

EDITION Σ: ISSUE 2, FALL 2024

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AURANTIUM

the mini 🍊



Vincent Van Gogh. *Still Life of Oranges and Lemons with Blue Gloves* 1889. Free to use under Creative Commons Zero.



Aurantium: Syracuse University's Official Undergraduate Philosophy Journal is proud to publish its second Σ Issue. This time a little smaller.

We decided to take an experimental approach this year by drawing inspiration from “zine” culture that turns information into a concise, accessible, and fun format. Thus, the “mini” version of *Aurantium* was born.

So, while we still have philosophical essays published by a group of our very own talented SU students, we also have alternate methods of sharing philosophical insights in hopes of broadening the community.

As always, we want to thank our incredible team ranging from editors, readers, contributors, and members of the Philosophy department at SU. We could not have made this possible without you all!

Happy philosophizing,
The *Aurantium* team.

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Experiencing *small and large beauties*

pleasure states

Love is the point of it all.

To experience emotions to their fullest.

*To make a **difference**. Finish your life
feeling like you **helped** someone.*

*The meaning of life is to have **faith** that
your life has or can have **meaning**. To
not believe would cause a person to
abandon their life or become **selfish**. To
believe would allow you to live in a way
that you can **derive meaning** from.*

*To live and love and **experience** as much
as **possible**.*

Idk just vibe

*The meaning of **life** is to **love**. To make
connections and **build community** and
spread love and connection. **What would
we have if we didn't have others?** To live
is to love. **To love is to live.***

“What is the Meaning of
Life?”

...It's an unusual question
to ask a stranger on
campus. Luckily, we got
some people who were
willing to take on the
challenge.

Meet Our Authors!



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American 18th Century Artist. *Young Woman with a Butterfly*. 1710.
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Evaluating Circumstances around Patterns Pertaining to Infidelity

in·fi·del·i·ty

/ˌɪnf əˈdelədə/

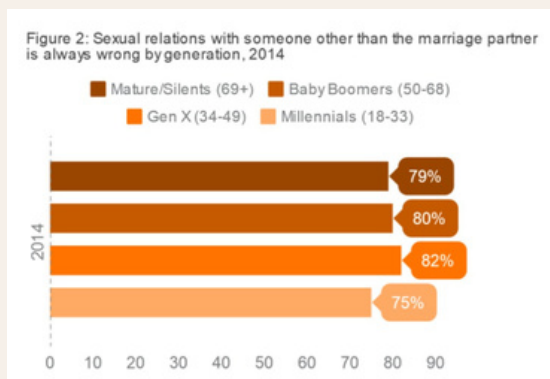
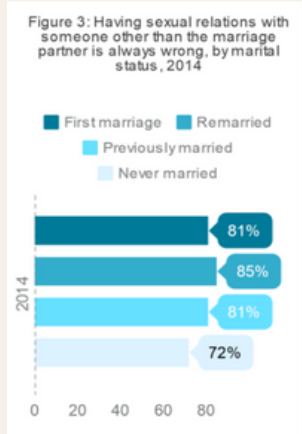
noun

the action or state of being unfaithful to a spouse or other sexual partner.

Historically, the identification of infidelity has been largely limited to sexual acts outside of a legally wedded couple. Even greater was the idea that only women should be wholly faithful to their husbands while a man should be able to do whatever he desires outside of the marriage; this was often a method of power and masculine gratification. For a long time, divorce was never in favor of women, whether it be frowned upon, not possible for women to file, or unequal allocation of assets, women have been at a disadvantage maritally for years. Recently in history, it has become the norm for either spouse to file for divorce for any reason (e.g., infidelity), and even more recently individuals shy away from getting married at all. Marital infidelity is the leading cause of divorce and the reason for marital counseling. These outcomes have a direct influence on both the parents and the children that may be involved in the situation. It is not uncommon to see individuals making decisions based on their history of infidelity. It is also not abnormal to see children mimicking parental behavior or making decisions to avoid any conflict they may observe.

When a couple is without children, the decisions they make after the infidelity surfaces are often much less complicated than when children are involved. With children present, there is the possibility that they might observe the patterns of behavior from their parents and deem it acceptable. Children are very influenceable, especially when they are younger, and cannot necessarily decipher right from wrong. Even after maturing, if they've grown up observing certain parental patterns, they are more likely to repeat the behavior. Others may shy away from engaging in things that cause conflict in their home, such as avoiding marriage completely. This trend of children making decisions based on their parent's behavior is not new, but time still plays an important role in how these behaviors are exhibited. As we enter a new era of societal norms, we see that younger

generations are becoming more liberal regarding relationships and are less likely to desire marriage than the previous generations. When we observe patterns and attitudes toward marital infidelity, it is important to understand that time, experience, and individual circumstances each provide important contextual value to the patterns of behavior.



The above figures are sets of results from the General Social Survey. The data depicted on the left is the percentage of the current generations of adults' attitudes towards marital infidelity. Each of the generations before millennials has a trend of 79% and higher disapproval. This trend is contrasted by millennials who reported a lower percentage of 75% disapproval. This trend is thought-provoking; the data provided shows that the younger generation seems more lenient

towards infidelity behavior than older generations. Another data set from the same source also shows a sharp decline in negative attitudes from 84.2% in 2008 to 79.1% in 2015 after steadily increasing in disapproval from 69.8% in 1973.¹ This generation is a stark contrast to the trend of increasing disapproval of infidelity behavior that peaked in 2008. This change is very indicative of cultural shifts between generations. This decrease in negative attitudes only seems to be more and more distinct with Generation Z.

The figure on the right depicts the attitudes towards infidelity behavior between different relationship statuses. It shows that the highest reported negativity percentage of 85% is from individuals who are remarried and the lowest at 72% is from those who have never married.² This is a very interesting trend because it shows that people have different reactions and attitudes towards infidelity depending on their interactions with infidelity and marriage. Obviously, those who have never been married could not have experienced marital infidelity, but those who are remarried could have possibly experienced infidelity in previous relationships. This is a dynamic that is important to take into consideration when evaluating attitudes towards infidelity. Those who have not experienced marital infidelity may not necessarily have as strong of an opinion regarding the matter due to the simple fact that they have not had the experience, they cannot relate. It is clear that being married has an impact on how an individual feels about marital infidelity.

The differences in circumstances between generations come with changes in the ways in which people interact with each other; the nature of relationships between millennials is quite obviously going to vary from relationships between baby boomers. An example of these contrasts is depicted in the first data set. We could go even further to infer that there is a correlation between the two data sets if we assume that most of the unmarried individuals are younger, closer to the age group of millennials. Though it may seem like the data is only presenting the idea that millennials and unmarried individuals don't have as many negative feelings towards infidelity, it may simply have to do with the ways they view relationships differently than the contrasting groups. The younger generation may view relationships more liberally than do older generations; This would explain the sudden change in attitude towards infidelity. Individuals who have never married might not have such strong feelings about infidelity because they cannot relate. Those who are married or have been

¹ General Social Survey

² General Social Survey

married might have more experiences that influence their attitudes toward infidelity. It's clear that the majority of people still disapprove of infidelity overall, but the reasoning for each response was formed from different circumstances.

Parental influence on children is often overlooked when analyzing infidelity patterns in individuals. Married or unmarried, there are many theories as to why someone might engage in infidelity. The evolutionary theory of infidelity describes a more biological reason for infidelity in which men and women both experience increased patterns of jealousy responses to infidelity as a result of paternal and maternal pressures. The theory explains that there is a sex difference in the jealousy responses in which the responses of women are heightened for emotional infidelity as opposed to men which have heightened jealousy responses for sexual infidelity. This theory has a strong root in the biological determination of attitudes towards infidelity. This theory isn't widely supported by critics because of its strong focus on sex differences as a main factor for attitudes towards infidelity. There are many factors that affect an individual's feelings toward infidelity. The overall response towards infidelity is consistently negative, but this theory of evolutionary differences in response to infidelity considers the response to different types of infidelity. No longer is this concept limited to sexual acts outside of a relationship, it also includes receiving emotional satisfaction from someone other than their partner.

It is quite critical in analyzing infidelity behavior to know that infidelity is more often exhibited by men than women. When we dive deeper into understanding why this might be, the answer can be found in societal roles and expectations.³ Historically, much of societal values and norms have been inherently patriarchal. As time has gone on, we have seen drastic changes and shifts in power, but there is no denying that society still operates in a patriarchal system at its core. These imposed values on society have created a power complex for men and consequently, men often seek power at the cost of their relationships. If this type of dynamic is observed by young boys, they may grow to believe that the type of behavior they grew up seeing from their parents is acceptable. They might think that a husband is allowed to engage in infidelity behavior due to evolutionary motivations and power dynamics.

The resulting distress from either suspecting or confirming that a partner is engaged in infidelity behavior can cause the individual to change their overall attitude towards infidelity. If

children are to observe these dynamics between their parents, then they may also have different attitudes towards infidelity than children who did not observe such dynamics between their parents. Children of parental infidelity are more likely to engage in infidelity behaviors in their own relationships.⁵ While this observation does not necessarily disprove the evolutionary theory of infidelity, it increases the complexity of an individual's propensity to engage in infidelity behavior. The evolutionary theory along with societal roles provides a sound explanation as to why men might engage in infidelity behavior more than women, but they don't provide information regarding the likelihood of infidelity behavior.

The social learning theory provides reasoning as to why an individual might be more likely to engage in infidelity behavior. As mentioned above, children who observed parental infidelity growing up were found to be more likely to engage in infidelity behavior in their own relationships. This is likely due to the children's mimicry of parental behavior. Infidelity may have been normalized in the home, especially if it was a repetitive theme growing up. Children learn and catch on to the behaviors of parents from a young age; an example of this is young children using inappropriate language, not knowing what the words mean, but simply repeating the behavior they observe. If a parent uses inappropriate language around a child, the child may go on to use the words they've heard without even knowing the meaning. Soon, this type of language, if not corrected, will integrate into the child's habits as they get older. The same can be said for any behavior a child picks up from a parent, including infidelity behavior.

As society shifts from the conservative nature of older generations to the more liberal younger generations, while we still have a continuation of these generational relationship patterns, there is a decline in individuals getting married at the average age previous generations were or simply not getting married at all. Whether or not the infidelity behavior is of evolutionary or environmental influence, this is still an important trend to consider when analyzing attitudes toward marital infidelity. Many factors influence an individual's propensity to engage in infidelity behavior, but if people are less and less inclined to get married, then individuals will not have such intense feelings towards marital circumstances, such as marital infidelity. It is guaranteed that children will still see parental infidelity as they grow up, and some children will likely see their parents' divorce due to infidelity, but this pattern of marital infidelity cannot be repeated if the children of that generation are less inclined to get married in the first place.

Analyzing attitudes towards and reasoning for infidelity is a very complex feat. There are a multitude of environmental factors and situational circumstances that play into an individual's attitudes or choices around infidelity. Studies around the topic of infidelity often fall short of considering enough factors when evaluating trends. An individual's propensity to engage in infidelity can have both evolutionary and environmental influences. That individual may have learned the behavior from their parents or feel like infidelity will gain them satisfaction. Alternatively, these evolutionary and environmental influences may prompt an individual to do the opposite of the behaviors they observed. This difference can create a completely different attitude towards infidelity. This is especially true if an individual is not getting married. It's important to consider an appropriate amount of contextual factors when evaluating marital infidelity, especially when assessing trends over periods of time.

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An Analysis of the Possible Means of Acquiring Virtue According to the Meno

In the Meno, Meno approaches Socrates and inquires about the nature of virtue, specifically, one section discusses if it can be taught or if it manifests in individuals naturally. Over the course of their dialogue, the two investigate these options, and by the end of the conversation, Socrates deduces that virtue is a result of neither of these things, rather it is given by a divine source. Though there are strengths and weaknesses to each of his assertions, his reasoning in favor of the teachability of virtue is the strongest as the other two alternatives have very apparent flaws and because the rebuttal to the learned argument is based on tenuous assumptions at best.

The first argument that Socrates and Meno considered during their dialogue was that virtue was teachable. To investigate this, they determined that if virtue was teachable, it must be knowledge, as everything that is taught must be knowledge (87c). From this point, the conversation turns to examining whether or not virtue is a form of knowledge. Before entering this engagement though, Socrates and Meno begin with the assumption that virtue is a good thing, and therefore beneficial (87d-e). This is essential to the discussion because if they can determine that the only good things are knowledge, then virtue must be knowledge. Socrates and Meno then list all the things that are beneficial to them, both physical and spiritual, such as health, beauty, courage, etc., and realize that they are beneficial only under the condition that they are used correctly (88a). This correct use comes only from understanding, or knowledge, and since virtue has already been stated to be something beneficial, it must also be a type of wisdom. Since all wisdom is teachable, virtue must also be teachable (88d).

Socrates makes another argument as well in favor of the teachability of virtue, stating that if virtue was innate rather than teachable, it would have been recognized at birth, and protected by the city. Individuals with virtue would have been sealed up to avoid their corruption and then used to serve their city when the time was right (89b). Meno concurs, and since that situation does not occur, virtue must not be manifested naturally.

There are a few flaws in Socrates' reasoning. Though in previous sections of the Meno, it is evident that Socrates and Meno are unable to define virtue concretely, his case for locking up men of virtue implies that virtue can be identified from a young age. Additionally, it suggests that those with

virtue must be able to rule correctly and that they want to or that society is willing to lock them up and exploit them regardless of those individuals' true desires. Furthermore, virtue being teachable doesn't exclude men from that scenario, as some could still be taught virtue and then sealed to serve their city.

Socrates doesn't discuss this but rather decides to attack his conclusion by addressing some of its implications. In 89d, he states that if virtue was teachable, then there would have to be teachers and students of it, leading to his argument for the possible innate nature of virtue. The reason he is hesitant to accept his verdict on the capacity of virtue to be taught is because he is unable to find any teachers (89e). At this point, Socrates and Meno question Anytus, the son of Anthemion, a man known for his wisdom, wealth, and respectful nature. Since Anthemion has raised his son in a similar manner, Socrates believes it is logical to seek an answer from him concerning whether or not there are any teachers of virtue (90a-b). Socrates begins his inquiry by asking Anytus if it makes sense that to learn something, one must go to someone who does that thing or teaches it, and naturally, Anytus agrees (90c). As such, Socrates suggests the Sophists are the people to go to learn virtue since they claim to teach it, but Anytus immediately dismisses this, asserting that they are frauds and only mad people go to them (91c). Instead, after Socrates inquired, Anytus maintains that any good Athenian would be better learned from their predecessors (93a). Socrates contests this claim using examples of good and wise men with sons who were not good and wise but were taught to be good at other things. For instance, Themistocles was a wise man, and his son Cleophantus was not, but he was taught to be a good horseman (93d-e), further insinuating that it must come intrinsically as they assume that any virtuous man should want his son to be virtuous as well.

Socrates then questions Meno to see if there are any good and wise men in his country willing to teach virtue, to which he responds no, and that even among the virtuous and wise, there is contention over whether or not it can even be taught (95a-b). Socrates supplements this with examples of Sophists and poets who also contradict themselves regarding this matter (95c-e). Socrates then asks Meno if he can think of any other fields where its teachers are not generally recognized as teachers or are unable to decide amongst themselves whether they know their discipline or not, to which he responds he does not. Based on this, he concluded that those who are confused by a topic, are unable to be teachers of that topic (96b). At this point, Socrates decides that

if Sophists and good men are unable to be teachers, then no one else is either, making virtue unteachable (96c).

Socrates's deduction here also has a few shortcomings in it as well. Two of the most prominent ones come from his implicit assumptions with respect to teaching and learning. He first assumes that those who possess a trait, in this case, virtue, must be able to teach it as well, which is not always true. This is because the ability to teach is a skill separate from whatever the actual topic that is meant to be taught is. Socrates may respond to that by saying that a facet of virtue is the ability to teach it, however, that assertion is never made, especially considering, again, no definition of virtue is ever given. On the other end, Socrates also presumes that just because something has the ability to be taught, it can be learned by everyone. This is not necessarily true, as some people are just unable to acquire certain skills, regardless of whether or not that skill is teachable or not. These two assumptions form the basis for his response to Anytus against the aptitude for learning virtue, and if they are not accepted, can invalidate his rebuttal.

Since Socrates has found deficiencies in both of his previous responses to Meno, he decides to review one of his earlier statements, that only knowledge is good and leads to beneficial things. Instead, he shifts his stance, stating that true belief could also be as beneficial (97a). True belief is defined as holding a viewpoint that is correct, without necessarily having reasoning to explain it, and according to him, if one follows true belief, one will end up with the same result as wisdom, since both will result in a right answer (97c). Consequently, if virtue is not acquired by nature, nor taught, but is still good and beneficial, then it must be true belief that manifests it (97e). He then compares those with virtue to prophets and soothsayers, who also say true things without the ability to explain them due to divine inspiration, essentially making them godlike (99c). Due to this, he states that the virtuous are also godlike and that virtue must also come from the divine (100b).

Though this is the conclusion that Socrates reaches and doesn't challenge, there are a few faults to it. Among them is the weak connection between the virtuous and prophets. Socrates assumes that just because the virtuous and oracles both have the same result of saying beneficial things without knowledge, they must also have the same cause of heavenly intervention. This is inaccurate as many things can lead to the same conclusion from a variety of sources, meaning that

virtue doesn't have to come from a supreme being. Instead, true belief could be a result of intuition or other factors.

Based on these three choices presented in the Meno, the strongest argument for the nature of virtue is still that it is teachable. This is because its refutations were unconvincing as they were based on the assumption that virtue must be able to be taught and learned by all. If Socrates's counterargument against teachability no longer holds, then neither does his argument in favor of the innate nature of virtue. Finally, the position that virtue is a result of a holy intervention hinges on a dubious association with soothsayers, making it unpersuasive as well. As such, virtue is most probably embodied through it being taught, however, only under the condition that the individual has a good source of guidance and is capable of learning, alluding to some level of congenital ability.

In the Meno, Socrates offers Meno three different possibilities for the appearance of virtue in an individual. At first, he discusses the viability of virtue being taught and learned versus it being a trait that people are born with, but after analyzing both of those claims, he decides that neither is probable. Instead, he comes to the conclusion that it must come from the divine. However, when examining these assertions, the case for virtue being teachable is most fitting as its counterargument is the weakest, while the arguments for innate nature and divinity are based on inadequate assumptions, making them less plausible options.

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Infinite Sense Paradox and Its Solutions

I will be discussing Frege's problem, mainly how this issue can lead to a format of an infinite hierarchy of sense. I will be explaining how this hierarchy comes about according to Kipke (2008) as I cannot seem to understand Burge. For the remainder of this paper, I am to make clear how to resolve this hierarchy in several ways. Firstly, by attempting to show how the issue of the hierarchy is a non-problem and possibly may only exist due to misreading in Frege. Secondly, if the argument of the hierarchy non-issue is not compelling then I will also be showing other arguments that attempt to show that the worries that come about due to the infinite hierarchy are non-worries.

The puzzle that Frege presents operates as so: Let us assume there is a man who looked up at the stars and named them. He named the last shining star in the sky "Hesperus". Sometime later he named the first shining star in the sky -the morning star- "phosphorus". Not known by him, these stars that he had named were the exact same object -the same star. Thus, it must be the case that the referent¹ points out the same thing for both, as they are in fact the same thing. However, seeing that one refers to "Hesperus" and the other "Phosphorus" it is impossible to state that these different things point out the same thing only using referent. Thus, Frege produces a sense² to identify how this is possible.³

Let us take the referent from the example above; the referent of "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" both co-refer to the planet "Venus". For when these objects are pointed out they both point out the planet Venus. This form of reference is direct⁴. To make this clearer I will now be bringing in the point counter to this -that being indirect referent⁵. Now, if we were to shift the

¹ Referent operates as so; it points out a particular. Put simply referent is the thing that is being discussed, the object of discussion. As an example: I point to a cat named Jimmy and say "this is Jimmy"; the referent in this case is Jimmy. (Frege, 1948)

² Sense put sense or a sense of a particular referent is reminiscent of platonic forms (Plato's Meno 82a-85e). They can be described as non-concrete abstract objects. For sake of clarity, I will be stating that these are not ideas, Frege refers to ideas as conceptions -and so the sense is not this. It is important to understand that the nature of sense is very much public; public to all that are well versed in the language with the language in which the sense remains. The sense is public because if it was not then people would be unable to agree upon referent: as sense determines referent. (Frege, 1948)

³ Frege 1948

⁴ Direct reference is a type of reference in which the object of subject is referred to by pointing out exactly what it is. It is a case in which things are directly talked about in relation to the donation of reference. When something is being donated in almost all case it is being done directly. (Frege, 1948)

⁵ Indirect referent is the exception to direct referent. Indirect reference was brought about by Frege so he could

referent to an indirect manner with a statement such as “Will Ervin believes that Hesperus is a star” then it seems that the sense must also change. The sense determines a (direct) referent,⁶so, there must be something else that determines an indirect referent. It cannot be the traditional customary (direct) sense of a particular. as the indirect referent because the indirect referent refers to the customary sense.⁷It makes the most sense to determine this thing to be the indirect sense. This indirect sense, much like the customary sense, determines the indirect referent. So, in any case, in which there is an indirect reference it must be determined in an indirect sense. Thus, solving issues regarding how referent is determined in an indirect context. However, this does produce other such issues, mainly the issue of the infinite hierarchy of sense. Whenever there is a belief statement it must be followed by an indirect referent, which is then determined by the sense. So, it follows that if a double-induced belief statement were to be uttered – “Charles believes that Will believes that Hesperus is a star”- then there would be two senses for that particular utterance. Hence it follows from this that an approaching infinite amount of sense can occur in this sort of hierarchy. Many problems arise from the notation of an infinite hierarchy of sense, for the sake of clarity I will be discussing which ones of these problems are relevant later in the paper.

Now, it is possible that the previous interpretation of the text is wrong. If this were to be true, then it seems that the hierarchy of infinite sense is still very much still an issue. So, I will be demonstrating solutions to this sort of problem and issues that may still pose issues. It has been suggested that the hierarchy only comes about because of a misreading of Frege. The indirect reference clearly does not operate as the standard for referent; it is an exception. Hence, we should treat it as such. According to Frege (1948), “Such exceptions must always be borne in mind if the mode of the connection between sign, sense, and reference in particular cases is to be correctly understood” (p. 212). Some suggest that indirect referent, according to Frege, is an exception to the standard conventions of sense and referent. It is believed that Frege actually thought that indirect referent determined its referent through itself¹⁰, after all, it refers to the customary sense. The indirect referent plays the role both of the referent and the sense -to make clear the kind of structure

attempt to solve his own puzzle. For the sake of clarity Indirect referent comes about when discussing things like what someone believes about “Hesperus” or “Phosphorus”, or any object that refers. Indirect reference is the referent of what someone believes about a particular. (Frege, 1948)

⁶ Frege 1948

⁷ Kripke 2008

⁸ Kripke 2008

⁹ Kripke 2008

¹⁰ Georgalis 2022

that is occurring. It is important to understand though the previous statement isn't true and merely is an attempt to help someone understand the structure. To be very clear an indirect referent has no sense. Frege never once refers to the hierarchy, something that has confused many, as it is unlike Frege to overlook something. It is believed here that Frege did not miss anything, he simply didn't talk about the hierarchy because it wasn't an issue. The only reason the hierarchy occurs is that people assume incorrectly that indirect reference must have an indirect sense. Frege makes no such claims, and the notion of indirect sense only comes about because of this misunderstanding.¹¹ It is believed that this confusion comes about due to Frege's terminological stipulation -something that makes clear an exception to the rule- of indirect reference. In this he refers to an 'indirect sense' to show how this exception compares to the normal rulings, however, in doing so it seems that he caused some major confusion.¹² Thus, the hierarchy seems to be a note issue as it comes about due to a misunderstanding of the original text.

Assuming that Kripke is right, and the hierarchy does exist, is it something that should be worried about? Kripke argues it is not. Kripke (2008) states "Important to this presentation of Frege is that he has given general directions for the reference of terms in all contexts and that this cannot possibly be incomplete. There are indeed infinite hierarchies generated by both (α)¹³ and (β)¹⁴, but these are given by a recursive rule" (p. 197). The hierarchy is recursively generated.

From my understanding this means that the hierarchy approaches infinity; it is not actually infinite. A new indirect sense is produced only when the proper conditions are met, hence why it is approaching infinity and not infinite, as you will never have an infinite induced instance of a sentence.¹⁵ So, the hierarchy is not a problem metaphysically for Frege's theory on sense and reference. From my understanding, another one of the issues that are taken with the infinite hierarchy is that it is too cognitively taxing. It creates instances in which Frege's theory is unlearnable.¹⁶ Kripke argues that this too is not an issue. Every indirect sense is acquainted with its previous sense. Hence, if we understand the customary sense -which is level 0 of the hierarchy- then

¹¹ Georgalis 2022

¹² Georgalis 2022

¹³ "When words appear in direct quotes, they refer autonomously, that is, to themselves" (2008, 195).

¹⁴ "When words appear in indirect contexts, that is 'says that', 'believes that', and so on, they refer to their senses in the clause following the 'that'" (2008, 196).

¹⁵ Kripke 2008

¹⁶ Skiba 2022

we should have no trouble understanding the hierarchy¹⁷. Another solution suggests that this sense is not infinite, that it can be understood in a chunked manner. By this, I mean that the amount of sense doesn't have to be infinite. Instead, the sense in these cases could be all-encompassing. For example, having our singular belief-induced statement has a "singular sense". For double-induced instances of sense, our sense would be referred to as a "double sense"¹⁸. It is important to understand that these are singular instances of a sense -there is only one- yet these encompass and determine several indirect references.

I have proposed a very different solution. One that relies on an assumption that is very controversial to reading Frege, and one that I suspect that Frege would not like. This is because direct reference has a very externalist frame, and indirect reference has an internalist frame¹⁹. It is possible that the indirect reference is not determined by a sense but by conceptions -something also discussed by Frege. This solves the infinite hierarchy of sense issue and also explains why indirect reference operates differently from the direct referent, mainly because it is not determined by sense. This idea is extremely unfounded and goes beyond the limits of the scope of this paper, but I found it interesting enough to be worth suggesting as a solution. Perhaps it can be further explored in future works.

¹⁷ Kripke 2008

¹⁸ Skiba 2022

¹⁹ Skiba 2022

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The Philosophical Path: Insights from PhD Student Austin Fraser

Behold—*Aurantium's* first ever interview! Ever want to know what a career in philosophy can look like? We sat down with 4th-Year PhD student Austin Fraser to pick his brain on all things philosophy, grad school, and work.

When did you have your first introduction to philosophy? What initially drew you to the subject?

So, I actually did a study abroad called Semester At Sea, maybe some undergraduates have heard of it, but I took an environmental ethics course during the program and that's what first drew me to the topic.

I think I just really enjoyed the that questions were being asked, as well as how the subject matter was being approached—the analytical way of looking at things.

What was your undergraduate philosophy journey like? Did you participate in related extracurriculars?

Yeah, I actually started off at community college. I was there for a while, and then transferred to Berkeley. At the community college, I took pretty much every philosophy class they had. Philosophy of religion, ethics, logic, intro to political theory, etc. They also had a little philosophy club there.

And then at Berkeley, I just had a wide variety of courses. I also got to take some graduate seminars as well which was nice. Outside of that I didn't do too much. I definitely read outside of the required readings, but I tend to lean more contemporary ethics. I did dabble in existential ethics for a bit.

Tell us more about that philosophy club!

Yeah, I mean it was pretty small. I think I actually ran it [laughs].

But we met like once a month, I don't remember exactly, it was a long time ago. We just met up, to discuss, like, any specified reading, or we were discussing stuff from class at the time. We would just have food and chat, basically.

Why did you choose to pursue graduate school?

After graduating [from Berkeley] I worked at some law firms for a couple of years—it wasn't bad—I think I just had missed the academic environment, and wanted to at least explore what that opportunity would give.

So, I did a masters. It was a pretty low-risk thing, since the masters program pays for your tuition, and you get a stipend, so it seemed worth trying. So, I did that. There are different masters programs that give—I think there's at least 6 to 8—that give you tuition remission and a stipend, and their primary purpose is to get you into pHd. That is how they are evaluated, and I think that's how they get funding—that's all they do. So yeah, and now i'm here.

What are the stages of your PhD program? What is your thesis about?

So, basically how our program is formulated: We have course work, and we have like a special paper, which is basically a publish-quality paper, and then you have a dissertation proposal, which is the rough outline of your paper (a few chapters and then some abstracts), and then defending your dissertation.

So right now, i've done the course work, i've done the special paper, and now i'm working on the proposal. And the proposal is... at first you may not think it's that difficult of a topic to understand...but its about harm.

So this comes up with like the non identity problem, which is hard to explain super briefly. Basically, we have a lot of intuitions about what counts as a harm, and its really difficult to justify what those intuitions are. Harm's a lot more convoluted concept than we realize, but at the same time it seems to guide a lot of our ethical judgements—it seems worse to cause harm to somebody than to just, like, allow harm to happen. Or, it seems worse to fail to give somebody a benefit. It seems worse to punch somebody than it is to fail to give them groceries, even though we can assume they have the same differences of all being that would come about. So, why is the first one harm and the other one not? Its difficult to come up with a theory that explains why.

And then the non-identity stuff comes up later with, like, reparations and climate change. As its unclear how current (say if we picked environmentally disastrous policies) how those policies actually harm future people. Cause, they're not worse off if they would have been otherwise.

How do you think this experience is better preparing you as a philosopher?

Um, I mean I don't know if it is [laughs].

It's more preparing you to be a researcher, than anything else. It's more knowing how to write about literature, how to respond and find your way. It's teaching you how to be an academic philosopher, which is valuable. But yeah, its primary purpose is that [research].

And since you've been studying philosophy since undergrad, have your views or ideologies changed at all?

Yeah, they have. I feel like in undergrad I was a tried-and-true utilitarian. Singer was a big influence. Now I don't really know [laughs] if I endorse any political theory.

But yeah, I mean they changed a lot. And part of it is just getting clarity. You just start to learn about all the different nuances of things you didn't see. Like, for ethics there's permissibility, blame, and then there's compensation. And these things are, like, distinct things actually. So yeah, they have changed. But I don't really know where I'm at now, like ethics-wise I don't have any particular theory.

What advice do you have for students who are just beginning to take an interest in academic philosophy?

Just keep exploring it. I do think it's worth keeping in mind...job opportunities that will be provided when you're done. You gotta be realistic that you might be spending a lot of money [to attend a program], so like make sure that you keep in mind when you pursue it.

It's still really valuable, you know you learn a lot of valuable skills for law school. It provides a lot of non-monetary benefits: You learn about the world and it's a different way of thinking about things, and that's helpful too.

I'm sure our department has ways they can facilitate you know, undergrads, if they want to learn more about the topic. There's tons of stuff offered. I would try and find a specific topic you like and keep exploring. I'm also available if people have questions as well!

Last question: Do you have an idea of what you would want to do post-grad?

The [philosophy] pipeline is for teaching, but it's really difficult. Like you are competing for—at least in my understanding—not a lot of full-time positions. So there's a really short supply and a really high demand of people competing for the same jobs everywhere in the country.

And, if you don't do full time [teaching], you do part time. You might not want to do that... full time has the research opportunities, and part time does not give you that. Or, you could teach at community college, but then you are mainly just teaching. It's just worth keeping in mind if you pursue that route. It's worth knowing and thinking about what exact job you're gonna get.

Personally, I'm gonna probably try and go into the market; See if I can find something. But i'm also very open to—especially since I worked at some law firms before—working in law so that might be in my future. But, that also depends on some opportunities that I might find.

Thanks for chatting with us, Austin! Best of luck with the rest of your PhD!

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