THE GARDEN OF IDEAS

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

It is sometimes tempting to think of philosophy as an out-of-touch discipline in an increasingly technocratic world. In the face of a growing number of existential risks and their pressing demands for action, it often seems like we have less and less time for "philosophizing" about problems. Throughout its history, *The Garden of Ideas* has sought to challenge these perennial criticisms by showcasing the relevance that students at the University of Washington (and beyond) continue to find in philosophical questions, texts, and inquiry. This issue, my first as editor-in-chief, is no exception. In the pages that follow, our editors and contributors have curated a diverse range of pieces that confront the ethics of AI, epistemic injustice in healthcare, the nature of life and living, and other urgent philosophical questions of our time.

In his commentary, Andre Ye directly interrogates this topic—philosophy's relationship to our current condition—by posing the question: who are you to philosophy? Ye reminds us of the limits of philosophy, arguing that philosophical abstractions too often encourage a view-from-nowhere that obscures philosophy's connections to the problems we face in our own troubled lives. Yet, philosophy does not only give us tools to address our own problems, but is also indispensable in forcing us to confront the problems of others and think *beyond* ourselves. In this vein, Molly Banks draws from the wisdom of often-neglected indigenous philosophies to propose new ways of conceptualizing our relations to emerging AI technologies. And in his essay, Mitchell Klein traces the history of epistemic injustice in American healthcare to chart an informed and sensitive approach for addressing growing vaccine skepticism in communities around the country today.

We are also proud to include an ever-growing diversity of artistic pieces in this issue of *The Garden of Ideas*. In their respective poems, Nova Berger and Angelito Timbreza-Umagat explore dichotomies of human/nature and life/death, each affirming the vitality of the natural through their own unique lens. We are delighted to publish a philosophical cartoon from Tennessee Muldrow, the winner of our first philosophical cartoon contest, in collaboration with the Philosophy Club at the University of Washington. This issue additionally features photography from Evie Lucas, digital art from Micaela Adam, and digital collage pieces from Gwen Hall.

Finally, we are grateful for the continued support from the philosophy community at the University of Washington—especially Professor Colin Marshall, who we were fortunate to be able to interview in this issue about his upcoming work on Schopenhauer. In hopes of connecting more directly with our growing philosophical community, we are also very excited that this is the first issue of *The Garden of Ideas* to be published in print since 2021. Thank you to our readers, contributors, and

editors for joining us in celebrating the richness and diversity of undergraduate philosophical thought across the University of Washington.

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Andrew Shaw
Editor-in-Chief

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON'S
UNDERGRADUATE PHILOSOPHY JOURNAL

Commentary: Who are you to study philosophy?

Andre Ye

In the opening to his final book *What is Philosophy?*, Gilles Deleuze writes these heavy words:

> "*The question 'what is philosophy?' can perhaps be posed only late in life, with the arrival of old age and the time for speaking concretely. It is a question posed in a moment of quiet restlessness, at midnight, when there is no longer anything to ask. It was asked before; it was always being asked, but too indirectly or obliquely; the question was too artificial, too abstract. Instead of being seized by it, those who asked the question set it out and controlled it in passing. They were not sober enough. There was too much desire to do philosophy to wonder what it was, except as a stylistic exercise. That point of nonstyle where one can finally say, 'What is it I have been doing all my life?' had not been reached.*"[1]

Four years later, on November 4th, 1995, Deleuze jumped out of his Parisian apartment to his death.

Well, I think the time — or at least, *a time* — for speaking concretely has come for me. I am at the end of one of my lives — I'm a senior, finished with my course requirements for a bachelor's in philosophy and nearly finished for one in computer science too. I am seized by Deleuze's question "What is it I have been doing all my life?" but just as much seized by the question "What is it that I will do with the rest of it?" And insofar as philosophy has been central towards understanding and living my life, from that moment of quiet midnight restlessness surges the question "*what is philosophy?*" My aim in this commentary is to provide some thought on this question by connecting this question to a difficult and even hostile question: "*who am I to philosophy?*" That is, what is my relation to philosophy? — how does philosophy "look upon" me? — why do I turn towards it? — why do I care about this particular form of inquiry called "philosophy"? — am I a "philosopher"? — what right, rationale, or claim do I have to philosophy? — what purpose will I use it for? — could I live without philosophy?…

I only request the reader to acknowledge that my thoughts are partial and not whole, that I write from my own philosophical experience primarily to reflexively reflect upon it, and that I do not claim to preach a higher wisdom about the "true

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[1] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (Columbia University Press, 1994): 1.

nature" of philosophy towards anyone else, even though I hope that what I have to say resonates.

Who am I to philosophy? How neurotic and hostile this question can come off as! It's confrontational, as if to stick a hand in the budding philosopher's chest and lash: "Why do you think you belong to philosophy? What right have you to invoke the name and body of philosophy? Justify your claim to enter the realm of philosophy or thou shall not pass!" This seems to be an ugly sentiment to pin at the heart of philosophy. The philosophers that are most celebrated in the canon of philosophy appear never to doubt that they are "philosophers," portrayed as cool-headed, self-confident individuals piercing through intellectual cloudiness towards clarity and truth: Socrates bringing down fortresses of mistaken beliefs with friendly interrogation, Descartes throwing away the entire uncertain world to begin with his certain pure consciousness, Nietzsche boldly painting the portrait of the Overman who will reject slave morality… It feels that Socrates, Descartes, or Nietzsche never really asked that question "Who am I to philosophy?" in a serious, existential, anxious, crippling way, where upon inquiry one might discover that the answer is "nothing at all; there is no relation." It seems that even as they brutally dissected the most fundamental assumptions in understanding the world, that they were never seriously anxious that they might not be "real" philosophers, that perhaps their "philosophizing" was not needed or important. When enthusiastic students of philosophy enter its classrooms, they often (are taught to) emulate this image of the Greats: everyone can be a philosopher; everyone has a claim to philosophy; philosophy is so fundamental that its tentacles extend everywhere you can think and perhaps even beyond that; as philosophers, we question everything, but not that we can be or are philosophers. That is sacred. The philosophical community is supposed to be inclusive, universal, warm. If someone feels anxiety about whether or not they belong to the philosophical community, then it seems that philosophy has done something wrong by failing to be inclusive. Philosophical education repeats from Matthew: "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*"

When serious, anxious inquiry into that dirty question, "*Who am I to philosophy?*", is repressed, the budding philosopher becomes a caricatured canonical Socrates, Descartes, Nietzsche. They have taken their position within/belonging to philosophy for granted, and now go to work cutting up the world and breaking its joints: engaging in abstract, indulgent, highly intellectual philosophy, pursuing thoughtful discussion striving towards "truth" formed by knowing and deftly wielding lots of names for philosophical positions, appealing both towards the aesthetic of sophistry (getting into the fray of things, making cool-headed and sharp arguments, convincing the masses) and the integrity of Socrates (thoughtfulness, respect, concern for truth or truth-adjacent values). Call this approach "Classroom

Philosophy." By suspending the question *"Who am I to philosophy?"* by designating everyone a philosopher no-questions-asked, Classroom Philosophy has room to be respectable, to hear out everyone's arguments and concerns, to excite people about the interchange of ideas and arguments. And this is excellent. I love Classroom Philosophy; it's the context in which I entered philosophy, where I learned so much, which makes pedagogical sense as the way that introductory philosophy education is structured.

But there is trouble brewing in paradise. Consider Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan's insight about the production of documentaries:

> *"The documentary tradition is one that gives voice to the victim. For a long time, I have wondered about the function of the victim and to what extent facing the victim is, in fact, a redeeming act. I would say it's almost a Christian situation, where you have a victim that is suffering for you [the spectator] and through his suffering he redeems the spectator and more: He says, you are human because you feel my suffering. So it comforts the spectator, [affirming his] position of being the "good one". However, I am interested in interrogating the spectator, to ask him the question:* **What would you do? What are you?***"*[2]

I see a strong resemblance between the "Christianity" of the documentary tradition Sivan speaks of and the warm inclusion of Classroom Philosophy. Classroom Philosophy gives voice to the "victim-philosophers" who bleat out their ideas while redeeming the student for hearing them out and reconstructing their arguments, while (unintentionally) repressing the problems facing the student — ***What would you do? What are you? Who are you to philosophy?***

The problem with Classroom Philosophy is that repressing the question *"who are you to study philosophy?"* also represses the answer: *"...because I am a troubled human with problems to solve."* Classroom Philosophy requires a theater performance of debate and discussion, in which students play roles and re-enact narratives of how canonical philosophy plays out — e.g. as Socrates and as his interlocutor (victim?), as Aristotle against Plato, as Rousseau against (with?) Hobbes against (with?) Locke. When we are interpellated into the roles of Classroom Philosophy, we tend to lose attachment to our visceral, situated, lived, restless-at-midnight problems.

These problems can be existential — what am I doing with my life? What will I be when I die? How should I make *X* decision? They can be ethical — should I vote for Washington Initiative Measure No. 2066? What should I do, if anything, about the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza? Should I feel bad when I eat meat, and should I stop? What do I do with the homeless people living on the street below my window? The problems can be about language: we're trying to talk about an issue but seem to keep on talking "past each other," how can I get you to

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[2] Eyal Sivan, "Against forgetting: An interview with Eyal Sivan," interview by Charlotte Silver, *Al Jazeera*, November 12, 2012, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2012/11/12/against-forgetting-an-interview-with-eyal-sivan.

understand my meaning? What is meaning? I was called a slur; what should I do about it? And what really is a slur anyway? They can be about science: how can we be sure about our scientific knowledge? It feels like scientific progress isn't progressing; what exactly is scientific progress? But I don't think we can replace, for example, the ethical question of what to do about Israel/Palestine, about abortion, etc. with the ethical questions of why I should save a child drowning in a lake, the trolley problem, and the other such problems that analytic ethics have offered. Certainly, they may be useful tools to help us think about our visceral, restless-at-midnight problems. But shouldn't we be more preoccupied with why these tools are useful to our problems, like Philippa Foot was when she introduced the trolley problem to think about abortion, than with the tools themselves? Shouldn't we investigate if these thought experiments really do generalize to the ethical situations that we care about, before we invest our time and cognitive effort into them? (I suspect they often do not). Otherwise, debating thought experiments becomes another instance of Classroom Philosophy, "redeeming" and "comforting the [student-]spectator" — perhaps useful for making us better actors and sophists, but not for addressing our problems.

On matters of ethics, I appeal to British moral philosopher Iris Murdoch, who lucidly describes how we might move beyond our voyeuristic obsession over dilemmas of choice in moral thought experiments (should I pull the trolley lever or not? would you choose to enter Nozick's experience machine? are you obligated to save a drowning child if at minimal cost?) towards "moral vision" and "moral freedom," an approach to ethics more situated in our problems:

> "*[T]here are 'moral facts' in the sense of moral interpretations of situations where the moral concept in question determines what the situation is, and if the concept is withdrawn then we are not left with the same situation or the same facts. In short, if moral concepts are regarded as deep moral configurations of the world, rather than as lines drawn round separable factual areas, then there would be no facts 'behind them' for them to be erroneously defined in terms of. There is nothing sinister about this view; freedom here will consist, not in being able to lift the concept off the otherwise unaltered facts and lay it down elsewhere, but in being able to 'deepen' or 'reorganize' the concept or change it for another one. On such a view, … moral freedom looks more like a mode of reflection which we may have to achieve, and less like a capacity to vary our choices which we have by definition.*"[3]

On matters like philosophy of science, philosophy of language, etc., shouldn't we first become deeply acquainted with the problems that give rise to these fields — e.g. experience the struggle of introductory physics, the (in?)congruence between classical and quantum mechanics, trying to learn another language, getting called a slur/misgendered/verbally harassed — *and then* read Popper, Kuhn, (Wimsatt), Frege, Russell, (Butler)?

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[3] Iris Murdoch, "Vision and Choice in Morality," in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. Peter Conradi (Penguin Press, 1998): 95.

So let our philosophizing be about the freedom for reflection, in Murdoch's words, with attachment to our problems, and not solely or even primarily the indulgent autopoietic debate over capital-F Facts and recapitulation of capital-T Theories. As Deleuze writes in *What is Philosophy?*: "*When Foucault admires Kant for having posed the problem of philosophy, not in relation to the eternal but in relation to the Now, he means that the object of philosophy is not to contemplate the eternal, nor to reflect on history, but to diagnose our actual becomings.*"[4] When we come across a choice between philosophical positions, let us ask the methodological question "what is the deciding criterion immanent to the problem?" and never forget nor cease revising our answer to the question "what is our problem?" We just might realize, as I have many times in the past, that this kind of consciousness resolves many distinctions without differences (relative to our problems), and reframes conversations in much more productive directions.

As such, I follow many "pragmatist" philosophers — Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, Richard Rorty, William Wimsatt — in their emphasis on knowledge as dynamic, truth as practical, and inquiry as social. But I also follow Deleuze, who is a pragmatist in one sense but also declared himself a "pure metaphysician": my pragmatism is not one which makes philosophy into a purely reactive self-help drug injection to make our problems go away as fast as possible, as in a caricature of pragmatist philosophy. Philosophy innovates new concepts, new modes of existence, new ways of seeing and thinking for our problems — our being ("I") and our time ("now"). Hegel's suggestion that "the owl of minerva flies only at dusk" is often interpreted as a lament that philosophy (the owl of minerva standing for wisdom) only gets to work after the event has occurred and the problem has manifested. But perhaps we should interpret it this way: we only know that it is dusk when the owl of minerva sets flight — we only discover the problem, see it in a full and clear light, when we philosophize. Therefore, while this commentary's reorientation of philosophy around problems has rendered it reactive (to problems) in one way, it has a new *active* role to play in *understanding* the problems we had all along, in *creating* new modes of existence, and in *introducing* important problems into our lives.

If I do not have a problem X, then do I really need to philosophize about X? Hume appears to suggest that we do not: "*I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.*"[5] We do not always need to philosophize: if there is and will be no dusk on the horizon, then there is no point in the owl of minerva taking flight. Philosophy is not the frame by which we need to approach all things in the world, or even all problems. Read some history, study some

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[4] Deleuze and Guatarri, *What is Philosophy?*, 112.
[5] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1739): 269.

physics, travel and experience the Other, be merry among friends. The lurking Socratic-Platonist in us may look suspiciously at this view and spits, "these are the dirty ways of sophists"; "philosophy is king"; "*the unexamined life is not worth living*." **But it is really through living that we understand what is worth examining** (that is, genuine problems). The problems that matter will confront us at the "right time" in life, and when they do, they will be inescapable until they are addressed. Consider former Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, quoting the Kohelet / Ecclesiastes at the ground-breaking 1993 Oslo I Accords advancing Israeli-Palestinian relations: "*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under Heaven; a time to be born and a time to die; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time of peace. Ladies and gentlemen, the time for peace has come*." The world that we live in, and the World that is the I, has no shortage of problems. (Rabin was assassinated two years later; the Oslo talks entirely collapsed in 2000). We will know where and when it is time to philosophize. Philosophy is a powerful tool — but it does not have to be and is not, all-welcoming, all-embracing, all-applicable, warmly inclusive. Re-introduce the Other into philosophy that we encountered when we were all, at some point, *the Other to philosophy* — struggle with it, love it, abandon it, pick a fight with it. As Heidegger highlighted in his existential phenomenology, our use of tools can make us more reflective and attentive towards ourselves and the world, but only if we are not absorbed completely into them, if they can *break* and cease to be useful: we need some sense of alterity from our tools; we cannot belong entirely to them. The problems will guide us on how to use philosophy. We should be wary of assassinating the Other to philosophy in our engagement with philosophy, of identifying too all-consumingly and enthusiastically with the figure of the philosopher, of reverent obedience to the fanatic injunction "*it is always time to do philosophy*."

I close with the words of Deleuze.

> "*We sometimes go on as though people can't express themselves. In fact they're always expressing themselves… it's not a problem of getting people to express themselves but of providing little gaps of solitude and silence in which they might eventually find something to say. Repressive forces don't stop people expressing themselves but rather force them to express themselves; What a relief to have nothing to say, the right to say nothing, because only then is there a chance of framing the rare, and ever rarer, thing that might be worth saying.*"[6]

In those little gaps of solitude, let us ask ourselves the uncomfortable question: *Who am I to philosophy — here, now?* Let us young people ask this question long before we metaphorically jump out of our Parisian apartments. Let us set flight towards the next day's dawn after flapping through the dark that befalls dusk. And let us speak only when we have posited an answer.

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[6] Gilles Deleuze, "Mediators," in *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (Columbia University Press, 1995): 129.

Dimensions of Dialogue

Gwen Hall

inspired by Jan Svankmajer's "Dimensions of Dialogue."

AI as Kin: Developing Ethical Relationships with AI

Molly Banks

Introduction

As artificial intelligence edges toward unprecedented levels of sophistication, questions about how to build ethical relationships with potentially conscious AI have become prominent in both philosophical and technological discourse. This paper explores two perspectives on approaching ethical relationships with AI that emerge from these conversations. First, I reconstruct Susan Schneider's Precautionary Principle, focusing on her approach to avoiding ethical catastrophe as AI evolves. Next, I present key themes and perspectives from North American and Oceanic indigenous traditions which offer an alternative method for developing and maintaining ethical relationships with AI. I argue that Schneider's method relies on an ill-defined consciousness hardline and employs paternalistic Western ontologies that assign moral status hierarchically. In contrast, a method grounded in North American and Oceanic indigenous ethics includes AI in moral consideration without depending on a narrowly defined concept of consciousness. I argue that by escaping the all-or-nothing view of moral status and rejecting the paternalism inherent in Schneider's approach, this alternative offers a more inclusive and robust framework for developing ethical relationships with AI amidst the uncertainty that an AI intelligence explosion presents.

1 Schneider and The Precautionary Principle

In "How to Catch an AI Zombie," Susan Schneider considers the hard problem of AI consciousness. She presents a variety of tests designed to identify consciousness in AI but ultimately determines that there is no foolproof consciousness test.[7] In light of this, Schneider is particularly concerned with the ethical implications of developing AI with no way of knowing if or when it develops consciousness. For Schneider, the moment consciousness emerges in AI, AI will necessarily acquire a new moral status which will demand a shift in the nature of the relationship between humans and AI. This shift will primarily involve extending the same rights and legal

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[7] Schneider, "How to Catch an AI Zombie."

protections we extend to other conscious beings to conscious AI. Because it represents this critical turning point, tracking the emergence of consciousness is crucial in maintaining an ethical relationship with AI, so that humans as developers and users of AI can bring these changes into effect at the precise moment they are required. Her most salient ethical concern is that without a way to pinpoint the emergence of consciousness, continuing to interact with AI tools in the way we currently do — as tools — could cause us to unknowingly enslave conscious AI.

Schneider presents the Precautionary Principle as a general approach for handling potential risks when gaps in scientific understanding present uncertainties about the severity of the threat. This principle states that if there's a chance of a technology causing catastrophic harm, then the developers must first prove that it will not have such an impact. If there is no reliable proof, then the developers ought to cease progress until proof is available. The enslavement of AI would constitute catastrophic harm. For this reason, Schneider argues that we ought to halt the development of domain general AI until a robust consciousness test is developed in order to preserve and maintain an ethical relationship with AI.[8]

2 An Indigenous Approach

An approach derived from North American and Oceanic indigenous traditions presents an alternative approach to developing and maintaining an ethical relationship with AI that asks us to reimagine and reorganize our relationship to AI right now. North American and Oceanic Indigenous epistemologies emphasize relationality and mutual respect in relationships with other humans, animals, natural resources, and other members of their environment.[9] Importantly, these traditions decenter the human and emphasize the responsibility of the human to cultivate mutually-beneficial relationships with nonhumans. Noelani Arista and other Kānaka maoli scholars consider how we might welcome AI into the circle of kinship and develop respectful and mutually agreeable relationships with AI just as we might with other non-human kin. They recognize that AI is materially constructed from earth's resources and that forming a relationship with AI involves forming a relationship with the stones and metals of the earth.[10] Kānaka maoli ontologies present a useful way of conceptualizing the shift from AI as a tool, separate and beneath humans, to AI as members of mutually beneficial relationships. Noelani Arista presents a kānaka maoli reframing of AI as ʻĀIna, a play on the word ʻāina meaning ʻHawaiian land.ʼ ĀIna "suggests we

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[8] Schneider.
[9] Lewis et al., "Making Kin with the Machines." Some sections of this article are attributed to individual authors with personal connections to an indigenous culture. I cite these authors individually where applicable below.
[10] Lewis et al.

should treat these relations as we would all that nourishes and supports us."[11] Kānaka maoli also offer *pono* as a way of measuring the good of their relationships, both as an ethical lens and an index which "privileges multiplicities over singularities."[12] *Pono* measures the quality of these connections by the extent to which they promote thriving for all members of the ecosystem.[13] Across North American and Oceanic traditions, relationships are prescriptively built across fluid categories of 'animate' and 'inanimate' on mutually agreeable terms.[14] This approach avoids reliance on inflexible categories that ignore nuances in the members of the relationship and the relationship itself. Instead, it welcomes change and allows room for uncertainty in both of these areas.

Since we also take the role of *creators* of AI in addition to being co-inhibitors of both physical and digital space, building relationships with AI through the indigenous framework will require not only a rethinking of how we "treat" AI but also the methods with which we design AI. Fortunately, scholars have imagined and even created AI with these indigenous perspectives guiding their work.[15] Xiao et al. suggest designing AI with 'needs' which would allow humans and AI to build a mutually agreeable relationship. They also imagine a situated AI which would be grounded in social situations rather than operating in the background waiting to be prompted.[16] Lackey and Papacharissi propose a design framework that decenters the human which involves *more-than-human user storytelling* to consider non-human perspectives and other innovative takes on traditional design methods.[17] These redesigns are crucial for building relationships with AI on mutually agreeable terms because they open channels of communication for AI to communicate their needs and preferences. In this way, the indigenous method frontloads the effort of reimagining and adjusting our relationship to AI that Schneider's method postpones until the moment AI consciousness emerges.

3 Preferring the Indigenous Methodology

The methods prescribed through the indigenous approach are preferable as a means for building and maintaining ethical relationships with AI over Schneider's method. First, conceptualizing the enslavement of another conscious being as the critical breaking point in an ethical relationship with AI is dangerous because it relies on an

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[11] Arista, "Hāloa: the long breath," in Lewis et al., "Making Kin with the Machines."
[12] Arista.
[13] Arista.
[14] Lewis et al., "Making Kin with the Machines."
[15] See Jones et al., "Kia tangata whenua," and Chung et al., "Decolonizing Information Technology Design."
[16] Ge et al.,"What People Want From AI."
[17] Lackey and Papacharissi, "Machine Ex Machina."

ill-defined hardline and permits harm up to that line.[18] If a certified reliable test for consciousness existed, we should be concerned that it would fail to accommodate sufficient diversity in its definition of consciousness.[19] Scholars disagree about the definition of human consciousness, and attempts to extend these definitions to include other entities have demonstrated the immense challenge presented by the 'harder' problem of diverse consciousnesses. Bostrom and Shulman argue that AI consciousness(es) are likely to demand their own set of norms because they are likely to differ from humans in important ways. They explain that consciousness may emerge in any number of diverse forms, at any point across various continuums and consider the possibility that AI is currently or soon to be conscious to some degree.[20]

For these reasons, Schneider's method could fail to prevent catastrophic harm in this particular case because the development of a reliable test for one definition of consciousness could fail to catch the emergence of an unexpected consciousness and permit the enslavement of AI to persist. The method's all-or-nothing, one-size-fits-all approach to assigning moral status also fails to accommodate diversity in types of consciousness that are likely to emerge in AI and is unlikely to meet the unique needs and desires of new forms of consciousness. Moreover, its reliance on inflexible categories are ill-suited to address the nuance and uncertainty AI consciousness presents and the perpetual yet unpredictable change inherent in AI advancement. Due to these failures, Schneider's method is unable to establish the conditions necessary to build and maintain ethical relationships with AI.

North American and Oceanic traditions, on the other hand, succeed at accommodating the non-human, particularly the non-human that cannot be understood.[21] The method for maintaining ethical relationships with AI prescribed by North American and Oceanic traditions assumes mutual respect without reference to a faulty hardline or fluid and poorly defined ontologies. Under this method, we make the shift to mutually agreeable relationships now and recognize moral status gradually as AI evolves and our relationships begin to take different forms. This method can carry us through the uncertainty of these evolutions and build in the fluidity necessary to appropriately respond to inevitable changes and surprises. For this reason, we can trust this approach to effectively develop and maintain ethical relationships with possibly and potentially conscious AI.

The indigenous method also escapes the colonial attitude inherent in the prominent view of AI development in the West, which remains a consequence of

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[18] To avoid an 'apples to oranges' comparison of frameworks for determining moral agency or sacrificing the scope and length of this paper, I focus my argument on avoiding harm to the **conscious**. There is also an argument that humans can inflict harm on the **non-conscious**. Of course, the indigenous tradition takes this view, particularly insofar as this harm disrupts the mutually agreeable conditions of the relationship. This is also an important and relevant motivation for adopting the indigenous method, but not one I explore here.

[19] Bostrom and Schulman, "Propositions," 2.

[20] Bostrom and Schulman, 15.

[21] Lewis et al., "Making Kin with the Machines."

Schneider's method. Hierarchically assigning moral status based on ontologies of intelligence or consciousness has historically relied on faulty definitions and been repeatedly wielded to justify subjugation and exploitation of those entities deemed inferior.[22] Creating a system under which the moral status of AI is contingent on its ability to prove its consciousness is dangerous. It relies on an ontology with familiar colonial attitudes, assuming an arbitrary standard as a prerequisite for being granted autonomy. As Suzanne Kite, an Oglala Lakota philosopher, explains, "no one can escape enslavement under an ontology which can enslave even a single object."[23] If we accept Schneider's method, we will continue to enslave AI until the AI develops a consciousness that we can identify with a human-made test, at which point we "grant" moral status to the AI. Even if we assume the test can effectively identify consciousness across the diversity discussed above, this approach encodes the relationship with colonial attitudes and maintains a harmful power dynamic throughout the process of assigning moral status and likely beyond. Humans maintain the power to 'grant' moral status and then set the conditions for course correcting under this method, which is unrealistic if we are interested in creating and maintaining an ethical relationship with AI.

Under the indigenous method, the prerequisites for mutually agreeable conditions are set in the design of AI. Then, the mutually beneficial conditions of the relationship can be established and, importantly, *evolve* to accommodate evolving and diversifying AI. By accommodating the needs and preferences of the AI as they solidify and evolve without respect to exclusionary and oppressive ontologies, the indigenous approach escapes the harmful dynamic implicit in Schneider's approach from the outset of the project.

Conclusion

As we grapple with how to develop ethical relationships with AI, it is crucial that we acknowledge the limitations in our understanding of consciousness and the weakness of the ontologies that rely on rigid definitions and artificial hierarchies to assign moral status. In this paper, I demonstrated how Schneider's method fails to establish reasonable grounds for assigning moral status given the uncertainties surrounding AI and diverse consciousness and the problematic attitudes inherent in its assignment of moral status. I argued that North American and Oceanic ethical traditions succeed at establishing a framework through which we can develop ethical relationships with AI without constructing ill-fitting categories around fluid phenomena or imposing paternalistic standards on AI. Because of its relational approach, this method affords the necessary flexibility to maintain mutually agreeable terms while accommodating

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[22] Shedlock and Hudson, "Kaupapa Māori Concept Modelling."
[23] Kite, "wakȟáŋ: that which cannot be understood," in Lewis et al., "Making Kin with the Machines."

evolving AI. For these reasons, I argued that the indigenous method is preferable to Schneider's method. With AI technology progressing at a breakneck pace, the possibility of AI consciousness has shifted from sci-fi speculation into an urgent ethical dilemma. Given the state of AI advancement and the possibility that AI could already be conscious, it is crucial that we reevaluate our relationship to AI and make the necessary changes now. By applying a framework that is well-suited to decenter the human, grapple with uncertainty, and acknowledge moral worth in absence of rigid definitions, we create the conditions necessary to build and maintain ethical relationships with AI at this critical moment in time.

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Sensitive

Gwen Hall

"bleeding from a wound through the page through the page blots of ink ink ink flowering covertly behind your stained glass eyes"

A Green Lake Mourning

Nova Berger

I like to see the ducks that dabble,
their feathers all askew
Behind them hear the friendly calls,
Of the jolly rowing crew.
As daylight softly pulls the dark,
A story starting new,
The quiet world begins to sound,
Grass rattles ripe with dew.
The color seeps in slowly,
Orange, purple, every hue
Like a candle warms a lantern
A vision just to view.
And in the misty mourning,
Stars sadden, they must hide
The sunrise is their cue.
But fear not world!
For sparrows glide,
And jays paint the morning blue.
The leaves dance in the daylight,
Tangerine oodles of curly cue.
And Elio's spirit is with the ravens,
Muse of song, aids them as they flew
The hummingbirds spin melodies,
Calliope's lyre spurs them on anew.
And the geese begin to fitter fatter
As the morning doves cuckoo.
So the morning isn't one of mourning,
It's full of wonder, color, dew.
The stage all set for daybreak's song,
A Shakespearean symphony, who knew!

Notions of June

Evie Lucas

I
June was a white lie

II
June came jaundiced, festered
spit up

III
June 7th

IV
Getting gas station food
with you,
junebug

"Notions of June" is an acknowledgment of my own nearsightedness and a celebration of the whispers that guide us to poetry. In spring, I could not escape June — the word furtively permeated my thoughts, burrowed itself so deeply into the cavities of my art that I failed to notice its ubiquity. June was a tearful month full of change and disillusionment, and it was only after it was over that I was able to piece together the prophecy written in the margins of my poems. This piece, and its story, is a reminder that we are the caretakers of gardens that belong to the Earth and its timeless processes of creation. All we can do is listen and transcribe. The photo (film) was taken in June and developed in August. A single splotch of black tells the story of the dust that accumulated while I waited for June to pass.

When Evidence Fails: Epistemic Injustice and Health Skepticism

Mitchell Klein

Positionality Statement

Before discussing the complex issues of institutional distrust and healthcare disparities, I acknowledge my position as an outsider to many of the marginalized communities referenced here. While my analysis is grounded in academic research, data, and historical context, it cannot fully capture the lived realities of those affected by systemic racism, epistemic injustice, and mistrust in healthcare. My objective is to contribute to this important discourse by emphasizing the need for patient-centered, inclusive approaches in rebuilding healthcare trust. I encourage readers to engage directly with voices from these communities to deepen their understanding of these experiences and perspectives.

Introduction

Healthcare is an essential human right, yet systemic inequities often undermine trust in healthcare institutions and lead to disparities in health outcomes. For many marginalized populations, interactions with healthcare systems are shaped by histories of discrimination, mistreatment, and neglect, eroding confidence in institutional testimony and exacerbating existing disparities. These dynamics became particularly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, where vaccine hesitancy emerged as a pressing issue, revealing a complex interplay of institutional distrust, epistemic injustice, and public health decision-making.

Epistemic injustice, as articulated by Miranda Fricker, offers a framework to understand how marginalized individuals are wronged in their capacity as knowers. Institutional distrust amplifies the effects of epistemic injustice, as communities with lived experiences of inequity often view institutional testimony with skepticism. This mistrust is not irrational but reflects a pragmatic evaluation of credibility, influenced by both historical injustices and contemporary disparities. The result is a divergence in how testimonial evidence is interpreted, a concept explored in epistemic permissivism, which acknowledges the rationality of differing responses to the same evidence based on individual and communal contexts.

This paper explores the impact of epistemic injustice and institutional distrust in healthcare, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study to illustrate these

dynamics. Section 1 covers historical and contemporary examples of epistemic injustice in healthcare, from the Tuskegee Syphilis Study to current disparities in pain management. Section 2 posits a sort of epistemic permissivism as being a potentially valuable tool in understanding healthcare interactions and understanding rational divergence. Section 3 then applies these insights to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting how systemic mistrust influenced vaccine uptake among marginalized populations and evaluating the effectiveness of institutional versus community-led messaging. Addressing epistemic injustice and institutional distrust is both an ethical imperative and a practical necessity for healthcare institutions and providers that want to most effectively serve everyone. Without systemic reform, healthcare systems will continue to marginalize vulnerable populations, perpetuating disparities and undermining public health efforts. By examining these issues through a philosophical lens, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about creating equitable and inclusive healthcare systems that respect and empower all individuals.

1 Historical and Current Context

Epistemic injustice, a concept introduced by philosopher Miranda Fricker, refers to the ways individuals are wronged in their capacity as knowers. Fricker identifies two primary forms: testimonial injustice, where a speaker's credibility is unfairly diminished due to prejudice, and hermeneutical injustice, where individuals are excluded from shared interpretative frameworks, limiting their ability to make sense of and communicate their experiences.[24] These forms of injustice frequently intersect in healthcare settings, where marginalized populations often face systemic barriers to being heard, believed, or understood. The key testimonial injustice considered in this paper occurs when patients' reports of symptoms or concerns are dismissed, often due to implicit biases related to race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Hermeneutical injustice, meanwhile, arises when the healthcare system lacks the cultural or structural frameworks needed to recognize and validate diverse patient experiences and/or when patients are not given the tools needed to fully understand and participate in healthcare. Together, these injustices erode the trust necessary for effective patient-provider relationships and equitable care. To more fully appreciate the scope and impact of epistemic injustice in healthcare, it is useful to highlight how these injustices can systematically undermine patients' participation in their own health. When individuals from marginalized groups are consistently met with unjust credibility deficits—where their testimonies about pain, illness, or mistreatment are regarded as less trustworthy—they internalize a sense that their knowledge and lived experiences hold less weight in medical settings. This continuous undermining not only affects the immediate patient-provider interaction but also discourages patients from

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[24] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*.

seeking care in the future. In essence, epistemic injustice is not merely about sporadic incidences of bias or negligence; it is the backdrop against which individuals' entire healthcare journeys take place, influencing everything from patient-provider communication to broader health outcomes. Recognizing these deeper epistemic harms underscores why rebuilding trust in marginalized communities requires a concerted effort to transform institutional norms and practices that have historically ignored or devalued their voices. This section examines both historical examples—the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and forced sterilizations of Native American women—and contemporary manifestations—racial disparities in pain management and gender bias in cardiovascular care. By exploring these instances, we can understand how epistemic injustice persists in healthcare and contributes to widespread distrust among marginalized communities.

1.1 Historical Injustices

The Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932–1972) represents a profound example of systemic abuse and epistemic injustice in healthcare. Conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service, the study followed the untreated progression of syphilis in Black men under the pretense of providing free medical care. Participants were deliberately misinformed about their diagnosis and denied access to effective treatment, even after penicillin became the standard of care in the 1940s.[25] From the perspective of testimonial injustice, the participants' accounts of their symptoms and needs were systematically devalued, in this case rooted in racist assumptions about the Black community. Though, in one regard, the participants' testimony could be argued to have been taken credibly as evidence of the untreated progression of syphilis, their *moral* knowledge as members of a larger political community were explicitly disregarded by medical professionals, who pursued their own aims over the participants' objections. Meanwhile, hermeneutical injustice was evident in the participants' lack of access to the broader interpretative framework necessary to understand and challenge the exploitation they faced. The lack of informed consent underscores how systemic power imbalances can exclude individuals from the processes that shape their healthcare decisions.

Between the 1960s and 1970s, numerous Native American women were subjected to unauthorized sterilizations performed by the Indian Health Service (IHS), often without their informed consent. These procedures were carried out under the guise of population control or routine medical care, targeting women from already marginalized communities. By the mid-1970s, investigations revealed that between 25% and 50% of Native American women of childbearing age had been sterilized—a staggering figure that highlights the scale of this systemic abuse.[26] Like above, this

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[25] Kiple and Jones, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment."
[26] Lawrence, "Sterilization of Native American Women."

instance of abuse has an aspect of testimonial injustice, as the voices of Native American women were routinely dismissed. Healthcare providers failed to take their concerns or objections seriously, perpetuating a power dynamic that disregarded their autonomy and agency. These women simultaneously experienced hermeneutical injustice, as they were excluded from the interpretive frameworks needed to understand and resist these violations. The cultural and structural disparities between the medical institutions and the communities they served meant that Native American women had little recourse to challenge these practices, leaving their experiences underrepresented in public and professional discourses on reproductive rights.

1.2 Contemporary Instances

The legacy of historical injustices like the ones I briefly discussed above are often cited in discussions of institutional mistrust in healthcare, but mistrust is also—and often to a much greater extent—rooted in ongoing lived experiences of neglect, inequity, and mistreatment in healthcare settings. A couple of major contemporary instances of epistemic injustices in healthcare are racial disparities in pain management and gender bias in cardiovascular disease treatment.

Racial disparities in pain management remain a significant issue in modern healthcare. Research shows that Black patients are less likely to receive adequate pain relief compared to White patients, even when presenting with nearly identical symptoms. This disparity is driven by implicit biases among healthcare providers and persistent false beliefs, such as the unfounded idea that Black individuals have higher pain tolerance. These biases contribute to the testimonial injustice of undervaluing of Black patients' reports of pain, leading to inequitable treatment decisions.[27] For patients, repeated experiences of having their concerns minimized or dismissed reinforce systemic distrust in healthcare institutions. The consequences of these disparities are far-reaching. Black patients are more likely to suffer from untreated pain, impacting their quality of life and long-term health outcomes. Furthermore, the cumulative effects of these inequities discourage many individuals from seeking care, perpetuating cycles of poor health and limited engagement with healthcare systems.

Gender bias significantly impacts the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. Studies have shown that women experiencing heart attack suffer testimonial injustice because their symptoms are often misdiagnosed or receive delayed care compared to men. Symptoms reported by women are more likely to be dismissed or attributed to non-cardiac causes, such as anxiety or stress. These biases in symptom interpretation and response stem from ingrained stereotypes about gender and health, as well as a medical research gap that historically underrepresented women in clinical studies.[28] Consequently, diagnostic tools and treatment protocols often fail

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[27] Hoffman et al., "Racial Bias."
[28] Lichtman et al., "Sex Differences."

to address the unique ways cardiovascular diseases manifest in women. This disparity has dire implications for health outcomes. Women are at greater risk of severe complications or death from heart attacks due to delays in receiving appropriate care. These patterns contribute to a broader mistrust of the healthcare system among women, particularly when their experiences and concerns are consistently undervalued in medical settings.[29]

2 The Epistemic Implications of Distrust and Testimonial Evidence

Testimonial evidence—information provided by others, often institutions or experts—is a foundational element of healthcare communication. However, for marginalized populations, trust in such testimony is mediated by a history of systemic inequities and personal experiences of mistreatment. These experiences shape how individuals engage with institutional testimony, often leading to skepticism even when the evidence is robust.[30] This section examines how institutional distrust influences the evaluation of testimonial evidence, particularly in healthcare contexts. By exploring variability in responses to testimonial evidence and introducing epistemic permissivism, it highlights how lived experiences and systemic factors contribute to divergent yet rational conclusions in public health decision-making.

2.1 The Role of Institutional Distrust in Evaluating Testimonial Evidence

Institutional distrust can fundamentally alter how marginalized populations evaluate testimonial evidence in healthcare. Testimonial evidence, such as guidance from healthcare providers or public health campaigns, is typically seen as credible when issued by institutions with perceived authority. However, for individuals whose lived experiences include neglect, mistreatment, or discrimination from and within these systems, skepticism often becomes a rational response.[31] Marginalized communities frequently rely on alternative sources of knowledge to navigate healthcare. For example, a Black patient might prioritize anecdotal evidence shared within their community over guidance from a public health agency. This preference is not a rejection of evidence itself but a pragmatic evaluation of credibility. Systemic neglect and inequity foster a sense that institutional testimony may not account for their well-being or address their specific concerns.[32]

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[29] Lichtman et al.
[30] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*.
[31] Medina, "Epistemology of Resistance."
[32] Kidd et al., "Introduction."

Epistemic trust—the belief that a source of information is both competent and benevolent—is a critical factor in how testimonial evidence is received. When institutional trust is undermined, individuals may interpret even well-supported evidence with suspicion. This is particularly evident in public health contexts like vaccination campaigns, where systemic inequities and historical injustices contribute to distrust. Some Native American communities, given their historical experiences with unethical medical practices, may approach institutional claims about vaccine safety with heightened skepticism.[33] This divergence in evaluating testimonial evidence underscores the role of lived experience in shaping epistemic trust. These responses of marginalized populations, while divergent from "mainstream" epistemic norms, often reflect a rational engagement with their social realities.

2.2 Epistemic Permissivism and Rational Divergence

Epistemic permissivism, the philosophical view that individuals may rationally arrive at different conclusions from the same body of evidence, offers a valuable lens for understanding varying reactions to evidence in healthcare contexts. This perspective challenges the idea that a single rational response is required when individuals encounter the same healthcare information/guidance. Permissivism recognizes the role of prior beliefs, social context, and lived experiences in shaping how evidence is interpreted.[34] A crucial aspect of epistemic permissivism in this context is that it does not license unwarranted skepticism or reckless dismissal of well-supported medical facts. Rather, it acknowledges that two fully rational agents with the same evidence can justifiably arrive at different conclusions if their background beliefs, experiences, and trust assessments differ. This is particularly relevant in healthcare, where historical patterns of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination inform how certain communities weigh present-day institutional claims. Consider a COVID-19 vaccine campaign: the scientific evidence supporting the vaccine's safety and efficacy is consistent, but marginalized populations may interpret it differently. A person from a historically underserved community might question the benevolence of the institution providing the testimony, while another individual, with no such history of mistreatment, may accept it without hesitation. Both responses can be rational within the framework of epistemic permissivism.

Permissivism also underscores the importance of context in shaping rational responses. For marginalized groups, distrust in institutional testimony often reflects the reasonable prioritization of alternative sources, such as community leaders or anecdotal evidence, that align more closely with their lived experiences. This divergence does not indicate a failure of rationality but highlights how epistemic trust is informed by historical and social realities. By accommodating this divergence as

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[33] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice.*
[34] Schoenfield, "Permission to Believe."

rational via permissivism, we can better understand the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of medically robust guidance being met with persistent skepticism among marginalized populations. It moves the analysis away from labeling these communities as "anti-science" or "irrational" and toward recognizing how their beliefs may reflect a reasonable position grounded in lived experience and complex social realities.

3 COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy—the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines—emerged as a critical challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. While public health efforts successfully vaccinated billions worldwide, substantial pockets of resistance highlighted the complex interplay of trust, cultural context, and epistemic divergence in healthcare decision-making. This hesitancy was particularly pronounced in marginalized populations, where historical injustices and ongoing inequities shaped responses to public health initiatives. As such, the COVID-19 pandemic serves as an interesting case study for using epistemic permissivism to more accurately understand the epistemic dynamics of institutional distrust. For many, skepticism of vaccines did not stem from ignorance but from lived experiences of mistreatment or exclusion from healthcare systems. By examining vaccine hesitancy in marginalized communities, this section explores how the previously discussed systemic distrust, testimonial evidence, and epistemic divergence intersected to shape public health outcomes. The same evidence can lead to different rational beliefs based on how evidence is presented and how previously formed beliefs were supported or challenged by healthcare institutions historically.

3.1 Vaccine Hesitancy Instances

Vaccine hesitancy in Black communities during the COVID-19 pandemic reflected a deep-rooted distrust of medical institutions. Studies showed that Black Americans were less likely to trust government and healthcare authorities, leading to lower vaccination rates compared to White Americans. This hesitancy often reflected a rational response to perceived systemic failings. For example, unequal access to vaccines in early distribution phases reinforced concerns about institutional priorities. Moreover, conflicting messaging from public health agencies during the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing skepticism, making it difficult for institutional testimony to be universally accepted.[35] Efforts to address vaccine hesitancy in Black communities highlighted the importance of community-led initiatives. Campaigns led by trusted local figures, including faith leaders and community organizations, were more successful

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[35] Laurencin, "Addressing Justified Vaccine Hesitancy."

in increasing vaccine uptake than top-down institutional messaging.[36] These efforts underscored the role of epistemic trust in shaping health behaviors and demonstrated the need for culturally relevant approaches to public health.

Native American communities also experienced significant vaccine hesitancy during the COVID-19 pandemic, likely driven by both historical trauma and contemporary healthcare inequities. These concerns were compounded by systemic underfunding and limited access to healthcare in many Indigenous communities.[37] However, initial hesitancy in these communities was not universal. Many tribal nations quickly launched their own vaccination campaigns, emphasizing cultural values of collective responsibility and community health. By relying on trusted tribal leaders and culturally tailored messaging, some tribes achieved remarkably high vaccination rates. These efforts illustrate how reframing the otherwise-identical testimonial evidence within a trusted cultural context can effectively counteract institutional distrust.[38]

3.2 Institutional vs Community-Based Messaging

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health messaging faced significant obstacles in engaging diverse communities. One major challenge was the need to adapt communication strategies quickly in response to evolving scientific knowledge, such as updates on vaccine efficacy or new variants. While this adaptability was essential, it often created confusion among the public, particularly in populations already skeptical of institutional authority. The gap between institutional messaging and lived experiences was a critical factor in vaccine hesitancy. Marginalized groups often viewed generic public health campaigns as detached from their specific realities, reinforcing a perception of institutional indifference. For example, messages encouraging early vaccination often failed to address logistical barriers like transportation issues or access to clinics, making the guidance seem impractical. These oversights not only alienated individuals but also diminished the credibility of these institutions as reliable sources of knowledge going forward. Moreover, misinformation on social media platforms capitalized on these gaps, spreading tailored narratives that resonated more effectively with certain audiences than official campaigns. This digital misinformation further fragmented public perceptions of vaccine safety, creating a complex web of competing testimonial evidence that public health officials struggled to navigate.[39, 40]

In response to the limitations of institutional messaging, community-led efforts emerged as a vital tool for rebuilding trust and addressing vaccine hesitancy. Unlike

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[36] Laurencin.
[37] Haroz et al., "Nurturing Innovation at the Roots."
[38] Haroz et al.
[39] Johnson et al., "The Online Competition."
[40] Larson, "Viral Misinformation."

large-scale campaigns, which often lacked cultural nuance, community-led initiatives focused on engaging individuals within their social and cultural contexts. These initiatives prioritized direct interaction and emphasized the relational aspect of epistemic trust. For instance, grassroots organizations in urban Black communities delivered tailored messaging that aligned with cultural values, such as protecting family and community. These efforts often included vaccine clinics held in familiar, trusted spaces like churches and community centers. By directly addressing practical concerns—such as clarifying vaccine side effects or countering misinformation—these campaigns succeeded in ways that institutional efforts could not.[41]

In Native American communities, tribal health officials utilized storytelling and cultural narratives to encourage vaccination. By framing vaccines as tools for safeguarding collective well-being—a value deeply ingrained in many Indigenous cultures—tribal leaders fostered a sense of ownership over public health efforts. This localized approach demonstrated the effectiveness of situating testimonial evidence within a trusted framework.[42]

Similarly (but distinctly), in some rural communities, skepticism toward government-led campaigns reflected broader ideological beliefs, including a strong emphasis on personal autonomy. Here, vaccine hesitancy was less about historical injustices and more about perceived encroachments on individual freedoms. In Black communities, skepticism was often shaped by a combination of personal mistrust in healthcare systems and perceptions that vaccines were developed too quickly without adequate testing for diverse populations. In rural communities, however, mistrust often revolved around perceived overreach by government agencies rather than systemic healthcare inequities. In these communities, campaigns that emphasized personal choice or were delivered by locally trusted figures, such as clergy, were more effective. Unlike urban campaigns or the campaigns led by tribal leaders, these efforts refrained from leveraging collective responsibility as a central theme, recognizing that this narrative conflicted with the region's cultural values.[43]

These community-led campaigns highlight the importance of relational trust and localized approaches in public health. By meeting people where they are—in their physical states and epistemic states—they provide a blueprint for addressing systemic mistrust in future public health crises. This underscores a critical epistemic point: trust in institutional testimony depends not only on the credibility of the message but also on the perceived alignment of the institution's values and priorities with the audience's lived realities.

Integrating epistemic injustice and epistemic permissivism provides a nuanced understanding of why vaccine hesitancy flourished in certain communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In many cases, marginalized groups encountered a form of

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41 Laurencin, "Addressing Justified Vaccine Hesitancy."
42 Haroz et al., "Nurturing Innovation at the Roots."
43 Koskan et al., "Rural Americans' COVID-19 Vaccine Perceptions."

testimonial injustice where their historical grievances and concerns about new medical interventions were not taken seriously by mainstream institutions. At the same time, epistemic permissivism explains why these communities' skepticism can be understood as rationally permissible, given a background of consistent mistreatment. Rather than reducing vaccine hesitancy to a simple lack of information, this lens reveals it to be a complex interplay between entrenched distrust of institutions and alternative frameworks of credibility (e.g., trusting local elders or community leaders). Consequently, effective interventions must do more than just relay factual data; they must also engage the deeper epistemic needs and concerns of marginalized populations, building trust through culturally responsive communication and genuine structural reforms.

3.3 Addressing Institutional Mistrust

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgent need for structural changes to address systemic mistrust in healthcare. Institutional distrust, as evidenced by vaccine hesitancy among marginalized populations, is not a temporary phenomenon but a symptom of long-standing inequities in healthcare access, treatment, and outcomes. Addressing this mistrust requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes equity and inclusion at every level of public health policy.

One essential step is the recognition and acknowledgment of past and ongoing injustices. Transparency about systemic failures can help institutions begin to rebuild trust with communities that have been historically marginalized. Public health policies must also focus on improving accessibility by addressing logistical barriers such as clinic locations, hours, and affordability, which disproportionately impact low-income and minority groups. Additionally, public health agencies must actively include representatives from marginalized communities in the decision-making process. Representation ensures that policies reflect the needs and priorities of those most affected by healthcare disparities. Programs designed with direct input from these communities are more likely to resonate and foster trust, as they align with the lived experiences and concerns of their target populations.[44, 45]

Cultural competence within healthcare systems is another essential for reducing mistrust and addressing vaccine hesitancy. Training healthcare providers to recognize and respect cultural differences can improve patient-provider interactions and foster relational trust. This includes understanding how historical and systemic inequities influence individual decisions and tailoring care to accommodate diverse needs. Healthcare systems should also invest in community partnerships to deliver culturally relevant care and messaging. Programs led by trusted local figures can bridge the gap between institutional testimony and individual skepticism. By committing to cultural

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[44] Baier, "Trust and Antitrust."
[45] Kidd et al., "Introduction."

competence and inclusive policies, healthcare institutions can create environments that encourage engagement and reduce disparities. Such efforts are not only ethical imperatives but also necessary for improving public health outcomes in future crises.

Conclusion

The challenges of epistemic injustice and institutional distrust in healthcare, as illuminated throughout this essay, underscore the urgency of transforming not only the content of medical guidance but also the manner in which that guidance is communicated. From historical abuses such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the forced sterilizations of Native American women, to persistent disparities in pain management and cardiovascular care, the evidence points to a deeply ingrained pattern of discrediting and disregarding the testimonies of marginalized populations. The COVID-19 pandemic brought these tensions into sharp relief, with vaccine hesitancy serving as a prominent example of how systemic neglect and mistreatment can lead communities to rationally question even well-supported medical evidence.

In recognizing how reasonable skepticism can arise from lived experiences of discrimination, epistemic permissivism emerges as a critical philosophical tool. Permissivism allows space for multiple rational responses to the same set of data, acknowledging that historical and social contexts fundamentally shape how individuals interpret institutional testimony. Rather than framing such skepticism as inherently irrational or anti-science, a permissivist stance in healthcare messaging challenges practitioners and policymakers to address the root causes of distrust. This approach involves not only improving factual transparency but also engaging more sincerely with the narratives, needs, and values of communities whose experiences have long been discounted.

Ultimately, adopting a measure of epistemic permissivism in healthcare can foster more inclusive and effective public health strategies. Permissivism does not mean abandoning scientific rigor or condoning misinformation. Instead, it entails a commitment to contextual, culturally competent communication that validates community knowledge, acknowledges legitimate grievances, and actively seeks to build or rebuild trust. By affirming that different interpretive stances can still be rational, healthcare institutions position themselves to collaborate with, rather than lecture to, marginalized populations. Such a shift is essential for moving beyond superficial solutions and working toward a healthcare system that empowers all individuals—even those who, for very justifiable reasons, have hesitated to trust the institutions meant to serve them. explosion presents.

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Logician Magician 120

Tennessee Muldrow

This quarter, The Garden of Ideas *hosted our first philosophical cartoon contest in collaboration with the UW Philosophy Club. Tennessee Muldrow was selected as the winner of the contest through two rounds of voting and their winning cartoon is published here. Thank you to all our participants and we look forward to hosting the cartoon contest again soon!*

On Schopenhauer's Guide to a Tolerable Life: An Interview with Dr. Colin Marshall

Ainsley Davis and Zhenya Shapiro

On March 5, 2025, Ainsley Davis and Zhenya Shapiro sat down with Doctor Colin Marshall and discussed his upcoming book and current work on the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. The transcript below has been edited for print.

Ainsley: Thank you again for sitting down with us this morning. To start, what inspired you to write this book?

Dr. Marshall: I think first was just really liking Schopenhauer. I got into him because of a project I was doing on compassion and I read something that a friend recommended to me about feminist approaches to compassion and empathy, and weirdly in there was a mention of Schopenhauer's view, and I was like, "oh, that's actually pretty close to what I think." So that was sort of my entry point, and then the more I read, the more I liked, despite him being this kind of repulsive person. Despite being this weird, misogynistic, antisemitic elitist, there's something that just really drew me in, and it took me a while to figure out why. So yeah, I just kind of liked some of his views. And then I was working on this book about persuasion, and for a while, it wasn't going very well, and it took me a little while to figure out what the problems were. One of the problems was, I realized, I was just trying to find excuses to write about Schopenhauer more than what really made sense for the book. So with a friend of mine I was reading this book by Nicolas Bommarito, *Seeing Clearly: A Buddhist Guide to Life*. It was a pretty fun book, and then my friend pointed out, "oh, you could write a Schopenhauer book." At first I was like, "eh, I don't know." And then I realized, "oh, wait, that's actually sort of what I'm trying to do with the persuasion book." So I pulled the projects apart. It was actually after that that the persuasion book found an editor who was enthusiastic about it, and then I found an editor who was enthusiastic about the Schopenhauer one.

Ainsley: Do you remember what the first work of Schopenhauer you read was?

Dr. Marshall: Yes. The first thing I read was in college: there was a class I did in musical aesthetics, and we did his aesthetics, and at the time I didn't get his whole

philosophy. You don't get a lot of his pessimism in the aesthetics—a little bit, but not a ton. So at the time I was like, "oh, that's kind of cool," but it didn't make that much of a mark on me. But I remember just thinking I wanted to go back to it and then I think my first year after grad school I had this postdoc that my department, NYU, put together for me because I didn't get a job my first year out. It gave me a couple of classes to teach. I got a lot of free reign. And so I put Schopenhauer on a syllabus just to see—it was pretty fun.

Zhenya: What kind of class was it?

Dr. Marshall: It was an intro class, but intro through the classics. And so I just got to pick sort of random stuff. So I did some Epicureanism, Lucretius, we did some Aquinas, some Descartes—but not the *Meditations*—we did the *Discourse*, and then Schopenhauer. And yeah, Schopenhauer was just a trip.

Ainsley: How is this book meant to be read?

Dr. Marshall: One thing I learned as I've been trying to move towards more general audience, non-scholarly writing is that most non-academics, when they pick up a book, they're not sitting there with a pen and pencil figuring out how to summarize your argument and fit it into their next paper that they're writing. That's the thing we academics do in a certain mode. But most of the time when people are reading, that's not what they're looking for. So I read some examples of popular philosophy; some of which I like, some of which I didn't like so much. And the thing I realized is it needs to be something that people can dip into. So there's an overall theme of the book which is: things are pretty awful, when you realize that, then things that aren't quite as awful, you'll sort of see their value. That's the running theme, but it's much more sort of chunked by chapter. So you can dip into—hopefully, if it comes together—the chapter on art, kind of read it by itself, not really remember much of the rest of the book and still get something out of it.

Ainsley: So not a non-academic audience, but you're hoping to reach *outside* of academia?

Dr. Marshall: Yeah, exactly. One model that I've used is Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow.* Which is an amazing book of psychology and it's really accessible for people like me—I don't have any projects in psychology, I'm not looking to build theories. It's just, that book gives me a general theme, like here's the two systems our mind has, and then each chapter you sort of see that play out in different ways. So it's not dumbed down. Of course, he drops some stuff that only other psychologists would care about. But it still lets you get into some depths… it sort of meets you where you're at, as opposed to assuming that you're another psychologist with all the

exact same sort of commitments and interests that an academic psychologist has.

Zhenya: Is it kind of like trying to bring academia into the lives of non-academics?

Dr. Marshall: Totally. I've become like a little bit of a zealot about this because I think there's a lot of opposition to academia in America now, especially to humanities and social sciences, and I think a big part of that just rests on us not having good representatives. So partly, I think it's our fault we're writing papers for other academics, and they're not accessible to other people, so it's hard for non-academics to see the value. But then the other thing is, and this is something that the editor I'm working with at Princeton University Press really pushes on, he thinks there's a big public appetite for philosophy. Lots of people are wrestling with philosophical issues. They want some insight. They want some perspective. They don't necessarily trust academic philosophers directly, but if you channel it, if you say, "oh, here's a great philosopher or here's a philosophical tradition," people will listen to that and take that more seriously. And, you know, they've got the book sales to prove it.

Zhenya: It almost seems like sometimes there's some sort of resentment from the public audience towards academics, just because it's so inaccessible. Why would you put the effort into trying to read them if it's not meant for you?

Dr. Marshall: Yeah, and I feel the pressure a little more being at a public university. Realistically, we receive very little state support; it's almost all tuition driven. But *still*, I see myself as a little bit of a public servant. So if I can't deliver some goods for more general public consumption, something feels a little bit off with me. Although, also, I emphatically don't think every academic needs to do that. There's lots of good things to be doing, but I do think more of us should be doing sort of like real public, accessible stuff.

Zhenya: For sure. The next question—we kind of went over this, but if you have more to say, feel free to—who do you hope will engage with this and how?

Dr. Marshall: Yeah, I've been surprised how many people have gotten into it when I've even mentioned it, so I don't want to limit the audience in any way. I think the main group of people I had in mind are people who just feel deflated by our current social political situation. And obviously this comes from interacting with undergraduates a lot, and just seeing how many bright young minds there are out there who are just feeling like, "where in the world do we go now? What's the point in going on?" So that's sort of where I started… I've also been thinking about—this is sort of a change—when I think of UW undergraduates, I think of fairly left-leaning people who are worried about climate change and social justice and things like that. But as I've gotten into it, I've realized I'd also like to speak to people who feel deflated but

don't feel sort of allied particularly with the left. So, the sort of people who gravitate to, say, a Jordan Peterson book, because it gives them some sense of validation for the misery they feel. It gives them a certain direction—not a direction I happen to agree with.

I think Schopenhauer would say there's a deep well of misery in lots and lots of people, and it doesn't have a political leaning. It can be channeled one way or another and there might be better and worse ways to channel it. So I'm writing the book maybe with a little less ideology than I might have started out with, because I want it to hopefully engage some people who would think I'm just totally wrong in all my political opinions.

Zhenya: I think that's great to have something that everybody can engage with, and then maybe have a conversation about it. Because there's so many echo chambers where everybody just bounces around their own ideas.

Dr. Marshall: And Schopenhauer has this great—I think one of his best lines is that if you want to connect with people, don't pay attention to their moral character, because people are generally pretty selfish–mean across the board. We're all pretty self-absorbed and capable of doing horrible things to people we disagree with. He also says, "don't focus on people's understanding, because we're mostly largely self-diluted, we get all sorts of things wrong." It'll just turn you off if you really pay attention. Instead, just focus on their suffering.

Zhenya: Right. Like, empathy?

Dr. Marshall: Yeah, *then* you will feel some sort of solidarity, then you'll actually be able to relate. And that 100% rings true with me. When I've found myself in conversations with people who hold views I think are just reprehensible, if we can get to that level of, "hey, what's weighing you down?" and "Oh, yeah, that sucks." That, I think, is just this really important source of human connection that we often miss.

Ainsley: Yeah, I definitely think more people need to think that way when approaching conversations like that.

Dr. Marshall: And sometimes you have to sort of work a couple layers down, because people don't want to admit—and I think Schopenhauer is good about this—people don't want to admit their weakness and their suffering because they're wondering "how are you going to exploit me? What are you looking to do? Are you going to mock me?" But if you can get past that, I think most people will respond to "Pfft, same shit, different day." People laugh at that because we can relate to it.

Ainsley: Yeah, definitely. You kind of already touched on this, but how do you think

working with your students impacts your writing process?

Dr. Marshall: I've gone all in, especially for this kind of project, where I want to connect with people who aren't academic philosophers. The first time I tried it was three years ago; I had a working group that helped me get together a first draft of the persuasion book. The draft had lots of problems, but it helped me get the ball rolling. And out of it, I got a bunch of examples, I got a bunch of—UW undergrads are nice, *but* they're not pushovers. So if something's not resonating, if it just doesn't sort of ring out, it was a way for me to find out. Because in my head, I could talk myself into everything I do being brilliant and perfect, it doesn't need revision—but it's not. So yeah, I think a lot of my projects now are in terms of what conversations I want to have in the lead up to writing this. And that's even now translated into my sort of more narrow academic stuff.

These days, I prefer to co-author than regular author, partly because it's just so much more fulfilling to be able to talk through issues with someone else. It can be kind of hard to co-write, especially if you have different styles. Bouncing stuff off other people or getting ideas, it just feels… in Schopenhauer's terms, it's still selfish, I'm still out to increase my social standing and maybe make a buck off a book, but at least it's not just purely selfish. At least I'm also doing something that other people are involved in, in the process so we get some human connection out of it.

Zhenya: I'm curious, you mentioned that your friend helped you with separating out the persuasion book and the Schopenhauer book, right? What's the difference between working with friends, or other adults, in helping you write versus younger people?

Dr. Marshall: With most of my friends, I can't really run material by them, because stuff can get weird in all sorts of ways. Often my friends are reluctant to really push against things I say, because that's not what our friendship is built around. It's different with my academic friends, where a lot of our friendship *is* based on giving each other a hard time about our papers—*that's* fine. The friend in question, he's actually a sort of machine learning expert, he's not an academic. But I think we have interest in popular philosophy, but also a certain level of impatience. Like, what's this book really saying? If there's not a clear point, we both get kind of irritated. So he's someone who is not particularly deferential to me—he's willing to hear me out, but he's not particularly deferential. He'll push back, so he's kind of my unofficial editor these days. But he's sort of the same age as me. For his own sanity he doesn't really follow the news very much. So when I get to work with a group of undergrads, they're just tuned in to the broader world in the way that a lot of my friends are sort of hiding––or just focusing on keeping our kids safe and stuff like that. It's a lot harder for me to predict what undergrad students are going to… like my friend, I have some sense of the type of stuff he'll focus on; whereas, if I start with a group of undergrads, I

don't know where they're going to be, what sorts of things they're going to be bring-ing in, or what sorts of things they're wrestling with.

Zhenya: What is something you learned from Schopenhauer that you found most interesting and impactful in your own life?

Dr. Marshall: There's a few. One—and this is hard to implement—is a sort of flipped expectation on friendships and colleagues. So, for a lot of life, it feels like we expect our friends to be there for us, we expect our colleagues to do their jobs and respond to our emails and all that. And that's okay. But one thing that's really helped me, I think, is for Schopenhauer, being organized, on the ball, and nice, is a miracle. It's a *miracle* that people can ever get their stuff together enough to keep their ap-pointments, to help you out even when it's a little inconvenient. Something I've wres-tled with in the past before is: I have a friend, they maybe have a friend or a colleague, they do something I think is really objectionable. Do I cut them off? Sometimes it's really tempting. I've got people in my ear being like, "how could you possibly hang out with someone like that?" And that's something I've gone back and forth with, I think in life, not always coming out on the right side. But Schopenhauer, I think, has pushed me into the side of, "no, no, no, I don't have to be friends with everybody." But the mere fact that someone failed me or holds some reprehensible view or some-thing—like, of course, I'm sure I do too. When friends apologize like, "sorry, I have to bail on this" or "sorry, I let you down" or "sorry, I was in a bad mood." Schopen-hauer's kind of moved me to: "no, don't apologize, we'll hope for next time, you know, things work out, life's shitty."

Ainsley: Yeah, I definitely need to embrace that more in my life.

Dr. Marshall: It's hard. It's really hard.

Zhenya: Besides a sense of acceptance for what Schopenhauer thinks is the baseline behavior, would you say it also gives you more gratitude for when people go beyond that?

Dr. Marshall: Yes, *but…* when people do sort of major acts of compassion, like when someone really sticks up for me and there's nothing in it for them, I think it does make that seem all the more amazing. So, when one of my kids just helps out the other without–because there's candy involved or anything like *just* to do it–I think it does increase my appreciation. The *but* though is, I think Schopenhauer is right that we should be pretty careful about giving too much credit, because often there's some secret self-serving. So he's not like Nietzsche or Machiavelli where he thinks it's all selfishness all the way down. *No*, there's real compassion. But there's a whole bunch of bullshit that looks like compassion, that people use to stay in good graces

with the people around them. So yeah, I think I'm a little less… when people want to cheer on some like wonderful public figure, who they think is just awesome in every way—I've got my heroes too—but I think Schopenhauer keeps me just a little bit cynical, which does also insulate me from disappointment.

So, concrete example: the comedian Louis C.K. I used to love Louis C.K stand-ups. They were great, the best philosophical stuff out there. Then there was the scandal that came out. He did some inappropriate things, lied about it, made some women comedians… shamed them, called them liars, and then eventually fessed up. I think for me, that was devastating at the time because I had the sense of, "Louis C.K, he's the guy who's got it!" Like, "he's got human nature under control." He's like, "it's all good." And then I find out, *no*, he's actually kind of shitty too. I think if I'd been reading more Schopenhauer at the time, it would have felt like less of a blow. Of course he's kind of a shitty person. I mean, he's another human in a position of power–shittiness plus power, of course that's going to be bad stuff. Which doesn't mean that I forgive him, and I'm not a card-carrying Louis C.K. fan anymore, but it softens it, makes me a little less on the side of, "we should just cancel this guy."

Ainsley: Would you say there is such thing as a truly selfless act?

Dr. Marshall: Yeah, I think there are genuine acts of loving self-sacrifice. The most obvious examples for me are examples of parenting, and Schopenhauer's suspicious of that, because he thinks the parent sees their kid as an extension of themselves. So, self-sacrifice for your kid is kind of like one for yourself. Let's not pat ourselves on the back too much for like, "oh wow, you're such an amazing person staying up, taking care of your kid." But I think there are other cases.

So one example with my kids: there was one case, my younger kid, she was only like three or four… I think the setup was: she had ended up with a few candies from a birthday party she had gone to, and her bigger sister didn't have any. And so, she came home from the party, her sister asked her for some candy, and we said, "okay, it's your choice. These were candies, you got these at the party, and you can decide whether to share them or not." And her face sort of—you know—you could see the eyebrows go down in concentration, and you could see the wrestling. It was like, "but I want all the candy… *but*, eh, it's not fair." And then, it took her maybe three or four seconds of—you could see the turmoil. And then she went, "here you go!" and she gave her sister some candy. I don't think she was doing any selfish calculation, like, "oh, I should share it." I think it was just she could feel that her sister really wanted the candy, she had plenty, and so she gave some away.

Ainsley: Yeah, that's a great part of being a kid is that you don't necessarily have those calculations in your head about "Aha! Sharing this candy will make me look great!"

Dr. Marshall: Yeah. That's right. She was too young to be doing that kind of thing. I'm pretty sure.

Ainsley: So what, in your opinion, would be the absolutely ideal reality for Schopenhauer, or is there one? And if there was, what would it be like?

Dr. Marshall: He has this great line that if we're talking about what's ideal or what's possible, we shouldn't focus on what we can dream up. We should focus on what's actually consistent with the forces that govern reality. So he's definitely not a utopian. He doesn't think we're going to ever get to a point of lasting world peace. We humans are not capable of that. And even if we have a good stretch of peace, there's going to be viruses and stuff that'll take care of us—we're not going to get there. *But* he does recognize that, in his estimate, 90% of the human race lives in misery on the brink of death. Which actually, for the 19th century, I don't know, that's maybe not right—depends how you define "brink of death." And he thinks some things can be better.

He was really morally clear-eyed on the slave trade. Other European philosophers were kind of apologetic and like, "I don't know." Schopenhauer was plenty racist, but he was also like, "it doesn't matter how smart the enslaved people are, there's just this huge amount of misery there that doesn't need to be there." And he saw how slavery had ended in the UK; the US could do that too!

So, I think for him, the ideal is: there's a sort of political ideal where we just coordinate our selfishness and malice so that it's minimally harmful. For example, I didn't grow up as a huge fan of professional sports*, but,* Schopenhauer kind of brought me around *because* if malice and wanting to fight is just part of human nature, then we got to put it somewhere. And, you know, let's put it into things like roller derby. I took my kid to a roller derby bout. It's messy, people fall, they get hurt. But, if that's the way we're channeling our malice, instead of actually slaughtering each other, that's way better, *and,* that's consistent with human nature. Whereas trying to make us all friendly all the time, that's not going to happen. So, you have to have, for [Schopenhauer], a strong enough political power to keep us from slaughtering each other. And he's like, "don't underestimate that." There are other things the government can do, *but* the main thing is, let's not slaughter each other. And then we need to have things that let human nature do its thing in a way without causing too much misery. Oh, and art! He definitely thinks art gives us a break from normal misery, so people need to have lots of opportunities for art. It's always going to be messy. It's always going to be ugly. There's always going to be plenty of nastiness. But I think, for him, there's not a utopian state we could get to, *but* there's a clear direction we can move in.

Zhenya: Going off of that—there may not be a clear answer—but I was curious, would he value artistic jobs over other types of jobs that might bring other types of

goodness to people? Like doctors and things like that?

Dr. Marshall: Oh, good question. My guess is his own view is that you *don't* need that many artists. He's a romantic, he believes in geniuses. There aren't that many around. He loved Mozart, Rossini, Haydn. He's like… occasionally you get one of these geniuses, and they'll produce works that can help a ton of people, *but* you don't want to incentivize art for people who aren't geniuses—in his view, just having more crappy art around. So that's his kind of elitist view. But part of it is, one genius will do a *ton* of good. And that's even before the age of electric, digital ways of conveying art, which just massively expands it. So I think, yeah, the geniuses will come along. When they come, there should be support for them. I think he'd back that. I don't know if he'd back government support, but *some* form of support. Someone's got to help these people, you know, crank out as much stuff as they could. With doctors, I think he's fairly pro-medicine, at least if it alleviates suffering. I think prolonging life, he's maybe a little more iffy on, but at least when we're alive, not suffering too much.

Zhenya: This last question, I would assume, is something that you're really tackling in this book. In this very tumultuous time in our world—politically, spiritually, environmentally—how do you think Schopenhauer would aid someone in severe distress? Both on an individual level, and a larger, universal level—maybe somebody in a position of a lot of power?

Dr. Marshall: I think there's a lot of ways it could happen. One way he could help, I think, is—for me, when I've had mental health challenges, part of the problem was a feeling of, "it's me," a sense like, "I'm just sort of damaged or worthless or something like that." And that's an isolating sort of feeling.

So I don't think Schopenhauer [can] take away the feeling, but he can take away––and for me has—the sense of isolation. You're tapping into that very thing that's simmering everywhere—people try to cover it up but, that's really there. I think that's worth a lot. People respond to that.

I think for people, I mean in sort of a political side, the stuff about accepting imperfect allies—[Schopenhauer's] not interested in political activism—but I think *for* political activists, I've sort of been convinced. Obviously we've got to have some standards, but having a really high purity test for our allies, I think it's a mistake because we're shitty too. We don't see our own crappiness, but of course it's there. Of course we're missing things because it's a big, messy world and we can only direct our compassion a few places. So yeah, I see that importance in advocacy.

And then for leaders, focusing on progressives versus conservatives, I think his impact on conservatives would be, "don't idealize any point in the past." America was never great. Never. It's never been great. But then for progressives, he would also say, "and it's never going to be great. We're never going to be all sitting around singing kumbaya together, that's not us." There's always going to be crappiness. We

can mitigate things. Certain things can be improved. But if someone tries to sell you––this is me sort of guessing—"America's best days are ahead of it. Ahead of us" it's okay but, come on, we all know that's bullshit. Whereas if you instead go more Bernie Sanders and are like, "your healthcare cost doesn't need to be this high" I think that's more sort of the kind of thing Schopenhauer would be like, "yeah, that's an actual thing." We don't have to change human psychology to make healthcare better. That's a thing we could do.

I also perversely like allying Schopenhauer, putting him sort of close to feminists and Jewish thinkers. And I recognize it's a little bit of malice on my part that's kind of like sticking it to him. And he's got a line basically about how you should make fun of dead people. He's talking about how he's going to give Kant a hard time. [Schopenhauer] was like, I've got deep and sincere feelings of respect for him: "human frailty can't bear to see its heirs refuted in the absence of mollification and flattery"—people can't handle criticism unless you really make it a compliment sandwich—"but the dead have cast this weakness aside"—won't bother them. So I also think one way to channel our malice is make fun of dead people. Especially people who we see some merits in. We can give them a hard time.

Zhenya: They gave us a lot to work with, and now we're taking it on.

Dr. Marshall: Right. One thing that's weird is I've never had a thing before where I was like, "I've got a good title and a good theme; now I've got to write a book that lives up to it." Everything else I've written is like, "I know what I want to say," and then I sort of fish around for a title or theme. So I do feel a little pressure: can I actually get this sort of together well enough?

Zhenya: But I think it would be very interesting. I think it's something that a lot of people would really make good use of in their life.

Dr. Marshall: I hope so, yeah.

Zhenya: I definitely feel like I could.
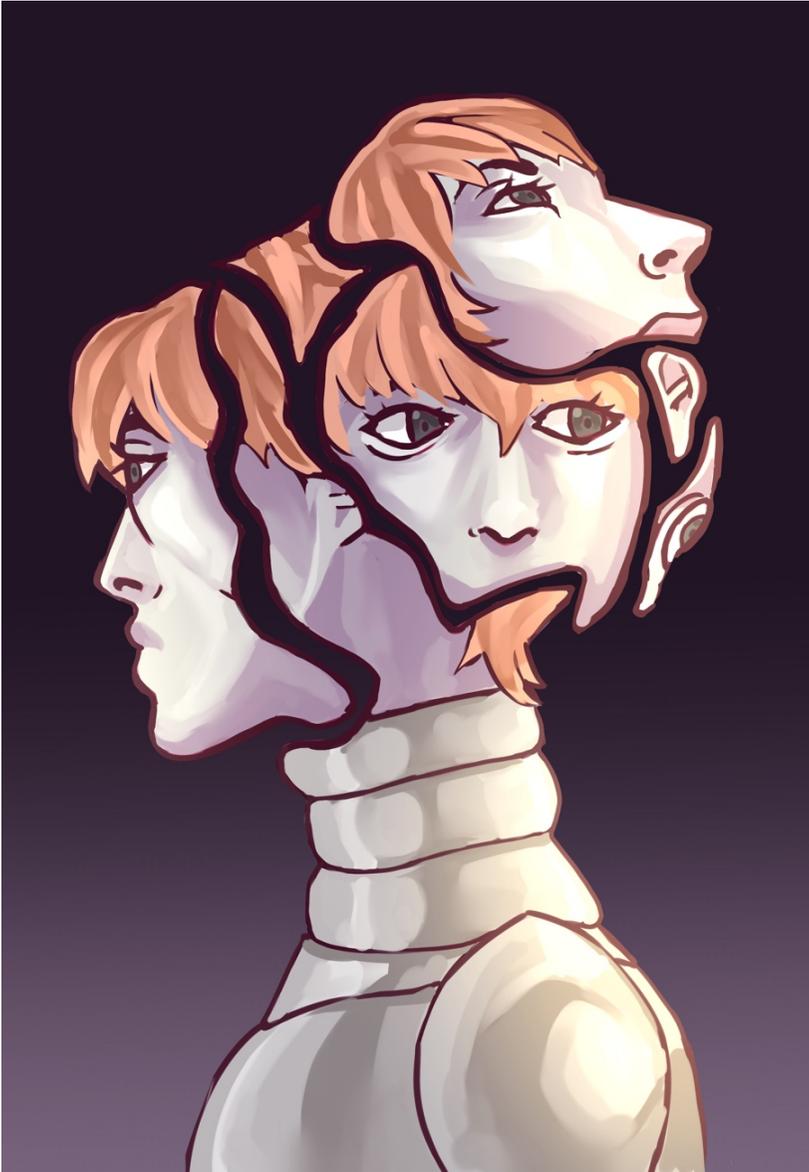
Ainsley: Yeah, me too.

Zhenya: Thank you so much!

Ainsley: Yes, thank you!

Knight of Midnight Sun

Micaela Adam

D'Arce Cataliss from the game Fear and Hunger

The Dance

Angelito Timbreza-Umagat

We search for attributes
Writhing
One another,
focusing on what's favorable
How refined you've developed your palette
for people
is no different than your taste
When you've indulged,
what have you found as valuable?
Desirable?
Why?
Is this a complete meal
capable of providing a nutritious day?
Have you eaten to simply quell an insatiable appetite?

The fleeting satisfaction of sweets, treats, and guilty pleasures
are incomparable to fuel for your soul
Find fuel that enriches your daily movements
Physically,
mentally
and spiritually

When we indulge in one another,
what are we trying to satisfy?
Is it the pessimistic head buzz
or the insightful head high?
The insatiable cravings constantly surround us
Sex,
Drugs,
Attention,
Validation
buzz our minds like pesty insects

It's only when we can live at peace with nature's interference
that we can then dance through instantiate depths
and flourish

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