physical reality, but rather one’s status as a dependent within society.

The tendency of biomedical experts to provide guidance on the basis of quality of life, rather than well-being, initially appears to be an issue of phrasing. However, using the phrase ‘quality of life’ means that not only a person’s projected well-being, but also predictions of the *kind of life* a person will lead, are involved in an assessment of whether or not it is ethical to ‘allow’ life. The facet of ‘mobility’ does not evaluate an individual’s quality of life on the basis of “impairment” in the sense associated with physical well-being, but rather if that person is independently mobile (WHOQOL 2012, 60).

The conflation of ‘well-being’ and ‘quality of life’ was not explicitly elaborated on by Mills (2017), but she does note that: “[...] concerns about biological normality are made inextricable from concerns about ways of living well” (291), as a part of her argument that norms of health become associated with a particular lifestyle. Arguably, the practice of incorporating assessments of one’s health and one’s ability to lead a particular, normative lifestyle into a singular evaluative criterion, ‘quality of life’, is a compelling reason for this association. This is not to say that those who are unable to live independently do, in fact, experience a high quality of life. However, low quality of life, to the extent that it could constitute an ethical obligation to ‘disallow’ it is not an intrinsic feature of dependence; it is the feature of a society that devalues life as a dependant.

The United Kingdom is an exemplar case of such a society. The government of the UK has recently proposed a policy whereby disabled, chronically ill and mentally ill individuals who depend on benefits will have their

benefits cut by £4,680 a year if they do not look for remote work (Open Access Government 2023). This policy is openly hostile towards those who are not currently able to work because of their health, and places individuals who were already experiencing financial insecurity in an incredibly difficult position; perhaps an impossible position. It is a biopolitical strategy to attempt to increase productivity, by making an ethopolitical claim that it is a “citizen’s duty” to work, and that working is expected as part of a normal lifestyle.

Statistically-derived norms, as Mills (2017) emphasises, create an association between fitting a particular norm of health and living a particular kind of life (290). For prospective parents who are aware of the connection between dependency on the basis of disability/chronic illness and a low quality of life, the question of whether their offspring will be able to be independent becomes a part of an overall consideration about their offspring’s quality of life. The issue is not simply the health concerns associated with an individual’s disabilities or chronic illnesses, but whether they can have a high enough quality of life within a society that devalues dependence to an extent that causes additional suffering. Prospective parents with a disability or chronic illness understand this connection, not because they have been made aware of this connection due to the pastoral guidance of a biomedical professional, but because they have likely experienced it themselves.

Facet 12, within the ‘level of independence’ domain of the WHOQOL, is highly indicative of the fact that human life that is capable of work is valued more highly. This facet concerns ‘Working capacity’. The explanation for this facet is as follows:

This facet examines a person’s use of his or her energy for work. “Work” is defined as any major activity in which the person is engaged. Major activities might include paid work, unpaid work, voluntary community work, full-time study, care of children and household duties. Because such questions refer to these possible types of major activities, the facet focuses on a person’s ability to perform work, regardless of the type of work. (WHOQOL 2012, 61)

On the basis of this quality of life assessment, if a person is unable to work, their quality of life would be evaluated more negatively than that of a person who is able to work. Given the hostility of society towards those who cannot work, it is no wonder that an inability to work is counted among health issues, psychological issues and physical insecurity as factors that can depreciate an individual’s quality of life. One can imagine that in a world in which an

inability to work is accommodated for, disabled, chronically ill people and carriers could be more optimistic about the quality of life experienced by their potential offspring.

It could be that some readers have thus far interpreted this essay as an anticapitalist critique, but this is not the case; ableism has existed for far longer than capitalism. This essay is as much a critique of contemporary capitalist societies as it is a critique of the Ancient Spartans, who bathed newborn male babies in pure wine to test whether they could grow into

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strong warriors, and killed the babies whose constitutions could not handle this (Penrose 2015, 510). Indeed, an anecdote from Herodotus about two Spartan men who were temporarily blinded by the same condition, one of whom went into battle anyway and died, and another who asked not to fight and was excluded as a coward (2015, 512), is almost reminiscent of the UK government's policy that disabled and chronically people should "find work anyway" or suffer the consequences. Disability/chronic illness activism is necessarily anti-capitalist, since it advocates for those who do not labour, but we must not assume that anti-capitalism is inherently anti-ableist. I hope to have adequately demonstrated that ableist rhetoric is entrenched not only in our political systems but in conventional morality, down to the level of our individual reproductive choices. Regardless of whether or not we live within a capitalist system, the quality of life of disabled and chronically ill people will continue to influence people's reproductive decisions.

Moralistic hand-wringing about 'quality of life' is ableist and unproductive if it is not accompanied by attempts to actively improve the quality of life of currently-living disabled and chronically ill people. Disability and chronic illness are not immutable. In spite of many attempts in the past and present to prevent disabled and chronically ill life through influencing the population's reproductive choices, disability and chronic illness will continue to occur spontaneously. As a person living with fibromyalgia (a chronic pain disorder) for a decade as of the date of this publication, I can attest to the fact that able-bodiedness is far more precarious than most of us are willing

to accept. Even for those readers who do not develop a disability or chronic illness in their lifetime, those lucky enough to reach old age will experience the realities of life as a dependent individual.

It is therefore in our best interests to maintain a society that guarantees a positive quality of life for disabled and chronically ill people, but it is as if, having observed our current quality of life, our ethopolitical responsibility has become preventing future disabled or chronically ill life rather than engaging in activism and societal change on the behalf of future disabled or chronically ill life. One is left to wonder who benefits from discourse that on the one hand encourages the prevention of disability and chronic illness (in other words, the prevention of disabled and chronically ill *people*), and on the other actively makes the world more hostile for disabled and chronically ill people. It is certainly not disabled or chronically ill people themselves.

Conclusion

This essay set out to examine the effects of biopolitical strategies on the reproductive choices of disabled and chronically ill people, and the carriers of genetic conditions. I have argued that the reproductive choices of disabled/chronically ill people and carriers are shaped by biopolitical policies and practices, and that these in turn are informed by ethopolitical discourse about ill-health and suffering. A biopolitical analysis of the discourse, policies, technologies and practices associated with reproduction shows that at every level, disabled and chronically ill people and carriers are influenced by authorities and institutions. In the case of carriers, the ethopolitics of reproduction may indeed be exercised on the level of pastoral guidance and abstract ethical equations, as Rose (2001) argues. However, in the case of those who are disabled or chronically ill themselves, their reproductive decisions are influenced by biopolitical strategies that affect the lives of disabled and chronically ill people at large.

At every level, disabled and chronically ill people and carriers are influenced by authorities and institutions.

Furthermore, biopolitical policies that reduce the quality of life for disabled and chronically ill people, such as the one proposed by the UK Government (Open Access Government 2023) not only control how people live, but control who gets to live. The knowledge that life – or rather, the current way of living – is hostile towards dependent individuals influences conceptions about quality of life, creating an ethopolitical component to individuals' reproductive practices. Disabled and chronically ill people experience this

hostility firsthand. If they do make the choice to reproduce, they are more likely to be offered prenatal testing, even if it produces additional risks for the foetus, because life as a disabled and chronically ill person is devalued as a result of the quality of life they experience.

The biopolitical strategies at play on the levels of discourse, policies and technologies, both on the level of biopolitical management of disabled/chronically ill people and the ethopolitical management of the reproductive choices of disabled people and carriers, promote a self-sustaining, able-bodied and independent population. It is indeed the case that dependent individuals experience a lower quality of life as a result of the ableist society they are born into. Having explored the reasons for the lower quality of life associated with disability and chronic illness, many of which are societal rather than inherent to disabilities and chronic illnesses themselves, it is apparent that positive societal change would likely influence the reproductive choices of disabled and chronically ill people, and carriers of genetic conditions. Notably, making an ethical argument in favour of improving the quality of life of disabled and chronically ill individuals by accommodating us within society, as opposed to making an ethical argument in favour of preventing our lives, is the road less travelled.

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SPLIJTSTOF

Reviewing Timothy Morton's *Being Ecological*

Jonas Hoekstra

As the title suggests, Timothy Morton's *Being Ecological* is a book about ecology. However, in a sense, the book tries to do more than simply presenting a philosophical, anthropological, or biological perspective on ecology. It tries to give an expansive critique on the way in which a lot of ecological thought is structured, and why this way of thinking is faulty. Morton adds that it is this faulty way of thinking that got us into (climate) trouble in the first place. Within the book, Morton also aims to provide us with a conceptual toolkit that may remedy our faulty ways of thinking. Each chapter follows a relatively similar structure, wherein Morton notes a problem, explicates it, and critiques it. The final part tries to provide a new way of thinking that may remedy this problem. For clarity's sake, I will also follow this structure in my analysis of the book.

Factoids, Objects and Neolithic Thinking

One of the main points Morton argues in *Being Ecological* is that our way of perceiving reality is fundamentally wrong. While this may seem a somewhat large claim, Morton does provide ample argumentation for this throughout the book. In the introduction, they write about the way in which we present ecological information to ourselves. Information about climate change is often presented as a compilation of data that must convince us of something – namely, climate change. Morton states that small chunks of

One of the main points Morton argues in Being Ecological is that our way of perceiving reality is fundamentally wrong.

data are presented as holding a fact, which they call “factoids” (Morton, 2018, 8). These factoids appear to factually tell us something about reality, and therefore hold some kind of truth. The reality is that factoids are only interpretations of small pieces of data and are therefore not facts, but only fact-like, as Morton states. A lot of ecological thought is concerned with the idea that if we can compile enough factoids, we will ‘get’ climate change and will be able to act upon it. Morton relates this scientific perspective to the way in which human beings think about reality at large. We perceive ourselves as a rational subject that is independent of the world and can perceive and ‘grasp’

things around it, be that via sight, sounds, or scientific analysis. Objects exist outside of the human psyche and are there to be analyzed, grabbed, utilized, etc.

This idea of the human psyche being independent of ‘things’ is a symptom of ways of thought that originated in the Neolithic period (Morton, 2018, 50). Morton states that historically, since the move from hunter-gatherer to agricultural society, humans have started to create conceptual separations between animal-human, culture-nature, master-subject. They claim that this idea of human beings being able to rationalize and divide the world has, in turn, led to industrial capitalism and the problems that have arisen from it.

OOO

Morton presents their answer to the problem of Neolithic thinking in the form of object-oriented ontology (OOO). Object-oriented ontology is a way of thinking about ‘things’. It proposes that all things exist in the same way, thus there is no way in which human existence is more important than the existence of any other thing. Additionally, it maintains that there are infinite ways of accessing things in the world, such as grabbing, throwing, talking to, drawing on, etc. Therefore, you can never exhaust the way in which things can be accessed. This means that things remain fundamentally independent and can never be fully grasped.

This also means that all things, animal, plant or stone, cannot be reduced to the way humans perceive them. In this way, OOO can help in combatting anthropocentric ways of thinking, including those that privilege the position of humans above animals and objects. In summary, Morton thus states that ‘being ecological’ is “acknowledging in a deep way the existence of beings that aren’t you, with whom you coexist” (Morton, 2018, 128). This means that we accept the fact that we cannot fully grasp the essence and existence of beings around us, but we also accept that these beings exist, nevertheless. Being ecological is therefore a way of opening up and letting the existence of other beings into our own lifeworld.

Assessment

In general, this work is great at tackling the issue of anthropocentrism and presents an original critique and a strong response in the form of OOO. The work goes beyond simply diagnosing the problem in the form of socio-political structures that cause climate change. However, one point of critique that may be raised against this work is the fact Morton writes quite erratically. Morton often begins a chapter by expanding on a certain idea or thought, but then suddenly switches to another subject, leaving the explana-

tion of the idea unfinished. This is a reemerging pattern in the work, and it significantly harms the readability of *Being Ecological*. Regarding accessibility, I therefore argue that although this work is accessible for a wider public, base-level knowledge of philosophers like Kant and Heidegger is necessary. The reason for this is that, while Morton does explain the ideas these

Being ecological is therefore a way of opening up and letting the existence of other beings into our own lifeworld.

philosophers hold, they are often brought up quite spontaneously in the text. Nonetheless, despite these shortcomings, this is a strong public philosophical work that provides an original narrative about ecological thought, which also serves as a good introduction to Timothy Morton's further body of work.

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SPLIJTSTOF

An Interview with Herman Westerink on Hopes, Freud and Dreams

Sophie Ingle and Charlie Chowdhry

Herman Westerink is Associate and Endowed Professor of Metaphysics and Philosophical Anthropology at Radboud University. A significant portion of his research is dedicated to Freudian psychoanalysis, alongside his studies in the philosophy of religion. Following his participation in a public lecture at *Radboud Reflects*, titled ‘What Are Dreams Made Of’, we decided to interview Herman and discuss a Freudian approach to our theme, ‘Hopes and Dreams’. While the lecture was very informative, we had some remaining questions, especially since terms like ‘hope’ and ‘dream’ are often used interchangeably. Herman was happy to join us and further discuss these matters.

Sophie: Thank you for joining us today. We’d like to ask you about your thoughts on dreaming, especially since the theme of this *Splijstof* edition is ‘Hopes and Dreams’. Given your recent work, particularly with *Radboud Reflects*, we thought it would be interesting to explore the topic more.

Herman: Excellent.

Sophie: For the uninitiated, could you tell us a bit about the relationship between your work on Freudian psychoanalysis and dreams?

Herman: Well, the ‘dream work’ of Freud is his most famous text, certainly among a larger audience. *The Interpretation of Dreams* is not necessarily in the centre of my research, but again and again, I am confronted with his dream analysis. Again and again, various texts refer to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and to the dreams of patients, which are always very important in his clinical writings, as well.

For Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* is not his only work on dreams; it is a topic that comes back again and again. Notably, the topic appears in his clinical writings, and sometimes also in his metapsychological writings, because dreams are supposed to give us an insight. That’s the first important thing to say about Freud’s interest in dreams: they tell us something about an aspect of our psychic life to which we normally have no access. To this, even dreams only grant us access to a certain extent, because there is also a kind of censorship mechanism. So, it’s also always in a filtered and indirect manner that dreams give us insight into unconscious mental processes, but nevertheless they do.

Having said that, according to Freud, dreams also give us insight into the fundamental principles that organise psychic life. Since dreams give insight into unconscious processes, they also help us detect when certain mental principles are no longer at work, like consciousness or perception. For instance, this is the case in our ability to organise impressions into a spatial or temporal chronology. They function not only as an insight into certain principles that organise mental life, but also show what psychic life looks like when these principles are shut down, or partly shut down.

“That’s the first important thing to say about Freud’s interest in dreams: they tell us something about an aspect of our psychic life to which we normally have no access.”

Sophie: Do you think there’s much overlap between Freud’s perspective and your own? What do you think about dreams?

Herman: I don’t have much opinion on dreams, but what intrigues me is the cultural, historical perspectives. Freud is part of that history. Generally, we in the Western world, although certainly not exclusively in the Western world, tend to attach a lot of meaning to dreams, whereas it’s not self-evident to do so. In the case of Freud, you could say dreams are a way to know more about ourselves than we would normally be able to detect or see. This is something that you find throughout Western history. I find that intriguing because it’s not self-evident that dreams have a meaning or a significant place in the way that we understand ourselves.

Although, that’s just an observation. That’s not an opinion. I don’t know if Freud’s theories can be maintained. He argues that dreams are wish fulfilments – or attempts at wish fulfilment. There is current research, especially in neuroscience, from those who claim that Freud made a good point here. Though, I don’t know whether Freud’s arguments about dreams are absolutely plausible. It’s not my field, but as I said, I find it intriguing that he paid so much attention to dreams as being meaningful and providing self-knowledge, whereas one could also spontaneously argue dreams have no meaning – that it’s just chaos.

Charlie: Since you mentioned wish fulfilment, I was thinking about how sometimes we use the word ‘dream’ as a synonym for a hope or a desire. I was wondering what Freud would make of this, and maybe also what you think about this yourself.

Herman: Yeah, that’s the popular use of dreams, right? The American Dream, dreams about the future, et cetera. This use of ‘dreams’ could well be seen as a kind of popularised version of a Freudian take on dreams, right? There’s a lot of stuff in Freudian thought that has been popularised. The idea of dreams as wish fulfilment is among them. I’m not really sure whether ‘dreaming of the future’ in terms of what you hope or what you wish to happen can fully be reduced to Freudian thought. Although, I think that Freudian ideas have been very important for shaping this idea of dream as wish or hope for the future. It is indeed phrased like that today, as opposed to the classical idea that dreams can be messages from the gods that reveal what is going to happen in the future – that was a very antique idea. So, I think the idea of dreams, as wish fulfilment, or hope for the future, is a kind of popularised version of Freudian thought. I think Freud is part of that, at least.

Charlie: That’s very interesting. I’ve never made a connection between the American Dream and Freudian thought.

“There’s a lot of stuff in Freudian thought that has been popularised. The idea of dreams as wish fulfilment is among them.”

Herman: Well, the American Dream, of course, also has other sources, right? It’s also the dream of the colonists to have their own country, to have their own land, et cetera, to make to make your life a success – ‘Manifest Destiny’. There are also other sources for that, but I think to phrase it in terms of dreams and dreams as wishes is a very Freudian idea popularised.

Charlie: Yes, that’s interesting. For those of us who perhaps have less pleasant dreams, could Freud offer any words of comfort for us, or is his work likely to make us feel worse about our weirder, more uncomfortable dreams?

Herman: Ah, yes, most dreams are uncomfortable. First of all, I would have to start by saying that Freud is very analytical, in honest and realistic depictions of dreams, and taking seriously what is communicated in dreams. If dreams are wish fulfilments, they are closely related to fantasies. That also

means what you find in dreams, as I already mentioned, is somewhat – but not fully – censored. Repressed or unconscious thoughts show themselves in the form of very violent dreams. For example, you can kill people in your dreams, or you can get killed in your dreams. There is violence and absurdity in your dreams. There is also power in dreams: being able to do things that you would normally not be able to do, like flying. There are all kinds of bizarre things, but also some aspects of human life that we would normally rather not be confronted with, especially violence and anxiety.

For Freud, nightmares are also wish fulfilments, but they are wish fulfilments in the sense that we react with fear to the consequences of what we are dreaming about. Waking up in a nightmare is usually at a point where something we do not find acceptable is going to happen. When the censorship breaks in, or when consciousness breaks in, you suddenly start to realise the implications of what you are about to dream, and this is where the dream ends. This is the point where the wish fulfilment shows its implications and then something in psychic life says, “this this is unacceptable, this cannot be!”. Dreams are not just wish fulfilments in the sense that they show us pleasurable sides of our own fantasies and imaginations. Quite to the contrary, they can also show the violent or the anxious side of psychic life.

There is also a special case to which Freud devotes some attention: the traumatic dreams of traumatised people. They may repeatedly dream about the traumatic events that they lived through. This is a really puzzling issue for Freud, because if dreams are wish fulfilments, even anxiety dreams to some extent, it is very difficult to explain why a traumatised people would return to their trauma in their dreams. That is counterintuitive for Freud. Therefore, he believed that there are some dreams that are ‘beyond’ wish fulfilments because they have something he calls ‘demonic character’. Dreams that bring us back to scenes of trauma are special case, but also shows, again, that dreams are not in any way related to pleasure.

Sophie: Following that line of thinking, how satisfied would you be with the conclusion that our dreams don’t mean anything – none of them?

Herman: I think that nobody would actually object to that. This is also something I said in *Radboud Reflects*: from the very start of our own cultural history of thinking about dreams, there has always been the idea that at least a part of our dreams is perhaps meaningless. Of course, in the antique world, that means there are dreams that don’t entail any messages about the future. Sometimes the gods are not speaking in dreams.

Freud would probably say that some dreams are more significant than others, but there are no dreams that have no meaning. All dreams reveal something of unconscious and repressed material. In this sense, dreams are, per definition, informative about psychic life. Yet, some dreams are more significant than others.

Sophie: What do you make of the dreams that come true? For instance, something bad might happen or things go wrong in an anxious dream and might really go wrong in practice.

Herman: Apart from self-fulfilling prophecy? You could give an answer from the idea of a wish fulfilment. If you dream that something is going to go wrong, it's probably because you wish, to some extent, that it goes wrong, and so why wouldn't it go wrong? Maybe dreams can also reveal something of an unconscious self-sabotaging mechanism. They may at least show you that there is a conflicting voice to what you may consciously think. Freud would say that our psychic life is always in conflict. There's always also another voice. There's a counter-tendency – for instance, not succeeding in things you think you want to succeed in – and it is that kind of mechanism. A Freudian answer to your question is that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy in this case.

“If you dream that something is going to go wrong, it's probably because you wish, to some extent, that it goes wrong, and so why wouldn't it go wrong?”

I certainly don't want to return to the idea that that dreams are really messages from 'gods' about what is going to happen unavoidably in the future. We can only prepare for what might happen. In the example that you mentioned, someone dreams of something that goes wrong, and it actually goes wrong. That indeed shows that they are probably self-sabotaging.

Sophie: Would you say this further illustrates that some dreams may be considered more meaningful, or at least less random or chaotic, than others?

Herman: Yes. I am now voicing a more or less Freudian take on dreams, but such cases are quite telling of our relation to what is going to happen. Our relation to persons or objects is never straightforward, but always ambiguous.

Charlie: I was doing some homework for this interview and I found that Freud analysed his own dreams for his work. I was wondering if, in your opinion, we should be able to get away with this kind of practice in our own work. Could I cite something that I've dreamed as a source for my own dream analysis book or essay?

Herman: I think this is a challenge. Strictly speaking, in psychoanalysis, it is not a good idea to analyse your own dreams. You could bring your dreams into analysis, *vis-à-vis* an analyst, but the idea of a self-interpretation of dreams is probably not the most fruitful form. At the same time, having said that, there's a long history since Freud in psychoanalysis where analysts, and also patients, keep dream books. This is not only something in psychoanalysis: there are people who do that, who wake up and the first thing they do is make a note about what they have dreamt and keep it in a book. This can be seen as an ongoing diagnosis of their own mental states.

There is a technical problem with doing self-analysis, which can easily take the form of a kind of self-deception. This is because I'm not sure whether we are the best interpreters of ourselves given the censorship I already mentioned. The other element in your question would be whether it is a good idea to do any form of self-analysis. Why would we be so obsessed with analysing ourselves? Self-analysis is also a way of self-problematization, and why would we make our lives so much more difficult than necessary? This is a somewhat Foucauldian answer; he criticises psychoanalysis, notably for the obsession with analysing ourselves in Western history. But are we a problem? I don't know. Should we be a problem for ourselves? Who says that we should be a problem for ourselves? This kind of argumentation that you find in Nietzsche and in Foucault can be used against psychoanalysis and against any form of treatment. Why would you make a problem out of yourself? Or consider yourself a problem? That's actually part of the idea of self-analysis. There is something happening in myself that I want to gain control over, and what is beyond my control is *de facto* a problem.

In the *Radboud Reflects* lecture, I already mentioned this in connection to the early Christian monks. They fought their dreams and thought the thoughts and images that appeared in dreams were fundamentally a problem. They thought their dreams were a problem, and self-analysis was a way to gain control over one's inner life. That's another way to answer your question.

Charlie: Thank you. When I was re-watching the lecture, you were talking about how the contents of the dreams were worrying to the monks. I was wondering if you've ever had a dream about Freud when you're in the midst of all of your writing!

Herman: Did I ever have a dream about Freud? I must have, but I don't remember anything. I'm not very good at remembering my dreams, and I don't keep a dream book.

Charlie: What do you think Freud would say about that? If you think you've dreamt about him, but you can't remember, does that say anything about things going on with your psychic apparatus?

“Self-analysis is also a way of self-problematisation, and why would we make our lives so much more difficult than necessary?”

Herman: It would be very strange if we would be able to remember our all our dreams. According to the Freudian argument that dreams reveal something of the unconscious, when you are asleep, the consciousness is more or less shut down. You would expect that in waking life, these things are again repressed, unconscious, and not accessible. In this sense, they are also not remembered for the large part. My colleague (and neuroscientist) from the *Radboud Reflects* lecture shows that you have a lot of dreams during the night – you don't remember most of them. The participants in dream experiments need to immediately share what they have been dreaming about when they wake up, because otherwise the dreams are forgotten. Most dreams are normally forgotten, that's not a strange thing.

It is actually more or less abnormal when you remember very vividly what you have been dreaming. This is likely the case for the dreams that were really impressive somehow – disturbing or perhaps very pleasant. I don't think that I've ever dreamt, for example, being in an analysis with Freud. That would be the ultimate Freudian dream – to be a patient on his sofa. And, as far as I know, I've never dreamt that I was the analyst and Freud was on the sofa – I'm sure about that.

Charlie: That must be reassuring to some extent.

Sophie: Returning to the *Radboud Reflects* lecture, one thing we were curious to discuss is whether any new questions about dreams occurred to you throughout the process of preparing for the lecture and working with Sarah Schoch.

Herman: No, not really. The lecture that I made was based on research that I had been doing in the past, which I already knew quite well. Instead, what I hadn't realised before was that most dreams in the antique world were not about big, societal future events. For instance, when gods were believed to give messages in dreams, most dreams concerned medical issues. That was quite a new insight.

Those dreams in the antique world still had a kind of prognostic quality in the sense that something was predicted to happen in the near future. Nevertheless, there was already something also of a diagnostic quality in these dreams because they were supposed to reveal something about psychic or somatic processes that were, as of yet, hidden and going to be a problem. This nuances the distinction between predictive dreams and more analytic dreams telling us about unconscious or hidden processes.

Another thing I found interesting, in relation to Sarah's talk, did not necessarily surprise me, but more or less confirmed something I had already expected. The team at *Radboud Reflects* discovered that there was not that big of a difference between our work. They tried to create an opposition between the neuroscientific work of Sarah and my talk, which focused mainly on Freud. They initially thought there must be a fundamental disagreement on the issue of dreams, but there isn't. Neuroscientific research does not falsify Freud or, at least, not completely. Freud is important for thinking about dreams and putting dreams on the scientific agenda – I would say historically, that's certainly true. However, they expected that the neuroscientific research would show a fundamentally different perspective on dreams and that Freud would be basically nonsense. Yet, that's not true, there is no such fundamental disagreement. As I said, this is what I actually expected from the research, although they are completely different forms of science – if psychoanalysis is a science at all.

Sophie: That's certainly an interesting reflection. Given everything we've discussed today, I'd like to ask one final question for the readers of *Splijtstof*. Most of this interview has been about dreaming, but our edition is themed around 'hopes', too. Is there anything you'd like to share about 'hopes'? Perhaps I'm returning to wish fulfilment with this question.

Herman: Yes, this comes back to wish fulfilment. I don't have specific hopes or wishes apart from very general ones that everybody would immediately agree with; these are open doors. I hope the next generation, such as you and younger people, will use all their efforts and all their creativity to find

“Neuroscientific research does not falsify Freud or, at least, not completely.”

solutions to fundamental problems in our society and in our world. I'm thinking of the problems that my generation did not succeed in resolving and only made worse, such as climate change. That's a very open-door and very general answer. I'm not very pleased with this answer, but maybe this is exactly what you wanted to hear.

Sophie: I think that answer is a hope in itself.

Herman: It's always my hope that the next generation does better than the previous generation.

Sophie: That's a good hope to have.

Herman: It's a good hope to have, indeed.

Sophie: Thank you very much for joining us today. I'm sure Charlie and our readers would agree that this conversation has been very insightful.

Charlie: Yes, thank you very much for your time.

Herman: Thank you. It was a pleasure. If you have any afterthoughts or dreams about what is missing, you can always contact me.

For further information, the *Radboud Reflects* lecture can be found on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/xQI9vU9PIrU?si=5V3SHc3EvMmhZP0j>.

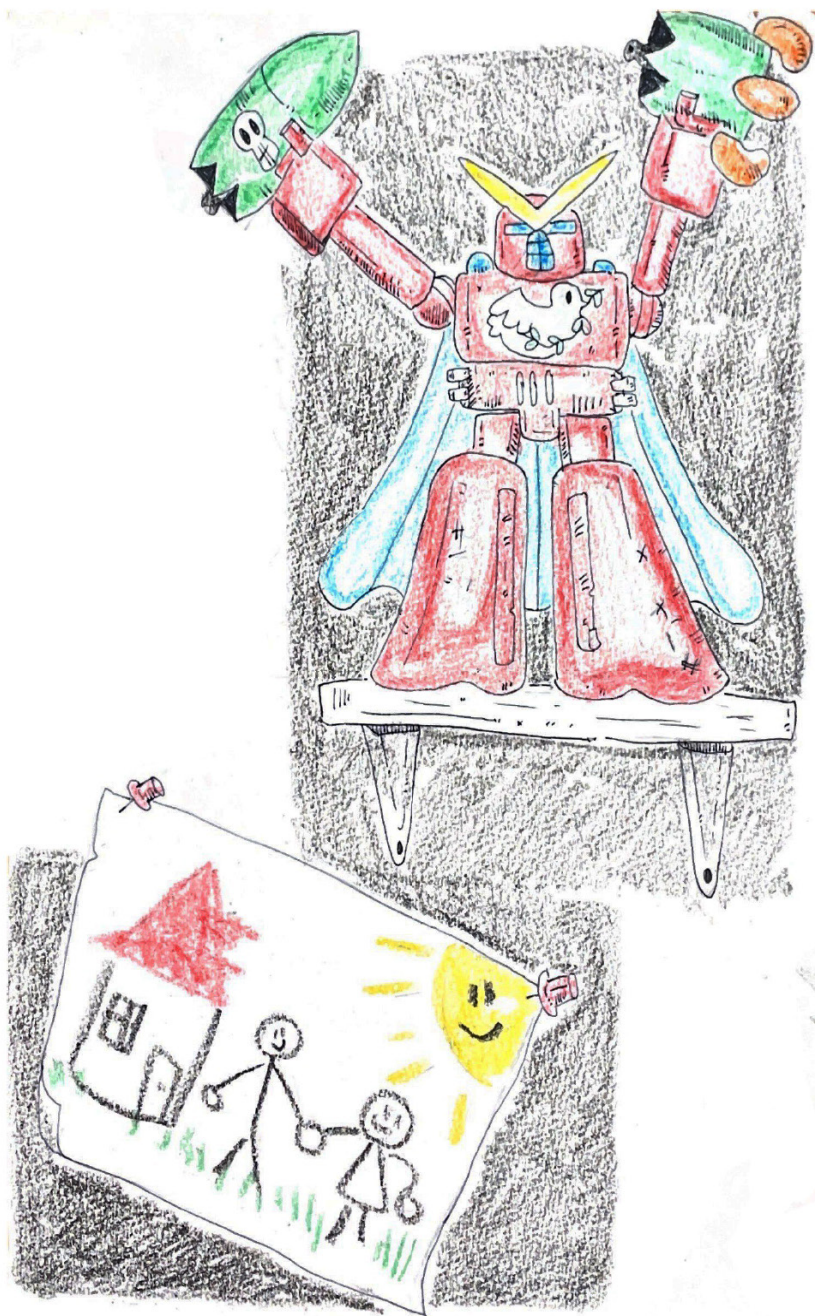


Illustration by Jonas Hoekstra

Accept to Lose: A Nine-Step Program

Film and Philosophy: *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006)

Mirte Debats

Dream Journal of the Family Hoover

- (Step) Father Richard:
 - Dream: publish and reach a big audience with his nine-step “Refuse to Lose” program, which is focused on following nine steps to achieve your dream, to be successful in life.
- Mother Sheryl:
 - Dream: keep her family together and make her marriage work.
- Seven-year-old Olive, Richard and Sheryl’s daughter:
 - Dream: participate in a beauty pageant for six and seven-year-olds.
- Fifteen-year-old Dwayne, Sheryl’s son from her previous marriage:
 - Dream: become an Air Force fighter jet pilot. He has taken a vow of silence until he reaches this dream.
- Richard’s father, Edward:
 - Dream: use heroin and be high.
- Sheryl’s brother, Frank:
 - Dream: lost his dream of having a relationship with one of his grad-students, and of being the preeminent Proust scholar in the U.S. Even his dream to commit suicide ended in a failure.

Jonathan Dayton (director of *Little Miss Sunshine*): “Our culture is so built on the idea of chasing our dream. [...] But then this [film] is about what happens when those dreams don’t come true and what’s left” (Cinema Therapy 2024, 6:14).

“*Little Miss Sunshine* teaches us that it’s okay to feel sad, that it’s okay to lose, to fail, to cry, to scream, [to swear,] to be you” (MovieSketch 2021, 0:46).

What do you want to be in the future? What do you want to achieve? What dreams do you want to chase? What do you want to do after your studies? How are you going to use your studies during the rest of your life? The answers to these questions that we ask each other and ourselves involve a job, an identity, or an individual goal you will spend the rest of your life chasing and maybe, hopefully, one day achieving. But who decides that you have reached your dream? What if you don’t reach it? What happens, what do you do, what are you left with? What if you find out that what you have always wanted is simply not possible? It is not yours to become, to one day be? The existential

list, nihilist, tragi-comedy *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) gives possible answers to these questions. For this review, along the lines of Richard's nine-step "Refuse to Lose" program, I have made a nine-step Accept to Lose program, based on what the film tries to teach its audience.

Step 1: Realise That it is Bullshit to "Refuse to Lose"

"You say to me: 'Life is hard to bear.' But wherefore would you have in the morning your pride and in the evening your resignation?" (Nietzsche 2005, 36).

Together, some of them more willingly than others, the family Hoover goes on a road trip to California to make Olive's dream of participating in the national Little Miss Sunshine pageant come true. During this journey, every character is also on their own journey, chasing their dreams. None of the family members truly reach the goals they set for themselves, none of them become who they wish they could be. On their individual journeys they are confronted with this failing and the questions that come with it, questions that push them to develop themselves: When have you actually reached your goal, your dream? Do you play by society's rules while chasing your dream? Do you need recognition from other people? If so, from whom? Do you want to accept it when you fail? Can you accept it when you fail? Do you really need to "refuse to lose" in order to win, or can you also win when you lose?

Step 2: Realise That Not Achieving Your Dream Doesn't Make You a Loser, a Failure

"There are two kinds of people in this world: winners and losers" (Dayton & Faris 2006, 1:25).

There are those who get what they want and those who don't, those who never give up and those who do, those who achieve their dream and those whose dreams end in failure. If you make your dreams come true, you are a winner, you are successful, you are hard-working, you are a go-getter, you are an example for other people. If you don't, you are a loser, you are lazy, you gave up on yourself, you gave up on your dreams, you haven't sacrificed enough, you are a failure. If that is true, *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) is a film about a family of failures. The members of the family Hoover are divorced, suicidal, bankrupt, colour blind, addicted to heroin, and not the prettiest girl in town. They all have dreams they are chasing, but none of them achieve their

dreams. What does it really say about who you are when you fail? To what extent do our dreams make us who we are? Winning or losing has nothing to do with where you end up, nor with achieving your goals, nor with being better than other people. You can lose big, but still be a winner.

Step 3: Set Boundaries on What You Are Willing To Sacrifice for Your Dreams

“Whatever happens, you tried to do something on your own. [...] You took a big chance, that took guts, and I’m proud of you” (Dayton & Faris 2006, 40:58).

Is betting everything you have on your dream, sacrificing everything for it, the way to achieve it? And what happens if you bet and sacrifice everything, but still don’t succeed? What do you do with the emptiness and the void you fall into after that? In his dream of making his nine-step program work and receiving recognition for it from a big audience, Richard bets his family both financially and emotionally. The rest of the family loathes him for his demands. He doesn’t bring in that much money with his job, driving his family to bankruptcy and putting the strain of providing for the family entirely on his wife, Sheryl. After her first marriage ended in divorce, and her family fell apart, Sheryl is trying to keep this family together, to make it work. In doing so, she sacrifices her own wants and needs to support her husband with a dream she actually thinks is nonsense, pointless and doomed to fail. I think it would have given her character more depth if she would also have had a dream that isn’t related to her being a good mother, wife and sister. Perhaps there was a dream she had to push away or sacrifice to be able to provide for her family. This is implicitly mentioned in the film, but it would have been better if the directors had made it explicit as well.

Sheryl’s son, Dwayne, also makes big sacrifices for his dream. He focuses on nothing other than his goal of becoming a pilot for the Air Force. In order to achieve this goal, he sacrifices his relationships with other people, isolates himself and takes a vow of silence. When he fails, he has nothing left to fall back on.

Step 4: Focus on Being YOUR Best, Not on Being THE Best

“There is no sense in entering a contest if you don’t think you’re gonna win” (Dayton & Faris 2006, 20:39).

Richard is blind to his family's needs and keeps pushing them to always be THE best, he strains them in his demand for perfection. Jonathan Decker (therapist) describes the situation as follows: "The family starts tearing at the seams because of this perfectionism. Because we're not focused on being YOUR best. We're focused on being THE best." Valerie Faris (director): "As if that's even an achievable goal" (Cinema Therapy 2024, 6:49-6:57). Therapist Jonathan Decker and director Valerie Faris make an interesting point here, because is it even possible to achieve a dream that is based on the idea of being THE best? That is based on winning? When do you achieve your dream? What and whom does it depend on? What can you control? You have to focus on what lies in your power, not of what is outside of your power. You are in control of being YOUR best, what you can't control is being THE best, because you can't control other people. You are in control of how you see yourself; you aren't in control of how other people see you and whether you will be recognised as having achieved your dream by others. You are in control of trying, journeying, chasing your dream; you aren't in control of the specific outcome that you are trying to achieve.

Step 5: Realise That Success Isn't Permanent

"I just want everyone here to know that I am the preeminent Proust scholar in the United States" (Dayton & Faris 2006, 32:00).

"Did I mention that I am the preeminent Proust scholar in the U.S.?" (1:00:06).

Even if you have achieved your goal, have reached your dream, this isn't always static and permanent (MovieSketch 2021, 2:29). This becomes clear in the character of Frank. He had reached his goal and became the preeminent Proust scholar in the U.S. Not only did he see himself that way, he was also recognised as such by other scholars. He didn't merely do HIS best, he became THE best. So, shouldn't he have been introduced as the example for the rest of the family? As the achiever of the nine-step program? The one who reached his dream, who can now tell the others how it is done? No, instead he has hit rock bottom at the very beginning of the film, and he has attempted to take his own life. It is only a matter of time before he also loses his dream, gets dethroned and someone else becomes the number one Proust scholar in the U.S.

Step 6: Realise That Failure Isn't Final

“Fuck beauty contests. Life is one fucking beauty contest after another. You know: school, then college, then work, fuck that. [...] You do what you love, and fuck the rest” (Dayton & Faris 2006, 1:24:02).

If you have achieved your dream and then lose it, or if you don't achieve it at all, where does that leave you? What if you lose everything you have and all hope is lost? What is still in your control? Sometimes you hit a wall, you are obstructed in achieving your dream by your own incapability, or by the rules, regulations, and expectations of society. But just as achieving your dream won't last forever, failure isn't the end; it's not final. You can find another way, dreams can change. Life isn't about trying harder than you actually can, sacrificing everything to ensure a certain outcome, to achieve your dream. It is about dreaming, about hoping, about accepting failures and seeing them as stepping stones, as teaching moments. This is not within a nine-step program to success, but within your development as a human being. Life isn't about individually trying to chase your big hopes and dreams. Of course, those can give direction, but eventually it is about finding hope and dreams in the small things, in your everyday life. It is about failing, learning not only to accept failure, to accept set-backs, but to embrace them, learn from them, be aware of the opportunities they give, and see them as a part of your life.

Step 7: Support Each Other's Dreams and Failures

“Whatever happens, we're a family. And what's important is that we love each other” (Dayton & Faris 2006, 51:55).

Little Miss Sunshine (2006) shows that no one exists in a vacuum. Chasing your own dreams, achieving them, focussing on your individual goals isn't enough. Life is about connection: connection to other people, connection to the people you love, and who love you. It's about supporting each other, helping each other work for your dreams, being there for each other when there are set-backs. None of the family members achieve their goals, except maybe Olive and Edward, of whom you could say they made their dreams come true, even if it's in a way they hadn't envisioned. In the end, the family members are able to be there for each other, support each other, and accept each other, and in turn feel supported and accepted by the other members of the family. Helping those close to you chase their dream in addition to chasing your own dream and being supported in that dream makes that you can share the happiness when that dream is achieved, but also that you can share the disappointment and sadness when that dream fails.

Step 8: Accept Others for Who They Are and Accept Yourself For Who You Are

“We gotta let Olive be Olive” (Dayton & Faris 2006, 1:28:14).

Human beings are dynamic, they change. A future you envision now may not be the future you want when that future becomes the present. Dreams change all the time. Dreams, success and failure all build the road you walk during your life. Instead of keeping your eyes on the future and thinking about what life will be like, what you will make of yourself, who you will, maybe one day, be, ask questions like: What do you want to achieve? What do you want to become? What/Who do you want to be? It may be more interesting to keep your eyes on the here and now, on how you are developing yourself, on what is happening in the world in this moment, on who you are, and to ask questions like: Who am I right now? What is my life like? Is that the life I want for myself, or do I want to change something? What do I want to change? What lies within my power to change? What drives me? What interests me? Whom do I support? Who are the people that support me? Whose support do I want or need? What is happening in the world right now? How do I want to relate to that? What am I willing to sacrifice now for achieving my dreams in the future? How far am I willing to go and what lines do I not want to cross? What are my smaller dreams? What are my big dreams and goals in life? When have I achieved those, if ever? How do the dreams I have for the future influence how I live my life now? Is that what I want? Is that who I am?

Step 9: Accept That There Are Only 8 Real Steps in This Accept to Lose Nine-Step Program

I could have come up with a ninth step, but that's not the point...

“A real loser is somebody that's so afraid of not winning that they don't even try. And you are trying, right?” (Dayton & Faris 2006, 2006, 45:30).

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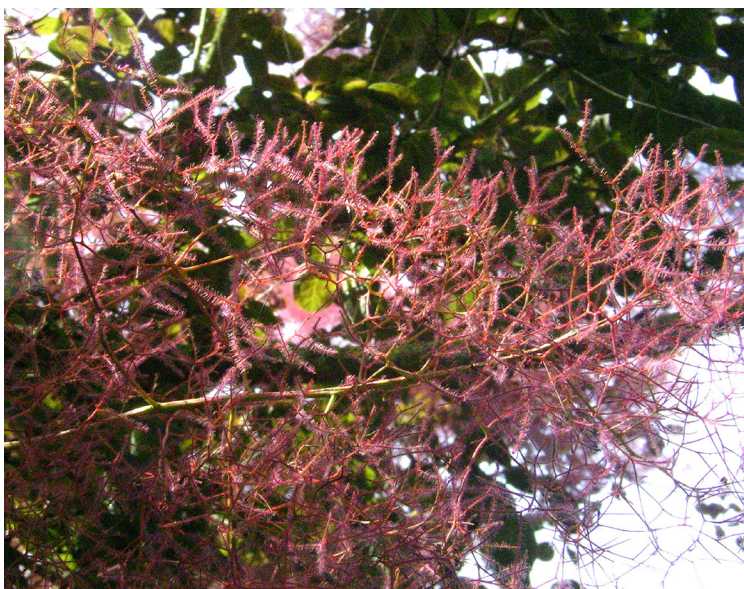
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Animal Citizenship in Gene Drive Ethics

An Evaluative Application of Donaldson and Kymlicka's Citizenship Framework to the Human Intervention and Management of Non-Humans in Gene Drive Engineering

Sophie Ingle

Introduction

Increasing interest in methods of conserving non-human animals has emerged in light of the ever-growing Red List of Endangered Species. The Red List appraises each species on a series of standards in its scientific approach, ranging from population decrease within ten years, to decreases in the size of its (local) population area (Hogeback 2023). This appraisal determines a statistical prediction of whether the species will become extinct over the next 20 years. As a result, the utilisation of genetic engineering methods has gained significant attention due to their potential to address the challenges of conservation by tackling issues raising the number of predictions.

As the Red List expands, new and innovative methods are explored by scientists, policymakers and ethicists. One of these methods is gene drive engineering. Characterised by their ability to alter the genetic makeup of species through biological inheritance, gene drives present a particularly interesting approach to conservation. While traditional methods of conservation rely on natural selection to spread desired genetic traits, gene drive mechanisms bias the inheritance process, ensuring that certain traits are passed onto offspring. Therefore, by targeting certain genetic traits, such as disease susceptibility and reproduction capability, gene drives offer the potential to significantly change conservation practices.

However, the use of gene drive technology raises various ethical considerations that must be addressed carefully. Many of these considerations stem from a debate in animal rights theory on whether humans should intervene in the livelihoods of non-human species. In the case of gene drive engineering, this debate is especially relevant since the method affects the species directly, as opposed to the traditional conservation efforts that affect their surrounding environments. The method raises the question of whether non-human animals should be left alone or if humans owe them moral obligations to help actively keep more species off the Red List.

It is also worthwhile to consider to which animal species, if any, humans owe moral obligations. This is especially the case for positive obligations, whereby humans actively intervene in efforts to help other species. Although traditional animal rights perspectives may advocate for preventing human

intervention in wild animals' livelihoods (Gamborg, Palmer, and Sandoe 2012), this approach can be considered unhelpful in gene drive discussions insofar as it provides no criteria constituting what makes an animal "wild". Many species choose to live in close proximity to humans, benefitting from human communities while holding a status distinct from wild and domesticated animals. Since the obligations humans owe to them may differ, it is essential to explore a framework addressing the concerns that arise from the human management of non-humans.

Furthermore, core political dimensions are at play in the ethical considerations of gene drive engineering. In investigating the relationship between climate and animal ethics, human interference, and obligations to others, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's citizenship framework should be consulted. As influential authors in animal rights fields, they offer a recon-

It is also worthwhile to consider to which animal species, if any, humans owe moral obligations.

ceptualisation of citizenship theory that includes the role of non-human animals in political communities. Their citizenship framework can be applied to the case of human interference via gene drives, resulting in a reflection on its usefulness in navigating the method's complexities given the urgency of the Red List's expansion.

This paper aims to examine the ethical dimensions of the prospective conservation method, focussing on insights from ethics, ecology and conservation biology. The examination will demonstrate these complex dimensions in terms of human interference and obligations to other species. It will first provide an overview of gene drive modification, analysing its capabilities and prospects. Following the analysis, the paper will explore the consequences gene drives can have on the target species alongside the ecosystems and communities in which they live. Next, Donaldson and Kymlicka's extension of animal rights via citizenship theory will be consulted, reflecting on the moral obligations owed to different groups of non-human animals. Their conceptualisation of animal citizenship will then be used as a lens through which the themes of intercommunity interaction, agency and responsibility can be applied to gene drive inquiry. This exploration will lead to the conclusion that Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework provides a nuanced approach to intervention that is useful in navigating gene drive ethics insofar as humans have different, complex responsibilities to different kinds of animals.

Exploring Gene Drives and Their Ethical Dimensions

Due to the rapid expansion of the Red List of Endangered Species, biologists and ethicists alike have begun to consider modifying the gene sequences of species in order to conserve or increase endangered populations. A particularly intriguing variation of this research concerns gene drives, defined as “systems of biased inheritance in which the ability of a genetic element to pass from a parent to its offspring through sexual reproduction is enhanced” (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine 2016, 15). Therefore, gene drive technology aims to spread a desired trait throughout a species’ population through reproduction, ranging from decreased disease susceptibility to the decreased reproduction of invasive species.

The attractiveness of gene drives is found in their ability to offer new strategies for conservation when other methods are ineffective. For instance, a study conducted by Antoni Margalida outlines the use of supplementary feeding strategies in rearing bearded vulture chicks, a Red List species, in the Spanish Pyrenees. Despite his research demonstrating a widespread use of supplementary food provisions in the conservation of scavenger species (Margalida 2010, 673), the strategy was ineffective in increasing the success of rearing the chicks. Margalida concludes his research paper by considering the application of other conservation strategies whereby humans intervene in the procuring of necessary resources for the bearded vultures’ wellbeing. Nevertheless, the proposed functions of gene drive engineering could be beneficial in efforts to optimise the chicks’ survival. Since the technology promises to be “effective in reaching the entirety” of a target-specific population (Sandler 2019, 223), gene drives are considered a potentially groundbreaking conservation method.

Furthermore, a feature unique to gene drive engineering is the use of modification technology (such as CRISPR) to actively copy a fabricated mutation from one individual’s chromosome to its partner chromosome (Caplan et al. 2015, 1422). This process means that almost all of a parent’s offspring will inherit the same mutation (desired trait). In contrast, other forms of genetic modification modify only one chromosome (Esvelt and Gemmell 2017, 3), resulting in a 50:50 chance of inheritance. Over generations, this continuous inheritance would significantly alter the population of a species, also impacting other species that rely on it for sustenance.

Gene drives entail the biased inheritance of a selected genetic trait, meaning that its likelihood of passing from a parent to its offspring is optimal. In order to better understand the methods that could benefit the conservation of Red List species like the bearded vulture, an exploration of research conducted by The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine will prove useful. In a collaborative publication, researchers

from the association explain that gene drives offer two key population control methods. The first of these methods is called ‘population replacement’, which refers to the “spread of a genetic element through a population that causes a population’s genotype to change” (The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine 2016, 16). Consequently, a species is ‘replaced’ because its genetic makeup changes as new generations carry the desired mutation. This method could be applied to projects like the conservation of bearded vultures in the Spanish Pyrenees by optimising chicks’ digestive systems in attempts to decrease the (hatchling) mortality rate.

On the other hand, the second method is called ‘population suppression’, referring to the “spread of a genetic element that causes the number of individuals in a population to decrease” (The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine 2016, 16). With this method, the biased trait inherited by a parent’s offspring may be maleness, for instance, resulting in decreased overall fertility of a population. Population suppression aims to decrease the population of invasive species in an effort to conserve local biodiversity. Therefore, the application of gene drive engineering to endangered and invasive species is a crucial development that proposes to effectively target an entire local population of a species.

A species can be ‘replaced’ because its genetic makeup changes as new generations carry the desired mutation.

Nonetheless, a series of ethical questions arise in discussions surrounding the use of gene drive engineering. For decades, animal rights theorists have debated whether “wildlife policy” (Gamborg, Palmer, and Sandoe 2012), guidelines for human interference in non-human livelihoods, should leave non-domesticated animals alone. In particular, many traditional animal rights perspectives have argued that humans have no right or duty to manage non-domesticated animals. In this view, animals have shared capacities with humans, such as the ability to feel pain or self-sustain, implying their ownership of moral rights. Hence, they maintain that animals possess the (moral) right to live without human meddling, as seen in confinement, culling, and other forms of management.

However, in debates concerning the extent of human interference in non-human livelihoods, “respect for nature” perspectives have also emerged (Gamborg, Palmer and Sandoe 2012). This view often advocates for human interference insofar as it protects the integrity of an ecosystem. It also maintains that species’ moral significance depends on “how far they promote or threaten the key environmental values at stake” (Gamborg, Palmer and

Sandoe 2012). Thus, while traditional animal rights theorists argue that humans should not interfere with non-domesticated animals, other perspectives maintain that a species may be protected or culled depending on how it alters the perceived value of its ecosystem. Since the new gene drive technology places a focus on target species themselves instead of conditions affecting the species, it is important to consider the potential consequences of interacting with non-human communities.

In their research report, Caplan et al. claim that manipulating non-human species' genes could have detrimental effects, "not all of which concern only humans, but also other species and the environment" (1421). Consequently, the human interference and management of (non-domesticated) species have crucial implications for the ecosystems in which they live. Alongside the target species, gene drives have the potential to disrupt the livelihoods of many others due to the impact of population suppression on food webs, for instance. The research report also demonstrates that several academic centres and private biotechnology labs have started to investigate the reduction of some insect species' lifespans and reproduction in efforts to prevent the spread of diseases they may carry to humans (Caplan et al. 2015, 1422). While humans may consider these insects pests, one must also consider the consequences of reducing their populations for species that rely on them as food sources. Therefore, although this approach to gene editing appears useful at first glance, one must consider its impact on communities other than humans.

Another concern raised by these researchers regards oversight of the modification and release of genetically edited organisms. Specifically, they draw on the necessity of effectively monitoring organisms edited by gene drive technology. Claiming that the current framework for international

The human interference and management of (non-domesticated) species have crucial implications for the ecosystems in which they live.

regulations fails to "foster public trust in the safety" of the technology (Caplan et al. 2015, 1422), they are sceptical about the management of genetically modified organisms in the wild. Their concern further highlights the stakes of the debate on whether humans should interfere with non-human livelihoods, especially when the capabilities and usefulness of human management are questionable.

Therefore, developments in gene drive research bring forth a host of ethical discussions surrounding human intervention and management of

other species. Notably, one must question whether humans have responsibilities to maintain in their interactions with non-human communities, and if so, which framework could be applied in this case. While traditional animal rights theorists have long debated the extent of human involvement with non-domesticated species, gene drives entail the direct management of the target species instead of their surrounding environments. Due to this development, a more nuanced conceptual framework is needed.

Donaldson and Kymlicka's Citizenship Framework and Its Relevance to Gene Drives

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's *Zoopolis* (2011) is considered a widely influential contemporary work in the domain of animal rights theory. Considering the intersection of moral obligations and the various ways non-human animals relate to human societies, they offer a political approach to animal ethics. In doing so, they reflect on "relationships of cooperation, of collective self-government and of histories of interaction and injustice" (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015). Their ideas are relevant to ethical discussions surrounding gene drives due to the complexity of interspecies relations at play. Nonetheless, before one can apply Donaldson and Kymlicka's work to the ethical dilemmas of gene drive engineering, a broadened understanding of the connection between citizenship theory and animal ethics in their work is necessary.

An important point of analysis concerns Donaldson and Kymlicka's conceptualisation of citizenship. In *Zoopolis* (2011), they begin their discussion of animal rights and citizenship theory by distinguishing between universal (human) rights and citizenship rights. The former, universal rights, do not depend on an individual's relationship to a particular political community (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 52). Consider an example of passengers disembarking from a plane to illustrate this concept. When the passengers leave the plane, everyone has certain foundational rights, such as the right not to be enslaved and the right not to be killed.

Nonetheless, some passengers, such as tourists, are temporary visitors to the country. These passengers do not have an "unqualified right to enter the country" insofar as they may have needed permission to enter, and they may not have permission to settle permanently (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 51). Similarly, the destination country is not obligated to adapt their political institutions to accommodate the temporary visitors. On the other hand, citizenship rights are dependent on an individual's relationship to a particular political community. Citizens are the passengers who disembark the aircraft with the unqualified right to enter and reside in the destination country. In this sense, once they enter, citizens are "full and equal members

of the political community” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 51). This means that their concerns and opinions play an equal part in determining what is considered to be the public good. Thus, one always has universal rights regardless of their location and relationship to a particular political community. Alternatively, one only has citizenship rights when they are situated within a political community in which they are a member.

However, Donaldson and Kymlicka’s extension of animal rights via citizenship theory emphasises that the analogy of passengers disembarking the plane is an oversimplification. While it paints a clear picture of what is meant by “universal rights” and “citizenship rights”, the authors imply that the rigid categories of citizen and non-citizen do not reflect reality. In a later publication, they expand on this notion, claiming that there are “various ‘in-between’ categories of people who are more than mere visitors but not (or not yet) citizens” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015). For instance, immigrants may receive residence permits for long-term stays in a country. In this case, they have a different political standing from temporary visitors despite not having citizenship. Yet, they also have a different political standing from citizens. Nonetheless, despite categorisations of citizens, non-citizens, and those in between, an underlying principle within Donaldson and Kymlicka’s analysis is that “universal human rights under-determines one’s legal rights and political status” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015).

Donaldson and Kymlicka apply their understanding of citizens, non-citizens, and those in between to animal rights. Like humans, they suggest that the moral standing of non-human animals under-determines the rights humans owe to them. Nevertheless, they maintain that the rights owed to animals “will vary with the types of relationships they have with human communities” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015). Aiming to demonstrate that a framework of citizenship theory can be applied to animal rights, Donaldson and Kymlicka propose three descriptions of animals that will prove useful in distinguishing the characteristics of a citizen. The first description concerns animals who are fellow citizens of a (human) political community. The two authors explain that these animals have the right to reside in and return to the shared political community while also having the right to the inclusion of their interests in determining the public good (2011, 53). Animals that are fellow citizens tend to be domesticated animals due to the intimacy and proximity of their relations with humans.

Next, Donaldson and Kymlicka describe animals who are citizens of their own separate communities, situated in their own bounded territories that are not shared with humans. In regard to these animals, the main obligation humans have towards them is “to comply with fair terms of inter-community interaction” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 58), meaning that

humans should not intervene in the framework of their community. Therefore, Donaldson and Kymlicka maintain that animals that are members of their own separate communities are generally considered wild animals, vulnerable to “human invasion and colonization” (Nurse and Ryland 2013, 203).

Lastly, the third description concerns animals that are residents of the human political community without being full citizens. Donaldson and Kymlicka claim that the main obligation humans have towards them is “to respect their rights as side-constraints on how we pursue our public good” (2011, 53). These animals may be described as “liminal opportunist animals” (Nurse and Ryland 2013, 203) due to their choice to move in or out of areas of human habitation. Thus, Donaldson and Kymlicka provide three descriptions of animals that function as the basis on which non-humans can be included in the political framework of citizenship theory.

A significant feature considered to be a characteristic of citizenship in the theory is political agency. Donaldson and Kymlicka claim that if they “accepted that animals are incapable of domestic political agency, it would not follow that citizenship theory is irrelevant to thinking about their rights” (2011, 53). In this sense, political agency is not a criterion of citizenship; it is one of several features. However, they maintain that animals can be capable of political agency, reconceptualising the term as a “cluster of values” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 53) such as autonomy, trust, authenticity and self-determination. In this regard, acknowledging someone’s citizenship means respecting these values.

Donaldson and Kymlicka also endorse animal or human citizenship through a “‘dependent’, ‘assisted’ or ‘interdependent’ agency” (2011, 60). This form of agency offers an inclusive perspective on the values it entails. One may reflect on moments in which everybody is, at some point, in need of assisted agency. For example, young children need assisted agency to help them understand new phenomena and express their frustrations. This form of agency can range from the explanation of political debates to the expression of trust seen in puppy training classes. Consequently, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that a notion of citizenship should uphold the value of agency while also acknowledging that “capacities for agency expand and contract over time” (2011, 60). Hence, agency is not a rigid criterion of citizenship. Instead, it unravels through one’s interactions with others.

Overall, Donaldson and Kymlicka’s application of citizenship theory to political animal rights provides an interesting foundation for exploring the ethical dimensions of gene drive engineering. Notably, their argumentation can serve as a framework for understanding the status of individuals in relation to a political community. In the context of gene drive engineering,

the manipulation of non-human animals raises questions about the rights and ethical considerations owed to them. An especially relevant reflection includes Donaldson and Kymlicka's three descriptions of animals: fellow citizens of a political community, citizens of their own separate communities, and those who may be residents of a political community without full citizenship. A fruitful discussion of this conceptualisation in the ethics of gene drive engineering can consider potential differences in obligations towards animals based on which of the three descriptions fits them best.

Similarly, Donaldson and Kymlicka's emphasis on the role of political agency is also relevant to ethical discussions about gene drives. Since they acknowledge that an animal may require a form of assisted agency, one may consider applying it to genetic modifications in cases such as reducing disease susceptibility. Alongside this, an evaluation of the ethical concerns surrounding gene drive engineering may consider the modification's impact on an animal's autonomy, trust, self-determination, etc. Since these are some of the values that constitute political agency, a discussion of how it may influence human intervention is relevant.

Applying Donaldson and Kymlicka's Citizenship Framework to Human Intervention via Gene Drives

When applying Donaldson and Kymlicka's citizenship framework to human intervention via gene drives, it is useful to consider the ethical implications of directly managing each of the three animal categories. Since they maintain that wild non-citizens, (non-human) citizens, and liminal residents without citizenship are owed different moral obligations, the degree of intervention permitted may differ. Therefore, their framework can help unravel whether managing non-humans in gene drive modification is too intrusive and, if not, when it may be an ethically viable option.

Donaldson and Kymlicka suggest that wild animals neither want nor need an active relationship with humans, especially not the direct management of their livelihoods. As a result, they advocate for wild animal sovereignty, which means that wild animals are free of human management insofar as they meet their own social and sustenance needs. Nonetheless, the authors provide a more nuanced view than the traditional animal rights approaches arguing that humans should leave wild animals alone entirely. At the same time, their view is more considerate of animals' universal rights than the "respect for nature" perspectives that endorse the management of non-humans based on their own ideas of an ecosystem's worth (Gamborg, Palmer, and Sandoe 2012). Notably, the authors claim that the question one should ask is: "what are the appropriate sorts of relations between human and wild animal communities?" (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 166). In this

sense, they do not believe that there should not be any relationships between humans and wild animals at all. Yet, they also do not support an active relationship that manages and may ultimately affect their capabilities to self-sustain. Thus, Donaldson and Kymlicka provide an approach to human intervention that considers the intricacy of the balance between meddling and conservation.

Particularly, they claim that although humans should be careful in justifying interference with non-human communities, “this does not mean that all conservation interventions are illegitimate” (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 180). Consequently, their framework aspires to provide a conceptual lens through which humans recognise that they have no right to dominate animal territories while acknowledging that they may react to urgent circumstances, such as a species’ addition to the Red List. Therefore, one could apply this notion to gene drive modification by considering it a potential last resort. The nature of gene drives is more intrusive than other conservation methods as it affects the target animals directly. Despite this intrusiveness, the framework may be compatible with using population replacement gene drive modification in dire wild animal cases whereby other conservation strategies are either unsuccessful or do not achieve results fast enough. One could argue this is the case in Margalida’s study of rearing bearded vulture chicks (2010).

Donaldson and Kymlicka provide an approach to human intervention that considers the intricacy of the balance between meddling and conservation.

Furthermore, within Donaldson and Kymlicka’s framework, domesticated animals are the only non-humans considered fellow citizens to humans. Although they reflect on how domestication has been historically exploitative (2011, 88), domesticated animals have formed co-dependent interspecies relationships with humans that are compatible with co-citizenship. Their domestication has caused them to adapt to human society, which “closes off their alternatives” (Nurse and Ryland 2013, 203). Thus, in Donaldson and Kymlicka’s framework, their preferences should be considered in the determination of the public good. While non-human animals cannot vote in elections, for instance, their active presence in a community suggests that they have a moral status that deserves equal consideration to all other (human) citizens. As citizenship entails active participation in a

political community, domesticated animals have responsibilities to humans, too, such as the responsibility (to be trained) not to bite them. This notion reflects the equal standing of domestic animals in a community.

Therefore, following the conceptualisation of domesticated animals as citizens in (human) political communities, one must question whether gene drives could permissibly be used to optimise the genetic makeup of a fellow citizen. As Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that not all conservation methods are illegitimate, the same line of argumentation could be applied to one's fellow citizens, regardless of species. Donaldson and Kymlicka hold that "new models of 'dependent agency' or 'supported decision-making'" are required (2011, 59) when considering an animal's best interests in topics like gene drive engineering. They refute outdated models such as paternalistic guardianship whereby a human will make decisions about an animal such as their pet. Instead, they advocate for updated models that seek ways of "eliciting a person's sense of their subjective good, often through 'embodied' rather than verbal communication" (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 59).

Similarly, human citizens also require assisted or dependent agency, such as when suffering from illness. In these situations, loved ones often make decisions on behalf of an individual, upholding Donaldson and Kymlicka's values of agency, such as trust, which unravel in their relationships. A similar circumstance may occur for domesticated animals, such as genetically modifying dogs carrying the canine parvovirus - a genetic virus "quickly spread among dog populations all over the world with high morbidity" (Li et al. 2017). In this case, the nature of dogs' subjective good within a political community is discovered through learning their temperaments in unravelling interspecies relations with them. Assisted agency could be applied, meaning that a human may choose to use population replacement gene drives, removing the parvovirus carrier gene to ensure the health of generations of dogs with whom they work and interact.

However, while animal citizens of (human) political communities have responsibilities towards humans and vice versa, animals in their own external communities also have relationships with each other. Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that humans must "comply with fair terms of intercommunity interaction" (2011, 58). This principle should apply to both wild and liminal non-citizens, even when humans may not fully understand their intricate relationships with each other. Thus, one may argue that gene drives can potentially disrupt the frameworks of non-human communities, regardless of how their internal relations manifest. This is especially the case in population suppression gene drives since the decision to decrease a species' local population threatens the target and all other species with which it interacts. In a risk assessment of gene drive engineering, research from the

International Risk Governance Center demonstrates that the (re)introduction of a modified species can impact the health of other animal and plant species (Kuzma 2023, 55). Consequently, human interference in non-human livelihoods via gene drives does not comply with the intercommunity interaction terms established by Donaldson and Kymlicka. This is because the terms suggest that humans have no right to alter the structures and relationships between beings in communities where they are not members.

The dilemma gene drives face in the terms of fair intercommunity interaction is also echoed in the research report of Caplan et al. (2015). Suppose humans are permitted to intervene in non-human communities using gene drives. In that case, their management capabilities must be adequate to

Gene drives can potentially disrupt the frameworks of non-human communities, regardless of how their internal relations manifest.

avoid disrupting the constitution of ecosystems, at least to some extent. Nonetheless, the report demonstrates that many national and international regulations are insufficient in addressing the impact of genetically modifying organisms on other species within their ecosystems (Caplan et al. 2015, 1422). Consequently, one may argue that human regulatory bodies must strive to improve the effectiveness of their management before the application of gene drives to any non-citizen animals becomes compatible with Donaldson and Kymlicka's citizenship framework. This conclusion is important because, although the potential application of gene drives to domesticated animals may uphold mutual agency in cases such as canine parvovirus, almost all Red List species are non-domesticated (Hogeback 2023). Thus, their citizenship framework is useful because its applications can help identify additional work needed to ensure humans do not overstep the boundaries of fair intercommunity interaction in conservation.

Meanwhile, discussions surrounding human intervention in liminal non-citizen livelihoods may be considered even more complex. Liminal animals hold a political status in between that of citizens and non-citizens since they depend on human communities to some extent, e.g., for food sources, but do not actively interact with humans. Consequently, this limited degree of dependence means humans must "respect their rights as side-constraints on how we pursue our public good" (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 53). In considering the extent of intervention via gene drives, it is difficult to determine whether humans may modify liminal animals to optimise their health, as one may allow in the case of domesticated animals, or to

treat gene drives as a potential last resort, as argued in the case of Red Listed wild animals. In addressing this dilemma, one may consult a response to other liminal animal dilemmas like predation, as seen in a journal article by Andrée-Anne Cormier and Mauro Rossi (2016).

In their discussion of liminal animals, Cormier and Rossi demonstrate some assumptions made by Donaldson and Kymlicka in their framework. The first relevant to human intervention via gene drives is that liminal animals choose to avoid humans. The second assumption is that they would prefer the risks posed by other species and their environments to restrictions of liberty (Cormier and Rossi 2016, 731). In response to these assumptions, Cormier and Rossi claim that liminal animals' aversion to human intervention loses moral weight when their fundamental, universal rights are at stake (2016, 732). As Donaldson and Kymlicka intend to include animals in the human citizenship framework, they should be treated in the same way as humans. In particular, they liken liminal species to human denizens (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Cormier and Rossi 2016) - long-term residents settled within a state's borders while not possessing citizenship. Yet, even for human denizen groups that opt out of political membership, the state may intervene in managing threats to their safety and livelihoods. In this sense, like wild animals, one may consider using gene drives as a last resort in conserving endangered liminal species.

However, Cormier and Rossi's article discusses predation, which entails a host of dilemmas concerning the risks some species pose to others. As a result, they identify the incompatibility of Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework with interventions to prevent one non-human animal from harming another due to the notion that liminal (and wild) animals are capable of navigating observable risks in their own communities. This incompatibility is arguably reflected in applying their framework to population suppression gene drives since they include the reduction of populations considered invasive and posing risks to other species, human or otherwise. Nevertheless, it does not mean the citizenship framework is also incompatible with population replacement gene drives.

As seen in their potential to optimise domesticated animal citizens' health and to aid the conservation of non-citizen Red List species as a last resort, population replacement gene drives appear to fit into Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework. Since the method tackles often unobservable and genetic risks to animals that may not be instinctively detected in the way pigeons may evade cats, it is not plausible to rule out population replacement alongside population suppression. Thus, although the potential applications of population replacement should differ between citizens and non-citizens, Donaldson and Kymlicka offer a nuanced framework that helps navigate

a discussion on the degrees of human intervention for animals with different political statuses in light of the expanding Red List and other risks to non-human health.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Donaldson and Kymlicka's citizenship framework, applied to the ethical dimensions of human intervention via gene drive engineering, offers valuable insights into the intricate relationships between humans and animals. In analysing their framework, this paper explores the moral obligations owed to different categories of non-human animals and the ways in which these apply to the potential use of gene drives.

Within *Zoopolis* (2011), the authors distinguish three categories of animals: fellow citizens, wild animal citizens of separate sovereign communities, and liminal residents. By analysing the rights and responsibilities associated with each category, one can develop a nuanced understanding of the extent to which human intervention via gene drives may be ethically permissible. While (population replacement) gene drives may be considered respectful of these rights when optimising domesticated animals' health or as a last resort for conserving Red List species, the framework suggests that interventions should be carefully weighed against the autonomy of non-human animals.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the concept of political agency within Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework and its relevance to gene drive ethics. By acknowledging that animals possess political agency, although different from human agency, one must recognise the importance of respecting their interests and subjective good in decision-making processes. This perspective demonstrates the need for inclusive models of decision-making that allow a reflection on the livelihoods of non-human animals affected by gene drive interventions that move beyond domination and paternal guardianship.

Nonetheless, further complexities must be explored when applying this framework to gene drive technology, particularly concerning fair intercommunity interaction and the potential disruption of non-human communities. While gene drives offer conservation methods that can affect entire populations, they also pose significant risks to ecosystem integrity and the liberty of non-human species. Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework is useful in discussing these complexities because it acknowledges that there is no singular, fixed answer to questions surrounding human intervention. Therefore, the extent of this intervention must differ for different groups of animals, following the various degrees to which they interact with human communities.

Meanwhile, the type of intervention is important, too. Gene drives may be considered more intrusive than other conservation strategies, as they affect the target species rather than its surrounding environment. Consequently, the citizenship framework is incompatible with population suppression gene drives. For Donaldson and Kymlicka, one must respect that (wild and liminal) animals are capable of navigating observable risks in their own communities. Alternatively, population replacement gene drives appear to be compatible with Donaldson and Kymlicka's approach, given their potential to optimise domesticated animal citizens' health and to aid the conservation of non-citizen Red List species as a last resort. Nonetheless, this compatibility requires that a more effective regulatory framework is developed to avoid as much disruption to ecosystems as possible.

Overall, Donaldson and Kymlicka's citizenship framework provides

The extent of this intervention must differ for different groups of animals, following the various degrees to which they interact with human communities.

a useful conceptual lens for navigating the ethical complexities of human intervention with non-human species in gene drive engineering. By emphasising the importance of respecting the rights owed in various political communities, the framework encourages a nuanced approach in light of the expanding Red List and other risks to non-human health.

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SPLIJTSTOF

Whispers of Vanity

Unmasking the Hopes and Dreams in Wilde's Classic

Caetana Ribeiro da Cunha

“He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.”

The Picture of Dorian Gray is an aesthetic book that is a treat for anyone who enjoys philosophy, literature, and the arts. The book goes into all of these in great detail, while providing the reader with some of the most intense internal conflicts in classic literature. It is a fascinating, absurd, and horrifying story about how a person's individual interests and vanity can affect not only their life, but that of everyone around them. Oscar Wilde's focus on beauty, ugliness, youth, old age, and all that comes in between makes this one of his most important pieces to date as well as an essential book to read. By putting all of the reader's own desires, hopes and dreams in the spotlight, the book calls out our own morality and the importance that we attribute to the vainer things in life, while comparing it to the frivolous, majestic, bon-vivant and careless lifestyle of the careless, the vexed, the one and only: Dorian Gray.

To understand how this wonderful book relates to the hopes and dreams that are attached to our mode of living, we must first and foremost know what the story is about. The story begins when the artist Basil Hallward

By putting all of the reader's own desires, hopes and dreams in the spotlight, the book calls out our own morality and the importance that we attribute to the vainer things in life.

presents Lord Henry, his close friend, to Dorian Gray, his most recent muse and fascination. Dorian Gray is a captivating young man, known for his remarkable looks and charming way of being. This beauty not only captivates Basil Hallward, who decides to dedicate a large portion of his time to painting Gray, but also Lord Henry, a man of high society who is equally fascinated by Dorian's youth and beauty. Lord Henry is a very philosophical man, always keen on presenting his interlocutors with debates and creating turmoil within every conversation he has, promoting in himself a sort of intellectual superiority for having access to the greatest books. But despite this

interest in intellect, he is still a mere mortal and therefore also very focused on appearances. In fact, he influences Gray, on one of their first encounters, to realize that “when one loses one’s good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything, [...] Youth is the only thing worth having” (Wilde 2012, 26).

Upon this encounter, where the artist is painting the young man, Basil realizes that this is the best painting he had ever created, and therefore gives the piece to Dorian, his muse. Upon reflecting on the painting, Dorian realizes how truly beautiful and young he is, and wishes to never age himself, and let the man on the painting age and wither away. Locking the painting away, deciding to never see it again, Dorian moves on with his young, promising, desirable and beauty-filled life.

Fast forward some time, with a formed friendship between Dorian Gray and Lord Henry, one filled with debate and conversations, Dorian falls in love with a beautiful, young actress with the name of Sybil Vane. Sybil plays several different classical characters, all of which with such love, sincerity, beauty and earnest that Dorian proposes to her, on a whim. He soon finds out, however, that the person he was in love with is not the innocent Sybil, but the characters she plays. Hurting her to her core, he breaks off their engagement in a very blunt, coarse way.

Once he returns home, in a fit of introspection, he decides to take another look at the mighty painting that Basil Hallward had painted. Upon this, he finds that the man on the canvas had become uglier than before, forcing him to realize how harshly he has treated the poor girl and attempts to repent. However, the next morning, on preparing to meet her and apologize, he hears that Sybil Vane has tragically died, assumedly taking her own life, due to the heartbreak. Sybil Vane, a girl whose personality was not half as vain as her name, was destroyed by a man who many could consider to be the vainest of them all.

Indignant with all that had occurred, Dorian attempts to move on with his life when Lord Henry offers him a book, one which soon becomes Dorian’s Bible. The book follows the story of a Frenchman who lives life attending to his every whim and desire, seeking pleasure and new sensations above all else. For the next two decades, in a life full of sin, disgrace, shame, pleasure, bliss, luxury, thrill and immorality, Dorian travels to several places in order to live a life filled with new sensations, as Lord Henry and the book had advised him.

He returns to his home in London once he is more prominently talked about within his circle. Although he is the object of gossip, people can never truly hate him because his beauty and youth are unmatched and purely

supernatural. While his body rejoices and remains the same as 18 years ago, the picture locked away in the hidden room withers and turns as hideous as one can be.

Eventually, his old friend Basil confronts Dorian on his new ways of life and is aghast when Dorian shows him the painting in his ugliest form, demonstrating Dorian's true soul. Basil begs Dorian to repent for his sins and to find morality in an immoral life. In a sort of tantrum of agony, rage and frustration, Dorian stabs Basil to death, refusing to forgive him for having created such a horrible creature as the one in the painting.

He then calls on another friend of his, a doctor, blackmailing him to help dispose of the body. Giving the doctor the time and space to take care of the body he had violently killed, Dorian goes to an opium den. Here, he enters a minor conflict with Sybil Vane's older brother, James, who tries to avenge his sister's death. Scared, for having killed a man and been threatened by another, Dorian Gray flees to his estate, where he expects peace and quiet. Dorian eventually finds James there, waiting and lurking on him, prepared for anything. However, in a hunting accident, before Dorian can do anything to protect himself, his own hunting party accidentally shoots James Vane. This finally provides safety for Dorian. While this happens, the doctor friend finds no way of coping with what he had done for Dorian and he, too, takes his own life, for what the bon-vivant had forced him to gruesomely do.

Dorian Gray then returns to his home, in a huge house filled with only him, his servants, and an obnoxiously painful reflection of his own life in a locked room. The room is his crime scene, the murder location of one of his closest, oldest friends. Dorian confronts himself, realizing all that he had done, counting all the people who had died because of him. Realizing all the blood that lies on his sinful hands, Dorian picks up the same knife he had used to kill Basil Hallward and tries to destroy the painting. Upon hearing a crash, his servants enter the forbidden room and find their master, with a knife in his heart, uglier than ever before, lying absurdly on the floor, putting an end to an unbearable, insufferable, despicable life.

In a strangely horrifying way, Wilde has managed, in this short novella, to present us with an incredibly internally tortured man. This is a man who pays no attention to his consequences, who lives his own life searching for that which he and only he desires, without moral concerns, and freely and candidly attending to his own dreams and hopes to live a carefree life.

The biggest message to obtain from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* seems to be quite cliché in a much more sophisticated, philosophical, and beautiful way; something which can essentially be summed down to "be careful what you wish for". We learn that although each one of us has, indeed and rightly

so, their own aspirations – which in this case was to do certifiably nothing – there are other things to consider in the life we lead. There are people who walk with us in our life, like the young innocent Sybil Vane, who are hurt by the words we speak. There are friends of ours, like Basil Hallward, that take an interest in us and genuinely care about our wellbeing. There are people like Dr. Campbell, who get unwillingly involved in our own messes and for some reason end up having to clean them up all while dealing with their own internal conflicts – and sometimes, like Dr. Campbell, they do not survive them.

Of course, a short paragraph on the ongoing theme of beauty and ugliness is also worthy. It is significant to understand how beauty has always played such an important role in our societies. From 19th century society where word of mouth was the main way of communication to now, where we are constantly bombarded by information and pictures of beauty, we can acknowledge that Dorian Gray would never have survived in the 21st century. This is because he would never be able to properly hide the dreadful picture: the digital footprint in today's day would never allow one to fully hide away

There are certain dreams, hopes, and wishes that are better off in our own heads, because sometimes they catch up to us.

a picture which unsettles one as much as the painting did for Dorian Gray. His constant efforts to hide a picture which, to him, symbolizes the deterioration of his own soul ends up corrupting him, for fear of how ugly he could become. In reality, he was already becoming an ugly creature by hiding it in the first place.

At the end of the day, it is about the importance we give to people like Lord Henry, to the pretentiousness of living a grand, dreamy life, without a realistic vision of what life is actually like. There are certain dreams, hopes, and wishes that are better off in our own heads, because sometimes they catch up to us and, like they did Basil Hallward, eat us up, day by day, until there is nothing left.

It is a magnificent piece that makes each of its readers carefully rethink their past actions, thinking about their own existence and what role they play in life. Are you a Basil Hallward, a Sybil Vane, a Lord Henry, a Dr. Campbell, or perhaps even, a Dorian Gray? If you fit in with the latter then I pray that you can recollect yourself, change your ways, read this novel, and let Wilde's incredibly philosophical statements reinvent yourself, hopefully for the better.

On his first encounter with Lord Henry, the tragic day, Dorian claimed that “when I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself” (Wilde 2012, 26) and indeed he did. Only, at that time, he probably did not yet know all the people, the hopes, and the dreams who would be killed along with him.

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Sowing Seeds of the Future

Mirte Debats

I hope for a Future
when We can just be,

when We don't have to choose
an identity,

when We can exist
in Our complexity,

I hope for a Future
when We can be free,

of every division,
class, and category,

restacking the deck,
of history,

I hope for a Future
without hostility,

when We put emphasis
on empathy,

when connection, compassion,
is all We see,

I hope for a Future
when We can just be,

I'm starting this Future
making it Reality,

do You hope for a Future,
when We can just be?

are You starting a Future,
this Future with Me?