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Alienation Through Abnormality in (Bio)Medical Practice

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Abstract: In this paper I critically discuss the epistemological structure of medical anthropological inquiry. The patient has a central role in this analysis, as biomedical epistemology, which informs that of medical anthropology, serves to alienate the patient from society and one’s self. The link in epistemological structure therefore disadvantages the general intent of medical anthropology in the misinformation of how one understand one’s own affliction. I structure my argument by first laying out basic assumptions of medical anthropology, demonstrating the failure of medical anthropology in addressing the individual alienation of illness, and how the current epistemological framework perpetuates alienation of the individual through the emphasis on the physical body.

Criticism of the Western approach to medicine, or biomedicine, lacks an understanding of the effects that perceptions of illness have on the wellbeing of the patient. Given that medical practice operates much like any other business in the most basic sense—responding to a public demand by providing goods and/or services—I will base my claims on the common, ideological assumption that medical practitioners labor to produce healthier individuals. However, perception shapes the notion of what constitutes health. Across cultures it is defined by abnormal circumstance, ailment. It follows then that health industries produce by returning an individual to a more normative state. Yet, nothing has been said of wellbeing. While what is normative is not always
associated with well-being, the context of health provides sufficient grounds for such an association.
With that said, the scope of this paper resides with the implications of a biomedical approach, but
the basis in theory regarding perception is intended to leave discussion open for the sake of
application to any form of human care.

Given that biomedicine is still too broad a field, I find it expedient to focus on the
epistemological level of medical anthropological practice as it helps clarify some of the basic
premises I have already established as significant factors in addressing ideological issues of medicine.
Although the goal of the medical anthropologist is to communicate a better understanding of
cultural perceptions of illness, the perceptions unique to the patient are often unacknowledged.
Hence, the advice taken from medical anthropologists is too simplified to ever have any far reaching
results. Part of the problem for this oversight is the shared theoretical assumptions between the
biomedical field and that of medical anthropology. Because illness is defined culturally through the
perception of normative characteristics—an assumption based on the occurrence of culture-bound
syndromes—we as humans associate it with physical (perceptible) manifestations, hence the
frequent emphasis on the body. As such, the physical body plays a central role in biomedical
treatment in the effort to return the patient to his or her normative (healthy) state. This process
becomes problematic if the person seeking treatment does not have the same perception of health as
the practitioner. In this case, the medical anthropologist mediates. However, perception of health
and illness on an individual level is more nuanced than the cultural understandings guiding
mediation. This does not suggest that culture lacks complexity, but that in the case of illness, there is
an extra pressure which can further complicate cultural perceptions of that illness, perceived in
relation to the negative connotations of abnormality, thus alienating the patient from themselves and
others. What have yet to be addressed in medical anthropological practices are the theoretical
underpinnings of alienation of a patient experiencing illness. It is not only the effectiveness of the
structure of the medical anthropologist’s epistemology that must be questioned in relation to the
individual patient, but also that the emphasis on the body perpetuates the alienation of the patient in
question by ignoring the totality of the self and treating the patient as defective in regards to the
physical body.\(^1\)

To structure my argument, I will first lay out some of the basic theoretical assumptions of
medical anthropology, as well as the intended results of medical anthropologists’ work. I will
continue with a discussion of the individual alienation of illness and how the work of medical
anthropologists has yet to address these issues. Additionally, I will point to the current
epistemological failings, which perpetuate such alienation of the individual on the basis of emphasis
on the physical body. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the importance of such proposed
changes and the implications of some of the ideas that I will outline.

All general anthropology textbooks begin by defining anthropology itself. The definition
always varies slightly depending on the author’s perspective regarding the goals of anthropology.
Although the discipline is not very old, having its roots in the nineteenth century, these varying
perspectives have fostered the development of anthropological study as a means to address issues
within other fields as is beneficial based on the guidelines that the American Anthropological
Association (AAA) lays out. Medical anthropology serves the purpose of addressing health issues as
they arise in relation to culture. This calls for a definition of not only medical anthropology, but also
health. Health, as it is framed in *Medical Anthropology: A Biocultural Approach*, is an idea founded on

\(^1\) It should be noted here that the body does not preclude the mind. In fact mental health is an aspect of biomedicine.
Hence, there is a distinction to be made between mental health and perception as the perception discussed plays into the
current construction of health and is conflated with much larger ideological assumptions, thereby contributing to the
structural norms which distinguish mental health within a given structure. Further explanation will be noted later on.
cultural notions of the body, thereby substantiating the value that the medical anthropologist’s perspective may provide new insight into the medical profession and its practices, while calling attention to their first parallel. The “locus of health” from the anthropological perspective of Andrea Wiley and John Allen is then the body and society (2013: 20).

Pulling from notable anthropologists, such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock, Wiley and Allen outline the three types of bodies relevant to the discussion of health from an anthropological perspective, the individual body, the social body, and the body politic. The individual body is the “self”, mind and body. Drawing from Marcel Mauss, the individual body is then the “embodied self” as it exists “apart from other individual bodies” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 2009: 7). The social body is “the seam between the physical body and the social world of the individual” (Wiley and Allen 2013: 20). It is the interaction between the individual and the external world, which links the health of the individual body to social experience. The social body is the only perceptible form of the body in that it is perceived with the senses. Borrowing from Mary Douglass, it is the symbol of the individual, and on a cultural level, is the symbol of social ideals regarding the body (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 2009: 7). The third and final type is the body politic, which refers to the power of social and political forces in constraining the wellbeing of the individual body. Following Foucauldian theory, the body politic may be constrained by ideological structures such as teachings pertaining to proper functioning of the body and how that reflects the character of an individual and what his or her role should be in society (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 2009: 8).

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock take the route of defining these bodies as types of epistemological approaches in anthropology. This is a legitimate claim, but in recent years these overlapping principles have merged as medical anthropologists attempt to take a holistic approach. Given the influence that medical anthropologists can have on the practice of medicine, this holism is extremely beneficial. However, holism in its expansiveness is extremely difficult to execute. In the synthesis of differing approaches, some of what is important to each approach is lost. And so, my argument rests on how this synthesis of approaches has resulted in the simplification of each with a central emphasis placed on the physical body. This failing in itself complicates the matter of addressing the individual.

From a health perspective, all three conceptions of “body” are only significant in relation to the physical body. This could be because medical anthropologists attempt to understand the culture of the system within which they work. However, the primary motivation for medical anthropologists beyond pure research is the promotion of cross-cultural dialogues. If that is the case, the use of the term “body” as the central theme to each level of health contributors is alienating to cultures that do not maintain the same health understandings or values as those accustomed to Western medicine. Furthermore, each conception of the body, which is an attempt to define the human experience in relation to health, directly reflects biomedical ideologies, given the causal relation each has with physical wellbeing. I do not fault medical anthropologists for holding fast to their Westernized perspectives, likely derived from years of collegial study, because theories must be grounded in some sort of perception of the physical world, Western or otherwise, if intended to affect change of such a world. The fault I find is that having such theoretical underpinnings in these conceptions of the body highlights the abnormality of the afflicted individual in the cultural context, while the intention is to alleviate anxiety resulting from illness and treatments of such. This can only be understood provided that illness is first viewed from the perspective of the patient.

There are plenty of personal accounts of problematic medical experiences such as The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down and The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, which certainly call for questioning of the ethics of current medical practices. What these accounts do not explicitly draw attention to are the epistemological structures grounding such practices. Emphasis on the physical
body fundamentally ignores the alienation of the patient. That can be seen in the practice of medicine itself.

The general biomedical process for identifying and treating illness involves a survey of the physical body whether it is through questioning about symptoms, physical inspection, biological sampling, or the use of machinery. All of these take the physical body into account while ignoring the patient as a human. This is not to say that medical practitioners have poor or no bedside manner, for that is a whole other sort of alienation. Rather, the patient is nothing more than a subject of study when it comes to diagnosing and treating an illness even though the individual’s interpretation of what is happening to them is as important. Perception of illness can have profound effects on individual health as is proven by the existence of culture-bound syndromes. Again, the resultant necessity is for medical anthropologists to bridge that gap. What medical anthropologists succeed in doing is translating biomedical practices into something the patient understands. This effectively dulls tensions between biomedical practitioners and patients, who struggle against treatment until they believe that they fully comprehend the intentions of the biomedical practitioners. In acting merely to mediate understandings, the medical anthropologist becomes a tool for the biomedical model, thus losing sight of the original goal, reducing the anxiety of the individual patient through enhanced understanding of all of the perceptions involved.

The patient has a unique relationship to illness as he or she experiences it as an affront to his or her self. However, this perception of illness is culturally bound in that the alienation one experiences in illness is derived from his or her cultural perceptions regarding the illness of others prior to falling ill. The Cartesian notion of a mind-body dualism\(^2\) is the initial source of this alienation as one recognizes one’s self through an awareness of thought, the mind, while understanding that same self as confined to a physical entity, the body. Andrew Warsop provides a view into the alienation of illness using this kind of thought by suggesting that the individual experiences his or her illness as a result of an invader (Warsop 2011: 485). This ‘invader’ reflects socially constructed experience in that ‘illness’ is perceived as an abnormality (Wiley and Allen 2013: 14). Drawing from S. Kay Toombs’ understanding, this abnormality manifests as a feeling of bodily otherness, and therefore alienation as it creates a conscious awareness of the body otherwise imperceptible in comparison to the “self” (Warsop 2011: 487 and Biro 2011: 41). This notion of bodily otherness applies even in cases where external forces are not the source of illness, but rather some sort of mutation within the patient, as in the case of cancer. Yet Scheper-Hughes and Lock suggest that this emphasis on the body creates a negative connotation of what the patient actually experiences by trivializing anything not directly related to the physical body itself or visible symptoms as insignificant, or even more pejoratively, unreal (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 2009: 8).

Fredrik Svenaeus further develops this idea in proposing that it is the “homeness” of the self that is disrupted (Svenaeus 2010: 336). This coincides with the notion that the “body in health offers a model of organic wholeness; the body in sickness offers a model of social disharmony, conflict, and disintegration” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 2009: 7). Illness forces one to recognize one’s own body through its dysfunction while ordinarily the body works with one’s will without tension, making the seam between the body and consciousness indiscernible. Here the conflict is directly

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\(^2\) Guido Nocolosi and Guido Ruivenkamp posit that the epistemological framework of scientific studies has been rooted in a kind of Cartesian mind-body dualism, which depicts life as detached from its environment. Hence, studies look to the genetic code as “the informational representation of life as a code”, ignoring external factors. This is not so different from the way in which the biomedical system views health, as something to be studied and found within the physical body. The physical body is perceived as a machine and its mechanism as biology. As such, it is to be understood through formal scientific tools and reasoning, making health and the human body entirely inhuman. The result, they conclude, is the “fetishizing” of scientific truths, further conveying the alienation of the human subject (Nocolosi and Ruivenkamp 2011: 311, 312).
related to the aforementioned mind-body dualism, i.e. the individual body. The alienation arises out of the perceived separation of mind and body, problematizing any kind of understanding centered on the body.

Alienation extends further in dealing with the patient’s awareness that his or her body is the focus of biomedical study without any regard for one’s individual perceptions of illness (Biro 2011: 41). The social perception is that the goal of biomedical practitioners is to make the patient “better”, however this is in contrast with the defining of illness as abnormal, because the result of treatment then does not better the patient but returns them to “health”, that which is a symbol of normality. This conception of health and illness as a normal/abnormal binary also encourages the patient’s sense of alienation. In being treated as someone with an abnormality through the constant evaluation of physical symptoms, the patient is differentiated from ‘normal’ individuals suggesting that they are a deficient person. The result is alienation from other individuals encompassing both the notion of the social body and that of the body politic through the symbolic attribution of normality to health and the socially constraining ideals about universally human qualities.

The patient’s perception of his or her illness illustrates the same sorts of foundational understandings as the three types of body suggest exists, thus promoting the movement back to holism. All that is missing is thorough study into the influence of the core of each epistemological foundation, the body itself. As the source of all this trouble, one can see the common association among patients, practitioners, and medical anthropologists of illness to object, an object other than one’s self. This relates everything to the emphasis placed on the physical body, yet here the problem with doing so is clear. The creation of a mind-body dualism through alienation separates one’s mind from one’s experiential development, thereby dividing one’s individual body (Biro 2011: 44). In creating this divide one also retracts from the social body, through which one defines one’s self, further expanding the scope of alienation, whereas the body politic is reflective of biomedical practices on the individual. Hence a thorough understanding of the influence that perceptions of the physical body have on practice not only clarifies existing anthropological theory, but also engages the medical anthropologist in linking theory to practice, thus initiating a reevaluation of the way in which issues may most effectively be addressed and the seemingly disparate complications arising from both medical anthropological practice as well as the structure of the health system and its effects on practice at the social level. The emphasis on perspective then allows for new ways of addressing issues beyond the current point in time in that the initial point of social interaction can be traced back to the structures guiding such interactions by way of such a focused lens.

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Foucault’s Ethics: Living as a Middle Sex or Intersex Subject

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Abstract: Foucault recognizes that there are different techniques and practices that transform us into subjects of moral actions and that the self is a constant process of creation. In other words, if the self is not pre-given then we can look at the self as a work of art. One way to think about subjectivity creatively is as an aesthetic process. As moral subjects, when we commit ourselves to certain modes of being or ways of life then we also commit ourselves to the facilitating principles that make this way of life possible. In this project, I investigate more on the question of the intersex individuals on “how shall we live” and study the practices of the self that they engage in order to discipline themselves as subjects actively committed to certain ways of being. Furthermore, I considered the transformative capacity of intersex subjects in their ability to influence, modify and motivate the actions of other subjects and existing norms in the society.

Introduction

If we are in a world where we take for granted that there is no logic of being, a pre-given order, logos or transcendent law then we have a very different set of ethical problems from the ones that have existed before. The difficulty of 21st century philosophy is that it is very hard to sustain claims based on a specific fundamental truth or moral code and Foucault helps us overcome
these challenges by reinterpreting ethics. The absence of a logic of being or pre-given order means that we can construct our own ethics in relation to ourselves. For Foucault, ethics is “how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions” and closely focused on the question of how to live. Foucault’s insight on ethics and the “work of the self on the self” with constant self-reflection allow for subjects to develop different relations with themselves and also with other subjects.

In this ethical project, I am going to examine how Foucault’s idea of ethics provides us with new lenses to understand the dynamics of gender binary, anatomical “abnormality” and to analyze middle sex or intersexuality as a way of life. Often, intersex individuals and hermaphrodites have rejected ontological premises of divine law, natural order, cosmological structures, rational and scientific rules while resisting dominant practices in their given discourses. These individuals have time and again challenged concepts of normality, opened up new field of possibilities, dislocated their previous practices, gained mastery over the self and aspired to attain certain modes of being as subjects as well as agents of their own actions. Furthermore, in this project, I propose that the practices of intersex subjects work as exemplars for the techniques deployed by other subjects in re-constituting their own subjectivity in new ways. The intersex community – by reflecting on the existing discourses and systems of our contemporary culture – is transforming and evolving the entire system itself, expanding freedom and paving the path to explore new power-knowledge relationships and networks.

Creative Exploration of How Shall We Live

Foucault recognizes that there are different techniques and practices that transform us into subjects of moral actions and that the self is a constant process of creation. In other words, if the self is not pre-given then we can look at the self as a work of art; additionally, for Foucault, ethics is closely related to an open-ended, heterogeneous system of creativity. One way to think about subjectivity is as an aesthetic process. As moral subjects, when we commit ourselves to certain modes of being or ways of life then we also commit ourselves to the facilitating principles that make this way of life possible. These principles or practices of the self are “models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society and his social group”. In this project, I investigate the question of intersex individuals on “how shall we live” and study the practices of the self in which they engage in order to form themselves as subjects actively committed to certain ways of being. I also analyze the ways in which culture, society, and other subjects have influenced the practices and moral actions of intersex subjects.

Overall in this project, I explore personal narratives, documentaries, academic research, medical approaches, international legal studies in the field, and historical backgrounds to gain greater depth on the topic of anatomical differences and intersexuality. I apply Foucault’s insights in the discourse of sexuality, self-care, and his ethical approach to re-examine the notion of the middle sex, existing practices that deal with anatomical differences, frequency of intersexuality, health and legal implications of the current approaches, paradigm shift and resisting practices as well as promoting alternative ways of being in the context of our discourses. Furthermore, I consider the transformative capacity of intersex subjects in their ability to influence, modify, and motivate the actions of other subjects and existing norms in the society.

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4 Ibid (The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom, 291)
Foucault's Ethics

“Ethics should focus on the work of the self on the self… the self taking itself as a work to be accomplished, an ethics that is no longer supported by either traction or reason… as an artist to itself, the self would enjoy the autonomy that modernity can no longer do without.”

Our relationship with the self requires constant reflection and conscious action with the vision of the world that we are trying to create. Foucault argues that the relationship to oneself has four major aspects, which include ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, ethical work, and telos.

The first aspect answers the question: Which is the aspect or part of myself or my behavior that is concerned with moral conduct? The ethical substance is the part of an individual concerned with moral conduct or appropriate behavior and ethical judgment. For instance, in our society the main field for morality is our feelings. In this project, the study of the intersex community further validates that subjects usually rely on their feelings for ethical conduct and judgment.

The second aspect is the mode of subjectivation, that is, the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligation. The mode of subjectivation reveals what fundamental law or truths (such as natural or divine law, rational rule and cosmological order) to which the subject ascribes. For example, the intersex subjects deny and challenge the common culture’s assumption on how gender seems natural (or necessary) and reveal the arbitrariness of our invented terms such as gender, anatomy and sex.

The third aspect asks what are the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects? It is the practice of the self, self-forming activity, and ethical work that the subject works on, improves, critiques and becomes engaged in re-writing its subjectivity in new ways. Some examples of what we do are: moderate our actions, eradicate our desire, use our sexual desire in order to obtain certain aims or decipher what we are. Intersex subjects seem to engage in deciphering what they are and reflect on that.

Lastly, the fourth aspect answers the question of the telos: which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way? For instance, shall we become pure, or immortal, or free, or masters of ourselves, and so on? The intersex community’s orientation and aspiration is to become free and resist the dominant practices in our current discourses.

Understanding the Notion of the Middle Sex

“Such [hermaphrodite] creatures seem to have been formed merely to show us that this much-talked-of dierence of sex is, after all, nothing inherent in the constitution of things, and that individuals may be born, live, and thrive of both sexes or neither.”

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6 Ibid (263)
7 Ibid (264)
8 Ibid (265)
9 Ibid (265)
10 Napheys, George H.. The physical life of woman: advice to the maiden, wife, and mother. Enl. and rev. ed. Philadelphia: G. Maclean; 1870. Print. (This quote shows how intersexuality- as a case where anatomy does not fit the existing gender
Society and different discourses usually strengthen themselves by creating identities and distinct categories to ensure enhanced interactions and bonds between the different members tied together by a string of certain similarities. Often, anatomy or body structure act as means of categorizing people and influences the assumptions and judgments that others make on the basis of physical appearances and sexual characteristics. Anatomical restrictions have been traditionally unwritten and over time transformed into written rules or even standards governing our societies.

For example, privileged status based on birthrights, controls on who can vote, and marriage regulations determining who can marry whom illustrate some of the ways in which anatomy have historically dictated our actions. The liberal progression towards “all men are created equal” is itself an anatomical truth claim that allows people to vote and enjoy certain unalienable rights regardless of whether they are men or women. But then questions arise about the foundations and premises of this assumption that has limited the society to conventionally discriminate and eventually institutionalize equality between two categories of gender, males and females. What about individuals born with both male and female sexual characteristics? How are these intersex or middle sex individuals considered abnormal and anatomically deformed only because they seem different? How does swinging in a gender binary eventually become a way of life and a new model for other subjects in our society?

In Foucault’s words, “power is essentially what dictates its law to sex”. Firstly, this implies that sex is placed by power in a binary system such as licit and illicit, or permitted and forbidden. Secondly, power prescribes an “order” for sex, which also implies that sex is deciphered on the basis of its relation to the law. Thirdly, power acts by laying down the law: “power’s hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law. It speaks, and that is the rule.” Thus, the norms and practices of the common culture decide and shape what is acceptable or normal as opposed to unacceptable or abnormal in our everyday lives. In our contemporary culture, anatomy is connected to gender. Anatomy consists of physical features and we assign names and meanings to these body parts. Furthermore, we declare what organs are the markers of our sexual identity. We also invent the idea of gender and hang it on to anatomy, which makes the concept of gender seem natural. In sum, gender is the consolation of practices that assume and result in a binary differentiation of human beings. Ultimately, all of these terms (anatomy, gender, sex) depend on their constructed meanings within the system of our culture. Foucault’s lenses on ethics give us an opportunity to identify how these are contingent and random terms which get connected and intelligible within a culture in specific ways. In Paul Veyne’s words, “what is called a culture has no unity of style; it is a mish-mash of rigorously interpretable discursive practices; it is a chaos of precision.” Over time, when specific

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12 Ibid
14 Ibid
15 Ibid
sets of practices and discourses under the umbrella of culture become dislocated or displaced in new ways then it further shakes the entire system of our culture.

The shaking-of-the-culture unfolds the arbitrariness and indeterminism of the whole system and the meanings we construct or the practices we follow cease to make sense anymore. Similarly, intersex subjects - with atypical anatomy - challenge the foundations of the system of our culture and the interwoven discourses forming it. The norms, discourses, and previous practices that seemed to fit together in a natural or normal way in our society get exploded when an intersex individual does not “fit in” and shows us the contingency and uncertainty in our system. Society tries to normalize these intersex individuals so that the whole system can work again in the normal order as before. However, the intersex community at present is resisting the existing system and is opening up doors for this system to evolve into a new one.

In our culture, part of the meaning of being a man is that he desires a woman and likewise, part of the meaning of being a woman is that she desires a man. Thus, heterosexual desires are naturalized in the gender binary by stating that the masculine and feminine organs and genitalia fit together in a complete sense. Moreover, the existence of these organs implies that each gender desires the opposite one. In the twentieth century, there was a shift on basing gender-assignment decisions from whether the gonads had reproductive potential to how the genitals could best be used heterosexually. Thus, an important factor of the anxiety of parents of intersex children is that their children do not fit into what it implies to be in a normative heterosexual relationship. If the intersex community challenges the idea of heterosexuality then it also unsettles the intertwined threads of gender, anatomy, and sex with it. For example, in our current discourse, the requirements for males are: “the presence of a sufficiently large phallus to function as a male urinary conduit, to offer a satisfactory appearance when compared with peers, and to function satisfactorily for sexual activity.” Assuming that the order is not arbitrary, the penis is, first of all, for one’s health, as a technical means for passing liquid waste out of the body; secondarily, it is for one’s male friends to view in the locker and to validate one’s masculinity; lastly, it is for sexual pleasure. Intersex subjects do not fit into the schema of either the traditional male or female requirements and attempt to change this schema under which we are operating.

Existing Practices to Deal with Anatomical Differences (Specifically Intersexuality)

“If genitals are not completely dimorphic, if genital surgery to create dimorphism is problematic, and if people under certain conditions are capable of accepting genital variability, then why is intersexuality managed in the way that it is?”

18 Susan Kessler cited above interestingly argues in a Foucauldian style- “For the purpose of gender assignment, males and females do not necessarily need physical genitals but rather cultural genitals (the genitals that the cultural system assumes one to have behind one’s clothes)”

19 Creating genitals in one gender for the purpose of the other is illustrated in a conversation between a genitally-mutilated woman and her mutilator in Alice Walker’s Possessing the Secret of Joy (New York: Pocket Star Books, 1992). The woman whose clitoris and labia were cut accuses the elder, “I felt I have been made into something other than myself.” The elder replies, “You have been made into a woman… It is only because a woman becomes a man that a man becomes a man” (246).


21 Ibid

22 Lessons from the Intersexed
Newborns are typically classified into one of the two genders and those born with anatomies that don’t fit the social norms are subject to medical intervention or normalization surgeries to modify the child’s genitalia and reinforce the gender decided upon by the doctors, parents and the society. Often, there exists a gap between what others think is best for the intersex child and what the child thinks is best for him/herself. The child is somewhat a victim (as described by the intersex adults) of the doctors and parents who seldom oppose the restricted medical and legal standards to fix intersex conditions. Doctors attempt to surgically improve the child’s appearance by completely changing their body structures and hormones but do not take into consideration any of the ways in which these actions inhibit a healthy adaptation and psychological well-being for these children. In fact, the medical intervention increases the long-term implicit costs such as bleeding, infection, insecurity, and adverse clinical consequences to achieve the short-term benefit of creating a normal body. From the physician’s point of view, gender assignment or surgical techniques are controversial, but the existence of intersex bodies and the need to treat them are not.

Furthermore, with an increase in technological development and a continual demand of more technology for the purposes of cosmetic or reconstructive surgery and other ideal or aesthetic intentions in the present era, surgeries ultimately reduce variability by setting narrower ranges for what is considered acceptable in the society. In other words, the various technological efforts have been marshaled by the medical profession to reduce variability within each gender and to increase differences between the two genders. The intersex community is currently questioning whether broader standards for genitalia will be adopted gradually and if more “abnormal” infants will be excused from surgery or would the opposite occur? As of now, the rise in genital surgery has led to less tolerance for variability rather than more tolerance. Intersex subjects are attempting to explore what moves have not been made yet in the current discourses and practices in order to expand their own freedom while indirectly opening up new field of possibilities for other subjects in the society.

The doctors demonstrate an unwillingness to think about intersexuality in any other terms except within that of existing practices in biomedical discourses, and they influence the thoughts and practices of the parents as well. Often, doctors mistake the silence of their patients as satisfaction and rarely conduct surveys or research to inspect the repercussions of their clinical procedures. “Shame produces silence, silence condones surgery, and surgery produces more shame,” stated Tamar-Mattis, to show the vicious cycle of the genital surgeries. Instead of helping the intersex children, the doctors influence the decision makers and income holders (parents) to accept their own children by changing their bodies. In reality, the intersex kids do not want any changes made to their bodies because it does more harm than good. In their quest for normalcy, the doctors perform an indirect genital mutilation and psychological harm to the intersex individuals.

How Is the Case of Intersexuality Different from Other Cases?

“Genital variability [intersexuality] can continue to be seen as a condition to be remedied or in a new way – as an expansion of what is meant by female or male. Whether the meaning one imparts to genital variability reifies gender or trivializes it has important implications for gender and intersex management. We need to

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24 "Intersex." Homepages at WMU. http://homepages.wmich.edu/~bstraigh/AN120/AN120visuals/Intersex.
26 Kessler, Susan. *Lessons from the Intersexed*
consider different possibilities about how to manage intersexuality, including the possibility of not managing it at all.”

As seen above, unlike cosmetic and reconstructive surgeries, genital-normalizing surgery is not undertaken for pleasure, but it has long-term consequences and repercussions on the future of the intersex children. Also, clinical procedures may exacerbate the lives of the intersex kids. For example, genital surgery may result in a loss of reproductive capacity, chronic infections, scarring and urinary incontinence (ISNA). Often, courts and legal institutions assume that the choices of the parents can be equated to the best interest of the children and let them take decisions for their kids. Parental consent is successful in case of other surgeries where parents have complete information and knowledge of what actually is beneficial for their children. However, in case of intersex kids, parents have incomplete and misleading information and no personal experience or specialist counseling to determine what actually serves the well-being of their children. Should the parents allow the doctors to infringe upon their kids fundamental rights? Do they just sit and refrain from any medical intervention? Only the intersex children, who can feel and comprehend their own senses, muscles, organs and bodies, can answer these questions with a greater possibility of improving their conditions rather than simply letting their parents and doctors risk their choices and experiment on them. Hence, intersexuality is different from other cases because of the rarity of this case and inadequate information (often ignorance) on how to handle the physical and psychological balance and basic health of the patients.

Frequency of Intersexuality

“Destabilizing gender introduces more selection bias in [the] data and arguments than people such as myself can afford, since we are trying to accomplish associations and determinants in the context of what is rather than what should be. Professionals need to see themselves not only as constrained by real world demands but as creators of that world.”

Aside from the issues with the surgeries and medical treatments, ethicists and diverse researchers ignore the question of intersex treatment because they assume the phenomenon of intersexuality to be extremely rare. The estimates show that 1 in every 1500 live births include intersex kids (Dreger). However, the measurements to determine the intersex conditions are ambiguous and often misleading. The intersex kids are somewhat marginalized because of their small numbers and this also explains the lack of a more humane and enhancing treatment within the medical community. In fact, children treated for intersex conditions within the medical establishments sometimes experience many of the same types of trauma as children who are sexually abused. Currently, the intersex community – similar to Foucault’s archaeological approach – is interested in exposing the power-knowledge dynamics of their current discourses and to target practices strategically in order to change the existing practices of normalization.

29 Lessons from the Intersexed
32 Kessler, Susan. Lessons from the Intersexed. (The psychologist is attempting to open up more possibilities for the future with creativity, imagination and enable new ways of rewriting our subjectivity).
33 “Intersex” Homepage (as cited earlier)
Intersex Subjects Engaging in the Care of the Self

“He [Socrates] is the man who cares about the care of others; this is the particular position of the philosopher. But let me say simply that in the case of the free man, I think the postulate of this whole morality was that a person who took proper care of himself would, by the same token, be able to conduct himself properly in relation of others and for others. A city in which everybody took proper care of himself would be a city that functioned well and found in this ethical principle of its permanence.”

The medical treatment of intersex infants may have profound legal implications for the intersex patients upon reaching adulthood. The well-meaning parents and doctors are unable to weigh the risks and benefits of surgery because of their own biases and fear of sexual differences. In Foucault’s words, at least in our industrialized and fast-paced society, “parents are denounced as the real culprits for the lack of supervision, neglect, and, above all, lack of interest in their children, their children’s bodies, and their conduct which leads them to entrust their children to wet nurses, domestic servants, tutors…Furthermore, there is an emergence of the health principle as a basic law governing family ties; the distribution of the family cell around the body – and the sexual body – of the child.” Likewise, as seen in the case of intersexuality, parents are extremely involved in the sexual health concerns of their kids. Doctors focus on the perceived need of the parents to have a “normal” infant rather than on the actual needs of the child as it grows into adulthood. Parents comply with the doctors’ to fix the anatomical problem than to question whether these efforts are truly in the child’s (or potential intersex individual) best interest. Often, the only approachable solution (surgery and clinical procedures) to deal with intersex conditions – the inability to envision a happy, productive life for a visible intersex person – is both the cause and consequence of the surgical “erasing” of intersex bodies (Tamar-Mattis). Hence, the decision-making process of both the doctors and parents fail to protect the interests of the intersex children. In fact, many times medical intervention leads to sterilization and prevents the individual from the right to procreation.

Engaging in a genealogy of the relation between self-knowledge and self-care, Foucault writes, “The care of the self isn’t another kind of pedagogy; it has become permanent medical care. Permanent medical care is one of the central features of care of the self. One must become the doctor of oneself.” Similarly, the intersex subjects are attempting to gain the right to become doctors of the selves rather than let the parents and doctors make the medical decisions for them. At present, the intersex individuals are fighting to have the right to determine their decisions with complete information from education and dialogue with other patients to ensure a valuable long-term choice and overall well-being. Foucault also stresses the relational aspect of the care of the self. He highlights,

“...the care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others...care of the self also implies a relationship with the other insofar as proper care of the self requires listening to...”

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34 The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom, 287
35 The Abnormals, 54
37 Ibid
38 Foucault, “Technologies of the Self”
the lessons of a master. One needs a guide, a counselor, a friend, someone who will be truthful with you. Thus, the problem of relationships with others is present throughout the development of care of the self.”

Until recently, different intersex individuals (especially the children and youth) had no communication or connection with other people who have similar intersex conditions. In fact, the lack of others’ insights and narratives had often left the parents and intersex children vulnerable to the pressure of the doctors and medical community. The intersex subjects had no other positive models and alternatives, in the previous years, to consider due to lack of sufficient information and sharing of the available medical records with others who are born with similar anatomical conditions. Recently, the intersex community, with an awareness of self-care, has connected with psychologists, counselors, researchers, schools, local institutions, and NGOs from different nations to interact and enable the sharing of resources, experiences, dialogues and learning. Also, for Foucault, taking care of oneself is also to know oneself and to have knowledge “of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles and prescriptions.” The intersex community is further pressing for the acceptable principles or international law to change for the case of intersex individuals and allow intersex children (especially on reaching the age of puberty) to be recognized as the main decision-makers on issues specifically related to their own health and well-being.

The Need to Create New Kinds of Freedom and Possibilities

“Ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection…Extensive work by the self on the self is required for this practice of freedom to take shape in an ethos that is good, beautiful, honorable, estimable, memorable, and exemplary.”

On May 27, 2004, the San Francisco Human Rights Commission held its first public hearing on intersex concerns in the U.S. The hearing extended for over four hours and declared intersex as a human rights issue. The Commission issued a Human Rights Investigation into the Medical “Normalization” of Intersex People and claimed that the standard medical approach to treat intersex conditions leads pediatrics to violate their patients’ human rights. Additionally, Cheryl Chase, an intersex patient and the executive director of the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), emphasized, “no longer should we be lied to, displayed, be injected with hormones for questionable purposes, and have our genitals cut to alleviate the anxieties of parents and doctors. Doctors’ good intentions and motivations are not enough. Practices must now change.”

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42 Ibid
46 "Cheryl Chase (Bo Laurent)." *Intersex Society of North America* | A world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgery. http://www.isna.org/about/chase
specifically condemned the continued clinical practices of performing irreversible normalizing surgeries without the patients’ consent, misleading parents with minimal information about intersexuality, withholding the patients’ medical records and failure to provide any counseling to support people with psychological trauma. In fact, the American surgeons seemed to violate their vowed ethical duty to do no harm.\(^{47}\)

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) forwarded its policy statement on the evaluation of newborns with abnormal genitalia, in response to the Human Rights Commission, and it calls the birth of an intersex child “a social emergency” with a sense of urgency to conduct genital surgeries at an early age.\(^{48}\) However, recently a number of physicians and patients in the U.S Commission Hearings suggested the need to delay the reconstructive surgeries until the intersex individual is able to participate in the decision making process. The intersexual movement in the U.K. has achieved greater success in expanding freedom and opening a new field of possibilities while also involving multiple players in the society and has served as an exemplary model for the intersex community in the U.S. Children have more rights to confidential information and to make treatment decisions in countries that provide free-state services, such as the U.K, where the parents do not necessarily pay directly for the kids’ healthcare because the state provides it.\(^{49}\) Thus, in the U.K, the “Children Act 1989” states that “if the child is of sufficient understanding (usually at the age of 16 or even younger) to make an informed decision he may refuse to submit to a medical or psychiatric examination or other assessment.”\(^{50}\) There are different controversies based on these policies but at least the English law recognizes that the parents’ consent to the medical system can often override a competent child’s refusal.\(^{51}\) The U.S still sticks to the 18 years age limit for children to make their own decisions without any exception in the case of intersex kids. However, the intersex subjects in the U.S are seeking to expand their field of possibilities based on the transformed practices of the intersex community in the U.K. The public hearings of intersex individuals and growing involvement of children show that increased availability of information and counseling, broadened communication, educated reflections on their conditions, and the patients’ exercise of autonomy and greater freedom raise the chances for reaching a better outcome.

**Conclusion: Paradigm Shift Towards Evolving and Alternative Ways of Being**

“Even if there are still two genders, male and female, how you “do” male or female, including how you “do” genitals, would be open to interpretation [because of the successes of the intersex community].”\(^{52}\)

Over the decade, momentum has been building for the adoption of new and less invasive standards of care for intersex kids because of resistance and educational efforts of the intersex activists and community. Usually, individuals who have experienced the societal stigma of intersexuality tend to fight for the cause of the subsequent intersex generations. Thus, we can see

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\(^{47}\) Dreger, Alice Domurat. ""Ambiguous Sex"--or Ambivalent Medicine?." Intersex Society of North America | A world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgery.

\(^{48}\) Ibid


\(^{51}\) Ibid

\(^{52}\) Using the verb *do* to emphasize the social-constructed nature of gender was introduced by Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman in the paper “Doing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 1 (1987): 125-51.
that intersex and middle-sex individuals are constantly working towards new ways of life, engaging in different practices and attempting to constantly increase new possibilities in order to attain a transformed mode of being or even to recreate their subjectivity in new ways. These subjects seem to be engaged in what Foucault would consider ethical behavior insofar as they are creatively working on the self as a work of art with constant self-reflection, informed practices, and care of the self. Furthermore, the intersex community is time and again testing its limits and experimenting to expand freedom (increase number of moves and open up the structures of the game) in our society. In other words, they are “making freedom their foundation, through the mastery of the self”.

Finally, intersex individuals are also serving as examples for not just other “abnormal” subjects but also “normal” ones to embrace broadened and new ways of lives such as encouraging genderless language in Swedish schools, empowering and liberating education systems, gender neutral housing and changes in lifestyles, and bigger institutional changes as seen in the U.K.

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Preference and Practical Reason: An Evaluation of Sen and Hausman

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Abstract: An expository account of Amartya Sen’s concepts of commitment and rational choice, along with Daniel Hausman’s alternative to Sen’s concepts, is given in this essay. Sen’s exposition of self-centered welfare, self-welfare goal, and self-goal choice, are explored and assessed. However, with the help of Philip Pettit, the essay points out several errors in practical reasoning with regard to Sen’s concepts of commitment and counter-preferential choice. In contrast, Daniel Hausman’s “total comparative evaluation” avoids these problems by simplifying the concept of preference and classifying other-regarding behavior as preference-influencing factors, not as types of preferences themselves.

Introduction

In his 1977 article, “Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory,” Amartya Sen argues that the study of economic discourse has fallaciously accepted the view of man as “actuated only by self-interest.” Sen believes that this theory of human behavior is an obstacle to answering a multitude of questions pertaining to economic theory-formulation. He uses the essay as a vehicle for delineating forms of human choice distinct from pure egoism. In

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Sen introduces “sympathy and commitment” as constituents of decision-making processes. Commitment, which, according to Sen, is important for rationality, involves instances of counter-preferential choice. However, Daniel Hausman disagrees, stating, “If one interprets preference as all-things-considered ranking, then altruistic motivation accords with preference.” The disagreement here appears to stem from alternative interpretations of preference, self-interest, and which interpretation is consistent with rational behavior. This divide will constitute a majority of the examination in this essay. First, I will survey and critique Sen’s position on preference, self-interest, and commitment. Second, I will explore and assess Hausman’s approach to the same concepts. Lastly, I will compare and contrast the two, and argue in favor of Hausman given that his view escapes the ambiguity, impracticality, and logical error implicit in Sen’s view.

Sen and Rational Choice

Sen, in his departure from F.Y. Edgeworth’s egoistic ideal of human behavior, brings up commitment as an example of non-egoistic, yet rational, behavior. For Sen, this endeavor is important because Rational Choice Theory—the theory that rationality requires choices based on preferences that maximize self-interest—fails to account for the fact that other-regarding, non-self-interested preferences can be beneficial for the individual in certain ways. Sen states, “The incorporation of one’s ‘self’ in reasoned choices can be a very difficult issue, since considerations of one’s own ‘self’ may enter the calculations involved in quite different ways (not merely in terms of what can be seen as one’s own ‘interest’).” Sen is suggesting that Rational Choice Theory alone is insufficient for understanding the way people make decisions and identify preferences. He proposes that a more diverse understanding is necessary because the self is a part of preference and choice in more ways than self-interested utility maximization.

Sen introduces three particular concepts of the self that factor into preference and choice: “Self-centered welfare, self-welfare goal, and self-goal choice.”

- **Self-centered welfare**: A person’s welfare depends only on his or her own consumption.
- **Self-welfare goal**: A person’s only goal is to maximize his or her own welfare.
- **Self-goal choice**: A person’s choices must be based on the pursuit of his or her own goals.

Different formulations of these three aspects of the self result in various types of preferences and choices that, while not necessarily welfare-maximizing, are still rational. In particular, Sen believes that while commitment does not necessarily violate self-centered welfare, it does, however, violate self-welfare goal and self-goal choice. The violation of self-welfare goal and self-goal choice imply that commitment is counter-preferential in the sense that one’s goals and welfare enhancement are sacrificed or ignored. However, commitment remains rational by satisfying self-centered welfare, or, in other words, by maintaining a level of welfare independent of the welfare of others.

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61 Sen, Amartya. "Why exactly is commitment important for rationality?" 6.
62 Ibid. 7.
Sen makes these distinctions in an effort to broaden the understanding of self-interest. Rather than criticize Rational Choice Theory on the basis that its basic premise is simply wrong, Sen aims to expand what he believes is an exceptionally narrow concept of self-interestedness employed by the theory. Only in this much wider understanding can one associate self-interestedness with rational behavior.

There are, of course, relevant criticisms to Sen’s account of self-interest and commitment. Sen claims that commitment violates self-goal choice, but had previously described commitment as a choice made in reaction to an event that “does not make you personally worse off, but you think it is wrong and you are ready to do something to stop it.”\(^{(63)}\) Thinking that something is wrong and having the will to take action to stop it seems to entail some kind of self-goal choice. For example, the civil unrest in regions of Africa does not have a direct negative impact on my personal welfare. Nor does the improvement of life for the people in those strife-torn areas cause any tangible enrichment of my own welfare. So, if I donate money to charitable organizations that strive to end human suffering in those regions, I am violating self-welfare goal. However, being committed to investing time and capital into taking some action to stop strife seems to entail a self-goal choice.\(^{(64)}\) I would not make such donations if it were not a goal of mine to live in a world without strife in those conflict regions. Or, my goal may be to embody the type of human being that takes action to stop strife in the world. Either way, commitment to helping curb suffering and despair cannot plausibly violate self-goal choice, since the action is born out of a personal goal. This is more or less the objection raised by Phillip Pettit, who, in critiquing Sen on commitment states, “The goal represents the success condition of the action and will be discernible in how the agent is disposed to adjust [their] behavior as circumstances change and as different interventions are clearly needed for the realization of the condition.”\(^{(65)}\) If we take Pettit’s notion of the committed self-goal choice, it is not clear that Sen’s concept of commitment is as other-regarding as he frames it to be.

What does this mean for Sen’s conception of commitment? The answer to this question depends on an account of preference. Sen is not particularly clear about what he thinks preference really is, but instead notes that multiple conceptions of preference exist among economists and social choice theorists. Sen states, “Preference can be defined in such a way as to preserve its correspondence with choice, or defined so as to keep it in line with welfare as seen by the person in question.”\(^{(66)}\) If we take preference to be a function of one’s calculations of self-regarding welfare enhancement, then commitment, as a violation of self-welfare goal, is counter-preferential. If we accept that preferences are identifiable in accordance with choice, and we concurrently accept the objection illuminated by Pettit, then commitment is not counter-preferential. However, Sen’s assertion that commitment violates self-welfare goal and self-goal choice insinuates that commitment is counter-preferential in both accounts of preference. For Sen, such behavior still involves rationality since self-centered welfare is still intact even in an individual’s commitments. These suggestions will be examined in further detail later in this essay.

\(^{(63)}\) Sen, Amartya K. "Rational fools." 326.
Hausman and Preference

The ambiguity of Sen’s concept of preference remains a problem for other thinkers. Sen’s aim in delineating types of preference is to reconcile other-regarding behavior with rationality. Choices that are counter-preferential under some concepts of self-interest still can be preferential in another concept of self-interest. However, this creates a maze of methods by which we can understand an individual choice. Daniel Hausman levels an objection to this on the basis that it distorts our ability to predict behavior. He asserts, “A theory purporting to explain or predict the ways in which agents evaluate states of affairs will need to make distinctions between values…and tastes, but these can be seen as distinction among the factors that are responsible for a person’s preferences, not as different conceptions of preference.” This leads Hausman to advance a distinct concept of preference, the “total comparative evaluation,” under a program of practical reasoning altogether different from Sen’s.

For Hausman, there is merely one concept of preference. He refers to it as the total comparative evaluation, or the “all-things-considered ranking.” Hausman is not talking about preference in the manner of Rational Choice Theory. Rather than preference being based on self-regarding welfare maximization, Hausman envisions preference as an umbrella over all things—including other-regarding behavior—that influence the instantiation of an individual’s preference. Nor does Hausman talk about preference in the way Sen does. Where Sen takes commitment as encompassing distinct types of preference, Hausman believes commitment to be one factor that, through rational deliberation, influences a singular account of preference.

It is important to note that Hausman agrees with Sen in the sense that economists and philosophers of economics alike should be skeptical of combining all aspects of rational choice into an exceptionally narrow understanding of self-interestedness. The difference between Hausman and Sen is simply the practical reasoning that compels the advancement of a more “nuanced view of rationality and rational choice.”

People prefer some things because of their expected benefits, others because of emotional reactions toward other people, others because of adherence to social norms or to moral principles, others out of mere habit. Depending on the context and the objectives, the account one might offer of the factors that influence preferences might be very simple or extremely complicated…Rather than capturing this complexity by means of multiple concepts of preference, one might capture it by a nuanced account of many factors that influence preference.

Why is this so important for Hausman? He believes 1) it will help economists avoid confusion, 2) it will make it easier to model preferences, 3) it will create consistency within everyday language regarding preference and 4) it is necessary to extract

70 Ibid., 42.
71 Ibid.
predictive power from game theory and expected utility theory.\textsuperscript{72} Hausman believes that Sen’s concept of rational choice confuses the process of accounting for, predicting, and explaining behavior. While Rational Choice Theory restricts our ability to do those things, Sen’s theory, according to Hausman, dilutes our ability to do so.

Of course, Hausman’s alternative is not immune to questioning. Where does self-interest fit into the puzzle that forms our preferences? He believes that self-interest cannot be instantiated within his interpretation of preference.\textsuperscript{73} Hausman states, “Only people who are never motivated by passions, fantasies, whims, ideals or moral and aesthetic concerns, and who are moreover able to pretend that they can always judge how alternatives bear on their own interests, could rank alternatives entirely in terms of their…self-interested advantages.” The reasoning here seems fine and is actually in agreement with Sen in the sense that constantly making conscious decisions on self-interested welfare maximization is, as Sen puts it, foolish.\textsuperscript{74} Hausman seems to suggest that self-interest is another factor in the formation of preferences, along with ideals, morals, and desires. However, Hausman might do well to expound upon how self-interest is involved with such sentiments. Certainly, self-interest does not exist in a realm entirely removed from passions, morals and whims. People who act on such sentiments might still be able to frame those choices as anticipated self-regarding welfare enhancements. Alas, this objection isn’t such that the structure of Hausman’s alternative is substantively challenged. Instead, more exposition upon self-interest in preference-influencing sentiments could strengthen his alternative’s applicability to predictive models of behavior.

**Sen vs. Hausman on Rationality and Other-Regarding Behavior**

In the first section, I explained Sen’s practical reasoning regarding the concept of rational choice. In the preceding section, I illuminated Hausman’s alternative to that reasoning. What does this mean for commitment and other-regarding behavior? It is clear that Sen believes commitment to be a rational endeavor when we extract Rational Choice Theory’s narrow notion of self-interestedness and subsequently expand it to include self-centered welfare, self-welfare goal, and self-goal choice. However, Sen’s method is bound to substantial ambiguity about the notion of preference. Hausman’s alternative, while congruent with Sen’s objective of expanding the notion of rational self-interest, brings commitment and other regarding behavior in line with one distinct concept of preference for reasons both analytical and practical.\textsuperscript{75}

The problem with Sen’s reasoning is that axioms of self-interest still can somehow produce counter-preferential choice. Sen mentions counter-preferential choice when he explains, “Commitment does involve, in a very real sense, counter-preferential choice, destroying the assumption that a chosen alternative must be better than…the others for the person choosing it.”\textsuperscript{76} However, if we understand


\textsuperscript{73} Hausman, Daniel M. Preference, value, choice, and welfare. 22.

\textsuperscript{74} Sen, Amartya K. "Rational fools.” 344.

\textsuperscript{75} Practical in the sense of applicability to economic models.

\textsuperscript{76} Sen, Amartya K. "Rational fools.” 328.
preference as a function of an individual’s calculation of her welfare, and commitment does not violate that axiom of self-centered welfare, then how can commitment be counter-preferential? Furthermore, if we accept Pettit’s objection, then self-centered welfare and self-goal choice remain intact in an act of commitment. Whether we take preference to be a function of deliberations about welfare or as a function of choice-making, commitment satisfies both understandings. As such, Sen is mistaken to confuse his program of reasoning by introducing the concept of counter-preferential choice, as any manifestation of counter-preferential choice would be a violation of all three axioms of self-interest. This occurs for two reasons: First, it is not possible to violate self-centered welfare and self-welfare goal without violating self-goal choice. As such, one cannot have a preference that satisfies only the function of choice and not the function of welfare. Furthermore, because commitment (if we take Pettit’s objection to be valid) does satisfy self-goal choice, and because sympathy satisfies self-welfare goal and self-welfare choice, then it is not possible to have other-regarding behavior applied only to preference as a function of welfare or only to preference as a function of choice. Second, Sen defines preference in ways that he already associates with rational self-interest. Therefore, no rational choice can possibly be counter-preferential. From this, it follows that if commitment were indeed counter-preferential, as Sen puts it, then commitment would not be rational. If Sen wishes to adhere to the notion of commitment, it cannot be framed in terms of counter-preferential choice. If he sticks with the idea that commitment is counter-preferential, then he must sever its connection with rationality.

The preceding paragraph exemplifies the reasons for Hausman’s multiple objections to Sen’s assertions. The logical problems between Sen’s concept of self-interest and counter-preferential choice, and the ambiguity of preference, surely confuse economic discourse in its quest to predict behavior, explain choice, and define rationality. Hausman’s reasoning stays consistent with logical stipulations of game theory and facilitates model-formation. Because self-interest, commitment, and various other personal sentiments fit under the umbrella of a singular form of preference, rather than under multiple conceptions of preference, the notion of counter-preferential choice is altogether avoided and other-regarding behavior is less of an anomaly to rational deliberations about welfare and choice than Sen asserts. In philosophical discourse, too, Hausman’s alternative avoids the logical fallacy entailed in Sen’s complex, veritable obstacle course of practical reasoning and provides an easier account by which to define rational behavior.

Conclusion

In this essay I have explained Sen’s account of rationality, commitment, and his expansion of self-interest. Sen’s aim to modify the narrowly self-interested implications of Rational Choice Theory is hardly argued here. However, examining the stipulations involved with self-centered welfare, self-welfare goal, and self-goal choice, and placing them alongside his explanation of commitment and counter-preferential choice, make it clear that there are errors in his reasoning. Furthermore, Pettit’s objection shows that commitment may not be as other-regarding as he

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77 Hausman, Daniel. "Sympathy, commitment, and preference.” 49.
believes, and the problems pointed out in conjunction with that objection might give Sen reason to modify either the concept of commitment or the idea that counter-preferential choice can be rational. Unlike Sen’s account, Hausman’s alternative avoids these reasoning errors by condensing preference into a singular concept and placing sentiments such as sympathy and commitment as preference-influencing factors rather than types of preferences themselves. This makes for a less obfuscated view of preference and allows for more streamlined models and discussions about human behavior.
Time and Cézanne’s Later Paintings

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Abstract: I present scholarship on Cézanne’s artistic process by George Hamilton, Meyer Schapiro and Joyce Medina in order to analyze his reconstitution of Space (as occurring in Time) in several paintings of his late period: “Le Bay from L’Estaque” (1886), “Chestnut Trees at Jas de Bouffan” (1885), and “Mont Sainte-Victoire” (1904). I argue that the ingenuity of Cézanne’s artistic representation of Space “induration” coincides with and is contemporary to a post-Kantian reconstitution of Space introduced by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), according to whom Space is experienced by Consciousness only in Duration (Time).

Preface

If an art historian were asked about the nature of his or her discipline, a variety of perspectives might be conveyed. It could be said that a history of art involves an inquiry into the parameters of its study. In other words, what constitutes an ‘artform’. It is difficult to conceive of any one historian occupying a perspectival position allowing them to view the totality of the ‘arts’ insofar as they are an aspect of a human history. Perhaps this is why such questions are abstracted, their references foreshortened, and their study annexed to a field of philosophy concerning itself with aesthetics, or the meaning, process, and purpose of art or creativity. An art history that narrows its scope in order to study the ‘artefact’ or the human-created object (to which artistic nature or quality is ascribed) is more imaginable, but still jarring. An art history which positions itself in such a way so as to consider the genealogy of a particular form or category of artistic expression, such as
‘painting’, is possible when set within a still immense framework of human traditions and their various developments.

The work of an art historian is conducted in a liminal position: between their perception of an artefact, and their pursuit of an understanding regarding the historical circumstances by which it came to be. This act of experiencing and interpreting artwork is situated within an interpretive process that is itself historical. There is no ‘Art History’. Rather, we have ‘art histories’: competing narratives that range from the broadest perspectives on the discipline to conflicting discourses on the level of an artwork by a particular artist of a particular series of a particular movement of a particular era. Each art history positions itself in a different relation to historical concerns. On the level of the specific artwork, the array of techniques, approaches, and methodologies available to art historians can produce many permutations of interpretation on a single figure, brush-stroke, or a related diary entry by the artist. This paper is bound to the matrix of art historical scholarship, its lexicon, and its approaches to its objects of study. I have sought to trace a line at this moment from a general view of art history towards the characterization of a particular moment within it. It is useful to catch a view of the broader landscape prior to entering a specific cluster of space within it.

Introduction

The movements of this paper occur on the level of a discourse concerning the historical significance of the works of a French artist, Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). The study that frames it has been conducted on the subject of correspondences between artistic modernity and the philosophies of modernity. As such, I approach Cézanne’s work through the problems of artistic practice and philosophical speculation contemporary to his life. The intent of this paper is to present a component of Cézanne’s painting located at the intersection of those two domains, and to argue that a popular thesis on the significance of his art — that his work bridges the impressionism of the previous generation of French artists with the intensification of formal abstraction by artists in the later Cubist movement — is incomplete. What is neglected by the appropriation of his artistic vision to that critical gap in the trajectory of late 19th and early 20th century European art is an awareness of his radical innovations in the representation of Time, especially concerning his late period of painting (1882-1904). While the thesis that I criticize is correct to identify the presence of distortion and abstraction (i.e. incongruous lines and the transformation of forms into ‘plastic equivalents’) in his canvases as a profound influence upon later artwork, I believe that his fracturing of the spatial-temporal relations characteristic of the impressionist style of painting is the more significant element of his creative contributions.

I present scholarship on Cézanne’s artistic process by George Hamilton, Meyer Schapiro, and Joyce Medina in order to analyze his reconstitution of Space (as occurring in Time) in several paintings of his late period: “View of Gardanne” (1885), “Le Bay from L’Estaque” (1886), and “Mont Sainte-Victoire” (1904). I argue that the ingenuity of Cézanne’s artistic representation of Space “in-duration” coincides with and is contemporary to a post-Kantian reconstitution of Space introduced by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), who asserts that Space is experienced by Consciousness only in Duration (Time).

Paul Cézanne

A biographical layer is essential for an adequate exposition of the ideas that form this project. This section introduces Paul Cézanne and his development as an artist who in 1870 would paint ‘Luncheon on the Grass’, in 1872 ‘The House of the Hanged Man’, 1886 ‘The Bay from L’Estaque’, and by 1904 a canvas of the series ‘Mont Sainte-Victoire’. Cézanne, like many of the modern masters (e.g.
Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin) passed through a variety of artistic phases before arriving at the ‘style’ for which we have most come to recognize his creative and technical ingenuity. Cézanne’s origin is the southern city of ‘Aix-en-Provence’. His departure from that region and his arrival in Paris as a twenty-two year old with aspirations to paint is perhaps the notable movement in this early phase of his life, at least insofar as my study is concerned. In the 1870s, the impressionist Camille Pissarro drew Cézanne away from the dark and internally driven phase of work from which the ‘Luncheon on the Grass’ surfaces; “At Pissarro’s side in southern Normandy and in direct contact with nature, Cézanne began to liberate himself into the discipline of seeing”. While Cézanne is influenced by Pissarro’s way of perceiving and painting during what is referred to as Cézanne’s ‘impressionist period’, his development of a personal, idiosyncratic style is intelligible at this stage. At the third Impressionist exhibition in 1877, Cézanne’s work was not well received. He “retreated to Provence and pursued his own independent goals in isolation and quietude”, there entering a phase of work that would produce ‘The Bay from L’Estaque’ — ‘a veritable icon of modernist innovation’. This painting and many subsequent canvases share a common element: the motif, or the representation of a “portion of the real world so empty of human activity that it permitted him to engage a visual experience purified of everything but artistic values”. Cézanne, in an attempt to ‘discover the logic of nature’ and to express it in the language of painting, arrived at the ‘plastic equivalent’ as a distillation of reality: a reduction of the subject to the cylinder, sphere, and cone — “the structuring abstractions within the variegated shapes, forms, and concretions of visible reality”. The author of that summation (Hunter) presents what I will now identify as the anchor point for the subsequent portions of my thesis: “Having thus dismantled and fragmented the scene, Cézanne could ‘realize’ his sensations in a ‘construction after nature’ i.e., the painting”. This is a glimpse at the practice by which Cézanne transitions away from an impressionist style and approach to painting — an indication of a transformation of vision that would germinate into his representation of Space in a new relationship to Time.

Division of the Canvas and the Subject

A significant marker in the development of Cézanne’s artistic vision is the severing of the canvas from its subject, where the term ‘severance’ connotes the liberation of a representation from a criterion of resemblance. This criterion can be, for example, the visual language that is deemed appropriate for the depiction of an upper forehead in the domain of classical portraiture, or the language of color as a function of light that is considered a proper syntax for an experience of reality in the domain of impressionist painting. An assertion of the independence of the canvas from ‘its’ subject in Cézanne’s artistic view signals the emergence of an object that is not subordinate to the phenomenon which it has set out to express. With the modification of this practical relationship between the painter and his or her canvas and the subject matter to which he or she responds, the field of possibility for configurations of representation has been expanded.
"Le paysage se reflète, s’humanise, se pense en moi. Je l’objective, le projette, le fixe sur ma toile." Joyce Medina translates the previous quote from Cézanne’s diary as “The landscape reflects on itself, is humanized, thinks itself in me. I objectify it, project it, fix it on my canvas.” It may be fruitful to meditate on this statement in order to come to terms with what it could mean for the person who has imagined it. Cézanne stands in some place within a valley and gazes upon what it presents to his perception. The landscape reflects on itself. The landscape is in a state of relation to itself. It is humanized. Its immensity is in a sense translated within the parameters of a limited human perception and understanding. It thinks itself in me. The landscape — it accrues and expands in the viewer’s experience of it so that he or she may better comprehend its complexity. I objectify it. Cézanne begins a sketch on paper or canvas. He projects and puts into form — fixes, essentially — some aspect or collection of aspects — onto his canvas. Medina writes that the landscape and its consciousness ‘exchange places in the development of the creating act that gives form to its aesthetic experience’. Evidence of the consciousness of the artist, she explains, “might disappear altogether except for the object signs on the canvas of a life of the landscape and of the aesthetically motivated contemplation that arises as the landscape takes its own form” (i.e., begins to endure on the canvas). A union of the life of the landscape in the creating painter and of the painter in the created landscape, for Medina, “is what makes the pictorial synthesis, as a doubly expressive synthesis, a significant form”.

**Impressionist Time and Space**

In this section I explore the implications of Medina’s interpretation of Cézanne’s statement if, as Medina alleges, it is an encapsulation of a process of creation. Her interpretation, I argue, is more representative of the Impressionist process that Cézanne eclipses than of the transgression of ‘fixed’ spatial and temporal parameters that Cézanne achieves in his painting. In George Hamilton’s “Cézanne, Bergson and the Image of Time”, the author proposes a lost interpretive component by which we can gain an understanding of Cézanne not just as “the painter who released us from the toils of representational painting”, nor just as “the source for much abstract art”. By examining Cézanne’s transformation of Impressionist technique in relation to “certain aspects of late 19th century French philosophical speculation”, the distortions for which he has come to be regarded as a father or modern art and even by some as a ‘proto-Cubist’, according to Hamilton, will be seen “not so much as visual aberrations”, but as a “result of his manner of working and thinking about Space and Time”. Hamilton asserts 1) that it is a reasonable assumption that a work of art that constitutes more than just a passing interest “may be related in technique, subject matter or expressed content, to certain aspects of contemporary thought”, and 2) that modern works of “high seriousness will contain some reflection of the dominant post-Kantian interest” in the nature and experience of Space and Time. If a theory of impressionism can be abstracted from what is known of the works and practices of those who worked in that style, it can be regarded as mostly positivistic in its interpretation of space and time. An Impressionist landscape is a presentation of visual phenomena seen “from a given position in space at a certain moment in time”. Space, therefore, is

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84 ibid.
85 ibid.
87 ibid.
88 Hamilton cites as examples Monet’s, Pissarro’s or Sisley’s during the 1870’s and 80’s.
restricted to “the place here” and *Time* is synonymous with “the moment now”. Impressionist space is timeless — it exists in terms of an instant in which that space is experienced. Hamilton proposes that since impressionism is based on a concept of “instantaneous time in a homogeneous, Newtonian (timeless) space” and Cézanne’s paintings do not indicate to us an Impressionist experience of space, his works must reflect “a different attitude towards space and time”.

**Bergsonian Philosophy and Cézanne’s Painting**

In this section, I present Hamilton’s interpretation of Cézanne’s artwork as the pictorial equivalent of the Bergsonian concept of *Space* as only known in and through *Time*. I expand these concepts in preparation for my later analysis of specific canvases by Cézanne. *Time*, for the German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, in addition to *Space*, is a parameter within which all experience occurs. *Time* and *Space* are forms outside of which human experience cannot occur; they are fundamental to human experience. Bergson’s reconstitution of those two parameters involves the dependence of an experience of *Space* to one’s being Conscious in *Time*. For Bergson, consciousness is continuous and its tempo is so variable that analytic, spatialized time (i.e. of clocks) has little relation to the time through which we live. There is no “instantaneous present” as the Impressionists believe, in this conceptualization of *Time*, because “an instant can only be experienced as a sensation, as an impression, but not as a psychic feeling.” This fluid and extended consciousness is located by Bergson in time — but that time is conceived as “Duration rather than as a sequence of successive but separate moments”. Duration, Hamilton notes, is to be understood as a “process, continuous becoming”. The synthesis of this aspect of Bergson’s philosophy and certain paintings by Cézanne (most prevalent in his late period: 1882-1904) is the artist’s achievement of a pictorial realization of *Time* as *Duration* rather than as *Instantaneous Succession*. Now, let us examine Hamilton’s comparison of Impressionism’s *Instantaneous Succession* and Cézanne’s representation of *Duration* in terms of the practices from which these expressions follow. In a typical Impressionistic canvas by Monet, a moment is observed and is recorded quite quickly — for in the next instant, quite a different moment has arranged itself before the painter. Impressionist practice “requires the development of a dexterous handling in order to record as quickly as possible the appearance of a given motif at one particular moment”. As speed is essential, a sense of space must be rendered in a “stable perspectival system”. Cézanne’s painting, on the other hand, is the record of an optical experience over a period of time. *Space* is not given “once and for all as a timeless substance, but is gradually discovered as and in *Duration* — in a process of becoming which involves memory (of successive experiences of *Space*).”

Whereas the surface of an Impressionist painting is the “sum of all the visual sensations received at one instant, the *entire pictorial surface of a Cézanne*”, Hamilton argues, a Cézanne painting is “the sum of *continuous* perceptions of space in the *mode of time*. If we accept that a painting by Cézanne is a record of ‘cumulative visual experiences recorded at different moments or periods of time’, then we may also accept that those experiences have not occurred in the same locations in space. Hamilton successfully reconstitutes the significance of Cézanne’s distortions by highlighting this element of a dynamic and unstable perspectival position. Less radical than Cézanne’s probing

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89 Mirroring Medina’s interpretation of Cézanne, Hamilton writes: “the Impressionist painter has chosen to function as an apparatus for registering an impression (in the sense of an effect imprinted on the organs of sight) of objects extended in a space which exists apart from his consciousness.” *ibid.*


91 *ibid.*

and rendering of multiple points of view for an object is the simple idea of him returning to the
studio after creating the first layer of a canvas, and adding new layers to his abstracted “plastic
equivalents” of observed forms. The experience of a three dimensional space implies that we exist
and move within it. This necessarily includes the experience of time. It is evident that even
Cézanne’s movement from one angle of perspective in a valley to another a mere yard to his left
implies a process that is experienced in Consciousness and through a Duration of Time. According
to Hamilton, we can reconstruct the image of Time which Cézanne’s paintings constitute by
attempting to reconstruct in our understanding the process by which the canvas was created; “The
difficulty which the elimination of time incurs for the observer (of a Cézanne) is seen when the
multiple points of view” implicit to the process of the painting’s creation “are removed” from the
painting. The spectator is faced “with the impossible task of trying to comprehend visually the
various foci in a single glance”, and so they are driven to an “expressive explanation of the
distortions”, assuming them to be “personal decisions of the artist … (that are) subjective and
illogical”. Scholarship that locates those distortions within a certain schema of the developmental
course of art history (i.e. one contending that Cézanne’s distortion of line and form are markers of
an explicit stylistic transformation in his artistic vision — a precursor to later abstract art) can avoid
entirely the contemplation of the focal point of Hamilton’s ingenious interpretation, which is
brought to its final movement with the following statement: “If the points of view implicit to the
canvas are returned to the painting in the sense that they are imaginatively gathered up again within
the consciousness of the artist and spectator, and the painting is considered as much an image of
temporal as of spatial experience, discrepancies (formal distortions or aberrations) become truths of
experiential vision”. The following passage of Bergson’s ‘L'Évolution Créatrice’ (1907) reasserts the
link established here between his philosophy and Cézanne’s painting. It epitomizes Bergson’s
concept of Consciousness as occurring in a Space which is experienced only in Time.

“I say that I change, but the change seems to me to reside in the passage from one state to
the next: of each state, taken separately I am apt to think that it remains the same, during all
the time that it prevails. Nevertheless, a slight effort of attention would reveal to me that
there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change every moment: if a
mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow. Let us take the most stable of
internal states, the visual perception of a motionless external object. The object may remain
the same, I may look at it from the same side, at the same angle, in the same light;
nevertheless the vision I now have of it differs from that which I have just had, even if only
because the one is an instant older than the other. My memory is there which conveys
something of the past into the present”.

**Interpretations of Paintings**

Meyer Schapiro presents narrative interpretations of a selection of Cézanne’s paintings from
1866 to 1906 in “Paul Cézanne”. In his analysis of landscapes and townscapes, he sometimes refers to
photographs of those locations by the art historian John Rewald. This allows for dynamic and
referential examinations of the processes and attributes of Cézanne’s artistic vision. In these next
sections, I examine Schapiro’s writings on three paintings from Cézanne’s late period: “View of

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94 ibid.
95 “Cézanne, Bergson and the Image of Time”, p11.
96 ‘Bergson, “L’Évolution Créatrice”
Gardanne” (1885), “Le Bay from L’Estaque” (1886), and “Mont Sainte-Victoire” (1904). My intent is to identify correspondences and oppositions between the artistic processes detailed in his interpretations, and the set of distinctions that I introduce in this paper between relations of Time and Space in Impressionist painting and relations of Time and Space in Bergson’s theory.

Painting One: ‘View of Gardanne’

This oil canvas, painted in 1885, depicts a densely settled town on a steep, rocky elevation. A view of this site in a photograph by John Rewald reveals several principal alterations, which Cézanne committed in the process of the painting’s creation. The scene has been narrowed, “bringing the distant buildings closer to each other, and accenting the steepness of the hill”. Schapiro notes that “the silhouettes of the trees and the sketchy branching lines” near the bottom of the work are “diagonal like roofs” — a “coordinating relationship” that is not actually reflective of the physical arrangement of the town. The upward movement which drives your eyes above the tops of the trees and towards the church at the top of the composition is intensified by the sweeping curve of the horizon and the striking puncture of the tower in the hollow created by that curve in the topmost band of the painting. Schapiro writes that “the unfinished state of the picture” allows us to see the methods by which Cézanne paints. The drawing in the bottom right quadrant of the canvas reveals that this layer “is not a fixed underlying plan”, but rather, “a piecemeal notation of lines”. Cézanne “draws and paints, paints and draws, without completing the lines”. This dialectic is an indication of the prevalence of a process of creation in Duration as opposed to a one-time rendering of a fixed point within an Instantaneous Succession of Time. The work’s state of incompletion is especially useful for highlighting its gradual creation.

Painting Two: ‘Le Bay from L’Estaque’

Hunter writes that it is difficult from our historical vantage point to understand just to what extent this oil painting from 1886 is an icon of the radical becoming of modernism. Of the view represented in ‘Le Bay from L’Estaque’, Schapiro writes that “without paths or human figures, the world is spread out before [Cézanne’s] eyes, a theme for pure looking; it invites no action, only discernment; it is sunny, but not gay or cheerful — a balance of warmth and coolness, the momentary and the timeless, the stirring and the stable, in perfect harmony and fullness.” It is useful to recall Hunter’s engagement of Cézanne’s use of motifs, in this case, the representation of a “portion of the real world so empty of human activity that it permitted [Cézanne] to ‘discover the logic of nature’ and to express it in the language of painting”. In this work, Cézanne “simultaneously affirms the physical reality of the two dimensional space of the canvas and harmonizes it with the three dimensions of nature’s space and its content of solid forms”. He achieves this by loosening and blunting illusionistic techniques typical for the representation of recessional space: converging lines and the progressive blurring of details. Cézanne’s way of rendering points in space reveals areas near and far in equal detail, the effect of which Hunter describes as a “steady, sourceless brilliance”. Despite this equality in representation, spatial differentiation exists, if not as a subordination to a continuum of proximity, then as a series of relationships between objects in the composition. There is a relationship between the left slant of the roof of the house, which juts from the middle and bottom end of the canvas — rupturing the alignment of the roofs and of the band of

97 Rewald, “Cézanne: a biography”
98 Schapiro, “Paul Cézanne”, p.16
99 Hunter, “Modern Art”, p.31
mountains across the water — and the drifting puff of smoke. In the other direction, the roof directs us to the “slope of the shore”, and the jetty far off in the upper left region of the canvas. The significance of spatial differentiation through object relations lies in the process by which these objects were augmented from the phenomena that they originally expressed and reduced to abstractions or plastic equivalents of their basic forms. The terms “augmentation” and “reduction” are the markers of a process. In support of Schapiro’s and Hunter’s interpretations of this painting is a process of deliberation, creation, and re-creation that undergirds the final composition which we see. Most importantly, the spatial differentiations — achieved more so through object relations and converging lines than through blurring and illusionism — suggest the presence of a Conscious viewer who saw those objects in Space through Duration (Time).

Painting Three: ‘Mont Sainte-Victoire’

Schapiro writes that in this painting, created by Cézanne toward the end of his life, his expression became “passionately freed to the point of ecstatic release.” It can be experienced as the synthesis and culmination of an array of Cézanne’s creative ingenuities and artistic transformations over the course of, but especially in the late period of his painting. If we were to place a grid overlay onto the canvas and to view the painting through it, we could begin to see clusters of space within the landscape of Mont Saint-Victoire as individual renderings of the artist’s dynamic perception of those spaces over the course of his time at the location, and over the course of his meditation and work upon the canvas. When we remove the grid overlay and see the conflation of all constituent spaces within the composition as they appear — contiguous and simultaneous — we lose a vision of Time, rather, of the Time(s) which constitute the Durations which bring about the flux, the dynamism, and the transformations of nature that Cézanne has shockingly encapsulated in this shaking image: appearing simultaneously as a series of fragments and as an ideal totality. Perhaps that ideal totality is achieved by Cézanne in the representation not of a singularity of experience in static relation to a fixed parameter of space within a fixed moment of time — as in an Impressionist painting — but rather, by the encapsulation of the many Mont Saint-Victoire(s) existing perceptually, aesthetically, and emotively for him.

Conclusion

The ‘Rouen Cathedral’ (1892-1894) is a series of canvases by Monet depicting the façade of the cathedral in its different appearances: one captures the cathedral in sunlight, another at the cusp of nightfall, and a third reveals it under the semi-opaque cloak of dawn’s light. It is difficult to imagine how the individual paintings in Monet’s series can be so variegated in tone, effect and color, and be so different from a late painting of Cézanne in terms of the relationships of Time and Space that they represent. Whereas the Instantaneous Succession that bridges one moment and then another would seemingly inspire work on a new painting for Monet (i.e. now the frieze is cast in a blue shadow and the sky has reddened), the experience of an entire day of fluctuation and transformation could be referenced and subsumed within a painting of the Rouen by Cézanne. The spectrum of sensations impressed into the Consciousness of the artist over and in the course of Time (a Duration) could be depicted in what is essentially a composite ‘Image of Time’. Liminality in art — a stage in a developmental process which does not fall entirely within the previous or the next paradigm — is often a rich terrain from which to analyze creative material in terms of the internal transformations.

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100 Schapiro, “Paul Cézanne”, p.18
occurring within the vision of the artist and the corresponding changes to their methods of expression. It is truly as if Bergson were addressing Cézanne’s creation of composite images when he writes that “there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change every moment’, and that even our visual perception of a motionless external object (i.e. the crest of a mountain in the distance) differs from the perception of it that we had just previously. By presenting interpretations of Cézanne’s artistic process by Medina — who captures from his paintings an Impressionist sensibility, Hamilton — who finds in his canvases composite Images of Time, and Schapiro — who identifies aspects of his paintings coinciding with both models, I believe that I have presented a useful framework for the differentiation of an Impressionistic and a ‘Cezannian’ rendering of Space in its relationship to Time, the philosophical-historical significance of that differentiation being the movement from a fundamentally Kantian to a post Kantian, Bergsonian understanding of Time and Space.

Writing About Art

If in writing about art we reject formulae and search instead for a way to write about art, we may be able to say something without barring other possibilities. It seems to me that this is important. And if, following the articulation of our ideas and speculations about the history of art — about human culture, and how certain artifacts came to be — our writing is still eclipsed by what it seeks to account for, then we may have achieved something exciting: characterization, texturing, and expansion of ideas and contexts, but not subordination of phenomenon to analytic schemas. In this way, the empirical, analytical approach and method commits a sacrifice from which I am not sure that it recovers. The explicit and articulable, authoritative by its specificity and clarity, replaces the metaphorical. Whereas the metaphorical (signifying the yet unarticulated inscape of a person’s emotional and referential creation or experience of artwork) can contain (as it certainly it does not restrict much within the field of possibility) the mood of a historical and analytical way of perceiving and reflecting, the empirical and analytical approach cannot surrender itself to the breadth of possibility and incertitude of the metaphorical. Its yearning for precision and certainty may be what drives it and commits it to certain boundaries. These are important ideas to consider when probing for approaches to writing about art, even if the successes and failures of either approach within the domain of scholarship on art influences or compels us to approach the task “as it should be” in an exclusive manner. In future writing on art historical topics, I hope to search for a way to present my ideas clearly but without such confidence for the necessity of those positions over other possible directions from which to approach material.

Bibliography


