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Bogdan POPOVENIUC
Marius CUCU

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Critical Horizons: Ethics, Consciousness, and Culture

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RESEARCH PAPERS

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Is the Ethical Evaluation of Art Relevant to Art Criticism? Focus on Noel Carroll's Defence of Ethical Evaluation of Art

Muhammad ATEEQ
Department of Philosophy
University of Karachi, Pakistan
muateeq@uok.edu.pk

Abstract

A popular view is that art is evaluated solely based on its artistic or expressive qualities. Since these qualities are often regarded as unrelated to ethics, the ethical evolution of an artwork is considered irrelevant to art criticism. This viewpoint suggests that art and ethics have separate values that cannot be used to assess each other. The value of art is fundamentally different from that of moral values. The proponents of this perspective regard aesthetic values as the sole criterion for assessing the worth of an artwork. They argue that ethics and aesthetics are autonomous as ethics concerns right or wrong, while aesthetics is solely a matter of beauty. So, art should be evaluated on the basis of its aesthetic qualities. Focusing on Carroll's defence of the ethical evaluation of art, this paper argues that aesthetics and ethics are not autonomous. There is a rational ground that relates both of these fields. Consequently, the ethical evaluation of art is relevant.

Keywords: *ethical evaluation, cognition, emotion, overridingness thesis, aggregation of aesthetic and moral perceptions .*

Introduction

A prominent perspective in philosophical discussions about art is that art is created for its own sake. This view holds that an artist has no external purpose or goal. Art is an end in itself. According to this perspective, the value of art is determined solely by its artistic qualities related to aesthetic experience. The ethical evaluation presupposes certain social or political ideals and judges whether an artwork is moral or immoral based on these external "ends". The critics of this approach argue that such external "ends" are not a matter of art. Art has its autonomous sphere that deals with beauty or aesthetics or the critique of beauty or

aesthetics. The question of whether an artwork has worse moral implications is not a matter of evaluation of art. The evaluation of an artwork is an evaluation that focuses on an "intrinsic form" that simply deals with the artistic or aesthetic characteristics of an artwork. The critics who oppose the ethical evaluation of artwork have been of the view that ethical consideration is relevant only when there is an external or transcendental "end". The "end" of art is art itself. Art is neither morally good nor bad. It does not lie in the sphere of morality.

This study begins its inquiry from Noel Carroll's work *Art and Ethical Criticism,* which by examining arguments against the ethical evaluation of artwork, highlights how the ethical evaluation of artwork is relevant to art. In section one, I focus on the arguments against the ethical evaluation of art. The critics of the ethical assessment of art mainly proceed with their arguments based on the distinction between the nature of moral and aesthetic judgments. They explain how ethical judgments are the result of cognition, which involves facts and reasoning, whereas aesthetic judgments arise from emotion, inner feelings and subjectivity. Additionally, they reject the consequentialist approach to evaluating art, contending that ethical critics have no solid ground for claiming that artworks lead to specific behavioral consequences. They believe that such assumptions are rooted in an insufficient and inaccurate understanding of the negative effects of art on human behavior. We thoroughly discuss these arguments in section one.

In section two, we focus on Carroll's response to critics of the ethical evaluation of art. Here, we explain how Carroll argues that the rigid demarcation between cognitive and emotional thought is based on a narrow conception of knowledge. We elaborate on Carroll's idea that artists' emotions can reinforce moral beliefs by portraying or imagining the moral dimension of human life. We will examine how Carroll demonstrates the relevance of ethical evaluation, as it assesses whether the author's imagination accurately represents the moral dimension of an act or not.

In section three, we assess the problem of the relevance of the ethical evaluation of art by exploring various debates on the nature of the relation between moral values and artistic values. Here our main concern will be that the relevance of ethical criticism can only be established if there is a unique interaction between moral value and the value of "artwork form". Here, we also analyse Eaton's idea of the integration of moral value and aesthetic value. Through an analysis of various possible ways of interaction between morality and aesthetics, we reach the point that the problem of ethical evaluation of artwork stems from the mistaken idea of incommensurability between cognitive and emotive judgements. Our analysis will demonstrate that while aesthetic and moral perceptions are distinct,

they are inseparable. They are two aspects of a single experience. This unique relation provides a ground for the ethical evaluation of an artwork.

1. Arguments against Ethical Criticism of Art

In his work *Art and Ethical Criticism*, Carroll thoroughly discusses the arguments against ethical criticism of art. The first argument is based on the idea that art and ethics are autonomous and cannot evaluate each other. According to this view, art exists for its own sake and does not serve moral ends. This idea is rooted in "aestheticism", which asserts that art deals with beauty alone (Carroll, 2000, p. 351). Art has no other purpose and does not aim for practical benefits or external goals. The only criterion for assessing a work of art is whether it promotes or provides an aesthetic experience. If it does, it is considered good; if it does not, it is seen as bad. The belief in the autonomy of art presumes "formal qualities" as its common characteristics which focus solely on balance, order, or beauty. This unique nature of aesthetic experience positions art as an autonomous discipline, suggesting that it should be evaluated only on this basis.

According to this peculiar nature of aesthetic experience, one cannot have aesthetic experience unless he has disinterested-sympathetic attention or contemplation of an artwork. This means that if someone approaches an art object with the aim of setting aside all intentions and judgments except for his aesthetic appreciation, he will genuinely experience the artwork in its full essence. The autonomists insist that critics should focus solely on their aesthetic experience and set aside other interests when evaluating artwork. If they have personal motivations, such as practical concerns or moral values, they cannot fully appreciate the artwork, and as a result, they will be unable to determine whether the artwork is good or bad (Carroll, 1999, pp. 172-3). Moreover, the true effect of aesthetic experience also depends upon sympathetic attention. If the viewer has a sympathetic attitude towards artwork, they will take art as autonomous and assess it solely on its own merits rather than applying any external criteria. Carroll explains that the idea of the autonomy of art leaves no room for the relevance of ethics for art evaluation (Carroll, 2000, p. 352).

This perspective suggests that artworks should be evaluated using criteria that are applicable to all forms of art. Autonomists argue that ethical values should not be a basis for evaluation, as most artworks are unrelated to ethical considerations. For instance, pure music and artistic designs or color arrangements cannot be classified as either moral or immoral. Therefore, artworks should not be assessed using ethical criteria, as these do not serve as a common standard for appreciating art (Carroll, 2000, p. 353).

Carroll identifies that the second argument against the ethical evaluation of artwork is developed in the context of the difference between the nature of cognitive and emotive judgments. This argument contends that art cannot contribute to ethical knowledge at all, as knowledge is derived from cognition, which involves facts, explicit thought, and reasoning, whereas art is rooted in emotions and proceeds through feelings and subjectivity. The belief that art can provide a basis for learning perfect moral views is misguided. An ethical assertion is a knowledge claim, whereas an expression of art is not a knowledge claim at all (Carroll, 2000, p. 354).

According to Carroll, the third argument against the ethical evaluation of artwork is based on an anti-consequentialist perspective. This argument challenges the idea that evaluating art from an ethical standpoint is relevant, particularly because some artworks might have specific negative effects on the behavior of audiences or readers. The main point of this argument is that critics who evaluate art ethically often claim the existence of certain behavioral effects without providing sufficient evidence. Ethical critics position themselves as authorities and assert that an artwork produces either good or bad consequences. Anti-consequentialists argue that these critics lack a solid foundation for making such definitive claims about the behavioral effects of artwork (Carroll, 2000, p. 355). However, an ethical critic provides some evidence suggesting that some artworks have bad consequences for individual life, but what are the exact consequences are difficult to prove. The debates on the consequences of such artworks have been controversial. The ethical critics of art take some behavioral effects as evidence for their critique without having sufficient and conclusive knowledge of human behavior (Carroll 2000, p. 356). Thus, for anti-consequentialists, the ethical criticism of art is not relevant to art critique.

2. Carroll's Response to the Objections Regarding Ethical Evaluation of Art

Carroll addresses all the above objections to ethical criticism of art. As we have seen, the first argument against the ethical evaluation of artwork is based on the idea of the autonomy of art. The idea of the autonomy of art presumes that the common denominator of art is its "formal characteristics" that provide an opportunity for aesthetic experience to viewers. It is independent of practical benefits and consideration of "moral ends". Carroll argues that though the ethical dimension may not be a common denominator of art, asserting that evaluation criteria must be a common denominator is problematic for the reason that in the history of art and literature, there is no such a common denominator that can be

identified in a conclusive sense. Carroll explains that artworks may have resemblances with each other in various ways but there are no essential common features of artworks. Even the aesthetic theory of art, which claims that aesthetic experience is the common denominator of art as art provides an opportunity for aesthetic experience, it overlooks the fact that aesthetic experience is itself highly controversial and undefined. There is no clear concept of aesthetic experience. One "object" can have different aesthetic effects on different people. The aesthetic is culturally contextual. Furthermore, even if it is said that aesthetic experience arises from the "significant form" presented in artworks, we may say that many artworks lack such a "significant form". For example, works like Morris's Dirt and John Cage's 4' 33" do not possess identifiable significant forms. This raises the question of how such work can provide an opportunity for aesthetic experience. Thus, art has no global common denominator to evaluate artwork (Carroll, 2000, p. 358).

As we have seen, the autonomists believe that the sole purpose of art is art's is to provide an aesthetic experience, which can only be achieved if the viewer remains disinterested in all other interests. By suspending all of the other interests, we can attend an artwork as an artwork i.e. to attend art for its own sake rather than other external interests. In response to this view, Carroll identifies two key points. First, not all artworks are created to afford the aesthetic experience only; many are produced with other intended interests. For instance, some artworks are produced and conceived with an interest in social and moral issues. They may have religious and social-political intentions along with the intention to produce aesthetic qualities. So, it is not right to say that artwork only provides an opportunity for aesthetic apprehension. Second, in viewing art the viewers do not limit their reaction to merely aesthetic feelings. They must also consider the messages and intentions conveyed within the artwork. Consequently, viewers cannot be entirely "disinterested," as their engagement often involves responding to interests that exist outside the art itself. For example, a feminist novel is not created merely as art for the sake of art. It has a social message and it motivates to think about these messages (Carroll, 1999, p. 178). Similarly, many of the artworks are created for religious motivation and moral education. In this case, art is for the sake of religion or for the sake of morality. Thus, if art can indeed be created for various external interests, why should not it be evaluated based on these interests?

As we have seen, one of the objections to ethical criticism is that it considers some artworks as a means of contributing to ethical knowledge. Opponents of this perspective argue that such an approach is not justifiable on rational grounds. They

explain that knowledge is a matter of cognition that proceeds through facts and explicit thought and reasoning. In contrast, art involves emotions and proceeds through feelings or subjectivity. Critics of ethical criticism assert that art lacks cognitive value. They believe that art does not make knowledge claims, and even when an artwork expresses moral views or other assertions, these cannot be regarded as insights or understandings since they operate on an emotive rather than a rational level. Carroll responds to this argument by arguing that it relies on a narrow concept of knowledge. Knowledge is not merely a matter of propositions like "what is the case" (or what is "x"). Knowledge can also encompass "how is the case" (what "x" is like). Therefore, when an artwork has a moral dimension, it is not simply because it states that "x" is moral or immoral (or "x" is good or evil), as we already possess that information. Instead, it has moral dimensions because it contributes to ethical knowledge in a different way. It reveals what the possible cases of "x" being moral or immoral might be. For example, a novel can afford ethical knowledge not in the sense that it tells us that slavery is bad, but by conveying what may be the cases of slavery (or knowledge of what slavery is like). It creates or highlights the cases of suffering relating to slavery. Carroll illustrates this point by emphasizing that emotive language enhances moral beliefs and motivates us to understand how immoral is evil. What Carroll explains is that even though art is not a source of knowledge in the same way that science, philosophy and history are, it can contribute to our understanding of facts of life in another way. Art portrays life situations in such a way that readers not only become more aware of the facts of life but also become attentive to the severity of facts and their implications. As Carroll states, art captures flavour of the facts (Carroll, 2000, p. 362).

From this perspective, we can say that art contributes to ethical learning. According to Carroll, life situations portrayed in literature are highly relevant to moral reasoning. He explains that an author, through his power of imagination and by employing appropriate literary devices, creates scenarios that evoke the emotions of readers or viewers and thus, in turn, invite them to contemplate the consequences of moral or immoral aspects of life situations. For instance, in "Crime and Punishment," the author, through his power of imagination, creates a situation and conveys the feelings of a murderer. This engages the readers and educates them about the repercussions of murder and the challenges faced by someone who has committed such an act. It prompts readers to reflect on the evil of murder and to understand what a murderer's life is like. According to Carroll, this is the "acquaintance approach" to knowing moral knowledge (Carroll, 2000, p. 363). Moreover, fiction has the power to portray moral scenarios that encourage

readers to reevaluate their moral beliefs. However, it may be that some fiction propagates an unjust critique of moral norms. Ethical criticism can address the problem. In ethical criticism, the art critic assesses whether the author's imagination accurately portrays the moral dimension of an act or not (Carroll, 2000, p. 364).

As we have seen, opponents of ethical criticism of art and literature argue that ethical criticism relies on inconclusive knowledge of human behavior and often criticizes art primarily for its negative impact on for human behavior. However, Carroll counters that ethical criticism does not attempt to predict the effect of artwork on the behavior of the reader or viewer. Instead, it assesses the quality of moral experience that artwork provides when the audience engages with it (Carroll, 2000, p. 370). We know that when fiction has a significant moral dimension, it engages the audience's moral emotions in a certain way and encourages them to participate in formulating moral judgment and responses. In ethical criticism of art, the critics simply focus on whether an artwork empowers audience's moral power to understand moral issues correctly or merely confuses or distorts them. What Carroll explains is that his approach to ethical criticism of art does not involve the approval or disapproval of the moral insight of an artwork based on its effects on human behavior. Instead, it assesses whether artwork properly shapes one's moral experience or misdirects it (Carroll, 2000, p. 370). In other words, Ethical critics of art concentrate on the quality of the content rather than its potential future implications. Moreover, Carroll suggests that if we cannot predict how the artwork will affect the moral behavior of the audience, we can justifiably question the form of moral messages that the artwork conveys.

3. Relevance or Irrelevance of Ethical Evaluation of Art: The Assessment of the Problem

We can assert that the relevance of ethical evaluation is considerable because ethical inquiry is essential for assessing artworks that poorly exhibit moral dimensions and influence our ethical experiences. However, we cannot shift moral responsibility to the artist without determining whether such artworks were intentionally created to misdirect ethical experiences. Therefore, the issue of shifting moral responsibility is crucial for understanding the relevance of ethical evaluation of art. It may be that artist have no intention of directing or misdirecting moral experience or wrongly exhibiting moral values; they simply create characters of different mindsets to represent their responses to moral values. In this sense, such artworks do not bear moral responsibility. This is consistent with the

autonomist's claim that art is for its own sake, rather than for moral ends. As a result, there is no justification for ethical criticism of art.

Zhen Li focuses on this issue by arguing that nothing can ethically be evaluated unless it meets the criterion for moral responsibility. He states that an action can only be subjected to ethical inquiry if it satisfies two conditions. First, it must be a controlled action; in other words, it must be a free action. Second, it must meet an "epistemic condition", which implies that the agents must be aware of their actions. Li explains that a controlled action is one performed by an agent when he has the ability to choose otherwise. If someone take action X but is unable to refrain from doing X, he cannot be responsible for acting X. For instance, if a person is forced to act wrong at gunpoint, we cannot blame him for his action. Moreover, if a person performs action Y and has the ability to not to act Y but is unaware of the nature of Y and its consequences, he also cannot be blamed for his action. For instance, a child cannot be blamed for upsetting another person (Li, 2023, p. 2479).

In order to understand the relevance or irrelevance of ethical criticism to art, Li also focuses on the distinction between artwork as a product and the artist as an agent who creates art. He argues that an artwork, as a product, cannot be held morally responsible because it is not an agent in the true sense. To illustrate his point, he uses the analogy of a snake bite If a snake causes harm to a person, the snake itself cannot be blamed. However, if someone intentionally places the snake in the person's path, then the agent who places the snake becomes responsible for the harm caused. In this way, if the artist fulfils the condition of being an intentional agent, he can be held morally accountable and thus can be blamed for his art (Li, 2023, p. 2483).

What Li explains is that for an artist to be believed morally responsible, he must have free will in creating artwork and an awareness of the consequences of his work (Li 2023, p. 2486). If either of these two conditions is not fulfilled, the artist cannot be held morally accountable and we cannot blame him. Regarding the condition of free choice, in most cases, the author is free to create artwork. However, there are circumstances in which an artist may produce an artwork without being aware of its consequences. Based on these two conditions, Li identifies three specific situations in which ethical criticism of art becomes irrelevant. First, if an artist freely creates or performs an artwork but is unaware of its consequences. Second, an artist is aware of the consequences of his work but cannot avoid them. Third, an artist is aware of the consequences and has the ability to avoid them, but is unaware that his act is immoral (Li, 2023, p. 2487). Thus, Li concludes that to conduct a moral critique of an artwork, an understanding of the

author's condition is necessary. Without adequate knowledge of the "freedom condition" and "epistemic conditions" of an artist's act, his work cannot be evaluated on moral grounds.

What follows from Li's analysis is that we cannot blame an artist if we are not aware of the artist's conditions discussed above. However, it is a considerable challenge to know the artist's conditions simply by focusing on the artist's product. In most cases, we are familiar only with the artist's product or the intrinsic quality of the artwork rather than the artist's conditions. This means we can evaluate the quality of artwork, but we may lack insight into the artist's circumstances. This implies that the relevance of ethical criticism hinges on whether there is a relation between "moral value" and the "intrinsic form" of an artwork. Without this relation, ethical evaluation becomes irrelevant. Ted Nannicelli focuses on this issue. He follows the "interactionist" position, which argues for a unique interaction between the "intrinsic form" of an artwork and its moral value. According to the interactionists, ethical flaws negatively impact an artwork. Conversely, if there is no ethical flaw in an artwork, its overall value is enhanced. This suggests that there is a significant interaction between the "intrinsic form" of an artwork, which pertains to its artistic quality, and its moral value (Nannicelli, 2017, p. 403). However, we have seen that there is a trend in the philosophy of art that denies the interaction between ethics and art, as it believes that art or aesthetics is an autonomous sphere.

The idea of autonomy of art ultimately leads to the belief that art, as aesthetic or beauty, is the supreme value and is entirely irrelevant to morality. This perspective does not take into account the consequences of artwork for any form of value structure and simply pursues art for the sake of art (Barrett, 1982, pp. 140-141). Moreover, if aesthetics or artistic value is intrinsically good, art would not concern itself with the potential suffering and humiliation it may cause for humans. However, the history of art shows that it often cares deeply about humans and condemns humiliation. We see that art has served as a means of actualizing human dignity, indicating that there is significant merit in asserting the interaction between art and morality. Nicola M. Pless discusses this point. He explains that art and literature can be seen as a key source for promoting human dignity. Through art and literature, individuals can feel self-worth which, in turn, promotes human dignity (Pless et al., 2017, p. 229).

According to Pless, artists react against human humiliation by giving form to their dignity and relating it with others. They create a broader meaning of life and self-identity (Pless et al., 2017, p. 223). Obviously, this occurs within a value structure and moral sense of the audience. Thus, we can argue that artwork takes

moral responsibility, allowing us to evaluate art on ethical grounds. This view aligns with Carroll's responses to the critics of the ethical evaluation of art. Carroll argues that ethical critics of an artwork simply focus on whether the artwork deals audience's moral power to understand moral issues correctly or merely confuses or distorts them. If an artwork distorts moral experience, it loses its overall worth.

While it is generally accepted that ethical flaws negatively affect artwork, it remains unclear how this occurs, as there is a significant gulf between artistic quality or "intrinsic form" of an artwork and its moral value. Eaton focuses on this issue. She notes that while surveys about specific artworks indicate that moral values may affect the aesthetic experience, it is still argued that aesthetics and morality are two metaphysically and epistemologically different enterprises. The proponents of this perspective believe that there can be "ugly generous men" and "beautiful mean men". They consider moral and aesthetic senses as two distinct faculties that do not depend on each other (Eaton, 1992, p. 221).

If aesthetic and ethical values are distinct, Eaton raises the question: why do some specific artworks' lovers claim that their aesthetic appreciation changes when it is discovered that such an artwork violates specific moral values (Eaton, 1992, p. 222)? For instance, a person who admires the beauty of a leather jacket might feel irritation upon realizing that it is made from lambskin. Why does he irritate if the aesthetic is an independent feeling? One possible explanation is that his aesthetic appreciation changes because he scrutinises his aesthetic feelings by prioritising his moral interest over his aesthetic interest as Eaton mentions (Eaton, 1992, p. 222). This position is usually labelled as the "moral overridingness". According to the concept of "moral overridingness", although moral consideration and aesthetic consideration are distinct, moral consideration has a greater status and is more admirable for those who care about morality. However, Eaton argues that there can be instances where individuals prefer aesthetic consideration even though they generally admire morality. In specific cases, they may choose aesthetic pleasure without feeling much regret (Eaton, 1992, p. 222). Similarly, there can be instances where people prefer moral consideration even though they generally admire aesthetics. Humans' preferences for ethical or aesthetic considerations do not imply that one overrides the other. Aesthetics and ethics cannot be blocked off. They can influence decisions, though their impact can be moderated. In other words, Eaton explains that the "Overridingness thesis" is problematic as it takes the separation of ethics and aesthetics for granted.

For Eaton, morality, aesthetics and other human concerns don't need to be considered with a rigid separation as it is not necessary to have one concern the others have to be blocked off (Eaton, 1992, p. 227). Although humans may

consider issues from various perspectives, such as moral, aesthetic and scientific perspectives, these perspectives are not like separate bundles. They can intrude on each other and the intrusion of one does not necessarily dilute the other. There may be interesting links or common perspectives between them. For instance, Eaton argues that aesthetics and morality both have a link. Both instigate from human "sentimentality" (Eaton, 1992, p. 229).

According to Eaton, human sentimentality serves both moral and aesthetic roles simultaneously. It provides a relation between ethics and aesthetics (Eaton 1992, p. 229). We cannot separate moral or aesthetic roles from human sentiments. If someone is sentimental, he is sentimental about both morality and aesthetics at the same time. One is sentimental about artwork due to the effects of its formal qualities, but it occurs with moral consideration, such as what is the consequence of this artwork and what is its overall goodness, or how it serves human well-being. Similarly, one is sentimental about morality as he restrains himself from what he believes to be immoral. But it occurs with aesthetic consideration, i.e. the expression of the immoral; how something is immoral (Eaton, 1992, p. 229). In other words, aesthetic judgments simultaneously demand the reference of moral principles and moral judgements depend upon aesthetic consideration. For instance, as we have seen in the case of Carroll, the understanding of "slavery is evil" is inherently connected to the comprehension of "how slavery is evil". Thus, when an artwork portrays the cases of slavery, it simultaneously has a reference to the moral principle that slavery is evil. Ethics and aesthetics are not necessarily separated and both can co-exist.

Eaton explains that the overridingness of morality over aesthetics or vice versa is misguided (Eaton, 1992, p. 230). The overridingness thesis provides a false basis for evaluating artwork, as it takes the separation of morality and art for granted. For Eaton, an artwork should not be admired purely on a moral or aesthetic ground, but rather admired by an aggregation of both moral and aesthetic grounds (Eaton, 1992, p. 230). For example, she discusses the case of an evaluation of a beautiful painting created through colour effects, using a goldfish dipped in paint, which ultimately dies after spreading colours across the canvas. Eaton explains that people who do not know the way the painting was created enjoy its beauty through aesthetic experience. However, as they know the creation process, the aesthetic experience of a fair number of people changes. While these people still see the same colours, the colours no longer please them as much as they did before. As far as deliberation to block moral consideration in aesthetic experience is concerned, Eaton argues that most of the people report that they cannot deliberate to overlook the moral violation involved in creating the painting,

making it difficult for them to enjoy the beauty of the painting as they enjoyed it before they were unaware of the way the painting was created. Thus, Eaton concludes that this shift of experience is not simply due to separate perception; rather, it is because of the aggregate of perceptions. The aesthetic and moral perceptions are different but inseparable. They are two aspects of one experience (Eaton, 1992, p. 232). The change in aesthetic experience shows that aesthetic and moral perceptions are not entirely separated, otherwise, the change in experience would not manifest.

What Eaton explains is that human perception, due to its complexity, is understood in different components, such as reason and emotions. These components represent two aspects of a single "unified self". Similarly, reality, due to its complexity, is found in different ways, such as goodness and beauty. But they are also two aspects of one reality. In this perspective, ethics and morality are equal partners. As a respondent of reality, humans have a strong interest in both aesthetics and ethics. Humans use aesthetics for a better understanding of ethics. If morality involves making the right decision or action at the right time, art and literature teach humans how to take such action and how to choose the best time for right action, as this often depends on the specific situation humans encounter in life. Life situations are best explained or expressed by art (Eaton, 1997, p. 363).

That is the point that Carroll explains in his response to the critics of the ethical evaluation of art. We have seen how Carroll emphasizes that art contributes to ethical knowledge in a special way. Art and literature can afford ethical knowledge in the sense they create stories or symbols for portraying life situations in such a way that readers not only become more aware of the facts of life but also become attentive to the severity of facts and their implications. Artists**,** through their power of imagination and by employing appropriate literary devices, create scenarios that trigger emotions in readers or viewers. This engagement invites them to contemplate the consequences of moral or immoral aspects of life situations**.** Carroll effectively demonstrates how emotive language can strengthen moral beliefs. In this context, there is a connection between aesthetics and ethics. This connection establishes the relevance of an ethical evaluation of art.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion leads us to conclude that although morality as a cognitive discipline and aesthetics as an emotive discipline appear to be distinct areas of study, they have a unique relationship. Carroll rightly points out that while ethics teaches about good or bad, aesthetics exhibits good or bad artistically, thereby deepening our understanding of moral values. Carroll's defence of ethical

criticism argues against the strict separation between morality and aesthetics, suggesting that such a separation assumes a narrow conception of moral knowledge. A narrow concept of moral knowledge emphasizes mere acquaintance of moral facts, while a broader concept of knowledge also includes an understanding of the severity of the moral facts. Carroll convincingly demonstrates that some artworks create a scenario of the moral aspects of life situations for depicting them artistically and motivate us to contemplate moral values. Thus, one can evaluate such artworks based on ethical consideration by assessing whether such artworks exhibit the moral aspect of life situations appropriately or misrepresent them. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that the role of ethical criticism is relevant in the evaluation of artworks.

Moreover, Eaton's conception of "aggregation of aesthetic and moral perceptions" also provides a ground for the relevance of ethical criticism of art. This idea aligns with Carroll's viewpoint, as it also recognizes that aesthetics plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of ethical knowledge. Eaton convincingly argues against a strict separation between morality and aesthetics, explaining why the aesthetic experiences of a fair number of people change when they know something deemed aesthetically good is a result of morally questionable actions. This shift in overall perception is not merely a result of a separate perception. It is the aggregate of perceptions. When Humans prefer ethical or aesthetic considerations, they do so not because one overrides the other. Instead, aesthetics and ethics are interconnected and cannot be separated. They can influence our decisions, though their impact can be moderated. Therefore, Eaton's idea of "aggregation of aesthetic and moral perception" provides a plausible ground for the relevance of ethical criticism of artwork. We can conclude that artwork should not be admired purely on a moral or aesthetic basis, but rather appreciated through the integration of both moral and aesthetic dimensions

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"A landscape of the heart": Emotional geography in William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* novels

Ioana Gabriela NAN

Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
ioana.nan@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Abstract

The article concerns itself with the mutual emotional effects involved in creating space and being created by it, in a genre where setting, although relevant, is not often thus emphasised. Taking as its case study William McIlvanney's detective trilogy, it aims to demonstrate not only the defining role the cityscape plays in detective novels in general and in the author's Tartan Noir novels in particular, but also the fact that choosing to construct the series around the topography of Scotland and Glasgow betrays deeper meanings attached to the idea of place as familiar space, the home to which one belongs, with all the feelings, sometimes contradictory, attached to it. First, the detective genre is placed against a wider literary background, with a focus on different critical attitudes to it and on its evolution from marginal to mainstream genre. Then it moves on to analyse the flavour of locality pervading the Scottish detective fiction, of which McIlvanney is a salient reference figure, aiming to connect his trilogy to his wider oeuvre but also to point out the literary influences on his style of detective fiction, particularly regarding the role of space in the economy of the novel. That is how it discovers that, in McIlvanney's case, detective fiction may be little more than an elaborate pretext for social, political and cultural comments on Scotland and Glasgow, a viewpoint it connects with and considers in the context of the spatial turn in the humanities, specifically the perspective that recognises the relationship between space and emotion.

Keywords: *the metaphysical detective story, Tartan Noir, the spatial turn, emotional geography, socio-political realism.*

Introduction: the metaphysics of detection

Along with romance and sci-fi novels, the detective novel is one of the literary genres that started out catering for the "popular" taste. Its beginnings are rooted in the historical context of the massification of cities at the height of the

industrial revolution in mid-nineteenth century, the genre itself intimately woven into the fabric of city culture, born "amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city" (Poe, 1900, p. 6). On the other hand, considering the persistent dichotomy between high and low cultural artefacts, particularly in literature, its initial appeal to the urban working class may have deferred it as the subject of serious critical analysis, at least before the second half of the twentieth century, when structuralist critics rediscovered the rich perspectives allowed by the genre, either in its formal aspects (Todorov, Barthes, Eco, Kermode) or in its connection to broader cultural-theoretical and ideological questions (Foucault, Bourdieu, Lacan, F. R. Jameson, Stephen Knight). Whether supportive of the genre's ambitions or still viewing it as a literary annex, this group of scholarly commentators managed to place detective fiction firmly on the critical map of the twentieth century.

The structuralist approach to detective fiction saw, for example, Tzvetan Todorov employ it to illustrate the idea of literary genre. While his classification of detective fiction, based on structural elements of the plot, reveals a logical development – from the whodunnit to the thriller to the suspense novel – which helps define the major building blocks that make up the genre, Todorov's analysis does not attempt to elevate the detective genre from its status of popular literature, or insert it into a literary continuum, as much as to confirm this status by underlining its separation from genuine literature. According to Todorov, it is only in the "happy realm" of popular literature such as detective fiction that a well-written piece can be identified as the one most aligned to the features of the genre, rather than contradict these features in some way, as genuine literary masterpieces usually do: "Detective fiction has its norms; to «develop» them is also to disappoint them: to «improve upon» detective fiction is to write «literature», not detective fiction" (Todorov, 1988, p. 159). Too few to be included in a separate genre, the exceptions he admits to at the time (Patricia Highsmith's Ripley novels, Francis Iles' work) (Todorov, 1988, p. 165) would, however, later on help expand the psychological thriller subgenre and bring detective fiction closer to literature as he understood it at the time of these critical statements.

By contrast, Umberto Eco unhesitatingly includes the genre in the great narrative tradition "from primitive myths to the modern detective novel" (Eco, 1995, p. 8). Himself the author of a detective best-seller (*The Name of the Rose*, 1980), Eco frequently takes the genre as exemplary regarding narratology and textual semiotics questions such as the voice of the model author (when his chosen example is Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*), the fictional pact between the author and his/her model reader (when he refers to Rex Stout's Nero

Wolfe novels), matters of translation (when he mentions the Italian versions of American detective novels) (Eco, 1995) or of narrative structure (when he discusses Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale*) (Eco, 1984). Most importantly, he talks about the metaphysical appeal of detective stories, whose fundamental question is identical to that posed by philosophy or religion, namely who is the author of it all - whodunnit? (Eco, 1995) or by psychoanalysis – who is guilty? (Eco, 2014), thus triggering a series of logical conjectures similar to those of scientific inquiry and ultimately ramifying into countless possible outcomes. What Eco implies is perhaps the fact that, as exemplified by his own detective novel, all detective fiction is labyrinthine. By extrapolation, the lesson it teaches the reader is that any type of fiction abounds in possible worlds, that "it is impossible for there to be *a story*" (Eco, 2014, p. 655).

The two positions illustrate the evolution of the genre from obscure and marginal to experimental and representative of modernist and postmodernist narrative techniques. In fact, Edgar Allan Poe's tales of mystery already broke existing moulds by initiating the tradition of psychological thrillers and horror fiction and by introducing the prototypical detective (Auguste Dupin) whose ratiocinative methodology will soon become the staple of classic fictional investigators such as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes or Agatha Christie's Poirot. Throughout the twentieth century, detective fiction became a particular field of literary innovation, with the works of Umberto Eco, Paul Auster and Thomas Pynchon[1] crossing the boundaries of the detective genre as described by Todorov. By raising questions "about narrative, interpretation, subjectivity, the nature of reality, and the limits of knowledge" (Merivale, 1999, p. 1), works like these do not inaugurate as much as confirm the tradition of a metaphysical detective story that transcends the conventions attached to the genre by addressing ontological and epistemological questions. While they display the methodology of detective fiction, they eschew its *telos*, which becomes, especially in McIlvanney's case, solving life, rather than death (Holquist, 1983, p. 173). At the same time, they might also confirm an aspect often unacknowledged, namely the fact that one of the engines of universal cultural development leading to modernism or postmodernism has been the appropriation by high culture of literary models such as detective fiction, a staple of popular culture to begin with. In fact, a permanent traffic between high and low forms has also meant that detective stories have, in

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[1] G. K. Chesterton and Jorge Luis Borges are also credited as part of this tradition (Marivale, 1999), as are Alain Robbe-Grillet or Witold Gombrowicz (Holquist, 1983).

turn, assimilated structural and conceptual features specific to canonical works (McHale, 1992, p. 226) belonging to these cultural movements.

The Scottish hard-boiled

Over the past few decades, the metaphysical detective novel has also incorporated a strong regional flavour. The defining presence of a localized landscape, culture and mindset have shaped new brands of "noir" fiction, from Nordic/Scandinavian to Scottish. The philosophical proclivities of McIlvanney's own detective novels have allowed them to be read as exemplary texts for Heideggerian concepts such as the relationship between language and truth, and for a certain mood, illustrative of Heidegger's "Stimmung", that seems to have characterised Scottish literature and politics in the Thatcherism decade (Wickman, 2015), when opposition shaped both of them. Born out of an interrogation of the condition of Scotland faced with British uniformization, Tartan Noir, the Scottish brand of detective fiction, became a literary formula investigating the ontological and political state of Scotland. Consequently, a long history of divided national loyalties, both linguistic and political, are also reflected in the Glasgow of McIlvanney's novels, a city whose "half-life is an indictment of the nation under British rule: [...] a nation that does not wholly possess itself, that is not «whole»" (Wickman, 2015, p. 10).

Despite his significant body of work as a novelist, short-story writer and poet, William McIlvanney seems to be much less known outside Scotland than he probably deserves.[2] Moreover, considered against the background of his overall literary output, his detective novel production is limited to the Laidlaw trilogy (thus called after the name of the investigating protagonist) and as such may be considered of minor importance compared to the significantly larger body of work proposed by other contemporary but younger Scottish novelists such as Ian Rankin, whose choice of focusing exclusively on the genre of detective fiction was influenced directly by McIlvanney. Despite his small detective oeuvre, as critics and Rankin himself have acknowledged,[3] McIlvanney set a new standard for all the Scottish authors who succeeded him in writing detective fiction, by creating "an influential symbiosis between a crime-ridden yet vital Glasgow and the divorced, hard-drinking but intellectually literate hero" (Priestman, 2003, p. 185).

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[2] At least not in Romania, where only one of his novels – the sequence to the Laidlaw series, co-authored by Ian Rankin – has been translated so far (*Întuneric fără sfârşit*, Bucharest: Crime Scene Press, 2023).

[3] "It's doubtful I would be a crime writer without the influence of McIlvanney's *Laidlaw*" (Flood, 2020, p. 1).

The Glasgow-based, philosophical-minded DI Laidlaw was thus successfully emulated not only by Rankin's rock aficionado, "the Edinburgh Laidlaw"[4] DI Rebus, but also by other British protagonist detectives (e.g. John Harvey's Charlie Resnick[5]) whose obsessive passion is meant to set them apart by identifying them against the anonymous background of an urbanised landscape simultaneously familiar and strange.

Paradoxically, it is also the cityscape that helps reinforce the difference and the connection between the above-mentioned Scottish protagonists. The Glasgow of Laidlaw and of Jack Parlabane (the investigative journalist in Christopher Brookmyre's novels), just like the Edinburgh of Rebus, are both seen not only as national capitals of the country, each in its own right, but celebrated and foregrounded better than in most of the novels produced outside Scotland and outside the genre (Priestman, 2003). In the case of Rankin, the friendship that ensued after he met McIlvanney in 1985, two years before publishing his first novel in the Inspector Rebus series, led to the ultimate homage to the latter's work when, after McIlvanney's death in 2015, Rankin was chosen to complete his "godfather"'s unfinished prequel to the Laidlaw series, published in 2021 as *The Dark Remains*. What McIlvanney had done for Glasgow by writing about a city that he knew well, Rankin emulated in his detailed description of Edinburgh, so that, in the end, the city is as central to their books as their detectives are.

Considering their order of publication, the first two Laidlaw novels must have been intended as a series, with *Laidlaw* published in 1977 and *The Papers of Tony Veitch* in 1983. Between that year and the publication of the third novel in the series (*Strange Loyalties*, 1991), McIlvanney wrote two more novels, neither of which belong to the detective genre, in addition to three poetry and short story collections. Besides indicating how prolific and technically adept the author was in a variety of literary genres, the gap may also explain why critics of the British detective novel such as Martin Priestman often fail to consider *Strange Loyalties* as part of the now classic Laidlaw trilogy when discussing McIlvanney's detective genre production. However, what they point out about the first two volumes is also true about the third, namely the fact that, despite their appearance as police procedurals, McIlvanney's novels in the series are clearly influenced by, and

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[4] Asked by Rankin to sign a book for him, this is how McIlvanney himself called the fledgling idea of a detective similar to Laidlaw but based in Edinburgh, the future DI Rebus (Flood, 2020).

[5] In the foreword to the first of his Charlie Resnick novel series, *Lonely Hearts* (1989), Harvey joins Rankin in acknowledging his indebtedness to McIlvanney's "masterly novel about a Glasgow police detective, Laidlaw" that he "read and re-read" before creating his own detective character (Harvey, 2007, p. 1).

employ themselves, the conventions of the American so-called "hard-boiled" detective fiction (Priestman, 1991; Dickson, 1996).

Historically part of the second Golden Age of the genre (from the late 1920s to 1939) and peculiar to the works produced in the United States, this sort of detective novel announces a clean break with the established European tradition of the genre. Thus, whereas Agatha Christie's Poirot or Marple novels are typically set in the isolated decor of an elegant English country house, and display a quasi-stereotypical structure (discovery of the dead victim, a series of false perpetrators whose investigation provide a red-herring delay of the denouement, the latter usually staged to coincide with a final revelatory scene) and featuring a highly intelligent albeit amateur sleuth, by embracing the messy realism of an urban landscape the American hard-boiled detective novels are nothing short of a direct reaction to, and reversal of, this model.

Moreover, one might say that a hard-boiled is as true to life as it is true to death, in the sense that it replaces the previously clean but artificial storyline with a dark and violent one set against a menacing urban background populated by criminals, vagrants and prostitutes. In the fictional world of the hard-boiled novel, detection is more than a game to exercise the protagonist's "little grey cells", as Poirot used to do. It is a tedious, ungrateful desk-and-leg job done by a lonely sleuth, usually an ex-cop often at odds with their former police colleagues, who probes the city's underbelly in exchange for money and not necessarily out of belief in the law, or even in the possibility of real justice for the victims. All this is indicative of the most important characteristic of the hard-boiled novel – the way it blurs the distinction between good and evil, criminals and law-enforcers, raising moral, social and political problems in the process (Cuddon, 2014, p. 169). Perhaps it is also one of the strongest reasons why the genre enjoyed enormous success, with authors such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler becoming cult figures almost overnight, and even more so after Hollywood turned some of their work into film noir blockbusters in the 1940s (such as, for example, Dashiell Hammett's *Maltese Falcon*, famously filmed in 1941 and starring Humphrey Bogart as the quintessential detective Sam Spade).

What McIlvanney's Laidlaw has in common with Chandler's Philip Marlowe and other classic American "private eyes" is his "lonely personal quest for «meaning» in a wider sense" (Priestman, 1991, p. 180). His almost obsessive crusades in the name of the underdog (whether the victim is a working class teenage girl, a homeless vagrant, a misfit intellectual or his own guilty artist brother), his irreverence to the authority he himself is supposed to represent, and

an incessant brooding[6] over personal, philosophical (right and wrong, guilt and innocence), social and political Scottish issues in a language that is intensely personal and highly quotable[7] make Laidlaw a "wise guy" hero that happens to be a policeman, rather than the other way round (McGillivray, 1995). It is also this heroic nature that draws Laidlaw close to the typical masculine protagonists in McIlvanney's novels[8], tough and often violent men of the working class (such as Docherty, the eponymous protagonist of the author's 1975 Whitbread Award novel). As if to stress the point, one of them (Dan Scoular, the protagonist of *The Big Man*) also makes a cameo appearance, mediated by Laidlaw himself as narrator, in *The Papers of Tony Veitch* (1983). Despite the apparent fragmentation due to frequent shifts in perspective[9], McIlvanney achieves the "bouncing" effect of credibility deriving from an appropriate mixture of characters that E.M. Forster considers "imperative" in a quality novel (Forster, 1972, pp. 143-144). We see surprisingly many characters, including "villains" and anti-heroes, "curving towards" round characters, in the sense that even secondary characters are represented by more than one trait and "capable of surprising in a convincing way" (Forster, 1972, pp. 138, 143).

A sociopolitical novel under cover

Yet, for all the machismo inherent in the hard-boiled genre in general and in McIlvanney's detective novels in particular, considered sometimes as limiting the power of their social comment – the author's aim in his previous and subsequent production – critics (Dentith, 1990, p. 35; Priestman, 1991, p. 181) seem to agree that "if it were not for the ghettoisation of detective from «serious» fiction, *The Papers of Tony Veitch* and its predecessor *Laidlaw* (1977) would and should be seen as important novels of the 1970s and 1980s" (Priestman, 1991, p. 181).[10] In

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[6] The meditative policeman modelled by George Simenon's Maigret, also illustrated by D.I. Dalgliesh, P.D. James' poet-policeman (Marivale, 1999, p. 14).

[7] McIlvanney's style in the Laidlaw series, with its crisp metaphors and sharp dialogue, proves the increasing attention and linguistic skill he invests in his writing (McGillivray, 1995).

[8] Heroism is an idea that pervades all McIlvanney's novels, not only the Laidlaw trilogy, proving that the series is not a diversion from his "serious" work, but a vital component in it (McGillivray, 1995).

[9] Alternating stream of consciousness (*Laidlaw*) with third person limited (*Laidlaw*, *The Papers…*, *Strange Loyalties*) and first person (*Strange Loyalties*) narrative points of view.

[10] Apparently disproving Todorov's assertion that the whodunit is "purely geometric architecture" (Todorov, 1988, p. 160), meaning that "par excellence [it] does not transgress the rules of the genre, but conforms to them" (Todorov, 1988, p. 159). Priestman's opinion about the merit of the Laidlaw novels is further supported by other critics of McIlvanney's work, such as Keith Dixon (Dixon, 1989).

other words, McIlvanney makes use of the conventions of the hardboiled genre not for its own sake, but in order to achieve the same end as in his other novels: a longstanding radical critique of moral, social and political issues centred on Scotland and Glasgow. As far as crime fiction in general is concerned, this is not a new approach. The light the genre throws on the social realities of an urban, industrialised background reaffirms its ties with the social novel of the 19th century represented, in England, by the work of Dickens, and proves its openness to the ideological and political inflections, in this case markedly leftward (Dentith, 1990, pp. 19-20), that McIlvanney imbues all his Laidlaw novels with, but especially the third in the series.[11] The "loyalties" of the title (*Strange Loyalties*, 1991) predict the main issue of the novel, that of the difficulties and dilemmas posed by one's duties to family and profession, but also to one's cultural and national background. These allegiances, it turns out, are crucial for the main character:

> *It would all be meaningless unless we related it to what mattered, to where we came from. We were all from working-class backgrounds. The chance we had was held in trust for others [...]. Whatever talents we had belonged to the man in the street. Each of us had to find our own way to reconnect with him. [...] Without him, what we had learned was useless.* (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 348)

Combined with the fact that the most important influence on 20th century British crime fiction were the American hardboiled novels (Dentith, 1990, p. 21) of the authors mentioned above, it is hardly surprising that this kind of fiction, and especially McIlvanney's uniquely Scottish breed, would appeal to an urban working class who found their own lives and place in the city mirrored, legitimised and reinforced by the hard-won and sometimes morally ambiguous positions of the characters. At the same time, considering the fact that American culture traditionally values local linguistic idiosyncrasy, another essential feature of the hard-boiled genre originating here and appealing to a working class audience is the use of street language to place and define the characters. On the other side of the Atlantic, McIlvanney chooses to employ the Glaswegian idiom against a cultural background typically characterised by class-obsession and conformity to royal standard language, where his systematic display of the popular idiom is not only unusual, but deliberately conspicuous. Besides providing his writing with a local rhetorical appeal, McIlvanney's use of the Scottish demotic, especially in the first two novels of the series, can be said to carry the same clear political undertones

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[11] As Jameson also notes about Chandler, his novels are murder mysteries in disguise, the author searching, in fact, to understand the underlying reality of American society (Jameson, 1983, p. 122).

mentioned above.[12] His appropriation of the Glasgow dialect is meant to convey both his familiarity with and lifelong loyalty to the city, and at the same time his appreciation for the language of the people of Glasgow as different from the British standard and even as different from other Scottish dialects (such as that of Edinburgh, for instance): "Ah wis in the merchant navy. Ah've been around. That's one of the reasons Ah like tae come here. Reminds me. The world's a big place. It's not just Glesca [Glasgow]". (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 171)

Like in the case of the so-called "realist" novel, the hard-boiled detective fiction, including McIlvanney's, relies heavily on *l'effet de réel* (Barthes, 1986, p. 141) achieved in this way, but even more than in the case of the realist novel, it's the setting itself, the "crime scene" that is naturally foregrounded here, as a fundamental part of the plot. In the detective story, space is crucial – it all starts with a murder scene, a setting, a stage. The detective story is as much a "whodunit" as a "wheredunit". In this respect, McIlvanney's novels resemble their American counterparts, so that from language the matter of authenticity extends naturally to the streets and places in the city, most of which are as real as the streets of San Francisco (Dashiel Hammett) or Los Angeles (Raymond Chandler).[13] Paradoxically in a genre whose main appeal is action, the "useless detail" or "insignificant notation" (Barthes, 1986, pp. 142, 143) embedded in extensive descriptions of the cityscape becomes significant to such an extent in the case of McIlvanney that one feels that it is the city that inhabits the characters, rather than vice-versa.

Here too he may have taken his cue from Chandler, who is a master of description, starting with interior spaces and moving outward to the urban neighbourhoods. In his novels, rooms are described in the minutest detail, from curtains to carpet to furniture placement and objects. All the possible rooms in the house, even the most private (living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom) are swept up at a glance or minutely analysed for traces (*The Big Sleep*). They are not only scenes of crime, but theatre scenes, backgrounds against which the detective

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[12] It is a recurring feature in his other novels, too. In *Docherty*, for instance, the protagonist discovers that the mother tongue at school and the tongue of his mother at home are not the same, and that the first cannot translate his feelings (Craig, 2009, p. 77).

[13] Ian Rankin went a step further when he provided each of the novels in his Rebus series with a map of central Edinburgh indicating each of the streets, buildings and pubs involved in the settings of his novels. One of the incontrovertible signs of the series' success with the public is the fact that there are now guided tours of "Rebus' Edinburgh", just like there are guided tours of "Holmes' London", "Chandler's Los Angeles" or "Nero Wolfe's New York". At the same time, as Eco points out in this respect, moving as these displays of fandom are, they also indicate a confusion, by the reader, of the fictional world for the actual one, a misunderstanding of fiction for fact (Eco, 1995, p. 85), of a narrative device (the reality effect) for reality.

moves, most often in the absence of the occupants, or in the presence of their inert bodies. House facades are often described in detail (their architectural style, their location) (*The Big Sleep*, *The Little Sister*) and, when this is the case, the geographical location is also recorded (e.g. California, Los Angeles, Malibu, Hollywood, Sunset Boulevard, plus the fictional Bay City, in *The Little Sister*). The minute description of offices (including Marlowe's own, seen in all his novels) and police interrogation rooms, of art galleries and film studios (*The Little Sister*) is almost clinically devoid of emotion – it's the sheer accumulation of details that is meant to convey the character/atmosphere of the place – but occasionally there is the dry subjective comment, always pessimistic, derogatory or self-derogatory, on the part of the detective character in relation to his surroundings.

In McIlvanney's novels, too, the intensity of detail authenticates the plot staging. However, unlike Chandler, he invests places with a meaning that goes beyond the affection for the familiar, resembling the respect one has for an entity beyond one's control, and ultimately beyond one's knowledge. For McIlvanney's detective, solving a crime is this environment is a question of assimilating the cityscape and letting oneself be absorbed by its mood, treating the city as a person with secrets whose revelation is indefinitely postponed. Imagining that one knows the city just because they know its street names is the mark of a bad copper, the "winner" in the eyes of the establishment:

> He [Harkness] knew Laidlaw's belief in what he sometimes called "absorbing the streets", as if you could solve crime by osmosis. [...]; [Milligan, Laidlaw's colleague and nemesis in terms of life/justice/policing philosophy] "I know this city," he said. "Right to its underwear. That's why I'm a winner" [...]; [Laidlaw to Harkness, about Milligan] "He's like a lot of policemen here. He knows the names of streets. He doesn't know the city. Who does? [...] Who ever knew a city? It's a crazy claim. (McIlvanney, 1983/2021, pp. 52, 209, 277)

The spirit of place

Mentioned above in connection with the critical rediscovery of the seriousness of purpose inherent in the detection genre, structuralism also embraced and enabled a wider hermeneutic scope, throwing new light on historical and geographical *lieux communs* and reasserting a fundamental connection between space and time (Soya, 1989, p. 18). Often cited as one of its leading figures, Michel Foucault notes as early as 1964 that while the nineteenth century would display an obsession for diachronic, evolutionary themes, the twentieth was the epoch of space, of simultaneous events, of the world as network (Foucault, 1964,

p. 1), a change of perspective accentuated by postmodernism and its aftermath.[14] In his usually iconoclastic way, Foucault advocated for a complete desacralisation of space by subjecting all accepted oppositions (private/public, leisure/work, family/social) to a critical breakdown (Foucault, 1964, p. 1). However, unlike Bachelard, whose phenomenological analysis focused on interior spaces, he devised his concepts (especially that of heterotopias) based on external space as the locus of power discourse.

Literary geography, the geocritical strand of literary theory, was born out of similar viewpoints voiced by other structuralist and post-structuralist critics (Lefebvre, Deleuze, Guattari), who reasserted space as plural, heterogenous and palimpsestic. This so-called "spatial turn" in literary theory (the term itself coined by Edward Soya in his *Postmodern Geographies* of 1989) was thus correlated with and influenced by a change of perspective in philosophy, sociology and cultural studies, one that redefined the agenda of cultural geography over the 1980s and 1990s, which became that of "understanding culture through space and as space" (Shymchyshyn, 2021, p. 14). According to its core belief, the place where events take place become essential to understanding the way they happen and the reason they happen. Thus, while Henri Lefebvre underlines the idea of space as both a product and a producer of social relations (Lefebvre, 1991), Edward Soja, commenting on an explicit remark on existential spatiality by Marin Buber, argues that the objectification of space is a condition of human consciousness itself (Soja, 1989, p. 132). However, places can trigger human ideas and emotions just as much as human emotions are constitutive of places, of how specific sites are imagined and represented. In McIlvanney's own words, it's "the looker [that] makes the looked" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 181). An emotional perspective of geography, then, starts from the way in which emotion is conceptualised and articulated in relation to space, as a relational flow between places and people (Davidson, Bondi, Smith, 2007, p. 3).

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[14] The spatial turn in the humanities may have come as a reaction to the postmodernist stance. For instance, along with Foucault, Frederic Jameson posits that it is spatial, rather than chronological categories that dominate our daily lives, mindsets and cultural language under postmodernity (Shymchyshyn, 2021, p. 18). On the other hand, it can be argued that the spatial turn in the humanities only follows in the footsteps of the major 20th century scientific discovery in physics, Einstein's space-time theory of relativity, which redefined the way we think about the effects of the correlation between the two dimensions. When coining his term of "chronotopia", Bakhtin himself refers to Eistein's theory to explain his borrowing of the metaphor from physics to mean the inseparability, or "intrinsic connectedness, of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84).

It is along these lines that space in the detective novels of McIlvanney can be interpreted. Laidlaw himself voices the complexity of experiencing the space-time continuum: "If place were only place and the present only the present, but we invade them with the past, complicate them with our futures. […] If the world was a new red apple, I was the worm inside." (McIlvanney, 1991, pp. 61-62) Yet, for all the potential universality of the remark, his reference is specifically local, for whenever McIlvanney evokes space and time in his detective series, he means Scotland and the Scottish mindset, or Glasgow and its landmarks, whether these are people, streets or institutions. Although influenced by both European and American writers, he is essentially a Scottish author placed "uncomfortably" (Dixon, 1989, p. 146) at the crossroads between two literary trends: a sentimental one, projecting an idealised image of a predominantly rural Scottish landscape, and a realist approach, disclosing the unseemly side of Scottish social and political life. "Uncomfortably" because he is neither a sentimental writer nor an anti-humanist, cynical one. If his concern for the centrality of the Scottish urban experience is explicit as an identity-defining locus ("You take the nexus around Glasgow that's still the eye of the hurricane. I think that's where our understanding of ourselves resides" (Dixon, 1989, p. 147)), it is because, ideologically, he is part of a Scottish radical literary tradition featuring ideas such as egalitarianism and scepticism about the religious establishment, but also compassion for and camaraderie towards the urban working class, whose lives he envisions in justifiably pessimistic tones (Dixon, 1989). His attitude is perhaps better understood in the larger context of modern Scottish literature, where national self-representation is strongly linked to the rapid urbanisation of the country, and especially of Glasgow, at the end of the nineteenth century. The pace and scale of industrialisation here meant that, as the working population of the city grew, the traditional rural ethos that informed their way of life was abruptly replaced by an urban ethos that questioned and disrupted these moral foundations. Despite the fact that a certain sense of community based on a rural model continued to exist, the ensuing conflict, promptly reflected by the literature of the time, between the former ethical norms of rural communion and the amorality inherent in the excessive individualism of urban capitalistic society (Riach, 2005) was unavoidable. McIlvanney's Laidlaw can notice the consequences of this conflict still lingering in Glasgow's landscape and the people's mindsets.

In addition, "inhabiting the paradox" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 7) of "writing on the borderline" (Dixon, 1989, p. 150) between a Scottish and an English cultural heritage adds another tension layer to McIlvanney's fictional universe. More than a typical whodunnit, his detective series attempts to render the image of a

particular Scottish region whose experience of political and cultural ambiguity can be painful. Being a "Borderer" means feeling "that the place that had defined Scottishness at its weakest edge, where it meets Englishness, had lost its sense of itself and blurred into anonymity" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 126). Lost in trying to translate "the demotic of Scottish traditions into a bland standard English" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 223), Laidlaw's father is the epitome of this unhappy mindset. While "maybe looking for Scotland", he describes himself "as Scottish as muffins and tea" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 126).

At the same time, an existentialism-inspired philosophy that forms the background of Laidlaw's worldview[15] and informs his intimate inclination towards free, albeit inevitably tragic, human choice seems to come head to head with the denial of choice proclaimed by a strict Calvinist tradition (Cairns, 1999, p. 107) predisposing him and his fellow countrymen to inherent feelings of guilt, remorse and self-righteousness and rendering them heavy-hearted and lethargic:

> *Guilt was at the heart of this kind of mood. [...] Perhaps it was just that, born in Scotland, you were hanselled with remorse, set up with shares in Calvin against your coming of age, so that much of the energy you expended came back guilt* (McIlvanney, 1977/2021, pp. 6-7)*; [...] perhaps it was just that he sensed a dangerously distorted version of that Calvinist self-righteousness that forms like an icicle in the hearts of a lot of Scots* (McIlvanney, 1983/2021, p. 17)*; [...] the old Scottish Sabbath, that interesting anomaly whereby the Kirk's insistence on the observance of the Lord's day of rest resulted in a country busy with Scotsmen transporting a thirst as heavy as luggage from one place to another.* (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 69)

One of the essential characteristics of Scottish literature is that it features location as a key topic to a degree of variety and depth rarely matched by other literatures (Riach, 2005, p. 240). The source of the characters' voices, and the ways in which the geographical location reflects these voices are also aspects typical of McIlvanney's work, where the familiarity of the landscape provides a meaningful psychological background to his atypical whodunnit. For instance, Laidlaw's Scotland is an idiosyncratic emotional terrain, where any display of sentiment is repressed as inappropriate and disruptive.[16] The "spirit of place"

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[15] There are books by Camus, Kirkegaard and Unamuno in Laidlaw's office desk drawer (McIlvanney, 1977), betraying an intellectual personality trait also emulated by Rankin's Rebus. Laidlaw's philosophical choices, in addition, reflect a staunch commitment to the political and philosophical positions the author himself engages with.

[16] For a documented account of the influence of religion on the practice of emotional relations in the Scottish Highlands, see Parr, Philo and Burns (2007, p. 92).

identified by D. H. Lawrence as specific to every landscape[17] imbues the locals with their characteristic dual nature – fiercely friendly on the outside, sorrowfully stoic within:

> *I realised that it wasn't just in Sparta that people smile and nod and talk trivialities while their self is unseaming. It was what we were all taught to do. Certainly, in Scotland, I decided, a lot of us had evolved social conventions so cryptic they almost amounted to mime and must be sustained, no matter what tragic opera was unfolding in the head.* (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 332)

Nowhere are these ambiguities and tensions, both internal and external, more concentrated than in Glasgow. Laidlaw's arduous description conveys his deep attachment to the place, to the degree where his voice becomes indistinguishable from that of the author. In this capacity as his hero's alter ego, for example, McIlvanney draws attention to the Scottish motto, this "wee message […] carved on the city's heart"(McIlvanney, 1977, p. 112). A historical reminder of a fiercely independent past, the inscription *"Nemo me impune lacessit"*[18] can be found on coats of arms in all major cities in Scotland, but in the context of McIlvanney's detective novel, it acquires the tone of an earnest present warning, cautioning any outsiders to honour the place by not meddling with its ways. It is a message of resilience, but also of implied revenge and dormant violence reminiscent of the region's strong nationalist feelings. It can also be, by extension, a symbol of Laidlaw's both heroic and anti-heroic traits that mitigate his affinity with Glasgow's criminal underworld.

The impression that Glasgow is considered by Laidlaw (and McIlvanney) the real capital city of Scotland is further strengthened by its comparison with Edinburgh. For the author and his hero, this iconic city usually represented as the symbol of Scotland actually reflects the country's political duality. To Laidlaw, the city appears to be "the most English place in Scotland, […] a […] clearing-house of the Scottish identity", its very architecture[19] and street names a political announcement that a transplant of psyche had taken place whereby a past Scottish identity and way of life were replaced by a future "career" as part of Britain

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[17] "[…] The different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars" is a "great reality" that each homeland possesses by virtue of its locality (Lawrence, 1925, p. 125).

[18] (Lat.) "No one assails/provokes me with impunity". The motto also appears in Ian Rankin's Rebus series novel *The Black Book* as reference to Scotland. On the other hand, its presence on a family coat of arms in E.A. Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" is less clearly indicative of a reference to Scotland, but the ominous, threatening tone of the message itself may have been deemed appropriate in the context of Poe's story of revenge.

[19] Architecture has the power to reposition a place as culturally or politically significant, hence the importance of various kinds of buildings (Urry, 2007).

(McIlvanney, 1991, p. 149), as if "the root of a thistle should nourish a rose" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 160).[20] By contrast, Laidlaw implies, Glasgow is an uncompromisingly Scottish city. Whatever remains of its Victorian architecture is now "very dirty", "half-devoured" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 158), decaying under the weight of the city's industries. Other old buildings are reminiscent of a Gothic aristocracy (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 14) or of eroding faith (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 56), some of these shabby monuments sometimes strangely but aptly named to invoke their own state of mournful desolation, such as the Coronach Hotel, called after a song lamenting the dead (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 69). Nevertheless, this self-confident architecture of the past, with its big, dark buildings of "handsome […] Victorian portentousness" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 113) also inspires the hero's affection and emotional attachment to the place (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 140).

That Laidlaw is more attached to the city's old looks than to its modern urban metamorphosis also transpires from the nostalgia with which he beholds the gradual, inexorable change whereby its almost rural but friendly neighbourhoods – crowded, noisy tenements, "the feeling that if you stretched too far in bed you could scratch your neighbour's head" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 15) – have given way to the sprawling, impersonal "architectural dump" of the housing schemes at the four corners of the city, prison-like boxes where people are poured into (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 36) and forgotten by a system that puts the interests of real estate above their needs (McIlvanney 1977, p. 40). Displacing people in this way feels, to Laidlaw, like a surgical removal of the city's own past, as suggested by the medical metaphors comparing the city to a patient suffering a "face lift" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 140), one whose "guts [are] replaced with [the] plastic tubing" of looping motorways (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 15). Personifying metaphors like these, especially employed to reflect the apparently disjointed relationship between the past and the present of the city, are quite frequent. For example, the contrast between the warm, vivid slums of the past and the cold, featureless and

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[20] McIlvanney's political engagement with the Scottish independence movement comes strongly through at this point. It is probably not by chance that two of the series' novels (*Laidlaw* and *Strange Loyalties*) were published just a few years before two major devolution referendums (1979 and 1997), the author apparently using his novels as platforms to voice and advocate his political convictions. A year before his death, he could have witnessed and voted in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, where the political differences between Glasgow and Edinburgh became visible again, with Glasgow's majority voting in favour of, and Edinburgh's majority against, the country's independence (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/scotland-decides/results).

expensive new estates are seen as an expression of a city "caught in a confused quarrel with itself" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 185).[21]

The streets themselves feel different. "The quality of the old Glasgow" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 44) meant that streets were family/familiar places, rather than serving only as undifferentiated pathways all leading to a wasteland of slum tenements (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 113) as they do now, when their modernity feels drab and bleak, reflecting "an imposed assumption about the meanness" of Glaswegian lives (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 61). The same contrast broadens to encompass the natural element as well. Usually associated with wholesome rurality but ultimately with a state of health and freedom, nature in Glasgow is now trimmed down and exhibited in museum-like fashion: "gated and railinged […], the city's commemorative window box of a once wilder place" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 39). Glasgow's moody weather plays into the atmosphere of stoic thriftiness, the sun a rare sight, and even then unable to provide more light or warmth than "an eye with a cataract" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 26). Despite this, every cloudless moment is celebrated as a boon, counted up and put aside in people's minds as if in the hope that, economised this way, they might nearly "amass a summer" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 26).

Ultimately, though, it is not only the past and the present cityscapes, but the city and the people in it that no longer seem to match each other: "I find the people very impressive. It's the place that's terrible […]; Glasgow folk have to be nice people. Otherwise, they would have burned the place to the ground years ago" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 36). Some of these, like the gallery of lunatics, misfits and picturesque characters imprinted in the city's collective memory, are landmarks of an old Glasgow, their struggles to survive "like kittiwakes nesting on a sheer cliff face" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 146) still an inspiration to McIlvanney's detectives as images of a rebellious authenticity that is indelibly Scottish. Among them, intellectual idealists like Tony Veitch, the eponymous character of the second Laidlaw volume, who refuses to let his precarious circumstances and the place itself circumscribe his vision (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 116), but who ends up a victim to his own inner turmoil. On the other hand, and only a short distance away, an invisible frontier seems to divide this first group from the representatives of the new elite of Glasgow, a new breed "born with their nose in the air" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 89) to whom the city means no more than "a taxi-ride between a theatre and a wine bar" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 110) and who, to Laidlaw, appear as

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[21] Arguably taking his cue from McIlvanney, Rankin's Rebus novels also frequently juxtapose "the «hidden» face of under-privileged Edinburgh with the «public» face of the city, […] emphasizing the sharp social and economic divides of modern Britain" (Skaggs, 2005, pp. 92-93).

inconsequential and platitudinous as the streets and houses they inhabit. The epitome of this fortressed world, and in stark contrast to the Coronach described above, is The Albany Hotel, a glass-and-concrete "embassy of privilege by which the rich reduce the world to one place" of impersonal, sanitised comfort (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 137).

A city whose strength seems to reside in the co-existence of attitudinal contradictions, Laidlaw's Glasgow is frequently described as the embodiment of opposite emotional reactions: homeliness and deadly violence, sanctimonious affability and menacing harshness, insensitivity and pain. That is why, in McIlvanney's typical metaphorical shorthand, personification is considered the most appropriate way of representing the place as a human being subject to sudden changes of mood (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 67) whose "right hand knocks you down and [whose] left hand picks you up, while the mouth alternates apology and threat" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 71). In the same conflicting way, the city "can turn your back on you, […] lock you out" (McIlvanney, 1977, p. 181), or, on the contrary, would stand by one in dark times: "the city wouldn't leave him alone" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 297). Sometimes McIlvanney would extend the personifying metaphor to all cities, the better to isolate the peculiarities of Glasgow: "Cities may all say essentially the same thing but the intonations are different. He was trying to re-attune himself to Glasgow's" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 1).[22]

The anthropomorphic treatment of the city seems, in fact, both metaphoric and metonymic. Personified in this way, the city's moods, mindset and behavior represent extensions of those of its inhabitants. At times, McIlvanney's Laidlaw's observant glance focuses on the city with a mixture of pride and didacticism not uncommon to the pages of a city guide intended to instruct and warn visitors about the rewards and dangers to expect in the streets. Thus we find that, despite its wide vistas, Glaswegians value the proximity of a pat on the shoulder and direct communication, rather than the anonymity and the cold shoulder of conventional cityscapes (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 2; McIlvanney, 1991, p. 140). In "the city of the stare" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 1), one should not be surprised to find one's privacy frequently invaded and oneself caught in abundant "cabaret moments" of

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[22] As if to suggest an intimate connection based on mutual respect between the city and McIlvanney's protagonists, these personifications are never gendered. The city is invariably identified by name and described from a subject position, except for one feminine referential pronoun, probably considered appropriate in the context of that particular metaphor but also suggesting disapproval – Glasgow as an old woman getting "*her* face-lift" (McIlvanney 1991, p. 140).

impromptu mirth peculiar to the place (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 59). Encountering the city for the first time can even amount to a confrontation, where the two opposing parties – "you" and they" – seem to dance around in a ring, weighing each other's intentions. Mistrustful of outsiders, Glaswegians "hate to be had", so the only safe behavior, reciprocated in the end, is complete openness and honesty: "Come to them honestly and their tolerance can be great" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 55). Putting up with the place and the slightly rude, uninvited remarks of the people may even be considered an act of contrition, designed to "freeze pretentiousness in its tracks", intimating that only a straightforward attitude will do (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 144). A combination of mistrust and friendliness designed to test the sincerity of one's intentions, the strategy is part of the "ancient Glaswegian art" of deceiving the deceiver either by feigning an irresistible innocence (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 140) or by saying one thing but meaning another: "Scartin' an' nippin' is Scots folk's wooin'" (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 222).

Despite the somewhat homiletic tone of these remarks, it is most of all with a self-comforting kind of affection that Laidlaw sees the Glaswegians' power to abide. Contemplating an image that encapsulates his faith in the city, he envisions the typical Glaswegian as the unique survivor of a nuclear holocaust, a slightly bothered but still good-humoured bearer of the last vestige of humaneness, and the one to ensure it endures (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 263). This may also explain why Laidlaw's own wish is to die "among the humane noise" of Glasgow (McIlvanney, 1991, p. 140), a city constantly generating the kind of audible energy one can plug into to feel alive (McIlvanney, 1991, pp. 140, 335).[23] If *Strange Loyalties* is an ode to Scotland (Laidlaw's dead brother called Scott, his mysterious painting feeding the plot, entitled "Scotland", an enigmatic portrayal of the country (McGillivray, 1995)), *The Papers of Tony Veitch* is just as clearly an homage to Glasgow itself, "a small and great city […] with its face against the wind", a city hardened by poverty and populated by survivors who "have made the spirit of the place theirs" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 263). The same apocalyptic allusions and references to martyrdom accompany the hero's affectionate avowal:

> That was Glasgow. It was a place so kind it would batter cruelty into the ground. And what circumstances kept giving it was cruelty. No wonder he loved it. It danced among its own debris. When Glasgow gave up, the world could call it a day. (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 263.)

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[23] The metaphor of the city as an energy generator occurs twice in the final volume of the series (pages 140 and 335), as if to indicate the hero's strong attachment to a city seen as an ever-renewable source of vitality.

All is not symbolic, though. A political comment makes its way into the core of the metaphor, adding historical accuracy and with it, sombreness to the statements. Once the second most affluent city in the British Empire, wealth has never reached Glasgow's own citizens, concentrated as it was on the other side of the border. Thus "the wealth of the few had become the poverty of the many" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 263). However, what McIlvanney's heroes repeatedly bear witness to is the city's indomitable resilience in the face of any kind of adversity, as demonstrated in the last scene of the novel, where, in what would normally have been a "formula for misery" – a crowd waiting for a taxi in the pouring rain – the place is "jumping joyously" to the tune of an impromptu jig, Laidlaw himself engaged in it. This final image of the city, instrumental in showing the way in which the city is determined to celebrate its own ordinariness (McGillivray, 1995), conveys "something marvellous, a spirit so determined to enjoy life that it had an aesthetic of queues" (McIlvanney, 1983, p. 298).

Conclusion

The particular fusion of time and space that forms the fictional chronotope has always been central to literary discourse, serving not only as the setting of a text, or as background to its plot, but also shaping both the movement of the plot and the development of the characters. The transdisciplinary phenomenon known as the spatial turn in the humanities, which has marked the meeting of geography and philosophy at the end of the 20th century, has ignited a renewed interest in "topophilia" in literary theory and criticism. The term can aptly apply to McIlvanney's series in the sense given to it by Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space* (1958). Glasgow seems to be McIlvanney's "felicitous space" in the sense that he captures "the human value of the sorts of space that […] may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love" (Bachelard, 1958, p. xxxv). His detective novels are a eulogy to Scotland and Scottishness, the patriotic rhetoric apparent whenever monuments of history are revealed and past conflicts, political or cultural, are recounted. Most of all though, if patriotism means attachment to one's *terra patria*, in McIlvanney's case the sentiment is highly localised, referring to "the intimate experience of place, and a sense of the fragility of goodness: that which we love has no guarantee to endure" (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974, p. 101). Yet, paradoxically, this is presented as the strength of Glasgow – its formidable resilience in the face of historical adversity and its stubbornness in the face of political and economic change. Laidlaw's preference for its old countryside ways,

however romanticised and Kailyard[24] in appearance, betray a universal nostalgia for a simpler life closer to nature, a rural landscape contrasting with the modern idea of the city as the seat of complex politics and sophisticated bureaucracy. For Laidlaw, the urban sprawl of Glasgow feels like the new wilderness, while the Edenic wilderness of old is threatened by extinction (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974, p. 105). Fortunately, a gritty style and abrasive comments balance what could have been an oversentimental approach, much like the people of Glasgow are described as masking their vulnerability behind a tough façade.

That such complex emotional ties to the landscape/cityscape should be exposed in a detective novel series is both expected and surprising. Settings are crucial in investigative fiction, but McIlvanney's novels transcend the narrow boundaries of typical whodunnits to such an extent that they can truly be considered a kind of make-believe detective fiction.[25] In fact, the detection plot seems to work more as a background to the hero's social and political comment on Scotland and Glasgow in what amounts to a wide-eyed ode to both. Being called "the father of 'tartan noir'" (Massie, 2013, p. 1) is therefore perhaps a misnomer for an author whose characters reflect his existentialist beliefs and political commitments so directly and transparently that his (limited) detection oeuvre seems designed to defeat the narrow purpose of the original genre.

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[24] Literally, "cabbage garden." A late 19th century school of Scottish literature idealizing the simple rural life in the language of the people, i. e. the Scottish dialect. The term has quickly come to be employed mostly derogatorily to refer to an oversentimental, parochial kind of writing extolling the virtues of village mores.

[25] Postmodernist experimental writers such as Paul Auster (*The New York Trilogy*) and Thomas Pynchon (*The Crying of Lot 49*, *Bleeding Edge*, *Inherent Vice*) regularly employ apparent detective plots in these novels. However, the earnestness of McIlvanney's socio-political engagement places his series in a different category, probably more suited to Marxist interpretation and clearly diverging from his contemporaries' disinterested, pure intertextual play.

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The Ethical Consequences of Artificial Intelligence in the Healthcare Industry: Luciano Floridi's Viewpoint

Peter OJO
Department of Philosophy
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
paojo19@lautech.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper examines the ethical consequences of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the healthcare industry, drawing on Luciano Floridi's Information Ethics. It utilizes conceptual clarification and ethical analysis to project that while AI holds immense potential to significantly improve healthcare through personalized treatment recommendations, diagnostic efficiency, and administrative enhancements, it also raises serious ethical concerns. These concerns include issues related to patient confidentiality, data security, bias in algorithmic decision-making, displacement of human professionals, and accountability in healthcare delivery. Floridi's Information Ethics focuses on the moral significance of information and the intrinsic value of information, proposing that ethical considerations must go beyond human actors to include informational entities and systems; particularly relevant in understanding the moral implications of AI, highlighting the responsibility of AI developers to ensure ethical integration, especially in healthcare settings. This paper examines Floridi's concept of the "infosphere" and argues that AI systems in healthcare should be designed with respect for human dignity, transparency, and moral responsibility. It also stresses that AI must be carefully incorporated into healthcare to improve human cognitive capacities rather than replace them. The paper underscores the importance of ensuring equitable access to AI-driven innovations and stresses that human dignity should remain at the forefront of healthcare delivery, even as technology evolves. By embracing Floridi's ethical principles, the healthcare industry can effectively navigate the complexities posed by AI, safeguarding human well-being and ensuring ethical integration. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the responsible use of AI in healthcare, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary approaches to address the ethical challenges and maximize the benefits of AI advancements.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Healthcare, Ethics, Luciano Floridi, Information Ethics.*

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers a transformational mark in different industries in which healthcare is of no exemption, especially with significant advancements in personalized treatment recommendations, diagnostic efficiency,

and administrative enhancements; there is no doubt that it has its ethical dilemma. The impact of AI with its promotion of technological advancement remains irresolute without addressing the ethical concerns it brings which must be given attention to; ensuring that AI provides an adequate contribution to healthcare systems without breaching the patient's moral integrity: i.e patient confidentiality, data security, algorithmic biases, and the displacement of human professionals. Luciano Floridi's Ethical perspective on Information Ethics offers compelling insights into how the moral concerns that AI introduced can be solved. Florida argues for a more expansionist way of seeing moral responsibility; according to him, moral responsibility should not be limited exclusively to human-human interaction but should also involve how humans treat the available information, data, and technological systems (Floridi, 2013, p. 45). So, it must be understood that moral consideration should apply to the handling and collection of information which involves how data is collected, managed, and utilised – this promotes patients' confidentiality such that the information entities (AI systems and databases) must be given critical attention to because it has lots of ethical impact on the well-being of individuals.

According to Floridi, he contends that the ethical use of information is essential in preventing harm and ensuring fairness in healthcare when the AI systems are held in high esteem the human dignity, patient autonomy, and data security (Floridi, 2013). There is no doubt that AI has improved healthcare but improper handling or lack of maintaining confidentiality, as well as impediments in allowing patients to autonomously make a better-informed decision about their care, can undermine human values. By extension, to better understand the transformational role AI plays in the lives of individuals and society in a healthcare context, his philosophical discourse needs to be addressed, called, "The Fourth Revolution". In his discourse, he put it forward that AI offers a groundbreaking shift characterised by revolution as the introduction, adoption, and integration of AI challenges boundaries existing between humans' and machines' usability (Floridi, 2014, p. 103). So, in healthcare, the integration of AI may seem intriguing as it provides a transformational landmark:

When it begins to take roles traditionally done by medical professionals; while this can improve cognitive capacities, Floridi warns against the potential dehumanization of medical practices if AI is allowed to replace rather than complement human judgment (Floridi, 2013, p. 95).

While AI incorporation proved tremendously significant because it has the potential to perform tasks which are traditionally performed by medical professionals, for instance recommending treatments and diagnosing diseases –

this provides one of the easiest ways to enhance human cognition and process large amounts of data in a very shorter period compared to when such is manually done; it can be dangerous according him to depend solely on AI as it can replace the humane and human contribution to medical care.

However, one of Floridi's concerns is to maintain and safeguard patients' data and privacy, especially in the age where AI depends mainly on vast amounts of healthcare data (Floridi, 2016). Florida emphasises that it is of utmost importance to handle the patients' Sensitive Personal Information (SPI) like the medical histories, genetic data, and treatment records; thereby upholding confidentiality and avoiding mishandling. So, a strict ethical guideline must be put in place to govern how data are collected, stored, and shared, assuring maximum protection of privacy rights in the pursuit of AI-driven healthcare advancements. Furthermore, according to him, it becomes complex if the designed healthcare AI algorithm is drawn upon the data that reflects existing societal inequalities or biases, it can perpetuate or amplify these biases (Floridi, 2020, p. 34). Thus, this calls for foresight based on insight to put inclusiveness in mind when AI systems are designed to avoid data that reinforces healthcare disparity; highlighting the need for ethical standards for overseeing the AI systems prioritise patients' well-being. This paper argues that while Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform healthcare by improving diagnostic efficiency, personalized treatments, and administrative processes, it also presents significant ethical concerns, which must be addressed by incorporating Luciano Floridi's Information Ethics to ensure that AI systems respect human dignity, maintain transparency, and prioritize patient well-being through responsible and ethical integration.

Floridi's information ethics and the fourth revolution

Floridi's concept of Information Ethics stems from the philosophical discourse, which sees the world as an "infosphere", that is, a space or region where both humans and non-human entities interact together via information; arguing that the transition of AI represents a Fourth Revolution has caused a great shift in the way in which we understand and view the world around us, especially our role in the universe which is quite different from from the previous revolutions (Floridi, 2014, p. 10). Furthermore, AI has significantly influenced how human beings make informed use of information such that moral consideration or ethical responsibility is not only extended to human beings alone but also to non-human entities with the intent that these AI systems or modern technologies must guarantee human dignity as the core principle of meaningful "existent" (essence). So, this is suggestive of the fact that in healthcare, moral responsibility should be

extended to AI systems in the management of patients' sensitive information (Floridi, 2014, p. 10). So, information becomes a central point of discourse of moral consideration or responsibility such that there is the need to scrutinize the flow of medical data being handled, stored, and used. It will be problematic to conjecture that the machine or AI systems can pervert available information, will it not be that humans lack oversight to handle, store, and make use of information at their disposal?

According to Floridi, he thinks that the rights and well-being of patients can be preserved seeing that data is beneficial on their own and the moral standard is using data such that it will promote patients positive outcomes, protect and preserve privacy, and respect the person's free will (Floridi, 2013, p. 47). Florida makes sense of data in healthcare as an important set of values because it can improve the patient's care through faster diagnoses, personalized treatments, and more efficient resource management. In the same vein, to neglect the importance of the management of information is to put the lives of patients at risk. But, in the management of information, data must be used in the acknowledgement that the patients should have full disclosure of how their medical information will be used being that unscrupulous disclosure or production of personal sensitive information will amount to breach of trust. The basis of his thoughts is that the moral obligation that is concerned with using AI in healthcare is that it must lead to greater consequences: in protecting the rights and the dignity of individuals.

The issue of patient confidentiality and data security

One of the ethical concerns in AI-driven healthcare that needs urgent examination is the issue of the protection of patient confidentiality and data security. As such, the collection, storage, and use of patient data must be properly protected. According to Florida, argues in his discourse, *Infosphere* that AI systems must be privy to the data's security and the patient's confidentiality; leading to the respect of individuals' free will from which their data originates (Floridi, 1999). The privacy of patients can be violated if it is not properly managed. Ethically, this is because AI systems heavily depend on the patient's data to generate evaluations and recommendations. In healthcare, it is crucial that the AI systems, upon the responsibility placed on them, must protect the personal data. Contrarily, won't it be an aberration to give up such an enormous responsibility that can't function without the manufacturing and operations of man? It is clear that machines only respond to manufacturers' designs and their operations are determined according to the manual in which the manufacturer designed them. Hence, to say AI systems can be responsible is to see them as

thinking objects which can choose; if this is not so then the responsibility must be placed on the manufacturer who designed such informational entities.

However, Floridi sees the need to preserve the sensitive medical information of patients, understanding that the value of any informational entities lies in the protection against data manipulation or the breach, and unauthorized access by the third party (Floridi, 2013, p. 89). It is a demanded effort to handle effectively the personal medical information of patients being made privy against unauthorized access because the failure to meet this ethical responsibility may heighten the abuse of an individual's medical records and could lead to identity and medical theft or fraud. AI technologies must give proper attention to data security to avoid loss of trust in the healthcare system. Not limited to this, to increase the maximum level of trust in the healthcare system, Floridi's philosophy gives attention to the protection of data usability rights, that is, patients must have the full knowledge of how their data will be used; thereby increasing the level of confidence in data protection. This follows necessarily that patients are giving out their information based on trust and have full knowledge of the reason they are releasing personal health information which is afterwards done out of consent.

Also, trust is integrity and integrity is of utmost importance in all the endeavors of human living, especially in the healthcare system. In this way, trust could only be established by ensuring data security measures and protocols live up to this expectation. So, Floridi does not only affirm that data security is utmost for the establishment of trust, but he also emphasizes the design of AI systems that incorporate ethical principles into the technology designs, as such will help to keep the patient's data confidentiality in mind. He believes that encrypted data protocols and transparent data-sharing policies should be integral parts of any AI-driven healthcare solution (Floridi, 2011, p. 248). Lastly, privacy is an integral part of one's identity because to steal one's personal information is to put an individual in danger – so, in healthcare, any misusage, non-transparent collection, and wrong storage of data amounts to exploitation.

The problem of accountability in AI-driven healthcare

As AI becomes more involved in healthcare decisions, as it has raised more complex ethical concerns and issues, the problem of accountability undoubtedly needs a promising solution. Floridi contends that AI makes mistakes, such as wrong diagnosis or recommendation of treatment (Moor, 1985). When this happens, who should be held responsible: is it the AI developers, healthcare providers, or the AI systems? This question has generated a lot of arguments and in the ample sphere of Floridi's discourse, these questions will be addressed.

According to him, he thinks that "responsibility should be distributed among all entities involved, with a particular focus on ensuring transparency in the decision-making process of AI systems." (Floridi & Sanders, 2004) To him, the justice system requires that all parties should remain accounted for since they are working together to perform an interdependent function. If all parties should be involved in the accountability process, who should remedy the harm when AI systems provide a wrong diagnosis or incorrect treatment plans? Floridi believes that to achieve transparency there is the need for an interdependence function such that each part of the systems should help one another; his thoughts remain resolute by believing that, "healthcare institutions and AI developers should work unanimously to create systems that track and verify AI decisions, guaranteeing that human supervision remain important in the process." (Floridi, (2013, p. 130) Given this, it can be deduced that it will be erroneous and detrimental to the patient's well-being if AI is left to replace human cognitive ability. AI should be used as a tool to heighten human cognition, that is, in healthcare – it can assist in the medicine prescription, treatment plans, etc. Healthcare should be acquainted with the technical know-how of the usage, identifying errors embedded in AI systems; it should be seen as oversight rather than replacing human cognition.

Another ethical implication of over-reliance on AI systems is that it can lead to the dehumanization of patients' care; thereby establishing that one of the roles of a medical professional is to always check, and modify where necessary the AI-generated recommendation to guarantee that the dignity and well-being of patients are protected (Floridi & Sanders, 2004). However, the role of humans is to oversee the recommendations and decisions made by AI and help humans enhance their cognitive ability in terms of remembrance and effective decision-making. Thus, this will create a sense of responsibility in the different actors of healthcare outcomes.

Addressing the problem of algorithm bias

The introduction of AI has increased the level of productivity in the healthcare system and one of the problems it has generated is that of the need to address the problem of algorithm bias. This is because the operations of AI are heavily dependent on the experiences, culture, and personal orientation of the developer; they may import data that is influenced by biases resulting in the under-representation of certain patients (Binns, 2018). This is evident when the algorithm is computed based on the conception of the Western population which may not necessarily capture the African race; this in turn sends a signal of failure to provide an accurate diagnosis for patients from different ethnic backgrounds. Floridi recommends that inclusion should be prioritized in the way in which AI systems

are trained to curtail a wrong medical prescription and avoid inequality of healthcare outcomes. In other words, the AI systems should not only be trained in datasets that include the marginalized population but also stress the moral responsibilities of AI developers to constantly improve these data sets (Floridi, 2013, p. 120). Furthermore, an AI may be trained from the datasets of the Western populations; there should also be a conscious effort to address the way AI makes decisions. This can be seen in the data that projects historical inequality or non-exclusiveness of women, this will affect how the AI will project inequality. A critical question that arises from this thought is that if AI developers are influenced by cultural, and personal thoughts, how is it possible to delimit biases since it is unknown to such developers? Also, what brings about the introspection in developers that they are projecting biases and what are the determining factors that give the knowledge that those developers are wrong since knowledge is dynamic? However, developers must constantly be aware that their knowledge can be faulty at a particular time – this understanding will bring the need to remove where necessary the biased datasets, and this will drastically improve the AI's decision-making thereby promoting justice.

Moreover, following this thought process, it deflects AI machines from being a responsible entity as against the claim and contention of Floridi. In the light of addressing bias in healthcare, his philosophy provides an ethical ground for moral responsibility and commitment to promote fairness through the monitoring of AI systems for signs of bias – this leads to regular audits of AI systems, providing suitable care for all patients without stereotyping.

The role of healthcare professionals in an AI-driven future

The understanding that AI systems can promote and heighten bias, and the potential threats that it brings will show the need for total dependence on the deliverables of AI by healthcare professionals. But, we have stressed from the previous discussions that AI provides robust support to healthcare professionals, but it will also be dangerous to rely on it. According to him, she argues: "AI should complement human cognitive capacities, allowing healthcare professionals to focus on more complex, nuanced tasks that require empathy and moral judgment." (Floridi & Cowls, 2019) So, the potential danger of AI has been known and it will lead to a lack of understanding to want to depend solely on AI decisions. Furthermore, medical professionals must oversee whether the answers to the questions generated by them perpetuate bias or misrepresent certain populations. He stresses the importance of oversight in ensuring that AI does not take the place of medical professionals when making ethically complex decisions.

The implication of this is that in healthcare practices the human decision remains paramount – it is an ordeal for healthcare professionals to make use of their cognitive ability when drawing from the decisions of AI. Instead of seeing AI being a technology that cannot be deformed by mistake, it should be seen as a tool for collaboration: healthcare can leverage multiple benefits to analyse data quickly while guaranteeing that patient care remains personalized and compassionate (Wachter, 2015). In the same vein, there must be a balance between efficiency and empathy by limiting the idea that AI systems replace human cognition rather than complement it.

One of the reasons why Floridi's argument remains crucial is because AI doesn't have mental, empathetic, and moral reasoning of its own, so it is necessary to seek a balanced incorporation of AI with human cognitive ability. There is a concern here: who determines the mean calculations? What are the parameters to determine a balanced integration of AI with human cognition? To answer these questions, Floridi's positions involve a multidisciplinary approach, human oversight, accountability, ethical alignment of values, and mitigation of bias are all key to maintaining patient care, and promoting justice.

Ethical regulations and governance of AI in healthcare

Floridi advances his quest for a more robust ethical governance framework to ensure the responsible use of AI in healthcare. His philosophy involves a multidisciplinary approach of inclusiveness which thought that no unit is independent and every unit in a system must work together to achieve functional objectives. He remains resolute in his complementary idea by contending that AI developers, policymakers, and health professionals must work together to create international standards that prioritize patient well-being and fairness (European Commission, 2020). To entrench the rights and health of patients, and as well as the just outcomes is when part of the system are not performing their roles complementarily. So, it is imperative that these units complementarily create standards and guidelines that will maintain the ethical use of AI to protect the rights and health of patients in healthcare systems. Such guidelines and standards should ensure that the rights of patients are well-protected, such as privacy, freewill to release their personal sensitive information. In addition to this, regular assessments should be put in place to ensure that there are constant audits on how AI systems affect positive outcomes. More so, more stringent systems must be put in place to address ethical concerns that lead to the potential harm caused as a result of the misuse of datasets. By following these standards, it will lead to more accountable structures whereby all units within a system will be able to perform a

functional role of ensuring the safety, and well-being of patients in AI healthcare. Not only limited to this, he also set out a practical ideal of these standards: first, AI machines should be built in such a way that they follow ethical principles; second, regular assessments of AI systems which affect the impact of healthcare outcomes; third, sets of clear operational principles for addressing ethical dilemmas.

One of the measures that makes his theory stand out is that he argues for a preventive rather than a remedial measure to a more sustainable approach to AI development: "he emphasis on proactive ethical design suggests that AI systems should be built with ethical safeguards from the outset, rather than relying on reactive measures after harm has occurred." (Floridi, 2019, pp. 261-262) This involves preparing for issues while they happen; in the same vein, a preparatory approach should be employed in addressing a known threat or potential ethical issues such as privacy encroachment, algorithm bias, during the process of building the AI software. Finally, Floridi's approach to addressing the problems of human dignity, fairness, and transparency provides vivid plans to tackle the issue raised by AI development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ethical consequences of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare must be approached with great caution and moral responsibility, as underscored by Luciano Floridi's Information Ethics. AI undoubtedly holds the potential to revolutionize healthcare by improving diagnostic accuracy, treatment personalization, and administrative efficiency. However, these advancements must not come at the cost of human dignity, privacy, or fairness. Floridi's concept of the "infosphere" calls for a broader ethical perspective, extending moral consideration to informational entities and systems, emphasizing that AI developers and healthcare institutions must prioritize ethical integration throughout the development and application of AI technologies.

Protecting patient privacy and ensuring data security is paramount, as healthcare AI systems rely heavily on sensitive personal information. AI should not only respect patient confidentiality but also allow for informed decision-making, thus preserving patient autonomy. Furthermore, Floridi's concerns about algorithmic bias and accountability highlight the need for inclusive, fair, and transparent AI systems to avoid exacerbating healthcare inequalities or dehumanizing medical practices.

It is essential to maintain human oversight in AI applications, ensuring that AI serves as a complementary tool to enhance, rather than replace, human

cognitive capacities. This balance is crucial to preserving the human element in healthcare and avoiding over-reliance on technology.

Ultimately, incorporating Floridi's ethical principles offers a framework for responsibly navigating the challenges AI poses in healthcare. By focusing on human dignity, transparency, and fairness, AI can be ethically integrated into healthcare systems, maximizing its benefits while safeguarding patient well-being. As AI continues to evolve, interdisciplinary approaches and international cooperation on ethical standards will be critical to addressing the complexities of AI in healthcare and ensuring its responsible use.

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Commodity Fetishism: From Marx to Contemporary Society

Reneilwe MASULUKE
Department of Philosophy
University of Johannesburg
reneilwemasuluke@gmail.com

Abstract

The concept of ideology plays a significant role in social and political thinking. There has been a shift in the critique of ideology today. For Marx the principal focus was commodity fetishism, which the tendency to misrecognize the true status of exchange value and of identifying it as an objective feature rather than seeing it as a subjective feature. The later scholars of Marxist thought, including Louis Althusser, assert that the examination of ideology has transitioned to focus on the subject. This paper aims to elucidate how the prevailing consumerism within contemporary capitalist society serves as a manifestation of the concept of commodity fetishism.

Keywords: *capitalism, commodity fetishism, labour theory of value, consumerism.*

Introduction

The capitalist system is defined by two features. First, it is a commodity producing system, in which goods are produced for the purpose of selling, with an emphasis on the maximization of profit or capital accumulation. Secondly, it is capitalist in the sense that the means of production are in the hands of the capitalists who also employ workers (Brewer, 1984). Commodities thus become one of the defining characteristics of the capitalist system. In analysing the system of capitalism Marx coined the term "fetishism of commodities" or rather as we call it today "commodity fetishism". In this paper I offer an analysis of commodity fetishism and how it manifests in modern day society. I will start by briefly discussing Marx's Labour Theory of value, particularly notions of the use value and exchange value. In the subsequent section I will discuss how commodity fetishism comes about. In the last section I briefly look at how commodity fetishism occurs in contemporary society.

Marx's labour Theory of Value: Use value and exchange value

Marx in *Capital* (1977) begins his analysis with commodity and asserts that it has two fundamental traits. First a commodity has a use value and secondly it has an exchange value. The former implies that they satisfy or fulfil some needs. The latter implies that they have a quality of being exchangeable for other things (Brewer, 1984, p. 22). Furthermore, this serves as the foundation for his theory of labour theory of value, which seeks to elucidate the social relations that exist within a capitalist system. A commodity can be loosely defined as something that can be exchanged for other commodities and is of use to us. Marx puts it in this manner: "a commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference" (Marx, 1977, p. 02). In other words, a commodity is something that has use-value and as such it is to be regarded as an item produced for the purpose of satisfying human needs or wants. A cell phone for instance is produced to satisfy some need, be it for making phone calls, taking photos, etc. That is one aspect of a commodity which is called its use value.

> The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use-value, something useful. This property of a commodity is independent of the amount of labour required to appropriate its useful qualities. When treating of use-value, we always assume to be dealing with definite quantities, such as dozens of watches, yards of linen, or tons of iron. The use-values of commodities furnish the material for a special study, that of the commercial knowledge of commodities. Use-values become a reality only by use or consumption: they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth. In the form of society we are about to consider, they are, in addition, the material depositories of exchange-value. (Marx, 1977, p. 8)

Every commodity is defined by its use-value, that is its capacity to satisfy needs and desires. Put differently, "a use value is a good whose material properties are designed to satisfy a human need. It is a means to some end." (Winkler, 2024, p. 27). For example, cellphone, chair, clothes, etc. Without the use value the commodity would not be produced. Moreover, "not every use value is a commodity, for use values which are created naturally, that are freely available or are not exchanged for money on the marketplace have no exchange value" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 16). For instance, sunlight, air, etc. These are useful to satisfy our needs – we need and use the air for breathing – however they cannot be commodified or exchanged for money. Essentially, the use value of an object is

determined by its physical properties, i.e., those made by the producer rather than those it possesses naturally – except perhaps for things like the sun, for example.

Exchange value on the other hand, embodies a relationship of equivalence between commodities (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 17). Marx was interested in establishing what is it that makes commodities equivalent or exchangeable. For Marx, "what creates the relationship of exchange, then, is not a physical relationship between goods but a historically specific social one" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 17). Exchange value can be explained in the following manner:

> *If x exchanges for y (x ~ y say), then 2x ~ 2y. If, in addition, u ~ v, then (u and x) ~ (v and y), and so on. But there is an unlimited number of relationships satisfying these properties, for example, weight or volume.* (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 17)

The exchange-value thus is the ability of objects or commodities to be exchangeable for other objects. More precisely, objects that have use-value acquire exchange-value when they can be exchangeable with other objects. Moreover, the values in use are contingent, that is they changing with time and place. For instance, let's say 1 kg of flour can be exchanged for 2 bags of apples, or 4 bags of strawberries. What this means is the 1 kg bag of flour has more than one exchange values, that is, it is equivalent to 2 bags of apples or also it is worth 4 bags of strawberries. Moreover, exchange value implies that different objects can be replaced by other objects, in their different quantities.

The exchange of these commodities occurs within the system of free market. For Marx we should not consider the markets as merely just the domain of exchange, but also as something that reflects the social relations in capitalism (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 17). Furthermore, for Marx in these social relations we get to see that labour is what underpins the equivalence between commodities. It has been established that throughout his analysis Marx has argued that in capitalism we create our material conditions through labour, "it is axiomatic that throughout history people have lived by their labour: if everyone stops working, no society can survive beyond a few days" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 17).

To reiterate, in a capitalist system products produced through labour are referred to as commodities that are exchanged in the market. Moreover, this production through labour brings about class domination, where one class (proletariat) sells their labour power to the other class (bourgeoisie). "To distinguish the workers from their ability or capacity to work, Marx called the latter *labour power*, and its performance or application *labour*" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005). Marx defines labour power as "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description" (Marx, 1977). Essentially, the proletariat sells their labour power to the bourgeoisie, and through labour they produce

commodities. The value of labour-power is ascertained, like any other commodity, by the labour-time required for its production (Marx, 1977). To add, what makes capitalism interesting is that labour power is also considered as a form of a commodity and as a commodity labour power possess use value, which is to create objects or commodities that others will purchase and use.

Critical to the exchanging of commodities, is money as a general equivalent. Money serves a crucial role, i.e., "it is a measure of value, a standard of price and a means of payment or exchange" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005). Each commodity is taken to be equivalent to commodities in the mark, in their own specific quantitative ratios (Bellofiore, 2018). The commodity possesses both use value and exchange value; while the latter is not apparent in the commodity itself, it is manifested externally in money as the "universal equivalent" (Bellofiore, 2018). By universal equivalent Marx meant that money serves as a special object with a universal purchasing power. In other words, money stands as a representative for all the commodities. Marx expresses it in the following manner:

> *The simplest form of the circulation of commodities is C-M-C, the transformation of commodities into money, and the change of the money back again into commodities; or selling in order to buy. But alongside of this form we find another specifically different form: M-C-M, the transformation of money into commodities, and the change of commodities back again into money; or buying in order to sell. Money that circulates in the latter manner is thereby transformed into, becomes capital, and is already potentially capital.* (Marx, 1977, p. 104)

Marx introduced the formula C-M-C to explain how exchange occurs in the market. C- standing for commodity and M representing Money. He argues within the circulation of commodities, these commodities are transformed into money. And that money is turned into commodities again. Consider the following as an example, let us say I own a smart phone as my commodity, but I no longer want it, instead I want a new laptop. Now for me to possess the new laptop I must sell the cell phone. This can be represented in this manner C-M. Thus, I have exchanged the cell phone (C) for money (M). Then the second phase of Marx's formula is M-C. The money I have received when selling my cell phone, I use it to purchase a new laptop. That is, M-C, in other words the money I have obtained is exchanged for a new commodity. In essence, the formula C-M-C demonstrates that commodities are sold in order to purchase other commodities, and this is how circulation of commodities is sustained.

Marx also mentioned another formula, which is M-C-M, which stands for the transformation of money into commodities, then the change of those commodities back into money again. This can be simply understood as the act of buying in order to sell. Moreover, the money that circulates here is called "capital" (Marx, 1977, p. 89). Let us consider the following example to illustrate this, let's

say I own a small local supermarket, I buy essential products in bulks such as milk, bread etc from a wholesaler (i.e., M-C), to sell them at my supermarket. These commodities I purchased from the wholesaler, will transform back to money when I sell them to customers (i.e., C-M). Thus, I would have accumulated capital. Marx further asserts,

> *As the conscious representative of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts and to which it returns. The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or main-spring of the circulation M-C-M, becomes his subjective aim, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more and more wealth in the abstract becomes the sole motive of his operations, that he functions as a capitalist, that is, as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will. Use-values must therefore never be looked upon as the real aim of the capitalist; neither must the profit on any single transaction. The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at.* (Marx, 1977, p. 107)

Within the scenario of M-C-M emerges the capitalist, i.e., the one who accumulates money through buying and selling of commodities. The capitalist is more concerned with the expansion of value. He becomes an embodiment of capital, as Marx claims that the capitalist becomes "capital personified and endowed with consciousness and will" (Marx, 1977). The main objective of the capitalist is to accumulate capital and maximise profit. For example, lets again consider the example of purchasing commodities from wholesaler. Let's say I buy a loaf of bread for R10 and I sell it at my store for R15. I would have accumulated extra R5 as profit.

In this section I have briefly outline some of the key points in Marx's Labour Theory of Value. I have discussed how the capitalist system is characterised by the production of commodities and how these commodities arise from social relations. I further demonstrated the two traits that a commodity possesses, i.e., use value and exchange value. Moreover, I touched on how individuals can also sell their labour power to capitalists to get wages. And lastly, I briefly discussed money as a universal equivalent in the market. In the following section I discuss commodity fetishism.

1. Fetishism of commodities.

The fetishism of commodities centres around the misconception of commodities once they enter the market or once they possess the exchange value. As alluded in the previous section, Marx believes that the exchanging of commodities in the market represents the social relations we find in capitalism. More specifically the fact that the relationship between workers as producers of objects becomes hidden. What we observe is rather a relationship between objects.

For example, what we observe is 2 loaves of bread= 5kg of sugar. "These social relations are further mystified when money enters into consideration, and everything is analysed in terms of price" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005). Marx puts it in this manner,

> *It is, however, just this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers. When I state that coats or boots stand in a relation to linen, because it is the universal incarnation of abstract human labour, the absurdity of the statement is self-evident. Nevertheless, when the producers of coats and boots compare those articles with linen, or, what is the same thing, with gold or silver, as the universal equivalent, they express the relation between their own private labour and the collective labour of society in the same absurd form.* (Marx, 1977, pp. 49-50)

This in essence describes the fetishism of commodities, where the relationship between the worker and products of labour is mystified and these products appear to be independent of their producers. Moreover, money acts as a mediator between these products, everything is considered in terms of its price. Let me briefly unpack how this phenomenon of commodity fetishism occurs. Marx states that,

> *A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour. It is as clear as noonday, that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, every-day thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was.* (Marx, 1977, p. 47)

Marx is arguing that at first glance we take objects that we have produced as simply objects for our use or consumption. If we just analyse a commodity in terms of its usefulness or use-value only, it will not appear to us as mysterious or complex. For instance, if I take wood and fashion a wooden spoon for cooking, I will take it as just an object that I use for cooking. However, Marx highlights that as soon as the product of labour attains an exchange value, that is where the mystery begins. Once that spoon acquires an exchanges value it transforms from just being a cooking spoon into a commodity in relation to other commodities. That is it attains a status of equivalence. For example, 1 wooden spoon= 2kg of potatoes. To put it differently, he asserts that a wooden spoon remains an ordinary

piece of wood unless it transforms into a commodity, that is when it transcends its use-value. The exchange-value is what gives objects the privilege to stand in relation with other commodities. Moreover, it is not the exchange value and the use-value that make the commodities 'queer' or mysterious as Marx asserts, rather the mystery lies in the fact that these commodities are considered to be in relation to each other naturally thus concealing the human labour behind the making of these commodities. In other words, the exchange value of a commodity embodies human labour. However, the worker cannot see that once the items he has made appear on the market. On the market, these items seem to lead a life of their own. In a sense that one item is exchangeable for another item, and this for another, etc. e.g. 1 wooden spoon=2kg of potatoes, 2kg of potatoes= 3 loaves of bread - and these relations of exchange in which they are caught appear to the worker to be mind-independent, i.e., not the result of his own work or labour. In other words, these relations are naturalized.

A fetish is a natural object that is thought to possess some supernatural power. Fetishism is a concept coined by historians and missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this was coined to describe what they considered the primitive stage of religion (Rehmann, 2013). The term in this sense refers to the practices of people carving objects and worshiping them with the belief that they possess supernatural powers. Rehmann (2013) makes an example of indigenous people in Cuba who had gold as a fetish, they had celebrations in its honour. In essence, fetishism is the misrecognition of reality. The fetishist takes something that is supersensuous or supernatural to have a mind-independent existence. Furthermore, it is to misrecognize the fact that the only reality is empirical reality or the material world and that the supersensuous or supernatural is a figment of our imagination; we falsely think the latter to have a mind-independent existence. Marx's application of this phenomenon is in his observations on how we regard commodities in the capitalist market. Thus Marx says:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things qua commodities, and

the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So, it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (Marx, 1977, pp. 47-48)

To sum this section up, Marx's starting point in analysing the economic system of capitalism he starts by looking at how societies create their material conditions. In a capitalist society, humans produce objects that acquire use-value according to their usefulness, e.g., we create food from crops. Moreover, these objects that are produced are necessary for the continuing existence of the society (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004). Marx further introduced two concepts, namely, use-value and exchange value. The latter is the ability of an object to exchange with other objects, moreover, in this state objects can be quantified (for instance we can quantify land in hectares or bags of rice according to kilograms, etc.). The former, refers to the usefulness of an object and in this instance the objects cannot be quantified.

A key point to bear in mind is that an object only becomes classified as a commodity when it has an exchange value. In other words, an object becomes a commodity when it has both use-value and exchange-value. Use-value on its own is not a sufficient condition for an object to be a commodity because there are some objects that have use-value and are able to satisfy human's needs, but they cannot be exchanged for money on the market, these are objects that are provided by nature or freely available. For example, we cannot sell or purchase the air we breathe, however it is useful to us. Essentially, one could describe a commodity as something that is produced to satisfy human desires or needs and can also be sold or exchanged for another commodity. Commodity fetishism is the belief that commodities are inherently natural and have an existence of their own in the market, independent of humans. In other words, we are led to assume that commodities on the market have an independent existence (Heinrich, 2004).

Ben Fine and Saad-Filho in the book *Marx's Capital* (2004) assert that Marx seeks to provide an answer to the question of "what is that allows commodities to be equivalent in exchange?" They argue that "what creates the relationship of exchange, then, is not a physical relationship between goods but a historically specific social one" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004). What then follows form this is that what all the commodities have in common is the fact that they are products of

human labour (Fine&Saad-Filho,2004). In other words, although commodities are characterised by their material/physical properties, i.e., they can be used for human consumption or use, their exchange value in the market is not determined by these properties, rather it is determined by social relations. Therefore, to answer Marx's question, the most fundamental trait that commodities have in common that allows them to be "equivalent in exchange" is the fact that they are products of labour (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004).

Additionally, one of the interesting features of capitalism is that labour power also becomes a commodity. Workers sells their labour power to the capitalist in exchange for wages. The worker sells labour power to the capitalist, who determines how that labour power should be exercised as labour to produce particular commodities (Fine, 2004). Workers, similar to produced commodities are in relation with one through the market or through the exchange of their products for money. For instance, we often purchase commodities without any knowledge of their producers or the production process (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004). Moreover, workers become alienated from their essence, on the labour market by treating his labour power as a thing to be exchange for some other thing. The worker objectifies his essence. In other words, when one sells his labour power in exchange for wages, their labour power becomes a commodity also.

Fine and Saad-Filho lament that in capitalism the worker is some instances is like a slave, since they have no control over the labour process or the product of labour (2004). The latter point is what Marx calls alienation, and it happens in four-folds which I will not discuss due to the scope of this paper. The essential point is that when one sells their labour power to the capitalist they become estranged to their product of labour. This is because that product does not belong to them and also when the product competes in the market it bears no recognition of its maker. Rather it appears independent of the maker and only in relation to other products. Furthermore, the irony in capitalist society is that as much as it comes with the freedom for one to choose not to sell their labour power, unlike other epochs (e.g. such as slavery when one did not really have much privilege), one is not really free to choose otherwise because the repercussions of not wanting to sell labour power (or to work) are much severe, i.e., the results are one ends up being ostracised form society. "For these reasons the workers under capitalism have been described as wage slaves, although the term is an oxymoron. You cannot be both slave and wage worker" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004).

As much as the of commodities signifies the historical social relationships in capitalism, the relationship between workers and their products of labour remains to be a relationship between things, as argued above. These social relations are further mystified when money is factorised as a general equivalent, and everything

is analysed in terms of price (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004), this is what Marx termed fetishism of commodities.

> *Everyone knows that the material used to make money (paper, metal, ink, etc.) is subject to wear and tear and that it is destined to be eventually destroyed. Yet we treat money as if its materiality were incorruptible, as if, instead of being subject to time, it were imperishable like the immaterial Forms of Plato's philosophy. The fetishistic tendency consists in hypostatizing its immaterial-social function.* (Winkler, 2024, p. 27)

We take money to be something that is supernatural and transcending the material world. It is as if it bears superior value beyond it being pieces of paper or metals that represent a certain value. For instance, how R200 note is taken as something that to possess supernatural powers. When I have the R200 note in my hand, it is not just a piece of paper imprinted R200, it means something beyond that. It represents my buying power.

> *It is not without reason that Marx resorts to the anthropologist's notion of 'fetishism' in his analysis of capital. The fact is that people treat money as religious folk behave around their fetish. It is for them a natural thing endowed with supernatural powers. People are prepared to die for it or do the impossible, as they are for their fetish or their nation or in the name of their 'way of life' and so on – for anything, that is, that strikes them sublime.* (Winkler, 2024, p. 27)

Marx establishes a remarkable comparison between commodity fetishism and the religious devotion shown in medieval societies (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2005). Humanity has created the concept of God and this is rationalised through religion. In this instance, humans invented the image of God and believe God has independent existence outside humanity. This is similar to the relationship of exchange between commodities, it is also a product of human mind. Moreover, this relationship between commodities conceals the true nature of capitalism- which is that it is exploitative under the guise of free market. To be precise, the buying and selling of commodities does not reflect the reality or provide insight into the conditions under which they have entered the market, nor does it expose the exploitation of the labourers that produce these commodities for the capitalists. Marx expresses it in this manner,

> *Hitherto men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations.* (Marx & Engels, 1970)

In this light, commodity fetishism can be made the basis of a theory of alienation or reification. Not only are the workers divorced from the control of the product and the process of producing it, but also the view of this situation is

normally distorted or at most partial. For both capitalists and workers, it appears that external powers exert this control, and not the social relations of production and their effects peculiar to capitalism. For example, the loss of employment or bankruptcy may be blamed on a thing or an impersonal force, as in the unfortunate breakdown of a machine, changes in consumer preferences, international competition or an economic crisis of whatever origin or cause (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004).

Commodity fetishism is transferring social properties or relations that humans have, into commodities (Brewer, 1984). I am saying social relations because in the market commodities are considered in relation to other commodities and the human behind the product is not considered i.e., commodities appear to have an inherent value in and of themselves. Moreover, the human that produced that commodity is alienated from the product of his labour. The same way a religious person asserts that they put more into God in order to empty themselves or relinquish themselves of the earthly desires, it is the same with the labourer the more they labour the more they are alienated from themselves and the products of their labour.

In the paper "Commodity fetishism", Arthur Ripstein argues that the analogy that Marx makes between commodity fetishism and religious belief in God is one where the problem of religious fetishism is easier to come out it or to resolve, whereas the one of commodity fetishism is harder to come out of. He asserts, "if Marx is right, the mistake of fetishism is impossible to avoid in capitalist production" (Ripstein, 1987). Hypothetically, religious fetishism can be resolved when humans recognise that religion is the product of the human mind and also when the social conditions that make religion important are abolished. In the religious scenario the fetishism occurs at the level of thought. On the other hand, commodity fetishism occurs at practical level, the mystery arises when the products created by human hands are misrecognised for having transcendental qualities, as if they follow natural laws and not human norms.

I think the interesting observation within commodity fetishism is that even when we are aware of the illusion of capitalism, it is difficult to dispel the fetish. Unlike, in the religious fetishism, when one becomes conscious of the illusions of religion, they can easily disavow the fetish, for instance if one comes to terms with the fact that maybe there is no God or that there are no empirical justifications of religion, they may classify themselves as atheists. However, with commodity fetishism even when we recognise that money for instance, is not a real thing or it a product of the human invention we still desire having it. Recognising the false illusions, does not necessarily negate our beliefs in these illusions.

In essence, Marx has shown that commodity fetishism has two aspects, namely, mystification and false consciousness. What I mean by this is that commodity fetishism reveals the ideological false consciousness that humans have, which conceals the exploitation and domination of capitalism. In capitalist society we have the hold on the impression that commodities that we consume, and produce are independent of humans, even when we know of the conditions under which the commodities are produced, we act as if we are not aware of the masks behind capitalism. A recent example of this is the issue of the Democratic Republic of Congo accusing the brand Apple of using illegally exported minerals to manufacture their products, yet the Apple product sales continue to do well even when consumers are aware of these conditions. In an online article Terry Gross (2023) highlights how tech-companies are supplied cobalt by illegal miners who work under harsh condition. "The DRC's cobalt is being extracted by so-called «artisanal» miners – freelance workers who do extremely dangerous labour for the equivalent of just a few dollars a day" (Gross, 2023). This a typical example of how people regardless of being aware of the ills of capitalism, tend to perceive commodities as things which are inherently full social power and life (Lewin & Morris, 1977, p. 173). The article further claims that besides the slavery-like working conditions, there is also child labour involved. With this information easily accessible to people outside of DRC, these have still not affected the sales of Apple products. Instead, people still desire the latest Apple product.

2. Commodity Fetishism and consumerism: The late stages of capitalism

In the paper "Commodity Fetishism and Repression: Reflections on Marx, Freud and the Psychology of Consumer Capitalism" Michael Billig argues that Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism offers us crucial insights into the late stages of capitalism, i.e., how subjectivity is fashioned in capitalism or how capitalism influences the nature of life (Billig, 1999). Commodity fetishism is closely tied to the notion of ideology, what these two concepts have in common is the idea of misunderstanding the reality or not seeing things for what they are.

Paul Ricoeuer has argued that the notion of commodity fetishism is important for understanding the theory of ideology (Ricoeuer, 1986). Ricoeuer claims in Marx the term ideology, is introduced by means of metaphor, i.e. Camera obscura. This metaphor is meant to express the inverted image of reality, "ideology's first function is its production of an inverted image" (Ricoeuer, 1986). As discussed earlier, Marx depends on Feuerbach's argument that religion is an example of an inverted reflection of reality, in Christianity the subject and predicate are reversed (Ricoeuer, 1986). In For Marx and Engels ideology can be understood as the dichotomy between the true nature of social reality and the

distortion of this reality (Billing, 1999). This came with it the task of critiquing this distorted reality and also the task of analysing this reality for Marx. He argues that,

> In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 47)

In this Marx and Engels assert that beliefs and ideologies are products of the human relations, that is they are socially constructed, and they reflect the conditions of life in which they emerge (Billing, 1999, p. 314). Hence their assertion "life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life" (Marx & Engels, 1970). The critical point here is Marx and Engels were concerned about the construction of truths or reality, and most importantly the distorted versions of the socially constructed truths. Put differently, two things are happening, first it is construction of reality influenced by the material, secondly this reality that is constructed by material conditions, is distorted. As they have argue, "in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura" (Marx & Engels, 1970). In other words, in ideology reality is perceived inversely, it appears as if consciousness is the one that determines man or that God is the one that creates man, rather than man creating God or man. This distortion is a product of power as Marx and Engels argue that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (1970).

Sarah Kofman in the book *Camera Obscura: Of ideology* (1998) explains how Marx was set out to move away from German idealism that he accused young Hegelians of in German Ideology, i.e., they were of the view that ideas are the ones that create reality rather the material conditions that people find themselves and this in a nutshell is what leads to ideology. Kofman following Marx argues,

> the inversion of the inversion involves departing from "real premises", founded on real bases, the empirically observable "material bases", and deriving, from these, those phantasmagorias which are ideological formations. The head should not be below but above, and it is not then sky but the earth which should serve as ground: it is men, of flesh and bone, men in their real activity, who should serve as points of

departure, not their language or their representations, which are simple reflections and echos. (Kofman, 1998, p. 2)

It is the material conditions or the physical reality that should influence our reality or rather consciousness. For Marx, if these conditions change, i.e., when we are indeed aware that it is the material conditions that determine our consciousness, we will then be free from ideology. Marx's critique is materialist precisely because of its "insistence that the materiality of praxis precedes the ideality of ideas" (Ricoeuer, 1986).

Similar to Marx, the key objective of this paper is to critique ideology. However, unlike Marx whose critique was based on the critique of ideology as a distorted reality, I hold that ideology critique has shifted towards the subject. It is my contention that in the current stage of capitalism, subjects are aware of the distortions and the facades that are embedded in capitalism, yet they act as if they are not aware. To support my claim, I refer to Davis Wallace and Slavoj Zizek briefly in the following paragraphs.

In his essay David Wallace 'E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction', describes irony as a reaction to an unrealistic world. It explains the relationship between how things appear and how they are. Moreover, its goal is to make us aware and expose these facades (Wallace, 1993). The role of irony is to put certain patterns of behavior and beliefs under scrutiny. For example, in questioning my identity, I am at the same time reflecting on my identity. For instance, an ironic attitude towards my identity could be "are you a woman?", in posing that question, I reflect on certain characteristics of a woman, for example, how a woman behaves, am I a good woman etc.

The ironist is someone who calls into question the foundation of things without expressly doing so in words. Put differently, in Marx for instance we have to see through the illusions of capitalism to come out of its ideology, i.e., to see that commodities are not independent of humans, or that the working class is being exploited.

The problem is that such a stance bears the assumption that we can get out of the capitalist system by seeing through its deception or ideology. I think Wallace makes a critical point which I agree with, that is seeing through the system in the way advocated by the ironist is what gets you entrapped in the capitalist system. It is as if the capitalist system asks you to take things lightly rather than seriously, it asks you to see things as appearances and surfaces, that the world is as it were without depth or truth. It is a system that does not believe in the truth or in essence. It is a system immune to critique because it is critical of the truth, of the view that there is a truth out there that awaits discovery. We have here an ideology premised upon the idea that everything is appearances and images, i.e., falsehoods.

Capitalism today, succeeds by being ironic, and we are entrapped in it because it commends us for seeing through its deception, and that is how it sustains its ideology. Wallace makes an example of how Isuzu car ads resulted in good sales through parody. Wallace writes "the ads invite the viewer to congratulate them for being ironic and congratulate themselves for getting the joke" (Wallace, 1993). Capitalistic hegemony is resistant to critique because it has adopted the irreverent, ironic and cynical post-modern attitude.

Zizek also, raises a similar concern about capitalist ideology, he argues that the common understanding of ideology is false consciousness, naivety or a misrecognition of reality (Zizek, 1989). He further posits that today's world has "cynical subjects who are aware of the ideological mask and social reality, but they nonetheless persist on upon the mask" (Zizek, 1989). Zizek puts it in this manner,

> But all this is already well known: it is the classic concept of ideology as "false consciousness", misrecognition of the social reality which is part of this reality itself Our question is: Does this concept of ideology as a naive consciousness still apply to today's world? Is it still operating today? In the Critique of Cynical Reason, a great bestseller in Germany, Peter Sloterdijk puts forward the thesis that ideology's dominant mode of functioning is cynical, which renders impossible – or, more precisely, vain – the classic critical-ideological procedure. The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask. The formula, as proposed by Sloterdijk, would then be: "they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it". Cynical reason is no longer naive but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still, one does not renounce it. (Zizek, 1989, p. 25)

I think the Wallace and Zizek's claims could not be more relevant and evident than in today's society. The current society is ridden with culture of consumerism and overconsumption. Today's subjects are controlled by the constant need of gratification and indulgence, to an extent that often the ethical aspect – such as exploitation of workers and child labour – of this is ignored. I will provide a few examples on this later in the section. In the age of consumerism subjects identity is tied up to their possessions (Billig,1999). In todays commodity fetishism, the subjects consume commodities consciously, i.e., they are well aware of their doing. And since it is simply consumption for pleasure, the social relations that lie behind the commodities are forgotten. Commodities are considered as objective by just looking at their value or label. For example, the fast fashion retailer Shein has been accused of child labour, however, it is still operational with customers from all over the world. This shows that what matters is the brand and the price of the product, the conditions behind this product are neglected. We do

not think about the living and the working conditions of the labourers making the product. The clothing items in this instance becomes the objects of fetishism, it also provides a form of identification for its buyers. In other words, the brand represents the means by which the subject "constructs and represents their sense of self" (Billig, 1999).

The over consumption of commodities can be explained as fetishism of commodities. We take these commodities as possessing supernatural powers that can fill up a lack in a subject. Another example is the subjects desire to possess certain material objects which in return define their societal standing. Driving a certain car today, can determine one's identity, e.g. if one drives the latest Mercedes Benz, we can tell that they are part of the middle class, how much money they make etc. My point here, is how commodities that we possess or consume can become part of defining our identity. I think Freud's theory of fetishism can better explain the culture of consumerism in society.

> *Let me briefly explain fetishism. When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost. That is to say, it should normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and - for reasons familiar to us does not want to give up.* (Freud, 1927)

According to Freud, fetishism entails both the acknowledgment and disavowal of reality, as well as the formation of a substitute for the absent object. In his scenario, the boy acknowledges that the mother does not have a penis, however he refuses to accept this hard reality and would rather continue acting as if the mother has a penis. Likewise, the modern subject has similar attitude. They are aware of the illusions created by capitalism; however, they would rather keep on believing in these illusions. For example, they would rather believe driving a Mercedes Benz signifies that one has a social status of elite, is successful, etc. In reality cars, similar to other commodities are only efficient for their use. The purpose of having a car is for convenience when traveling it has no additional value of defining one's identity.

> *The camera obscura functions like an unconscious which can, or cannot, accept the sight of this or that reality. What is it that ideology refuses to see? Who is refusing? What is missing, in the real, such that it cannot be recognized?* (Kofman, 1998, p. 17)

Kofman poses pertinent questions, which can be summed up as, what is it about reality that we are afraid of facing or come to terms with. Or rather what exactly is it that ideology refuses to acknowledge. I contend that modern subjects are afraid to come to term with the fact that there is no getting out of ideology or

there are no alternatives to ideology. Kofman, critiques Marx's view on ideology as distorted reality by raising two points. Firstly, she argues that "the model of camera obscura sheds no light on the relationship of ideology to desire" (Kofman, 1998). Secondly, Marx "presupposes an original truth which is obscured and inverted in presentation" (Kofman, 1998).

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Connectionism's new wave. Reexamining two theories of machine consciousness

Alexandra CHIRILĂ

Doctoral School of Filosofie și Științe Social-Politice
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania
chirila.alexandraa@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper analyses the possibility of machine consciousness concerning Daniel C. Dennett and John R. Searle, in the light of the most recent technological advancements. We will consider the opposing views that each author has of qualia and how it either widens or narrows the possibility of machine consciousness. While Dennett strongly believes that human-like artificial intelligence is just a matter of time, Searle thinks that until we solve the problem of how the mind works, the idea of an AI that does everything humans are capable of is far from reality. Dennett reinforces his beliefs about this kind of AI, based on the concept of strange inversion of reason. On the other hand, Searle states that consciousness can be causally reduced to neural activity, but not ontologically. Even though connectionism used to be popular two decades ago, recent developments in Deep Learning have made connectionism return to the spotlight, with software like AlphaZero, Chat GPT, and DALLE. Artificial neural networks are becoming more complex and nuanced, and this calls for a revisit of the classic arguments mentioned above to determine their relevance in light of the most recent developments. This paper aims to determine whether any of these views can still help researchers and engineers when considering state-of-the-art technologies and future developments in AI.

Keywords: *Connectionism, Dennett, Searle, machine consciousness, qualia.*

Introduction

This paper examines the new wave of connectionism in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and its implications for two of the classic theories of machine consciousness: the theories of Daniel Dennett and John Searle. We start with an overview of connectionism, followed by its modern developments in the light of technological advancements, such as deep learning architectures. The second part of the paper concerns the relevance and compatibility of Dennett's and Searle's positions with regards to connectionism and AI. The goal is to assess whether these theories hold their place in current debates in the field of AI.

Early connectionism and Deep Learning

Connectionism was the dominant framework within the philosophy of mind during the 1980s. Connectionism theorists believed intellectual abilities could be developed in artificial agents using artificial neural networks. Connectionism represented the alternative to the classical theory of mind, which modeled cognition as symbolic computation.

Computational and technological power was scarce during that time, which means that scientists had no means to put their ideas into practice. Early connectionist models relied on artificial neural networks (ANN) composed of input units, hidden units, and output units. The input units received the information, the hidden units processed said information, and the output units gave a response. These units were inspired by their biological counterparts. The input units are analogous to sensory neurons, output units to motor neurons, while hidden units represent all other neurons. These initial artificial networks worked in a binary system, meaning that they could be only activated or deactivated, without any degree, like switching a light on and off without being able to change its intensity. Furthermore, these early networks were limited in depth, meaning the architecture only allowed for one or two layers of hidden units.

During the 1990s, the field of machine learning witnessed an exponential growth. As Tom Michael Mitchells explains, "the field of machine learning is concerned with the question of how to construct computer programs that automatically improve with experience" (Mitchell, 1997, xv). However, recent developments have enabled the emergence of deep learning, a class of machine learning. According to Deng and Yu, deep learning is "a class of machine learning techniques that exploit many layers of information processing for supervised or unsupervised feature extraction and transformation, and for pattern analysis and classification." (Deng & Yu, 2013, pp. 199-200). Deep learning represents connectionism's new wave for at least two reasons, as follows. Firstly, deep learning architectures overcome a significant limitation of earlier ANN, reaching a far greater number of hidden layers, ranging from five to hundreds of layers (Buckner & Garson, 1997). This increase allows for more complex and accurate information processing. Moreover, the great number of hidden layers translates to the possibility of creating a better copy of the biological neural network. Secondly, modern artificial systems no longer operate on a binary model. The newer ANN can represent different levels of activation, an important feature in convolutional neural networks (CNN), which concern visual image analysis. AlphaGo and its better version AlphaZero have demonstrated the power of deep networks. While

AlphaGo required little human input and data, AlphaZero achieved superhuman performance with no human input, training entirely through self-play, becoming the best go player in roughly 24 hours. Other examples of successful deep networks are DeepSpeare, which learned to write poems and sonnets after analyzing vast amounts of data and DALLE or MidJourney, generative CNNs capable of generating images based on text prompts. Deep Learning is of utmost importance for large companies. As Cameron Buckner stated, by 2016, Google had approximately one thousand deep learning projects in development (Buckner, 2019, p. 2).

Despite these advances, one problem remains, the anthropomorphisation of AI systems. In his paper, *Artificial Intelligence meets natural stupidity*, Drew McDermott articulates this issue that is just as relevant today as it was back in 1976 when the paper was published. First, many researchers have the tendency to describe internal representations of artificial systems using natural language terms. In other words, developers and engineers adopt everyday language to describe machine operations. This leads to wishful thinking by overestimating the capabilities of deep networks. This linguistic approach to code writing and development has led us to believe that "the human use of language is a royal road to the cognitive psyche" (McDermott, 1976, p. 7). This kind of anthropomorphism is often used in day to day discourse and, as such, we often attribute understanding to objects around us. We say that the thermometer *feels* the temperature; the door *knows* to open itself when a person is around, but neither the thermometer nor the door feels or knows. Searle states (1980, p. 419) that we use verbs like these because we have the tendency to extend our intentionality and impose it on these artifacts. However, there are no instances of intentionality in any AI or day-to-day artefacts. The apparent intelligence of artificial systems is a product of computational power, depth of layers, and statistical correlations. The distinction between weak AI (systems that simulate reasoning) and strong AI (systems that possess consciousness) maintains its importance. Considering the contemporary artificial intelligence systems, no architecture meets the criteria for strong AI. With this context established, it is time to turn to Dennett and Searle, whose theories offer accounts of consciousness and intentionality. Their relevance will be established in the following sections.

Searle's biological naturalism

John Searle supports the biological naturalism view (Searle, 2004, p. 113), which places consciousness in the field of biological phenomena. However, Searle asserts that consciousness is superior to the physical level (Chua, 2017, p. 46). In

Mind, the author distinguishes between two types of reductions: causal and ontological (Searle, 2004, p. 119). When it comes to causal reductions, an X phenomenon is causally reduced to a Y phenomenon if and only if X entirely results (causally) from Y's behavior. On the other hand, ontological reduction means that phenomenon X is ontologically reduced to Y if and only if X is nothing else other than Y.

The most important aspect of biological naturalism is that conscious and subjective states are part of actual phenomena. This means that consciousness is not an illusion, nor can it be ontologically reduced to the neurobiological dimension. Consciousness cannot be ontologically reduced to neurobiology because this would mean a shift from *first person* to *third person*. Consciousness has, by definition, a first-person ontology, and as Searle put it, the meaning of the concept is lost if we redefine it in third-person terms (Searle, 2004, p. 123). Searle mentions identity theorists, which identify consciousness with a neurobiological process in order to consolidate his argument. He denies this identity and states that "we can treat one and the same event as having both neurobiological features and phenomenological features. One and the same event is a sequence of neuron firings and is also painful" (Searle, 2004, pp. 124-125).

John Moses Chua notes how Searle explains consciousness by dividing it into three moments. The first moment is physical, in which receptors react to an external stimulus, like the pinch of the skin, and send information to the brain, then the neural activity begins. This process is observable and can be measured. After neurons process the input, the second moment begins: the sensation (in this case, pain) or qualia, the subjective phenomena, immeasurable and only sensed by the experiencing person. The second moment can only exist if we take the first-person ontology into account because this phenomenon cannot be discussed in third-person terms. The third moment is the reaction, which is observable and measurable, such as muscles tensing, rapid heart beating (Chua, 2017, p. 49).

Searle maintains that consciousness cannot be compiled by software alone because programs cannot possess consciousness. To defend this statement, Searle proposes the already well-known thought experiment called the Chinese Room Argument. This argument underlines that no computational system can prove it possesses intentionality (Boyles, 2012). We bring up a concept discussed in the first section, specifically the classical theory of mind, which Searle implicitly agrees to. This is because the CRA concerns how an AI would not be able to *understand* Chinese, but this reduces the AI problem to a symbolic processing issue, just as classical theorists suggest. Deep learning systems are reducible to

computation, but they do not rely on symbolic architectures that were present at the time when Searle constructed the CRA.

This raises the question: is Searle's biological naturalism compatible with deep artificial neural networks (ANNs)? The answer is ambivalent. On one hand deep networks are capable of syntax in natural languages, but they do not have access to the semantic dimension of language. In this matter, Searle's critique still stands: artificial systems do not *know* Chinese, they merely act as if they do. Apart from this, there is a more nuanced aspect to be discussed. Suppose qualia can be causally reduced to neurobiological activity. This means that our neural network is the cause of subjective phenomena and consciousness, which implies that if we copy every aspect and detail of our neural network, in principle, we would end up with a system that possesses qualia. However, this approach would lead to two functioning systems that we cannot understand. If we cannot understand human qualia, then we will not be able to understand or even recognize artificial qualia. In other words, we lack the means and criteria to determine whether the system possesses qualia or simulates it. Therefore, even if we had the means to recreate the human neural network to the smallest detail, we would not undoubtedly know if we were standing in front of an actual artificial agent.

However, developing such an agent might help us better understand how our minds work. If Searle is correct and consciousness emerges in a 1:1 ANN, the system would serve as a mirror which allows investigation of the mind. Dennet notes in *From Bacteria to Bach and Back* that we are having trouble explaining how our mind works because it is so very close and personal (Dennett, 2017, p. 18). Maybe by externalizing consciousness, we can study it as an impersonal object with no connection to ourselves whatsoever. Dennett also offers a different approach to consciousness and qualia, as it will be discussed in the following section.

Dennett's computational functionalism

Daniel Dennett has a reductive computationalist view of consciousness, stating that all mental phenomena can be reduced to computational processes. This makes Dennett a reductionist because he rejects the existence of any ontologically superior domain, holding that there is nothing more to the mind than neural activity (Chua, 2017, p. 46). In *From Bacteria to Bach and Back*, Dennett introduces the concept of strange inversion of reasoning. One good example of such inversion is the transition from geocentrism to heliocentrism. Specifically, this transition is a strange inversion of reasoning because scientific discoveries overturned common sense. Dennett believes that competence without

comprehension is such an inversion. In other words, the generally accepted opinion is that comprehension in a particular domain precedes competence. However, the author believes that systems often exhibit competence without any understanding. Following Darwin and Turing, Dennett believes that the simplest life forms and machines are competent to do what they must do, but they do not possess any comprehension whatsoever. Just like McDermott, Dennett acknowledges the dangers of anthropomorphism. We anthropomorphize plants and bacteria to understand their behavior. The problem with anthropomorphizing is that we credit them not just with competencies but also with comprehension of actions, benefits, or reasons behind behaviors (Dennett, 2017, p. 85).

In his essay *Quining Qualia*, Dennett denies the existence of qualia. In order to consider this subjective feature as a component of experience, Dennett argues that we would need to be able to recognize when a change in qualia has occurred (just as we can recognize changes in other types of states), or that there must be a detectable difference between experiencing a change in sensation and not possessing the sensation at all. Dennett concludes the essay by asserting that we can demonstrate neither of these conditions, therefore, he maintains that qualia cannot be a component of experience (Dennett, 1988). As previously mentioned, Dennett opposes the naturalistic perspective. To support his claim that qualia do not exist and are nothing more than an illusion, he introduces the concept of Cartesian gravity. Specifically, imagine a mind explorer who wants to begin the investigation of consciousness starting with his own mind. This explorer is at home, on Planet Descartes, contemplating the task of uncovering the mysteries of consciousness. He observes the external universe from a first-person point of view. Cartesian gravity is what keeps him fixed in an egocentric position. His internal monologue, reminiscent of Descartes, goes: here I am, a conscious being, intimately familiar with the idea in my mind, which I know better than anyone else, simply because they are mine. In the meantime, from afar, another explorer approaches, a scientific one, equipped with maps, theories, and models, and so on, determined to also discover the nature of consciousness. The closer this scientific explorer gets, the more uneasy he feels. He is drawn into a perspective he should avoid, but the gravitational pull is too strong. Upon landing on Planet Descartes, his third-person, objective perspective is transformed into a first-person perspective. Moreover, the scientific explorer finds himself unable to use the tools he brought along. Cartesian gravity cannot be resisted once one is on this planet. This shift from the third-person to first-person is inevitable and represents a clear case of strange inversion of reasoning. Two contradictory points are revealed, but they cannot coexist (Dennett, 2017, p. 20, adaptation).

Dennett's notion of Cartesian gravity makes use of the same concepts employed by Searle in arguing for the phenomenological dimension of consciousness, which, in Searle's view, coexists with its neurobiological basis. However, Dennett contends that these two aspects cannot coexist simultaneously. The feature that appeals to neuronal activity represents the scientific approach to explaining consciousness, while the phenomenological trait corresponds to the individual's own perspective, the one experienced on Planet Descartes. Thus, qualia, the phenomenological trait of consciousness is, according to Dennett, only an illusion, one that is particularly difficult to abandon because the gravitational pull of Cartesian subjectivity is too strong.

Instead of a centralized system, Dennett proposes the multiple drafts model (Dennett, 1991, pp. 111-115). Specifically, ideas or perceptions are multiple narrative fragments, also called drafts, which exist in various stages of editing. In his view, these drafts serve different specific functions. They do not arrive in a single location, such as a central processing unit (CPU) in the brain, but are edited throughout the brain in ways that shape cognition. The question which drafts are conscious, or capable of leading to a conscious state inevitably places us once again on Planet Descartes. For Dennett, consciousness is a kind of virtual machine, an evolved computer that gives structure to brain activity (Chua, 2017, p. 48). The multiple drafts model has lead Dennett to assert:

> if the self is just the Center of Narrative Gravity, and if all the phenomena of human consciousness are explicable as just the activities of a virtual machine realized in the astronomically adjustable connections of a human brain, then, in principle, a suitably programmed robot, with a silicon-based computer brain, would be conscious, would have a self. (Dennett, 1991, p. 431)

Conclusion

From an engineering perspective, Dennett's theory appears more aligned with current views in AI than Searle's. Although more instinctively plausible, Searle's theory puts more obstacles in the way of engineers. However, if Dennett is correct and constructing a silicon brain is what it takes for a conscious machine to exist, then it means we could bypass the Cartesian gravity. Studying an external consciousness would allow the usage of every scientific tool we possess without us being pulled into the first-person perspective. Yet the same problem remains: even if a machine exhibits human capacities, how could we determine whether it truly possesses a subjective point of view? We don't know if qualia exist, but there is a practical nature to it. As Raúl Arrabales et al. put it, on one hand, a comprehensive understanding of qualia might make possible the building of conscious machines;

on the other hand, the path to a complete understanding of qualia in biology might lay through the research on new computational models (Arrabales *et al.*, 2010). Specifically, even though Dennett's perspective remains controversial, his theory allows the possibility of artificial consciousness without any biological constraints. By using Dennett's strange inversion of reasoning, maybe we need not understand human qualia to construct artificial qualia, but instead perhaps developing more advanced deep networks and computational models is what will lead to understanding consciousness.

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How about Terminator?

Roxana - Ionela ACHIRICESEI
Ştefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania
rachiricesei@yahoo.com

Abstract

In a world where technology is advancing at an accelerated pace, ideas that are still in the realm of science fiction are on the verge of becoming reality. If in the middle of the 20th century the idea of a wireless phone, but especially without buttons, were ideas that were accepted only in fiction, now things like artificial intelligence or robotics, including a fusion between them, are one step away from becoming a reality.

The world we know is heading in a different direction, if we analyze it from the perspective of the accelerated evolution of technology. The human being – man –, its future and that of humanity has always represented a point of philosophical reflection, and with the industrial revolution, and now with the direction that technology has, the issue of man, nature and its meaning are beginning to become more prominent in philosophical discussions. This may also be due to the fact that there are a multitude of cinematic approaches to the future of humanity from the perspective of the accelerated evolution of technology.

Such an interesting topic, which would cover a rather wide area, is proposed by the film series The Terminator. The ideas approached can be debated from a philosophical point of view, and they represent a variant of a possible future in which robotics in all its forms, together with artificial intelligence, would radically change the world we know.

So why not Terminator as a topic of philosophical debate?

Keywords: *technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, human being, evolution.*

Introduction

Philosophy is a science that has expanded into almost all fields, especially through the prism of ethics, applied ethics. The idea paper proposes to offer a philosophical perspective on the *Terminator* film series, especially on the first film, in order to capture the basic and futuristic substances of man-machine fusion, or the danger of the existence of the human being.

Many cinematic approaches center around ideas related to a future of humanity in a hyper-technological world, in another type of society in which

humans are either annihilated by entities endowed with artificial intelligence, or people live in a hyper-technological society, and new technologies are part of the individual's daily life, or a world is presented in which people have gone through an apocalyptic war, and life resumes in another form.

The Terminator film series has established itself as a landmark in science fiction cinema. The narrative centers on a superintelligent artificial intelligence – Skynet – that decides that humanity is a threat. Skynet sends cyborgs back in time to change the course of history, declaring all-out war on humanity. Thus, starting from the premise that a superintelligent artificial intelligence could destroy the future of humanity, even exterminating the human race, he opens a series of philosophical reflections, having as central themes artificial intelligence, the future of humanity and of course responsibility.

The Terminator film series consists of seven films as follows according to the Internet Movie Database - IMDb (Terminator Series):

➢ *The Terminator* (1984);
➢ *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991);
➢ *Terminator 3: Rise of The Machines* (2003);
➢ *Terminator Salvation* (2009);
➢ *Terminator: Genesys* (2015);
➢ *Terminator: Dark Fate* (2019).

So, *Terminator* can be considered a film that contains philosophical implications, exploring the tensions between new technologies, control, freedom, and responsibility.

Terminator – *a vision of a world that is under robots and AI*

The first Terminator film was released in 1984 and was directed by James Cameron. It quickly became a cultural and philosophical landmark in science fiction cinema. Beyond its success, this series of films, with the status of a Hollywood franchise, stood out for its ability to explore something that has always intrigued at least the world of science fiction consumers. It explored humanity's fears about technology, using narrative in a visual manner that was unique to that point.

Even though it can be said that the film's narrative is simple fiction, this does not mean that it does not raise a form of philosophical problematization. The Terminator franchise series involves the interdisciplinarity between philosophy, technology and social studies, as the following questions can be asked:

➢ *What is the nature of technology?*
➢ *What is the ethical responsibility of the creators of these cyborgs?*

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> *What is the status of human freedom in a world dominated by robots, by autonomous machines?*

In the United States of America in the early 1980s, the situation is marked by a period of political tension, the Cold War situation – "Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as détente gave way to renewed hostility." (Strauss Center, p. 1), but also from the fear of nuclear war – both sides have acknowledged that nuclear conflict is "unwinnable" (Strauss Center, p. 14), but also by the technological progress recorded during that period, which fueled society with both enthusiasm and anxiety.

This mention is necessary in order to anchor the Terminator film in the real context of the era, and why the mentality of the time resonates with the fear related to technological control or the fear of nuclear war.

Although the Terminator film is considered a science fiction story, it can also be interpreted from another perspective: that of a complex and philosophical text, because it problematizes the relationship between man and technology, between creation and destruction, and between freedom and control. To capture this dimension in the analysis, semiotic, existentialist, and hermeneutic perspectives must be integrated.

In the case of this film, it can be said that it functions as a philosophical discourse, one that has social implications. All the symbols and ethical tensions build a critical vision of technological evolution.

A first type of analysis is semiotic and refers to the way in which visual and narrative signs are communicated. From this perspective, each element in the film can be understood and perceived as a signifier – image, sound, gesture – that points to a philosophical signifier. The terms „signified and signifier are the terms proposed by Saussure to make in a more scientifically rigorous manner the distinction between "concept" and "acoustic image", the two "sides" of the linguistic sign, one located in the plane of content, the other in the plane of expression" (Minică, 2019). Thus, through signs, symbols, visual and narrative structures, fundamental questions about the human condition are raised.

In the movie Terminator, a series of signs can be identified, including: the cyborg, the red eye of the robot, of the machine, Skynet, the war between humans and machines, the image of the mother. These signs can be correlated with fundamental questions related to the human condition and the future of humanity in a society that could be dominated by machines endowed with artificial intelligence.

The cyborg as a visual sign in the film, is represented by the actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has a human appearance, but covers a mechanical structure. As a philosophical meaning, it raises questions related to: *What does it mean to be human?, What is the boundary between man and machine?*, *What is the boundary between natural and artificial?*.

The red eye of the machine as a visual sign in the film represents the artificial, the camera watching through a non-human eye. As a philosophical meaning, this can be interpreted as a way of seeing humanity through the prism of technology, algorithmically, without empathy.

Skynet as a visual sign in the film, represents an abstract entity, endowed with artificial intelligence that becomes conscious and assumes its own autonomy. Its philosophical significance can be interpreted as a sign of anxiety related to the loss of control over one's own creation, over freedom, and symbolizes the idea of *conscious automatic technology*. "Skynet in The Terminator illustrates recursive autonomy in its purest form: a system that develops through learning, detached from human oversight." (Oguz, 2025) As an image, it is a reflection on the anxiety about the control that artificial intelligence could have over humanity.

The war between humans and machines as a narrative sign found in the film's script represents the situation of the time created by the political conditions that led the world towards the idea of a real confrontation between the great powers. The philosophical significance can be interpreted starting from the tension between the creator and the creation, from the moment when the creation exceeds the limits of the human and is released from the control of the creator.

The image of the mother as a symbolic sign in the film is represented by the maternal figure who is protective, and as a philosophical meaning it can be interpreted through humanity, through the hope of the continuity of humanity and the fact that humanity can survive through affective relationship and responsibility and not through technology.

These signs present in the film focus on philosophical meanings. They become true symbolic structures that make the Terminator film a philosophical vision of a world dominated by robots and artificial intelligence. If these signs are carefully analyzed, it can be said that this film is not just a film that falls into the action and science fiction section. It offers a philosophical vision of the human condition in a world marked by the uncontrolled progress of technology.

The film brings into discussion a reflection on human freedom and responsibility, involving philosophical determinism. Thus, ideas can be extracted from here for contemporary debates related to artificial intelligence, robots,

automation and the future of society, confirming that cinema can be a privileged space for philosophy.

Once such artificial intelligence-based technology is developed, it will be implemented. In the ong term, this accelerated development of technology and its use using AI systems may make people seem like prisoners of their own inventions. Since the advent of computers, the internet, and artificial intelligence, anxiety about a technology that could rule the world has intensified, which would force humanity to do one thing: adapt to survive as a species.

The first principle of existentialism is "Man is nothing but what he makes of himself." (Sartre, p. 4) From an existentialist perspective, the film Terminator stands on the border between destiny and freedom. If Jean-Paul Sartre tells us that man is condemned to be free, that each individual should build the path of his own life through his own choices, this perspective proposed through the lens of the film implies a problematic of the human condition in which humanity is between freedom and philosophical determinism. According to determinism, technological development occurs independently of human will. In the film, the cyborg is programmed to kill, but being reprogrammed and having contact with humans, it learns to protect. Thus, the question arises, *can a machine become authentic?*. "The first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in control of himself as he is and places the entire responsibility for his existence on his own shoulders." (Blunden, 2005) Because from here we understand that through reprogramming a cyborg can overcome its limits and define its actions.

Also from this perspective, the image of the mother is, according to Sartre, for all of humanity, not just for herself, so the symbol of the mother in the film does not just represent the desire for survival, but the assurance of humanity by protecting her son.

From a hermeneutic perspective, we can say that the film puts viewers in the position of interpreting and reinterpreting meanings through the prism of their own knowledge, their own fears and aspirations. Due to the characteristics of the film through images, narration and symbols, a field of multiple interpretations opens up. Thus, the viewers actively participate in the interpretation, because they relate to the story according to their own experiences.

Could the movie Terminator *be considered a philosophical film?*

A film becomes philosophical when, through its script and screenplay, it raises fundamental questions about man, freedom, time, existence, technology.

The Terminator film can be considered a philosophical film, as evidenced by the signs and their meanings presented previously, because from the first film to

the last, the characters face the existential question: *is the future fixed?*, *what would be the outcome of humanity if artificial intelligence gets out of control and takes over the world?*.

This film falls into the list of philosophical films because it has a problematic narrative about the relationship between creator and creation, between life and technology, between freedom and control. Through it, central issues of contemporary philosophy are staged, both visually and narratively. Among these we can enumerate:

➤ *Is the future of humanity subject to technological evolution or are we free to change it?*
➤ *Can creation exceed the creator, be released from control?*
➤ *Can humanity be preserved in the face of the domination of technology? How?*
➤ *What is man in relation to artificial intelligence?*
➤ *What does human freedom and responsibility mean if it is assumed that the emergence and dominance of artificial intelligence are inevitable?*

These are a series of questions that raise a philosophical issue related to the future of humanity as we currently know it in the *Terminator* series.

Conclusions

The film's director James Cameron made the following statement:

The themes of Terminator have been important to me since high school: those apocalyptic visions, ideas about our love/hate relationship with technology, our tendency as a species to head in a direction that could ultimately destroy us, and a core belief in the ingenuity of humanity. These are motifs that have run through all my films. (Hollub, 2023)

When he thought about making such a film, we can say that he was a visionary about the direction that the accelerated evolution of technology would take and captured people's anxieties about a future in which humanity would live alongside technologies endowed with artificial intelligence and would become autonomous, and offered a perspective on a possible future related to a possible outcome of the relationship between humanity and autonomous artificial intelligence, emphasizing humanity's anxieties about the future of humanity.

The viewer is challenged to reflect on their own freedom and responsibility in a world dominated by technology, and here a principle of existentialism is brought to attention, which assumes that the future is not predestined, but is built on the basis of choices.

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Philosophy is a fascinating field from its beginnings to the present day and never ceases to amaze with the interdisciplinary connections it creates with other fields. Through this film, it overcomes its status as simple fiction and becomes a meditation on existence in the age of technology.

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Aggressiveness and Violence: between dispute and scientific consensus

Dennis-Theodor PÂRJU
"Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
parjutheodor94@gmail.com

Abstract

Aggressiveness and violence have been and still are two topics of great interest in the scientific area among researchers who are in search of identifying comprehensive answers regarding the manifestations of human individuals that are considered aggressive and violent. Investigating the content of some of the reference works and studies found in the research literature, we can observe that aggressiveness and violence are frequently considered to be in a synonymous relationship (Jiménez-Ponce & Jiménez-Ramírez, 2024, p. 72). For this reason, their definition and use has created a number of ambiguities and confusions in the academic community (Balica, 2008). Moreover, in the research literature we can find some attractive conceptions and views according to which some analysts give these concepts distinct meanings. In this situation, it is necessary to recognise that we are confronted with a conceptual enigma that further deepens the identification of concise interpretations and definitions of these two fundamental notions. Starting from these considerations, from the multitude of perspectives and points of view advanced and developed over time in the pages of the reference literature, the present study has been developed with the aim of capturing, selecting and highlighting a series of notes (convergent and divergent) that tend to portray the enigmatic, volatile and perpetual nature of human aggressiveness and violence.

Keywords: *aggressiveness, violence, bio-psycho-socio-cultural, similarities, differences.*

Introduction

Aggressiveness and violence have been and still are two topics of great interest in the scientific area among researchers who are in search of comprehensive answers regarding the manifestations of human individuals that are considered aggressive and violent.[1] Investigating the content of some of the

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[1] Since they have been and continue to be the subjects of interest in my scientific endeavours, I would like to point out that in previous years I have undertaken a series of theoretical and conceptual investigations on aggression, violence and deviance. Without neglecting the general

reference works and studies found in the research literature, we can observe that aggressiveness and violence are frequently considered to be in a synonymous relationship (Jiménez-Ponce & Jiménez-Ramírez, 2024, p. 72). For this reason, their definition and use have created a number of ambiguities and confusions in the academic community (Balica, 2008). Moreover, in research literature we can find some attractive conceptions and views according to which some analysts give these concepts distinct meanings. In this situation, it is necessary to recognise that we are confronted with a conceptual enigma that further deepens the identification of concise interpretations and definitions of these two fundamental notions.

1. What is aggressiveness?

From the outset, it should be stressed that aggressiveness is one of the many specific behaviors found in human society for which there is a wide variety of views and conceptions, being generally difficult to define (Popescu, Moise, Duvac, 2013, p. 163).

Aggressiveness is a prominent behavioral characteristic found in most animal species and also detected in human behavior (Bueno, 2010). It has evolved over time in the animal kingdom to serve functions of essential importance for the survival of the species. Seen from a general perspective, aggressiveness is a decisive tool that has as its main objective the securing of resources and territorial delimitation. In human beings characterized as social animals, aggression supports the preservation of group identity traits, the protection of offspring, and in the course of confrontations between individuals (rivals), it helps to select the winner as the prototype that ensures the reproduction of the species (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 2009, p. 7) The written and unwritten history of human societies tends to validate the view that with regard to aggressiveness, we must bear in mind a paramount aspect of the preservation and evolution of human societies: human individuals exhibit a natural propensity for the use of instrumental aggression aimed at obtaining positions of dominance and power in the social structure (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 2009, p. 11).

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representative perspectives of definition and interpretation that I will also set out in this study, these researches that I have mentioned have been mainly focused on the interpretation of aggressiveness and violence as forms of behavioral deviance manifested in the school environment. However, some of the ideas, considerations and visions presented in this study can also be identified within these works and studies. Having said that, the interested reader has the opportunity to go through these theoretical analyses in the work entitled *Forme actuale ale devianței școlare/Current forms of school deviance* (my doctoral thesis) published at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași in 2023, as well as in other representative studies/articles elaborated and published during the period of doctoral studies indicated in the bibliographical section of this material

In his paper entitled "Human Aggressiveness", the ethologist Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, a leading collaborator of the great Austrian-born ethologist Konrad Lorenz, described aggressive behavior as very complex and comprehensive from multiple perspectives. The ethologist noted that individuals can display aggression against other individuals in direct forms, through hitting, name-calling and taunting. In addition to direct ways of expressing aggression, it can also take indirect forms, such as when a person is bad-mouthed, and in this way their social relations with others are destabilized. Aggressive behavior can be adapted and manifested through passive forms: refusal to communicate, refusal to engage in discussion, social isolation or inaction when a person needs help (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 2009, p. 123).

In another fundamental work that seeks to explain and clarify aggressive behavior, socio-biologist Edward O. Wilson argues that aggressive behavior cannot be explained solely in terms of an evil abnormality or a symptom of a brutal instinct. According to the author, aggression should not be attributed to pathological traits that have developed in the human personality as a result of growing up and developing in a hostile environment. In the course of development, the human being acquired the predisposition and propensity to react with irrational behavior to cope with dangers coming from outside. An interesting thing to analyze in this circumstance is that the human individual has gone beyond neutralizing the threatening source by reinforcing and satisfying various goals by using aggression (Wilson, 2013).

As we can notice, "definitions of aggressiveness are very different, an aspect inherent to the complexity of the manifestation of human aggressiveness. Most often, however, the definitions reflect not only the complexity of the phenomenon but also the theoretical position of the author" (Nastas, 2002, p. 37), "the more comprehensive the studies, the more concrete and clearly delimited the forms of aggression investigated" (Lungu, 2022, p. 159). In general, it can be concluded that aggressiveness projected by human individuals is manifested with the intention of causing harm and discomfort to others (Archer & Coyne, 2005, p. 212) Finally, we can define aggressiveness as a natural disposition, more specifically a predisposition to attack that can be translated into behavior through aggression (action), being both a generic trait of the individual subject to disruptive bi- psycho- psycho-affective states, and a potential that provides human beings with the necessary tools to satisfy their existential needs (Dragomirescu, 1976, p. 77).

2. How can we define violence?

The concept of violence is one of the most ambivalent concepts that the social sciences have been trying to analyze and define for decades. Since the end of the 1960s, there has been a substantial increase in violent behavior in the social area of Western industrialized countries. As a result, the issue of violence has been a subject of great interest, reflected in public discussions, policy-makers' programs and, last but not least, in academic debates. Despite these attempts to arrive at a truthful interpretation of violence, a number of controversial questions which remain unresolved, relating to the proper definition, substantive differentiation, socio-political and moral evaluation of violence can be observed (Imbusch, 2003).

Violence is commonly described as a psychosocial problem influenced by the interaction of hereditary and environmental factors. From the multitude of meanings that can be found in the pages of research literature, we can note the following directions of analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon of human violence:

1. *According to the psychosociological view*: violence is found in a synonymous relationship with aggressiveness;
2. *According to the sociological orientation*: violence is found in a close relationship with transgression and violation of socio-cultural norms, being categorized by sociologists in the spectrum of acts that fall into the category of social deviance;
3. *According to the criminological view*: violence is a main element in the commission of criminal offences or with a justified criminal appearance (Telipan, 2016, p. 125).

Being concerned with the study of social structures, the sociological perspective of interpreting violence starts from the assumption that violent behavior is not only considered as a resource of power of privileged classes or groups, but also as a compensatory means used by disadvantaged or marginalized social classes and groups (when the promotion of their interests cannot be achieved through normal channels) made up of individuals who lack resources, are socially unintegrated or poorly socialized (as a compensatory reaction to the stigmatizing, and therefore deviant, situation in which they find themselves). The lack of access to institutionalized means of achieving socially desirable goals is the reason why these persons resort to illicit, illegitimate, often violent means, through which they can gain access to social opportunities (Zamfir, Vlăsceanu, 1998, *apud* Stănilă, 2017, p. 209)

The violence manifested by man possesses a plurality of forms through which it is encountered and manifested in various locations and areas circumscribed by social space. We often observe how through the manifestation of violent behaviors, depending on the place and context (domestic space, common spaces, school environment, workplace, sports events), man attacks the security and personal safety of others (Liiceanu et al., 2004). According to classifications, violence has several dimensions of manifestation: physical, emotional, material, social identity (Stuart, 2000, *apud*, Bujorean, 2017, p. 13)

Researcher Cristina Neamțu (2003, pp. 220-221) also points out the terminology that is used in the French-speaking specialised literature and makes the following terminological clarifications regarding violence:

- *Violence*: characterized by the context of interaction in which an individual, or several individuals, act directly or indirectly, causing physical, psychological, moral and material harm to other individuals at varying levels (*apud* Pain, 1992, p. 88)
    - *Violence ressentie*: translated into Romanian, it designates felt or subjective violence, which can be observed from the outside as it is consequently experienced only by the victim (*apud* Debarbieux, 1991, p. 28).
    - *Les brimades*: expresses behavior that falls within the area of psychological violence, such as insults, jokes, pranks, etc.
    - *Bullying*, a concept taken from the English language which has the same meaning as above.

Summarizing some of the views found in the research literature, we can conclude that violence is defined by researchers as a set of actions and behaviors involving the use of force against another/others that ultimately cause harm and damage of a certain nature. It can also be noted that definitions that encompass human violence tend to exclude a number of aspects that are particularly essential in understanding the phenomenon. In the first instance, definitions of violence tend not to refer to the pain and emotional damage caused by the domination of some by others. In the second instance, some interpretations and classifications possess the inclination to focus intensely on studying the pathological, harmful and visible aspects of inter-human interactions and relationships, but neglect the damage caused by institutional and organizational structures (Bujorean, 2017, p. 13).

3. Aggressiveness versus violence

In the research literature, we can observe that the term aggressiveness is used in particular to encompass a wide range of manifestations and behaviors. Theoretical analyses highlight the fact that aggressiveness and violence are

concepts that are often used synonymously. In reality, however, it should be emphasized that they are concepts with different nuances. Broadly speaking, violence refers to the physical component of aggression (Tenenbaum, ch.c, 1997, *apud* Crăciun, 2007, p. 5).

In the conceptual "dispute" between aggressiveness and violence, researcher Ecaterina Balica notes that the relationship between aggressive and violent behavior is shaped based on the effects and risks that each of them manifests in the psycho-medico-social field. While violent behavior involves the use of force, causing physical, psychological and economic harm to victim/victims, aggression only starts to cause harm when it exceeds certain social, moral and legal limits (Balica, 2008, p. 51).

Another variant in delimiting violence from aggressiveness revolves around the idea that violent behavior takes the form of manifestations that are sanctioned by legal normativity. On the other hand, only a part of aggressive behavior is categorized as delinquent as a result of a deviation from social norms and values (Balica, 2008, p. 51). Another fundamental difference between violence and aggressiveness is that the latter is an innate and instinctual behavior of the human being, based on responses in the genetic construction of the human being. Aggressiveness can be influenced through processes (learning) or external factors from the environment in which the individual is living at a point in life (Balica, 2008, p. 51). In turn, violence has been distinctly defined as interfering with a number of shifts and changes in relation to social attitudes, perceptions and representations towards tolerance of certain forms of violence. For example, violence is categorized differently in relation to the characteristics of the cultural model of the society concerned. On the one hand, there are forms of violence that are not accepted in certain world cultures, while in other socio-cultural spaces these forms of violence are still tolerated and accepted by the societies concerned (Balica, 2008, p. 51).

In the context of capturing the distinctiveness between aggressiveness and violence, researcher Michel Floro (*apud* Căprioară & Căprioară, 2013, p. 482) emphasizes a differentiation of the two terms by referring to a number of three operational indicators:

1) *The first criterion*: is a functional/applied one, according to which aggressiveness is a potential source that is based on the direction of actions. It is predominantly integrated in the spectrum of cognitive thinking and analysis. Violence, on the other hand, is characterized by concrete activity, goal-directed action

2) *The second criterion*: it is topological, according to which aggression originates from the internal side of the individual, while violence originates from the predominantly external dimension of the human being;

3) *The third criterion*: it is attributed to the ethical dimension according to which aggressiveness is a potential state which gives the individual the power to face the difficulties he experiences and which, in this explanatory hypostasis, can be judged as acceptable and desirable under certain conditions. On the other hand, violence is interpreted as an intolerable action that causes suffering to those who experience it.

Violence can be defined as any action characteristic of human beings which may cause individuals to lose their physical, mental or material integrity and which affects, in a brutal or continuous form, the daily activities (violence may also take the form of self-destructiveness) or an individual, a collective, a community or the whole of society. Violence always has elements of destructiveness and extremity. In contrast, aggressive behavior has its origin in the innate nature of the human being, it can manifest itself both with elements of violence and through socially desirable behavior. The scope of aggressiveness is much wider and more comprehensive, including, in addition to violent behaviors, those that fall within the area of excitability, impulsivity, propulsiveness and aberrant-type manifestations (Căprioară & Căprioară, 2013, p. 483) From the facts highlighted, it can be assumed that violence is a concept that possesses the following specific notes: manifest form of aggressiveness, destructive intent, frustration of general human needs (Căprioară & Căprioară, 2013, pp. 485-486).

As we can observe from the specialized studies related to the basic field of socio-human sciences, violence is a specific term mainly oriented towards the conceptual package of sociological science. The concept of aggressiveness is frequently used in the whole terminology of psychology. Seen from a similarity perspective, both violence and aggression can, in certain circumstances, be correlated with criminal offences, but also with behavior that falls within the scope of criminally punishable crime (Clerget, 2008, p. 108).

Conclusions

Regarding the myriad attempts to define, analyze and interpret aggressiveness, it can be pointed out that there is no consensus in the scientific community on an exhaustive definition and interpretation of this concept. At the same time, it can be noted that the way in which certain points of view have been propagated is more prominent than in terms of the definition of other psycho-social phenomena and processes. There is an extremely high level of resistance

among researchers in the socio-human sciences to the creation and use of a grid for analyzing, interpreting and explaining aggressiveness. This can be explained by the versatility of descriptive-explanatory ideas and models that have penetrated the scientific space over time (Mitrofan, 1996, p. 433).

Analyzing the main element of differentiation between the concepts of aggressiveness and violence, it can be pointed out that the fundamental difference that can be indicated in this situation is one regarding the degree and the way in which the individual doses the state of attack on the other(s). In contrast to aggressiveness, the register of violent behavior includes aggressive actions and acts that are extreme and excessive. Violence refers to the idea of imposing power, domination and making use of physical as well as psychological superiority over other individuals and social groups (Vozian, 2012, p. 189). Starting from the same explanatory logic, we can also specify that aggressiveness represents an internal disposition of the individual towards attack, a potential one according to some authors. Violence arises when the individual's actions go beyond the state of potentiality /probability of committing a harm/suffering and turns into a categorical state, but in a way that emphasizes brutality, cruelty and imposition.

Most theoretical perspectives describe violence as a behavior that refers to an illegitimate and illegal use of force and can be defined as a force that is directed against socio-legal norms and social order. In the field of criminological science, violence means a form of behavior that stray from, deviates from and infringes a set of rules and laws established and known to social actors. In research literature, there is no general consensus among researchers on the universality of this definition, and there are situations in which violence appears in the social register disguised as armed conflicts, situations of self-defence when the use of force is no longer illegitimate but authorized and legal (Dragomirescu, 1976, p. 76).

Analyzing and examining the totality of scientific perspectives presented in the course of this study, we believe that it is time to commit ourselves to a series of conclusive ideas and issues regarding aggression and violence:

- According to the researchers who follow the biological orientation, aggressiveness is a natural instinct that every human individual acquires from birth (Potâng, Botnari, 2018 *apud* Pârju, 2023, p. 147), being determined in an overwhelming manner by bio-chemical and genetic conditioning and adaptations. The great physicist Stephen W. Hawking also started from the same vision, stating that "aggression is the result of natural selection during cave-dwelling or before that, the aggressive instinct seems to be transmitted through DNA" (Tănăsescu, 2003, *apud* Sandu, 2017, p. 30);

- According to specialists and authors belonging to the sociological perspective, aggression is a specific behavior of social actors determined by the particularities of the environment and socio-cultural groups to which they belong. According to sociological science, by institutionalizing and legislating certain socio-cultural norms, practices and conventions, social groups can control, tolerate or even encourage the proliferation of violence in the society. A particularly important aspect to highlight (as indicated in the previous pages) is the fact that in sociological works the term "violence" is more frequently used rather than "aggressiveness" (Clerget, 2008). This conceptual position adopted by sociology can be attributed to the reasoning that sociologists interpret violence as a deviant type of behavior that transgresses the social, moral, legal and cultural norms that regulate the social order specific to a given social environment;

- In relation to the exponents and researchers affiliated to psychological orientation, aggressive behavior is interpreted by portraying and delimiting the intrinsic cognitive, emotional and affective psychological elements that shape both the inner (unconscious) and outer (conscious) dynamics of the individual. As a consequence, studies in the field tend to create the image that psychology has shown a definite inclination towards analysing and researching aggression which, once activated internally and positively correlated with certain personality traits, character dimension and hereditary inheritance, can metamorphose into violence (external level) and cause severe psycho-emotional, physical and material damage to those who experience and generate it (Căprioară & Căprioară, 2013);

- When the aggressive impulse is dosed by the human individual in an improper way, lacking control and moderation, it generates violence, which can be categorised as the climax of the state of aggressiveness. According to all the norms and values that underpin human societies, "every human being has the right to live in safety and peace, to behave naturally, to speak his or her mind without the fear of being punished or abused, without feeling fear in relation to another person. There is no justification for any aggression, and the blame belongs entirely to the aggressor" (Stanciu et al., 2023, p. 148).

Although the members of the academic community have so far not agreed on an exhaustive definition, interpretation and delimitation of aggressiveness and violence, there is explicit evidence to be found in historical records and sources that aggressive and violent behavior "not only affects the individual, the victim, but also society and especially future generations, setting a negative example to follow" (Bonea, 2020, p. 18). This is why we can only validate the perspective

according to which "violence is a free aggressiveness, subject to human will and having a particular mimetic power, an aspect by which it imposes itself as a cultural phenomenon, original and constructed, therefore marked by intention, then aggressiveness expresses a bioeffective disposition, reactive to environmental situations, and thus shows a defense reaction to the environment" (Baciu, 2011, p. 35). The demarcation line between aggressiveness and violence is very sensitive and elusive in some situations and psycho-social relationships. This fact can mislead even the most well-informed researchers and exegetes of socio-human and natural sciences.

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Traditional Medicine and the Fight against Infectious Diseases

[1]Samuel ADU-GYAMFI, [1]Ali YAKUBU NYAABA,
[2]Emmanuel BEMPONG, [1]Ruth DWAMENA, [1]Konadu ASANTE,
[1]Caleb KUSI AMPOMAH, [1]Julia KOM, [1]Bridget AMABLE KLUFAH
[1]*Department of History and Political Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of
Science and Technology, Kumase-Ghana*
[2]*Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani*
Corresponding Author's Email: mcgyamfi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Traditional medicine plays a major role in the management and treatment of infectious diseases in Ghana. Over the years, successive governments have made enormous contributions through initiatives and policies to recognize the importance of traditional medicine in the healthcare system of Ghana. Though traditional medicine is important in healthcare delivery in Ghana, there have been misconceptions relating to the use of traditional medicine in curing infectious diseases. Some have argued that it is ineffective and unsafe due to lack of scientific proof/therapeutic index. This research assessed the effectiveness of traditional medicine in managing and treating infectious diseases in Ghana. The research deployed a qualitative method and a purposive sampling technique. Individuals; ranging from a traditional medical practitioner (1) to orthodox medical practitioners (doctors and nurses) (3) and users of traditional medicine (12) summing up to sixteen (16) participants were interviewed for first-hand data. Secondary information were also collected from books, articles, reports and electronic sources. The study highlights the extent to which traditional medicine has been effective in curing infectious diseases despite the misconceptions surrounding it (NHIS). The study revealed that traditional medicine is efficacious in treating infectious diseases like COVID-19, typhoid, Syphilis, hepatitis B and C, among others and also established that though TM at the local level is noted to have the challenge of proper dosage and prescription, it has no side effects. This study recommends that the government of Ghana collaborate with traditional medical practitioners by providing them with financial assistance to develop if possible, remedies for epidemic and infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Keywords: *traditional medicine, infectious diseases, orthodox medicine, cure.*

Introduction

Traditional medicine has a long history, with its origins dating back to prehistoric times. It is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based

on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of physical and mental illness (Gureje et al., 2015, p. 168). The principles / approach of traditional medicine vary greatly from culture to culture, but they often include a holistic approach to patient care, a focus on maintaining balance in the body, spirit and the use of natural remedies. Traditionally, the people of Africa have used a plethora of traditional medical knowledge to sustain their respective societies and promote their socio-economic development. Some of the traditional medicines that have been used over the years are alchornea cordifolia (*Gyamma* in Twi), a shrub whose root and leaves are used to cure stomachache, jaundice, fever and ringworms (Abbiw, 1990).

Primarily, the people of Ghana have persistently battled with serious health challenges in the course of their existence. Ghana's health policy upholds the principle that "health is not only a human right issue but also a key developmental issue and ultimately a source of wealth (Republic of Ghana, 2007). Amid these challenges, Ghanaians have shown resilience to anything that poses a potential threat to their survival. As espoused by Adu-Gyamfi and Donkoh, the history of any community cannot be written without paying attention to the issues that shaped the lives of the people (Adu-Gyamfi & Donkoh, 2015, p. 4). One of the issues in their postulation is the prevalence of diseases and how they were prevented and cured within the period under review.

According to Adu-Gyamfi, one of the avenues Ghanaians resorted to for the treatment and prevention of diseases included the use of traditional medicine (Adu-Gyamfi, 2010). Prior to the end of the first half of the 19th century, Western scientific medicine did not form part of the medical systems of the Gold Coast, especially among the indigenes; traditional medicine was the main and only form of healthcare delivery system (Adu-Gyamfi & Adjei, 2017, p. 5). Traditional medicine is an essential contributor to primary health care in many communities based on a long history of cultural acceptance, with an anecdotal estimate of 80 to 90% of the rural population relying on traditional medicine for this purpose (Houghton, 1995, p. 131).

According to the World Health Organization, traditional medicines are "the total of all knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnoses, prevention and elimination of physical, mental and social imbalance, relying exclusively on practical experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, whether verbally or in writing (WHO, 2019, p. 15)." Adu-Gyamfi and Anderson (2017) also define it as "the diverse health practices, and approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal, and mineral based

medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises applied singularly or in combination with other things to treat, diagnose and prevent diseases (Adu-Gyamfi & Anderson, 2017, p. 70). Simply put, traditional medicine is often referred to as indigenous or folk medicine, which encompasses medical aspects such as knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences that are indigenous to different cultures. These practices are used in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illnesses.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) estimates that about 60% of the global population uses herbal medicine to treat their illnesses and up to 80% of the African population depends on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs. Most traditional medical practices are compatible with their users' cultural values, beliefs, and worldviews regarding the meanings of health, illness, and healing (WHO, 2002, p. 2). In both the developed and developing world, traditional medicine is referred to as complementary and/or alternative medicine (CAM). However, its usage has continued to be popular and is increasing rapidly as a viable health care option among the citizens of these nations. Indeed, Ghana appreciates traditional medicine and has a national policy which is aimed at full-fledged integration of traditional Medicine and Practices into the mainstream orthodox biomedical systems in hospitals and other health centres. Thus, it can be contemplated that Ghana presents are useful space to observe and also analyze the policy for integration of traditional medicine into the biomedical settings (WHO et al., 2001, p. 2). It is significant to note that Ghana is among the twenty-five (25) countries out of WHO's 191 member countries that has a policy for traditional medicine (*Ibidem*).

In 1991, the Ministry of Health established the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Directorate to provide a well-defined and recognized complementary health system based on excellence in traditional and alternative medical knowledge and to coordinate and monitor all traditional medical practices in Ghana (Ministry of Health, 2005). Traditional medicine in Ghana has over the years, proven to be very reliable for the people of Ghana (Anful, 2015, p. 6). Insufficient and poor spatial distribution of health facilities, inadequate number of the already ill-equipped health facilities, limited access to public health services, high cost of healthcare due to weaknesses in healthcare financing through poor insurance arrangements, and inadequately trained personnel at the facilities all make the modern healthcare system incapable of meeting the healthcare needs of Ghanaians, especially those living in rural areas (Republic of Ghana, 1997).

Research shows that by the close of the twentieth century, about 70% to 80% of the Ghanaian population depended on traditional medicine for their healthcare needs; as a result, the importance of indigenous medicine cannot be underestimated (WHO, 2021). Anful (2015) opined that Orthodox medicine hindered the development of traditional medicine, and with the coming of orthodox medicine, the African was made to see his or her medicine as not good enough due to the fact that indigenous medicine was linked to the indigenous religious beliefs of the local populations (Anful, 2015, p. 6). In his research "Trends and challenges of traditional medicine in Africa", Abdullahi (2011) argued that:

> *A century of colonialism, cultural imperialism has held back the development of African traditional health care in general and medicine in particular. During several centuries of conquest and invasion, European systems of medicine were introduced by colonizers. Pre-existing African systems were stigmatized and marginalized. Indigenous knowledge systems were denied the chance to systematize and develop.* (Abdullahi, 2011, p. 116)

However, after Ghana's independence, successive governments recognized the essence of traditional medicine in the country. This led to the formation of the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healers Association in 1961, and the establishment of the Center for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine in 1975 attests to this fact (Ministry of Health (MOH) 2005).

Over the years, there have been several scholarly debates about traditional medicine and how it has been used to cure infectious diseases in Ghana. In their study on the "Use of traditional medicine by HIV/AIDS patients in Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana: A cross-sectional survey," Gyasi *et.al* explored the impediments of infections like HIV/AIDS and how it continues to ravage the population and has adversely impacted productivity and economic growth in Ghana (Gyasi, Darko & Mensah, 2013, p. 117). According to the Ghana Aids Commission, 64% of people living with HIV know their HIV status, and 96% of people with diagnosed HIV infection received sustained anti-retroviral therapy. 73% of people receiving anti-retroviral therapy have viral suppression. The total number of people living with HIV in Ghana is 346,120; 36% are males and 66% are females (Ghana Aids Commission, 2020). The classical treatment with anti-retroviral therapies has been effective in prolonging the lives of HIV positive patients who would have eventually progressed to stages III and IV of AIDS. However, the drug does not cure the infection; it only slows the progression of the condition (Lunat, 2011). People living with AIDS in Ghana use traditional

medicine alongside anti-retroviral therapies. This is because of the availability and easy access to a wide variety of traditional medicine care, the intrinsic cultural beliefs and the freedom of patients to select and utilize the treatment modality of their choice (Liu, Manheimer & Yang, 2005). According to Gyimah et al (2021), prior to the emergence of COVID-19 in Ghana, traditional medicine played a key role in preventing and sustaining the lives of the infected (Gyimah, Donkor, Cindy, Sarkodie, Bekoe & Boateng, 2021). Prof. Abraham Kwabena Anang, the Director of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR hereafter) indicated that NMIMR has received a number of local herbal medicines that are being considered for the possible treatment of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In an interview with Emelia Ennin Abbey (a senior journalist at the Graphic Group Communications Limited), she hinted that "Looking at the number of local herbal medicines received, there is a lot of hope because we have received a number of local medicines that are being screened for COVID-19 treatment" (Daily Graphic, 2020). Though many assertions have been made on how traditional medicines have cured one disease or the other. So far, there has been limited social anthropology and historical study on how effective or efficacious traditional medicine has been in the fight against these diseases. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to assess how traditional medicine has been used to cure infectious diseases over the years.

According to Adu-Gyamfi (2010), prior to 1900, the major healing therapies that were used in Ghana for the treatment of ailments were traditional medical therapies. Indeed, the role played by traditional medical practitioners (TMPs) cannot be gainsaid. Abdullahi (2011) posits that, despite the negative effects the introduction of orthodox medicine had on the practice of traditional medicine, traditional medicine persevered and continues to be important in the country's health care system (Abdullahi, 2011). It is evident that traditional medicine has a greater proclivity to improve the healthcare status of Ghanaians if it becomes more regulated and systematized. In a study conducted by Gyasi *et al*., it was revealed that traditional medicine is widely used by HIV/AIDs outpatients on anti-retroviral therapy (ARTs) in the Kumase Metropolis of Ghana (Gyasi, Darko & Mensah, 2013, p.118). According to Liu *et al*. (2005), herbal medicines have been used for treating HIV infection and AIDS. People living with AIDS in Ghana use traditional medicine alongside anti-retroviral therapies because of the availability and easy access to a wide variety of traditional medicine care, the intrinsic cultural beliefs and the freedom of patients to select and utilize the treatment modality of their choice (Liu, Manheimer & Yang, 2005). Also, many Ghanaians resorted to the use of traditional medicine when COVID-19 broke out on March 13, 2020.

Despite the international regulatory bodies like the WHOs perceived double-dealings and suppression of traditional medicinal use, for the combat of epidemic diseases like COVID 19 and HIV/AIDS, the Ghanaian local populations' constant patronage of traditional medicine, could serve as a positive avenue to pass some acceptable messages about traditional medicine, not only as an accessible medicine and practice, but also as an effective and safe practice.

In 2005, the Ministry of Health provided Policy Guidelines on Traditional Medicine Development. It postulated that if traditional medicine is well harnessed, it could be effective and considered advantageous for the development of Ghana's health care system (MOH, 2005). It is against this background that WHO placed much emphasis on traditional medicine as the surest way to achieve total health coverage for the ever-growing populations of Africa. Though the WHO emphasized and legalized the incorporation of traditional medicine into biomedicine to achieve total health in 1978, nonetheless, it still has some reservations as to what traditional medicine can cure and what it cannot cure regardless of its progress. This can also be due to the argument concerning lack of evidence-based health care delivery by traditional health practitioners. It is imperative to ask if all traditional herbal tonics claimed to be able to cure both HIV and COVID 19 were researched thoroughly to assess their efficacy before the authorities drew such conclusions. Notwithstanding the tremendous impact traditional medicine has had on the treatment and management of infectious diseases, biomedical health practitioners have consistently refused to acknowledge the role traditional herbal medicine plays in the management and treatment of such diseases. This emanates from their negative perception toward traditional medicine. It is based on some of these antecedents that the study sought to explore how traditional medicine has been used to cure and manage infectious diseases in Ghana. This research paper aimed to uncover how traditional medicine has been used to cure infectious diseases and its effectiveness since the post-colonial period. The specific objectives of the study were to assess the extent to which traditional medicine has been used to manage and treat infectious diseases in Ghana, to ascertain the attitude and perceptions of orthodox medical practitioners: doctors, nurses, and midwives among others toward the use of traditional medicine in treating infectious diseases in Ghana, to explore the reasons why people with infectious diseases continue to use traditional medicine despite the introduction of orthodox medicine in Ghana and by way of emphasis, it discusses why Ghanaians continue to visit traditional medical practitioners.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed to aid the in-depth descriptive data analysis of the study. Primary and secondary sources of information were adopted to achieve the objectives of the research. Data was collected employing oral interviews. Phones were used to record the responses by the interviewees after receiving their consent to do so. Oral accounts from traditional medical practitioners, scientific medical practitioners and users of traditional medicine in Accra and Kumase, respectively, were found to be useful. Sixteen interviews were conducted in the Greater Accra and Asante during data collection. The interview was conducted and explored in Twi, Ga and English because Twi, Ga and English are the three major languages spoken in these two cities: Accra and Kumase. In particular, interviews that were conducted in the local languages; Twi and Ga, were later translated and transcribed into English language.

The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select participants who could provide valuable insights and rich information into the research questions. In view of this, respondents in the study were chosen from individuals with expert knowledge of the subject matter. Traditional medical practitioners, scientific medical practitioners and users were interviewed. The years of experience of the practitioners were significant and ranged from ten to thirty years of practicing herbal and scientific medicine, while most of the users who were interviewed included persons who have been using traditional medicine since childhood. This was to provide an in-depth understanding of their experience on the topic and allowed questions that required some follow-up questions to be duly addressed for better clarification. The interview questions were structured based on the research objectives. Secondary sources were also employed to enrich the study by providing historical accounts and trends in the usage of traditional medicine for the treatment of infectious diseases. Books, journal articles and published articles including reports and online sources supplemented the primary sources.

Accra and Kumase served as the geographical settings of the study. Accra is the capital and largest city of Ghana, located on the southern coast of Guinea, which is part of the Atlantic Ocean. During the 2021 census, the Accra Metropolitan area, which covers $20.4km^2$ (1,253 square miles) had a population of 5,455,692 inhabitants. Accra is the Greater Accra region's economic and administrative hub and serves as the anchor of the larger Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA), which is inhabited by 4 million people, making it the thirteenth largest metropolitan area in Africa. Kumase is a city in the Asante Region and is among the largest metropolitan areas in Ghana. It is located in a

rainforest region near Lake Bosomtwe and is the commercial, industrial and cultural capital of the historical Asante Empire. Kumase was alternatively known as the "Garden City" because of its many species of plants.

Discussion of Findings

This section of the research is divided into five themes; the first theme deals with the extent to which traditional medicine has been used to manage and treat infectious diseases in Ghana, the second theme discusses the attitude and perceptions of orthodox medical practitioners (doctors, nurses, midwives, etc.) toward the use of traditional medicine in treating infectious diseases in Ghana, the third theme explains the reasons why people with infectious diseases continue to use traditional medicine despite the introduction of orthodox medicine in Ghana and the final theme discusses why Ghanaians continue to visit traditional medical practitioners despite the absence of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to cover their cost.

The Extent to Which Traditional Medicine Has Been Used to Cure Infectious Diseases in Ghana

Since time immemorial, man has been confronted with health challenges and one of the avenues he resorted to for cure was traditional medicine. Some studies have discussed how HIV patients use traditional medicine alongside anti-retroviral therapies. Also, prior to the emergence of Covid-19 in Ghana, traditional medicine played an essential role in preventing and sustaining the lives of infected people. The above notwithstanding, several Ghanaians tend not to believe in the efficacy of traditional medicine in the management of infectious diseases (Krah & Ragno, 2018).

In ascertaining the perception of Ghanaians about how traditional medicine can manage and cure infectious diseases, we interviewed Mr. Akanwariwiak, a medical doctor at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST hereafter) hospital. According to him, traditional medicine can only manage infectious diseases but cannot cure them. He stated that "traditional medical practitioners do not use scientific means in producing and testing their drugs and also they do not have the machines required to be able to detect some of the risky infectious disease viruses so they can only manage infectious disease but cannot cure it". However, Mr. Sakyi, a traditional medical practitioner and the president of the Plant Medicine and Traditional Healers Association of Ghana (PMTHAG), strongly disagreed with this assertion. According to Mr Sakyi, traditional medicine can be used to manage and cure infectious diseases. He

supported his position by explaining that, in the case of COVID-19, when it first appeared, nobody was certain as to how to tackle it. The Minister of Health asked herbal practitioners if they could help. The Ministry took medicines from some specific herbal hospitals to run some tests to see if they could be used as an immune booster because you cannot treat any viral infection without resorting to the immune system. He further explained that it is not the drug that cures the virus; the drug only provides the necessary information to the immune system as to how to tackle the virus.

Sakyi agrees with the assertion made by Doctor Randy concerning the fact that traditional medical practitioners do not have the facilities to diagnose infectious diseases; however, he explained that they identify the virus through the symptoms and put the patient on drugs. However, concerning COVID-19, he emphasized that during the period of the outbreak, they received and treated several patients who had contracted the virus. As a result of dealing with COVID-19 cases, he became infected along with his wife and two of his staff, and as usual, they detected the virus through the symptoms. When asked about how they concluded that they had been healed, he stated;

> *After we realized we had been infected, we started using some of the medicines we produce here in our hospital. We started by taking immune boosters and other medicines. After using it for some time, we realized we were cured because we were not experiencing the symptoms again and so we went ahead to check at the orthodox hospital and when the result came, it proved that our body had developed immunity to the virus. Your body can only become immune to a virus if you have been infected by it, and so this serves as evidence to prove that traditional medicine is capable of managing and to some extent, curing infectious disease* (Interview with Sakyi, 2022).

He provided additional evidence to support his argument that his herbal center has been treating and curing infectious diseases. This is seen in the medical test result in figure 1 thereunder:

Figure 1. *COVID-19 Test results indicate that the patient has become immune to the virus*.
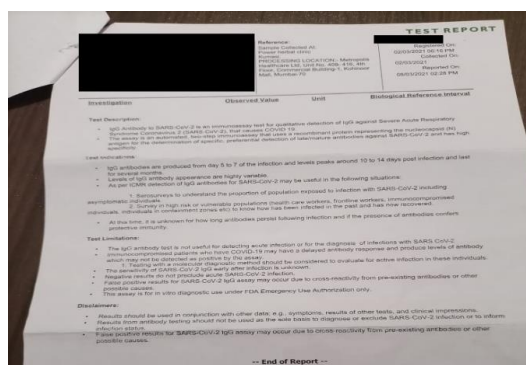
Notwithstanding the above testimony, when the COVID-19 vaccine; Pfizer, was developed, the Ghanaian Government, through the Ministry of Health, received some from the United States Government and made it mandatory for public employees to be vaccinated. The question that begs for an answer and attention is why did the Ministry of Health initially resort to investing in traditional medicine to get a cure for the virus and what could have caused the shift from researching and testing traditional medicine to pursue vaccines?

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA hereafter), in collaboration with the National Medicine Regulatory Agency (NMRA), approved a clinical trial of "Crytolepis Sanguinolenta," locally known as "Nibima," for its efficacy in treating COVID-19 cases (Kekrebesi, 2022). Also, at the height of COVID-19 in 2021, the President of Madagascar, Andry Rajoelina, unveiled a locally developed herbal tonic made from the Artemisia plant that contains antimalarial properties (Koiga, 2021), hailing it as a traditional cure for the virus but the World Health Organization did not accept or acknowledge its relevance; a quintessential African narrative.

Again, in a discussion with Amoah, a user of traditional medicine, he indicated that whenever he experienced any form of sickness, his first point of contact was always traditional medicine because the therapy works very well for him. Oduro also informed us that in 2018, his sister was infected with Hepatitis C. According to him, they visited many hospitals, including prayer camps but saw no improvement until someone directed them to visit a traditional hospital.

He stated "*Doctor no deε, waboa yεn papa. Yε hyεε aseε sε yε kɔ ne hɔ no, bεyε bosome miensa, ankyε koraa na yε hunuu nsonsonoyε wɔ me nua ne ho εfa hepatitis yareε no ho*" (Interview with Oduro, 2022). It translates as "the doctor placed my sister on drugs and just three months later, my sister tested negative for the Hepatitis C virus." He added that since then, whenever they need medical help, their first point of contact is a traditional hospital or to see a traditional medical practitioner. After Oduro gave us this information, we asked if we could interview the doctor who took care of his sister, but unfortunately, we were not able to reach the doctor due to his busy schedule. We went back to Doctor Sakyi, the herbal doctor we had interviewed, to inquire if we could get any evidence to support the narrative that traditional medicine can cure hepatitis. We asked if he had been able to cure any patient who came to their centre with Hepatitis B virus, using traditional medicine.

He showed us some of the awards he has received for treating hepatitis and also provided us with evidence to support his opinion that traditional medicine is

very effective in treating infectious diseases. Below are some of the evidence to support the argument that traditional medicine can treat and cure infectious diseases.

Figure 2. *A report indicating that the patient has tested positive for Hepatitis B. Patient's name has been anonymized due to ethical considerations.*

The above report illustrates that the patient has been diagnosed with Hepatitis B virus. This patient is said to have visited several orthodox hospitals but saw no improvement in the health condition. The patient decided to use traditional medicine as a last resort. According to the patient, he had seen no improvement in the health condition, after visiting the hospital and taking medicine prescribed by the orthodox medicine practitioners for a period not less than three years. He said in Asante *twi*; "*ma brɛ o, ma kyini papapapa, me baa ha koraa na anidaasoɔ biara nni hɔ sɛ me ho bɛ tɔ me, nanso Power Specialist Herbal Clinic adaworoma nti ɛnɛ me nso menya mayare sa*" (Interview with Sakyi, 2022).

Figure 3. *The report indicating that the patient whose report indicates positive in figure 2, has tested negative for the Hepatitis B virus. Patient's name has been anonymized due to ethical reasons.*

After he visited the traditional medicine hospital, they placed him on drugs for two to three months and after a few months, he went back to check his status and he tested negative for the hepatitis B virus. This further attests to the fact that traditional medicine is effective in the management and treatment of infectious diseases in Ghana. It is quite unfortunate that some individuals do not believe in the efficacy of traditional medicine in treating infectious diseases based on misconceptions about the usage of traditional medicine. However, others do believe in the efficacy of traditional medicine because they visit traditional medical practitioners for treatment and mostly see these practitioners receive new patients suffering from infectious diseases in their hospitals or healing centers.

The above notwithstanding, the two medical reports, positive and negative are all emanating from one herbal laboratory. Several clinicians and diagnostic centres argue that to ascertain the true nature of a first diagnosis, the health centre ought to get a second opinion from mostly a well-reputed laboratory. It seems to us that this is a missed opportunity for the herbal centre to prove the efficacy of herbal medicine in this context.

The Attitude and Perception of Orthodox Medical Practitioners (Doctors and Nurses) Towards the Use of Traditional Medicine for the Treatment of Infectious Diseases in Ghana

In Ghana, statistics show that several people use traditional medicine rather than orthodox medicine to treat diseases. Concerning infectious diseases, there is the assumption that only orthodox methods can cure them. Based on the objectives of the research, we proceeded to find out the attitude and perception orthodox doctors and nurses have toward the use of traditional medicine in treating infectious diseases in Ghana. Below are some of the discussions of the interviews we conducted and the views of the respective individuals we interviewed. According to Akanwariwiak, orthodox medicine involves "giving treatment to patients by giving them drugs that have been clinically and scientifically proven and do not cause harm to patients because they are given the required dosage". He further explained that if the medicine is taken in a large quantity above the required dosage, it may cause harm to the patient. However, if the right amount of drug is taken then the drug would be curative to the body.

We asked if the orthodox medical practitioners have any relationship with the traditional medical practitioners. Our interviewee further hinted that they do not have any relationship with traditional medical practitioners (TMPs hereafter) in terms of collaborating to treat infectious disease. Also, they do not refer any patients to the TMPs. In fact, during his ten years of working experience as a medical doctor, he has never seen any of his colleagues transfer patients to herbal hospitals. He emphasized; "I do not agree to the assertion that traditional medicine can cure infectious disease because most of the time, their medications have no therapeutic index. The same dosage of medicine that can cure malaria can also cure HIV" (Interview with Akanwariwiak, 2022). TMPs often associate their claims to Judeo-Christian Bible verse like Ezekiel 47:12, where it is written that the fruits of trees will be for food and the leaves for healing, which is further interpreted to mean that all trees can serve the purpose of healing.

Dr. Boamah, a medical doctor in Brodekwano, a town in the Bosomtwe District in the Asante Region of Ghana, hinted that "poor people who contract infectious disease visit traditional or herbal centres because the national health insurance does not cover all the costs regarding infectious diseases and infectious diseases like septic arthritis or any other deep tissue infections are known to be very costly. If an individual or a patient suffering from this infectious disease does not have money, traditional medicine will become his or her alternative". He argues that the beliefs of people influence their health-seeking behavior in Ghana. When an elite is infected with an infectious disease, the first option will be to visit

the hospital while the unlettered mostly prefer traditional medicine because of what they have been conditioned to believe in (Interview with Boamah, 2022). In an interview with 32 years old nurse in Accra; Alberta Fianu, she also added that traditional medicine cannot cure infectious diseases because TMPs lack the requisite machines and skills that will aid the process of treating infectious diseases. She further argued that TMPs can treat some diseases like malaria, headaches, and stomachaches but their assertion of being capable of treating diseases like HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and recently COVID-19 is not true because she has never seen any evidence that shows that traditional medicine has cured any infectious disease because they lack the scientific capabilities to do so. Generally, some TMPs do not keep their hospitals or centres clean and the methods they use in producing their drugs are also not modernized (Interview with Fianu, 2022). However, an interviewee said that she believes that traditional medicine can cure infectious diseases because people continue to visit herbal hospitals, which means traditional medical practitioners do not just manage the disease but cure it and people testify to that on television and radio (Interview with Konadu, 2022).

Despite the negative perceptions and brashness held by some medical practitioners toward the use of traditional medicine in treating infectious diseases, other medical practitioners believe that traditional medicine is very important in the healthcare delivery system of Ghana. They believe that traditional medicine and orthodox medicine are complementary and not on a war path for survival. Indeed, they can co-exist even if it is done with no easy truce. An interviewee, Mansah, made a statement which is consistent with Adu-Gyamfi and Adjei's assertion that African traditional healers' systems are a part of African culture and that even in contemporary Africa, traditional medical practitioners remain relevant to the health and general well-being of Africans (Interview with Mansah, 2022; Adu-Gyamfi & Adjei, 2017, p. 4). The medical doctor hinted that the services provided by traditional medical practitioners are important in the healthcare system of Ghana because not all villages have access to clinics or hospitals, but TMPs can be located in every village, town and city in Ghana. Therefore, they fill a lacuna for those who do not have access to orthodox hospitals by providing another alternative. She also argued that though TMPs lack the facilities required for treating infectious diseases, they are still able to cure some infectious diseases like hepatitis, urinary tract infections, malaria, and COVID-19.

Dr. Sakyi also provided us with the necessary information to debunk some of the allegations made by some of the orthodox medicine doctors or practitioners cornering the use of traditional medicine in treating infectious diseases and how the TMPs conduct their services. According to Dr. Sakyi, traditional medical

practitioners collaborate with orthodox medical practitioners in treating some infectious disease cases. He stated that they have a referral system that is based on mutual understanding. He hinted among other things that

> *There are certain infectious disease cases that the orthodox medical practitioners cannot treat and others that herbal medical practitioners cannot treat as well, so when we encounter such issues (for example, cases that need surgical attention), we refer them to the orthodox hospitals and they also refer to us cases they think we can attend to.* (Interview with Sakyi, 2022)

He also argued that the assertion that the preparation of traditional medicine is not attractive due to poor hygiene and the belief that it is not safe because TMPs do not use scientific means in producing the medicines are all false to some extent. He argued further that not all traditional medical doctors use the traditional method of producing or manufacturing medicines. Most of the traditional medicine centres in Ghana recently infuse the scientific method of producing drugs and healing into their systems.

Dr. Sakyi gave us a tour around his production hub to take us through how modern "traditional" medical practitioners produce their medicines. The evidence is seen thereunder:

Figure 4. *Shredding machine. It is used to cut the medicinal plants into smaller pieces. With the traditional method, the plants were placed on top of a table or a piece of wood and shredded by using a cutlass.*

Figure 5.   **Figure 6.**
Grinding machine   *Drying room*

Traditional medical practitioners use the above machine (Figure 5) to turn raw materials, such as leaves, bark of tress and dried fruits into powder. With the traditional method, traditional/herbal practitioners pound their ingredients in a mortar.

They also have a drying room where all the leaves, bark of trees and shredded plants are assembled to dry as seen in figure 6 above. This process, however, does not use the traditional method of drying plants directly with the sun; it uses a solar dryer that is equipped with ventilators to assist in drying the ingredients. Solar dryers use the heat from the sun to remove the moisture content from the plants and leaves which is done in the shortest possible time as compared to the traditional method of drying it directly under the sun, which could take a longer period of time.

Figure 7. *A Chiller Machine*
A chiller machine (cooling water circulation device) is used to remove heat or liquid from the herbs.

The machine below **(Figure 8)** is used to prepare liquid medicine or syrups. A boiler is a closed vessel in which fluid is heated. The final product of the medicine comes about via vapor compression, and absorption refrigeration cycles.

Figure 8. *Boiler*

Figure 9.
The medical plants and leaves that have been shredded and grounded are placed in this pan before they are transferred into the boiler machine to be heated

Figure 10.
Filtration Machine

The water that goes to the boiler machine passes through the filtration machine and the machine physically traps any sediments or contaminants. Then, activated carbon acts like a magnet for compounds as water passes through. So, it basically cleanses the water before it is used for the preparation of the medicine

Figure 11
Bottle-filling machine

The above machine (**Figure 11**) is also used to refill the prepared liquid medicines into bottles and also includes a capping machine.

We have included these images to help shape the perception people have concerning how traditional medicine is prepared. Modern traditional medicine is a mixture of tradition and modernity in the sense that, some but not all traditional medical practitioners have infused scientific measures into producing their medicines and maintaining good hygiene in their hospitals and clinics. With the images provided above, we hope to enlighten readers and users in order to change the negative and sometimes too, the false narratives concerning traditional medicine, especially its preparation.

Reasons Why People with Infectious Disease Continue to Use Traditional Medicine despite the Introduction of Orthodox Medicine

Akua Konadu, a 45-year-old woman, uses traditional medicine because she grew up in a traditional home where her grandmother used to pour traditional medicine for her and her siblings every morning. "So, I grew up trusting in the efficacy of traditional medicine because that is what I was brought up with". We asked if she has used traditional medicine in treating any infectious disease. She narrated that she suffered from a urinary tract infection when she was about 25. She reported that all her friends advised her to visit the hospital but she did not. She used dried *gyamma*, a local herb in treating it. Her grandmother taught her how to use it and it actually cured it.

The excerpt provided above describes the situation of several Ghanaians. They grow up using traditional medicine to treat common ailments such as

headaches, stomachaches, malaria, rashes, and fever. However, Mr. Nii Odatey Benjamin has a different reason for using traditional medicine. According to him, he had never utilized traditional medicine until he had typhoid. He said among others:

> *I took all the medications the hospital gave me but I saw no difference. It got to the point where I nearly believed it was spiritual and it never crossed my mind to visit an herbal clinic though my wife was pushing me to do that. I didn't want to visit any herbal hospital because I said to myself, even these doctors are not helping me? What can these traditional doctors do? My situation worsened and so I had no choice but to listen to my wife's plea. I took the medication for just a month and it was as if a miracle happened, the disease vanished from my system. I'm always telling people about it because I never thought that traditional medicine was so powerful.* (Interview with Odartey, 2022)

He added that he has never been to the hospital ever since and that anytime he feels unwell he purchases traditional medicine such as time herbal mixture, herbicide herbal mixture, and *Adu-Yaa herbal malamix* and it always works for him.

Most of the interviewees we interviewed concerning COVID-19 informed us that they used traditional medicine when COVID-19 was on the rise because traditional medicine does not have side effects as compared to orthodox medicine. Mr. Akomea reported that one can use traditional medicine throughout the life course without fear because they are plants and in essence, they are like food. Plant medicine is a restorative form of therapy; it replaces lost cells and replenishes the body. When the body has too much of it, it will just excrete the mineral (Interview with Sakyi, 2022). We further asked about why the conclusion that traditional medicine has no side effects. He explained that generally there are no side effects but there are certain poisonous plants. If the right plants are identified and used, there are no side effects. He goes on to discuss that traditional medical practitioners send their medicines to either Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) or Center for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine, Akuapim Mampong, for them to conduct toxicity tests, and the result always comes out as containing no side effects (*ibidem*). This also influences people with infectious diseases to utilize traditional medicine since it has fewer or no side effects compared to orthodox medicines.

Ocloo, a 53-year-old woman from Accra also has a different opinion regarding this discourse. For her, she has not and will not use traditional medicine to treat an infectious disease because orthodox medicine has never failed her when she contracts any infectious disease like white or candidiasis (Interview with Ocloo, 2022). She strongly opposes the assertion that traditional medicine can

manage and treat any infectious disease. Few of the interviewees had the same opinion. Janet Dufie also argued that she would rather patronize orthodox medicine than herbal medicine (Interview with Dufie, 2022). However, it is important to note that their assertion of not believing in the use of traditional medicine to cure infectious disease was not based on personal experiences but on the mere perception that traditional medicine would not be effective in curing any infectious disease.

According to Amankwaa, traditional medicine requires trust from patients. He hinted that

> *Psychologically, if you do not trust the treatment of diseases using traditional medicine, the therapy will not work for you. However, if you believe in the treatment of diseases using traditional medicine then it will work for you. An individual's faith in traditional medicine means 50% coverage of the treatment. In emphasis, belief in the efficacy of traditional medicine works for patients* (Interview with Amankwaa, 2022).

According to him, trust and mutual relationships contribute to why people choose herbal medicine over biomedicine. Further, he emphasized that trust and faith in the herbal medicine during treatment is key in traditional medicine treatment and the healing processes in particular.

Some respondents including Affum and Offei also hinted that they experienced the symptoms of COVID-19 but did not visit the orthodox hospital due to the fear of being quarantined (Interview with Affum; Offei, 2022). Hence, such people treated the virus by using traditional medicine such as hibiscus tea (*sobolo*); a mixture of roselle leaves, ginger, *prekese*, and pineapple. Others also included medications that were provided by their traditional medical practitioners, but they refused to provide the names of such medicines because they were advised not to. The findings revealed that severally, traditional medical practitioners do not provide the names of the exact medicines they use in treating infectious diseases because there are policies and guidelines by the Food and Drugs Authority concerning the registration of herbal medicinal products in Ghana. In fact, this process requires a huge amount of money, so several traditional medical practitioners remain silent on what their medicines are capable of curing since it can lead to their arrest if they have not gone through the right procedure or requirements to register the particular medicines they are using to cure infectious diseases.

Reasons for Ghanaians Patronage of Traditional Medical Practitioners despite Funding Challenges

Our findings are consistent with Patrick A. Twumasi's assertion that Ghanaians were entirely reliant on traditional medicine until the introduction of orthodox medicine. Generally, ordinary Ghanaians have used traditional medicine to cure common ailments such as headaches, stomachaches, and jaundice since childhood. About 85% of the people we interviewed stated that they have been using traditional medicine since infancy.

Nursing mothers use an enema bulb syringe (known as *"bentoa"* in Akan) to clean the colon of their babies. "*bentoa*" is used to deliver herbal medicinal portions into the lower gastrointestinal tract through the rectum for treating common ailments and diseases like constipation, nausea, indigestion, headache and dizziness. Based on the above discussion, it is evident that most Ghanaians grow up trusting in the efficacy of traditional medicine. The study also revealed that, unlike orthodox medicine, traditional medicine is easily accessible to Ghanaians. Mr. Ottu at Bosomtwe, a suburb of Kumase reported:

> *Most of the communities surrounding me do not have orthodox hospitals and the few communities that do, they do not have drugs to help with the treatment of their patients. The doctors normally prescribe the medicine for us to go and buy at the pharmacy and there is only one pharmacy in my village, so most of the time they do not have the prescribed drugs and we have to travel to a different town to purchase them. What we normally do is visit Opanin Kusi, a traditional medical practitioner for him to treat us using traditional medicines and it always works for us* (Interview with Ottu, 2022).

The above indent depicts the dilemma of some Ghanaians. Villages and towns and to some extent some cities lack hospital facilities to cater for the healthcare needs of the increasing population in the country. However, it is important to emphasize that traditional medical practitioners can be found in every part of the country namely: villages, towns, and cities. This indicates that traditional medicine has become the first and to some extent, the only form of healthcare for the majority of Ghanaians.

According to Amankwaa, people prefer traditional medicine because of trust, proximity, mode of payment, and the mutual trust between traditional medical practitioners and their patients. Amankwaa further hinted that:

> *An individual's faith in traditional medicine means 50% coverage of the treatment. In emphasis, belief in the efficacy of traditional medicine works for patients* (Interview with Amankwaa, 2022).

According to her, trust, proximity, payment methods and mutual relationships contribute to why people choose herbal medicine over biomedicine. Also, when it comes to availability and accessibility, traditional medical practitioners can be located in every sphere of the country (villages, towns and cities) but orthodox medical practitioners are mostly found in towns and cities but are rare in villages.

The findings from this research revealed that some people also prefer using traditional medicine to cure infectious diseases due to the mode of payment. This affirms Adu-Gyamfi's assertion in his research, titled "From present African health care systems to the future: health financing in Ghana and Rwanda". The research argues among other things that payments for traditional medical practitioners in pre-colonial Ghana were made in kind, especially through the provision of livestock; it was essentially an out-of-pocket payment system (Adu-Gyamfi, 2019, p. 319). Traditional healers who do not have clinics or hospitals conduct their services at home, and the mode of payment is more flexible in the sense that some of the traditional medical practitioners do not accept money as payment. This claim corresponds with the assertions of Twumasi (1975) and Adu-Gyamfi and Adjei (2017). In Twumasi's study, he indicated that in pre-colonial Gold Coast, which is now Ghana, indigenous healers did not charge their clients for their services, but relied on the appreciation shown by the patients as their reward (Twumasi, 1979, p. 29). Adu-Gyamfi and Adjei also argued that traditional medical practitioners still rely on the pre-colonial mode of payment where the lack of resources by patients did not deny them access to healthcare delivery (Adu-Gyamfi & Adjei, 2017). Again in Adu-Gyamfi's article, "Islamic traditional healing amongst the people of Sampa in Ghana; An empirical study", Aziz, a traditional healer, is said to have argued that traditional medicine is very effective. In order not to hinder a sick person's healing, he proceeds to treat a patient who is unable to pay for his service and he continues to treat a patient who may not be able to pay him after the healing process has been completed. He further indicated that the power of healing is from Allah, and charging too much as a result of greed will reduce the power or the efficacy of the medicine (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

Also, one of the interviewees indicated that she was infected with syphilis, and the traditional medical practitioner who took care of her asked for a hen as payment. "I could have spent more money if I had visited the orthodox hospitals so I will recommend people with infectious diseases to visit the traditional medical practitioners, their medicine is effective and affordable as well" (Interview with Serwaah, 2022). Some orthodox medical practitioners are of the view that poor people use traditional medicine because it is not expensive, however, Dr. Sakyi, a

traditional medical practitioner, strongly disagrees with this assertion. He argued that poverty is not one of the reasons people patronize or opt for traditional medicine. He added that several traditional medical practitioners have established either clinics or hospitals and their services do not accept the national health insurance scheme (NHIS). The fact that people still visit these herbal hospitals for treatment, knowing that they cannot use their national health insurance, proves that it is not only poor people who use traditional medicine (Interview with Sakyi, 2022).

Ghanaians continue to patronize traditional medicine despite the introduction of orthodox medicine to treat diseases and infectious diseases in particular. Among other things, accessibility, flexible mode of payment, and sometimes efficacy in treating diseases have been listed as the reasons for the increasing patronage of traditional medicine irrespective of the existence of orthodox or western biomedicine. Indeed, it can be argued that poverty cannot be the only major factor that influences people to choose traditional medicine as a mode of treatment or cure for their illnesses in Ghana.

Conclusion

The research revealed that several orthodox practitioners believe that traditional medicine is dangerous due to the fact that there is no therapeutic index. However, traditional medical practitioners, on the other hand, asserted that herbal medicines do not have side effects compared to orthodox ones because traditional medicines are plant-based and in essence, they are like food. Plant-based medicines are restorative form of therapies; they have the capacity of replacing lost cells and replenish the body. Also, herbal medicine users sided with herbal medical practitioners to confirm that traditional medicine has no side effects. In some cases, traditional medical practitioners who cannot handle certain ailments, refer issues involving surgical operations to orthodox medical practitioners for treatment and vice versa. The Medical practitioners interviewed expressed skepticism about the efficacy of TM. For instance, Dr. Boamah stated that TM can only manage but not cure serious diseases, labeling it as unsafe due to its lack of proper scientific research. Similarly, Dr. Randy Akanwariwiak pointed out that TM lacks a therapeutic index for dosage prescription and deem it unsafe scientifically. Nurse Alberta Fianu echoed these sentiments, stating that TM lacks the scientific capacity in terms of technology and herbs' lack the effectiveness to cure infectious diseases. Likewise, some users share similar sentiments with the medical practitioners. Individuals like Dufie and Ocloo expressed negative views, stating they would never use TM and prefer to go to the hospital or seek

biomedical treatments, which they find to be effective and is supported by appropriate legal tenets. In contrast to the views of the biomedical doctors, TM practitioners like Dr. Akomeah Sakyi postulated that TM effectively cures many infections, including Hepatitis B and C. Mr. Aziz also noted that TM is effective and offers flexible payment methods as does not inconvenience users with any side effects.

Users of TM provided a range of experiences. For example, Akua Donkoh and Oduro, reported that TM was "very effective" in curing infections such as candidiasis and Hepatitis B. Others, like Mansah, emphasized TM's relevance in curing endemic infectious diseases, while Nii Odartey shared a personal success story of curing typhoid after one month of TM treatment. However, not all interviewees provided positive responses. Dufie and Ocloo expressed their distaste against TM, stating that they have not used it before and they will never use TM and prefer scientific medical treatments. Some respondents, like Amankwaa, suggested that TM's efficacy could be influenced by the user's belief in its effectiveness. This highlights the psychological and spiritual aspects of treatment and its potential impact on perceived outcomes. According to the study, TMs' availability, accessibility, flexible payment method, mutual relationship it offers users and its effectiveness contribute to the reasons why most people patronize it. Nonetheless, a medical practitioner, Dr Boamah presented some reasoning regarding funding. He opined that TMs are patronized by poor people because they cannot afford biomedicine. Dr Sakyi, a TMP, refuted the argument concerning funding. He hinted that TMs are not covered by NHIS like biomedicine so poverty cannot be the rationale. It is rather based on individual choice, accessibility and the belief in the potency of traditional medicine by the local population.

Generally, the effectiveness of traditional medicine in curing infectious diseases appears to be highly subjective and varies significantly among practitioners and users. While some practitioners and users report positive outcomes and effectiveness, others express skepticism and caution regarding its scientific basis and safety. While biomedical practitioners question the scientific validity and safety of TM, many users and TM practitioners attest to its effectiveness based on personal experiences. However, more scientific research and clinical trials may be needed to objectively determine the effectiveness of TM in curing infectious diseases. However, further studies should focus on more scientific research and clinical trials to objectively determine the effectiveness of TM in curing infectious diseases. As elucidated in the discussions, successive governments in Ghana have implemented policies and/or initiatives that have assisted in promoting traditional medicine and have also helped in creating a

platform for all traditional medical practitioners to come under one umbrella; which is known as the Traditional Medicine Practice Council (TMPC). Its purpose is to brand and create a respectable image for Traditional and Alternative Medicine (TAM) practice in Ghana. The organization has succeeded in transforming the methods used by some traditional medical practitioners in producing their medicines and to some extent built a respectable image of traditional medicine in Ghana. However, a lot more can be done to sponsor traditional medicinal research to handle complicated health issues.

Conclusively, the research has revealed that traditional medicine is efficacious in managing and treating COVID-19, Hepatitis B and C, typhoid and general infections like candidiasis, syphilis, among others since it has a significant of twelve (11) positive responses against four (4) negative and one (1) neutral response. Though both biomedicine and traditional practitioners were biased or subjective, the view of users can be considered due to the fact that they were based on individual experiences. Therefore, the study proposes that the government gives much attention to traditional medical practitioners in their quest to cure or fight COVID and any other future epidemics and pandemics in order to build public trust. This study recommends that the government of Ghana collaborate with traditional medical practitioners by providing them with financial assistance to develop if possible, remedies for epidemic and infectious diseases. However, more scientific research and clinical trials are needed to objectively determine the effectiveness of TM in curing infectious diseases. Also, further studies should focus more on scientific research and clinical trials to objectively and scientifically determine the effectiveness of TM in curing infectious diseases with a larger sample size.

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ESSAYS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEWS

Question Quadrant's Role in Philosophy for Children

Paraschiva Rodica RUSU
University Ştefan cel Mare of Suceava
dida_bucea@yahoo.com

Abstract

Philosophy for Children (P4C) has gained significant attention in recent years as an approach that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative learning among young learners. At the heart of this pedagogical framework lies the Question Quadrant Method, an innovative strategy designed to help students categorize and explore questions in meaningful ways. The Question Quadrant Method represents a powerful tool for enhancing the teaching and learning experience in Philosophy for Children. While teachers generally recognize its potential to foster critical thinking and engagement, addressing the challenges associated with its implementation in Romania is very important.

Keywords: *P4C, Question Quadrant, critical thinking.*

Introduction

Philosophy for Children (P4C) involves engaging young learners in structured discussions that address philosophical questions relevant to their experiences and understanding of the world. As Echeverria (2007) observes, children possess a natural capacity for questioning, making them ideal participants in collaborative philosophical exploration. Within P4C, the teacher's role is not to impose authoritative answers but to create a safe, dialogic space where inquiry is encouraged, perspectives are shared, and ideas are critically examined.

In this approach, education is understood as an active process of inquiry, reflection, and collective meaning-making. Learners are encouraged to examine concepts, test assumptions, and explore the implications of different viewpoints through respectful dialogue. One of the key pedagogical tools in this context is the *Question Quadrant*, developed by Philip Cam, which provides a framework for categorizing questions according to their depth, scope, and connection to a given stimulus. By guiding students in generating and classifying their own questions, the Question Quadrant supports richer classroom discussions and helps develop both critical and creative thinking skills.

Literature review

1. PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C)

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a widely implemented educational approach in schools. It aims to stimulate dialogue on various topics, improve communication skills, and help children formulate their own philosophical questions or arguments. P4C is applied to the whole class and encourages peer-to-peer dialogue based on philosophical questions arising from stories, films, or other stimuli. Students sit in a circle, facing each other, while the teacher introduces an activity or game related to a particular theme, skill, or disposition they want to emphasize. This might involve a video, a story, an image, or an artifact. The group discusses the stimulus, raises a series of questions, and collectively selects one suitable for discussion (Trickey & Topping, 2004), such as *What is kindness?*, *Is it ever right to limit someone's freedom?*, or *Are a person's looks more important than their actions*?.

Once the appropriate question is chosen, the main discussion begins. Students share their ideas on the question and argue their perspectives. The teacher, trained in P4C facilitation, guides the process without dominating it, encouraging participants to support their claims with examples, test assumptions, and explore potential consequences. The session ends with closing remarks from all participants. Students may maintain their initial opinions or change them after they talk to each other. They have the opportunity to express their own thoughts succinctly, but also to reflect on the session's progress. So, the discussion typically concludes with a reflective review, in which participants consider the quality of their reasoning, highlight productive moments, and identify areas for improvement.

Haynes & Murris (2012, as cited in Tricky & Topping, 2004) outlined nine stages of a P4C session:

1. *Starting* – begin with a relaxation exercise and establish interaction rules;
2. *Introducing a stimulus* – use a prompt to initiate inquiry;
3. *Pause for thought* – allow time to think;
4. *Interrogation* – encourage students to think of intriguing or complex questions;
5. *Connections* – link questions together;
6. *Choosing a question* – decide on one question for investigation;
7. *Building on ideas* – encourage students to build on one another's thoughts while also exploring independent avenues of inquiry;
8. *Recording the conversation* – mapping or documenting ideas;

9. *Review and closure* – summarize, reflect on the process, and consider if perspectives have changed.

Philosophical discussions in P4C avoid suggestive questions that could lead to random answers or teacher-biased responses. Instead, it privileges open-ended questions with multiple possible answers, fostering both intellectual autonomy and respect for diverse perspectives (Lipman, 2003). P4C is not about authoritarian or indoctrinating practices but about fostering alternative ways of thinking, respecting the opinions of both children and adults.

Even though we cannot generalize that the use of P4C has always a positive impact, since the honesty of its implementation can take various forms, nevertheless, numerous studies have indicated that, under specific circumstances, children can experience substantial improvements in both academic performance and social skills through this form of interactive philosophical engagement. Empirical research by Sharp, Reed, and Lipman (1992) found that those children who study philosophy are more likely to achieve better academic performance and also have social benefits, such as higher self-esteem and a higher degree of empathy.

Although advocates highlight P4C's potential, critiques question its practicality within highly standardized curricula (Trickey & Topping, 2004). Time constraints, assessment pressures, and limited teacher training can reduce the scope for open-ended inquiry, leading to superficial or rushed discussions.

2. THE QUESTION QUADRANT

The *Question Quadrant* was developed by Australian philosopher Philip Cam as part of his work integrating the Community of Inquiry pedagogy into mainstream classrooms (Cam, 2013). One notable early application was at Buranda State School, where P4C was adopted to address challenges in student engagement, discipline, and academic performance. Reports from this initiative indicate improvements in critical thinking, teacher confidence, and overall school culture, prompting further research and documentation (Scholl, 2014).

Cam observed that even within well-facilitated philosophical discussions, students often struggled to formulate questions that could sustain deeper inquiry. Many tended toward simple factual queries or closed-ended prompts that limited discussion potential. In response, he created the Question Quadrant, a visual and conceptual framework for classifying and improving student-generated questions before engaging in dialogue.

This tool divides the questions into four categories, resulting from the intersection of two axes:

- one horizontal axis with closed-ended questions (which have a specific answer) and open-ended questions (which allow multiple answers)
- one vertical axis with questions directly related to the text or topic studied and questions that go beyond the immediate context, having a more general or intellectual nature.

Thus, the four resulting quadrants are:

- questions for understanding the text: closed-ended questions directly related to the material studied;
- factual knowledge questions: closed-ended questions that require additional information, not necessarily present in the text;
- questions that stimulate literary speculation: Open-ended questions related to the text, which encourage interpretation and exploration of ideas;
- questions for philosophical research: open and general questions, which go beyond the immediate context and invite deep reflection.

The quadrant was developed to support teachers and students to recognize and use open-ended intellectual questions that are, in fact, philosophical questions. Through the questions proposed in the quadrant, the teacher moves from the role of "omniscient" (in which he asks questions to which he knows the correct answer), to the role of facilitator in which learning is centered on the student, creating conditions for meaningful learning experiences.

The Question Quadrant Method is a tool that encourages students to differentiate between types of questions, such as factual, interpretive, evaluative, and creative. By dividing questions into these categories, learners can better understand how to approach complex issues and engage in deeper discussions. Teachers often use this method to guide students in formulating their own inquiries, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in their learning journey.

In Romania, Associate Professor Marin Bălan, PhD, from the University of Bucharest, deepened and promoted the use of the Question Quadrant in education. He stressed the importance of encouraging children's natural curiosity and asking questions as an essential way to explore and understand the world.

Based on Cam's model, Marin Bălan (2023) proposed a simplified version of the quadrant with different labels for better understanding:

- Instead of "closed," use "one correct answer."
- Instead of "open," use "many possibilities."

- Instead of "textual understanding," use "look at the text and see the questions."
- Instead of "factual knowledge," use "ask an expert."
- Instead of "literary speculation," use "ask using your imagination."
- Instead of "research," use "think a bit."

Below is the graphic representation of the quadrant proposed by Marin Bălan (2023):

Figure 1
Marin Bălan's Question Quadrant (2023)
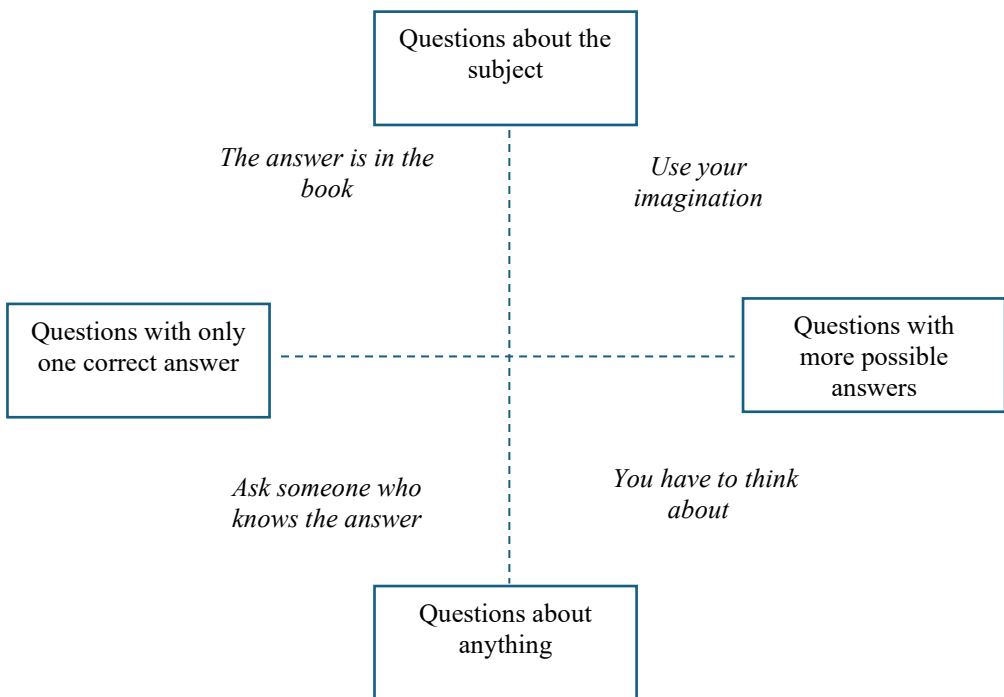
The quadrant encourages intellectual open-ended questions that lead to philosophical discussions. Teachers shift from the role of "all-knowing expert" to facilitators of student-centered learning. Bălan's (2023) adaptation preserves the quadrant's conceptual integrity while making it more accessible. Visual aids, such as cards placed in a circle or sticky notes categorizing questions, are often used to make the activity more engaging. While simplification may enhance pick-up and classroom usability, two risks arise: over-compression can obscure the distinction between textual and intellectual inquiry that prevents drift back into comprehension checks; loss of metacognitive language may reduce students' ability to self-classify and upgrade questions.

However, research suggests that the Question Quadrant can strengthen metacognitive awareness, helping students to not only participate in discussions but also reflect on the quality and purpose of their questions (Massey, 2019). Activities such as distinguishing between facts and opinions or conceptual classification exercises (Cam, 2019) can complement quadrant use, further supporting the development of critical and creative thinking.

The implementation of the Question Quadrant in the educational process facilitates a structured approach to discussions, allowing students to distinguish between different types of questions and actively engage in the learning process. This method promotes a collaborative learning environment, in which both teachers and students contribute to the exploration and deep understanding of the topics studied.

Conclusions

The integration of the Question Quadrant into educational practice offers a structured yet flexible approach to guiding classroom inquiry. By categorizing questions according to their type and scope, students learn to differentiate between superficial queries and those that stimulate deeper exploration. This process not only strengthens critical and creative thinking but also fosters collaborative learning environments where teachers act as facilitators rather than sole knowledge providers.

Evidence from both Australian and Romanian contexts suggests that the method can enhance student engagement, improve the quality of discussion, and promote intellectual curiosity. However, its effectiveness depends on consistent teacher training, cultural adaptation, and alignment with broader curricular goals. When implemented thoughtfully, the Question Quadrant becomes more than a categorization tool, it functions as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue and reflective learning.

However, recent critiques of P4C note that while the program cultivates higher-order thinking, it may be impractical within standardized curricula constrained by testing regimes (Haynes & Murris, 2012). Moreover, the Question Quadrant has been accused of oversimplifying the nature of philosophical inquiry. In many instances, children's questions may fall across categories or resist categorization altogether. Trickey and Topping (2004) caution that P4C interventions often produce mixed results and that success may depend heavily on teacher training and classroom ethos.

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