

**TOWARD AN ETHICS OF TRAGIC UNCERTAINTY: MIGUEL DE  
UNAMUNO AND GLOBAL SOCIAL CONFLICT**

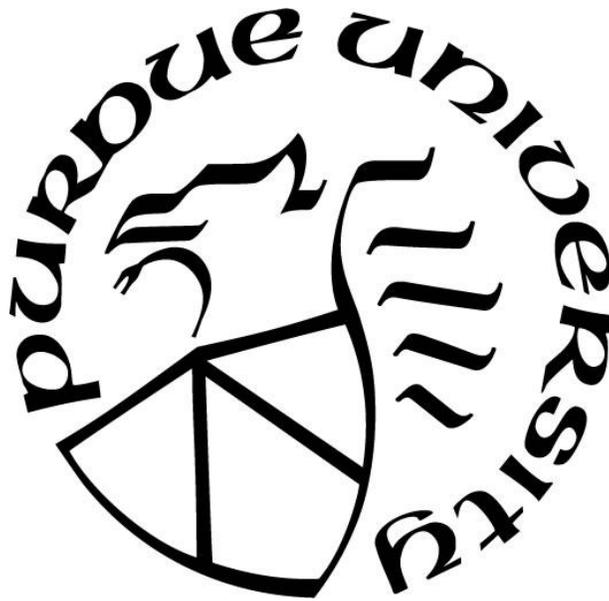
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*For Naomi, my wife, whose enduring love and affection pushes me to new horizons. For Reyes Espinoza, Maria de Jesús Espinoza, and Maria del Rayo Espinoza, my parents and hermana. Su paciencia y cariño a través de los años me ha hecho bien. For all my close friends from Sunland Park, New Mexico: Amir Hernandez, Martín Verduzco, Christian Mata, José Gomez, y Jerry Zamora. For the Asociación de Filosofía y Liberación and Philosophy Born of Struggle, and their movements toward new and better philosophy. For universal human liberation.*

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## ABSTRACT

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Title: Toward an Ethics of Tragic Uncertainty: Miguel de Unamuno and Global Social Conflict

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My dissertation is in two parts. First, it develops a philosophical concept of “tragic uncertainty,” derived from early twentieth-century Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. Secondly, it demonstrates ethical application of tragic uncertainty to human societal events. The *ethical imperative* created from tragic uncertainty—and not either tragedy or uncertainty alone—is the following. Given a tragic situation with a great degree of uncertainty, people living with doubt, mental despair, and perpetual anguish because of it should be provided relief. Generally, this relief should be in the form of therapy, by which I mean an affective and emotional release. Two important case studies are explored. One on corrupted political systems in the USA-Mexico border. The other in Honduras, on both climate change and corrupted political systems. These are explained and categorized as tragically uncertain. Corresponding, minimal practical solutions accompany the ethical imperative created to remedy tragic uncertainty.

## INTRODUCTION

To this date, the inhabitants of Reservoir Top and those of Reservoir Bottom hate each other to death. The present generation no longer remembers the causes for such hate, but maintains live the fire of their passions with frequent skirmishes.

Living, then, more or less like how the rival tribes of the Stone Age lived.

Abel Quezada, translated by Reyes Espinoza

*El Mejor de Los Mundos Imposibles/*

*The Best of the Impossible Worlds, "Prologue"*

## ESSAY 0. THE CENTRAL CLAIM AND ITS CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

My dissertation develops a philosophical concept of “tragic uncertainty,” derived from late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. Moreover, it demonstrates its ethical application to societal events on planet Earth, such as immigration and liberation of consciousness associated with some psychedelics. As I show in this part of the introduction and in the essay “Circumstances Generating Tragic Uncertainty: Ethical Implications for Immigration Policy,” both immigration and issues with at least one psychedelic have causes and roots in corruption in and violence by formal governments and their enforcement agencies. My philosophical method questions global affairs from anthropocentrism but has effects favorable to mitigating or preventing further climate change and damage done to natural environments. The dissertation is divided into two parts, each of which contains three essays and a concluding chapter.

### The Central Claim

The concept of tragic uncertainty includes two constraints. (1) The *tragedy* constraint: A tragic situation is one where there is an incommensurability between the ideals, practices, or norms affecting a social group, and in which this incommensurability creates societal instability for them. This instability can take on numerous forms: displacement of household or livelihood (job, monetary income, etc.), severed ties with loved ones, and so on. (2) The *uncertainty* constraint: The tragedy constraint is conjoined by a large degree of uncertainty and lack of clarity as to the resolution of the incommensurability. Thus, if a tragic situation has a clear time-horizon and feasible logistical plan for resolution, it does not meet the uncertainty constraint.

This would make the situation fall outside the scope of tragic uncertainty. Similarly, if there is no tragedy associated with the uncertain situation, the following ethical imperative cannot be invoked.

The *ethical imperative* constructed to remedy tragic uncertainty—and not either tragedy or uncertainty alone—is the following. Given a situation within the scope of tragic uncertainty, people living with doubt, mental despair, and perpetual anguish because of it should be provided relief. The kind of relief will depend on the details of the situation. However, in general, this relief should be in the form of therapy, by which I mean *an affective and emotional release*. Examples of this release and relief have a range proportional and appropriate to the situation. It could be as simple and tender as a hug from a loved one when you are being held captive. It could be an institutional policy that alleviates the suffering of one or many people.

An ethics of tragic uncertainty is an applied ethical theory—a theory that states what we should do about specific, practical situations. It takes as its starting point social situations that are grounded in tragedy as a perpetual struggle for life, and the lived experience of contradictions in one's self, one's environment, and one's culture. To be sure, some conflicts predictably generate no resolution, that is, they remain tragic in the sense of a perpetual struggle. We know, then, that there will be fallout from them, and by ignoring or applying the wrong tools to the predictable fallout, the patterns of suffering and destruction by human hands will logically continue.

An ethics of tragic uncertainty, as I conceive of it, tells us to act and to act in the service of those we know will be displaced and are being consistently harmed. The philosopher Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004) has called this class of people *los atravesados*, Spanish for “*the in between*.” Under tragic uncertainty, one acts not out of a sense of domination or fear, but out of concern and empathy, and concerns oneself with fundamental disagreements creating conflict. I

am especially keen to examine disputes among formal institutions that create tragic uncertainty for parties directly and indirectly affected.

### **Two Case Studies**

The thesis analyzes two important case studies using the ethics of tragic uncertainty, both of which are large-scale global events: (1) people riding on the series of trains in México known as “La Bestia/The Beast” where death, sexual assault by gangs, and maiming from the trains are very likely (Sorrentino 2015; Roselló 2013); and (2) climate change injustice suffered, experienced, and resisted by some Central American indigenous groups (Watts 2016).

### **Unamuno and Ethics**

The notion of tragic uncertainty was first proposed by the Iberian-Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, most notably in his book *Tragic Sense of Life* ([1921] 1954). Unamuno argued strongly that the concept of doubt, despair, uncertainty, and tragedy must become part of our everyday ethical theory, politics, and activism. “What I wish to establish,” he wrote, “is that uncertainty, doubt, perpetual wrestling with the mystery of our final destiny, mental despair, and the lack of any solid and stable dogmatic foundation, may be the basis of an ethic” (261). The overall aim of my thesis is to demonstrate the contemporary implications of Unamuno’s concept on policy and public opinion.

### **Contemporary Implications**

My scholarly interest in tragic uncertainty is fueled by the status of the border between the USA and Mexico, particularly the results of the cultural behaviors, political alliances, and enforcement procedures surrounding psychotropic or consciousness altering substances, such as marijuana (natural) and K2 (synthetic and sold in Mexico at least since 2012) (SDPnoticias,

2012, June). Part of that result is the journey taken by thousands on La Bestia, the series of dangerous trains transporting thousands from Central America to the USA through Mexico. Although recent government intervention has lessened the number of people on these trains, there are still many that do board them (Sorentino 2015). Still of great concern, preventing those that would ride them from boarding has displaced and redistributed them to other places, especially in Mexico, but their underlying ills and problems were not sufficiently addressed.

Recently, for those that have and will take this journey, they often aim to seek refugee status in the USA. If they happen to reach the USA-Mexico border, they then become stuck in the limbo of bureaucracy, racism, and mistreatment. To remedy some trauma of people having taken this kind of journey decades ago, events like “Hugs not Walls” take place. At the “Hugs not Walls” events families living on the USA side of the border without legal documentation to live in the geography of the USA are allowed physical contact, such as a hug in public view of hundreds of people, with their families in Mexico for a few minutes under the supervision of Customs and Border Patrol (Hayes 2017; Ramirez 2016; Uribe 2016). I take events like “Hugs not Walls” as corresponding to the ethical imperative instantiated from tragic uncertainty constraints in section one. I say the “Hugs not Walls” events *correspond* to my ethical imperative since the organizers of these events did not read my philosophical work beforehand, but I take their activist organization to display in the common, public world the ethical imperative from tragic uncertainty presented in my philosophical work.

On another note, Mexico’s formal political system, which has complicity from other countries, is inauthentic and dishonest. This political system Ricardo Ravelo (2012), one of the foremost investigative journalists in Mexico, calls “narcopolítica,” translating to narcopolitics. Narcopolitics is the operational linking of formal political institutions (such as police forces

legitimated by state and federal governments relying on a constitutional framework) and gangs, cartels, or clandestine operatives. This effectively makes them one codified system of organization supporting their mutual existence through armed, legal, and violent conflict.

The status of the USA-Mexico border largely engulfed by the circumstance of narcopolitics and the transportation logistics, that is, the marketplaces of substances like marijuana and K2, creates tragic uncertainty. In the twentieth century, one consequence from this tragic uncertainty is the phenomenon known as “La Bestia,” explained above. After acknowledging La Bestia as tragic uncertainty, I hope people come to recognize the need for more appropriately dealing with people having experienced its direct and lingering trauma through therapy—therapy and help, not weapons, walls, or policies that only redirect the flow of migrations dangerous to those migrating and the possible and documented negative consequences to societies experiencing them.

The current and decades-long status of the USA-Mexico border intensifies the mistreatment of people in the situation of their everyday lives throughout the Americas. Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) described the USA-Mexico border as an “*herida abierta*,” that is, an open wound (25). This is still, in 2019, an apt description. I am concerned with participating in alleviating this suffering, this open wound.

Narcopolitics, which is effectively a pernicious cultural norm for issues often viewed as the province of justice, can be alleviated, in my practical assessment, by more readily accepting desire for psychotropic, consciousness altering substances. We have a divide and contradiction between proper methods of reaching bodily states of exaltation or relaxation. Some view marijuana as inherently dangerous and some as exaltation or relaxation. The contradiction of these perceptions, as part of a multi-factor analysis, lead to the global event of tragic uncertainty

in the Americas—exposing an inauthentic and dishonest aspect of how some governments and criminals, together, derail civil society.

While a theory may be unnecessary for public action, theorizing on these topics and associated actions will, nonetheless, open up spaces of possibilities for some people, and it will create scholarly resources that can be drawn upon for juridical or activist purposes. I apply Unamuno's insights on tragedy, contradictions in society, risk, and uncertainty, to global situations of prescient public concern.

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## **PART 1: UNAMUNO, CONFLICT AS FUNDAMENTAL, AND ETHICS**

Now, this unity underlying a multiplicity, these many faces, moods, and movements, traceable to one only type, I find deeply connected in my mind with Unamuno's person and with what he signifies in Spanish life and letters. And when I further delve into my impression, I first realize an undoubtedly physical relation between the many-one Welsh divines and the many-one Unamuno. A tall, broad-shouldered, bony man, with high cheeks, a beak-like nose, pointed grey beard, and a complexion the colour of red hematites on which Bilbao, his native town, is built, and which Bilbao ruthlessly plucks from its very body to exchange for gold in the markets of England...a fighting expression, but of noble fighting, above the prizes of the passing world, the contempt for which is shown in a peculiar attire...rather than relieve, the priestly effect of the whole. Such is Don Miguel de Unamuno.

Salvador De Madariaga, Introductory essay to *Tragic Sense of Life*

## **ESSAY 1. TRAGIC UNCERTAINTY AND METAETHICS: CONFLICT TO EMPATHY**

### **The Basic Aims**

My basic aim in this essay is to present an overarching view of tragic uncertainty. The second aim is to describe how visceral ethics and tragic uncertainty are connected. Thirdly, their relevance and importance to keep present in decisions on global trade and policy.

This dissertation is a set of interrelated essays. My basic questions for each essay are:

1. What is the ethical case under consideration and how to construct it?
2. What are the normative or evaluative dimensions of each ethical case, that is, what should be done about it and by whom?
3. What are concrete ways to enter an interplay of theory, practice, and activism?

(Sometimes the answer to this is that activism or action becomes impossible at a certain point in time for some situations. Thus, sometimes the answer to this question is: To do nothing. However, noting that something should have been done, especially when there was enough time and resources to do something about it by someone or some group, is sometimes necessary for the sake of collective memory and an affective release or therapy).

In some ways, questions one through three correspond to metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. However, my questions and philosophical methods are in conversation and take starting points from traditions in philosophy which do not easily track or always care about meta, normative, and applied ethics. From my understanding, some philosophers adhere to the position that ethics at the normative or metaethical level is separate from political or social causes found

in life. I would respectfully disagree with such a philosopher. Examples of these philosophers are Peter Railton and John Rawls at some junctures in their philosophical careers.

Rawls's overly ideal theorizing on justice and morality in *A Theory of Justice* is a common criticism of that philosophical work. I do not want to go too much over treaded ground on this point. Railton is lesser known than Rawls, but his theory of ethical naturalism is equally ambitious in divorcing political and moral realities from the theorizing. Moral judgments in Railton's ethical naturalism are equated with natural facts in in the domains of biology and engineering. Moreover, Railton's favoring a method of an "ideal observer" presents equally problematic issues when compared to criticism of Rawls's "veil of ignorance." While Railton and Rawls have their defenders when it comes to their classic works, other defenders argue that they grew past their "ideal" stage, especially Rawls. I do not favor an ideal observer technique or an exclusively ideal approach in ethics or moral theory simply because there are, to my estimation, stronger starting points for engaging with controversies and troubles in politics, policy, and human lives.

More favorably to people in the exclusively "ideal" or "theoretical" camp, if a metaphysical approach to ethics is preferred by philosophers, it seems to me that Derek Parfit's (1984) *Reasons and Persons* is a better starting point in such philosophical theorizing. Santiago Truccone makes a persuasive case in his Introduction to the 2017 *Justicia Intergeneracional: Desde el Pensamiento de Lukas H. Meyers* for the position that Parfit is to be largely credited for influencing new theories in intergenerational justice (9). Lukas Meyers takes after Parfit in his seminal book *Intergenerational Justice*, which is the basis of the newer essays 2017 essays. While I respect this approach to justice and ethical theorizing, I prefer the traditions and aforementioned philosophers in French Philosophy, Philosophy Born of Struggle, and Latin

American Philosophy because I think they are better for contemporary ethical matters requiring immediate action, which I understand as overlapping but still different from the philosophical concerns of long-term survival and flourishing of the human species.

Not in every essay of this dissertation do I fully answer the three basic questions expressed above. Sometimes figuring out the ethical case, or even the broad contours of an ethical case, is difficult enough to fill a book—so I stop short of a book in each essay in the interest of moving on to a new, more pressing issue or theoretical vision. Some may want to deride me by saying I have a short attention span when it comes to certain issues; my reply to that charge is to say the world is vast and complicated and I prefer to move from topic to topic as fast as I can—lest my philosophizing goes the way of Cold War West-Soviet politics, that is, deadlock, arbitrary lines drawn, and the creation of systematic barriers and flows that create world misery, anxiety, and arbitrary accumulation of power.

Formally, this dissertation should be read as a work of ethics. Informally, I like the sound of this collection of essays being a work of social-political philosophy with a futurist bend. What kind of futurism? I am not ascribing to the Futurism of the early twentieth century, of which Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) eventually turned into a steppingstone for a kind of fascism. The broad vision I consider as the futurist bend to social-political philosophy might be a kind of anti-Marinetti Futurism, where feasible technological changes are taken seriously to not glorify and admire but to discover or inquire as to what their limitations are, could, and should be. I consider some of the subgroups within the following groups as kinds of futurists in this sense: transhumanists, postmodernists, post-non-in humanists, and liberation philosophers. It is undeniable that technology and human lives are tied to each other like water and humans—and

so changes, advances, and prohibitions in technology and the mechanisms for technological changes, advances, and prohibitions are important for reflection.

### **Distinctions of Ethical Theory and Moral Theory: Judgment, Decision, Viscera**

The concept I reflect on in this dissertation, due to its potential uses in policy and its important characteristics for ethical theory, is tragic uncertainty. I categorize what I think of as “tragic,” aided by Miguel de Unamuno and famous playwright Sam Shepard, and inquire into the “uncertain” of ethics in “Essay 3. Learning to Live with Tragic Uncertainty: The Impossibility of Social and Political Certainty.”. Briefly, here is my synopsis of tragic uncertainty. Given a tragic situation with a great degree of uncertainty, people living with doubt, mental despair, and perpetual anguish because of it should be provided relief. The kind of relief depends on the situation. In general, this relief would be in the form of therapy, where therapy is an affective and emotional release. Regarding policy design and decisions, the voters, and creators of them need to keep tragic uncertainty at the forefront. Otherwise, patterns of unwarranted destruction continue indefinitely. Under the concept of tragic uncertainty, two examples examined in this dissertation of large-scale global events to grapple with are people riding on the series of trains in México known as “la bestia/the beast” where death, sexual assault by gangs, and maiming from the trains are very likely as well as climate change injustice suffered and fought by some Central American indigenous groups. Some deaths, in some cases deaths of groups, are more probable than others. Irredeemable suffering in a non-moral universe, necro-tragedy as defined by Professor Leonard Harris (Harris 2018), is categorically distinct from tragic uncertainty.

Now, I want to direct your attention to the need for a *visceral* ethics for global relationships, meaning that it is an ethics based on feeling, affect, and the sensations of the body. The visceral aspect is used to think through and feel through global situations that the intellect

and ethical principles have had a hard time motivating people to act in the way prescribed. My starting point for such an ethics, the ethics of tragic uncertainty, is Miguel de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life* ([1921] 1954). In my view, the visceral aspect informs the tragically uncertain. To understand the basic point of a visceral ethics, it behooves us to listen to Unamuno.

There is a class of pedantic label-mongers, pedants by nature and by grace, who remind me of that man who, purposing to console a father whose son has suddenly died in the flower of his years, says to him, "Patience, my friend, we all must die!"

Would you think it strange if this father were offended at such an impertinence? For it is an impertinence. There are times when even an axiom can become an impertinence.

(14).

Some of Unamuno's most powerful passages are where he provides a story for his reader, an example, or an intuition that is hard for the reader to ignore. Like Nietzsche, he talks in twists and turns and makes a point briefly only to explain it at more length a chapter later, but without marking any of his arguments neatly. Part of my task will be to systematize Unamuno's insights where relevant without losing the literary and feeling aspects that characterize his works; for I believe that ethical insights, at least some of them, need the feeling and visceral aspect even in written form.

From the passage above, Unamuno continues, saying, "There are, in fact, people who appear to think only with the brain, or with whatever may be the specific thinking organ; while others think with all the body and all the soul, with the blood, with the marrow of the bones, with the heart, with the lungs, with the belly, with the life. And the people who think only with the brain develop into definition-mongers..." ([1921] 1954, 14). As we saw in the preceding

passage, we do not want to be pedantic, definition-mongers, for they bring up axioms when they ought not to bring them up.

The historical situation in philosophy I concern myself with has elements for which there are not immediately clear or satisfactory answers from ethical theories in the tradition of Descartes, Kant, and of other philosophers in the “modern” period. Badiou ([1993] 2002) describes the general principle from these ethical theories as “the principle that judges the practice of a Subject, be it individual or collective” (2). This is an “ethics of judgment,” that is attractive to many contemporary ethicists and has been attractive to philosophers of a European past. Many of these past and present ethicists and philosophers are closer to this ethics of judgment than to Hegel’s “ethics of decision” (2). For my part, by using Unamuno I am largely outside of this tradition identified by Badiou as an ethics of judgment, even though Unamuno uses, albeit critically, some of the moderns’ insights.

More generally, however, Badiou ([1993] 2002) thinks that contemporary society suffers from a “socially inflated recourse to ethics...” (2). This is largely--and not only due to Kant and the moderns--because “In fact, ethics designates today a principle that governs how we relate to ‘what is going on’, a vague way of regulating our commentary on historical situations (the ethics of human rights), technico-scientific situations (medical ethics, bio-ethics), ‘social’ situations (the ethics of being together...” etc (2). Moreover, “This norm of commentaries and opinions is backed up by official institutions, and carries its own authority: we now have ‘national ethical commissions’, nominated by the State. Every profession questions itself about its ‘ethics’. We even deploy military expeditions in the name of ‘the ethics of human rights’.” (2). I find most of what Badiou is saying insightful and something that should be listened to and acted on.

Some might argue that Badiou misses the mark on some of his criticisms. For example, one issue with Badiou could be that the problem with the ethics of Human Rights is not the Human Rights themselves, but the mistreatment of people. Hence a better enforcement process would be the necessary solution, instead of discarding the notion of Human Rights. Badiou might agree, but would take this as a cue to include socio-political philosophy and world events (and events in general) in his ethical positions; otherwise, we might be reinforcing social forces that we should not. Human Rights can be expanded on to no end, but I believe it is true that if there is no proper enforcement of them in the courts or by government police and military forces, then it's as if those Human Rights were never penned. It's as if they were never penned since they were written to be respected, and with respect comes changes in behavior. When the queen enters the room, I stand; when the dictator drops bombs without proper authorization, the people and representatives of the people should protest and act to limit the power of the dictator. For his part, on this topic, Badiou said in 2000 in the first printing of his English translation of the book *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, reflecting after seven years from its initial printing in 1993:

We have since had to endure the intervention of Western bombers against Serbia, the intolerable blockade of Iraq, the continuation of threats against Cuba. All of this is still legitimated by a quite unbelievable outpouring of moralizing sermons. The international Tribunal is clearly prepared to arrest and try, in the name of 'human rights', anyone, anywhere, who attempts to contest the New World Order of which NATO (i.e. the United States) is the armed guard. (lv).

Although, for all his discomfort with contemporary ethics, Badiou ([1993] 2002) still thinks it is worth talking in the language of ethics. His positive view of ethics is that "it should be

referred back to particular *situations*” (3). I follow this line of thinking from Badiou. For my part, I am concerned with the USA-Mexico border and the contemporary situation there with psychotropic substances, immigration, and narcotics, and including the mistreatment of people in immigration detention centers in the USA. I am concerned with how to stop the mistreatment of people and death in these situations. I am also concerned with how to alleviate this suffering.

I now bring up another objection that is of relevance here. Why create an ethical imperative to alleviate tragic uncertainty, or why even Unamuno, when Peter Singer’s applied ethics have been successful in moving people to action on a range of ethical issues, most notably animal rights? If you want an argument or imperative that creates a political movement, why not go with Singer’s applied ethics?

Singer is a utilitarian. In the first book that compiled selections of Singer’s applied ethics, he states, “Pain is bad, and similar amounts of pain are equally bad, no matter whose pain it might be. By “pain” here I would include suffering and distress of all kinds” (Singer 2000, xv). Moreover, there is a modal aspect as well to Singer’s four claims which create the core of his utilitarian arguments, “We are responsible not only for what we do but also for what we could have prevented. We would never kill a stranger, but we may know that our intervention will save the lives of many strangers in a distant country, and yet do nothing. We do not then think ourselves in any way responsible for the deaths of these strangers. This is a mistake. We should consider the consequences both of what we do and what we decide not to do” (Singer 2000, xvi). I like Singer’s claims and think that the arguments for animal welfare, affirmative support for euthanasia, and the obligations of the economically rich to help the poor are persuasive and logical. However, they miss the mark for me on two fronts. While I respect and admire Singer’s ability and drive to move the field of ethics in the English speaking world from its analysis of

moral language and desire to remain morally neutral in the early 1970s into the sphere of applied topics and judge actions as right and wrong (Singer 2000, xiv), philosophers in other parts of the world and preceding Singer by a few years or a few decades, philosophers in Spain and France and Mexico, were having their own discussions on applied ethics. For example, Antonio Caso, Foucault, Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus, Ortega y Gasset, and Unamuno. I take much of what some today might want to only call “political philosophy,” or purely “existentialism” in the case of Sartre and Beauvoir, to actually be applied ethics. For a fuller treatment of the disservice in separating ethics and politics, see the concluding essay of the work you are reading. Secondly, we need to see one more part of Singer in order to make sense of my second remark on why I resist being a wholehearted utilitarian. Singer states,

Given that ethics can be very demanding, what are we to say to the amoralists, who ask why they should act ethically at all? I never felt that I had answered that question satisfactorily in my [master of arts] thesis, and I have returned to it on various occasions...The question leads us to think about the ultimate values, the deepest goals, by which we live our lives, and here we tend to run up against the limits of philosophical argument. Is it still possible, at this fundamental level, to give reasons for choosing one way of life in preference to another?...Here we move across the ill-defined border between philosophy and psychology, and can no longer find chains of reasoning that should persuade any rational person. Were we incapable of empathy—of putting ourselves in the position of others and seeing that their suffering is like our own—then ethical reasoning would lead nowhere. If emotion without reasoning is blind, then reason without emotion is impotent. (Singer 2000, xix)

Seeing the reasoning and honesty of Singer, we understand his predicament, since it is the predicament Unamuno chases at key points in *Tragic Sense of Life*. However, Unamuno had resolved for himself in the early twentieth century on topics Singer wanted to revisit nearing the twenty-first century. Remarkably, Singer's focus on empathy in ethics mirrors Unamuno. Unamuno philosophically argues for the interplay of emotions and the intellect, the heart and the head, and each of his chapters of *Tragic Sense of Life* convey an aspect of this.

I now take my responses to thoughts and possible objections arising from Rawls, Railton, Badiou, and Singer as leading to the following sub-conclusion of this essay. Therefore, my ethical position, the ethics of tragic uncertainty, is necessary because it is an attempt to solve and understand a situation. Also, it is not in the tradition of the ethics of judgment, which is a point in its favor since ethics of judgment have received sufficient attention relative to other ethical approaches. If Badiou's criticisms of this tradition are on solid footing, then that my position is not wholly in step with the ethics of judgment is *prima facie* a positive mark for it; at least it's a seldom traversed forest. Another positive mark of my position is that it contains a visceral element which is derived from Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*. This visceral element is also found in theatrical plays, Greek tragedy, and a receptive audience. I plan to also use theatre and drama to help along the argument for this visceral element in ethical theories.

### **Applying Tragic Uncertainty to the Relation of the USM-USA International Border**

#### **A Central Socio-Political Problem in the World**

This philosophical project applies tragic uncertainty to the ongoing set of crises ultimately created by governments at all levels (local, state, and federal) on both sides of the international border between the United States of America (USA) and the United States of Mexico (USM). Historically and presently, these governments are the proximate cause of death

and suffering of millions of people due to their policies on immigration, psychotropic substances, and narcotics. These policies create the background and the extracellular matrix where death and suffering related to immigration, psychotropic substances, and narcotics occur.

The following scenario in world politics has the features of tragedy and uncertainty. It is a set of circumstances that make up, that reify, the concept of tragic uncertainty. The situation *at* the USM-USA international border and the effects that emanate *from* it are international crises that affect millions at a personal level. These international crises require that therapeutic ways of being ought not to be proscribed (it is wrong to deny therapy to international crises) and that they should be facilitated whenever possible. Again, the applicability of tragic uncertainty comes in the form that therapeutic ways of being should not be proscribed by any entity. On the obverse, this mode-of-being of therapy ought to be encouraged by the relevant entities in the kind of crises that this international border suffers from and which it exports to places far from its physical location.

### **A Real and Tragic Situation: Luevano and his Mother**

For example, it would be egregious and immoral to prevent families the opportunity to see their loved ones periodically when such meetings are logistically feasible. As reported by Fronteras Desk on August 11th, 2016 between El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua the border authority U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) allowed families to be reunited for three minutes. As reported on the same event by the El Paso Times on August 2016, 100 families, totaling about 1,000 people, met between the two cities as part of the first “Hugs Not Walls” event—in part organized by the Border Network for Human Rights (BNHR).

To show the emotional impact of this event, I now present Francisco Luevano’s encounter with his mother after not having seen her for 15 years (Fronteras Desk, August 11,

2016). “Luevano is an undocumented hotel maintenance worker who lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico. His mother traveled 700 miles from central Mexico to see him for a fleeting three minutes” (Fronteras Desk, August 11, 2016). The report continues with testimony from the same undocumented worker about this short reunion with his mother, “It feels like I've been reborn,” Luevano said, “like when I was a child in my mother's arms” (Fronteras Desk, August 11, 2016). Furthermore, as reported by elpasoproud.com, a subsidiary of Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc., on January 29th, 2017 the “Hugs Not Walls” campaign held its third event January, 2017, accommodating for more than 350 families. As stated by Fernando Garcia, executive director of BNHR, the “Hugs Not Walls” campaign is preparing a fourth event of this kind, for which a date and time have not been set (Nexstar Broadcasting Inc, Jan. 29, 2017).

### **The Cemented River**

The meeting place of these families is important for us to spend some time describing in order to understand the logistical possibilities for short and periodic reunification of families as well as to better understand the socio-political landscape of this region of the world under constant assault by international crises related to immigration, psychotropic drugs, and narcotics. According to the U.S. National Park Service’s (NPS) online entry “Chamizal Convention of 1963,” on September 25th 1964, presidents Lyndon Baines Johnson and Adolfo López Mateos of the USA and USM, respectively, walked the international bridge between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez toward each other and shook hands at the international border marker to celebrate the signing of the Chamizal Convention of 1963 (para. 11). Previously, “In July of 1963 U.S. Ambassador Thomas Mann and Mexican Foreign Minister Manuel Tello signed the Chamizal Convention in Mexico City” (NPS, para. 10). The Chamizal Convention of 1963 settled a number of disputes between the two countries. The most important for us to remember is that

“the Rio Grande was cemented through the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez area so that the international border would be well defined and permanently unchanging” (NPS, para. 12). Today this cemented river runs through both cities and is the official international border of the USM-USA. As we have covered, when there is no water flowing and on designated days of the year this river is not only a river, it is also the meeting place of hundreds of families separated by legal, political, cultural, and physical barriers. These meetings are allowed and supervised by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Given the logistical feasibility and the emotional support it provides to families, preventing these meetings between loved ones would be a terrible harm to them under ethics of tragic uncertainty.

### **Conclusion: Global Trade and Policy**

As was seen, tragic uncertainty can be used to mark situation that otherwise be overlooked if, instead, governments focus on profit, the rule of national law, and short-sighted business concerns. My hope is that the present work moves the needle toward a focus on compassion and empathy of persons, their concrete selves.

The rest of this dissertation, this is especially true of part 2, is a set of interconnected essays on planetary phenomena that include money, gambling, (para)military tactics, nation-state borders, anthropogenic climate change, and human politics and culture. These topics have technological dimensions under human control as well as a dimension that is outside of this control. For the part that can be controlled—even possible or potential control—ethics can guide, constrain, or liberate. Keeping in mind the distinction of ethics and morality that Badiou directs our attention to, which he attributes to Hegel, my essays remain closer to ethics in the sense of decision as opposed to judgment.

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## ESSAY 2. FROM UNAMUNO TO NOW: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND LOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS

At first, I tried to completely understand Miguel de Unamuno from an existentialist perspective, but this is impossible. There are existentialist elements in Unamuno's works (a little sense of Kierkegaardian anxiety, a little bit about nothingness that resembles Heidegger), but as Unamuno might say, these existentialist elements could be but fragments of facts in a life and philosophy. You may have a few atoms that create a molecule, but any set of atoms does not create any molecule. Like the thought that "Most of the facts labelled as such by Positivism were really only fragments of facts..." (Unamuno [1921] 1954, 7), fragments of existentialism in a poet-philosopher's work do not make a purely existentialist philosopher. Regionally, Unamuno was an Iberian-Spanish philosopher. Conceptually, Unamuno was a philosopher-poet who thought that philosopher and poet were twin brothers, and now we can update that to twin sisters, or simply twins with the same blood: "In psychology its action [Positivism's action] was harmful. There were even scholastics meddling in literature—I will not say philosophers meddling in poetry, because poet and philosopher are twin brothers, if not even one and the same..." (Unamuno [1921] 1954, 7). Unamuno claims, I think correctly, that Positivist psychological analysis, derivative from August Comte in the 1800s, did not understand the novel or drama.

According to Unamuno, the "main business" of drama and the novel "is to give act and motion to concrete men, men of flesh and bone," but in applying Positivist psychological analysis to states of consciousness this method made consciousness disappear much like in testing certain chemical compounds you produce the separate elements of the compound, that is,

the “products of its decomposition” (1921/1954, 7-8). The decomposed product is a new number of products, instead of a product in motion or use.

Unamuno can be understood philosophically from a personal perspective—Unamunoism. Although, one would be foolish to be only an Unamunist, since Unamuno emphatically said that, “And as for my philosophy, let someone else write about it, some foolish Unamunist...” (as cited in Nozick 1971, front matter). Perhaps one is a fool if one stays an Unamunist. What if one wants to analyze his thought to then move past it? I think this would be good in some ways. One could perform a deconstructionist project by building up a giant of intellectual thought only to tear down this image. I hate speaking in metaphor as often as most of us do, but I think this tearing down would be good as well in some respects. I think that analyses and use of Unamuno’s arguments, contradictions, and personal dispositions goes beyond Unamunoism. For me, the most important lesson to draw from reflecting on Unamuno is about traversing academic disciplines and fields to arrive at a truth and method that connects with community, justice, intellect, and interiority in a balanced fashion.

Unamuno can be better understood from an Iberian Philosophy perspective when compared to Existentialism in general. Some common elements in existentialism geographically from Kierkegaard to Sartre, Denmark to France, are anxiety, uncertainty, and atheism. You will find these elements in Unamuno’s writings, but not in the same fashion. Moreover, Unamuno was hardly an atheist if by atheist we mean someone who rejects myth and the Bible. Unamuno often reflects on the writings in the Bible and on secondary literature on the writings in the Bible; see any number of chapters in *Tragic Sense of Life* to confirm this, there is at least one reference in each chapter to Biblical (if not outright Catholic) themes, figures, and commentators. Considering only Sartrean existentialism proper, that is, Sartre’s ontology, Sartre is an atheist.

Ronald E. Santoni (2010) philosophically argues against the existence of God in *Being and Nothingness* and concludes for God's ontological non-existence, but there is "ambivalence in Sartre's attitude toward the existence of God" in several publications pre-and-post *Being and Nothingness* (85-87). Still, it seems to me that even taking into account Santoni's (2010) commentary, Sartre's conclusions and overall attitude is as he states in *Existentialism* (1947) following Heidegger, "When we [Atheistic existentialists] speak of forlornness, a term Heidegger was fond of, we mean only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this. This existentialist is strongly opposed to a certain kind of secular ethics which would like to abolish God with the least possible expense" (25).

Previously, Sartre stated, "Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence....Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the principle of existentialism" (1947, 18). Unamuno had different ways of ascribing to and rejecting God at various points in his life and writings. Perhaps Unamuno was able to articulate what Sartre admitted in his private moments or in those interviews and short statements Santoni (2010) finds on Sartre. Unamuno concluded that reasoning leads you to disproving the immortality of the soul, agreeing with Hume on the subject (Unamuno [1921] 1954, 79). Throughout *Tragic Sense of Life* Unamuno states his conclusion and reasoning that God is eternal or exists because of belief in the immortality of the soul. "As I explained in the preceding chapter [chapter 4 The Essence of Catholicism], the Sacrament of the Eucharist is simply the reflection of the belief in immortality; it is, for the believer, the proof, by a mystical experience, that the soul is immortal and will enjoy God eternally. And the concept of substance was born, above all and before all, of the concept of the substantiality of the soul, and the latter

was affirmed in order to confirm faith in the persistence of the soul after its separation from the body” (82). An example in the history of philosophy of this flawed reasoning is found in Kant, “Whosoever reads the Critique of Practical Reason carefully and without blinkers will see that, in strict fact, the existence of God is therein deduced from the immorality of the soul, and not the immorality of the soul from the existence of God” (Unamuno, 4). Putting this together, since God is derived from the immorality of the soul, but the immorality of the soul is confirmation bias or begging of the question, then God cannot be derived from the immorality of the soul. Thus, the existence of God cannot rest on the immorality of the human soul. Could God exist some other way, sure, but that would be a waste of space for this essay if I went deeper into it now. As Unamuno put it, and I follow him here, “And as criticism of these proofs has been undertaken a hundred times, it is unnecessary to repeat it here” (83). Instead, let us put Unamuno and Sartre together again, or better said, state how they differ in their conclusion for the non-existence of God. They arrive to a similar enough conclusion through reason or ontology: God does not exist. However, they differ in their attitude about where to proceed philosophically from here. Sartre portrays a strong atheistic stance for the public, whereas Unamuno openly confesses that he hungers for immortality, even though it is irrational and may never succeed in achieving it.

In the following, I argue for diverse ways of interpreting Unamuno’s philosophical contributions to the history of philosophy of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as well as how he is useful to us today.

### **Philosophical Identities: Regional, Personal, and Systematic**

Regional identities of philosophers are a double-edge sword that too often stifle interesting questions. Just because Sartre and Camus are both French does not mean that we

should by default group them together philosophically or ideologically. As Rozena Maart, director of the Center for Critical Research on Race and Identity and professor at University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), told me about Derrida—Derrida cannot be understood without understanding his North Africanness (personal communication, November 2016). Too often he is thought about as only French. Reductionist claims to singular identities are the problem I refer to in the context of philosophical discourse.

Similarly, Camus cannot be understood as only French and much less as only an existentialist. He was also Mediterranean and North African-Algerian. Camus reflected as a philosopher on his journalistic writings in and about Algeria, which precede and detail the journey to armed conflict between the French military and the Front de Libération Nationale/National Liberation Front. He also made numerous policy recommendations throughout this time, either through his own writings in newspapers or journalists quoting his views from speeches. The journalistic writings span twenty years from 1939 to 1958 and his philosophical reflection on matters in Algeria are especially found in “Preface” and “Indigenous Culture: The New Mediterranean Culture”—all of this collected in *Algerian Chronicles* (2013) by Albert Camus, translated by Arthur Goldhammer with an Introduction by Alice Kaplan and published by The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Camus did not think of himself as an existentialist. In a November 15, 1945 interview with Jeanine Delpech, Camus said that most of his and Sartre’s works were written without ever having met, and when they met and got “to know each other, it was to realize how much we differed” (1970, 345). In the same interview, Camus said, “Sartre is existentialist, and the only book of ideas that I have published [at least up to 1945], *The Myth of Sisyphus*, was directed against the so-called existentialists....Sartre and I do not believe in god, it is true. And we don’t

believe in absolute rationalism either. But neither do Jules Romains, Malraux, Stendhal.... Must we put all these people in the same school?" (345). If Camus ever reneged on these statements, I am not aware. Thus, if anybody wants to contend that Camus was an "existentialist" they have to argue that elements of his philosophical enterprise are existentialist and are different from Sartre's existentialism in this or that way, or they should ascribe another label to Camus when it comes to his ideas and analysis. Similarly, Unamuno should not be grouped philosophically only with existentialists. As a quick aside, from the historical philosophers of Europe, Unamuno did read and comment on Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche (Unamuno [1921] 1954, 3-5; 231).

It is impossible to classify Unamuno as one type of philosopher. He might even want to take off the shackles of being labelled as a philosopher or intellectual if you catch him in the right moment. The term "thinker" may be more to Unamuno's liking. Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, a respected commentator on the written corpus of Unamuno, certainly thinks so. The following quotations from Morón Arroyo, I translate from Spanish to English.

'Thinker', according to Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, is the best label to attribute to Unamuno and intellectuals of the caliber of Unamuno. Morón Arroyo says he believes that "the correct word for the intellectual contributions of Unamuno, Ortega [y Gasset] and many other writers (Jorge Luis Borges would be on that list) is 'thinker'" (2003, 10). Morón Arroyo's definition of Thinker is the following, "Systematic thought is not a system of philosophy... Thinker is that intellectual which is no slave to the traditional themes in the philosophical disciplines, instead they look directly at reality and formulate an image of it according to their capacity of seeing, their ideology, and their power of suggesting forms of conduct" (2003, 10). Morón Arroyo then states some implications of this definition of Thinker, "Systematic thought is an analysis of conducts and personal deeds or social institutions, which inserts criticism or proposed ethics on

permanent structures of the person or society. Because of that connection of the ethical posture with the being of the person and society, the thinker relates themselves with philosophy or transforms the philosophy they receive” (2003, 10). There is to unpack from Morón Arroyo’s considered statements on his definition of thinker and its implications for thought and philosophy.

### **Thinker and Philosopher: Their Similarities Today**

*Pace* Morón Arroyo, I have my reservations in not labelling Unamuno as a philosopher today, since the definition of philosopher Unamuno himself was assuming when he repudiated the label “philosopher” was a specific one, closer to that of Positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Furthermore, Morón Arroyo’s definition of Thinker could apply today to any number of what we consider professional philosophers, even tenured university professors, in the USA and around the world. As cited previously in the Introduction of this dissertation, Unamuno derided the scholastic and pedantic philosopher who was a “definition monger” that also respected Positivist criteria in their philosophizing. It is true also that Unamuno was a writer who wanted to extend his thought out as far as he could: writing novels, essays, poems, and critiques of historical philosophers.

If we use Unamuno to help along the profession of philosophy of today, we might as well label him a philosopher, at least as shorthand for great thinker, especially in the sense “systematic thought” that Morón Arroyo uses. Even so, professional philosophers of today hardly adhere to “systematic philosophy.” Although, philosophers in the USA still contend with the Analytic/Continental divide, this divide is 1) debatable how strict it is; 2) it is a far cry from what would pass as “dogmatic” or “systematic philosophy” in another era; and 3) it is dubious

whether it exists other than economically and institutionally, which may then imply that in reason or disciplinarily it does not exist.

Analytic philosophy may have common foundations in Russell and Frege, but Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson are enough to cite to complicate the story of Analytic philosophy as an overly rigid or completely logical system in the propositional calculus. Similarly, Continental philosophy tends to have common foundations in Hegel, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Foucault—which these four alone are arguably evolutions of each other or complete adversaries, not to mention there are contemporary philosophers which have sliced up positions within the Continental camp of philosophy. Regarding point number three, it is a tenable position that the Analytic/Continental divide is only institutional. Even if there are philosophers that ascribe rigidly to either label and completely disregard the other, disciplines of professional philosophy like Feminism, Latin American, Asian American, and African-American philosophies all complicate the story of philosophy of the USA to reasonably render the Analytic/Continental divide as an issue of administration, party politics, and the nature of institutions operating in time and space. Thus this would be a problem not with ideas and thoughts themselves. Lastly, none of this really keeps in mind contemporary international philosophy that is in some ways in conversation with but also completely has its own development separate from the USA.

I apologize if some of the previous paragraphs are deemed strictly unnecessary for reflecting on Unamuno himself, but I think taking the time to reflect on these matters of the discipline of philosophy in universities and the professionalization of it is important because Unamuno himself had a contentious relationship with philosophers of his time. Some of his

institutional and ideological critiques remain relevant today, and I have at least cited his rejection of Positivism as he understood it in a couple of places so far.

### **Understanding Unamuno as a Logician**

The best way to understand Unamuno and enter his thought pattern—this is my perspective, although limited it may be—is to think of him as a logician. If we put the existential hat on the head of Unamuno for a minute and compare him with Sartre, this would be helpful to see in what way I want you to understand Unamuno as a logician. According to McBride (1967), “Sartre as a philosopher is, above all, an ontologist—or if one prefers, a metaphysician. The priority which he comes to place on *human* existence is logically based on the fact that he views man as a unique and central kind of being in the universe” (263; emphasis in original). In a note in the previous quotation, McBride states, based off a passage in *Being and Nothingness*, that “Sartre himself carefully distinguishes between ontology, which is what he claims to be doing in *Being and Nothingness*, and metaphysics, a study which would pose questions about the origins of our particular world as we find it and as the ontologist has shown it fundamentally to be” and proceeds to say that metaphysics as is “more commonly thought of by philosophers...does not coincide with this technical Sartrean definition” (1967, 263). For McBride, Sartre is assumed an ontologist-metaphysician because of Sartre’s commitments and inquiry into the uniqueness of the human being in relation to the universe.

For my purposes, the most important part of McBride’s analysis of Sartre’s corpus is when he says that Sartre’s “literary and political essays serve to provide concrete verification for the necessarily abstract ontological account of existential man which he has constructed in his more strictly philosophical writings...” (1967, 264). Moreover, and here is the crux of it for my analysis of Unamuno and logic, the preceding entails “the view that Sartre, unlike at least some

other existentialist thinkers, is consciously propounding a theory about ultimate existents, and that he therefore invites attempts to verify or to falsify that theory” (McBride 1967, 264).

Although some may want to disagree with McBride’s interpretations of Sartre’s corpus, for my part I take him as being correct, including the conclusion that Sartre invites attempts to verify or falsify Sartre’s own theory of ultimate existents. I do not think McBride is being disparaging to “other existentialist thinkers” when he separates their existentialist projects from Sartre.

However, I want to add to the history of existentialism by interpreting the partially existentialist project of Miguel de Unamuno in *Tragic Sense of Life* as proto dialetheism, which is an account of the possibility of true contradictions.

### **Types of Contradiction**

I operate under the assumption that Unamuno is best thought of in terms of a logician because of his positive commitment to one typically unacceptable criterion in professional philosophy: contradiction. If there is anything I have been consistently taught in philosophy classrooms, especially at the undergraduate level in philosophy classes is that contradiction is bad: Do not perform contradictions because if you do chaos ensues. Validity is thrown out the window. Truth tables would not exist. Nothing would matter in debate if contradictions are given a positive status since if I say *A* and you say not *A* there would not be fundamental criteria for saying which of us is correct, at least according to the law of non-contradiction.

JC Beall (2004) puts the logical trouble this way, “Some philosophers use the term ‘contradiction’ to mean an *explosive sentence*, a sentence such that its truth entails triviality—entails that all sentences are true” (4). This is worrisome and detrimental to these philosophers “...since if [for example, the sentence] ‘every sentence is true’ is true, then every sentence is true, in which case triviality abounds” (4). Beall, further, differentiates between the *explosive*

*usage*, which we defined, and the *formal usage*. “The *formal usage* of ‘contradiction’ has it that contradictions are sentences *of the form*  $A \wedge \neg A$ , where  $\wedge$  is conjunction and, as above,  $\neg$  is negation. In other words, a contradiction, on the formal usage, is the conjunction of a sentence and its negation” (4). What Beall has clarified for us is that there are at least two types of contradiction. Contradiction too often conflated and confused with other concepts, such as inconsistency, incoherence, or as a simple tool of logic in *reduction ad absurdum*. Unamuno passionately pursued contradiction.

### **The Prophet of Dialetheism**

I consider Unamuno the prophet of dialethism and paraconsistent logic. A voice crying in the wilderness, from the wilderness of his Salamanca in Spain. This is especially pertinent since Philosophy in the Spanish language, from my research of philosophical sources, such as translation from Spanish to English of figures that originally wrote in Spanish, are relatively lower compared to German and French. Unamuno and later José Ortega y Gasset, was received and responded to in Mexico by, for example, the great Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos “the actual founder of the contemporary movement in Mexico for the Mexicanization of culture in general and philosophy in particular” in the early 1940s (Romanell 1975, 83-92).

Graham Priest ([1987] 2006) in part places his inquiry and assessment on contradiction under Hegel stating, “The only point that I wish to isolate and highlight is Hegel’s contention that our concepts are contradictory, that there are true contradictions. The notion of true contradiction is at the heart of this book” (4). Furthermore, Priest creates a neologism for true contradictions, calling them dialetheias or singularly dialetheia (4). Priest formalizes and defines a dialetheia as “...any true statement of the form:  $\alpha$  and it is not the case that  $\alpha$ ” (4). Priest provides a language and respectable account for analytic philosophers to come to understand and

reevaluate contradiction. Unamuno was doing a similar philosophical move throughout *Tragic Sense of Life*, but his writing style was not for the analytic or rational philosopher, and he knew that. Thus, it does not surprise me the English-speaking world, including Priest and the movement of paraconsistent logic has not engaged with Unamuno from what I have seen.

At this point in the debates in formal logic inquiry into paraconsistent logic Unamuno would serve as a someone to look for the interaction of dialetheias in life with human consciousness. “Paraconsistent logics, by definition are not explosive. A consequence relation  $\vdash$ , however defined, is said to be *explosive* if  $A, \neg A \vdash B$  holds for arbitrary  $A$  and  $B$ . A consequence relation is said to be *paraconsistent* if and only if it is not explosive” (Beall 2004, 6). The upshot here is “Such logics, in other words, open up the ‘possibility’ in which *some but not all* contradictions ‘could’ be true” (6). Even Unamuno has his limits, he knew he was a man of flesh and bone and would never negate that. A proper understanding Unamuno would help support dialetheism. The world has contradictions for Unamuno through which one struggles through, but it is not a trivial world where everything is true. Unamuno is a proto dialetheist. Hence, best understood for us in our contemporary world as a logician, but a logician that inquires into the concrete stuff of conscious life.

### **Conclusion**

At first, I tried to completely understand Miguel de Unamuno from an existentialist perspective, but this is impossible. There are existentialist elements in Unamuno’s works (a little sense of Kierkegaardian anxiety, little bit about nothingness that resembles Heidegger), but as Unamuno might say, these existentialist elements could be but fragments of facts in a life and philosophy. To group academics by region or geography can be a deadly enterprise for the intellect. This may have made more sense when people and cultures interacted and traveled

either less frequently or shorter distances. Now, someone born in Argentina could be raised and schooled in another country. In such a case, nothing but their birth certificate may be Argentinian. This person could also have many legal and paradoxical issues of identity, but we can at least agree that if this person was a philosopher calling them an Argentinian philosopher says very little about their philosophical work and thinking. Calling them an International philosopher or World philosopher may even be a better objective label if we were asked to label them without knowing anything about them but their circumstances of birth.

As for Unamuno, he can be understood more completely as an Iberian philosopher and a singular Unamuno. An interesting and more complicated way to understand Unamuno, as I have argued, is as a logician, proto dialetheist. By “understand” I mean entering into his way of thinking, especially as found in *Tragic Sense of Life*.

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### ESSAY 3. LEARNING TO LIVE WITH TRAGIC UNCERTAINTY: IMPOSSIBILITY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CERTAINTY

In “From Unamuno to Now: The Development of Social and Logical Contradictions,” we determined it is near impossible to classify Unamuno as one type of philosopher, thinker, or intellectual. He might even want to cast off the shackles of being labelled as a philosopher or intellectual if you catch him in the right moment. Thinker was a label he was more comfortable being attributed. Still, I have my reservations in not labelling Unamuno as a philosopher today since the definition of philosopher he was assuming when he repudiated the label “philosopher” was a specific one. He derided the scholastic and pedantic philosopher who was a “definition monger” that also respected Positivist criteria in their philosophizing. On the other hand, there is a passage in Chapter 2 of *Tragic Sense of Life* ([1921] 1954) where he provided criteria for philosophizing, for which he was excited by:

“Philosophers seek a theoretic or ideal starting-point for their human work, the work of philosophizing; but they are not usually concerned to seek the practical and real starting-point, the purpose. What is the object in making philosophy, in thinking it and then expounding it to one's fellows? What does the philosopher seek in it and with it? The truth for the truth's own sake? The truth, in order that we may subject our conduct to it and determine our spiritual attitude towards life and the universe conformably with it?

“Philosophy is a product of the humanity of each philosopher, and each philosopher is a man of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself. And, let him do what he will, he philosophizes not with the reason only, but with the will, with the feelings, with the flesh and with the bones, with the whole soul and the whole body. It is the man that philosophizes....

“In the starting-point of all philosophy, in the real starting-point, the practical not the theoretical, there is a wherefore. The philosopher philosophizes for something more than for the sake of philosophizing.” (28-29)

Unamuno was a philosopher in his criteria of philosopher. He was also a thinker, a thinker who wanted to extend his thought out as far as he could: writing novels, essays, poems, and philosophical critiques of historical philosophers and his contemporaries. If we use Unamuno to help along the profession of philosophy of today, might as well label him a philosopher, at least as shorthand for great and powerful thinker that helps us imagine new forms of individual and institutional conduct.

The best way to understand Unamuno and enter his thought pattern—this was the way that I was able to make most sense of his philosophizing—is to think of him as a logician. If we put the existential hat on the head of Unamuno for a minute and compare him with Sartre, this would be helpful to see in what way I want you to understand Unamuno as a logician. According to McBride (1967), Sartre is best thought of as an ontologist. For McBride (1967), Sartre is best thought of as an ontologist-metaphysician because of Sartre’s commitments and methodological inquiry about the human being and the uniqueness of the human being in relation to reality.

Unamuno, on the other hand, has his version of the uniqueness of the human being in a human’s self-conflict, the contradiction of passions and intelligence in the same person.

Unamuno is best thought of in terms of a logician because of his positive commitment to one typically unacceptable criterion in professional, academic philosophy: contradiction. Suffice it to say for the moment, I like contradiction and reality is full of it. I love and embrace reality. In the previous essay, “Essay 2. From Unamuno to Now: The Development of Social and Logical Contradictions,” I called Unamuno the prophet of dialetheism and justified my position there.

Tragic uncertainty as an ethical position of compassion and empathy (trying to see the world as another person) has numerous influences in its creating. In this essay, I will explain the historical elements from the history of philosophy that motivated me to develop the concept of tragic uncertainty and explain some of its manifestations in culture, along with explaining some of Unamuno's and Shepard's philosophical portals and insights. The two major influences for tragic uncertainty are Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) and Sam Shepard (1943-2017). Unamuno and Shepard included their philosophy in numerous mediums outside of philosophical essays and journal articles. For this essay, I will stick to Unamuno's philosophical essays, but will use Shepard's plays to extract the philosophical content from them. One interesting quandary that arises from my work is that, in a sense, one's morality and politics are singular and solipsistic. Your being is not certain in its singular and solipsistic politics, and society is a mess resulting from the imperfection of humans. Still, I sustain that molar-molecular (political-ethical) movements are still worthy of our consideration and participation. The implications of this in relation to tragically uncertain situations are explored in the last section of this essay.

### **Unamuno and Shepard: Preliminaries**

Miguel de Unamuno and Sam Shepard are related at the most basic level by publishing written texts. Shepard is best known for his published plays. Unamuno is best known for his novels.

The two were interested in mediums beyond those which they are best known for. Shepard was an actor, director of plays and movies, published poems and short stories, and his plays often had music as a central component in the lyrical character of the dialogue or as part of the plotline. A great example of the use of music in the work of Shepard is his co-written play with Patti Smith *Cowboy Mouth* (1971). Unamuno was a professor of Greek, published poetry,

was rector of the University of Salamanca in Spain and wrote books of ideas and unconcealed paradox, of which the best known is the philosophical text *The Tragic Sense of Life* ([1921] 1954). The authoritative English translation was in 1921 by translator J.E. Crawford Fitch and reprinted by Dover Publications in 1954 as an “unabridged and unaltered authorized republication” (front matter). The full title translated from the original 1913 Spanish version is *On the Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Societies / Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida en los Hombres y los Pueblos*.

### **Tragedy and its Connections to Ethics and Uncertainty**

#### **The importance for Ethics of Unamuno’s seminal book *The Tragic Sense of Life***

My starting point is Miguel Unamuno’s *The Tragic Sense of Life*. Unamuno was an early twentieth century literary expert and religiously oriented, but not monotheistic, existentialist philosopher. Of special importance for my project are the following chapters of *The Tragic Sense of Life*: chapter 1 “Man of Flesh and Bone” and chapter 11 “The Practical Problem.” From chapter 1 we can find Unamuno’s views on consciousness. From chapter 11 we can find his criticisms of the ethical theory of his time, which are still instructive for us to see. In chapter 11 we also find his recommendations for future directions in the ethical theory of his time, which are also instructive for us to see today.

“...what I wish to establish is that uncertainty, doubt, perpetual wrestling with the mystery of our final destiny, mental despair, and the lack of any solid and stable dogmatic foundation, may be the basis of an ethic” (Unamuno [1921] 1954, 261). This is Unamuno’s clearest formulation for hoping to make a contribution to ethics, even if just to set the stage for later writers, people, and those who want to live through their ethics. For Unamuno, an ethics is based on conduct. If you have an ethical principle, then instantiate it with your life, but also do not

wholly rely on the principle (262). For Unamuno, there is a core of the consciousness which does not allow people to cease to want to persist and endure, even though their beliefs are shattered. As Unamuno says, “He who bases or thinks that he bases his conduct...upon a dogma or theoretical principle which he deems incontrovertible, runs the risk of becoming a fanatic, and moreover, the moment that this dogma is weakened or shattered, the morality based upon it gives way...Happily the stuff that is underneath a man’s ideas will save him” (262).

A beautiful and important passage from Unamuno for my ethical imperative to help solve situations of tragic uncertainty is the following:

A pedant who beheld Solon weeping for the death of a son said to him, “Why do you weep thus, if weeping avails nothing?” And the sage answered him, “precisely for that reason—because it does not avail.” It is manifest that weeping avails something, even if only the alleviation of distress; but the deep sense of Solon’s reply to the impertinent questioner is plainly seen. And I am convinced that we should solve many things if we all went out into the streets and uncovered our grief, and joined together in beweeeping them and crying aloud to the heavens and calling upon God. And this, even though God should hear us not; but He would hear us. The chiefest sanctity of a temple is that it is a place to which men go to weep in common. A *miserere* sung in common by a multitude tormented by destiny has as much value as a philosophy. It is not enough to cure the plague: we must learn to weep for it. Yes, we must learn to weep! Perhaps that is the supreme wisdom. Why? Ask Solon. ([1921] 1954, 17).

This line of thinking, this story from Unamuno, is not about judgment, it is about an affective release necessary for existence, at least for the kind of existence Unamuno advocates for. A person needs to sometimes weep. Whether you think a person should be in jail or on a bus

to be exiled from a country, who would want to deny that they should be allowed to cry in these situations? At the same time, how many ethicists recommend for this behavior? To my knowledge, not many since they rarely consider situations as extreme places of torture and traversing deserts totally unprepared for the journey, or when moral feelings are invoked, behaviors are seldomly theorized. Unamuno helps us theorize and consider much that analytic ethical theory and existentialism has not. In fact, Unamuno does not recommend for solitary weeping, but encourages people to join each other in an act of “crying aloud to the heavens” in the streets with uncovered grief. The streets are turned temple in an act of common weeping, weeping that has as much “value as a philosophy.” Sometimes weeping is harder than philosophizing, so might be able to be argued by a philosopher with theatrical experience.

### **Tragedy in Life**

I connect Unamuno’s philosophical work with insights from theatrical theory; notably, from Tragedy. For example, Greek Tragedy has a central theme: the audience is presented with a story where the hero is sure to lose against a foe, but still fights with conviction against ultimate powers. As a quick example of this: Greatly outnumbered, the Battle of the Alamo was a losing battle for Texans fighting against the much larger Mexican army laying siege to the fort, but their loss is celebrated and commemorated today by millions of Texans. They knew they had little chance of survival and still dug in their weapons, prepared to fight to the last possible moment. The important aspect here is that there is a social force that one has little chance, or no chance, to win against, and yet still fought while ultimately having lost the battle.

As stated previously, a tragic situation in the ethics of tragic uncertainty is one where there is an incommensurability affecting a social grouping composed of people, where this incommensurability creates societal instability for them. However, what allows me to say this?

How am I justified?

The tragic effect is the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ aspects of a Tragic Drama, otherwise typically called a Tragedy. My concerns are not with what, as Young (2013) summarized, Schelling called the ‘tragic effect’, if the tragic effect is only found inside the text of a play or its performance (1). According to Young, this is what most philosophers of Tragedy are concerned about. They are concerned with the textual elements of the play as a literary form as well as in its performance in how it affects the audience, that is, what benefits it has for the audience (Young, 2).

However, Young (2013) informs us that, “No doubt there are some important philosophers of tragedy I have omitted. I considered, for instance, including Miguel de Unamuno but failed to make much headway with him. The book nonetheless aims to provide at least a relatively comprehensive survey of what Western philosophers have said about tragedy...” (2). Unamuno not analyzed in Young’s recent work. Not to speculate too much, but Young might not have made ‘much headway’ with Unamuno because his view of Tragedy, at least in *Tragic Sense of Life*, is not concerned with Schelling’s tragic effect, which is Young’s main concern in his own book.

People experience a “tragic fight” to save themselves, that is, an “immortal craving for immortality”—an immortality that is not realized, according to Unamuno ([1921] 1954, 13). We, however, strive for it in some way or another. Still more from him on this topic, this time turning to Tragedy, “Some may espy a fundamental contradiction in everything that I am saying, now expressing a longing for unending life, now affirming that this earthly life does not possess the value that is given to it...[However] [s]ince we only live in and by contradictions, since life is tragedy and the tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory or the hope of victory, life is

contradiction” (13-14). Again, ‘life is tragedy and tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory or hope of victory, life is contradiction’. He is not talking about tragedy on the stage, but tragedy as being in life outside of theatrical performance.

### **USA Pragmatism Ignoring Unamuno**

One important term to consider at this point is the term “tragic sense of life.” ‘Tragic sense of life’ is as defined in the previous section based on Unamuno ([1921] 1954), but it is also an evocative term. It sounds good, and you can seem to say a lot with it by invoking it. There is those who have abused it, derided it, or simply liked the sound of it and discarded the original thinker and marketer of the neologism. Sydney Hook is the greatest offender against Unamuno and Philosophy from Spain. Although there is philosophical merit to Hook’s personal interpretation of the term “tragic sense of life” in describing something meaningful about USA pragmatism, he completely disregards the complexities of Unamuno and oversimplifies Unamuno’s proper philosophical merit.

There are three significant moments I want to bring your attention to. When I say “Pragmatists” and “Pragmatism” I refer to who and what Hook had in mind, which was Peirce, James, and Dewey and their philosophies. If there is deviation from this, I will let you know. First moment, Hook ([1960] 2002) states,

[Pragmatism] was also a temper of mind toward the vital options which men confront when they become aware of what alternative proposals commit them to. It stressed the efficacy of human ideals and actions and at the same time their inescapable limitations. It forswore the promise of total solutions and wholesale salvation for piecemeal gains. Yet far from embracing easy formulae of the ultimate reconciliation of conflicting interests

and values, it acknowledged the reality of piecemeal losses even when we risk our lives to achieve the gains. (69-70)

This is a good encapsulation of the aims and goals of Pragmatism as Hook understood it. Hook thought that “critics” of Pragmatism had “ignored” this aspect of it and affirms that “[Pragmatism] is grounded in a recognition of the tragic sense of life” (70). So far, we are three pages into Hook’s article and there is no reference to Unamuno. Keep in mind, Unamuno published *Tragic Sense of Life* in 1913 in Spanish, and it was subsequently translated and published in English in 1921, which Dover reprinted in 1954. The Hook article was published in *Commentary* in 1960.

Second moment to bring your attention to is Hook’s acknowledgement and disregard of Unamuno’s *Tragic Sense of Life*. Hook ([1960] 2002) states,

This brings me finally to my theme of tragic sense of life as a feature of human experience which provides an illuminating perspective upon the analysis of man’s problems. The juxtaposition of the expressions “pragmatism” and “the tragic sense of life” may appear bewildering to those who understand “pragmatism” as a narrow theory of meaning and “the tragic sense of life” as the hysterical lament that man is not immortal—the theme song of Unamuno’s book of that title. To speak of pragmatism and the tragic sense of life is somewhat like speaking of “The Buddhism of John Dewey” or “The Dewey Nobody Knows.” (74)

A pithy way to put the debate here is “thanks, but no thanks!” Hook likes the connotation, images, and feelings the phrase tragic sense of life evokes, but rejects the work of the Basque-Spaniard who breathed great life into them. Hook belittles Unamuno’s book, which is the culmination of decades of philosophical study, commentary, and criticism, by simply describing

it as the “hysterical lament that man is not immortal.” The next paragraph, and the third moment I want to bring your attention to, is the subversion of Unamuno and Hook admitting he is replacing the philosophical content with his own. Hook ([1960] 2002) states,

I am not aware that Dewey ever used the phrase “the tragic sense of life,” but I know that growing up in the shadow of the Civil War he felt what I shall describe by it and that it is implied in his account of moral experience. At any rate, nothing of moment depends upon whether the view is actually Dewey’s or Hegel’s or William James’s or Nicolai Hartmann’s, in in all of whom it can be found. I take the responsibility of the interpretation and its application. It is a perspective which seems to me to illumine the pragmatic view that problems of normative social inquiry—moral in the broad sense—are the primary—not exclusive—subject matter of philosophy, and that reason or scientific intelligence can and should be used to resolve them. (74-75)

This was the last passage to bring to your attention from this article by Hook, which does nothing to enlighten us about Unamuno, and serves, instead, the self-aggrandizing of Hook and creating his version of tragic sense of life.

In principle, I have no issue with someone taking a term and using it for their purposes. The trouble I have with Hook is his disrespect toward Unamuno and by extension the generation of 1898 in Spain. By brushing aside Unamuno as a philosophical inferior without proper argument or analysis, there is a sense of USA chauvinism that I cannot tolerate, and must let you, reader, become knowledgeable of, and hopefully you feel some of my disdain toward Hook’s methods as well. A deep reader of Hook, however, would at this point state that there is a reading and criticism of Unamuno in that article we have been analyzing. That deep reader is right. Hook devotes, to my reading, four paragraphs of uncited commentary on Unamuno, which is

presumably from *The Tragic Sense of Life*. The fourth paragraph begins with comparing Unamuno to a “foothill” and Bertrand Russell to a “Himalayan peak” (86). This cheap shot without true analysis to support it, is not wholly unjustified. Unamuno did in a couple of occasions use his pen to do slight insult to a couple of British men, but Unamuno at least provided citation and brief analysis. Against Shadworth H. Hodgson, Unamuno briefly reviews a book of metaphysics of his and ends the analysis with “Let the reader consider this passage of the English metaphysician and tell me if it is not a tissue of contradictions” ([1921] 1954, 30). In a later chapter of *Tragic Sense of Life*, Unamuno states against another Briton, “The whole of the first part of Spencer's *First Principles*, and especially the fifth chapter entitled "Reconciliation"—that between reason and faith or science and religion being understood—is a model at the same time of philosophical superficiality and religious insincerity, of the most refined British cant” (89). He finishes the thought with, “The unknowable, if it is something more than the merely hitherto unknown, is but a purely negative concept, a concept of limitation. And upon this foundation no human feeling can be built up” (89).

### **Back to Tragedy in Life**

Following Unamuno, part of my project is reading or interpreting reality as having the property of the tragic, of tragedy. Every philosophy has a metaphysics, epistemology, and logic built into it. For this short work I cannot delineate all my philosophical commitments. However, I understand “reality” as being composed of social agents and the interaction of them with environments; without entering into a disciplinarian aside, accept it on my word that this description of reality is mostly atheistic (not caring about ontologically real God(s) that will judge our action) and increasingly common in the USA. A quick fact, Pew Research Center’s Michael Lipka (2016), reporting for their news column *Fact Tank*, states that of adults (18 and

over) in the USA self-ascribed atheists were 3.1% in 2014, which is up from 1.6% in 2007. Back to reality, when I say that I am “reading” or “interpreting” reality as having the property of the tragic, I am saying that there are situations and circumstances where social agents in their environment experience tragedy, and there is another group of social agents that can interpret their life as such.

### **Unamuno: Ultimate Truth from the Anti-Rational Heart**

According to Unamuno, the ultimate truth from our anti-rational heart is the following. “The immortality of the human soul, the truth of the persistence of our consciousness without any termination whatsoever, the truth of the human finality of the Universe” ([1921] 1954, 263). After this, he asks what our moral proof/prueba moral is for this truth? At this point, we must understand that “an ethic” is created through action and embodiment of words in conduct. Earlier in chapter 11 Unamuno stated, “Virtue, therefore, is not based upon dogma, but dogma upon virtue, and it is not faith that creates martyrs but martyrs who create faith” (262). For now, we take it at its word and seek for the moral proof of the anti-rational heart, which all as humans possess, in action. We can codify moral proof in written texts and speeches, but moral proof is found and discovered in life through living and transforming dead words to actions.

Sometimes it seems to me that students think that they in general are more morally righteous if they have taken an ethics or moral philosophy class. This is plainly false. Many of university undergraduates go on to work in several technological industries that have terrible track records of human rights abuses and fraud. They tacitly endorse these places of work by working in them, and their participation in these workspaces is exacerbated if they do no work to counteract the evil that they are participating in when they participate in evil. If we take Unamuno seriously, we are reflecting on morality when reading and writing and learning about

moral acts, but we are not made more moral except when participating in real life on things we are proud and would eternalize. Unamuno says, “My conduct must be the best proof, the moral proof, of my supreme desire; and if I do not end by convincing myself, within the bounds of the ultimate and irremediable uncertainty, of the truth of what I hope for, it is because my conduct is not sufficiently pure” (262).

### **Unamuno’s ethical criticisms and recommendations.**

Unamuno provides us two written formulations of moral principles, but still sustains that the best moral proof/prueba moral is one’s conduct, read the above quotation for why this is. The first of the written formulations I will name the *Principle of Communally Meriting Eternity*. The second formulation I will name the *Principle of Living To-Day to Survive for Eternity*. These formulations come from Unamuno’s reflections on Sénancour’s 1804 Letter XC ([1921] 1954, 263).

*Principle of Communally Meriting Eternity*: “Act so that in your own judgment and in the judgement of others you may merit eternity, act so that you may become irreplaceable, act so that you may not merit death” (263).

*Principle of Living To-Day to Survive for Eternity*: “Act as if you were to die to-morrow [sic], but to die in order to survive and be eternalized” (263).

I want to ward off the specter of seeing Nietzsche’s eternal return in Unamuno. First, as stated previously, Unamuno based much of this on Sénancour’s 1804 Letter XC. Secondly, here is a criticism by Unamuno of Nietzsche and the eternal return in chapter 3 “The Hunger for Immortality.” After discussing the merit (or madness) of Paul’s discourses to some Athenians and Romans about resurrection, Unamuno says:

There you have that “thief of energies,” as [Nietzsche] so obtusely called Christ

who sought to wed nihilism with the struggle for existence, and he talks to you about courage. His heart craved the eternal All while his head convinced him of nothingness, and, desperate and mad to defend himself from himself, he cursed that which he most loved. Because he could not be Christ, he blasphemed against Christ. Bursting with his own self, he wished himself unending and dreamed his theory of eternal recurrence, a sorry counterfeit of immortality, and, full of pity for himself, he abominated all pity. And there are some who say that his is the philosophy of strong men! No, it is not. My health and my strength urge me to perpetuate myself. His is the doctrine of weaklings who aspire to be strong, but not of the strong who are strong. Only the feeble resign themselves to final death and substitute some other desire for the longing for personal immortality. In the strong the zeal for perpetuity overrides the doubt of realizing it, and their superabundance of life overflows upon the other side of death. (50-51)

As we see in that passage, Unamuno has nothing but disdain for Nietzsche's eternal return, since it is a poor substitute for the "zeal for perpetuity." For Unamuno, "The end of morality is to give personal, human finality to the Universe; to discover the finality that belongs to it—if indeed it has any finality—and to discover it by acting" (263).

### **Shepard: The Concrete Playwright and Plays that Shake You to the Core**

I connect ethics to Drama. In 20th century Drama, Sam Shepard is recognized as one of the three foremost playwrights of that century, along with Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett (Rea 2008). Shepard's works reclaim what Rea (2008) calls a "Beckettian existential space." This Beckettian existential space is composed of continually redrawing the boundaries of what theatre is supposed to be. Moreover, this Beckettian existential space calls for playwrights to

write a play from an aesthetic space devoid of concepts: for Beckett it was starting with a tree and an empty stage in *Waiting for Godot* and for Shepard in *Kicking a Dead Horse* it is to begin the play script with describing a dead horse—a horse that should look as real and as dead as could be onstage (Rea 2008). From these beginnings the play is anchored in something of the concrete world. We could deny that horses and trees exist, but, even then, I, and you, reader, would still be able to crash a horse into a tree—if you rode a horse near trees.

One way to think of Shepard's plays is to compare him to Dramatic Social Realism of the early 20th century and late 19th century; for example, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Shepard does not aim to make his plays Realistic—they are not recreations of life—but instead aims to reinterpret reality using the stuff of real life to help the audience connect with their own problems and the world around them. Thus, “the dramatic” is found in the “concrete.” The lesson I draw from this for ethical theory is to start from a concrete thing, situation, or experience and see what purposeful ethical theory does.

### **Shepard's *God of Hell* (A Play)**

One play which is especially chilling in its narrative and dystopian ending is Shepard's *God of Hell* (2005). A dystopia paints a picture of a world you would not want to live in. This world is often arrived at through societies trying to survive through horrible circumstances. The dystopian society comes about because of a central power codifying a flow of life, perhaps a natural desire, and having the power to enact the code. I think the current international world on planet Earth is a dystopia when it comes to the topic and networks surrounding hallucinogens. It is also a dystopia on immigration of citizen's between nations. We often forget that people have lives in dystopias. The dystopian novel often has a protagonist that is somehow trying to change

or defies the power structure—everyone else is living on, to various degrees of satisfaction and defiance.

An apocalyptic scenario is about fate, nature, or society itself ruining humanity; but it is a single cataclysm which we can all point to for the crisis—the crisis-point. It is then up to humanity, conscious beings in concert, to reconstruct from the ruins, or perish. *God of Hell* (2005) presents the beginnings of a dystopian world arrived at through the machinations and conspiracies of Welch—a kind of government agent—and an unseen but arriving vanguard political party trying to throw the world into disarray through a vaguely explained, probably radioactive, chemical. Its effects are displayed onstage. It is a rhizomatic, erratic biological terraforming chemical agent whose central component seems to be plutonium (Shepard 2005, 41-2; 67-9). To me, the word “biological weapon” is insufficient to describe its power, since it randomly changes the genetic structure of any life it comes into contact. It has devastating effects on human reproduction. We’re increasingly in an era where projectile weapons are child’s play.

### **Implications from Tragic Uncertainty in Society**

#### **Social Movements without the Right Side of History**

Unamuno embraced a spirit of having pride in one’s work. He embraced knowledge. He embraced living life to the fullest as best as one knew. From these commitments, one might want to ask what does any of this have to do with society? One might even be tempted to say that Unamuno was a crude egoist. However, Unamuno had the utmost love for humanity and for his Basque Country. How can such a man—and he is a man, an identity that might create trouble for his writings since relationality or working-with (typically associated with Feminism nowadays) may not be basic in his writings—have any associations with groups given his, what many would want to call today, egoism and individualism? To answer this question, let us turn to S. De

Madariaga, in the Introductory essay to the (1954) Dover edition of *Tragic Sense of Life*.

“Self-compassion leads to self-love, and this self-love, founded as it is on a universal conflict, widens into love of all that lives and therefore wants to survive. So, by an act of love, springing from our own hunger for immortality, we are led to give a conscience to the Universe—that is, to create God” (Madariaga, p. xvii). In Unamuno’s words on this point and we must pay attention to his definition of God, he says, “The feeling of solidarity originates in myself; since I am a society, I feel the need of making myself master of human society; since I am a social product, I must socialize myself, and from myself I proceed to God—who is I projected to the All—and from God to each of my neighbours” (279). As we have read, Unamuno may be egoistic and individualistic, but his egoism and individualism, which are improper names for what Unamuno is writing, are different from many contemporary trends in these ideas.

Despite the impossibility of knowing that one will succeed in a political and ethical cause, onwards we march. For in myself I recognize everyone. From everyone, I proceed to my neighbors. Toward my neighbors, I have empathy. Sometimes I fight with them. Nevertheless, the fighting must give way to empathy, respite, and to allow the fight stop a while.

Tragic uncertainty matters only because we care. To some, this is unfortunate. If there is no metaphysical, spiritual, or ontological force to push you toward the ethical imperative to help in tragically uncertain situations, some will think the theory is worse for it. I do not think this. Our ethics must be in accordance with reality. Even if there is some benefit to creating ethical principles as standards, it is only our feelings and culture that help us achieve the standards, not the standards themselves.

Social movements for political causes, to demand rights, to create attention for abuses,

are a known phenomenon, but they are not intimately known unless one participates. I feel a sense of indignation for the need to protest. I often feel “I need to protest for this!” about something that feels so obviously right and correct to me. How come I must let my fellow citizens of the world and my government know about this? I tend to think that they should know it already and that they should be responding in an appropriate, empathetic, helpful way. This feeling in my heart is not rational, but feeling and rationality, as Unamuno has shown us, are a tense interplay. There are two points I want to close this essay on: 1) protests as the failure of governments; and 2) the impossible right or correct side of history.

Even though wars are still fought with missiles, tanks, and submarines, people protesting in cities, which are an integral part of social movements, are a place of warfare. This warfare can be bloody as people in a protest can clash with police and counter-protesters. For example Trevizo (2014) states, “In the summer through early fall of [1968], hundreds of thousands of young people in Mexico City took to the streets to demand...an end to police abuse...as well as amnesty for political prisoners...The dirty tactics that students identified became evident to even wider audiences when their government ordered a surprise assault on a peaceful rally...” (488-89). This can be described as repression of the “left,” but repression against the political “right” is possible as well. The abuses against protesters by official government actors in 1968 in Mexico against protesters is one of an innumerable number of incidents like this. What I want to suggest at this point is that protests are a failure of government.

A metaphor I have heard is that protests are an “escape valve” for a healthy democracy. However, protests can also happen in non-democratic political regimes. If protests can happen in both democratic and non-democratic contexts, then that weakens the argument that they are the escape valve for a healthy democracy. Perhaps they are a result of the failure of a democracy, or

perhaps a part of that democracy. From the imagination of an idealistic moral philosopher, this failure emanates from the thought that when people gather it should be for the important things in life, such as marriages, births, deaths, ceremonies, and rituals. To protest your feelings about a policy issue or an outright abuse seems to trivialize the gathering of humans. As I quoted Unamuno earlier, “The chiefest sanctity of a temple is that it is a place to which men go to weep in common. A *miserere* sung in common by a multitude tormented by destiny has as much value as a philosophy.” The protest is, then, a place to go to weep the incompetence of our political system. Sometimes it may be about a singular issue or politician, but more often it seems to me that it would be for the weeping of the political system, even if we do not know it.

This brings us to the second point, the impossibility of the right or correct side of history. The main contention here is that this is not a moral argument, but an epistemological one about history. I will call this *Thought Experiment from the Historical Butterfly Effect*. We may have the best moral argument to justify a particular policy issue. We then act on it. We acquire some right or some protection. We are feeling good. Little did we know; our success made some racist in some part of the world very angry. Ten years later, this person acquired great political power, dissolves some constitution, and names themselves dictator. This dictator then enacts the exact opposite protections and rights in their country from what we enacted a decade before in ours. In some way, our moral and political success fueled and created that dictator and their opposite actions in relation to us. What are we to make of this thought experiment?

Epistemologically, we cannot fully know what our actions will influence. This is why I admire Unamuno’s work. It seems to me the most suited to allow us consolation in this situation. Do not fret friends. We cannot control history, no matter what we do. We have intuitions, reasons, and arguments on the ready to discuss politics, morality, values, metaphysics, but we

cannot control the future. Unamuno does not pretend that his philosophizing is wholly provable and consistent, especially in the space of ethics. How could it be? Humans are consciousnesses moving around and controlling the world from a limited space and time. Our individual actions, even when they cohere toward a great society, science, and culture, are not guaranteed to bring us happiness, joy, or even moral satisfaction. We too often blind ourselves to this world of uncertainty of applied ethics. Unamuno faces this, and we can too.

This is the point where some start singing about nihilism, that is, the value of life being zero, or that nothing matters. This is a choice. One we must all make. While psychology and existentialism do have tools and thoughts to bring one out of the nihilistic stupor, that is not my job at the moment. All I want to say now is repeat earlier points. Empathy is important. We should try to bring about the ethical imperative of therapeutic relief for tragically uncertain situations. I can go from myself to God, who is I projected to the All, to my neighbors and connect with them. Outright abuses of power against us need to stop. We will deal with the repercussions of our actions when those repercussions present themselves; that is all that is possible in this relativistic space and time of our local and sometimes transcendently digital (non-local quantum) actions.

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## **PART 2: TRAGIC UNCERTAINTY, GLOBAL EVENTS, AND ETHICS**

For what did Don Quixote fight? For Dulcinea, for glory, for life, for survival. Nor for Iseult, who is eternal flesh; not for Beatrice, who is theology; not for Margaret, who is the people; not for Helen, who is culture. He fought for Dulcinea, and he won her, for he lives....

What, then, is the new mission of Don Quixote, to-day, in this world? To cry aloud, to cry aloud in the wilderness. But though men hear not, the wilderness hears, and one day it will be transformed into a resounding forest, and this solitary voice that goes scattering over the wilderness like seed, will fructify into a gigantic cedar, which with its hundred thousand tongues will sing an eternal hosanna to the Lord of life and of death.

Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*,

“Conclusion: Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragi-Comedy”

## **ESSAY 4. THE FLANEUR AS OBSERVER OF THE FRAGILITIES IN CAPITALISM: GAMBLING, CRITICAL THEORY, AND TRAGIC UNCERTAINTY**

The phenomenon of tragic uncertainty occurs when complexity increases beyond a point that resists being easily serviced. It operates. It functions. It happens. The dual criteria for tragic uncertainty presented in “The Main Claim and Contemporary Implications” are more and more being met by the current exponential technology world. Conscious human reality has had both tragedy and uncertainty for millennia; however, tragically uncertain situations were, it seems to me, rare or short-lived. Now, tragic uncertainty seems to surround us more readily in multiplying and worldwide situations. It is more present in the collective consciousness. The two case studies on climate change and corrupted political systems in this Part 2 of the dissertation will serve as contemporary examples of tragically uncertain situations. Moreover, there is a relation between availability of information and the human, collective social animal, which I cannot make explicit now, but I intuit exists and would serve to support my claims of longer persisting tragically uncertain situations or their increase from previous historical periods.

A pertinent question to ask, if it is true that tragic uncertainty is increasing or longer persisting, why so? A candidate answer to this is the interplay between shadow, gray, and informal economies and official distribution-monetary systems. In this essay, I focus on the character of official distribution-monetary systems of the world today. The elements of luck and chance at the heart of contemporary official distribution-monetary system are definite contributors to tragic uncertainty. Whether they are unavoidable is a question I leave open for the reader, but there are times that I lean in my arguments and analyses to thinking that they are not

unavoidable. At the conclusion of the essay, I revisit shadow, gray, and informal economies to connect them to the matters at hand.

Within a capitalist system, compulsive gambling is a perversion of a person's relationship to money. The flaneur is an observer with an eye toward the societally unique; at least this is the evolution of and contemporary scholarly interpretation of Walter Benjamin's flaneur type. Money comes from no single person, nation, or time—hence it was made by no *one*.

As a flaneur, let us take an imaginary, yet all-too familiar, stroll through a Las Vegas casino and observe the compulsive gambler. What is to be shown, once we put our socio-political philosopher's hat on, is that by observing and analyzing the compulsive gambler, we learn that money exists only because most of us respect the rules of it. However, the compulsive gambler is only *one* portal by which we can observe the reification of fragilities in capitalism. 'Fragilities' here mean exposures or weaknesses in a symbolic system that threaten the stability of that system. In this case, symbolic system is the monetary network of capitalism within a 21st century global context. For the purposes of this short work, we will focus on observing and listening to the compulsive gambler and the forces that allow for this phenomenon, for this type of person, to irrupt in society, at least as it irrupts in the United States of America.

Briefly, I want to make clear that I am neither demonizing gambling in general nor the compulsive gambler. Steinmuller (2011) asserts that in "local folk theory" gambling can create "social heat" (267). "Coming together for any eventful gathering...produces social heat..." including gambling (267). We can attribute social heat to activities which are "ideally...lively, hot, and noisy..." as in "...playing games of any kind, eating, making an excursion, chatting, joking, and so on" (268). One of Steinmuller's influences is Adam Chau who, according to Steinmuller, says social heat is produced under what Chau calls a "sociothermic theory of

sociality” (267). Steinmuller’s focus is on “The negotiation around the social heat produced in gambling and how it is evaluated differently by different actors...” (268). My focus with gambling is not a moralizing project, although I leave open the possibility that some forms of gambling may be unethical in the normative sense, that some forms of gambling may be impermissible under some criteria. I also allow the possibility that gambling can be used as a tool of uncontroversial play to create a sense of community. My focus is neither to judge gambling in general nor to demonize the compulsive or ‘problem gambler’ as connoted in the following Chinese oppositional terms: play (social gambling) *wan* and high-stakes gambling with money (problem gambling) *du* (268). My focus is to say something meaningful about the compulsive gambler type of person, in so far as compulsive gambling does exist in players, to explore the effects the compulsive gambler could have on economies. Much can be learned from such an economic and production perspective of gambling, especially concerning capitalist systems of money and acquisition of material goods.

The compulsive gambler, as defined by Gamblers Anonymous, mental health therapists, and capitalist moralizers, is troubling because this lifestyle reminds us that the current rules of money are not permanently or immutably ingrained or encoded into our collective psyche. Truly, through the compulsive gambler, we are reminded or come to realize that the money that nations and stock exchanges validate as currencies has a great level of fiction attached to it. I do not imply term “fiction” in any derogatory way, it simply is one aspect of financial systems that we must interpret, explain, and utilize.

One of the main reasons the current capitalist rules of money have persisted in human reality is because as many people as respect the rules of it are alive. Otherwise, money would

cease to exist because one *necessary* component of money is that it is a practice.<sup>1</sup> Just as soccer would cease to be played if the black and white ball with hexagonal and pentagonal surfaces were to not be kicked around anymore with the aim to score a goal, so would monetary systems stop operating if money ceased to circulate.

### The Upshot

By demonstrating that money in practice is what it is because of how groups of people perceive it and utilize it, it can be shown that money itself has no intrinsic purpose. This is to say, there is no place that money is supposed to go, no person or group that is supposed to have it. The rules of money change depending on the population, place and time. Politics and the public sphere, think of these terms as loosely as you like, are the realms where decisions are made for where those monetary interactions are localized in the time and place for that population.

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<sup>1</sup> One may run an analysis on the necessary and sufficient conditions as to what money is in and of itself. Some have done so. For my project here, I'm exploring one aspect or component or necessary condition of money: that it is a practice. Yet, another component of money itself could be that it is some kind of abstract entity. I will bracket technical discussion of the *metaphysics* of money in this essay and only deal with that issue indirectly. Although, I will say that in the present work, I am indebted in many respects to Ole Bjerg's *Making Money: The Philosophy of Crisis Capitalism* (2014). In my section two of this essay, I praise Bjerg's work on the metaphysics of money and the strengthening of the connection between philosophical and economic thinking.

One of my main concerns in the present essay is what business owners, shareholders, governments, "regular" people, etc., do to keep money in circulation. Moreover, I'm concerned with hypothesizing that if certain practices stopped, then certain monetary systems would crumble, and yet, life would still go on. Agriculture would continue, people would still have desires and wants; but monetary relations would meaningfully change. Thus, I believe that money *in practice* is ontologically different from money *as an abstract entity*. My work concentrates most on money in practice and contributes to the discussion of money as an abstract entity only to a small degree.

### **The Roadmap for the Rest of the Essay**

First, a theoretical framework based on Benjamin's flaneur-type will be sketched. The flaneur-type colors the rest of the paper, even when not immediately obvious. Next, definitions and descriptions of compulsive gambling will be given, based on Gamblers Anonymous, the mental health community, and capitalist moralizers. Third, I use the work of Bjerg to highlight why, philosophically, the compulsive gambler matters. To this end, I engage with the political philosophy of Deleuze, Marx and Lacan to better understand Bjerg's argument. Fourth, some of Walter Benjamin's thoughts on gambling in modern societies are commented on by me. Benjamin's thoughts are mainly on the expression of gambling in capitalist economic culture. Lastly, it will be concluded that compulsive gambling is a great way to explore the nature of capitalism and the purpose of money because from our exploration in that world we learn that one necessary component of money is that it operates only if enough players play it a type of way, but sometimes other ways to play it are found and practiced. Ways like compulsive gambling by too many people goes against both capitalism and gambling for the sake of community building.

### **The Benjaminian Theory of Motivation - Adopt a Character**

#### **Benjamin's Flaneur**

There has been much scholarly attention on Benjamin's historical analysis and creation of a figure or type in the flaneur. Partly, I hope to contribute to Benjaminian scholarship from a philosophical perspective. Mainly, I hope to use this analysis on Benjamin's flaneur to begin the inquiry on the fragilities of capitalism through gambling. Our first basic question is what is the flaneur?

“Possibly the most serviceable guide through the passages of Benjamin's thought is the figure of the flaneur, the wandering observer who confronts the chaos of the modern world as if it were a labyrinth that only he can penetrate” (Birkerts 1982, 164). But why penetrate the labyrinth of the modern world? And how do the flaneur’s wanderings, which are laden with observation, differ from the gaze of the enlightenment enterprise of grounding all thought in rationality? For Benjamin, the city of Paris created the flaneur (1999b, 417).

“But the great reminiscences, the historical shudder—these are a trumpery which he (the flaneur) leaves to tourists, who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci with a military password. Our friend may well keep silent. At the approach of his footsteps the place has roused; speechlessly, mindlessly, its mere intimate nearness gives him hints and instructions. He stands before Notre Dame de Lorette, and his soles remember...he would have given all he knows about the domicile of Balzac or of Gavarni, about the site of a surprise attack or even of a barricade, to be able to catch the scent of a threshold...” (1999b, 416).

“...Benjamin's flaneur is a motif, a concept in many ways different from the historical flesh-and-blood stroller who wandered the boulevards and passages of 19th century Paris...” (Birkerts 1982, 165). The flaneur is a historical person who used to stroll the streets of Paris. He used to promenade and observe and take in the sights to stave off boredom. There was something about the crowds that were starting to develop in the city that also attracted this person. For one, crowds were becoming ever more common and frequent. Benjamin saw something special in the flaneur himself. He saw that this person was one of the few, at the time, and first people who watched people for fun.

The original flaneurs did not try to dissect reality like a scientist might. Although, some things were peculiar to the flaneur that others did not see. The flaneur in a way is a societal missing link. What is a commonality between the observational comic, the social researcher, the social-political philosopher? They all observe without much judgment at first, then their different mindsets, perspectives, and methods take that information and use it for different purposes. But it all started with a kind of instinctive fascination with people and how they live, how human societies affect the individual person, their desires and behavior; that is a flaneur type mentality. The following gives us a similar look at the flaneur:

“For Benjamin the flaneur is at once a genuine historical manifestation and a personal emblem, the representation of a sympathetic sensibility. The two are not to be confused. The historical flaneur was already an extinct species in Benjamin's day...By excerpting the flaneur from the past, by projecting his image upon modern urban life, Benjamin conferred a shock upon the word. He turned a phenomenon into a type, a mask.” (Birkerts 1982,166)

Let us now quickly dissect and analyze one of Benjamin's sentences from one of the quotations above. “[The flaneur] stands before Notre Dame de Lorette, and his soles remember...” (1999b, 416). The flaneur's “soles remember” signifies that his feet, his senses are connected to history. His soles *remember*. They recall a past event that our flaneur wishes he was at. “...he would have given all he knows about the domicile of Balzac...to be able to catch the scent of a threshold” in the barricades of a revolutionary Paris (1999b, 416). This is a romanticism of war and history that was not out of character with notions of war in Europe prior to the events that were unleashed by Gavrilo Princip's killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. This

romanticism of war, of course, changed after the massacres on the Western Front because of the evolution of weaponry.

More on this sense of history in the flaneur. “The street conducts the flaneur into a vanished time. For him, every street is precipitous. It leads downward—if not to the mythical Mothers, then into a past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private” (1999b, 416). The flaneur knows that he is not the only one alive, and that many lived before him. The streets are alive for the flaneur, and he would love to be transported back to those places, not to participate and instead to observe, but memory of historical facts and reconstructions, imagination, and the senses would have to do. There is also a sense of a communal history present in this passage. The history of humanity is one and interconnected, despite what we have inherited because of past events.

There is a contradiction in the flaneur. “Dialectic of flanerrie: on one side, the man who feels himself viewed by all and sundry as a true suspect and, on the other side, the man who is utterly undiscoverable, the hidden man. Presumably, it is this dialectic that is developed in [Poe’s] “The Man of the Crowd”” (1999b, 420). The flaneur is a person who not a lot of people recognize, personally. They might have said that he travels a certain path every day, or that he’s not from around here—not a lot of people know a lot about him and what he wants. He just wants to observe and feel and think.

Ultimately, “Benjamin’s flaneur is a response to a world in which sense is disjected, scattered, crystallized in detail. The flaneur is the collector and connoisseur of detail. He is a sensibility as opposed to an intelligence. His highest aspiration is to become a medium, a precipitate in which the scattered particles of sense can reconstitute themselves” (Birkerts 1982, 165). In this way, many a researcher may aspire to acquire a flaneur sensibility, since so much of

our academic training can be focused on the side of intelligence. This is “Benjamin’s flaneur.” A person who can take in the world, say something meaningful about it, and then go for a walk, for the fun of it.

### **Benjamin on Boredom**

Benjamin had the insight that “The mere narcotizing effect which cosmic forces have on a shallow and brittle personality is attested in the relation of such a person to one of the highest and most genial manifestations of these forces: the weather...How fine the ironic overcoming of this attitude in the story of the splenetic Englishman who wakes up one morning and shoots himself because it is raining” (1999a, 101-102). The Englishman killed himself because he couldn’t feel the rain, or when he felt it, it did not remind him of anything, or it was physically painful. The weather is a metaphor for the forces that are not under one’s control and that happen slowly. The weather is one of the most boring topics of conversation. The weather is “narcotizing,” stupefying and causes sleepiness in many. It also affects everything we do by being the field where we operate, but it is so hard to notice it in real time.

The weather is one of the most boring things to observe as it develops in the moment. Have you ever sat and watched the clouds move? One must be in a certain mood to appreciate this movement, but hardly anyone is regularly in such a mood in technocratic-capitalist societies. It is then fitting that the ‘splenetic Englishman’ shoots himself, perhaps in an urban cityscape, rather than be bored watching the rain. Compulsive gambling and suicide in some cases have common causes, boredom and anxiety in a world culture that has the narcotizing, stupefying effect of rain in our ‘splenetic Englishman’.

## **Definition and Description of Compulsive Gambling**

There are many ways to be compulsive. You can tear out your hair strand by strand, second by second. You can gamble your money away and become destitute. You can use drugs daily at levels that prevent one from being “productive.” Most pathologies are deemed as such because they prevent a person from contributing labor to society or one’s in-group that relies on that person for livelihood.

Let’s take a quick look at abnormal consumer behavior. Faber and O’Guinn theorize that:

“One reason the study of abnormal consumer behavior is important is that these behaviors have severe consequences for both the affected individual and others. Compulsive buyers who amass unmanageable amounts of debt can create economic and emotional problems for themselves and their families. An inability to retire this debt can also adversely affect their creditors. Thus, understanding this problem and providing help for those who suffer from it is not only humanitarian, but in the interest of society as well.” (147)

As described above, abnormal, pathological, or deviant behavior is such because it affects the wider societal population in a typically undesired way, especially under capitalistic circumstances where people, especially modern-day proletarians, are required to work to earn monetary gains from their labor.

A strange phenomenon arises from extreme behavior having to do with money. For example, in the case of “Compulsive buyers, [they] buy not so much to obtain utility or service from a purchased commodity as to achieve gratification through the buying process itself” (Faber and O’Guinn 1989, 147). To highlight, “the buying process itself” is what brings “gratification” to the compulsive buyer. This is a kind of perversion of a person’s relationship to money

because, officially, money is supposed to be *for* something. It is to be used for goods and services. Entertainment can be bought as well. But when the buying process itself becomes a form of entertainment, in that case, societal groups—families, governments, capitalists—may become uncomfortable.

A similar claim can be made about deviant gamblers compared to compulsive gamblers. There is something about playing with money that gratifies them. A familiar pleasurable and painful tension takes place every time money is on the lines at the craps table or, nowadays, the digital roulette machine.

### **A Short History of the Virtuous Against Gambling Behavior**

Legal pressures against gambling are present at least as early as the seventeenth century in the Americas. “The Plymouth Colony in 1660 set fines of two pounds for “card fiends caught at play” and mandated that servants and minors caught gambling could be “publicly whipt” (Longstreet, 1977:30)” (as cited in Rosecrane 1985, 276). Overall, in the USA, we are far from preventing people from gambling. Many states have racetracks and casinos, and most states have lotteries. Moreover, online gambling is an emerging industry. Its future depends on many factors, such as competition from gambling websites outside the USA and mechanisms for capturing tax revenue and corporate investments (Edington 2004, 217).

On this vein, Edington (2004) continues, saying, “In most jurisdictions that have had legalized casinos or casino-style gaming in the past two decades, the most important policy issue has been the perception and reality of negative social effects associated with excessive or pathological gambling behavior (Australian Productivity Commission 1999)” (217). It can clearly be seen here that pathological gambling behavior, its “perception and reality,” is a major hurdle to communities that desire the revenues and industry that casinos bring with them, or in

the case of online gambling, on the tax revenue they bring to whatever bureaucracy which takes responsibility and ownership of the regulation rights. For online gambling websites, there is also possible corporate investment and marketing revenues which they can accrue.

Pathological gambling, as we have been discussing, has a monetary effect and “negative” consequences in capitalist societies, or societies or groups where a person’s labor is necessary for acquiring monetary gains for the personal livelihood of individuals and others relying on them.

As for medicalization, “Psychoanalysts [in the 1920s] made the first attempts to explain excessive gambling in other than moral or legal terms” (Rosecrane 1985, 276). Rosecrane states that this negative attitude, in legal and moral terms, toward gambling as reprehensible recreation when excessive continued “For much of the twentieth century...” (276). Moreover, “The development of a disease label served to validate a common sense or folk definition of deviance. This can be observed in the comments of Lindner (1950: 95), an early proponent of a medical model for deviant gambling” (276). Hence, once medicalization, or categorization, of gambling as a mental/societal health issue arose, this became the steppingstone toward creating a treatment model at the level of the individual, and a way to do this *without changing the overall societal circumstances*. Still further, Gilles Deleuze provides for us a framework through which we can see that human economies are made up of psychological entities. For example, economies become depressed and overall, aggregate confidence matters. Thus, while it is true that entire economies can be pathologized, as Deleuze argued, what I am saying, and this is compatible with Deleuze: pathologies of individuals that relate to money in a capitalist context put a strain on economies to the point that whole industries—governmental, medical, community-based—emerge to reinforce the sustainability of the capitalist system.

## **Therapy for Individuals with Compulsive Gambling as a Diagnosis**

Rosencrane (1985) reports that the well-renowned psychoanalyst Bergler argued that, “The anguish of losing is eroticized into a chronic masochism which the gambler craves with an uncontrollable passion. This condition renders the compulsive gambler unable to control his or her gambling. Bergler (1957) contended that such gamblers are in the grips of an illness and should be accorded medical treatment rather than moral condemnation” (277). Thus, you could still hold a moral judgment against such an individual, but if you wanted to change his or her behavior toward one of productive labor, then Bergler was showing that you needed to treat this person as a patient, not a criminal.

If we are completely honest with ourselves, the nature of gambling requires that there be some component of compulsivity in the process. A common strategy among gamblers that enjoy a few nights of gambling without breaking the bank, is to only take money, including credit and debit cards, inside a casino that you are willing to part with. If that money is lost on one hand of poker or a hundred hands, it doesn't matter. What matters is that if that money is gone, you don't bet any more. Compulsive gamblers, as defined by the medical community or gambling groups advocating gambling abstinence, don't have the will to set aside money that they are willing to part with. They then try to keep gambling once all their money is gone.

### **By Observing and Analyzing the Compulsive Gambler, we Learn about the Practice of Money**

Bjerg has done a great service to philosophy. He has strengthened the connection between philosophers and economists. Published in several places are his examinations of economic theories or economic problems from a philosophical perspective. For example, he has a great book on the matter titled, *Making Money: The Philosophy of Crisis Capitalism*. However,

here only one of his papers will be used. In *Too Close to the Money: A Theory of Compulsive Gambling* (2009), on gambling and money and chance, Bjerg says, “In gambling, money is lifted out of its ordinary circulation in the capitalist economy and led astray into a universe of chance. Thus the very concept and meaning of money is challenged” (47-8). It is this challenge to money that we are also analyzing. On a more basic level,

For most people, gambling is just a curious diversion from everyday life, a compartmentalized activity in their lives in capitalist society. But for some people, the experience of winning or losing, seeing money ebb and flow at the whims of chance, has such traumatizing effects that their very being as subjects of capitalist society is distorted. They become compulsive gamblers” (Bjerg 2009, 48).

It is this “traumatizing” and “distorted” view of capitalist society that, phenomenologically speaking, is what is, as I have stated, one of many portals in which we can see the fragility and cracks in purely capitalist society.

Pure capitalist societies can be defined in many ways. For the conclusions and methodological constraints of this essay, one good way to think of a purely capitalist society would be one that tries to ‘obey’ universal laws of economics by thinking that economics is only a natural phenomenon or one that humans have no true way of constraining or completely opening economies such that the operation of money can be more beneficial for the public good than now. What can also be thought of as pure capitalism is that it is the ultimate or final form of politics and economic theory. Political regimes that have a ‘hands-off’ approach to money tend to be purely capitalist in the sense of pure capitalism that has been hinted at; that is, regimes that let banks or industry dictate what the public good is, without organizing the public sphere in

order for it to have effective means to change the distribution systems of goods and property. This goes beyond politics in the USA.

### **A Quick, but Important Journey into Marxism**

Arguably, Marx's magnum opus is *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. In *Capital* we find that "... one of [its] essential theses... is that...there are no economic laws valid for each and every basically different form of society (aside from the trivialities like the formula which points out that no society can consume more than it produces without reducing its stock of wealth..." (Mandel 2004, 12). Reiterated here is what is said previously, that there are no universal laws of economics, except for a few "trivialities." Moreover, every society finds itself in a kind of historical situation where it does its best to find a way to distribute goods and services and to have its population entertained. We happen to find ourselves in a capitalistic society because of its historical and ideological situations. To this end, "Each specific social form of economic organization has its own specific economic laws. *Capital* limits itself to examining those which govern the capitalist mode of production" (12). We are also limiting ourselves here to examining and critiquing capitalist societies.

Marx's historical materialism is based upon "...the *relativity, social determination and historical limitation* of all economic laws" (Mandel 2004, 13). Furthermore, there are no "objective economic laws" in production of goods and services or in their distribution, or in economic markets, which could "correspond to 'human nature'" (13). Lastly, Mandel claims that Marx shows that no objective laws of economics are ever at work and will never be at work (13). If this is true, there is plenty of ways to have societal economics operate. Then we can ask we if we are in the best possible world of economic circumstances. If we are not, what can we do to

change it toward a better situation? Perhaps society is better off without capitalism as the main mode of economics in operation.

Turning again to Bjerg, there are several Marxian strands that we can connect to his work. For example, “Generalized commodity production fully unfolds trends and contradictions which are latent in every one of its basic ‘cells’, the commodities” (Mandel 2004, 13). Gambling is one of those “unfolding trends” that is contradictory in terms of how it operates in capitalist society, as well as its purpose.

### **Marxian Roots of Bjerg’s Arguments**

Bjerg’s (2009) Marxist analysis of money and commodities is now up for display. On this line of reasoning, the Marxist one, Bjerg states that “A crucial distinction in Marx is the distinction between money and capital (Marx, 1867: 161–91). Money is the symbolic expression of the commodity’s value. But money takes on a different character depending on the form of circulation in which the money (M) and the commodity (C) enter” (50). Moreover, it is possible to have “the form M–C–M... I have \$100. For this \$100 I purchase a sack of potatoes, which I then sell on for \$110. Both the starting point and the ending point for this circulation is money, while the commodity is only an intermediate. The two points are not qualitatively different but quantitatively different, since I have increased my balance by \$10” (50). It can be seen that once the capitalist enterprise is in motion, money can beget money. This is exactly what gambling is an instance of. Thus, what many of us see as a perversion of money, is exactly one of the functions that a capitalist economy is set up to do--which is, in its own way, to make money out of money; except that in the case of gambling, instead of the commodity being the medium for more money, it is a gambling apparatus (such as poker or the slot machine) that transfers the money from one person to another.

***Objection: There is a difference between increasing the money supply through the commodity versus the gambling apparatus***

The difference between the gambling apparatus and increasing one's money supply through the sale of a commodity (such as a computer or a table) is that there is no "loser" in the case of a commodity. A person gets profit from the commodity, and the other gets the commodity. As for gambling, in order for there to be a winner there has to be a loser, and the loser gets nothing. Except the loser does get something. The loser gets the experience of having lost. Not only this, but the loser has the potential to gain a lot, depending on the pool of money. The gambler paid to have a shot at profits without, at the very least, labour in the sense of working for an hourly wage.

Many, perhaps most people, lose money in the gambling process, but a few lucky people gain money. To those winners, they have a profit. Money has seemingly materialized from nowhere. Obviously, it came from the pockets of the losers. However, this is no different than how a typical business gains profits. The profits of the business owner come from the pockets of the consumers. Consumers and losers pool their money together to either receive a commodity or the pure experience of losing money to the fates; but, again, to be clear, both lost money in the sense that neither possesses it after the transaction.

**Back to the Marxian Roots of Bjerg's Argument**

Bjerg (2009) attributes Marx with having found "Hidden in the circulation of capital...a certain premise, ...Capital's production of surplus-value is possible only under the condition that we find on the market a commodity whose use-value is to generate value. This commodity is of course labour" (50). Marx seems to have undertheorized gambling as a way to generate value. However, as we said earlier, gambling is one of those "unfolding trends" that is contradictory in

terms of how it operates in capitalist society, as well as its purpose. Yet, Marx gave very little thought to gambling in *Capital*.

One of the few places that Marx mentions gambling is the following. "...the national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable effects of all kinds, and to speculation: in a word, it has given rise to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy" (Marx [1867] 2004, 919). Here he simply compares certain practices in the stock market as being left up to luck or chance.

On another note, in fact, Marx seems to have thought that gambling created no profit at all, no surplus-value. He states that to buy 100 pounds of a material and then to sell it off for 100 pounds is an absurd situation, and then cites Th. Corbet as saying "Hence trade is advantageously contrasted with gambling, which consists in a mere exchange of money for money" (Marx [1867] 2004, 251). Marx never seems to have turned 20 dollars into 200 in a half hour period at the Free Bet poker at the Venetian in Las Vegas.

### **The Lacanian Roots of Bjerg's Argument**

What Bjerg demonstrates in *Too Close to the Money* is that, ...money serves an ideological function as 'the sublime object of capitalism'. What happens in gambling is a form of de-sublimation of money. The status of money as a bearer of special symbolic meaning is undermined, and the gambler's entire economy of desire, structured around money, implodes" (2009, 48).

Bjerg is arguing that money is what most people aspire to obtain or accumulate in capitalist societies. The phenomenon of the compulsive gambler shows that there is a class of people who desire money, but who also know a deeper truth about it. Money becomes "de-sublimated," meaning that they no longer hold it at the upper-most-status that they used to, if

they ever did hold it to that highest regard. It used to be something to be taken care of and be careful with, like a trophy in a glass case, but at some point, the compulsive gambler starts playing real fast and loose with money. Society, at that point, usually starting with the compulsive gambler's friends and family, starts to get worried.

Bjerg (2009) utilizes the Lacanian categorization of the symbolic and Real in the following. "If we apply the Lacanian distinction between the symbolic and the Real, we may see both the immediate circulation of commodities (C–M–C) and the circulation of capital (M–C–M) as taking place exclusively within the symbolic order. Money and capital [surplus-value] are in themselves symbols. And both commodity and labour enter the circulation only insofar as they have been ascribed a symbolic identity according to their place in the circulation" (50). For the "commodity and labour" to have "symbolic identity" someone or some group had to give that meaning to them. These meanings were not given arbitrarily, mind you, but ultimately, they are interpretations that are, arguably, not the pinnacle of economic mechanisms, as we saw very clearly in Marx.

The Real and the symbolic have a reflexive/feedback relation. Once they are connected, once a symbolism is attached to the Real, which in this case is commodities and labor, only certain possibilities are made actual due to the interaction of the Real and the symbolic realms. "Lacan describes the relationship between the symbolic order and the Real as one where the chaotic, meaningless and irregular Real is cancelled out by the operation of symbolization" (Bjerg 2009, 51). Moreover, Bjerg says, "Is not this exactly what happens in the capitalist process of circulation? Cannot capitalism be described as an order symbolizing the Real in a way that imposes a certain regularity with certain possibilities and impossibilities on reality? Something is defined as commodity, something as labourer and something as capitalist" (52).

Thus, capitalism is a form of symbolization that attaches meanings to the Real—commodities, labor, desires, among others—and it is this ever-moving evolving relationship that we are dealing with here. But the point, again, is that capitalism is a kind of symbolization, but not the only one; whereas commodities, labor, and desires would continue without any particular symbolization attached to them. Bjerg also tells us that:

...piece of the Real is produced within the symbolic order, but at the same time incarnates a surplus of meaning not entirely reducible to operations within the symbolic order. The Real appears as a form of immanently produced transcendence, which, in an almost Gödelian sense, is what makes the symbolic order possible. In the process of symbolization something is ‘left behind’, only to be found again later as something beyond symbolization guaranteeing the whole operation.” (2009, 52).

We learn here that without a certain amount of unpredictability or chance, symbolization is not possible. When dealing with the Real we find that there is “something beyond symbolization that guarantees the whole operation” and this “beyond” is something that can’t fully be symbolized, much less controlled or done away with. Just because it can’t be symbolized does not mean it does not exist or manifest in reality.

### **Bjerg on the Fragility of Capitalism**

Many believe that capitalism is the ultimate form of economic evolution in the history of humanity. On the contrary, Bjerg (2009) states, “Even though capitalist ideology is very inventive in developing new means of self-preservation, it is possible to identify minor implosions in capitalism, where the sublime object of money is de-sublimated. Gambling is just such an implosion” (54). In gambling in general, but especially in the compulsive gambling,

which is the object of our study, it can be found that capitalism is fragile and that part of the reason that it persists is because more of us don't gamble more.

Bjerg (2009) presents a certain flare and drama in the following insight. “When the roulette player bets his \$1000 on red, he buys absolutely nothing. He does not buy no thing, but nothingness itself. What the roulette wheel, the fruit machine or the dice do is to create an opening in the symbolic order where the Real may be confronted directly. In this very opening the gambler places his money” (54). While in some ways dramatic, this is true. While the gambler does gain a certain intrasomatic experience which is a blend of pleasure and pain, or beyond pleasure and pain—really, gambling is made possible by money and chance/luck, and nothing more. Nothingness itself, or at least a void in the capitalist enterprise, presents itself to any gambler in the act of gambling—the compulsive gambler just knows it best.

### **Benjamin on Gambling**

On gambling, one of the patterns in Benjamin's observations, which he detects, is that “As life becomes more subject to administrative norms, people must learn to wait more. Games of chance possess the great charm of freeing people from having to wait” (1999a, 119). Once people are free from having to wait, they are enslaved to marketing and a small screen from a cell phone. Candy Crush is a perfect example of this. The deep insight here is that games of chance possess their charm because of administrative norms. Many would rather play the game of chance on their phone for half an hour rather than fill out that form your daughter brought you so that you can have the chance at a new job.

Next, this quotation is by Paul Lafargue, French revolutionary and Marxist from the 19th century. It is found in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. “Modern economic development as a whole tends more and more to transform capitalist society into a giant international gambling

house, where the bourgeois wins and loses capital in consequence of events which remain unknown to him....” [for example, in the stock markets”] (as cited in Benjamin 1999d, 497).

There are plenty of places where money can be lost and won in society, but one of the most respected is the stock market. You have companies like Google and Facebook that seem like they will be around forever. How can Google ever disappear at this point? And maybe Google will be around forever but start investing in little known companies on solar energy or the next innovative technology, and the risk/reward scales start playing in your head faster than flight of the bumble bee.

Now, what we want to focus on is a quotation by Benjamin on the relation between economy and culture in Marx. “Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matters is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture” (Benjamin 1999c, 460). This relates to how Benjamin perceived his *The Arcades Project*. *The Arcades Project* is “the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible *Urphenomenon*, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life in the arcades, and accordingly, in the nineteenth century” (1999c, 460). Gambling is one form of expression of the economy in the culture. It is one of the best examples. In a sense, gambling may be the jazz of expressing the economy in the culture. You must feel when it is right to come in and out of the streak. Sometimes you can mess up the flow when you come in, or you hit that top note just right. Gambling is a culture all its own, and it is all economics, money at its most Real in the Lacanian sense.

### **Conclusion: What Has Studying the Compulsive Gambler Type Shown?**

In the case of money, the compulsive gambler has lost respect for the main purpose of money. Money, in a capitalist system, is supposed to be primarily for goods or services, not

entertainment or a release of anxiety or a way to unburden yourself of your troubles. There are celebrities, CEOs, sons and daughters of oil tycoons, that is, the modern-day bourgeoisie, that can blow through hundreds of thousands of dollars in a single night at the roulette table without affecting their livelihood in any significant way. But even they, these monetary elites, can be drained of their fortune in any Las Vegas casino after a sufficient amount of time. Whereas most of you who read this article would be cleared out of your savings in a day or two of compulsive, not just regular, but *compulsive* gambling, the modern-day bourgeois person would clear their bank account within a few weeks of compulsive gambling under the eternal day that occurs in casinos.

The allure of gambling is strong for some and not for others. In exploring the compulsive gambler—this set of behaviors that has very little supporters (and perhaps only the gamblers themselves support this behavior before they try to alleviate it)—we discovered how great a role *chance and luck* have in capitalism. In realizing how great a role chance and luck have in capitalism, we can now ask ourselves, would it be better for them (chance and luck) to not have as great a role in our official distribution system of goods, commodities, and services, as it currently does?

I say official *distribution* system because “monetary system” is too veiled a way to talk about this issue. The practice of money is a means to an end, officially. It is for the securing of goods, commodities and services. The gambler uses it for entertainment or unburdening him or herself in some way or form.

I say *official* distribution system because currently, and for the foreseeable future, there are and will be “shadow” economies. These are economies that resist standard accounting mechanisms by governments. Fleming, Roman, and Farrell (2000) say, “In seeking to understand

the size of the world economy, we are usually guided by official statistics on output, trade and investment. But there is a driving force in today's world market that has, hitherto, rarely been recognized for its tremendous economic impact. It is what we will refer to as the shadow economy" (387). They continue, "Economic activity that falls outside the purview of government accounting is known by various names: shadow, informal, hidden, black, underground, gray, clandestine, illegal and parallel. Implicit in each, save for informal, is that these economic activities include conscious efforts to avoid official detection" (387).

Making a living from gambling in the conscious mind of most people in the USA might be indecent to some, especially when reminded of those who run gambling establishments, such as suited casino pit-bosses or politicians granting dubious permissions for certain practices. As portrayed in movies they may be caricatures, exaggerations, or true-to-life. Yet, gambling is a far cry from being a shadow economy. It provides revenues for governments and communities, often through donations and taxation and it is often advertised by governments and gambling commissions that these donations are being made to the community. Gambling provides legal paying jobs for individuals of various kinds. The USA is both idealized and reviled for being a chance economy: gameshows, climbing social ladders, social mobility, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs—they all live there. This is also now more or less the way of the world.

Capitalism is imbued with high degrees of chance and luck in how it currently operates, as displayed in our study of the compulsive gambler and what this teaches us about money and economies. Politics and the public sphere are the realms where discussions on our official distribution systems can take place. A new or highly modified official distribution system is to be sought if one wants to eliminate blatant chance and luck in the current one.

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## **ESSAY 5. CIRCUMSTANCES GENERATING TRAGIC UNCERTAINTY: ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR IMMIGRATION POLICY**

The analysis I conduct is for understanding the circularity, reciprocity, and confrontations of United States of America-United States of Mexico (USA-USM) government policies and their effect on the people within each country and between them. I center my analysis on the realities of capitalism, culture, and political borders, while using marijuana as my starting point to enter this complex international relationship. I display these realities and actualities in contemporary society and culture by showing how relevant concepts and mechanisms are implemented in politics and policy in this specific region of the planet.

Why concentrate on nation-states in this article? At this point in history, nation-states serve as material connectors between peoples as well as are arbiters of values. Whatever the concepts of liberation, freedom, and oppression might mean to us or however we engage with these concepts and their associated realities and actualities, people identify with their nationalities as well as are affected by nationalities and nations whether they like it or not. I subscribe to two theoretical guidelines. Better to know how and why nation-states affect us. Better to know possibilities of future difference.

### **Establishing Marijuana as a Relevant Social-Political Issue between USA-USM**

This article can be properly categorized as an ontological project about society—the category of Social Ontology—based on the lived experiences of people affected by political parties and factions as well as world policy designs. The year 1913 in the title refers to a sensationalized murder reported in the *El Paso Herald*—a man presumed to be on the psychoactive effects marijuana is reported to have killed two people, two horses, and chased a

couple of people with a huge knife—which soon after served as a partial cause for the full ban on marijuana in the city of El Paso, Texas due to its influence on public opinion (as cited in O'Rourke<sup>1</sup> and Byrd 2011, 74). According to Aaron Martinez (2015) of the *El Paso Times*, the ordinance banning marijuana went into effect June 14, 1915, making El Paso, Texas the first city in the United States of America (USA) to make such a ban—although, California, Utah, and other states preceded the city of El Paso. Moreover, in the article you are reading, everything begins and ends in El Paso. The year 2012, the next year in the title, refers to the year of publication by Cinco Puntos Press, located in El Paso, of Benjamin Alire Sáenz's *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club*. Sáenz has been a member of the faculty at the University of Texas at El Paso since 1992 and his writing has appeared in numerous award-winning books and well-respected newspapers and magazines. The Kentucky Club is a famous bar in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, United States of Mexico (USM). Just crossing the Santa Fe international bridge from El Paso, it takes a short walk to arrive there. The stories by Sáenz in the Kentucky Club book mainly take place between these two cities, El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. They revolve around violence and heartbreak. The book of short stories by Sáenz is a piece of literature I cite from later in this article to situate identity from a Latin@ categorization.

Dangerous aspects and socially destructive realities and actualities of prohibition of some substances are materialized in the stories by Sáenz, but they do not have to be the case. If it is true that some degree of choice and freedom exist in the human world, then there are possibilities of having a world other than the one we have—for better or worse. Marijuana does not have to

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<sup>1</sup> For those of you in the know of Texas politics, yes, this is the same Beto O'Rourke running for USA senate in 2018 and trying to dethrone Ted Cruz. He's a former city council member and congressperson from and for the city of El Paso, Texas.

be (it is not necessary for it to be) illegal. Legal trade between USA and USM of marijuana is conceivable in the imagination, even though commerce laws for it are not in place and not likely to be in place anytime soon. Currently and for considerable time, the conversation on marijuana—the psychoactive version of the cannabis plant—has been centered on medicine. Is it therapeutic? Will it make my disease improve in some way? However, cannabis and its varieties of possible meaningful, recreational, and medical effects are not the only conversations and debates that should be associated with it. Shifting the conversation, we can speak about the circle of violence between the USA and USM and within each of these nation-states connected to the illegality and legal gray zone of the plant.

The heart of the violence connected with marijuana is the linkages and territory disputes, ideological and physical, between governmental groups with military power and narcotrafficking groups with weapons and networks (technological and political) approaching the power of democratically elected officials that control military administrations. There are other psychoactive and illicit substances associated with narcotrafficking as well as practices by these groups that often include kidnapping and extortion, but I concentrate on cannabis to make the scope of the article manageable. Furthermore, this article does not have a comprehensive philosophical or argumentative stance on whether the plant should be legal or not, or the normative stances we can take on it, but does highlight the too-often ignored—especially in the profession of philosophy, justice systems, and academic fields—violence associated with its illegal or legal gray zone status.

In the USM elected governments, the military, and narcotrafficking groups converge in “narcopolitics.” Ricardo Ravelo (2012) defined Mexican-style narcopolitics in the following way—here is my English translation from the Spanish language. “In Mexico, the ties among

narcos, politicians and members of the military have scandalous antecedents, inscribed in the phenomenon of narcopolitics, which, demonstrated by history, to maintain their business dealings safe, criminal groups need the complicity of power” (Ravelo 2012, 20). Narcopolitics is a form of structuring a society, but it is neither best described as an authority in the institutional sense nor a form of civil society. Narcopolitics is a way of structuring society through conspiracies and what in the USA we call “back-room deals” among those who have material wealth (money, territory, buildings, etc.), political power, or destructive weapons to keep their webs of power—and the public sphere has no meaningful input in these negotiations but must understand this conspiratorial power structure as a force of nature, something to contend with but not control.

Philosopher William McBride (2000) associates the term civil society “most closely” with John Locke. McBride defines John Locke’s definition of civil society in Locke’s *Second Treatise of Civil Government* as “to be assured of having a known authority to obey and whom to appeal when injured” (149). Narcopolitics might be defined or described as an authority, but if it is, it does not fit “civil society” as John Locke thought of it. Even though I have a negative perception regarding some European philosophers’ ideas of the historical time-period Locke was writing in, some of their concepts and ideas for institutions are understood to be fair and sometimes good or desired by people when one expects justice. Institutional mechanisms or procedures under narcopolitical circumstances are not a “known” authority because there is no place you can find to notify, make a claim of justice, and know with some certainty that your claim is being handled as you would reasonably expect.

Say your son is killed by a narco-trafficking cartel member. If you notify the police and the police is taking money and has a working relationship with the narco-trafficking group whose

member killed your son, you would likely not receive the retributive justice you desire or expect for your son's death. Even though I have questions about and problems with excessive police force and with overreliance on some aspects of civil society, even with retributive justice itself, narcopolitics is not the answer I seek to replace the problems with civil society, which I am privileged enough to question.

Under narcopolitics there is no way for citizens or the public-at-large to reasonably “obey” the authority since the demands of narcopolitical authority shift rapidly among the military, the police, politicians, criminal groups, and those with material wealth. Under narcopolitics there is no strong institution or procedural mechanism, an authority, where I can reasonably expect my “appeal” of injury to receive a fair hearing. Under narcopolitics no action can be expected to meaningfully arise where evidence, morality, and the rule of written law interact.

There is more to say on the topic of marijuana, its uses, and distribution. There is more to say about marijuana, period. There have been scientific studies of the use of cannabis as a drug as early as the late-1800s. “In 1893 the British government commissioned a report on cannabis use in India. The Indian Hemp Drugs Commission spent years studying the issue before publishing an eight-volume report that found “the moderate use of hemp drugs is practically attended by no evil results at all”” (Barcott 2017, 10). Legalization in several states of the USA on various uses of the cannabis plant has created renewed interest in its history and scientific investigations. New literature, informational videos, and podcasts on the topic of marijuana, including at least one philosophy anthology,<sup>2</sup> are continually available; some of better and worse

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<sup>2</sup> See several essays in *Cannabis—Philosophy for Everyone: What were We Just Talking About?*, ed. Dale Jacquette (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2015).

quality depending on why you seek them out. A new philosophical and positive defense of marijuana cannot be done here due to various considerations, the main one being that my inquiry is on Social Ontology and not Moral Theory or Philosophy of Law. Suffice it to say for the moment, new philosophical evaluations of marijuana are possible. There have been instances of such defenses, and there remains more action, activism, and arguments to be created. For my part, pleasure, personal enhancement, and well-being are topics under which theorizing about marijuana could be fruitfully done in the contemporary philosophy landscape.

Some of what follows is anecdotal evidence and examples from literature. I hope my reader is sympathetic to my aims and goals for conducting philosophical inquiry in the social realm. The issues involved with marijuana, the USA-USM relation to it, and their association with capitalism, culture, and political borders therein, cannot be spoken about without anecdotal or literary evidence, at least not in how I think of these issues in this article. If you have deep concerns about my methodology, please skip to the section prior to the “Conclusion” titled “Response to Objections” where I may address some of your concerns on issues of evidence and creating arguments. After that, you may be ready to come back here and read on to the next section.

### **USA-USM Ontological Circumstances**

#### **Identity Interruption: Today’s Newspaper**

This is a conversation between the two main characters in the story “HE HAS GONE TO BE WITH THE WOMEN.”

“You like newspapers,” [Javier] said.

“Yes.”

“They’re the past. And they’re all lies.”

I [Juan Carlos] held up my newspaper. “It’s not *El Diario*.”<sup>3</sup>

“Are you one of those?”

I looked into his smiling face. “One of those?”

[Javier] laughed. “One of those Mexicans who hates other Mexicans?”

“No. I don’t suffer from that disease.”

“What do you suffer from?”

I didn’t say anything. I looked into his chocolate eyes. I think I was looking for *suffering*.

“You’re not really Mexican,” [Javier] said.

“Not Mexican. Not American. Fucked. That’s the disease I suffer from.” (Sáenz 2012, 13)

The most obvious part of the passage, at least from an ontological standpoint, is the idea of a mixed identity, especially a kind of Latin@ identity. All human identity is mixed. In the grand scheme of the universe, there is little room for purity or stasis in identity, especially in cities with millions of people living in them and a complex web of rules and traditions that one can enter and exit, sometimes more easily than others. These are general insights from some post-modern thinkers that I take as basically true. The idea here is that identity is generally

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<sup>3</sup> *El Diario* is a newspaper from Ciudad Juárez, which you can find online at [diario.mx](http://diario.mx). I use the quoted passage to open the conversation and inquiry into the ontological issues of identity found in the work of Sáenz. However, the idea of “fakenews” could be brought up as well. The integrity of newspapers in the USM, including *El Diario*, and other news media is a topic of much debate in print, online, and on the street. “Fakenews” did not start with Trump. Issues of propaganda and veracity of articles in newspapers has been a topic of discussion throughout the twentieth century. Notably in our case, it has been a point of contention in the USM and perhaps was heightened by the cartel wars in the 2000s. This is one reason great reporting, like that of Ricardo Ravelo who I quoted earlier in his definition of narcopolitics, is so important in the USM. As much as I would like to say more about this, it would take us too far from our current inquiry on identity.

fragmented on an ontological level. This makes thinking about politics from a communitarian perspective difficult in some sense. However, I think this criticism would not harm the rest of my thoughts on the passage from Sáenz nor the general thrust of this paper.

On a positive note, the thoughts that I take to be true from post-modernism and identity in this paragraph seem to me to evade the criticism by Leonard Harris (2000) about the possible and actual racist implications of a post-modern “meta-utopia” where any version of a utopia is admissible. A fragmentary, multiplicitous, or produced identity says nothing about what kinds of preferences those identities should have. Since there is no a priori normative content to these identities, the expression of racism as consequence of regionalisms or nativist-isolationist concerns is evaded; at least the next step would be to debate the normative content admissible in human identities. I take Harris’s (2000) criticisms to be some of the strongest critiques of tenants in post-modernism. By ascribing to the parts of post-modernist identity that I do and without the notion of the meta-utopia attached, as a starting place my project is on, to my estimation, solid philosophical ground.

At first, the identity under consideration in the story by Sáenz is that of being Mexican. The last line of the passage introduces the concept of possibly being American (USAer), but ultimately the character Juan Carlos rejecting either label. The remainder of the story, along with other themes and elements of great story-telling, explores the theme of a Mexican-American identity and what its membership entails in terms of membership consequences (benefits, responsibilities, dangers) in contrast to singular Mexican or American (USA) identities.

The two characters in the story, Javier and Juan Carlos, live commuting between El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, two cities with connected bridges, a river cemented by concrete, and governmental institutional enforcement mechanisms of various kinds to separate,

codify, and regulate them. Javier was taking care of an uncle in El Paso who died during the story, but after the death he kept commuting to El Paso to be with Juan Carlos (Sáenz 2012, 30). Despite Javier being offered by Juan Carlos to overstay his Mexican visa and live with him on the USA side, Javier refused to exclusively live in El Paso due to the sense of community he had for Ciudad Juárez (Sáenz 2012, 34-36). Javier was eventually killed in a case of mistaken identity—narcotrafficking cartel members rounded-up men in an apartment building looking for someone and Javier—not the one they were looking for—was taken and killed as part of this process. Juan Carlos found out about the round-up of men by cartel members by speaking with two women who were neighbors of Javier living in an apartment near where Juan Carlos and Javier shared many intimate nights and loving memories (Sáenz 2012, 39-40).

“HE HAS GONE TO BE WITH THE WOMEN” is a story that tracks elements from real-world accounts of people’s lives and deaths in newspaper reports throughout the USM at least since the early 1990s. Thinking about the real-world accounts of the dead from narcotrafficking circumstances, their deaths are historically contingent. People like Javier did not have to die the way they did, that is, unless one holds a necessitarian account of social events, which to me is not a useful philosophical position or psychological disposition for implementing possible social change. However, the debate of these epistemological and metaphysical positions is outside the scope of this essay. The passage by Sáenz and its explanation places us in a mindset to further elaborate on the elements of what an identity is composed of in humans of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. International borders may be social constructions that in the year 4,000 A.D. may not exist and did not exist in their present formation in 1989. Why does the world change this way? Continuing with the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez relation, we will partially answer this and related questions.

Through a further analysis, we delve and deepen our understanding of this region of the world and the wider mechanisms which make it the case that it persists. How do such situations like Javier's and Juan Carlos's romantic separation happen? How is the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez international situation persisting? What are ways it could meaningfully and realistically change?

### **Warring Border Culture and Integrated World Capitalism**

At various junctures in the following sections, I concentrate on the set of violent circumstances in the USM-USA international border, especially the tri-state region of Chihuahua, New Mexico, and Texas—the first being a state in the USM and the other two states in the USA. For shorthand, I call this region of the world NS2-T3: two nation-states bordering each other and three states, one from USM and 2 from the USA, also bordering each other and creating this region of the world.

During this section, I am working out some philosophical issues Anzaldúa leaves open for inquiry. Thus, my project here can be said to “borrow” from her work or that it is “under” it. This is especially true when I tackle issues at NS2-T3. I also speak on philosophical issues left open for inquiry and action by Guattari in relation to capitalism, the interconnections of humans on planet Earth, and subjectivity.

Warring Border Culture, as I conceive of it, combines Anzaldúa's definitions of *los atravesados* and borderlands and contextualizes them in the concept of border culture. What Anzaldúa calls a “border culture” is a category that admits of multiples. Taking it as a foundational concept, one can identify numerous kinds of border cultures. At NS2-T3 there is a Warring Border Culture that affects much of the life there.

I will now mark Anzaldúa's initial major theses relating to borders from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, originally published in 1987. The numbering is my own and not in the original. Each

thesis is conceptually argued for or judged confirmed through aesthetic and sensible (of the senses) observation at one juncture or another in the book.

1. “The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* [is an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture.” (italics in original)

2. “A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.”

3. “The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.”” (italics in original)

4. “Do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only “legitimate” inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those [p. 26 begins] who align themselves with whites. Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger.” (2007, 25-26)

Much is owed to Anzaldúa. She opened the academic and theoretical space to talk about borders as a felt experience and problematized many unquestioned power relations. From theses 2 and 3, we all live between borders, but not everybody lives on a borderland; los atravesados are the ones that live on a borderland, and not everybody is an atravesado. We might want to say that having brown or black skin is enough to say one is an atravesado, but this is not true. There may be instances where our skin is enough to have us discriminated against and killed, but the fullest

expression of the *atrasado* is of one who cannot enter and if they do they ‘will be raped, maimed, gassed, shot’. By my education, way of speaking, and knowledge of a certain set of systems—say immigration, government administrations, and education—I am more legitimate than an *atrasado* in the USA-USM border culture. There may be instances where my skin and facial features place me in the danger an *atrasado* feels and exists in, but I am more legitimate than an *atrasado* by my power through knowledge of some social and technological systems. I likely learned those systems through being “aligned” with “whites” from childhood. I was born in the USA and consequently have a birth-certificate from a state in the USA and received all my schooling in public schools of the USA. The fullest expression of the *atrasado* at the USA-USM border, this Warring Border Culture, is one who has no alignment with whites, has no power and is in “tension” and “ambivalence” in their life situation. Death looms over them. Perhaps “death is no stranger” crossing from the USM to the USA through the deserts of Arizona due to excessive heat and no water; perhaps they are shot by a gun if they make a move that is perceived as threatening to those who would capture or arrest them; perhaps death might loom over the *atrasado* in a detention center if they are of poor health, receive bad treatment, or sent back to the situation outside the USA they were trying to escape.

Furthermore, Anzaldúa provided us this term Border Culture to let us know that where two worlds meet, their touching is a dynamic, relational union. A oneness emerges. However, not all border cultures are the same as thesis 1 from Anzaldúa may make it seem or at least leaves open a space for interpretation and investigation.

Her words “*es una herida abierta*” dictate a negative connotation. This border culture hurts and bleeds. The blood of these two countries bleeds and “hemorrhages again” before scabbing. These are words describing a war, someone shot, a sister and a sister fighting each

other and others in perpetuity. This is what I call a Warring Border Culture. There are numerous Border Cultures and the USA-USM Border Culture, as Anzaldúa presented in 1987 and as I corroborate throughout this essay, includes a Warring Border Culture because of the “emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.” History, urban city planning, seeking protection from a country and its inhabitants, and policies on psychedelic substances are part of that emotional residue, that unnatural boundary, and part of what keeps the battle going.

She uses the term “third world” in a correct manner writing in 1987. As McBride (2001) states, “There was even, for a certain time, a self-proclaimed “non-aligned” movement of what were then called “Third World” countries. (This term still survives for some reason, even though the former “Second World” of Soviet-style socialism no longer exists anywhere except, in a certain sense, in Cuba and perhaps North Korea.)” (vii). So Anzaldúa does not commit an error using this term for the USM, since under the criteria McBride makes us aware of the USM is not first or second world in 1987. How close the USM was to the “non-aligned” movement is unclear to me.

Now, there are other socio-political processes that have great influence on this unnatural boundary and that perpetuate the bleeding, *la herida*, of the Warring Border Culture. There are two central ontological assumptions in *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* (2008) that are worth highlighting at this point. First, it examines the human being without reducing it to a subject or an object. Second, it recognizes the person as a confluence of social and material forces. On this second point, an important aspect to bear in mind for the present article is the connection between what Guattari calls Integrated World Capitalism and subjectivation. Seeing how

Guattari's thoughts on Integrated World Capitalism might provide new thoughts in today's scholarship on Globalization, Post-Globalization, and Post-Post Marxism<sup>4</sup> is important.

Guattari coined the term "Integrated World Capitalism" (IWC) as early as the late 1960s (Rolnik 2008, 477). According to Rolnik, in an unpublished report in 1980 for CINEL group seminar, IWC is explained the following way by Guattari, "...capitalism is worldwide and integrated because it potentially colonized the whole planet, because it currently lives in symbiosis with countries that historically appear to have escaped from it...and because it tends to leave no human activity, no productive sector, outside its control" (Guattari 2008, 477).<sup>5</sup> For Guattari IWC is different from globalization. Guattari considered the term 'globalization' "...to be excessively generic and which serves to hide the fundamentally economic, specifically capitalist and neoliberal senses of the phenomenon of transnationalization..." (Rolnik 2008, 477).

Before I connect IWC with "subjectivation," I will note that for those schooled in or acutely aware of "Continental Philosophy," and I have my gripes about the term given that now we definitely know Europe is not the world of philosophy—it seems to me Foucault is most strongly associated with the term "subjectivation." Personally, I do not know how much Guattari took from Foucault or Foucault from Guattari as far as this term, idea, or topic is concerned.

What I do know is that Guattari in an interview with Michel Butel says that "It was during the

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<sup>4</sup> "Post-Post Marxism" is a term I first saw in the title of William L. McBride (2001) *From Yugoslav Praxis to Global Pathos: Anti-Hegemonic Post-Post Marxist Essays*.

<sup>5</sup> Originally published in Rolnik, Suely, ed., "O Capitalismo Mundial Integrado e Revolução Molecular," *Revolução Molecular: Pulsações políticas do desejo* (Brasiliense: São Paulo, 1981, 3rd ed. 1987, out of print), p. 211. According to Rolnik, before she published it, it was unpublished by Guattari and was a written report for a conference given at a 1980 CINEL group seminar. I could not find what exactly CINEL group was, but from the context it seems to be an academic working group or workshop (Rolnik 2008, 477).

time of the GIP (Group Information on Prisons) [early 1970s] that I had gotten Deleuze together with Foucault to embark on what eventually became the CERFI (Center for Study, Research and Institutional Training), by obtaining a research grant for them and their co-workers. In a way, then, there really was a moment for this kind of collective work” (1995, 28). The connections among “this kind of collective work”—GIP, CERFI and other projects, like Deleuze co-writing with Guattari, in France pre-and-post 1968 named in the interview with Butel by Guattari—is very important for the history of contemporary world philosophy, especially French philosophy. There is more to discuss in the relationships, either in biographical or intellectual work, among Deleuze, Foucault, and Guattari. However, the main point I make in bringing up this part of the interview between Butel and Guattari is that Guattari deserves some spotlight in terms of history of philosophy in the years preceding and proceeding the GIP.

Guattari greatly developed—even if he might have been philosophically mature already—and kept developing philosophically and professionally in the world of letters after his first writings with Deleuze. Guattari, then, can be looked at as an authority on certain concepts that might be more closely associated with Foucault without having to make the explicit comparison of “who did it better” or “how did they differ or compare” at the present.

Subjectivation is the wider phenomenon of the creation of the human being and, how I want to currently look at the situation, Integrated World Capitalism (IWC) is one social force, albeit one of the more ubiquitous ones, that reconfigures and structures subjectivation (the production of human subjectivity). There are two important passages from Guattari which I will quote to support my summation of subjectivation and assessment of IWC in connection to subjectivation.

First passage:

“Rather than speak of ideology, I always prefer to speak of subjectivation, or the production of subjectivity.... The subject, according to a tradition of philosophy and the humanities, is something that we find as an *être-là*, something in the domain of a supposed human nature. In contrast, I propose the idea of subjectivity of an industrial, machinic nature—in other words, one that is essentially manufactured, modeled, received, and consumed” (Guattari [1986] 2008, 35; italics in original).

Second passage:

“IWC asserts itself through a double oppression in modalities that vary according to the country or social stratum. First, by direct repression, both economic and social—controlling the production of goods and social relations through external material coercion and the suggestion of meaning. The second oppression, perhaps greater than the first in intensity, consists in the installation of IWC in the very production of subjectivity: an immense machine producing a subjectivity standardized on a world scale has become a basic element in the formation of collective labor power and the force for collective social control” (Guattari [1986] 2008, 53).

To fully take a snapshot, a static image of a subjectivation, as I understand Guattari to be explaining, one would need to make an analysis and connections of Integrated World Capitalism combined with other social forces including marketing, mutual funds, stock exchanges, biological impulses, family upbringing, natural disasters, wars, and every and all conceptual, physical, historical forces. This is the same style of problem we have when we discuss the possibility of complete knowledge. Some of us will answer that complete knowledge in a domain is possible and others will say no. In general, subjectivation is a process. If you claim processes are knowledge, the preceding issues obtain. What, in my assessment, cannot be denied is that

subjectivation creates, maintains, and eliminates subjects, cultures, and ways of perceiving. These subjects, cultures, and perceptions are in constant motion, come in and out of existence, and cannot be wholly static in the practice.

### **Connecting IWC and Warring Border Culture at NS2-T3**

The main connection with Warring Border Culture is that IWC is one of the main forces—to clarify, as defined in the previous section, IWC is different from money itself, economic systems in general, or the practice of commerce and trade—that creates the conditions for the bleeding to continue, that is, for people to be continually killed in the streets of Ciudad Juárez and for USA cities to imprison a great portion of their population in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Guattari says that for IWC to perpetuate itself and its outcomes, “...it is quite prepared to tolerate subjective territories that, to some extent, escape this general culture [the culture IWC develops and establishes]. For this it is necessary to tolerate margins, sectors of minority culture—subjectivities in which we can recognize ourselves, recover ourselves in an orientation foreign to that of...IWC” (2008, 27). They continue to say that this tolerance is not an accident, as it may have been at one point in the early developments of IWC, but rather is calculated and accounted for. “In recent decades [preceding the early 1980s], this capitalistic production [IWC] has made an effort on its own to produce its margins, and in some way it has prepared new subjective territories: individuals, families, social groups, minorities, and so on” (2008, 27). One might think that the IWC would only “tolerate” the margins because it has no choice but to work with the physical limitations of the human body, but according to Guattari IWC creates its own kinds of margins because of a psychological component that is beyond attention span, need for sleep, or other more bodily sorts of human limitations. Guattari said that IWC tolerates and

creates margins outside of IWC so that "...people will have some sort of feeling that they are in a kind of territory and not lost in an abstract world" (2008, 27). In other words, Guattari infers IWC makes room for people's a sense of belonging. However, IWC helps create the sense of belonging which keeps expanding and maintaining IWC, that is, through "minority" cultures that work with and not wholly against the "double oppression of modalities that vary according to country or social stratus," as stated in the second extended quoted passage by Guattari.

From my preceding analyses, *los atravesados*, in Anzaldúa's sense, are produced in large part by IWC, by policies concerning cannabis trade, and by that "emotional residue of an unnatural boundary." There is significant overlap between Anzaldúa's "atravesados" and Guattari's "minority culture," but I cannot do a proper analysis here of their similarities and differences.

I conclude this section by saying that *los atravesados* can be calculated and created to be perpetuated by IWC as well as more traditional State mechanisms such as incarceration, extreme military tactics against select protests, and overly disciplinary education systems. *Los atravesados* can be created by the *atravesados* themselves to escape these mechanisms or to change them. The repercussions and consequences of changing them is a continually open question as borderlands are—as Anzaldúa says in thesis 2 in my numbering of her work—in a "constant state of transition."

## **Response to Objections**

### **An Objection to Social Ontology in General**

An analysis from the perspective of Social Ontology may be disputed or objected to from a moral point of view, but this would be a category mistake. Logically speaking, this would take

the form that analysis of topic X is mistaken because the analysis is not about Z. In this case, X would not be the same as Z.

A better objection would be to say that Social Ontology about any topic is just as good as any other topic. So, then the field of Social Ontology would in that line of thinking a field in danger of dealing with trivial analyses, which the analogy to logic would be that Social Ontological analyses would be vacuously true. This objection affects my article in the following way. This objection would ask of me, why focus on the USA-USM international border as opposed to another international border? This is also to ask, why concentrate on borders at all and not instead on animal rights, climate change, or any other large-scale phenomenon? Why even theorize and write about large-scale phenomena at all and not individual lives and cases? And perhaps, why even do Social Ontology?

Tragic uncertainty is a technical term. I provide context for it from history of philosophy of the early twentieth century in Part 1. Now, I provide the basic definition to highlight its importance in the USA-USM phenomenon under scrutiny throughout this article. This term tragic uncertainty is important to describe here because it is the perspective under which I chose to inquire about the considered USM-USA relation rather than another topic of writing or philosophizing. Tragic uncertainty is my answer to the objection that any topic is just as good to do Social Ontology about. My response, and there are other possible responses to the objection lobbied, is that tragically uncertain situations warrant a response and meaningful action to rectify them based on the ethical imperative that therapeutic relief in the form of affective release should be provided.

Tragic uncertainty describes a situation with a moral dimension which has no clear plan of resolution and no clear time horizon for conceiving a plan for its resolution; and the situation

clearly deserves a plan of resolution (it should be solved). For example, I think many of us find it intuitively wrong that “La Bestia” exists. La Bestia is a series of trains running from one of the southern-most regions of the USM to the northern-most regions of the USM, bordering with the USA. La Bestia transports people that typically are in poverty and from very violent regions of Central America. These people wait for the trains and climb on them, riding on the top of the train for the whole trip—enduring rain, heat, and threats from violent gangs in the form of demands of money, personal objects, or sex. As you may surmise, this act of taking the journey on La Bestia is a harrowing experience but is allowed due to various complicated factors. The travelers are trying to reach the USA or more northern parts of the USM in search of a better life than the one they have lived.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of La Bestia, I attribute the term tragic uncertainty to the situation. It is not a situation which is a one-time occurrence. The trains depart on regular times every few days and people climb them when they see fit and risk their lives by trying to get on them, being maimed if they have a misstep. The governments throughout North and Central America know that this phenomenon happens. In fact, you talk about it in the streets of the USM to people and if you are near enough one of the trains’ stops, the people you speak with might be able to direct you to the stops. Interestingly, at the 2017 “Philosophy Across the Americas” conference in McAllen, Texas I saw an exhibit by an artist making a claim of irony about the situation. The artist took pictures of La Bestia’s travelers but asked them to wear masks of current USA-president Donald Trump. This is not a problem of knowledge. People, governments, and NGOs know the

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<sup>6</sup> It is a horrible situation and I cannot do justice to describing its horrors and anxiety in this section. I suggest you see the images, video and fuller description of it on YouTube from Univision’s *Al Punto* episode “Conoce “La Bestia,” el tren que transporta a miles de migrantes,” hosted by Jorge Ramos and field reporting by Pedro Ultras. July 27, 2014. <https://youtu.be/tUmB2eAmnr4>

phenomenon of La Bestia exists. Still, there is no clear resolution, no plan, for resolving this. There is, to my knowledge, no active conversation between governments and the public sphere for even coming up with a good plan for not only stopping people from climbing the series of trains, but for doing something to meaningfully improve the poverty and generally harsh life circumstances of those who choose to take their chances of being sexually assaulted and suffer extortion of some kind by being on La Bestia.

For now, I submit the case of La Bestia, its riders and those of us who know about it as a paradigm example of tragic uncertainty—even if just as presented in this provisional outline of the case. I do this to show how tragic uncertainty operates in an, as I see it, intuitive case of a morally wrong situation. Similarly, I attribute Tragic Uncertainty in the controversial case discussed, the case of illicit substances, specifically circumstances surrounding marijuana distribution and consumption in a region of the world. The situation with illicit substances has a moral dimension which has no clear plan of resolution and no clear time horizon for conceiving a plan for its resolution; and the situation clearly deserves a plan of resolution (it should be solved). I am on the side that while certain distinctions must be made about the safety and enjoyment of some historically demonized substances—such as marijuana, cocaine, some mushrooms, etc.—the moral case for demonizing marijuana is on the shakiest ground possible, but the enforcement mechanisms (economic, administrative, military) against it remain so strong, especially on the international level, that there is no clear resolution in terms of plan or time horizon for its consumption or in terms of distribution.

As stated previously, the policies, politics, and thoughts relating to the USA-USM relationship explored in this article mostly surround the situation of marijuana distribution and consumption in the form of Mexican-style narcopolitics and coercive legal, police, and military

suppression from the USA. Moreover, I realize narcopolitics has many more causes and effects than marijuana distribution or consumption, but a full treatment of narcopolitics from a philosophical perspective is outside the scope of this article. New inquiries or simply more research of narcopolitics from a philosophical perspective would be of much worth to studies on immigration, national security, and terrorism.

### **One More Concern: Does it Do Too Much?**

For those in the traditions of Philosophy of Liberation, Social Ontology, or Applied Political Philosophy, my main audience, some of you might want to say that my article tries to do too much, or you might say that my thesis is clear enough, but too many types of sources are pulled together. Besides the seemingly disparate types of sources, you might say that too many techniques are used: anecdotal evidence, literature, economics, and logic. There is no strong center to the paper, one might want to say. These criticisms are worthy of consideration, but in part I have replied to such criticism by citing previous philosophers who are well-respected and do their own take on pulling from disparate sources for their philosophical purposes.

Philosophers of the caliber of Anzaldúa, on the aesthetic-literary and anecdotal side, and Guattari, on the economic and anecdotal side, have engaged in this kind of work, both also using logical assessments. Still, my main response to these criticisms is that if given an earnest and extensive read, one would find there is internal consistency in the article. Furthermore, it is important for these kinds of arguments and discussions to be in the public sphere and academia.

The article follows its main aims. It purports to explain, although sometimes with too much ease, issues that are controversial and contentious. I consider the situations and topics under examination very difficult to generally speak on and affirm that only a combined effort of ideas and techniques can convey, display, and analyze them.

## Conclusion

The analysis I conducted is for understanding the circularity, reciprocity, and confrontations of United States of America-United States of Mexico (USA-USM) government policies and their effect on the people within each country and between them. I centered my analysis on the realities of capitalism, culture, and political borders, while using marijuana as my starting point to enter this complex international relationship.

I clarified the concept of Warring Border Culture by following the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. I explored Félix Guattari's analysis of Integrated World Capitalism and its connection to subjectivation, that is, the production of subjectivity. I synthesized the analyses on Guattari and Anzaldúa to theorize about how the USA-USM borders and borderlands are structured and what their future possibilities can realistically entail given their current position. Prior to this, I established relevant socio-political factors of USA-USM commerce and human life-death in relation to domestic and international cannabis trade, specifically marijuana. The marijuana trade, its (il)legal status, and its distribution and consumption on both sides of this international border is one important topic to theorize about and is a meaningful way to continue the conversation on narcopolitics, capitalism, political borders, and culture.

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## **ESSAY 6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL INTERESTS: MORAL SENTIMENTS, OPPRESSIVE RACIAL FORMATIONS, AND ALAIN LOCKE**

I will present a modus ponens inference and try to fill out support for it throughout the paper. I call the conditional, its modus ponens inference, and the surrounding premises *Argument for Indigenous Environmental Interests*. I do this in the next paragraph. The rest of the paper tries to fill out the criteria to fulfill policy and public support for the *Argument for Indigenous Environmental Interests* as well as justify the moral-political outlook that grounds my concern for Indigenous Environmental Interests (IEIs). The moral-political justification that grounds my concern for IEIs is mostly from philosophical work on moral psychology. A crucial aim of this paper is to theorize about global collective action and praxis, which I see as part of the wider moral-political work we can do as philosophers.

*Argument for Indigenous Environmental Interests*: Premise 1) “Concrete action” is action classified as any combination of political, moral, or personal action. By “entities,” I mean any person, group, or procedural institution; Premise 2) Taking something “seriously” is to be moved to a concrete action; Premise 3) Barring climate change skepticism, we ought to desire (A); Premise 4) If (A): we desire protections for sentient ecosystems, including human cities, due to harmful anthropogenic climate change, then (B): we need to take indigenous environmental interests (IEIs) seriously since engaging with these is one of the best strategies to mitigate harms from anthropogenic climate change to sentient ecosystems on planet Earth; Premise 5) Since (B) follows from (A), and we desire (A), we ought to desire (B); Conclusion) Therefore, we—persons, groups, procedural institutions—need to take IEIs seriously, that is, be moved to concrete action that stops harms to them.

The most contentious aspect of the argument is premise 5, the modus ponens inference. After reading the argument, one can with good reason ask is premise 5 true? Does (B) follow from (A)? I will try to motivate the claim that yes—(B) we need to take indigenous environmental interests (IEIs) seriously since engaging with these is one of the best strategies to mitigate harms from anthropogenic climate change to sentient ecosystems on planet Earth because this follows from (A) we desire protections for sentient ecosystems, including human cities, due to harmful anthropogenic climate change. I will do this by providing reasons for thinking that IEIs in themselves, without regard for climate change, are in danger but also that they link in the right way—causally connect—to anthropogenic climate change. Global forces of various kinds harm IEIs and in harming IEIs harm numerous, perhaps countless, sentient ecosystems—including human cities—on Earth.

I use the case study of the 2015 death of environmental activist Berta Cáceres and her connection to the Lenca people of Honduras to talk about the general harms that occur with IEIs. However, if I fail to convince you that IEIs connect to anthropogenic climate change, I hope you are convinced that IEIs are, indeed, in danger. In particular, as I describe here, the Lenca people in Honduras are in danger. That being the case, even if IEIs are not linked to climate change in the way that I'm arguing, myself or some other person could more fully explore true-to-life cases of IEIs. For example, we need to continue to pay attention to the Lenca in Honduras and how their moral status as moral agents in real-world danger stemming from vast global economic and multiple governmental forces.

The following corresponds to important ideas of the paper. What are Indigenous Environmental Interests? Indigenous people near to or owners of significant natural resources for industry; these are 'Indigenous Environmental Interests'. Why care for Indigenous

Environmental Interests in terms of anthropogenic climate change? Indigenous people are often near to or own natural resources that are significant for industries, such as the energy sector (oil for gasoline or water for hydroelectric power, etc.) or large plots of land that could be used in agriculture (soy beans, palm oil, coffee, etc.). Historically and as we will see in section one of this paper, there are instances when investors and company leaders have not compensated indigenous groups fairly and have not protected the environment as they are required by law when cleaning up an area after oil deposits are depleted by industry or in reforestation projects. Not only this, but there is covert and systematic killing of environmental activists, often of indigenous affiliation, in Latin America in direct connection to urbanization or globalization—and by extension anthropogenic climate change. Consequently, how do we start caring about IEIs? To do that, we need to have a proper understanding of two mechanisms that affect planet Earth and human societies: anthropogenic climate change and connections among loyalty, tribal-social-instincts, and values. Lastly, there is lessons and concrete suggestions to draw and infer from this information to curb damages from anthropogenic climate change, that is, ways to combat negative and foreseeable aspects from anthropogenic climate change.

**Indigenous environmental interests: Berta Cáceres and the systematic killing of indigenous people for significant natural resources**

Berta Cáceres, co-founder of National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras, COPINH) and organizer for the Lenca indigenous group (Martins 2016), is a recently murdered environmental activist from Honduras, killed March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 (García 2017; Editorial Staff of *La Prensa Gráfica* 2016). As of this writing on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017, there are slightly different accounts of the day and time of Berta's death. Jonathan Watts of *The Guardian* said her death

was on a Thursday. However, every other newspaper I have seen places Berta's death on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, which is a Wednesday. The 2017, March 3<sup>rd</sup> article I cite later in the essay from *El País* places the death at 23:40 on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. The Editorial Staff of *La Prensa Gráfica* from 2016, May 10<sup>th</sup> states the death was on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 but provides no time. The 2017, February 28<sup>th</sup> article of Nina Lakhani from *The Guardian* places her death on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 at 11:30pm, 10 minutes prior to the article from *El País*.

Berta won the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize, “the world’s leading environmental award” as a “recognition” for her successful efforts in effectively battling “to stop construction” (Watts 2015) at the “Agua Zarca [project]...one of four dams planned in the Gualcarque river basin” (Watts 2016).

Berta was killed by military members from Honduras at the command of then active military officials of the country, according to credible testimony from First Sergeant Rodrigo Cruz (a pseudonym), whose identity was confirmed by “academics, community leaders, and activists” (Lakhani 2016). Berta’s daughter, Olivia Zúñiga, in an interview on Nicaraguan television, accused the Honduran federal government [“el Estado”], the military [“Fuerzas Armadas”], and Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA) of being complicit in orchestrating the murder [“autores intelectuales” del asesinato] of her mother (Editorial Staff of *La Prensa Gráfica* 2016). One suspect arrested for the murder connected to DESA was employee Sergio Rodríguez Orellana, manager of social and environmental issues for DESA, who said he was “surprised” by his detainment (Malkin 2016).

There is more tragedy to spell out regarding environmental activists in Latin America. Berta’s death is not an isolated incident. Chris Moye from Global Witness told Alejandra Martins of *BBC Mundo* that of the 111 murders from 2002-2014 in Honduras of environmental activists

80 of them were in the Bajo Aguán region from 2011-2014 (Martins 2016). Chris Moye further claims that Berta's death is representative of "systematic persecution" of Honduran environmentalists (Martins 2016). Relatedly, "The Bajo Aguán region—where the Xatruch taskforce is based [Rodrigo Cruz's former military unit]—has been the setting for a string of violent land disputes between powerful palm oil magnates and local farmers. More than 100 people, mainly peasant activists, have been killed, many at the hands of state or private security forces" (Lakhani 2016).

Should our loyalties be with Berta and her memory, supporting COPINH, the indigenous group supporting environmental rights, or should they be with federal governments, military members, and corporations that try to extract key natural resources near indigenous homelands, often at the detriment to the environment and indigenous groups? I will conclude that we must side with Berta's memory and groups like COPINH by doing what we can, including monetary support and political activism, to support them. In the last sections of the essay, I clearly explain why we should conclude this. Before arriving to that conclusion and its explanation, we need to reason through different aspects of anthropogenic climate change, evolutionary psychology, and large-scale societal problems.

### **The dire and largely unpredictable aspects of climate change**

Stephen M. Gardiner's *The Perfect Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (2011) is an invaluable resource to scholars and policymakers, eager to find solutions to climate change. Its drawback is its complexity and length. However, given the intractable nature of the problems it engages, solutions and framing of the issues require the utmost care. Gardiner's *The Perfect Storm* provides detailed arguments on why the problems associated with climate change

are not likely to go away without purposeful plans. A key aspect to such plans is their execution. Proper plans executed well will improve climate conditions for current and future generations.

One of the most important parts of the book is Gardiner's Global Test, found in section 1 of chapter 7. Here is the best formulation of it. *The Global Test*: "Under these assumptions, we seem to have identified an important global test for social and political institutions and theories: if either [social and political institutions and their theories] does not respect the claim that failure to address a serious global threat is a criticism of it, and a potentially fatal one, *then it is inadequate and must be rejected*" (2011, 217; emphasis in original). Gardiner's most important evaluation of the Global Test is that it is highly relevant and that the test has largely been ignored in contemporary debate on climate change discourse dominated by "scientific, economic, and short-term geopolitical concerns" (2011, 219). Thus, even though the test is obvious in some ways, it has not been an important part of the discourse on climate change, even though it would be instructive for choosing theories and institutions that should handle it.

Gardiner claims that in the "theoretical storm" climate change involves the intersection of many problems. The theoretical storm is comprised of problems with the "best" candidate political and moral theories for reasoning about the planetary environment (Gardiner 2011, 41). Conventional approaches to public policy are not well equipped to handle the following problems associated with the theoretical storm: 1) Uncertainty of climate models 2) the very long-term and 3) the creation of different preferences and persons (Gardiner 2011, 213). There are many dimensions for possible alterations to the planetary climate, and we do not know all the negative consequences that could come about (Gardiner 2011, 189). If there are possible positive consequences, I am not familiar with literature that explores them.

Gardiner constructs four salient change scenarios in terms of the planetary climate that are important for the security concerns of humanity and for the well-being of our and future generations: Scenario 1, Soft Landing: creeping change with significant but highly malleable, negative impacts; Scenario 2, Rough Landing: Substantial change with major, and moderately malleable, negative impacts; Scenario 3, Hard Landing: Dramatic change with severe, and poorly malleable, negative impacts; Scenario 4, Crash Landing: Spectacular change with catastrophic negative impacts with no malleability (2011, 223-224).

For Gardiner, conventional institutions and theories can likely handle the first two change scenarios (Soft and Rough Landings), but they are not likely to handle the latter two (Hard and Crash Landings). Applying the framework of Jane Gordon and Lewis Gordon in *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in a Modern Age* (2009/2016, 8-9), climate change runs on a continuum of disaster and catastrophe. There is the scientific facts and predictions that models and climate scientists can tell us about; then there is the social implications and collective action we can take (or not) to mitigate or prevent disasters that become catastrophes that become disasters that become catastrophes, ad infinitum. We may learn to heed the warnings of destruction and choose, through collective strategy, to mitigate or prevent the negative effects from anthropogenic climate change. Gardiner's salient change scenarios are important to keep in mind to refine the theoretical debate on the continuum of disaster that climate change signifies. We can use the scenarios to decide how to mitigate or prevent further negative, disastrous, and catastrophic effects from anthropogenic climate change. Summarizing Gardiner's worries, the latter two scenarios, Hard and Crash Landings are the most worrisome in relation to conventional institutions and theories (2011, 224). Using Gardiner's framework, the Global Test shows us that

if it is the case that conventional theories and institutions are bad at handling certain scenarios, as they are when it comes to the Hard Landing and Crash Landing, they should be criticized for it.

### **Loyalty, tribal social instincts, and values in relation to anthropogenic climate change**

Humans have a learning mechanism for social and moral norms in place from birth, that will develop as they age (Nichols 2002). Social and moral norms (the rules for navigating human societies and propensity for altruistic action) are acquired at an early age and implemented through various personal and group-dependent psychological mechanisms, including punishment for those that deviate from the group norm and varying levels of reward for those that comply with group norms (Sripada & Stich 2006). These are two insights we know from renowned scholars working at the intersection of psychology and moral philosophy, typically referred to as ‘moral psychology’.

One recent important book in moral psychology is Jonathan Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* published in 2011. Haidt claims to provide a highly plausible account of how human morality differs from other species and how it has helped us achieve large-scale cooperation. Haidt says, “...morality is the extraordinary human capacity that made civilization possible” (2011, Introduction). Moreover, it includes loyalty in its explanation of largescale cooperation (chapter 7, section The Moral Foundations of Politics). Haidt agrees with neuroscientist Gary Marcus’s analogy that the brain is a “first draft” of a book that nature provides. The brain, so the analogy goes, has language, morality, sexuality, etc. written on it, and one’s upbringing and social circumstances shape it further in time (chapter 7, section A NOTE ON INNATENESS). Haidt argues that “Secular West” moralities have a propensity to speak of and account for “harm and suffering” and “fairness and injustice,” while largely ignoring four moral “taste receptors” (Haidt, 2011, Introduction, section WHAT LIES

AHEAD). Those four moral values or “receptors” are “liberty, loyalty, authority, and sanctity” (Haidt, 2011, Introduction, section WHAT LIES AHEAD). In Haidt’s “Moral Foundations Theory” foundation number three is loyalty/betrayal. Haidt states, “The Loyalty/betrayal foundation is just a part of our innate preparation for meeting the adaptive challenge of forming cohesive coalitions. The original trigger for the loyalty foundation is anything that tells you who is a team player and who is a traitor, particularly when your team is fighting with other teams” (2011, chapter 7, section THE LOYALTY/BETRAYAL FOUNDATION). Haidt has given moral psychology much to build on and ponder going forward regarding the foundations of morality and, for my purposes, has given an excellent introduction to understanding loyalty in general through the Loyalty foundation—again, composed of loyalty and betrayal.

An exploration and explanation of loyalty in the debate on the effects of global climate change by humanity is of the utmost importance if we want to help solve the theoretical problems with political and moral institutions Gardiner analyzes. While Gardiner does an excellent job in examining the convergence of the global, intergenerational, and theoretical aspects of this debate, his analysis of why we ‘pass the buck’ is incomplete without accounting for why people choose some commitments rather than others. ‘Passing the buck’ in our case refers to one generation of humans having knowledge of climate change’s dire effects, but hoping, expecting, or not caring that a future generation finds ways to survive possible catastrophic effects. The alternative is the current generations taking on the challenge.

Humans are typically loyal to individual people, rather than to abstract categories of people as aggregates. Gardiner states, “...the affective mechanism [as opposed to the “analytical” mechanism] is likely to result in a particular problem’s being marginalized by other—perhaps objectively less important concerns...” (2011, 194). The analytical and affective

mechanisms “acquire information in different ways: the affective tends to rely on personal experience, whereas the analytical favors statistical descriptions...” (2011, 193). Thus, I conjecture, it is (to varying degrees) easier to have loyalty to individual people and smaller groups than to bigger groups and the species. Consequently, an example that does not readily activate our cognitive mechanism for loyalty is future generations, especially when they are not one’s children or one has no personal connection. Future generations are impersonal “categories” instead of, as Miguel de Unamuno in *Tragic Sense of Life* phrased, “flesh and bone” persons who suffer and die, especially die ([1921] 1954, 1).

Part of the project of this paper tries to elucidate a sense of justice for future generations. Providing justice to indigenous populations around the world that are adversely affected by anthropogenic climate change is one way to do this. Anthropogenic climate change, to make clear, largely occurs because of negative aspects of globalization and urbanization. Concrete suggestions on how to use evolutionary psychology to aid in the struggle against anthropogenic climate change regarding indigenous populations are present in the last sections of this essay.

The evolution of humanity is a topic often hard to breach. It is much easier to understand how other animals evolved, but, despite the complexities, humans have a long history of evolution. “The evolution of humans from primate ancestors involved the evolution of sympathy, loyalty, and pride in one’s contribution to the group. These qualities originally supported simple tribes in which food was shared, territory defended, and rules enforced without any top-down leadership” (Richerson & Henrich 2012, 57). Sympathy, loyalty, and pride are three emotions or functional values that form a substantive part of humanity’s “tribal social instincts.”

Undergirding these instincts, which still accompany human societies, is “gene-culture

coevolution” (Richerson & Henrich 2012, 38). A comprehensive and concise description of this process is the following:

The cultural and genetic elements of our social psychology interacted over the long run of human evolution. To judge from the stone tools humans left behind...human cultural sophistication probably evolved in several waves after about 2.6 million years ago....Molecular evidence suggests that humans have undergone a burst of genetic evolution in the wake of the origins of agriculture and some controversial arguments hold that psychological traits as well as those related to disease and diet responded in a major way to the development of food production and the larger, more sophisticated societies it made possible. (Richerson & Henrich 2012, 58)

Thus, tribal social instincts are in place in humans today because of early humans’ circumstances and their ongoing interaction with other humans and locales throughout history. In line with the evidence, “enormous collective action enterprises” were made possible by “our ability to cooperate and trust conditionally” (Richerson & Henrich 2012, 58). Cooperation and trusting conditionally are consequences from the evolution of sympathy, loyalty, and pride. Furthermore, for Daniel Dennett, “Our wills are free, in the morally relevant sense, because our ancestors’ superior capacities to take responsibility and commit to courses of action gave them comparable advantages over competitors” (Zawidzki 2007, 126). The capacity for loyalty allows for long-term planning, even on a non-conscious level. The ability for taking responsibility and committing to courses of action does not necessarily require promise keeping and language, it may be enough to take care of your young and group for some amount of time.

In conjunction with contemporary ongoing cultural evolution, human organizations today operate on principles shaped by tribal social instincts from early humans. Organizations that have

too many employees that act selfishly as opposed to having a wider concern for the continuation of the organization tend to be worse off than those that have ‘good norms’; good norms in this context are “social norms that effectively harness aspects of our evolved psychology in ways that led to success in inter-group competition” (Richerson & Henrich 2012, 57). Overtime, cultural evolution has favored these kinds of groups because they engage our evolved psychology, which tends to benefit the group.

Having the capacity to be loyal does not of itself dictate who you should be loyal to. On this point, Gardiner says, “The perfect storm constitutes a non-neutral evaluative setting, and this poses special challenges for ethical action...we must pay attention to the ways important values are articulated, since the likelihood of their perversion is high” (2011, xi). Similarly, Alain Locke endorsed a reconceptualization of the concept of loyalty and its application.

...the Roycean principle of “loyalty to loyalty,” which though idealistic in origin and defense, was a radical break with the tradition of absolutism. It called for a revolution in the practice [sic] of partisanship in the very interests of the values professed. In its larger outlines and implications it proclaimed a relativism of values and a principle of reciprocity [that dictates no culture stays static and that cultures take from many sources to create their practices]. (Locke [1935] 1989a, 49)

An obvious difference between Alain Locke and Gardiner is that Gardiner is not a full-blown relativist about values. At the same time, Locke’s relativism about values may be more palatable to the reader than other formulations of relativism. Take Harris’s (1989) summary of value ultimates or imperatives in his “Introduction” to Locke’s *A Functional View of Value Ultimates*, “Value ultimates or imperatives are really “system imperatives rather than intrinsic absolutes.” Values are functional transpositional systems” (79). Furthermore, values, rules, or

imperative, that is, the “regulative normative rules we adopt” (80) are not only important to know for those of use working in moral philosophy and normative issues generally, but how we adopt and accept them are just as important. There may be normative rules that seem to be morally correct in theory, but if they are completely counter to how we adopt or accept them cognitively, they could violate one moral intuition, which I believe is a great guide in ethical theory: Ethics cannot command or recommend for us to do the impossible. There are cases where the lines between the impossible and the improbable are not clear, but in a great deal of cases the lines are ethically and logically clear.

In sum, values play an important role for both Locke and Gardiner when it comes to collective action on a world-scale and they both believe that some values are not conducive to positive large-scale human cooperation.

### **Lessons from Critical Pragmatism and Evolutionary Psychology to Combat Negative Climate Change Inducing Activities**

The following deals with culture, technology, and world conflicts, especially considering philosophy from early 20<sup>th</sup> Century to today. Alain Locke, a critical pragmatist, warned against relying on science and technology to close cultural barriers to bring people closer regarding their “factionalisms.” Alain Locke claimed that science and technology are “relatively value neutral, and, since they can be fitted in to [sic] such different systems of end values, cannot be relied upon to become deeply influential as unifiers” (Locke [1944] 1989b, 76). Locke is essentially saying that science and technology are not enough on their own to unify the world. The world needs to unify through a mechanism other than science. By “unifiers” of humanity, Locke means the end of war between nations and an end of conflict between racial and religious groups. As he says, “The moral imperatives of a new world order are an internationally limited idea of national

sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry” (Locke [1944] 1989c, 152). While these ‘moral imperatives of a new world order’ may be justified, Locke does not have a perfect answer for how to make these a reality in the world. If there is policies for how to achieve them, keeping in sight that human societies are never static and that what is symbolically meaningful changes (think of the disbanding of the USSR as a nation)—some answers by Locke for achieving moral imperatives for a new world order have a limited window of opportunity.

However, unifying mechanisms identified by Locke are proper goals if one believes in amelioration of world conflict. Thus, minding Richerson and Henrich, evolutionary psychologists in their clarification and research on tribal social instincts provide knowledge for achieving Locke’s moral imperatives for world order in contemporary world society. We can claim without much controversy that science does not control our minds or cultures, even though it may facilitate certain aspects of communication and allows for technological possibilities otherwise not able to be brought into existence. Despite any advance in acquiring economic wealth or acceleration in communication or acquisition of material possessions, Locke contended that such “material issues” could not stop “culture feuds and value intolerances” (Locke [1944] 1989b, 76). He continues:

[science and technology] can quite more easily serve to intensify the conflict as the geographical distance between cultures is shortened and their technological disparities are leveled off. *It is, after all, our values and value systems that have divided us apart from and in many cases over and above our material issues of rivalry and conflict.* If we are ever to have less conflict and more unity, it must come about in considerable part from some deep change in our *value attitudes and our cultural allegiances.* The increasing

proximity of cultures in the modern world makes all the more necessary some corrective adjustment of their “psychological distance.” (Locke [1944] 1989b, 76-77; emphasis mine)

Since cultures and value attitudes are what divide people, what creates “psychological distance” when they are in serious opposition, scientific and technological enterprises can do little on their own to bring us together. Science and technology may drive us apart as tools of war and destruction of communities or protecting entrenched corporate and economic interests.

### **Concrete suggestions for anthropogenic climate change mitigation or prevention**

Lessons from Leonard Harris’s work on philosophy of race can help protect indigenous environmental interests. However, first a reflection on the concept of loyalty would be helpful to understand Harris’s insights on group unity. Loyalty to your immediate family (mom, dad, brothers and sisters) may conflict with your loyalty to the human species, despite the scientific data on climate change and how you ought to change your behavior based on it. Loyalty to your lifestyle may conflict with your loyalty to the human species, despite the scientific data on climate change and how you ought to change your behavior based on it. For example, I may truly believe that climate change is happening and that my individual actions contribute to the problem, but I need, or so I have decided, to fly around the world to become more cultured or vacation. I may need to travel to see my family or my work peers. Moreover, I may strongly desire to eat meat, even though it contributes more to climate change than veganism. In fact, I may need to eat meat for my health, assuming there are such types of human bodies, to survive, even though this contributes more to anthropomorphic climate change than veganism.

Haidt provides moral psychologists with the moral foundation of loyalty/betrayal. This is one moral component that can be used to the advantage of those wishing to address climate

change. Based on the preceding considerations by Locke, it is necessary to find “corrective adjustments” to the “psychological distance” between societies and cultures, especially since scientific findings and new technologies keep closing the geographical gap between them, which has the potential to create conflict if left unchecked ([1944] 1989b, 77). Based on Richerson and Henrich, tribal social instincts must be engaged in intergroup cooperation to facilitate large-scale cooperation, even in contemporary societies. Lastly, Gardiner realized that values are at the heart of the climate change debate. Hence, what system of values you adopt and prefer is important in the battle against climate change.

Here is one set of suggestions helpful to those wishing to stop or slow down anthropogenic climate change. “The forces that unite humanity—such as common dominators of class interest, inclinations to pursue status, disdain for injustice to members of one’s perceived community—can be marshalled to aid the destruction of sinister, unintentional, and structural racial formations of oppression” (Harris 1999, 449). Not only can they be marshalled to destroy oppressive racial formations, but they also can be marshalled to destroy climate change disasters. Harris’s work on Alain Locke shows in this set of recommendations; one can recognize the respect and working-out of problematics from Alain Locke’s theories. Not only that, but it also respects Richerson and Henrich’s work on tribal social instincts, without explicitly having them in mind.

One of the most entrenched and hardest of topics to discuss in the mind of those in the USA is race. The topic of race shares this with the topic of climate change: even though it is all-encompassing and affects our social surroundings, it is hard to pick out its boundaries, since it is so ubiquitous. Thus, if Harris’s suggestions are good for dismantling racial oppression, they are on the right track for us regarding climate change proposals to change culture when it comes to

behaviors that would lead to climate protection. For changing culture around climate change, I will only expound on the last of the set Harris presents: “disdain for injustice to members of one’s perceived community.”

### **Revisiting the case of Berta and groups like COPINH**

If these indigenous groups are part of our perceived community, we will be outraged at the treatment they have received and receive at the hands of national militaries and energy corporations. This would be because we have a “disdain for injustice to members” of our community. Instead of morality, Harris speaks of “injustice.” This kind of injustice for Harris is of a type grounded in everyday experience, history, sociology, and of course, philosophy. In my assessment, outside of philosophy discussions on morality as such are rare. People are better acquainted with justice than they are with morality as such.

If indigenous groups are a part of our perceived community, we will disdain injustices they experience—injustice that hurts even more when we know that it is not only their human dignity that is being trampled on, but also the soil that feeds them. Still more outrageous and hurtful to us if we saw indigenous groups as part of our perceived community—the palm oil that feeds North and South America and is used to make lotions and countless other products is extracted, as I mentioned in section one, despite the killing of peasant farmer activists in Central America in the process. These injustices when voiced should outrage us and move us to action, to praxis. Granted, not every injustice can move us to action against that specific injustice since we have complicated lives filled with countless activities. Still, if no injustice moves us to action, we are not fulfilling our political, moral, and civic duties as citizens of nations, of the world, or as moral agents.

The most concrete suggestion I can provide the reader is to help stop the killing of people that are trying to protect sentient ecosystems and their homes. Do it in your own way, but first improve your moral-political outlook on indigenous environmental interests. Secondly, move to action in some way. If in the United States of America, find your congressperson and tell them about the H.R. 5474 – Berta Caceres Human Rights in Honduras Act. Even if this bill were dead in the House of Representatives, this would let them know that you care about justice in Latin America. If you are anywhere else in the world, you can stay connected to COPINH through their website by the same name. Connect with groups trying to do work on indigenous environmental interests because their work not only benefits them but also can have upstream effects on government policies on anthropogenic climate change. Although, we cannot rely solely on federal government powers to move the world in the direction of justice and sound moral-political outlooks and actions.

### **Conclusion**

Can we care about the ecosphere, the planetary environment, in the abstract? No, most of us cannot. I have argued that engaging our sense of loyalty is key to protecting and securing long-term human interests and the long-term survival of environments such as forests, rivers, oceans, and animals that reside therein. One could use explanations for tribal social instincts and the suggestions for engaging the human sentiment of loyalty to help either corporations trying to extract key natural resources from indigenous lands or to help indigenous groups supporting environmental protections. Moreover, I argued for supporting the *Argument for Indigenous Environmental Interests*. The main argument was premises three through six: #3) Barring climate change skepticism, we ought to desire (A). #4) If (A): we desire protections for sentient ecosystems, including human cities, due to harmful anthropogenic climate change, then (B): we

need to take indigenous environmental interests (IEIs) seriously since engaging with these is one of the best strategies to mitigate harms from anthropogenic climate change to sentient ecosystems on planet Earth. #5) Since (B) follows from (A), and we desire (A), we ought to desire (B). #6. Therefore, we—persons, groups, procedural institutions—need to take IEIs seriously, that is, be moved to concrete action that stops harms to them. Throughout the essay, I offered several supporting reasons, including analysis of tribal-social-instincts and worries on harms to the planet and humanity from anthropogenic climate change.

In all, I support using these insights for helping groups like COPINH, since siding with them tends to help in the fights against anthropogenic climate change. In supporting groups like COPINH one improves their quality of life and that of future generations. Furthermore, psychological distance is decreased between the abstract category ‘future generations’ and individual psyches when we think of COPINH as an instantiation of a group that helps future generations. COPINH was co-founded by the now deceased Berta, killed at the behest of clandestine deals between Honduras’s military and possibly an energy company wanting people like her to disappear. DESA’s profits lessen when it must compensate indigenous landowners and properly clean when they leave an area. As I present the story, Berta is deserving of your loyalty, while DESA (the energy company in the story) does not deserve your loyalty. DESA does not deserve your loyalty due to its betrayal of one of our perceived world community members, betraying indigenous environmental interests. Too often, energy companies in conjunction with federal governments contribute to anthropogenic climate change through malpractices in design and by not keeping indigenous environmental interests in their strategies for creating new energy economies and infrastructures.

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## CONCLUSION. ETHICS AND POLITICS AS ONE

### The State of the Field in Ethical and Moral Theory

Moral inquiry in USA philosophical circles does not have a strong tradition of naming names when it comes to critiques of political mechanisms in governments. Perhaps this is for the best, since mass punditry on cable news and YouTube are in no danger of dying out. Still, this leaves me wondering, what is and should be the role of professional philosophers—such as adjunct, lecturers, and in the tenure system—in the public? Politics and ethics are at the heart of this question, even if we were to exclusively think of logicians or philosophers of science, since they often work at public universities.

If a professional philosopher goes too deep into politics, one is branded as an activist as opposed to a moral philosopher. Peter Singer has dealt with this issue, finding that there is a narrow path between “campaigning for a cause, while remaining true to the philosophical vocation” (2000, xix-xx). However, campaigning for a cause requires time, effort, and usually money. Even when money is not required, the success of your campaign may be based on how much money supports that campaign for a cause. People of the world have varying degrees of time, effort, and money. Not every cause that deserves attention will acquire the attention it deserves. Paradoxically, how much attention a cause deserves may be proportional to how much attention it acquires. It depends on your perspective of what it is for something to deserve the attention of a nation, a city, a household. This system is certainly stacked against people in poverty, with little time, and whose effort will go toward surviving, not campaigns of uncertain outcomes. I do not make the case that this is tragically uncertain. The tragedy constraint is not clear to me here. Still, it is worth staying on this topic to see where it leads.

The disinterest to minimally connect yourself to the political system of representative democracy in the USA seems to parallel the factors for politically campaigning a moral cause. It seems to me a possible explanation for low voting turnout in the USA is the moral sentiments of people dictating that things should be better, but participating in the political system as is could not be the answer. According to the United States Elections Project, voter turnout for presidential elections, since 1912, has never been above 64% of the voting-eligible population (VEP) and, also since 1912, has only been over 50% twice (1912 and 2016) for midterm elections. There is at least two possible lines of thought here: 1) disillusion of people with voting, the mentality that “I voted before, but nothing changed that I wanted changed”; or 2) people feeling that government should be effective and in their favor without their personal input. I have either one of these versions in my heart when I think about the USA constitution. It should have been better from the beginning, thinks the moral dreamer in me. The USA constitution is not an inherent good to humanity, and this thought would be heresy to some people. Of course, the constitution is a good, some will say, if it was not for it, we would not have the rule of law! But is any rule of law just as good as any other? No, there are better and worse forms of rule of law. Not all laws and their enforcement are made equal. I think of how much better the USA and the world might have been when I read Broadus N. Butler (1983), for example:

The first draft of the American Declaration of Independence recognized the contradiction between the existence of the institution of slavery and the quest by colonists for independence in the name of liberty. The elimination of that passage from the final draft displayed such a contradiction even of theory that British and American commentators addressed the matter as an absurdity, and the British used that fact to belittle the whole effort of the colonists to be free. Although the paragraph that would have been the vehicle

for the elimination of slavery was itself eliminated from the Declaration, the meaning of it and the significance of the institution to the history of thought in the nation has not diminished. Had the paragraph been retained, the drafting of the Constitution may have taken a difference course. (2)

Never criticizing our possibly “best” tools for the sake of their sanctity is foolish.

Political tools may be sensitive, but they are still tools. Political tools, these mechanisms, we silently support the miseries which are their consequences if we do not speak about their bad consequences. To think that our worldwide ethical and political world is the best of all possible social worlds is complacency of a type I do not want to participate.

What I do in this essay is make the case that politics and ethics are one. The obvious question that jumps out is in what sense are they one? The rest of this essay attempts to answer this question in a satisfactory manner to my readers.

### **Problems with Some Judgmental and Divisionary Moral Philosophy**

I have an expanded notion of what “politics” is compared to what I think many of my philosophical peers think of as politics. Even philosophers and political theorists that are knowledgeable in the liberal tradition of political theory or philosophy may have notions of politics that I, and many philosophers I will comment on, think of as wrong. For example, Maynard and Worsnip (2018) pose the question of the possible distinction of politics and morality in terms of normativity. Maynard and Worsnip (2018) state that there is a move in the academy to bracket political normativity from moral normativity, which they endorse, on the initial basis of following some of the works of Bernard Williams, especially from *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (2005), as well as because of some scholarly interpretations of Rawls (756-57). I would not get very far in a

conversation with Maynard and Worsnip because one of my initial commitments—following some French, Latin American, and Philosophy Born of Struggle philosophers—in this dissertation. The interrelation among meta, normative, and applied ethics is fluid to the point that we cannot meaningfully bracket them off from each other. Splitting normativity between moral and political is not useful for theory and philosophy that wants to be connected to intractable problems in society and culture across the globe today.

Also, reiterating what I said about Parfit in Part 1, I respect issues of intergenerational justice that have their genesis in thinking from *Reasons and Persons* (1984) on the issue of future generations. It is not that abstract and hard thinking is not required in philosophy, but that some problems are not worth the cyberspace.

### **Party Politics as an Evil**

One presupposition I hold in this essay is that the public in the USA and general philosophical discourse tend to regard party politics as politics proper; I disagree with this view of politics. I may be wrong in this presupposition in some sense, but I also think that even if the general tendency is not exactly this, there is some justification for my being worried about party politics as politics proper. The justification for my worry comes from my limited experience of party politics in the USA. It also comes from being in contact with Guattari's notions of micropolitics and warnings of mass acculturation/homogenization of culture through Integrated World Capitalism (Guattari [1986] 2008, 53).

Democrat and Republican parties are the only viable options if one wants to vote in elections in the USA. Also, the slow changes in rebranding the dualism of party politics across time in the USA does not change the dualism itself (the two-party system), which is arguably a problematic system for a society. In the USA two-party system, candidates in local elections

often run unopposed. Voters often do not know who they are voting for personally, but trust that parties sufficiently vetted politicians, when that may not be the case. Worse, voters may not care how the parties came to be what they are.

To think of party politics as the best mechanism for politics is to think, minimally, that there can be no development in political mechanisms or that politics is not something other than party politics. On the other hand, there is a hard separation between political systems and politics as a concept. When thought of conceptually in their most broad sense politics and ethics (in the sense of decision or immanence, or even possible notions of flourishing derived from Aristotle) are one and the same.

I take the accumulation of power beyond a certain threshold as an Evil to society and cultures. I say the word “Evil” in the sense of Badiou’s ([1993] 2002) definition which states, “Since we have entirely rejected the idea of a consensual or a priori recognition of Evil [in earlier chapter of *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*], the only rigorous line of thought open to us is to define Evil from within our own terrain, and thus as a possible dimension of a truth-process” (61). Furthermore, this is where some of the previously mentioned philosophers in the traditions of philosophy I ascribe to in my Essay 1 can have a greater say in the truths they arrive at through their philosophical reflection. A good friend of mine, Michael Oxenrider, said to me that perhaps no further words would have to be written if we simply looked closer at what has already been written. I hope that the logic and insight on politics and ethics of the following thoughts are permitted to breathe in the following curated passages of some philosophical predecessors.

### **Philosophical Predecessors on the Evil of Arbitrary and Objective Power**

Cornel West (1983) writes,

In this historical moment, Afro-Americans engaged in the philosophical enterprise can contribute to the redefining of philosophy principally by revealing why and showing how philosophy is inextricably linked to politics and power—to structures of domination and mechanisms of control. This important task does not call for an end to philosophy. Rather it situates philosophical activity in the midst of personal and collective struggles in the present. (51)

I understand party politics and my naming of it along with my descriptions and concerns of them as one way to reveal one structure of domination and mechanism of control—an Evil dominating as mechanism of control of a society. If we combine this with Foucault's ([1972] 2009) comment in the Preface to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* saying, "I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time....Paying a modest tribute to Saint Francis de Sales, one might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*" (xiii), we come one step closer to recognizing and understanding how ethical theory can be used for the evaluation of conditions as opposed to judgment, especially of individual actions.

Stepping into the realm of poetry-philosophy, we can come to a place of further recognition of how methodologies that are too abstract and too reasonable, can create the condition for heartless killing. The following is from a poem titled "Instant Animal" by Sam Shepard in *Hawk Moon*.

He was talkin' about the imagery in a good fight / I didn't get it / An outsider no doubt /  
Him I mean / Talkin' about this guy spilling hot coffee on this other guy / And the good  
time it was / No stitches / No hospital / No emergency / Just a good yuck / He was talkin'  
about trust / Measured by action in a life and death move / If someone's there or not there

/ To be present at death / At the same time in the same place / I'll always trust a dumb  
guy before a smart one / An instant animal / With no thinking gaps / The gap that kills /  
The watcher watching the watched / An outsider no doubt / Me I mean. (1981, 69).

Two outsiders talkin'. Talkin' about an instant animal fighting. Then we have two kinds of watchers. The first outsider described by the narrator of the story is a watcher who appreciates the imagery of the fight of the two guys. The narrator of the story is also the second outsider described and is a cynic that uses the observer skill for game theory, figuring out how to take advantage of the situation. The narrator does not trust themselves, since they have thinking gap that kills. Next, on this game theory skill of objective observation we have a short passage from Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity*.

Dostoevsky asserted, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." Today's believers use this formula for their own advantage. To re-establish man at the heart of his destiny is, they claim, to repudiate all ethics. However, far from God's absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on the earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears the responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed, and his victories as well. A God can pardon, efface, and compensate. But if God does not exist, man's faults are inexpiable. If it is claimed that whatever the case may be, this earthly stake has no importance, this is precisely because one invokes that *inhuman objectivity* which we declined at the start. (1947, 15; emphasis mine)

For me, these reflections from past philosophical ideas from well-respected philosophers, and one poet-philosopher of great reputation in twentieth-century drama, leads to the difficult idea of One World. Human civilization and actions from persons, from flesh and bone people as

Unamuno is famous for emphasizing, from conscious beings, leads us to reasonably think of One World where we bear as much responsibility for each other as to any other. This should not lead us to think that if we are responsible for everyone, we are responsible for no one; universal or transcendent categories are not dialectical methods.

A difficult problem which reaches the limits of my thought is the following. Who are we? is a different question from—How should we live with each other? If we are One World this does not say how we ought to live in that One World. This one world may imply and contain four tactics for living with each other: mechanisms, institutions, rules, or modes of existence. These four tactics in Ethics are found in the traditions I have used throughout the dissertation in my chapters as well as in this conclusion.

How we choose to engage with the One World may depend on these four tactics in Ethics; however, operating within these tactics and choosing among them is not as logical as having constructed them in time or discovering them through theory. The accidents of and contingency of history or randomness, rationality, material forces, immaterial forces, and innumerable other things will be part of this process.

Ethics and politics are one. We should keep thinking about the details of the four tactics. Again, the four tactics are mechanisms, institutions, rules, and modes of being in the One World. Ignoring this pursuit and inaction on these tactics may cost human civilization itself or a significant portion of itself: war, famine, destruction, cruelty, blatant stupidity could result from ignorance and laziness of such a pursuit. I have argued and philosophized to the best of my abilities at this point. The rest is up to, the rest is up to me and you and us, deciding.

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## VITA

### Reyes Espinoza

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#### EDUCATION

#### DEGREES

Ph.D.	Philosophy, Purdue University	Summer 2019
B.A.	Philosophy and Theatre Performance, University of Texas at El Paso	2014

#### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

*SPECIALIZATION:* Ethics

*COMPETENCIES:* Environmental Ethics, Bioethics, Existentialism, Philosophy of Art, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Race, and Latin American Philosophy

*DISSERTATION:* Toward an Ethics of Tragic Uncertainty: Miguel de Unamuno and Global Social Conflict

Supervisor: Daniel W. Smith

Committee: Leonard Harris, William L. McBride, Luis Rubén Díaz Cepeda

#### ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Purdue University, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Philosophy

Instructor - Distance Learning	Su 2019, Sp 2019, Sp 2018, Fall and Su 2017
Graduate Teaching Assistant	Fall 2018, Sp 2017, Fall 2016

Ivy Tech Community College, School of Liberal Arts and Science, Humanities - Philosophy

Adjunct Faculty Member	Fall 2016, Fall 2015
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University of Texas at El Paso, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Philosophy

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant	Spring 2014, Fall 2013
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#### MEMBERSHIPS

Purdue Climate Change Research Center (PCCRC)

-Graduate Student Affiliate, 2018-2019 under Dr. Daniel Kelly from the Department of Philosophy

Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy (SAAP), Member, 2017-present

American Philosophical Association (APA), Member, 2017-present

#### LANGUAGES

English: high (native) level reading, writing, and speaking

Spanish: high (native) level reading, high-moderate writing and speaking

French: competence reading (Purdue University Department of Philosophy translation exam)

#### REFERENCES

Available upon request

## DISCOVERY/SCHOLARSHIP

### PUBLICATIONS

"Art, Technology, and Trans-Death Options", in Dalila Honorato, Maria Antonia Gonzalez Valerio, Marta de Menezes and Andreas Giannakouloupoulos (eds.) *Taboo-Transgression-Transcendence in Art & Science 2018 Conference Proceedings*, Mexico City: IIF-UNAM, 11-13 Nov. 2018 (ISBN to be announced).

Book Review of Daniel G. Campos (2017) *Loving Immigrants in America: An Experiential Philosophy of Personal Interaction*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books. *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* (Forthcoming Fall 2019). Volume 10, Issue 2.

"Railton's Moral Properties and Sinclair's Critique of Them." (2013). *Res Cogitans: An Annual Undergraduate Philosophy Journal*. Volume 4, Issue 1. <https://commons.pacificu.edu/rescogitans/vol4/iss1/>

**Articles Under Review** (titles omitted to facilitate blind refereeing)

A paper about climate change and indigenous environmentalism.

### PRESENTATIONS

#### **Invited Speaker or Panelist - International and national, academic**

"Presence, Erasure, and the Elimination of Othered-ness." Moderator for the panel. 23rd Annual Conference for Philosophy Born of Struggle. Received travel award from Purdue U: Texas A&M U, College Station, November 3-5, 2016.

#### **Invited Speaker or Panelist - Regional or specialized audience, academic**

"Applying Alain Locke's Philosophy of Culture: Empowering Communities, Technology, and Representation." 46th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy (SAAP) for the Alain Locke Society (refereed): Columbus, Ohio, March 14-16, 2019.

<http://conf.american-philosophy.org/saap2019/openconf.php>

"Unrecognized Borders Recognized Through Dread and Analysis: Understanding Borderlands and Their People, the Cannabis Trade, and a Warring Border Culture." *Philosophy Across the Americas: Thinking La Frontera* (refereed, blind-review); primary support for conference by the Department of History and Philosophy of South Texas College: Casa De Palmas Renaissance Hotel, McAllen, Texas, November 2-4, 2017.

Paper in English and some Spanish, presented mostly in English, but some Spanish as well during the conference. <https://philosophyacrosstheamericas.weebly.com/program.html>

"Race, its Relation to Group Agency, and the Genetic Approach to Race." Annual Meeting of the Georgia Philosophical Society; theme of Nature and Naturalism (refereed, blind-review): University of Georgia, Athens, April 23, 2016. <https://sites.google.com/site/gaphilosophy/past-programs>

"Removing an Incoherence in Armstrong's Ontology of Truthmakers." Respondent to Hao Hong (IU Bloomington). Indiana Philosophical Association: Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, November 13-14, 2015.

"Should Physicians Be Empathetic." Respondent to David Schwan (Bowling Green). Joint meeting of the Indiana Philosophical Association and the Kentucky Philosophical Association: Owensboro, Kentucky, April 10-11, 2015.

"Methodological Discourse: Feminist Philosophy of Language as a Prescriptivist Ideal." Respondent to Joshua Trosch (Washington University in St. Louis) and moderator for the "Moral Philosophy" panel. Meeting of the Indiana Philosophical Association: Fort Wayne, Indiana, October 17-18, 2014.

#### **Conferences - International and national, academic**

"Art, Technology, and Trans-Death Options." Interdisciplinary conference Taboo – Transgression – Transcendence in

Art and Science (refereed, blind-review): Universidad Autónoma de Mexico and Centro de Cultura Digital, Mexico City, Mexico, November 11-13, 2018. Full program to be announced October 30th, 2018.

<https://avarts.ionio.gr/ttt/>

“Alain Locke on Common Denominator Values and Cultural Relativism.” 45th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy (SAAP) (refereed, blind-review): Indianapolis, Indiana, March 8-10, 2018. “Philosophical Podcasting.” Workshop co-presented by Reyes Espinoza\* and Michael Oxenrider. 4th meeting of the Public Philosophy Network; theme of ‘Understanding Impact’: Boulder, CO, USA, February 8-10, 2018.

<https://philosophyimpact.org/>

“Unrecognized Borders Recognized Through Dread and Analysis: Understanding Borderlands and Their People, the Cannabis Trade, and a Warring Border Culture.” 1° Congreso Internacional/1st International Conference of the Asociación de Filosofía y Liberación-México/Association of Philosophy and Liberation-Mexico; theme of Posglobalización, Descolonización y Transmodernidad/Post-Globalization, Decolonization and Transmodernity (refereed, blind-review): Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, September 26-29, 2017.

Paper in English and some Spanish; presented mostly in English but some Spanish as well during the conference.

<http://afyl.org/archivos/431-i-congreso-internacional-posglobalizacion-descolonizacion-y-transmodernidad/>

“Loyalties in the Climate Change Debate: Caring About Indigenous Environmental Interests.” Meeting on Intergenerational Justice and Climate Change: Juridical, Moral and Political Issues/Justicia Intergeneracional y Cambio Climático: Aspectos Jurídicos, Morales y Políticos (refereed, blind-review): School of Law at the National University of Córdoba, Argentina, September 18-19, 2017.

<https://intergenerationaljusticeandclimatechange.weebly.com/cordoba.html>

“Loyalties in the Climate Change Debate: Caring About Indigenous Environmental Interests.” 2nd International Congress of the Spanish Network of Philosophy/Red Española de Filosofía; theme of The Frontiers of Humanity/Las Fronteras de la Humanidad (refereed, blind-review): University of Zaragoza, Spain, September 13-15, 2017.

Paper in English and presented in Spanish during the conference.

<http://redfilosofia.es/congreso/programa-2/>

## **GRANTS AND AWARDS RELATED TO RESEARCH**

Promise Grant (Tier 2: International) from Purdue University’s College of Liberal Arts, \$1,500 travel award, for workshop/fieldwork “Un proyecto de vida rural” at Las Cañadas: Centro de Agroecología y Permacultura, March 4-9, 2019.

Purdue Climate Change Research Center (PCCRC), \$400 travel award, for workshop/fieldwork “Un proyecto de vida rural” at Las Cañadas: Centro de Agroecología y Permacultura, March 4-9, 2019.

Digital Humanities Travel Award by Purdue University’s Integrative Data Science Education Ecosystem, a part of the Digital Humanities program, \$600, for my participation in the Interdisciplinary conference Taboo – Transgression - Transcendence in Art and Science (refereed, blind-review): Universidad Autónoma de Mexico and Centro de Cultura Digital, Mexico City, Mexico, November 11-13, 2018.

Promise Grant (Tier 2: International) from Purdue University’s College of Liberal Arts, \$1,500 travel award, for the meeting on Intergenerational Justice and Climate Change: Juridical, Moral and Political Issues/Justicia Intergeneracional y Cambio Climático: Aspectos Jurídicos, Morales y Políticos: School of Law at the National University of Córdoba, Argentina, Fall 2017.

- Purdue Climate Change Research Center (PCCRC), \$500 travel award, for the 2nd Congreso Internacional/International Congress of the Red Española de Filosofía/Spanish Network of Philosophy on the theme of Las Fronteras de la Humanidad/The Frontiers of Humanity: University of Zaragoza, Spain, Fall 2017.
- Purdue University Philosophy Department, \$300 travel award for the 2° Congreso Internacional/2nd International Congress of the Red Española de Filosofía/Spanish Network of Philosophy; theme of Las Fronteras de la Humanidad/The Frontiers of Humanity: University of Zaragoza, Spain, Fall 2017.
- Promise Grant (Tier 1: Domestic) from Purdue University's Liberal Arts College, \$500 travel award, for the 23rd Annual Philosophy Born of a Struggle conference: Texas A&M University, Fall 2016.
- Purdue University Philosophy Department, \$300 travel award for the annual meeting of the Georgia Philosophical Society; theme of Nature and Naturalism: University of Georgia, Athens, Sp 2016.
- The Walt Disney Company-HSF Scholarship Program, \$5,000 tuition and living expenses award, administered by the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, academic year 2015-2016.
- Purdue Doctoral Fellowship, \$18,000 a year stipend, administered by Purdue University for two academic years: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

## LEARNING

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### COURSES TAUGHT

#### **Purdue University**

Philosophy 110: Introduction to Philosophy

Faculty: Professor Daniel Smith

Graduate Teaching Assistant - Grading and 3 Recitation Sections

Fall 2018

Philosophy 114: Global Moral Issues—Distance Learning

Instructor: Reyes Espinoza

Full Teaching and Course Design Responsibilities

Sp 2018 and 2019, Su and Fall 2017

Philosophy 270: Biomedical Ethics

Faculty: Visiting Professor Yujia Song

Graduate Teaching Assistant - Grading and 3 Recitation sections

Sp 2017

Philosophy 280: Ethics and Animals

Faculty: Professor Mark Bernstein

Graduate Teaching Assistant - Grading

Fall 2016

Philosophy 290: Environmental Ethics—Distance Learning

Instructor: Reyes Espinoza

Full Teaching and Course Design Responsibilities

Su and Sp 2019

#### **Ivy Tech Community College (ITCC)**

Introduction to Ethics

Instructor: Reyes Espinoza

Full Teaching and Course Design Responsibilities

Fall 2016

Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Reyes Espinoza

Full Teaching and Course Design Responsibilities

Fall 2016, Fall 2015

#### **University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)**

Ethics (Lower Division Undergraduate Course)

Faculty: Assistant Professor Caroline T. Arruda

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

Sp 2014

Ethics (Lower Division Undergraduate Course)

Faculty: Visiting Professor Aleksandar Pjevalica

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

Fall 2013

### **CONTINUED TRAINING**

Certificate of Foundations in College Teaching granted by Purdue's Center for Instructional Excellence. Workshops completed October 8-9, 2018. Certificate granted April 2019.

### **ENGAGEMENT/SERVICE**

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#### **SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION**

*The Grindstone* – the podcast of the Purdue University Department of Philosophy

-Producer: “*The Grindstone* was created, and is hosted and produced by Matthew Kroll. Reyes Espinoza mixes and co-produces the podcast. Intro and outro music is by Al Terity. Special thanks to Madison Maroney for voicing the intro and outro.”

-<https://shows.pippa.io/the-grindstone/about>

Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) – Purdue Chapter

-Co-Founder 2018

-President 2018-2019

#### **SERVICE TO PURDUE UNIVERSITY**

##### **Department of Philosophy**

-Purdue Graduate Student Government

-Senator 2018-2019

-Legislative Affairs Officer 2019-2020

#### **ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH**

##### **Town-and-gown Presentations and Activities**

“2017 UNESCO World Philosophy Day.” Co-organized by Reyes Espinoza\* and Michael Oxenrider. Reyes\* presented opening and closing remarks. Event co-sponsored by various organizations and departments at Purdue University, including the Philosophy Department and the Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts program. West Lafayette Public Library; West Lafayette, IN, USA, November 2017.

<https://reyes-espinoza.blog/events/2017-wpd-wlplinus/>

“2017 College 101.” Hosted by the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. Managed the volunteer sign-in booth; directed parents and students to their designated locations; dismantled registration area after parents and students were at their respective workshops and lectures. Los Angeles, CA, USA, Jan. 25th, 2017.

Leadership, Empowerment & Academic Development (LEAD) Mentor at the Hispanic Scholarship Fund's (HSF) three-day Youth Leadership Institute (YLI). This YLI took place in University of New Mexico, June 2014.

Purdue Social Justice Coalition (PSJC): High School Subcommittee. West Lafayette, IN, USA, Aug. 2014 - December 2014.

University of Texas at El Paso Philosophical Society's (UPS) Vice President and Outreach Project manager. Initiated the Bowie Philosophy Club by acquiring approval from assistant principal Mr. Sizemore. Facilitated that members from the UPS along with faculty members from UTEP meet with members of the Bowie Philosophy Club to participate in philosophical activities and take part in monthly philosophy lectures. El Paso, TX, USA, Feb. 2013 - May 2014.

## PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

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### Conferences

“Philosophical Podcasting.” Workshop co-presented by Reyes Espinoza\* and Michael Oxenrider. 4th meeting of the Public Philosophy Network; theme of ‘Understanding Impact’: Boulder, CO, USA, February 8-10, 2018.  
<https://philosophyimpact.org/>

### Podcasting

*The Grindstone* is the podcast of the Purdue University Department of Philosophy. Reyes Espinoza is co-producer on this podcast, taking care of many technical elements, such as editing, recording, and managing the podcast feed as well as booking guests. Matthew Kroll is co-producer and is the 2018-2019 host of *The Grindstone*.  
<https://shows.pippa.io/the-grindstone/about>

### Website

One website I own, curate, and update is <https://reyes-espinoza.blog>. This website also contains philosophical artwork from my former students when I taught Global Moral Issues from summer and fall 2017 and spring 2018.

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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### Toward an Ethics of Tragic Uncertainty: Miguel de Unamuno and Global Social Conflict

My dissertation is in two parts. First, it develops a philosophical concept of “tragic uncertainty,” derived from early twentieth-century Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. Secondly, it demonstrates ethical application of tragic uncertainty to human societal events. The *ethical imperative* created from tragic uncertainty—and not either tragedy or uncertainty alone—is the following. Given a tragic situation with a great degree of uncertainty, people living with doubt, mental despair, and perpetual anguish because of it should be provided relief. Generally, this relief should be in the form of therapy, by which I mean an affective and emotional release. Two important case studies are explored. One on corrupted political systems in the USA-Mexico border. The other in Honduras, on both climate change and corrupted political systems. These are explained and categorized as tragically uncertain. Corresponding, minimal practical solutions accompany the ethical imperative created to remedy tragic uncertainty.

C.V. updated August 2019