May 2024

Social Theory From The Second Person Perspective

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A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Philosophy
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY FROM THE SECOND-PERSON PERSPECTIVE

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April 12, 2024

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ABSTRACT

This paper relies on the work of Charles Taylor, Rahel Jaeggi, and Harmut Rosa to develop a method of 'second-person critique.' This is developed in opposition to first-person critique, otherwise known as self criticism, and third-person critique, which I take to be representative of instrumental reason. I criticize instrumental reason from Taylor's perspective, while also relying on Martin Heidegger and Martin Buber to do the same. To further develop Rosa's theory of resonance, I rely on David Graeber. I conclude by suggesting that while phenomenology has long accounted for our embodied relationship to the world, a 'resonant phenomenology' that includes the preceding authors can account for an understanding of others as embodied in the same manner that we are.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr Andrea Sullivan-Clarke, who not only served as my supervisor for this project, but graciously did so in troubling times of her own. Thanks to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Windsor for their continued support; thanks especially to Dr Radu Neculau, Graduate Student Coordinator, for his guidance. Thanks to my partner Amrita Dhindsa for her constant presence, including, but not limited to, copious amounts of popcorn. Thanks to Adam Rideout-Arkell, my deskmate and fellow co-creator of the theory of Rigorous Hippieism. Finally, thanks to my parents, family, and friends for instilling in me a genuine passion for knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the notion of 'authenticity' has fallen out of usage as a critical tool; Foucault, for example, saw it as emblematic of a "cult of the self."[1] 'Alienation' has faced a similar fate[2] In this paper, I offer an overview of three major attempts to reconstitute the discourse surrounding these terms. In regard to authenticity, I consider the work of Charles Taylor, especially *The Ethics of Authenticity*. I take his work therein and elsewhere as a solid introduction to the possibility of reconstituting the notion of authenticity such that it is still a useful tool of analysis in the contemporary age.

Following that section, I consider *Alienation* by Rahel Jaeggi, which proposes an understanding of alienation as a deficient kind of self-appropriation. Next, I suggest that *Resonance* by Hartmut Rosa can serve as a unified theory that can account for both authenticity and alienation in the face of the criticisms levelled against those notions.

However, this reconstruction would be fruitless without a particular goal in mind. To that end, I propose what I call 'comparative philosophy from the second-person perspective.' I contrast this with that from the 'third-person perspective,' which is usually taken as the natural opposite of the 'first-person perspective.'

I rely here on styles of voice typically, though not exclusively, found in literature. First-person voice is employed when the narrator is also one of the characters in the story; 'I said,' 'I did,' 'I felt,' will appear throughout the text. Third-person voice is the inverse of this, in that the narrator is not one of the characters. They sometimes possess a degree of omniscience, providing external narration of multiple characters; they can, however, serve as an external observer that 'follows' a certain character. Compare *The Lord of the Rings*, where

[1] Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1982, pp. 777–795.
[2] Haverkamp, Beatrijs. "Reconstructing alienation: A challenge to social critique?" *Krisis*, vol. 36, no. 1, Sept. 2016, pp. 66–70, https://archive.krisis.eu/reconstructing-alienation-a-challenge-to-social-critique/.

Tolkien narrates the thoughts and actions of every character, to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, where Lewis narrates from the third-person view, while following the thoughts of only one of the protagonists. This narrative voice presents as 'he said,' 'she thought,' 'they did,' etc. Finally, there does exist the second-person voice, though it is rather rare in literature; it is more common in film or stage, where it may take the form of 'breaking the fourth wall.' In literature, it may take this form as well, though it is also present in 'choose-your-own-adventure' books. Regardless, the second-person voice addresses the audience directly - the narrator will claim that '*you* do' something, or '*you* feel' something else.

By 'comparative philosophy,' I'm referring to the mode of thought that involves criticizing multiple 'forms of life' through comparing and contrasting them against each other.[3] Consider, for example, the act of comparing multiple systems of logic. Throughout this paper, I want to put forth three primary claims. The first is that comparative philosophy is generally considered to be a practice that requires a degree of 'self-abstraction,' and therefore occurs from the 'view from nowhere.'[4] I take this to be an improper way to perform comparative philosophy, and propose that we should in fact *avoid* self-abstraction in this practice. Secondly, I propose that the standard method of thinking from this view from nowhere - from the third-person voice - can influence self-criticism, from the first-person voice, in a detrimental way. If we understand self-criticism strictly as the inverse to comparative philosophy - that is, if we divide philosophy exclusively into the 'subjective' or the 'objective' - this hinders our capacity to effectively perform self-criticism. This is a notion that I will explore throughout this paper, but will be most readily apparent when I consider

[3] I take the notion of 'forms of life' from Rahel Jaeggi. *Critique of Forms of Life*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin, Belknap Press, 2019.
[4] Per Thomas Nagel.

Taylor's 'communitarian' philosophy, as well as Jaeggi's criticism of the 'self-invention' model of the self. Finally, I aim to develop a kind of philosophy that we can perform from the second-person point of view, which circumvents the traditional subjective/objective divide.

It's worth noting that the framework that I am establishing here does bear some similarities to the discussion around internal, external, and immanent critique. Internal criticism is the kind of social critique that relies on the norms set by a given form of life. Criticizing someone or something as hypocritical is a common kind of internal criticism, for example. External criticism is the application of an external metric, such as judging a form of authenticity based on your own ethical standards, rather than the norms established by the subject at hand. Immanent critique has different characteristics based on the thinker putting the theory forth, but is uniformly an attempt to develop social criticism beyond the internal/external divide. For example, immanent critique is quite like internal critique according to Jaeggi, with the exception that it is *reconstitutive*. She takes Marx's critique of capitalism to be a kind of internal critique, in that it is not founded upon soothing the tensions of capitalism to secure its continuity, but instead to prove its fallibility and bring about a new, authentic form of life, communism.[5]

However, I hesitate to say that I am developing my own theory of immanent critique given the fact that I do not think the first- and third-person perspectives neatly match with internal and external critique, respectively. I take Charles Taylor to be performing first-person social theory, for example, but not exclusively internal critique. Likewise, while Hartmut Rosa says that good social theory includes first- as well as third-person perspectives, I do not take this as a sign that he is attempting to develop immanent critique.

[5] Pp. 196, Jaeggi, Rahel. *Critique of Forms of Life*. Harvard University Press, 2019.

The model that I develop does draw heavily on Rosa, however, as well as Martin Buber and Martin Heidegger. In addition, I take the work of David Graeber to be some first steps toward what Charles Taylor has referred to as the primary concern of his philosophy - a convincing theory of 'philosophical anthropology', a concern that I now take on as my own.[6] As such, 'second-person philosophy' is a deeply phenomenological framework, one that attempts to apply phenomenological methodology to social philosophy. In doing so, I hope to overcome what I take to be the traditional model of comparative philosophy as occurring from the 'view from nowhere.'

[6] Pp. 1, Taylor, Charles. *Human Agency and Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1985

AT THE BUFFET TABLE

According to Charles Taylor, authenticity as a distinct philosophical notion has its roots in the Romantic movement, demonstrated most clearly in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As Taylor sees it, 'Romantic authenticity' developed in opposition to the traditional, religious one. In this new model, rather than 'the good life' being defined by adherence to a divinely given moral code, it was characterized by the development of the 'social self' in accordance with an 'inner voice' that we each possess.[7] Taylor is deeply critical of this framework, seeing it as fundamentally too individualistic to account for every facet of authenticity. Even if one were to understand the authentic self as individualized, he says, "we define this [self] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us."[8]

Socrates and Euthyphro showed us long ago that trying to define a term exclusively through examples leaves us no closer to a concrete definition of the term than not trying at all.[9] If we try to understand what 'piety' is without developing an abstract notion of 'piety,' instead only ever thinking of 'piety' as a category that includes all instances of piety we've ever seen, we won't get far in understanding what 'piety' means. Likewise, if we base our understanding of authenticity only on what we've encountered and don't strive for a shared model, we'll be left with simply saying 'be yourself' without reflecting on what that means. Piety is further relevant in that Romantic modernity is a kind of negation of its religious origins. An easy solution to the dilemma of authenticity is to reframe the 'internally contained, yet unrevealed authentic self' as 'your soul.' Given that this chafes against the

[7] Pp. 27, Taylor, Charles. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Harvard University Press, 1991.
[8] Pp. 33, *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Taylor does not exclusively mean 'significant other' in the sense of 'romantic partner,' although this is of course an important source of self-identity. Rather, he is referring to 'others who are significant to us' in a general sense.
[9] *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito*. Translated by F. J. Church, edited by Robert D Cumming, The Library of Liberal Arts, 1956.

anti-dogmatic tendencies of Romanticism, the square peg of the inner voice is crammed into the round hole of irreligiosity.

Outside of this possible religious view, the assertion that there is an authentic self hidden within us does not account for its source. Rousseau does not give us a clear explanation here, nor do more modern versions of the notion of an 'inner voice.' For example, this notion lives on in the psychoanalytical divide between the conscious and unconscious self.[10] Much has been said about the general notion of the unconscious self, of course, but the unconscious of each individual is initially unknown, indeed *unknowable*, without great difficulty.

However, Taylor's disavowal of an authentic self that exists a priori does not involve forgoing an individualized understanding of authenticity. He proposes that values are essentially desire-based, divided between first- and second-order desires. First-order desires do not have any discernible source - nor, however, do they require one to be considered 'legitimate.' That is to say, a first-order desire is still an expression of our 'real' desires, despite its basis being unknown to us. In "What Is Human Agency?" Taylor uses the example of choosing an éclair or mille feuille at a buffet table to demonstrate the distinction between orders of desire.[11] Whether we know the basis of our desire or not, acting upon that desire is a real expression of our will.

In contrast, second-order desires have a source that is known to us, but one that does not need to be known *prior* to the evaluation. You might have a particular reason to pick a certain dessert, but whether that reason was known to you beforehand is irrelevant. Perhaps

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[10] Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by Anna Freud et al., XVIII, Vintage, 2001.

[11] Pp. 16, Taylor, Charles. "What Is Human Agency?" *Human Agency and Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

you choose the éclair because it has more or less fat than the mille feuille. Or perhaps you munch on the éclair for a moment before suddenly remembering that, as a child, you always ate éclairs in moments of celebration, and now they're a particularly pleasant treat.

Milling around a buffet table might not seem like a particularly significant kind of evaluation. Taylor would agree, and that triviality forms a division between what he calls strong and weak evaluators. Jean-Paul Sartre considers a man either caring for his ailing mother or fighting for his nation to be an example of radical choice. In turn, Taylor takes this as an instance of a weak evaluator, no different from the choices made at the buffet table.[12] Taylor reasons like so: if, per Sartre, individuals do possess radical freedom, then they do not have to consider external factors that could affect their decisions. Assuming this is true, then the choice between fighting for one's nation or caring for one's mother is just as baseless, and therefore arbitrary, as choices made at a buffet table. When we allow for an analysis of the sources of our desires, we can then truly consider ourselves to be acting upon a second-order desire. Thus, it is only through this analysis that we can know ourselves as a strong evaluator.

A strong evaluator is an individual that considers not only the characteristics that decide the value of available choices, but also considers why these characteristics are indeed valuable to them. In this way, strong evaluators perform a kind of metaphilosophy in their decision making; their evaluations consist of "a background of distinctions between things which are recognized as of categoric or unconditioned or higher importance or worth, and things which lack [reference to that background] are of lesser value."[13] Sartre's evaluator does not appeal to the reasons why he may choose between caring for his mother or fighting for his

[12] Pp. 75, Taylor, Charles. "Self-Interpreting Animals." *Human Agency and Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
[13] Pp. 3, *Human Agency and Language.*

nation. Indeed, Sartre sees such considerations as undermining radical freedom entirely. Taylor, for his part, is inclined to agree.

In Taylor's terminology, the Sartrean subject is the atomized subject. They are an individual that feels completely separated from their environment in regard to their individual fulfillment. For Taylor, "the term 'atomism' is used loosely to characterize the doctrines of social contract theory… which inherited a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfillment of ends which are primarily individual."[14] Thus, Taylor's critique of the theory of radical freedom is that it is concerned only with the *individual*, *their* choices, needs, values, etc, to the detriment of the needs and values of their community.

Consequently, Taylor's often referred to as a 'communitarian.' That is, his philosophy considers the community to be the primary subject of analysis rather than the individual person. For Taylor, what defines a moral community is a shared orientation around a 'hypergood,' a notion which he develops in *Sources of the Self*. One of the hypergoods that Taylor outlines therein is creative expression;[15] as we will later see, this has great bearing on the process of authentically relating to the world. But consider that creative expression must first be understood as valuable in order to make proceeding ethical judgements with reference to it as a hypergood. This is the basis between Taylor's model and what he refers to as the "bad model of practical reasoning, rooted in the epistemological tradition, [which] constantly nudges us towards a mistrust of transition arguments."[16] I take this to be a kind of 'epistemic leap' in the vein of Kirkegaard's 'leap of faith;' what defines a hypergood compared to a moral source is that a hypergood is initially adopted in the process of analysing that very

[14] Pp. 187, Taylor, Charles. "Atomism." *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
[15] van Buuren, Jasper. "The difference between moral sources and hypergoods." *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2016, pp. 171–186, https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq201641259.
[16] Pp. 73, Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Harvard University Press, 1989.

thing. As we will see later, this bears strong similarity to Jaeggi's claim that the self that is alienated comes about through the very process of appropriation - here, *what is appropriated* is likewise defined as we appropriate it.

This process bears strong similarity to Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic circle, the interpretive process that occurs between reader and text. For Gadamer, the initial approach to a text through the lens of our foreconceptions provides the reader with a starting point for further interpretations, which enables them to interrogate those very foreconceptions. This continuously proceeds toward better interpretation of the text.[17]

We can imagine a kind of 'ethical circle' that has much the same structure. When we initially encounter the notion of 'human rights,' we approach it with our foreconceptions of what precisely 'human' means, or 'rights.'[18] Assuming we take on this notion as an ethically valuable one, we can then reflexively criticize our foreconceptions, allowing us to employ 'human rights' as a hypergood that grounds our proceeding ethical judgements. However, when we perform ethical judgements that do not involve an element of self-criticism, the ethical-hermeneutic circle is incomplete. Thus, the proceeding ethical evaluations are weak, even if those evaluations are founded upon second-order desires. The Sartrean evaluator could very well take into consideration whether he more strongly desires to care for his mother or fight for his nation, but without taking into consideration *why* he possesses those desires, he is no more a strong evaluator than if he were standing at a buffet table.

Taylor denies that choice is valuable per se; that perspective is a position that he takes to be a 'soft relativism' that reduces all choices to being equally meaningful - or equally

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[17] Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Hermeneutic Circle and the Problem of Prejudice." *Truth and Method*. Continuum, 2004.

[18] This kind of faulty approach is how we end up with, for example, classical liberals that cried for universal human rights while still owning slaves.

meaningless.[19] He sees authenticity as at once an act of poíisis ('creation') as well as mīmēsis ('representation'). In doing so, Taylor strikes a kind of middle ground between arbitrary choice on the one hand and adherence to the status quo on the other, simultaneously stressing the originality of authenticity as well as the value within our world that we draw upon to constitute our authentic selves. To go too far in the direction of 'authenticity-as-mīmēsis,' he thinks, is to reduce authenticity to realist representationalism, with no room for originality. Conversely, excessively valuing originality leaves us with a kind of baselessness that cannot account for the context of our being-in-the-world.[20] We represent ourselves via our creation of ourselves - likewise, we create our world via our representation of the world.

Taylor worries that societies not composed of strong evaluators are bound to slip into a 'liberalism of neutrality.'[21] Such a society feels that it "must be neutral on questions of what constitutes a good life. The good life [in such a society] is [only] what each individual seeks, in his or her own way, and government would be lacking in impartiality, and thus in equal respect for all citizens, if it took sides on this question."[22] If allowing for a multitude of forms of authenticity includes the assertion that we cannot judge each form of authenticity as 'desirable' or 'undesirable,' then authenticity slips from being a genuinely useful philosophical concept to simply being a descriptor.

Consider, for example, Karl Popper's 'paradox of tolerance:' "Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them."[23] A society that

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[19] Pp. 37, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.
[20] This entire line of thought comes from pp. 62, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.
[21] Pp. 17, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Pp. 581, Popper, Karl. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Routledge, 2008.

does indeed extend tolerance to the intolerant would be one that has embraced a 'liberalism of neutrality.' If we take up a strictly relativistic understanding of authenticity, one that could, for example, view 'domination' as an equally valuable hypergood to 'human rights,' we are bound to turn into the kind of overly tolerant society that Popper outlines.

The necessity for a shared metric for the judgement of forms of authenticity does not imply a *universal* metric, especially not an innately present one that we must discover. Similarly, Taylor is deeply critical of the assertion that a metric of judgement requires an appeal to 'human nature.' "Philosophers who think like this," he says, "have generally been opponents of the ideal of authenticity; they have seen it as part of a mistaken departure from the standards rooted in human nature."[24] Hypergoods, therefore, give us a *shared* ethical reference point that does not need to be considered *universal* to be valuable. Crucially, the sharing of these ethical systems, done properly, should lead to a *plurality* of forms of life, rather than considering each form only *relativistically*.

In summary, and in Taylor's own words:

> Authenticity (A) involves (i) creation as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently, (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentiality to what we recognize as morality… It (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue… What must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other, of (A), say, at the expense of (B), or vice versa.[25]

[24] Ibid.
[25] Pp. 66, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.

The dual nature of authenticity that Taylor lays out here - one that is at once creative as well as representative, individual as well as social - can be characterized by what Sally Haslanger calls 'social structural explanations.'[26] In an article of the same name, Haslanger offers the following passage:

> Suppose I am playing ball with my dog. I stuff a treat into a hole in the ball and throw it for him. The ball goes over the lip of a hill and rolls down into a gully. Why did the treat end up in the gully? If we imagine the trajectory of the treat alone… it would be a huge task to explain the particular events that determined each of its movements. A much easier explanation would be to point out that the treat was inserted into a ball that was thrown and rolled down the hill into the gully. In this latter explanation, we explain the behavior of the treat by its being part of something larger whose behavior we explain… If I had simply thrown a handful of treats in the direction of the gully, the fact that the treat in question was part of a handful of treats would do little or nothing to explain its movement because the handful is just an aggregate, not a structured whole.

The Romantic version of authenticity considers the 'treat alone,' rather than the ball; that is, it is focused on a strictly individualistic understanding of living authentically. Jaeggi will later refer to this as the 'self-invention' model of self, in contrast to her own 'self-appropriative' model. For now, I'll say that Haslanger's suggestion that considering the treat *in* the ball rather than as a thing-in-itself is not only more philosophical sound, but frankly more easily laid out, is precisely the ethos that I am developing herein. The treat does

[26] Haslanger, Sally. "What is a (social) structural explanation?" *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 173, no. 1.

not exist without the ball in this scenario, nor is the ball thrown simply for its own sake; the 'inner self' does not exist without the 'external self,' nor, however, does the external self deserve primacy in our analysis of the self as such. Additionally, the latter distinction Haslanger outlines, the treat-ball versus the handful of treats, is crucial. The deconstructivist approach to comparative philosophy assumes that the two instances are equally arbitrary; the treat-ball is structurally the same as the handful of treats. However, this glosses over the existence of intentionality behind the treat-ball 'structure' that the handful of treats 'structure' lacks. Likewise, to assert that all social structures - or indeed choices, as Sartre argued - are equally arbitrary not only in their *existence* but also in their *significance* is to ignore, wilfully or otherwise, the qualitative differences between those structures and choices.

The proceeding sections of *The Ethics of Authenticity* address some possible criticisms of this understanding of authenticity, as well as summarizing some of the key ways that authentic forms of life are hindered in the modern age.[27] One of the prime suspects, Taylor says, is instrumental reason.[28] If we understand our relation to the world, and especially to each other, as one founded on utility, it mutes our capacity for appropriating the world into our being, as well as expressing our being into the world.

As one example, Taylor notes that the standard liberal/conservative debate over technology as either a hindrance or benefit to society - which normally, though not always, corresponds to the conservative and liberal camps, respectively - attempts to address the dilemma of instrumental reason, yet glosses over the very nature of our relationship to technology that is the basis of modernity.[29] If we relate to technology instrumentally, our relation to the world through technology takes on the same fundamentally instrumental nature.

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[27] Indeed, the original title of *Ethics* was *The Malaise of Modernity*.
[28] Pp. 93-108, "An Iron Cage?" *The Ethics of Authenticity*.
[29] Pp. 95, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.

Consequently, we begin to see the world, including others, as nothing more than what Heidegger calls 'standing reserves.'[30]

In "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger develops the notion of 'standing reserves' to refer to the instrumentalization of our being-with. As Heidegger sees it, our relationship to the world and to each other is mediated through technology not just in a literal sense - seeing the unseen through a microscope or developing a friendship online - but in an ideological sense as well. The instrumentality of our relationship to technology seeps into our relationships with other beings in inescapable ways; Heidegger refers to this process as 'enframing.'[31] Viewing the world through this enframing produces sees the world as nothing more than 'standing reserves,' that which is "ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering."[32] This is an inauthentic mode of relating to the world and is precisely the kind of instrumental reason that concerns Taylor.

Instrumental reason hinders not just our relationship to the world and others, but also to ourselves. Authenticity as the externalization of the inner self, as the Romantic conception proposes, leaves our 'external self,' the one that we embody, as nothing more than a tool for the realization of authenticity. There is a strong tension between the 'reality' of the inner self in the sense of 'truer' and the reality of the external self as 'lived in.' Valuing the former over the latter means that the self that we exist through, the external self, is seen as one that is false, vapid, and incomplete. In this instance, the 'technology' that we relate to the world through is our physical body, used as a tool by our internal self to experience the external

[30] Pp. 307-342, Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." *Basic Writings*. HarperCollins, 1993.
[31] Pp. 325, "The Question Concerning Technology."
[32] Pp. 322, "The Question Concerning Technology."

world. This leaves us with the pressing question of whether those who cannot ‘fulfill’ the desires of their inner voice for reasons entirely out of their control are to then be understood as ‘less real’ than those who are free to act as they please.

In this section, I’ve outlined Taylor’s understanding of the dual nature of authenticity as at once creative as well as representative. Now, I’ll turn to Rahel Jaeggi in her work *Alienation* to address the titular concept as the philosophical inverse of authenticity.

A RELATION OF RELATIONLESSNESS

What determines a worldy relation as deficient is not the object of the relation, according to Jaeggi, but the *process of the relation itself*:

> If what the unalienated subject is to take itself to be is not already determined by the results of a prior but still unself-conscious act of self-expression, then a theory of unalienated selfhood will focus not on the content or results of the subject's appropriative activity but on its process or form: the presence or absence of alienation depends not on *what* the self takes itself (or strives) to be but on *how* it determines what it is.[33]

Jaeggi herself does not explicitly say that authenticity should be understood as the inverse of alienation; she simply refers to such a thing as an 'unalienated life' or something similar. I take alienation and authenticity to be opposites for two reasons. The first is that it more easily allows for the later transition into the work of Hartmut Rosa. As a student of Taylor, Rosa is deeply familiar with his work, and I don't think understanding authenticity as a kind of precursor to 'resonance' is an overzealous assumption. Thus, Rosa's contrast between resonance and alienation can be understood as this prior contrast between authenticity and alienation. Secondly, contrasting authenticity and alienation streamlines our discussion. Rather than authenticity and inauthenticity being mirrored by alienation and inalienation, it seems clear that the negations of each concept can simply be replaced by the sister concepts.

With that said, Jaeggi's understanding of authenticity is not founded upon an assertion of an authentic self that exists within us and must be discovered, nor does it necessitate an

[33] Pp. xiii, Jaeggi, Rahel, *Alienation*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

external point of reference, such as a hypergood. Rather, what determines a particular form of life as authentic are the ways in which it is brought about. Within a given sociopolitical ecosystem, there can be as many forms of authenticity as there are individuals - provided that the process through which their authenticity is brought about is a properly performed act.

Of course, this raises the question of how a 'proper' form of authenticity comes about, which Jaeggi addresses throughout the book. She says that "living one's own life means identifying in a certain way with oneself and the world - being able to 'appropriate' the world - [which] is importantly different from standard, usually Kantian conceptions of autonomy, according to which autonomy is unaffected by the world in either a positive or negative sense."[34]

The nature of authenticity as a process rather than defined by the object of appropriation bears similarity to our interactions with objects in the world. Consider, as Heidegger often does, the act of using a hammer. Even when we are not hammering anything, there still seems to be a proper process for hammering that is external to what is being hammered. Imagine, for example, a child haphazardly smacking things with a toy hammer rather than hammering a nail. They are still hammering 'better' when they hold the hammer properly rather than upside down, even though they are not performing a productive version of hammering in the first place.

That there is a proper way to hammer something, or a proper way to appropriate the world, does not preclude our possibility to choose. For Jaeggi, choice is always already an aspect of our being-in-the-world. Part of our 'thrownness' is that our life is already 'one's own to lead;'[35] 'thrownness' being the term that Heidegger uses to refer to the immutable

[34] Pp. xxi, *Alienation*.
[35] Pp. 19, *Alienation*.

facts of our being.[36] Simply put: if we do not decide our own form of authenticity, who does? Jaeggi clarifies that this freedom of choice is not in fact the *basis* of alienation, as the conservative criticism of modernity would suggest. From that perspective, the baselessness of modernity is the direct source of our alienation; for Jaeggi, alienation is instead founded in radical *un*freedom.[37]

Popular psychology often refers to the 'choice overload hypothesis,' which proposes that there is a quantifiable point at which other choices being added into a given environment not only has no positive effect on the experience of the evaluator, but can in fact lead to disillusionment, confusion, and frustration.[38] The sheer variety of, say, desserts at a buffet, can feel particularly overwhelming when one is choosing not just between éclair and mille feuille, but any number of tasty treats. It would seem that the remedy to such a feeling is to limit the available choices to 'the good ones.' In such a simple example, it's easy to propose that the 'good' desserts are chosen the most often. This gets much messier if one instead proposes that the ideal remedy to 'choice overload' between so many practical forms of authentic living is to simply limit the choices to 'the good ones.'

Benjamin Scheibehenne, professor of Cognition and Consumer Behaviour at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, proposes that the crucial element of avoiding 'choice overload' is that the choices presented are *genuinely meaningful to the evaluator*.[39] When an individual is unfamiliar with the choices presented to them, it's difficult to develop a useful metric for deciding which choice should be made in the moment, which fosters those feelings of being overwhelmed. Choices are therefore only meaningful as far as they adhere to a

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[36] Pp. 133-137, *Being and Time*.
[37] Pp. 23, *Alienation*.
[38] Scheibehenne, Benjamin, et al. "Can there ever be too many options? A meta-analytic review of Choice Overload." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 409–425.
[39] Pp. 410, "Choice Overload."

particular metric for deciding if they are indeed meaningful. (Recall once again Gadamer's hermeneutic circle, as well as Taylor's notion of weak and strong evaluators, and the process of reflexive re-evaluation that is the fundamental structure of the hermeneutic circle, or the 'ethical circle').

We can then say that the issue with modernity, for Taylor and Jaeggi, is not the overabundance of choices available to us in our lives; the average person is now capable of choosing from any number of careers, partners, lifestyles, hobbies, etc.[40] Rather, the root of alienation is the moment when these choices are no longer experienced as meaningful, and so we relinquish our power to choose at all.

Jaeggi stresses not just the need for a recovery of the notion of alienation as a tool of social criticism, but an entirely new framework for its usage. If we abandon the traditional understanding of authenticity as adherence to an internal, authentic self, but otherwise leave the notions of authenticity and alienation relatively untouched, one question remains: "From whom or what is one alienated when one becomes alienated from oneself?"[41] Jaeggi's answer is what I will call 'authenticity-as-process.' A person experiences alienation when their appropriation of the world is a deficient process, rather than when that process is applied to the 'wrong' thing. This circumvents the need for an 'authentic self' that must be uncovered, which sets a strong basis for a plurality of forms of authenticity by acknowledging that an authentic relationship could be established in any number of environments.

Jaeggi approaches the problem of self-alienation by asserting that appropriation of the world is simultaneously an act of creation as well as representation, which is consistent with Taylor's model. She states that "the self that is capable of becoming alienated first emerges in

[40] At least, they're *supposed* to be.
[41] Pp. 27, *Alienation*.

[the process of appropriation],"[42] and that "we can become alien to ourselves as agents in what we do, or our lives alien to us, when processes that take on a dynamic of their own or conditions of *rigidification* hinder us in understanding ourselves as agents in what we do."[43] When an individual does not feel as if they are in control of their world, nor of their participation in the world, they feel as if their life has 'rigidified' beyond their control, and thus that they can no longer express their agency by appropriating the world around them. 'Constitutive rigidification,' conversely, refers to the kinds of "routines, institutions, and rituals" that are integral, positive elements of our existence that are nevertheless beyond our ability to directly control.[44] For the sake of clarity, I will from here on refer to rigidification as 'ossification' and constitutive rigidification as 'concretization.' It is important to reframe ossification to emphasize that the dichotomy is not between rigidification, a neutral phenomenon, and constitutive rigidification, its positive alternative. A critical error is made when we understand what is ossified as concrete, and even more so when we understand what is fluid as ossified. That is to say: treating what is rigidified as necessarily so in a *constructive* way, simply by virtue of being rigid can develop maladaptive forms of appropriation; likewise, understanding what is fluid as rigid obfuscates our appropriative powers entirely.

The middle sections of *Alienation* are dedicated to allegorical elaborations on Jaeggi's theory of alienation. For the purposes of this project, I'll present the case she offers in Chapter 5, which describes a young academic who has gradually lost any feeling of control over his life.[45] He marries his partner for the tax benefits, moves to the suburbs when they become pregnant, and rather swiftly goes from a haphazard life to one with a strictly regimented

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[42] Pp. 153, *Alienation*.
[43] Pp. 51, *Alienation*. Emphasis my own.
[44] Pp. 64-65, *Alienation*.
[45] Pp. 51-68, "*Seinesgleichen Geschieht* or 'The Like of It Now Happens:' The Feeling of Powerlessness and the Independent Existence of One's Own Actions." *Alienation*.

schedule that he did not actively choose.[46] This is an example of the process of ossification, the process of what was once fluid becoming rigidified in a detrimental way. Sure, he 'could' uproot his life in a search to 'find himself' but, as Jaeggi puts it, who exactly is it that he is trying to find?

Imagine a similar scenario, but one that has some key distinctions. Suppose a young academic married for love, took time to choose a place to raise a family, and planned the pregnancy. He would, just like in the version Jaeggi outlines, experience a shift in his life from chaos to order. Yet in this version of the story, that process of rigidification would be *within his control*; in other words, his chaotic life would become concrete, not ossified. The distinction here is plain, but the process of *believing* that what is fluid is ossified is a bit more of a nuanced one. The mere *ability* to do as you please does not guarantee the actual *feeling* that this is the case. Indeed, the material ability to do as you wish does not prevent you from the social consequences of doing so. Regardless, this raises the question of what is more impactful: a life *becoming* ossified, or the *feeling* that this has occurred? If the ossified individual experiences alienation through their inability to appropriate the world around them, does it matter if this inability is 'objectively real' or not?

The question of the significance of 'objective reality' is central to Jaeggi's criticism of Taylor, and is worth further exploring. She cites "What Is Human Agency?" to criticize what she sees as a misunderstanding of the objective presence of the world in Taylor's thought: "[Taylor's] criterion [of authenticity], however - and this is crucial - focuses our attention on distortions *of* the expression and not on distortions *by* the expression."[47] Jaeggi, like Taylor,

[46] Pp. 52, *Alienation*.

[47] Pp. 162, *Alienation*. The following is the Taylor quote that Jaeggi is referencing: 'There are more or less adequate, more or less truthful, more self-clairvoyant or self-deluding interpretations [of the authentic self]. Because of this double fact, because an articulation can be *wrong*, and yet it shapes what it is wrong about, we sometimes see erroneous articulations as involving a distortion of the reality concerned. We do not speak of error but frequently also of illusion or delusion.' Cf. pp. 38, "What Is Human Agency?"

sees our world as one that fundamentally changes, and she believes that these changes are far more impactful than we may initially recognize.

In general, 'objective reality' refers to a loose collection of 'really existing' things which our subjective interpretations of those things are projected upon; the noumena to the phenomena. A bizarrely literal version of this occurs in contemporary film, in what I think is a vivid illustration of the traditional objective/subjective divide. It's an open secret, or simply common knowledge, that most modern blockbusters are more CGI than not. Often, the only 'real' thing in each shot, even a shot of characters in an unremarkable environment, is the actors, with the rest being added in post-production via digital enhancement. This abandons one of the most impactful elements of filmmaking: the feeling of physicality. This is especially true for action movies; it's simply impossible for an animation of an explosion to have the same raw, kinetic feel that a genuine pyrotechnic stunt has. In response, many productions have taken to reintroducing a physical element to the movie shoot, only afterward superimposing animation, rather than simply sticking actors in front of a green screen. This often occurs in scenes involving a vehicle or some other object that the actors directly interact with. The resulting behind-the-scenes photos are often too bizarre to be anything other than deeply comical, showing actors running on treadmills for a chase scene or standing on bizarrely shaped blocks that look like half remembered parts of a dream. Similarly, the traditional objective/subjective divide presupposes that there is a kind of 'raw reality' that we do not directly access, and that is hidden behind our subjective view of reality itself.

In contrast to this, Jaeggi understands the 'objective' world as one that is malleable via its symbiotic relationship with the subjective self. In the same section of *Alienation* that introduced our young academic, Jaeggi asks us to imagine a bank teller who feels as if he is

'really' an artist.[48] This is at once a familiar scenario; it's easy to think of someone you know who, for example, insists that they could have become an athlete or musician had their life played out just a bit differently, and who holds onto this unrealized version of themselves as a key part of their identity. I've previously outlined Jaeggi's objections to such a notion founded upon the paradoxical nature of the inner, unexpressed self being seen as the 'real' self. To suggest that the inner self is 'more real' than our lived experience robs those experiences of their philosophical and personal significance.

In addition to this, the bank teller could not even articulate the belief that he 'really' is an artist if he had no conception of what an artist is - or, for that matter, what it means to 'really' be something. Both notions are, to a certain extent, already in the world. The disclosure of the notion of 'artist' to us is not a constructive act wherein the notion of 'artist' is developed from the ground up. Rather, it is our contribution to the totality of the shared linguistic reference point that is 'artist,' in addition to contributing to our self-totality. While our act of disclosing them to ourselves is a *self*-constitutive act, our access to such notions is external to the process of appropriation. In other words, the banker believes himself to 'really' be an artist in a way that is contingent on the versions of the notions of 'being real' and 'being an artist' to which he has been exposed. These particularized notions are socioculturally based, and it is in this way that the 'objectively real' notion of 'artist' is in fact the contingent, malleable, synthetic product of the social world that we live in.

Things are therefore 'objectively' present to us, available to be appropriated, but only in the sense of 'objective' as 'non-subjective.' This is the key distinction between self-appropriation, Jaeggi's model, and what she refers to as models of 'self-invention' - she

[48] Pp. 44-45, *Alienation.*

cites Nietzsche and Foucault as examples.[49] It would be inaccurate, I think, to suggest that there is no objective world at all for philosophers who rely on the self-invention model, but they are at least working with a substantially different model of 'objectivity' than is traditionally relied upon. In any case, the self-invention model minimizes the influence that others have on our own self-appropriative activities.

I want to expand upon Jaeggi's claim by proposing that we can account for the symbiotic nature between external and internal worlds through the notion of care, specifically the Heideggarian version of the concept. What feels to us as concrete and immutable can in fact be the product of the care that others provide for us.

Of the three versions of care that Heidegger introduces in *Being and Time*, I'd like to focus here on Fürsorge. In contrast to *Sorge* - which is normally translated as 'care' - and *Besorgen* - which is 'to take care of something' or 'to get something done' - fürsorge refers specifically to 'caring for someone' or 'concern:' "The being… to which Dasein is related as being-with does not… have the kind of being of useful things at hand; it is itself Dasein. This being is not taken care of [Besorgen] but is a matter of *concern* [Fürsorge]."[50] Heidegger points to the ways in which what is experienced as constitutive from our own perspective is often the result of the acts of self-appropriation that our forebears carried out. What is available to us to self-appropriate, what is experienced to us as 'objective,' is the result of the subjectively valuable actions of others. When this is done deliberately - for example, when our parents decide what books are on our shelves as children - *that* is an act of Fürsorge.

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[49] Pp. 186-187, *Alienation*. This reading of Nietzsche is founded upon what Julian Young calls the 'posthumous Nietzsche;' see Young, Julian, 'Posthumous Nietzsche,' *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life*. Routledge, 2014. Pp. 126-135. I owe this idea to a good friend.

[50] Pp. 118, *Being and Time*.

When we reinsert care into our discussion on subjectivity and objectivity, it provides a more clear picture of the constitution of the 'objective' world. If we do understand the world as projections onto 'raw reality,' we can forget that what is experienced in that way for us is not necessarily 'raw' in the sense of 'present without purpose.' When a director uses physical elements to shoot an otherwise CGI scene, they are shaping the reality that we perceive on the screen. This is true even though we as the audience never directly see the green screens or other production props - just as we don't always witness our parents purchasing books to go on our shelves. Indeed, what makes behind-the-scenes photos so engaging is precisely that we see beyond what is normally possible.

Thus, when Jaeggi refers to 'objectivity' - indeed, when I do as well - what she is referring to is a part of reality that exists in a sort of flux between subjective and intersubjective. The objective is outside of the purely intersubjective in that it is not, to put it crassly, a shared delusion. It is socially constructed, but this construction is a process that occurs referentially. These referential things - noumena, external reality, raw reality - are put there with intention based upon our intersubjective values.

Immanent critique for Jaeggi in particular is a kind of 'reconstitutive internal critique;' the contrast is quite like ossification versus concretization. We perform immanent criticism when we critically evaluate the constitutive elements of ourselves; Taylor would call this process a strong evaluation. In both immanent critique as well as self-appropriation, the significance is the procedure, rather than what is being criticized or appropriated. Jaeggi reasserts this following her criticism of the 'self-invention' model: "from the fact that it is impossible to 'find' oneself [i.e., there is no internal, authentic self to be unearthed], my account does *not* conclude that it is also impossible to 'miss' or 'fall short' of oneself. Even in

the absence of the possibility of finding oneself there can be success in the process of appropriation [or criticism], which can be described as the success or lack of success in performing an action."[51]

Hammering cannot be performed for its own sake, whether or not it is performed properly. My previous example involves hammering as part of *play*; normally, it is a part of *work*. In both instances, hammering is only one *action* that is part of a larger *activity*. Jaeggi draws on Ernst Tugendhat to reinforce this as an integral element of a proper analysis of alienation: "an activity is alienated to the extent that one *does not* or *cannot* do it for its own sake as well."[52] Of course, not every action is capable of being performed for its own end, as is the case with hammering. Jaeggi acknowledges this and suggests that actions-as-utility only becomes a problematic framework when it begins to obscure our ability to perform those useful actions as part of a larger activity. The crucial distinction between the two is that activities have a goal:

> The possibility of self-realization… is threatened precisely when one gets caught in a teleological circle, a situation in which one does one thing only for the sake of another without ever connecting them to a final end, that is, to an end where one can no longer ask the question ["]for what purpose am I doing this?["][53]

This provides a slightly more nuanced take on instrumental reason than the one that Taylor offers. While it is certainly true that we should avoid a relationship enframed by instrumental reason, as Heidegger would say, to disavow the significance of the human

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[51] Pp. 190, *Alienation*.
[52] Pp. 207, *Alienation*, cf. pp. 183, Tugendhat, Ernst, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*. Translated by Paul Stern, MIT Press, 1986.
[53] Pp. 208, *Alienation*.

capability to interact with the world via instruments is to ignore a crucial element of the process of appropriation, and thus of authenticity.

While Jaeggi does present criticisms of Taylor, the two complement each other in crucial ways. Towards the end of *Alienation*, Jaeggi takes up Taylor's critique of individuality, with specific reference to Richard Rorty's version of the concept. Rorty is a strong individualist, and specifically asserts that uniquity is the key element of asserting one's individuality.[54] Yet, as Jaeggi points out, an individual can only be considered unique in comparison *to other individuals*, and thus must exist in a non-individuated way; 'What makes Rorty's description of individuality thin, among other things, is his neglect of the fact that individuality develops only in relation to, or in engaging with, something and that for this reason individuals can realize themselves only in relating to the world.'[55] This serves as a structural basis to Taylor's own criticisms of individualism; thus, Jaeggi bases her criticism on an understanding of individuality as a negation of situatedness.

However, Jaeggi cedes some ground to the individualist perspective by reappropriating Rorty's notion of self-experimentation. For Rorty, uniqueness fundamentally hinges on 'not being a copy,' which Jaeggi sees as being "so strangely thin because it relies on a self-referential conception of individuality and therefore remains peculiarly empty."[56] What makes this understanding self-referential - despite, as Jaeggi points out, necessarily involving relations to others – is that it is founded upon a strictly self-defined notion of uniqueness. What feels to us unique is founded upon our worldly experiences, in that we cannot expect to uniquely position ourselves with reference to the unknown. The knowledge of the world that one relies upon when defining oneself as 'unique' is not equivalent to the sum of all points of

[54] Pp. 210, *Alienation*, cf. Rorty, Richard, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
[55] Pp. 211, *Alienation*.
[56] Pp. 212, *Alienation*.

unique reference. Rather, the people and ideas that we contrast ourselves to when we define ourselves as unique are situated in our past and ongoing experiences. If this were not the case, our uniqueness would have to be defined in contrast to all people and ideas that have ever existed, exist now, or ever will exist – which, even for Rorty, would be absurd.

Jaeggi characterizes Rorty's understanding of 'life-experiments' from his ironist perspective as the "private, idiosyncratic creation of a unique identity," which she sees as nothing more than "purely aesthetic experimentation."[57] She proposes a more explicitly phenomenological understanding of life-experiments that accounts for "the orientation that one has toward… one's own life," thus allowing for the "liquefaction of everything pregiven and achieved… as [a form of] experimental problem solving and not as experiments for the sake of experimentation."[58] Just like with the act of hammering, life-experiments are alienated when they are exclusively performed for their own sake, rather than as part of a larger project; in this case, self-appropriation in its entirety. Thus, Jaeggi reinforces Taylor's critique of modernity, which involved his own criticisms of instrumentalism, ironism, and individualism. But she builds upon those criticisms by clearly outlining the ways in which each of those philosophical viewpoints hinders our ability to properly apprehend the world, and thus apprehend the self.

Using Taylor and Jaeggi, I've shown what I see as two of the strongest outlines of authenticity and alienation, respectively. The next step in this project is bringing the two theories together in a holistic framework that includes both. To do that, I'll rely on *Resonance* by Hartmut Rosa.

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[57] Pp. 213, *Alienation*.
[58] Pp. 214, *Alienation*.

A WORLD THAT LISTENS

In *Resonance*, German sociologist Hartmut Rosa develops the titular concept as a unified theory that takes into consideration the criticisms, as well as positive developments, of the theories of authenticity and alienation. [59]

Rosa defines resonance as "a kind of relationship to the world, formed through af←fect and e→motion, intrinsic interest, and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed."[60] Resonance is a deeply phenomenological theory, and the directionality of af←fect and e→motion is crucial. Af←fect refers to the ways in which we are affected by the world, and e→motion describes the projection of our own emotions back onto the world. When we encounter a beautiful piece of art, regardless of its medium, we are af←fected by it; when we respond with tears, goosebumps, or some other somatic response, we are expressing e→motion.[61] This is, of course, not a particularly revolutionary concept; saying that we are affected by art is so transparently obvious it approaches the tautological. Indeed, Taylor takes art to be emblematic of the poetic-mimetic character of authenticity.[62] Reframing this relationship in phenomenological terms, however, deeply enriches our ability to describe that relationship.

Rosa uses the metaphor of tuning forks to describe the ways in which we can be af←fected by the world or e→mote into it; he often uses literal sonic resonance to explain social resonance.[63] Here, he notes that two tuning forks designed to vibrate at the same frequency will both begin to vibrate even if only one of the forks is struck. A resonant relationship consists of what he calls the 'first fork' and the 'second fork.' This maintains a

[59] Pp. 9 in Rosa, Hartmut. *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Polity, 2019.
[60] Pp.174, *Resonance*.
[61] Pp 76-83, "Laughing, Crying, Loving," *Resonance*.
[62] Pp. 35, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.
[63] Pp. 124, *Resonance*. See also Appendix 1.

directional dialectic between what we could otherwise call ‘subject’ and ‘object’ while avoiding explicitly relying on those terms.

Someone who primarily understands themself as a first fork seeks resonance through e→motion, through the ability to express themselves and be heard. It might seem, for example, that the relationship between artist and viewer is inherently skewed, especially given the contemporary financialization of art. While this certainly dampens the possibility of the development of a resonant relationship, the artist *speaks* through their art and is *heard* by the audience. Conversely, someone who more closely conforms to the model of the second fork seeks out af←fective resonance. The elderly couple who bird watches, the record collector, the restaurant regular; these people seek resonance through their own capacity to let the world permeate their porous being. Jaeggi sees the self as similarly porous, and argues that we should understand ‘the self’ as a kind of ‘cotton candy,’ an interwoven, permeable thing that does not truly have a core.[64]

Rosa outlines three distinct ‘axes of resonance’: horizontal axes, between self and others; diagonal axes, between self and objects, like the kinds of relationships I was outlining above; and vertical axes, between self and ideas.[65] I’ll go on to outline each of these axes as modes of resonance, and consider the ways in which Taylor, Jaeggi, and others fit into this framework. Rosa offers multiple chapters outlining different examples of each axis, but for the sake of this project I’ll review one chapter about each axis.

I’ll begin, as Rosa does, by taking a closer look at horizontal axes of resonance. These are the resonant relationships that develop between individuals. Rosa anticipates a comparison between this notion and what has elsewhere been referred to as ‘recognition,’[66] and clarifies

[64] Pp. 155-199, “Like a Structure of Cotton Candy”: Being Oneself as Self-Appropriation,” *Alienation*.
[65] Pp. 194-305, “Spheres and Axes of Resonance”, *Resonance*.
[66] Perhaps given his relationship to Axel Honneth, who served as his doctoral supervisor.

that while there are certainly similarities worth pointing out, terms of recognition are "applied to individuals (*I* am loved/respected/valued),[67] whereas resonance always refers to an occurrence *between* two or more subjects. *I am recognized*, but resonance is something that can only happen *between us*."[68] He imagines recognition as related to cognition in a very similar way to what I previously called the 'ethical circle' in reference to Taylor:[69] "[Honneth argues] that reifying attitudes toward the world rest on forgetting or repressing the fact that social *recognition* precedes all *cognition*, including of nature and objects."[70]

Rosa argues here that recognition is a *moment*, and resonance is a *process*, but this may be a bit too shallow a reading of Honneth. Indeed, Honneth bears notable similarities to Taylor, who Rosa explicitly relies upon in order to develop his theory of resonance. In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth develops the initial version of his theory of recognition.[71] His model divides recognition into three spheres: love, in the same general and not strictly romantic way that Taylor uses the term; rights, or sometimes 'autonomy'; and solidarity, or esteem.[72]

Contrary to Rosa's reading, Honneth does indeed understand recognition as a fluid process. For example, Honneth uses shame as proof of the plurality of structures and modes of recognition. Shame, like any other moral feeling, presupposes a certain value code that both the shameful person and those shaming them understand that exists a priori to the shameful event. What places Honneth in line with Taylor, and what separates him from the liberal

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[67] These are the three 'spheres of recognition' that Honneth outlines in *The Struggle for Recognition*.
[68] Pp. 197, *Resonance*.
[69] Indeed, the diagram that Rosa sketches of 'inscription and expression' that he offers could quite easily be a diagram of Gadamer's hermeneutical circle; see Appendix B.
[70] Pp. 196, *Resonance*.
[71] 'Initial' in that he frequently relies on the psychoanalytic theory of George Mead in *The Struggle for Recognition*, a tendency which he later drops.
[72] Honneth, Axel. "Patterns of Intersubjective Recognition: Love, Rights, Solidarity." *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. MIT Press, 2007, pp. 92–130. See also Appendix B.

philosophers that critical theory at large takes aim at, is that Honneth does not suggest that this a priori value code is universal, or, indeed, codified at all. Instead, the value system that is referenced in a shameful act is strictly contextual, normally in a cultural sense. Consider how bizarre a shameful act can seem to those outside of the value system at hand, not necessarily in the nature of the act, but in the nature of the shame. What is considered by some to be completely shameful can seem entirely innocuous to an outside observer; conversely, what is accepted by one culture as a norm can often seem repulsive to outsiders.

Intraculturally, Honneth sees shame as an integral measure of the values of a given culture. Much like Taylor's notion of cultures centred around a hypergood, Honneth is not talking exclusively of ethnic or national cultures. Drawing on Ernst Bloch, Honneth makes room for radically different value systems between socio-economic classes, including when he poses the bourgeois value system as the usurper of its feudal predecessor, per Marx.[73] Like Marx and Bloch, Honneth sees Hegel as being essentially concerned with the 'interlocking of individuation and recognition.'[74] For Hegel, and therefore Honneth, a direct violation of bodily autonomy, such as in torture, is a viollation of their personhood in a not strictly legal sense. In such a case, there is an explicit refusal of recognition on the part of the violator, who does not recognize that the victim has the same degree of rights that they themselves possess.

Honneth connects this individual act to the realm of rights at large through Joel Feinberg's thought experiment known as 'Nowheresville.'[75] In the thought experiment's construction of a community that does indeed have positive law, but none that concretely outline interpersonal interactions, Feinberg sees an opportunity to explore 'the significance of

[73] Pp. 117, *The Struggle for Recognition*.
[74] Pp. 189, Honneth, Axel. "Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition." *Political Theory*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1992, pp. 187–201.
[75] Pp. 119, *The Struggle for Recognition*.

individual rights for the individual'. The dilemma that Honneth highlights using Feinberg is the essential need for a clearly defined set of interpersonal values in any given community, and that the most intuitive form of this standardization is codification. Thus, codification of recognition is not a stultifying process for Honneth, as it is for Rosa. Instead, Honneth's framework of codification is quite similar to Taylor's hypergoods, in that they serve as moral reference points that, just like for the latter thinker, can evolve over time.

Legal recognition via codification is often won through hard-won battles and can be taken away through abolition of the ratifying law, yet exists in a kind of temporal limbo while it is indeed codified. This is the structure of many contemporary battles between social groups and the legal systems to which they are beholden. In Canada, every single Indigenous nation or group of nations is collectively categorized under a single legal identity - and under a misnomer, at that. Canadian law still recognizes First Nations peoples as 'Indians.'[76] In this way, the 'struggle for recognition' that Indigenous peoples continue to fight is one enframed by the initial legal recognition that they were originally granted within the Canadian system.

In *Red Skin, White Masks,* Glen Coulthard considers the relation between Indigenous and colonial Canadians through the lens of the theory of recognition, especially as found in Taylor and Honneth. Therein, Coulthard reminds us that even the original understanding of recognition, as put forth by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is one founded on *mutual* recognition.[77] Coulthard stresses that the 'lord' of the 'lord-bondsman' dialectic[78] eventually

[76] 'First Nations' refers to Indigenous peoples who are neither Inuit nor Métis.
[77] Pp. 128, Coulthard, Glen. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
[78] This is also commonly translated from the original German *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft* as the 'master-slave' dialectic, but I take issue with this interpretation. Unfortunately, I cannot speak to the linguistic validity of either translation, but I want to note that the lord-bondsman pair can potentially allow for a broader application of the dialectic, if only based on our intuitions. To put it bluntly: analyzing contemporary social recognition through the lens of the master-slave dialectic can leave a sour taste in the mouth; conversely, lord-bondsman captures instead feudal relations, which are generally understood in less normative terms, and thus more easily carried around in our 'philosophical toolbox,' as it were.

becomes ossified by their previously empowering position of 'lord' - that is, the party that decides the terms of recognition - to such an extent that they are only recognized by the previously 'subjugated' party, the 'bondsman.'[79] He connects this to colonial theory via Frantz Fanon by drawing on Fanon's assertion that the colonial lord-bondsman dialectic is one that is crucially founded upon the bondsmen internalizing the lord's terms of recognition in such a way that they perpetuate these terms in a stultifying way.[80] Thus, the colonial dialectic is inherently osteogenic, rigidifying the self- and social identity of both lord and bondsman.

The legal does not exist without the political, and politics is one of the examples of the horizontal axis that Rosa explores.[81] For Rosa, the modern relationship to the political sphere is a fundamentally muted one in which we feel unable to engage with the world around us, which consequently leads us to deny the muted world the ability to engage with us. He explicitly ties this back to Taylor by highlighting the ways in which the latter sees the encroachment of instrumental reason into the political sphere as symptomatic of the abandonment of 'the great chain of being.'[82] Via Taylor, Rosa asserts that the abandonment of an understanding of the political sphere as a resonant one that can both speak and be heard has led to a muted relationship to the political sphere. Given that the political sphere is an intrinsically social one, this muting also dampens our ability to relate to others within this sphere of resonance. Conversely, "when citizens are able to conceive of themselves not only as the addressees or recipients of the laws and rules that bind them, but also as their authors, they experience the political/administrative order not only as a heteronomous realm, but also as a zone of civic resonance."[83]

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[79] Ibid.
[80] Pp. 31-32, *Red Skin, White Masks*.
[81] Pp. 214-226, "Politics: The Four Voices of Democracy," *Resonance*.
[82] Pp. 215, *Resonance*, cf. pp. 5 in Taylor, Charles, *The Malaise of Modernity*. House of Anansi Press, 1991. (Once again, this is just the original version of *The Ethics of Authenticity*.)
[83] Pp. 217, *Resonance*.

Rosa uses political scientist Nancy Love to outline the ways in which musical metaphors can accurately represent a 'resonant politics.' He notes that we often think of politics "not only [as] voices, but of harmony, dissonance, orchestration, discord, working in concert, etc."[84] In the 'liberal-individualistic' conception of politics, the entirety of what is considered 'political' is the act of casting a vote. We project our political voice outward, but in a muted way; it is not 'heard' as a voice that is uniquely ours but quantified as only one of many.[85] Indeed, many liberal political systems are designed in such a way that many voices are explicitly *ignored*. The Canadian political system, for example, is one of many that is founded on a system of 'first-past-the-post.'[86] In any given election, the winning candidate is the candidate that gets the most votes when compared one-to-one with each other candidate individually.[87] Given that Canada is (at least nominally) a multiparty democracy, this often leads to the winning candidate securing anywhere from 40% of the vote *all the way down to only 20%*. If no individual candidate who receives any portion of the other *60-80%* of the vote does not have more than the winning candidate, most of the votes are entirely ignored. In terms of resonance theory, such a system is founded on the *possibility* of your voice being heard - with little care for whether this is the case.

Rosa contrasts the liberal framework of politics with what I will call the 'critical' conception of democracy; he refers to Jürgen Habermas and Bernd Ladwig as examples. This framework "recognizes a deliberative, reasonable, verbalizing voice aimed at rational argument," which Rosa sees as a fundamentally 'disembodied' understanding of the political voice, such that it "lacks… 'visceral,' bodily, and sensual qualities."[88] Through this

[84] Ibid, cf. Love, Nancy. *Musical Democracy*. SUNY Press, 2006.
[85] Pp. 217-218, *Resonance*.
[86] This kind of system primarily exists in former and current Commonwealth states.
[87] "What Is First Past the Post?" *Fair Vote Canada*, www.fairvote.ca/what-is-first-past-the-post/.
[88] Pp. 217, *Resonance*.

disembodiment, the critical perspective of democracy has a tendency to embrace a realism that consequently fosters an understanding of the political sphere as one that is strictly ossified. While the critical camp may not enthusiastically embrace liberal democracy as such, they are the camp that will begrudgingly propose that this is 'simply the way things are,' abandoning any hope that genuine alternatives exist.

At this point, I must address a possible criticism of my project, and the work that I have been relying on throughout. The disavowal of instrumental, muted relationships to the world does *not* mean the discrediting of reason in favour of 'emotionality,' or, most importantly, the fetishization of emotionality to such an extent that there should be a disavowal of reason *as such*. When Rosa considers the critical conception of democracy to be lacking sensual qualities, this is not a suggestion that sensuality should be the *only* goal of the political sphere. In fact, Rosa thinks that there is a noteworthy example of precisely that: fascism.

In terms of resonance theory, fascism is best understood as an echo chamber. This term is often used to refer to insular communities, usually political ones, and most especially to online political communities, wherein the strength of the community is reinforced only by its own capacity to display signs of being part of the 'in-group'[89] Paradoxically, membership in an echo chamber is contingent on proof that one is already a member. This does map well onto Rosa's definition, but does not capture the entire matter. In addition to serving as an 'epistemic bubble,'[90] echo chambers should also be understood as existing past the "[fine line] between the concept of resonant *response*, which not only permits but requires *contradiction*

[89] Nguyen, C. Thi. "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles." *Episteme*, vol. 17, no. 2, 13 Sept. 2018, pp. 141–161.
[90] Ibid.

[on the one hand], and the identitarian concept of resonance-as-*echo* [on the other].”[91] The echo that you hear after shouting into a cave is a ‘real’ response, in that it is not simply garbled sound, but it is not *resonant*; it does not have a genuine source *other than yourself*. The success of fascist movements, according to Rosa, is the capacity to take hold of those very ‘visceral’ elements that are missing from the liberal and critical frameworks of democracy, and to develop them through chants, marches, or slogans, in what he calls a “[staging] of ‘the unity of the people.”[92]

Rosa’s understanding of fascism focuses on the ways in which genuinely resonant relationships can be engendered by discerning genuine beliefs and concerns that political subjects have, then manipulating those beliefs to serve the ends of a given fascist movement. In addition to instances of this character, however, there exist movements that exist without any reference to real political urges, even nascent ones; this is commonly known as ‘astroturfing.’ This is a spin on the term ‘grassroots,’ which typically refers to political movements that develop out of genuine concerns, normally starting on a small scale and expanding upward and outward.[93] Astroturfing, then, is a facade of a grassroots movement: “Just as ever-green Astroturf is only a plastic version of the real thing, ‘astro-turfed’ political actions masquerade as grassroots efforts.”[94] In recent years, the ubiquity of social media has ballooned the impact of astroturfing campaigns; with the anonymity afforded by the internet, it has never been easier to present oneself as representing the ‘silent majority.’[95]

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[91] Pp. 219, *Resonance*.
[92] Pp. 220, *Resonance*.
[93] Chetkovich, Carol and Frances Kunreuther. *From the Ground Up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*. Cornell University Press, 2006.
[94] Lee, Caroline W. “The Roots of Astroturfing.” *Contexts*, vol. 9, no. 1, Feb. 2010, pp. 73–75.
[95] García-Orosa, Berta. “Disinformation, Social Media, Bots, and Astroturfing: The Fourth Wave of Digital Democracy”. *Profesional De La información*, vol. 30, no. 6, October 2021.

In the music industry, groups or artists that come into stardom overnight, seemingly having come from nowhere, are referred to as 'industry plants.' While this typically involves drastically lower stakes than astroturfed political movements, especially ones that engender fascist sentiments, the general structure of the phenomenon is much the same. In terms of resonance theory, astroturfed movements represent an attempt to develop resonance by playing the music of such an 'industry plant'; the only thing that suggests an astroturfed movement is indeed a resonant space is simply the assertion that this is so, without any genuine evidence.

A 'unified' theory of democracy, founded upon the principles of resonance theory, recognizes not just the spatial elements of resonance, but the temporal as well. Rosa has elsewhere developed a theory of 'social acceleration,'[96] which I will briefly outline. The immense technological progress of the past two centuries has rapidly left us with an equally immense amount of free time, and a nearly infinite number of possibilities of what to do with that time. This harkens back to the notion of 'choice overload' that I discussed above, and Rosa takes a similar position to Jaeggi. The problem with 'choice' in modernity is not the sheer volume of choices available to us regarding how to live an authentic life, but that the *quantitative* increase in the number of choices does not reflect a *qualitative* increase in the value of those choices. Consequently, we feel 'accelerated,' compelled to live our lives as fast as possible, as efficiently as possible, with little to no regard for the quality of the life that we live, wishing only to actualize as many possibilities as we can.

The modern conception of the political sphere is one fundamentally shaped by social acceleration. Part of the reason for the dominance of the liberal and critical conceptions of democracy over more community-based alternatives is the desire for democracy to be *fast*,

[96] Rosa, Hartmut. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. Columbia University Press, 2017.

efficient, and *out of the way*. This is largely based on the prevailing understanding of politics as the maintenance of the status quo, rather than the realm of new possibilities of social organization. Rosa refers to this ethos as 'dynamic stabilization:'[97]

> In short, the structural reproduction and stabilization of the status quo involves three central levels of the modern social formation. First is its fundamental institutional order, what can be called the 'basis institutions' of society: the competitive capitalist market economy, political democracy, the welfare state, and the academic and educational system… Second, the sociocultural order, i.e. the pattern of stratification of socioeconomic classes, is also reproduced in and through the logic of escalation. This is linked with, third, the *operational logic* of social accumulation and allocation.

Thus, dynamic stabilization is the process of continuously adapting the sociopolitical realm to match its prior state, *despite the rapidly shrinking possibility that this can happen*. This is baked into the structure of liberal-democratic politics regardless of where precisely one is situated on the political spectrum. Performing this stabilization is portrayed as the arcane art of successfully navigating the labyrinth of capital-G Government, which creates a political sphere founded upon the fundamental idea that politics should be left to the politicians, and that most people would simply be unable to perform any kind of political duties. This is especially noteworthy given the simultaneously prevalent notion that politicians are corrupt criminals that are terrible at their job. What this leaves us with is the underlying feeling that politicians are terrible at their jobs, *but if we tried, we'd do even worse*.

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[97] Pp. 406-407, *Resonance*.

The vertical axis of resonance describes resonant relationships between oneself and ideas. Recall Taylor's notion of hypergoods; both he and Rosa describe the orienting power of 'big ideas.' In this section, I'll examine the similarities between hypergoods and vertical axes of resonance further through 'The Promise of Religion:'

> *God* is at bottom the notion of a *responsive world*… From this perspective, religion (from the Latin *religare*, 'to connect, to bind') is in fact a relationship, one which promises the categories of *love* and *meaning* as a guarantee that the basic, primal form of existence is a relationship not of alienation, but of resonance… In this way, religious experience can be redefined as an *adaptively transformative* relationship to the world in which the correlating experience of *self-efficacy* is achieved not through external action, but through *internal* movements of taking in, synthesizing, and apprehending.[98]

From this view, God serves as a hypergood that underlies the belief in a resonant world. In practice, this results in a relationship to the world founded upon the I-You distinction, rather than an I-It distinction; Rosa takes this concept from Martin Buber.[99] Buber characterizes our relationships to the world as different 'basic word pairs,' highlighting not just the phenomenological relationship between I and You, but the logico-linguistic one as well: "The I of man is also twofold. For the I of the basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It."[100] In Rosa's appropriation of these terms, I-You relationships are

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[98] Pp. 258-259, *Resonance*. Rosa clearly acknowledges that he is operating from a Protestant Christian perspective, but does not think this limits the applicability of this conception of divinity: "It does not strike me as too bold to assert that similar ideas and experiences are also constitutive of Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim forms of religiosity, although I am unable to provide evidence of this here"; Pp 260n14, *Resonance*.

[99] It's possible that Buber inspired the notion of axes of resonance as well. Consider the following passage: "Three are the spheres in which the world of relation arises. The first: life with nature… The second: life with men… The third: life with spiritual beings." Pp. 5, Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kauffman, Free Press, 2023

[100] Pp. 2, *I and Thou*.

resonant, and I-It relationships muted; furthermore, I-It relationships are those shaped by instrumental reason. Beyond avoiding a strictly instrumental relationship with the world, the I-You relationship is constitutive of the I in a way that the I-It is not: "Buber further understands [the I-You relationship] to be a transformational encounter in which both I and You are changed; the I is by its nature always already both question and answer."[101] Buber considers every I-You relationship to occur in reference to God; this takes the shape of a hypergood when this is understood in combination with the constitutive nature of I-You.

Resonant relationships should not exclusively be understood as positive; negative emotions are just as resonant as desirable ones. Similarly, Rosa acknowledges that the resonant power of religion is not immune to abuse. He suggests that we understand religious violence, at least in the modern age, as a kind of 'panic reaction' to the 'death of God.'[102] This process is what Taylor earlier referred to as the abandonment of the 'great chain of being;' with the discrediting of the possibility of a resonant world, the modern subject is thrown into absurdism.[103] For Rosa, religious violence first manifests "as an effort to force the fulfillment of [the promise of resonance], thus making the inaccessible accessible… religion represents a particular challenge to the notion of self-efficacy as a condition of resonant relationships."[104]

This harkens back to the central place that self-efficacy had for Taylor's and Jaeggi's understandings of authenticity and appropriation, respectively, and is foundational to his criticisms of their theories. Religion for Rosa, and indeed many kinds of resonant relationships in general, are in fact fundamentally based on a *surrender* of self-efficacy, the acceptance and even *desiring* of lack of control.

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[101] Pp. 261, *Resonance*.
[102] Pp. 267-268, *Resonance*.
[103] Rosa examines the works of Sartre and Camus as emblematic of this absurdity.
[104] Pp. 267, *Resonance*.

Religious violence, then, is the desire to experience a resonant relationship to the world while simultaneously harboring an inability to allow that resonance to occur in situations beyond one's control. Take, for instance, the case of residential schools in Canada. These schools, jointly run by the Canadian government and various Christian churches,[105] aimed to remove Indigenous children from their families and communities. The children were further isolated from their community by stripping them of their native language, while simultaneously prohibiting Indigenous adults from attending English- or French-language schools outside of the residential system. Brigadier General Richard Henry Pratt, founder and first superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School,[106] said the following in response to the infamous saying that 'the only good Indian is a dead one:'[107] "In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."[108] The first residential school in Canada opened in 1831 in Brantford, Ontario. The last residential school was shut down in 1997.[109]

It is utterly crucial to understand that reframing religious violence in the language of resonance theory does not negate the responsibility that the perpetrators carry for their actions. Understanding the motives behind a monstrous action does not make it any less monstrous. In our terms, understanding religious violence as an attempt to force a resonant relationship is not a dismissal of what exactly 'force' means, namely, physical violence, often carried out on a large, coordinated scale. It is often said that fascism is simply colonization coming home, and its relationship to religious extremism is much the same.[110] At the core of

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[105] Also administered by the British government prior to Confederation.
[106] 'Industrial schools' in the United States were analogous to residential schools in Canada.
[107] Here, 'Indian' derogatorily refers to North American Indigenous people.
[108] Pp. viii, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 - Origins to 1939*. Vol. 4, McGill University Press, 2015.
[109] Miller, J R. "Residential Schools in Canada." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 10 Oct. 2012, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools.
[110] Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham, NYU Press, 2000.

this lashing out is the fundamental belief that the development of a resonant relationship is based on self-efficacy; even more primordial than the belief that we *should* relate with the world around us strictly through the actualization of our authentic selves, the belief that we *can*.

The diagonal axis of resonance, which exists between subjects and objects, presents the clearest demonstration of the distinction between the 'basic word pairs' that Buber outlines. Rosa suggests that muted subject-object relationships are modern, but in contrast to *non-modernity* rather than *pre-modernity*: "Non-modern worlds of ancient, animistic, and totemic cultures are different [than modernist cultures]. They recognize animated, ensouled, or *speaking* things that share an inner connection with human beings and are often also interwoven in a web of resonant relationships and references to ancestors, spirits, or gods."[111] By clarifying that resonant subject-object relationships are not lost to the past, irretrievably trapped within the pre-modern, Rosa allows for the genuine possibility of the re-establishment of these relationships. Here, Rosa presents an argument like Massimiliano Tomba in his *Insurgent Universality*, which proposes a 'multiverse of histories.'[112]

Briefly, the crux of Tomba's argument is that we should abandon a strictly linear, progressive understanding of history in favour of his 'multiverse,' a framework that he says can acknowledge the redemptive elements of the past without getting caught up in conservatism or nostalgia. He examines the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, and the Mexican Revolution - specifically the Zapatista movement - as moments of history that can be directly connected to the present in a way that 'circumvents' the intervening years. That is, we can understand the revolutionary moments of

[111] Pp. 226, *Resonance*.
[112] Tomba, Massimiliano. *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

the past as moments that we can claim as *our* past, regardless of our temporal distance from those moments. His primary thesis is that we should remember that we are not the product of a single, monolithic Past, but of a nearly infinite series of moments in the past - including those most revolutionary of moments.

The significance of reframing the possibility of belief in a resonant world - or a revolutionary world, for Tomba - as *non*-modern rather than *pre*-modern is the possibility for a recovery of the non-modern within the confines of the modern. That is, if we understand the 'ensouled' world not as a worldliness trapped in the past, but one that exists *alongside* modernity, for example in Indigenous cultures. Rosa and Tomba attempt to detach 'modern' and 'modernity' from their normative characteristics, instead reappropriating the terms as historical-descriptive devices. This is only a debatably fruitful endeavour,[113] but it's worth taking note that the understanding of belief in a resonant world as existing outside of modernity is not at all an assertion that cultures considered non-modern from this perspective are somehow 'worse' or 'less developed' than modernist cultures.

David Graeber, much like Tomba, was a social theorist with a deeply critical slant. An anarchist, Graeber took an explicitly anti-capitalist approach to social anthropology, which influenced the entirety of his body of work. In this section, I'll rely on *Bullshit Jobs* to examine the axes of resonance as they permeate our everyday lives, especially the diagonal axis of work.

With that said, I am now left with the task of describing what precisely a 'bullshit job' is. Relying on John Maynard Keynes, Graeber points out that it seems apparent that most labour should be redundant by now. Given the massive increase in industrial and other kinds

[113] Consider Gadamer's exploration of 'the classic' as one example of the intrinsically normative nature of historical-hermeneutic devices; see "The Example of the Classical" in *Truth and Method*, pp. 285-290.

of productive efficiency, Keynes believed that the standard work week would be approximately 15 hours by the year 2000.[114] Much like every other domain, the field of work has seen a drastic increase in the *quantity* of work, but not the *quality*. *Bullshit Jobs* asks why this is the case.

Graeber begins by outlining the varieties of bullshit jobs that exist (mostly in the West, though he does make comparisons to Soviet style 'full employment' regimes):

- Flunkies are employed to make either the establishment they work for, or sometimes specifically their boss, seem important. This section includes testimony from receptionists, front desk clerks, and other front-facing administrative jobs. Graeber compares these positions to that of feudal retainers.[115]
- Goons, a category that includes telemarketers, advertising firms, and lobbyists. Their job is to counteract the telemarketing, advertising, and lobbying of competing companies.[116] Graeber, being characteristically provocative, suggests that most of the military could be included in this category as well. He acknowledges that there are practical uses of the military - suppressing domestic dissent, for example - but reminds us that, "If no one had an army, armies would not be needed."[117]
- Duct-tapers, whose role is to maintain the internal workings of a company, without ever fixing any actual problem.[118] "It's as if a homeowner, upon discovering a leak in the roof, decided it was too much bother to hire a roofer

[114] Pp. xvi, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. Graeber, David. Simon & Schuster, 2018.
[115] Pp. 28-36, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[116] Pp. 36-40, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[117] Pp. 36, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[118] Pp. 40-45, *Bullshit Jobs*.

to reshingle it, and instead stuck a bucket underneath and hired someone whose full-time job was to periodically dump the water."[119] He notes that this kind of work is historically relegated to women "left with the responsibility of performing the emotional labour of soothing egos, calming nerves, and negotiating solutions to problems that [their male superiors] created."[120]

- Box tickers, "who exist only or primarily to allow an organization to be able to claim that it is doing something that, in fact, it is not doing."[121] This includes writing in-house material such as corporate magazines, or reports that amount to saying 'everything is still the same, carry on.'[122]
- Taskmasters, who exist in two separate types.[123] Type 1 taskmasters are generally middle managers or other superiors who 'supervise' those who are perfectly capable of supervising themselves. One testimony comes from an 'Assistant Localization Manager' who coordinates a team of five translators, despite not being a translator, and thus not contributing much other than reports for his own superior, which will then be reported to an even higher superior. Type 2 taskmasters are those who actively generate more bullshit work for themselves and those around them. This section references an Academic Dean, who was specifically given the non-executive role of providing "strategic leadership."[124]

[119] Pp. 44, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[120] Pp. 41-42, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[121] Pp. 45, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[122] Pp.45-51, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[123] Pp. 51-58, *Bullshit Jobs*.
[124] Pp. 53, *Bullshit Jobs*.

What Graeber provocatively refers to as 'bullshit' is what Rosa would, much more politely, refer to as a muted relationship. Work, for Rosa, is a relation along the diagonal axis; we relate to the world of 'It's around us *through* the world of 'You's. "Drawing boundaries between the living and inanimate *and* transgressing that boundary" is the fundamental nature of the diagonal axis of resonance under modernity,[125] which directly parallels the I-It relation as evolving *out of* the I-You relation. Thus, a uniquely modern kind of resonant relationship with objects can be developed by transgressing that boundary; "When we have repaired, altered, cleaned, or manipulated an object… many times over, we and/or our idiosyncrasies have literally *become part of it* - just as, conversely, it has *become part of us* and changed *us*."[126]

Heidegger makes the distinction between things that are 'present-at-hand' and things that are 'ready-to-hand.' Things that are present-at-hand are 'objectively' present before us but are not necessarily part of our current and active being-in-the-world.[127] In contrast, things that are ready-to-hand are not only present but are an active part of our being-in-the-world in a way that alters our being from its prior state. Consider, once again, Heidegger's hammer: "Hammering [as an action] does not just have a knowledge of the useful characteristics of the hammer; rather, it has appropriated this utensil in the most adequate way possible."[128] When we are using a hammer or any other tool we are, however briefly, appropriating that thing into our being-in-the-world. A similar thing occurs when we drive a vehicle. With practice, we begin to develop a sense of the size, shape, and movement of the vehicle, just as we gradually

[125] Pp. 229, *Resonance*, cf. Kimmich, Dorothee. *Lebendige Dinge in der Moderne*. Konstanz University Press, 2018.
[126] Pp. 232, *Resonance*.
[127] Pp. 66-72, "The Being of Beings Encountered in the Surrounding World," *Being and Time*.
[128] Pp. 69, *Being and Time*.

develop a sense of the size, shape, and movement of ourselves when we are toddlers learning to toddle.

One of the crucial connections between things present-at-hand and ready-to-hand is the transition from one to the other, which can occur when something that is ready-to-hand suddenly no longer is. In the case of the hammer, the handle breaks; for the car, the tire blows out. A similar thing can occur with our physical body, too; we ignore the fact that we have a nose most of the time, until we become sick, and we suddenly feel as if there is a brick taped to our face. In this moment, what was previously incorporated into our phenomenal body radically changes because it is in some way dysfunctional, and we suddenly become aware of the thing in a way that we previously weren't. What was once a tool to construct with, an extension of our very self, is now a stick and a lump of metal.

But this transition cannot occur without difficulty if we resonate with the object of concern. When we care about what is ready-to-hand rather than just apprehending the thing for the purpose of utility, we actively maintain its handiness. In the example of the hammer, I would never see it as simply broken parts if the hammer had particular importance to me. Say that it was the hammer that I received many years ago in my grandfather's old toolbox. Even if it were to break, I would still see it as an imperfect version of my grandfather's hammer, rather than allowing its identity to be constituted by its lack of utility, and therefore existing as just a pile of scrap.

Indeed, many of the heirlooms that we inherit are important to us precisely *because* they lack utility. In addition to the significance that we attribute to the object because of its relation to someone we care for, we also take pleasure in the very act of caring for its own sake. The hammer is not valuable simply because it was my grandfather's, but also because it

has no value outside of this (it's a remarkably old hammer and would quite easily break were I to try using it). We experience the power of the self in its purest form in this moment; we consider an object as being valuable, and for no reason other than this, it is so.

What Rosa contributes to this line of thought is an emphasis not just on the outward e→motion that I express when I consider the hammer as valuable in and of itself, but also the way in which I am af←fected by the hammer. Af←fect is not a kind of metaphysical value that an object has, nor is it a suggestion that objects carry the ability to e→mote in the same way that we do. Rather, he is highlighting that even though my resonance with the hammer is indeed an expression of my evaluative powers I could not, for example, understand a book as an af←fective hammer.

If, to try and unify my resonant relationship with a hammer and with a book as the same kind of relationship, I understood both as resonant relationships with 'things,' that might also obscure the unique nature of each of these relationships. Experiencing a book as a source of resonance is crucially different from a similar relationship with a hammer in that the latter does not have the same kind of willful ignoring of utility that the latter does. Books are a bit unique here in that they can be works of art, sources of information, or oftentimes both.

Understanding Graeber's theory through this lens gives us a picture of bullshit jobs as a kind of deliberate manipulation of the fundamental aspect of human sociability - care. Indeed, Rosa ties work as an axis of resonance directly to the work*place*, as Graeber does, in the following passage: "People often cite strategic, i.e. "mute," interactions in interactive contexts that are by nature geared toward resonance as among the most agonizing and most alienating possible experiences."[129] Graeber has argued that most work can be understood as a

[129] Pp. 236, fn. 43, *Resonance*, cf. Binswanger, Mathias. *Die Tretmühlen des Glücks*. Verlag Herder, 2006.

kind of 'reproductive work,' rather than 'productive work.'[130] Rosa asserts that "the activity of baking bread or playing soccer [for example,] itself implies what it means to bake or play *well*," an argument that he relies on Alasdair MacIntyre to make, and which bears great similarity to Jaeggi's understanding of self-appropriation.[131] Yet what Rosa stresses, beyond Jaeggi, is the unpredictability that is key to a genuinely resonant relation, even to objects:[132]

> Just as the concept of resonance demands, the idea of a *responsive material* here always also implies the possibility and occurrence of *resistance*, of the unforeseen and surprising. The dough, the motorcycle, even the text I am trying to write all "speak with their own voice". Now and then they prove to be *unruly*, never allowing themselves to be fully mastered or completely unpredictable. When they do, the relationship ceases to be a resonant relationship, becoming merely pure routine.

Bullshit jobs are therefore the ultimate realization of what Rosa sees as the basis of modernity, the endless desire to bring as much of the world as possible under our grasp. When, in a potentially resonant space like work, we are given absolute supremacy over our domain, when we are given an infinite amount of time to perform a task that takes only minutes yet compelled to continue to pretend as if we are working, we are undergoing this process of becoming routine. Ossification occurs, then, not when the world is out of our control, but when it is *entirely under our thumb, and we refuse to do anything about it*.

The trick of modernity is convincing us that this refusal is valuable; Graeber proposes that this is in part due to what Max Weber calls the 'Protestant work ethic.'[133] In a broader

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[130] Graeber, David. "From Managerial Feudalism to the Revolt of the Caring Classes." Chaos Communication Congress. 2019, Leipzig.
[131] Pp. 234, *Resonance*.
[132] Pp. 234-235, *Resonance*.
[133] "The Theological Roots of Our Attitudes Toward Labor," pp. 220-222, *Bullshit Jobs*.

sense, I want to reformulate the fetishization of discomfort that Graeber outlines as a fetishization of muted relationships. Recalling my earlier discussion of social acceleration in regard to the political sphere, our interpersonal relationships can feel accelerated as well. In these instances, The understanding of muted interpersonal relationships as somehow more valuable than truly resonant ones exemplifies the kind of seeping inward, or perhaps downward, of instrumental reason that Taylor and Rosa both criticize. Social acceleration does not occur only in the political sphere, but in the social as well. Rosa presents the following hypothetical in his chapter on work: "A doctor who only knows to respond to a patient's questions with *That's up to you, you have to decide for yourself*, though acting in accordance with the ideal of patient autonomy, is here guilty of a crime against resonance."[134]

There are two key notions that I want to draw from this passage. First, there is an implicit assertion that a careful balance must be maintained between the acknowledgement of autonomy, on the one hand, and the genuine development of a resonant relationship. There are hints here of what Søren Kirkegaard famously called the 'leap into faith.'[135] For a resonant relationship to develop, especially between individuals, the initial 'leap' must be taken by asserting the fundamental belief that there is the possibility for a resonant relationship to occur. This also feels like Graeber's previous quote about the military, which we can now reimagine as, 'If no one had muted relations, muted relations would not be needed.' That is to say, the totalizing nature of instrumental reason, the fetishization of muted, impersonal, 'rational' relationships exists to such a degree that even the possibility of developing resonant relationships is seen as impossible. Our very capability to resonate with the world becomes ossified.

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[134] Pp. 237, *Resonance*.
[135] Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Alastair Hannay, Penguin Books, 2006.

Secondly, Rosa undermines the understanding of social theory as a dialectic between third- and first-person perspectives, even though this is a perspective that he otherwise favours. When we understand recognition as a passive activity, and therefore value passively maintained relationships, we can slip into the habit of viewing autonomy in a strictly negative sense. A tendency develops which sees recognition of autonomy as simply the passive avoidance of impeding others. Through this perspective, autonomy is expressed and recognized through avoiding physical contact with others, not taking up too much space, speaking only in hushed tones in public, wearing muted colours to avoid drawing attention to oneself, limiting oneself only to 'idle talk' with others to avoid bringing up offensive or even simply uninteresting topics.[136]

There is a tendency to simultaneously believe that this muted understanding of autonomy is ubiquitous while also being most deeply affected by even the politest attempt at the briefest moment of resonance. I have seen grown men who live trapped within the confines of the most regressive kind of traditional masculinity brought to tears through a sincere, heartfelt, 'Thank you.' Despite this fact, rarely is a connection ever made between one's own existence as a being who craves resonance, yet who is trapped within a negative conception of the recognition of autonomy, and the possibility that *others live precisely the same way*.

When we acknowledge this aspect of our shared existence, we can once again begin to recognize others in a resonant way, as a 'You' instead of an 'It.' If, in Rosa's example of the doctor and patient, a genuine kind of resonance develops between them, even if only for a moment, not only is the 'subjective' element of the interaction better, but the 'objective' aspect is as well. It's likely that the patient would report the visit as more satisfying, and it's

[136] Pp. 161-164, "Idle Talk," *Being and Time*.

likely that learning even the personal details of the patient would improve the actual quality of the care. We can imagine our doctor saying, ‘Look, here’s what I think you should do,’ which is only possible if the patient is a *You*, instead of an *It*.

Regarding social theory, we should perform our ‘critique of forms of life,’ as Jaeggi calls it, not from the perspective of the third person, but of the *second*. To answer Graeber’s question on the possibility of having a bullshit job and not knowing it, we might be able to solve the problem from the perspective of their peers, friends, or family. Relying on the first-person perspective, it’s hard to judge the way that a person lives or works if they themselves seem satisfied. From the third, we’re really only analyzing an amalgamation of first-person perspectives, which gives us some room for our own interpretive work, but not much else. Yet from a *second*-person perspective, an I to their You, we have the power to say, ‘You seem happy, but *I know you*, and I think *you might be unhappy*.’ In other words, while Graeber explicitly acknowledges the subjective view on the value of one’s labour, he may have forgotten - as, perhaps, much of social theory has - the other subject in the room.

CONCLUSION

My aim with this project was to develop an understanding of authenticity that could simultaneously be pluralistic while also avoiding 'soft relativism.' Traditional conceptions of 'the good life' are often totalizing to the extent of being suffocating. The more dogmatic strains of religious, political, or other social ideologies can leave a bad taste in the mouth, bitter medicine without the accompanying spoonful of sugar. The social philosophy of the latter 20th century did little to remedy this fact beyond simply pointing out that bitter taste. Acknowledging you have a problem is the first step to solving it, as they say. Now, however, is the time for the second step.

When someone we care about seems happy doing something that we think is fundamentally harmful to them, what do we do? While Graeber was primarily focused on the subjective element, he did acknowledge that, "[unless] one takes the position that there is absolutely no reality at all except for individual perception, which is philosophically problematic, it is hard to deny the possibility that one *can* be wrong about [evaluating] what they do."[137] The kind of 'problematic philosophy' that Graeber is alluding to sounds very much like the 'soft relativism' that Taylor disavowed, as well as the individualism that Jaeggi especially attributed to Rorty and the like. I believe this demonstrates that, even outside of academic philosophy, there is a prevalent understanding of the dichotomy of the value of lived experience, self-perception, and phenomenal reality against the need to develop a kind of shared understanding of what the 'good life' means.[138]

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[137] Pp. 63, *Bullshit Jobs*.

[138] I stress that this tendency might exist even outside of academic philosophy as the question of what the 'good life' means is quite literally philosophy 101.

Much of the work I have previously cited approaches this dichotomy as a dialectic between the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective. Taylor, Jaeggi, and Rosa have all suggested, in these and other works, that we should understand social theory as a kind of back-and-forth between the noble desire to develop a kind of 'objective' metric for determining right and wrong, and our being-in-the-world offering us only one perspective out of which we see that world. Rosa explicitly said as much in a presentation he gave at Aalborg University in 2022 when he proposed that one of the 'requirements for social theory' is a "dual *structural* (3rd person) and *cultural* (1st person) account of the (modern) social formation."[139] A similar idea can be found in Jaeggi's dichotomy between subjective and objective reality (see above). In Taylor's criticism of 'soft relativism,' he implicitly calls for a kind of 'hard relativism,' one that can allow for criticism alongside acceptance - what I would simply call 'pluralism' rather than 'relativism.' I propose that we can circumvent this dilemma by remembering that the dichotomy of the first- and third person perspectives is not a dichotomy at all. Strong social theory, I think, occurs from the second-person perspective, which lies between the two poles of the first- and third-person perspectives.

The theory that I have developed over the course of this paper suggests that the embodiment of our lived experience is the correct methodological approach needed to take that great leap of faith into our uncertain future. We are not simply isolated individuals, bereft of all social obligation or desire; nor, however, are we the aloof critic, analyzing the world around us as an outside observer. We are, all of us, beings in the world. This world is not one that is shaped by passive, mechanistic forces that are beyond our capacity to know. Our world is an organic one, shaped not only by our own interactions with it, but through its interactions

[139] Rosa, Hartmut. "Social Acceleration, Parametric Optimization, and the Resonance Conception." The University of Aalborg. 2022, Copenhagen, Denmark.

with all who have come before, and all who will come after. We would do well to remember Tomba's multiversal temporality; while the past and future are populated by billions, *the present is as well*. Our paths are not walked alone, with forks in the road ahead and behind us. Instead, we cohabitate with billions of others that desire resonance, and can resonate with us.

Remembering this is not only useful on a microcosmic, interpersonal scale. Comparative philosophy should not strive to judge both the view that we inhabit as well as any number of others from the omnipotent view from nowhere. We should embrace the philosophies that we exist within, and relate to other perspectives not as an 'It' to be studied, but as a 'You.' The relationship between I and You is a resonant one - one that allows us to speak, and be heard.

APPENDIX A

From page 124 of *Resonance*. The leftward arrows represent af←fective resonance, resonating with the world; the rightward, e→motive resonance.

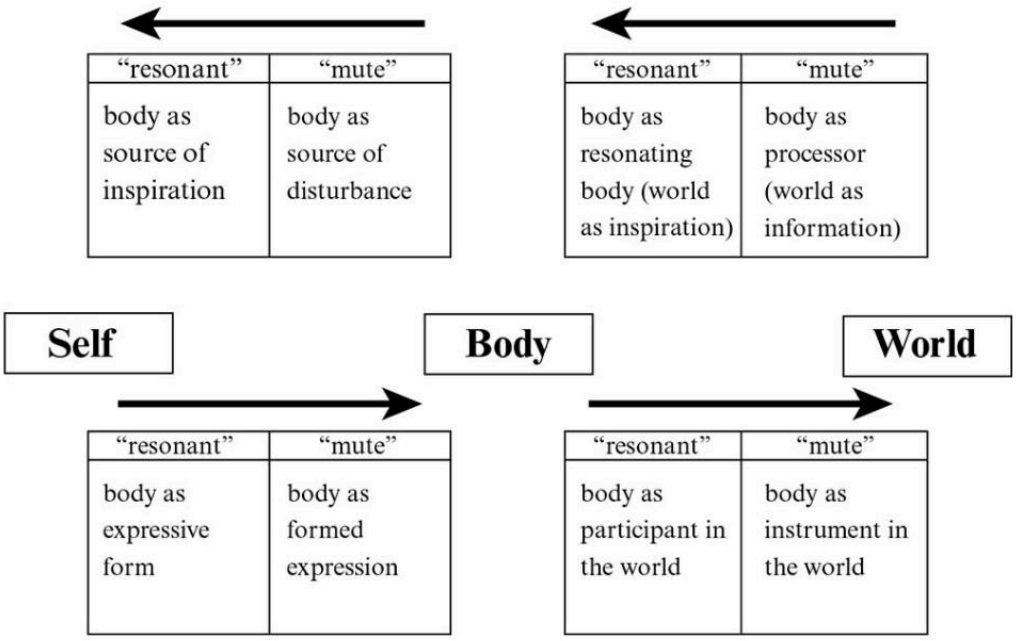

Figure 2 Mute and resonant forms of bodily relationships to the world (arrows denoting direction of impression/expression)

APPENDIX B

From page 129 of *The Struggle for Recognition*.

Figure 2 The structure of relations of recognition

Mode of recognition	emotional support	cognitive respect	social esteem
Dimension of personality	needs and emotions	moral responsibility	traits and abilities
Forms of recognition	primary relationships (love, friendship)	legal relations (rights)	community of value (solidarity)
Developmental potential	—	generalization, de-formalization	individualization, equalization
Practical relation-to-self	basic self-confidence	self-respect	self-esteem
Forms of disrespect	abuse and rape	denial of rights, exclusion	denigration, insult
Threatened component of personality	physical integrity	social integrity	'honour', dignity

APPENDIX C

From page 85 of *Resonance*.

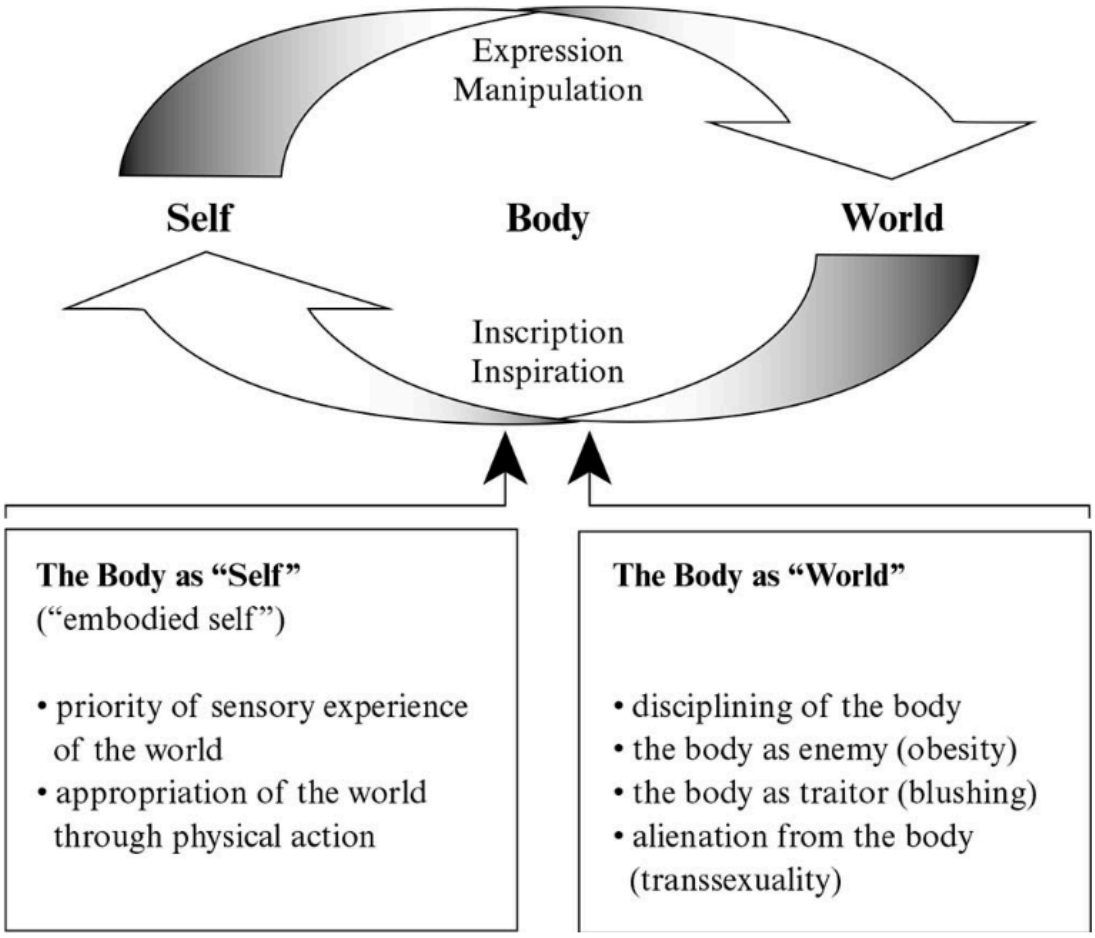

Figure 1 Inscription and expression – the body between self and world

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VITA AUCTORIS

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