ARTICLES

Schopenhauer's Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright as Artistic Genius
Kevin Beers

Simone de Beauvoir and the Ethics of Authenticity: Life as Project & Responsibility
Andres Lara

Dracula vs. Descartes: The Battle over the Intellectual Freedom of Woman
Andres Lara

Hip-Hop Culture and the Perpetuation of Inequality
James Crawford

Active Hospitality
Jaime Muñoz

Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas: Philosophic Influences on Theology
Jaime Muñoz
Schopenhauer’s Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright as Artistic Genius

Kevin Beers

IF PHILOSOPHERS ENJOYED the same devoted patronage as saints, Arthur Schopenhauer might well be considered the patron philosopher of artists, his bust resting proudly beside that of St. Catherine of Bologna in the studios and workshops of artistic geniuses across the globe. Schopenhauer’s affection for the arts and admiration for those few people capable of creating truly great works are well documented and are perhaps the best known and most often discussed aspects of his philosophy. Within Schopenhauer’s aesthetic theory, art is given a position akin to spiritual salvation, with artists acting as tortured but enlightened priests or shamans, capable of leading their flocks to (temporary) salvation.

American architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s theories regarding the value of art and artists share remarkable similarities to Schopenhauer’s philosophy; Wright, like Schopenhauer, sees a separation between appearance and reality; in addition, Wright believes artists have the ability, and therefore the duty, to perceive this separation and communicate the essence, or truth, that lies beyond appearances; this is strikingly similar to Schopenhauer’s aesthetic philosophy; examining the writings
of both men, it becomes clear that not only does Frank Lloyd Wright possess a similar worldview to Schopenhauer, Wright is, in fact, the ideal example of Schopenhauer’s concept of the artistic genius, saving the suffering masses from themselves.

 Salvation requires suffering. Schopenhauer describes the source of all suffering metaphysically; asserting that existence itself is the suffering from each individual’s existence as will (275). He argues that the world perceived by the senses is an illusion, built by the mind as a representation of the thing-in-itself, a term borrowed from Kant to describe the world as it exists outside the constructs of the mind (275). Beyond this illusion, the world exists as what Schopenhauer carefully chooses to call will (15). Schopenhauer states that the will, as thing-in-itself, "is devoid of knowledge, and is only a blind, irresistible urge" (275). Since this blind urge is goalless, there is no way to satiate it. When manifested into the knowable world, the relentless striving becomes relentless suffering, lacking any way to fulfill its own desires.

This position may come across as excessively pessimistic, reducing existence entirely to will and then asserting that will is ultimately suffering; however, Schopenhauer does offer, within his theory of aesthetics, the possibility for the temporary relief from willing and therefore from suffering. Schopenhauer gives artists the ability to relieve the suffering of others by removing individuals from their subjectivity and allowing them to contemplate timeless Ideas (Schopenhauer 186). In this capacity, Schopenhauer’s artistic genius becomes a teacher and a savior, expressing essential truths about reality to masses of suffering subjects who are less equipped to perceive them through the illusions created by their own minds.
Schopenhauer's artistic genius facilitates the contemplation of *Ideas* in others. The *Ideas* Schopenhauer has in mind are Plato's *Forms* (130). Schopenhauer sees these *Ideas* as the universal Forms or Archetypes that individual objects derive their essence from. "He describes the *Ideas* as the moulds, wherein the chaotic primal will gathers itself before dispersing into the countless phenomena that make up the world as representation" (Vandenabeele 569). The individual objects based on these forms, necessarily existing solely in the world of representation, are experienced through the condition of time; therefore, they appear to come and go, rise and fall, exist and cease to exist; however, the Ideas themselves are timeless and universal (Schopenhauer 130).

Through the contemplation of these Ideas, the individual’s intellect can detach itself from the service of the will and allow the subject to gain temporary relief from the suffering caused by the will's relentless striving (Schopenhauer 186). "Schopenhauer maintains that for those few capable of moments of authentic aesthetic experience there is a transport lifting them beyond the individual sufferings of desire, want, and conflict of will. Aesthetic contemplation induces a silencing of the individual will, without which the intellect cannot be receptive to the Platonic forms embodied in nature and art" (Jacquette 11). Put simply, art offers a temporary escape from the suffering of life through the perception of timeless Ideas lying beyond phenomenal appearances.

In order to see through the phenomenon to the timeless Idea, an object must be considered as a universal archetype or Platonic Form, and not as an individualized specimen. This type of contemplation is possible through nature, but, Schopenhauer argues, it is more successfully achieved through art.
"Aesthetic experience, as Schopenhauer understands it, is essentially experience in which a subject apprehends, or has intuitive knowledge of, the Ideas; this is his version of the thought, familiar in the history of aesthetic theory, that aesthetic experience involves transcendence of the particular and access to the universal" (Neill 179).

Through this type of detached contemplation, the individual subject becomes temporarily will-less; furthermore, he is able to separate himself from his own individuality, his own personal urges and desires; becoming a timeless, universal subject and contemplating timeless, universal objects. "Intuitive knowledge of the Ideas, in short, will be available only to a knowing subject who is not, or does not 'know as', an individual. And as intuitive knowledge of the Ideas is precisely what is given in aesthetic experience, it follows that the possibility of aesthetic experience depends [on] 'abolishing individuality' in the subject" (Neill 180). This is art's true value in Schopenhauer's theory: to act as a tool for transcendence, releasing the suffering subject from his own individual desires, raising him above the everyday turmoil caused by his individual willing.

Once the subject has reached beyond the phenomenon of the object to grasp its underlying Idea, the subject is then able to expand this detached, objective view to the world as a whole, seeing the universal Forms behind individual objects (Reginster 261). In his own words, Schopenhauer summarizes the conditions for achieving this "aesthetic method of consideration" as having "two inseparable constituent parts: namely, knowledge of the object not as individual thing, but as Platonic Idea, in other words, as persistent form of this whole species of things; and the self-consciousness of the knower, not as individual, but as pure, will-less subject of knowledge" (195). Thus, the removal of individuality from both the
subject and object becomes the necessary condition to achieving an aesthetic view of the world.

Viewing the world aesthetically is the gift of the *artistic genius*. For Schopenhauer, the artist has an increased proficiency for seeing the *Ideas* of objects through their phenomenon and by employing his or her imagination, is able to communicate those *Ideas* through the medium of art. This increased proficiency for objectivity is a consequence of having a higher degree of intellect in relation to individual will (Schopenhauer 186). The excess of intellect inherent in the artistic genius allows the artist to free himself from the service of the will for extended periods of time and to contemplate objectively the Forms of things separated from their connections and relationships to individual willing. Schopenhauer describes the abilities of the genius in detail:

> the *gift of genius* is nothing but the most complete objectivity, i.e., the objective tendency of the mind, as opposed to the subjective directed to our own person, i.e., to the will. Accordingly, genius is the capacity to remain in a state of pure perception, to lose oneself in perception, to remove from the service of the will the knowledge which originally existed only for this service. In other words, genius is the ability to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard entirely our own personality for a time, in order to remain pure knowing subject, the clear eye of the world; and this not merely for moments, but with necessary continuity and conscious thought to enable us to repeat by deliberate art what has been apprehended (186).

Schopenhauer admits that all or at least most people have some capacity for the type of objective contemplation he sees as constituting pure aesthetic experience. If this were not the case, he surmises, art would have no meaning at all (194). If the common man was completely incapable of achieving the objective viewpoint afforded to him by the contemplation of *Ideas*, the special
abilities of the artist would serve no purpose; he would be completely incapable of communicating anything, let alone facilitating the temporary relief of suffering for those less capable than himself (Schopenhauer 194). So the difference between the common man and the artistic genius, according to Schopenhauer, is not a difference in kind, but rather a variance only of degree.

Much of this difference lies in the genius' enhanced ability to perceive through intuition, rather than conceive through conscious abstraction. Barbara Hannan discusses this important distinction in her book, *The Riddle of the World*. She writes, "The Idea is a real grade of the Will's objectification, a force of nature, known through perception. The concept is a definition or word classification made by cognition or intellect, for purposes of rational thought. Concepts fall under the Principle of Sufficient Reason; Ideas are outside the Principle of Sufficient Reason" (109). Understanding the differences between an *Idea* and a *concept* gives insight into the artist's special ability to perceive the world within Schopenhauer's philosophy.

Despite the artist's excess of intellect, Schopenhauer emphasizes that Ideas must be perceived non-rationally. Once the object has been formed by the intellect into a collection of meanings and relationships, it is no longer a pure objective Idea; rather, it becomes an object of knowledge, a *concept*. "The artist intuits rather than explicitly understands what he is trying to express. He works instinctively, guided by the unconscious, from feeling, not from thought. This is all part of working from the Idea rather than from the concept, according to Schopenhauer" (Hannan 110).

Schopenhauer believes that the innate ability to perceive the world intuitively as *Idea* rather than consciously conceive it as concept is the prerequisite of
genius; however, it is not the only requirement. He also emphasizes the importance of imagination to the artistic genius in order to communicate the perceived Ideas. Without imagination, Schopenhauer argues, the artist would be limited to expressing only objects he was present to and not the Ideas behind them. He would be restricted by his own experience. Schopenhauer writes, "the man of genius requires imagination, in order to see in things not what nature has actually formed, but what she endeavored to form . . . imagination extends the mental horizon of the genius beyond the objects that actually present themselves to his person . . . For this reason, unusual strength of imagination is a companion, indeed a condition of genius" (186-87). John Atwell also discusses the role of imagination to Schopenhauer's artistic genius. He notes "the genius is a person who, as such, has only a limited range of knowledge of things, yet the Ideas extend beyond actual knowledge into the 'realm of possibility'; consequently, he must, through imagination, reach out beyond personal experience and 'construct' Ideas, not every dimension of which he has ever experienced" (96-97). It seems clear that Schopenhauer denotes perception and imagination as the primary abilities of the artistic genius.

Despite the straightforward collection of abilities possessed by Schopenhauer's genius, it is impossible to simplify the artistic genius into a formula of obtainable requirements because Schopenhauer maintains that genius is an innate gift. The required skill set cannot be learned by those not already endowed at birth with the necessary abilities of the artistic genius; moreover, in order to be considered an artistic genius in the eyes of Schopenhauer, one must naturally possess an exceptional ability to perceive the universal from the individual, the
imagination to apply such perception to objects outside one’s experience, and enough proficiency in an artistic medium to express the perceived Idea to those less capable of perceiving it. To achieve this expression, Schopenhauer favors the plastic arts of painting and sculpture (214-30); however, as his writings demonstrate, Frank Lloyd Wright considers architecture as the most successful means to express reality.

Frank Lloyd Wright’s innovative ideas and enduring fame make it easy to define him as a genius in the conventional sense of the word. Testimony to Wright’s genius is abundant. In 1961, biographer Finis Farr described Wright as "the world’s most imaginative architect – the great and famous Frank Lloyd Wright" (24). As recently as 2009, Ingrid Steffensen, former professor of architectural history at Princeton University, described Wright as "probably the most famous architect in the world" (257). The volume of claims exalting Wright’s genius is convincing evidence that he meets the conventional definition of the term; unfortunately, Schopenhauer is not satisfied with mere fame or the conventional definition of genius; his artistic genius goes beyond these considerations. Schopenhauer creates a specific definition for his artistic genius. In order for Wright to be successfully situated within Schopenhauer’s aesthetic philosophy, Wright must go beyond the conventional uses of the word genius and possess the characteristics of the artistic genius contained in Schopenhauer’s definition. These include the innate ability to perceive universal essence through individual example and the imagination necessary to communicate Ideas through an artistic medium. For Frank Lloyd Wright, this medium is architecture.

Using Wright’s own words as evidence for these characteristics, one can confidently adduce that Wright fulfills Schopenhauer’s criteria. In fact, much of
Schopenhauer’s description ideally describes Wright. Wright saw architecture differently than his predecessors. His views diverged even further from most of his contemporaries. He recognized the universal primacy of Ideas as Forms and the separation of appearance from reality. Evidence for Wright’s views is direct and abundant. In his writings, Wright touches on many of the same themes as Schopenhauer, and the two men often use similar vocabulary in their theories; however, their use of words is not always completely equivalent; words such as Form and Idea are used similarly although not equivalently, their meanings expressed thoroughly enough in context to show the congruence of their thoughts; nevertheless, one must pay close attention and be wary of the dangers that arise from relying solely on the equivalency of vocabulary in order to show the congruence of ideas.

In *The Future of Architecture*, Wright asserts, "A fancy or conceit trifles with appearances as they are. An idea searches the sources of appearances, comes out as a form of inner experiences, to give fresh proof of higher and better order in the life we live . . . AN IDEA IS SALVATION BY IMAGINATION" (187). Wright’s emphatic assertion expresses Schopenhauer’s means to salvation. Although it cannot be justifiably said that Wright intends this statement to express the Platonic conception of Form, the similarity of his thought to Schopenhauer’s is remarkable. Not only does Wright explicitly note the difference between appearances and reality, he also clearly states that ideas are primary to appearances; moreover, he connects ideas with the "sources" of appearances. He develops this connection further when he concludes, "Thus a single glimpse of reality may change the world for any of us if, from the fancies and conceits of
mere appearances, we get within the source of appearances. By means of human imagination at work upon this source untold new life may find expression, for, with new force, ideas do actually fashion our visible world" (187). In these passages, Wright explicitly states that through the appearances of things, ideas can be perceived as "sources" and that through the use of human imagination, these sources can be expressed and used to create the visible world.

In only a few paragraphs, Wright echoes Schopenhauer's emphasis on both the perception of ideas and the use of imagination to express those ideas; the two required abilities of the artistic genius. Furthermore, Wright assigns these qualities directly to artists when he states, "The Artist in any medium must first 'see' with a prophetic eye, and then to reveal the vision he must handle his brushes, pigment, and canvas with a sympathy that respects the limitations of the material and the process and makes both eloquent together ... it is the Artist's prophetic eye that must idealize, and conventionalize his natural state" ("A Philosophy of Fine Art" 42-43). The artist's "prophetic eye" perceives reality behind appearance. Wright persists and boldly asserts, "Of all Art, whatsoever, perhaps Architecture is the Art best fitted to teach this lesson, for in its practices this problem of 'conventionalizing' Nature is worked out at the highest and best. The Art of building is the great representative Art of Civilization when it comes to be understood" (43).

Conveying parallel ideas, both Schopenhauer and Wright acknowledge art's ability to express the essence of reality that exists beyond the world of appearance. Their theories weave even closer together when both men explicitly discuss using art to express the Idea of humanity in particular. Schopenhauer asserts "that man is more beautiful than all other objects, and the revelation of his nature is the highest aim of
art" (Schopenhauer 215). Mirroring this view, Wright states, "A conscientious architect learns to understand the nature of human nature so well that the character of his structural ability may eventually justify calling organic architecture man's love of presenting man to Man" (qtd. in Moholy-Nagy 323). Wright connects architecture to the expression of humanity even more directly when he states, "In all buildings that man has built out of earth and upon the earth, his spirit, the pattern of him, rose great or small. It lived in his buildings. It still shows there" (Future of Architecture 51). Architecture expresses the spirit, the pattern, or as Schopenhauer would label it, the Idea of man.

Evidence for Wright's desire to express humanity to humanity is common. In another essay from the Future of Architecture, he states "I declare the time is here for architecture to recognize its own nature, to realize the fact that it is out of life itself for life as it is now lived, a humane and therefore an intensely human thing: it must again become the most human of all the expressions of human nature. Architecture is a necessary interpretation of such human life as we now know if we ourselves are to live with individuality and beauty" (225). Wright sees architecture as a means to communicate Ideas to the masses who are less capable of seeing beyond appearances; his statements about artists reverberate with connection to Schopenhauer's artistic genius. He writes, "That is what it means to be an artist – to seize this essence brooding everywhere in everything, just behind aspect" (Autobiography 181). In addition to overtly acknowledging his awareness of sources behind appearances (or essence behind aspect) and the importance of human imagination in expressing these sources to the world, Wright makes further comments about the roles artists play that parallel
Schopenhauer's own view of the artistic genius as savior and teacher. He notes, "We who love architecture and recognize it as the great sense of structure in whatever is — music, painting, sculpture, or life itself — we must somehow act as intermediaries — maybe missionaries" (Future of Architecture 230). Avoiding the dangers of similar yet nonequivalent vocabulary, Wright clearly expresses his view, shared with Schopenhauer, that universal Forms/Ideas underlie the appearances of the visible world, that these Forms/Ideas act as archetypes giving structure to the visible world and that it is the duty of those capable of perceiving these archetypes to "act as intermediaries," communicating the archetypes to the masses, teaching them about themselves.

From his very first independent commission, the William Winslow House in River Forest, Illinois (1893-94), Wright used his architecture to express Ideas. He designed his Prairie style architecture to express the Idea of Home as an archetype. Wright wanted his Prairie style houses to convey the essential qualities of shelter, comfort and family, the elements that, to Wright, constituted the Idea of Home. Described in architectural terms, "The typical Prairie style home is distinguished by a horizontal line emphasized on the exterior by a low-pitched hipped roof, long bands of windows, wide overhanging eaves and brick courses or wood bands. Inside, the floor plan is open and radiates outward from a central fireplace" ("About the Prairie Style"). Each of these architectural elements contributes to the expression of Home in the Prairie style house. The Winslow House serves as an excellent example of this expression. In his comprehensive book on The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Neil Levine describes this expression at length. He notes, "in the Winslow House, the elements of a house are analyzed into their constituent parts" and are
then "synthesized into an image of
domesticity that . . . is expressed in the
emotional terms of horizontal lines that echo
the earth and carry the sense of human
warmth, comfort, and security" (17).

The horizontal orientation of the
building becomes an important factor in
Wright's expression of Home. As Levine
states, "A house had to signify comfort, a
sense of belonging, a feeling of privacy—in
a word, the idea of shelter. 'The horizontal
line,' Wright wrote, 'is the line of
domesticity.' On the flat prairie of the
Midwest, breadth would be a sign of shelter,
as height was a sign of power and success in
the city" (17). The expression of shelter was
central to Wright's expression for the Idea
of Home. It is further expressed in the long,
exaggerated, overhanging eaves found on
Wright's prairie style houses. On the
Winslow House, these overhangs provide a
look of protection specifically molded to the
prairie. Additionally, "[t]he shadow line thus
created allows the gently sloping hip roof to
appear to float and provide, as Wright would
say, a sense of 'broad shelter in the open,
related to vista'" (Levine 16). Levine
provides an excellent explanation for
Wright's expression of Home when he
writes:

In the Winslow House, for the first time in his work, "the
sense of shelter in the look of the building," which Wright
felt to be the primary characteristic of the Prairie
House, infused every aspect of the design with an
expressive meaning that was more than skin deep. While
the calm horizontal lines and deep overhanging planes
make the house seem as one with the site, the massive
central chimney literally pins the structure to the earth and
establishes an emotional core for the "sense of shelter" in
the almost "instinctual" relation between hearth and
home (17).

The horizontal design of the prairie house
and the centralized chimney act in a dual
manner to express multiple Ideas. In fact,
the central chimney and the massive hearth
beneath it become Wright's primary means
of expressing comfort and family, both essential elements to the Idea of Home. Wright intends his centralized fireplace to become the very heart of the house and to convey comfort and togetherness as a common gathering place for family and friends. In his autobiography, Wright states, "the integral fireplace became an important part of the building itself in the houses I was allowed to build out there on the prairie. It comforted me to see the fire burning deep in the solid masonry of the house itself" (165).

Levine elaborates on the importance of the fireplace to the expression of Home. He writes, "In the Winslow house, the fireplace is so broad in treatment and so open to view that it appears to be the very backbone of the house, as the roof above is its shelter. . . . the formal equation of hearth and home became a fundamental element of the Prairie House type, transmitting the emotional content of the type through the very core of the building" (Levine 19).

The fireplace becomes the heart of the Winslow House; it also becomes the gateway between the public and private portions of the home and the overt expression of the conflict between family togetherness and individuality. Immediately upon entering the house, visitors are presented with the grand visage of the fireplace, occupying their entire field of sight. The open unity of the front portion of the house is contrasted with the more private areas which lay beyond the grand fireplace:

What appears at first to be a static, symmetrical, classical plan is turned into an asymmetrical, freewheeling pattern of movement by the presence of the fireplace . . . Opposite the entrance, facing the public reception area, the fireplace provides the general image of family "togetherness." On its other side, however, the different rooms break out into conflicting configurations, as might the individual family members in the daily patterns of their lives. As the emotional core of the house, the fireplace holds in balance the worlds of the private and the public, the individual and
the group, the formal and the informal. (Levine 20). Both the united family and the individual members who comprise it are given thoughtful expression which, when combined with the sense of shelter provided by the horizontal orientation of the house and the comfort of the central hearth/chimney, convey the Idea of Home as an architectural archetype. Wright uses this Idea to teach people about humanity and temporarily save them from the suffering of their day to day lives. Through the intentional expression of Ideas such as Home, Wright becomes Schopenhauer's artistic genius. Evidence for this view of Wright expands beyond his own writings.

Confirmation of Wright's roles as savior and teacher arises from external sources as well. In Ken Burns' PBS documentary, Frank Lloyd Wright, historian William Cronon reflects that Wright "very much wanted to build buildings that would enlighten people and lift them up. He was trying to raise the masses above themselves." When describing Wright’s building record, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy writes, "It might stand as a supplement to the characterization of Wright as architectural teacher which – in the broadest sense – he felt himself to be, not only for America but for mankind" (329). Further reference to this view of Wright comes from Martin Engel who describes Wright's portfolio of buildings as, "the products of an architect who felt antagonistic toward the world, keeping himself aloof from it while actively seeking for its salvation" (38). Once again, Frank Lloyd Wright is shown to have the characteristics and, more importantly, the documented actions of a teacher and a savior, mirroring Schopenhauer's artistic genius.

Wright's ideas echo Schopenhauer’s and express a shared worldview. In an interview by Ben Raeburn recorded in 1956, Wright professes views about art and artists
that are strikingly similar to Schopenhauer’s:

Human nature [is] in search of something better than the thing it knows. Human nature is always restless, aiming, desiring and feeling either an uplift, a depression or being shoved aside. Now, architecture gratifies that sense of the future, the uplift, the becoming, and of course all art should; more or less does, but architecture primarily is the basis of that; from it, you get your painters and you get your sculptors, all desiring to make something suitable, fitting, calculated to make human life happier (On Record).

Here, Wright’s description of human nature convincingly mirrors Schopenhauer’s restless will; going further, Wright professes art as a means toward human happiness. Once again Schopenhauer and Wright share congruent ideas, only disagreeing on which artistic medium best conveys the reality beyond appearance. Diverging from Schopenhauer, Wright sees architecture as both the source and the salvation of the lesser arts like painting or sculpting. He believes architecture has the ability to educate the masses and to illuminate essential truths about humanity; when viewed through the lens of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, Wright becomes Schopenhauer’s artistic genius: tormented teacher and savior of suffering subjects.

For Schopenhauer, the world is full of purposeless pain. To exist is to suffer. Schopenhauer’s worldview is bleak; there is no grand plan, no ultimate rationality for the world to evolve towards; however, he does offer humanity a crumb of hope for salvation. It is not a permanent salvation; in fact, it is fleeting and inequitably distributed amongst the afflicted. Those special few capable of perceiving the world intuitively bear witness to reality, bubbling underneath the illusion of transitory appearances. They are compelled to communicate this reality as best they can through the only medium capable of its communication: Art.
Schopenhauer’s artistic genius acts as a conduit for the expression of reality, and as Frank Lloyd Wright exemplifies, attempts to raise the masses above themselves, offering temporary relief through the contemplation of timeless, universal Ideas: Plato’s Forms. Schopenhauer is renowned for the value he places on art and artists. They play a crucial role in his philosophy; however, he undervalues architecture’s merits in comparison with the plastic arts of painting and sculpting. In a significant departure from Schopenhauer’s judgment, Frank Lloyd Wright argues that architecture, not painting or sculpting, is the most effective means of peering through appearance to contemplate reality. Sadly, Schopenhauer did not live to see architecture’s potential realized. The man who would champion its rise beyond Schopenhauer’s limitations was born a mere seven years after Schopenhauer’s death. Less than a decade separated the lives of these two brilliant men. Had they met, perhaps Schopenhauer’s evaluation of the arts would have reflected Frank Lloyd Wright’s accomplishments and, perhaps, Schopenhauer’s sculpted likeness would have rested proudly on the drafting tables of Wright and his architectural disciples.

William Winslow House (fireplace).
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SHOULD I KILL MYSELF? Should I continue to live? If so, how? Albert Camus, a twentieth century French existentialist philosopher, might comment, "This is the only philosophical question. Just because you are born does not mean you should continue to live." Every person must make this decision to live consciously, or, if not, find ways to avoid it. What, then, should man do with his unsolicited life? How should he address the socio-economic situation he inherited without his consent? When Camus asks, "How should a man respond to his life, or plague?" the existential program responds that the individual alone is responsible for shaping his life and affixing meaning and value. In The Ethics of Ambiguity, Camus's contemporary Simone de Beauvoir says, "man makes himself a lack of being so that there might be a being." Beauvoir holds that in this world of becoming, of perpetual flux, life is possibility; every human goal is, at the same time, a point of departure for a new project. To resign oneself to one's inherited situation is inauthentic, irresponsible, and criminal; the authentic individual must not accept anything that offers itself as a
complete, unchanging, fixed limit, but instead work with inherited conditions, and use them as a springboard. The inauthentic man is unfree: he assumes external givens and makes himself into a mechanism, a passive conductor of inherited values and traditions, a thing, a member of the species. The authentic man, on the other hand, is a freedom, "a unity in the unfolding of time" (26). The free man does not accept any foreign absolutes; he understands being as a project. Jean-Paul Sartre, Beauvoir's philosophical partner, says that in the world of becoming, "there is always a future to be fashioned." Poets, who assert themselves as authorities, rebelling against organized religions, the monarchy, science, and other forms of objective and totalizing knowledge systems, can serve as examples of authentic living.

In his essay "A Defence of Poetry," British romantic poet Percy Shelley proclaims, "the poet is the undistinguished legislator of the world." Sartre supports Shelley's proclamation when he says, "existentialism is a form of humanism ... because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself." Could it not be said that life under the ruthless capitalism and hyper-connection of the twenty-first century United States is a life unlike any before? If so, the United States needs poets now more than ever. In ancient Greece, poetry, or poesis, was defined as a revealing. Beauvoir gestures toward the romantic poet when she says, "the authentic man does not aim to trap being, but to disclose it" (30). According to William Blake, an early British romantic, the poet's assignment is to "see a world in a grain of sand, heaven in a wild flower." The authentic individual, therefore, aims to live as an existential poet, disclosing being and opening up the future for individuals, and concerning himself with the freedom of
others, always aware of his social responsibility. Life is a call to action, and existentialism is one authentic way to answer this call. I interpret the poet under the existential lens because the existential poet can serve as an example for authentic individuality.

Antagonists will reject this notion of life as a project and responsibility. These opponents to existential humanism and revolutionary art will ask "why should a person concern himself or herself for anyone else?" and "why do you think you are entitled to wish for others what they might not want or know that they want?" To this, Beauvoir answers, "if I want the slave to become conscious of his servitude, it is both in order to not be a tyrant myself—for any abstention is complicity, and complicity in this case is tyranny—and in order that new possibilities might be opened to the liberated slave and through him to all men" (86). Here Beauvoir says that an authentic individual understands his responsibility and his commitment to others. As an atheist, Beauvoir believes that the absence of God does not represent a free-for-all; on the contrary, the absence of an all-powerful creator demands more responsibility from all individuals. She says, "Because man is abandoned on Earth... he bears responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself" (16). If God is absent, then it is up to individuals to care for each other. It is the unique assignment of man to invent himself and help others realize this assignment. The existentialist believes in his power to shape the world, even a local world.

Life, therefore, is a project full of possibility. Since meaning is unfixed, and every goal is, at the same time a point of departure (49), man must never rest, he must never find comfort—in fact, Beauvoir's brand of existentialism condemns the man who finds his being actualized. Man makes
himself a lack of being so that there might be a being, and this perpetual ambiguity generates the angst, or the "perpetual tension to keep being at a certain distance, to tear oneself from the world, and to assert oneself as a freedom" (24). Beauvoir says the authentic individual is always planning new possibilities, not "sleep[ing] in the dull comfort which capitalism grants" (20). This activity of keeping permanence and "dull comfort" at a distance is illustrated in the poems of American poet Emily Dickinson. Though not a self-proclaimed existentialist, Dickinson, a later romantic poet, operated under her own belief system that opposed her society. Thus, re-visiting her work through the lens of Beauvoir brings new understanding to some of her work. In poem 286, Dickinson engages the rebellious process of "tearing oneself from the world," and expresses the co-occurring anxiety that this existential practice—or making oneself a lack of being and understanding life as a project—introduces:

I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you - Nobody - too?  
Then there's a pair of us!  
Don't tell! they'd advertise - you know!  
How dreary - to be - Somebody!  
How public - like a Frog -  
To tell one’s name - the livelong June -  
To an admiring Bog!

Here we can see the difficulty in pursuing authenticity. Because the speaker of the poem does not recognize any external absolutes, nor accepts ready-made values that offer themselves from the outside (24), she avoids thingness and affirms the individual life as project. An existential position can save one from being a fixed frog in Dickinson’s life-denying bog by "refusing to set up as absolutes the ends toward which my transcendence thrusts itself, and by considering them in their connection with the freedom which projects them" (14). The authentic poet and individual keeps being at a distance and will always look toward the future: there is always a future to be fashioned. Life is
being towards death, and all events must be seen as a unity across the unfolding of time. Resignation to a position/rule is incorrect because every situation is always limited and provisional, and for Beauvoir's brand of existentialism, a calcified man, with fixed rules and values, is a criminal. The authentic man perpetually throws himself into the future.

Furthermore, because God is absent for atheistic existentialists like Beauvoir, the authentic individual bears more responsibility. The French existentialist views existence as finite, with no imagined promise of an after-life, only flesh and blood presence. Thus the speaker in Dickinson's poem understands her responsibility, and she is concerned for the future and possibility of others. On my view, it appears that the speaker expresses commitment to the others who share the "bog"/who appear alongside her as members of the same species, and that the speaker is interested in helping the reader/other realize the life assignment and engage the project. The line "then there's a pair of us" illustrates Beauvoir's belief that the freedom of the other is equiprimordial to the self.

The French existentialist program, which appears after the devastation that WWII brings to Europe, shares a similar re-evaluation of values with the modernist movement that develops after the First World War. After the mass destruction and horror of WWI, understood as proof of God's absence, the modernist poets, like T. S. Eliot, for example, take refuge in the loneliness, ruin, and "heap of broken images" of post-war society. Though not participating in the brand of existential articulated by Beauvoir and her French contemporaries and writing partners, Eliot's poetic and political program emerges from a similar post-war territory, a "scorched Earth" that awakens social responsibility in a "God-less" society that thrusts its
participants unflinchingly towards death, a "scorched Earth" without the nebulous promise of a debt-settled, physically-healed, suffering-free afterlife. In the conclusion of his 1922 poem "The Wasteland," Eliot provides three suggestions for behavior to awaken readers to their social responsibility: be charitable, show compassion/sympathy, and control yourself. Eliot believes in mankind's power to shape the violently shook-up world. Eliot's three suggestions, therefore, are not irrelevant to Beauvoir's atheistic program, where God's absence empowers the individual with increased responsibility for himself and others. For the authentic man and woman, there is always will and freedom: nothing is determined, and one must always act with others in mind. To live authentically, individuals can follow the example of the existential poet, who understands life as a project and the necessary commitment to the well being of others.

To be truly human in the existential program is to aim at liberation, to seek the realization of your freedom. Man makes himself a lack of being so that there might be a being: man is a project, a possibility, a freedom. Man's plague is a crisis that requires immediate attention: this call to act responsibly is man's unique prerogative. Living authentically is possible, and the revolutionary art of some poets, interpreted through existentialism, can inspire man to live authentically today. But this decision to live authentically must be enacted individually. Unfortunately, nobody chooses to be born or the conditions that he or she inherits; instead, how to live, and what meaning one injects into his/her life and actions is a freedom that always presents itself. More often, however, this decision and freedom is ignored, identity is inherited, and inauthenticity, as an ontological lifestyle, is engaged uncritically and unapologetically.
Dracula and Descartes: The Battle over the Intellectual Freedom of Woman

Andres Lara

BRAM STOKER'S LATE-VICTORIAN NOVEL Dracula (1897) is about more than a blood-thirsty alien-invader's infiltration of London and this supremely evil creature's subsequent vanquishing; the novel shakes up Western society's understanding and knowledge of itself. This assault on Western society, for which London, in Londoner's eyes, serves as the metropole, is achieved through an inversion of woman's faculties and her assignment as a muted, domestic, servant. Dracula's heroine, Mina Harker, is a woman with "man-brains" who ultimately chooses to disregard her gender role when she knits together a body of knowledge, a "whole connected narrative," out of multiple, personal accounts. Her text serves as proof of and evidence for Dracula's execution. Mina's transcript is the scientific account that women were stereotypically considered too "precious" and "imperfectly-formed" to produce, according to Cartesian metaphysical dualism, which is implicit in the sexual division of labor. Metaphysical dualism prescribes women—construed as body-oriented, irrational and emotional—to the private, muted, silenced position at
home, while men—characterized as scientific and highly rational—are allotted mobile social positions in the public sphere. *Dracula* sinks its teeth into this rigid binary between rational men and irrational women and shakes up Cartesian/Western society's understanding of itself, as well as popular, yet ostensibly rock-hard, "truths," which are in actuality tenuously held.

Modern science, as an institution that governs, organizes, and illuminates Western thought, is largely founded upon French philosopher Rene Descartes' metaphysical/epistemological system. In the seventeenth century, Descartes sets out to establish a new method of knowledge that he thinks will ground a new science, which will be free from prejudice, superstition, inherited beliefs, and wrong-headed values, etc. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes decides that in order to create a solid foundation for knowledge he must exclude all *a posteriori* beliefs or claims—which are experience-based and, therefore, inconsistent, unreliable knowledge; instead, Descartes accepts only *a priori* knowledge—which includes knowledge before experience and, therefore, knowledge that is necessary and universal. For Descartes, discarding experience-based knowledge is crucial, since this information is dependent on the senses, and the senses are often deceptive. Descartes aims to arrive at apodictic (true and certain) knowledge, which he feels is possible only through a strict rationalist methodology. For Descartes, *a priori* reason is how universal, objective truths can come to be known. The Cartesian mind/body metaphysical dualism arrives with the epistemic distinction between true, universal, disembodied, knowledge, available through reason, and opinion/variability that is available through the body and experience. Yet, when the body exclusively defines women, we can see
how quickly science contributes to institutional sexism.

Far from being unprejudiced, Descartes' metaphysical dualism, science's foundation, is easily mapped onto gendered bodies. In her essay, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," feminist philosopher Alison Jaggar says, "Women appear to be more emotional than men because they, along with some groups of people of color, are permitted and even required to express emotion more openly... A woman may cry in the face of disaster, and a man of color may gesticulate, but a white man merely sets his jaw" (178). Here Jaggar shows how modern Western men are privileged in their expectations to be cool and expressionless, while at the core of Western values, they are expected to feel contempt for women. Jaggar goes on to say, "in contemporary Western culture emotionally inexpressive women are suspect as not being real women, whereas men who express their emotions freely are suspected of being homosexual or in some other way deviant from the masculine ideal" (178). This privileging of masculinity is inherited from Cartesian epistemology and the myth of the Cartesian dispassionate investigator, which, Jaggar says, serves an ideological role, or it functions to bolster the epistemic authority of the currently dominant group, composed largely of white men, and to discredit the observations and claims of the currently subordinate groups, including of course, the observations and claims of many people of color and women... Women are defined culturally as the bearers of emotion and so are perceived as more 'subjective,' biased, and irrational (Jaggar 178).

These 'womanly' categories must be excluded from scientific investigations, and, as a result, so must women. Jaggar argues that no science is free from emotion because emotions are embedded in our values, and values organize scientific projects. An example of how emotions are embedded in
our values is evident when one gets angry as the result of a perceived violation of established, social norms; for example, as we will see shortly, in the scene where Mina's 'man-brains' drive Dr. Seward wild. *Dracula*, however, allows for women to engage in scientific inquiry, and, as a result, the alien fiend is annihilated.

*Dracula* itself is a scientific text, arranged carefully and methodically so that it shows a true knowledge that can structure reality and can spring from passionate investigation, and not only in its absence, not only in dispassionate inquiry. To argue against the accepted, unparalleled value of the Cartesian dispassionate investigator, Stoker employs Mina to type the chronological evidence to be used in the case against Dracula. In a conversation with Dr. Seward regarding his diary, Mina says, "[the diary] is a part of the terrible story, a part of poor dear Lucy’s death and all that led to it; because in the struggle which we have before us to rid the earth of this terrible monster we must have all the knowledge and all the help which we can get" (Stoker 197). Here we see the impetus for the monstrous assemblage of the various diary entries, letters, newspaper clippings, and transcribed phonograph recordings. *Dracula*, the body of subjective experience-based knowledge, begins out of love, out of necessary revenge, as well as a desire to create a shared body of knowledge that will raise awareness of a crime (to be used as evidence/justification). When two dry men of science (296) in the matter-of-fact nineteenth century (210) employ this text to pursue and vanquish the supremely evil fiend, Stoker shows that there are instances when the knowledge of "women" cannot be subordinated: Mina knits Dracula’s history together, and the heroes of the novel accept the beliefs in the text as fact because it is a result of their own experiences. This acceptance of empiric-based knowledge
allows wider education, dialogue, and action. Since the foundation for this knowledge is the feelings of a grieving woman, the text provides Stoker leverage in his argument against binary oppositions.

Furthermore, Dracula’s expulsion comes about through Van Helsing’s employment of ancient, superstitious methods. Dracula, therefore, is a being that defies rationality— that is, knowledge or awareness of him cannot be arrived at through Cartesian thought alone. Knowledge of Dracula must come about through experience, and the only way these Cartesians are able to battle the demon is to play his own game: to embrace feminist science, the championing of outlaw emotions, or the emotions of all women in the face of persecution, oppression, and obstacles. Mina’s transcript, a subjective experience-based account, is an attack on gender roles because it challenges Victorian society and Western epistemology. Dracula illustrates how a reality structured by knowledge and arrived at empirically (as a reality that accepts truths that result from outlaw emotions) can be equally as valid as a reality based on scientific truths that are confirmable through detached, objective, repeatable experiments and observation.
*Dracula* is the result of an outlaw emotion, and it supports a fluid synthesis or a collapsing of metaphysical dualism as a feminist concern; therefore, the novel itself argues for an alternative epistemological method. As Jaggar might point out, Mina is monstrous because she is a sum of parts, her person, which has multiple aspects, suggests a reconstitutive rather than oppositional relation between knowledge and emotion. Mina is a character described by Van Helsing as such: "Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination" (207). Van Helsing's comment presupposes that men and women have different brains: women, like the criminal, are "child-like," and have "imperfectly formed" minds that learn empirically, while men are brave, strong, and have "full man-brain," with the ability to learn by principle (Stoker 296). When a woman like Mina with "man-brain," a woman with "rare gift or power" (Stoker 206), seeks admission to the science camp with its methodicalness and detached observation, the men in the novel adore her. When Mina expresses desire to observe Renfield after reading Dr. Seward's diary, Dr. Seward writes, "She looked so appealing and so pretty that I could not refuse her, and there was no possible reason why I should" (Stoker 205). Here Dr. Seward is shocked by Mina's sudden interest in rational science, and he cannot resist his attraction to this woman with multiple-aspects. Dr. Seward's attraction to a Mina, and her request for admission to the masculine sphere of metaphysical dualism, reflects a hidden Victorian desire to emancipate woman from her muted, domestic, servile position. The collapse of metaphysical dualism is illustrated by Mina Harker's acceptance as a double agent, occupying both the spheres of
mind and body, so that it is a welcoming of
woman's rationality that leads the heroes of
the novel to triumph against Count Dracula.

Popular belief, however, views
appreciation for this dual woman as an
outlaw emotion, an emotion that does not
operate according to dominant beliefs; for
example, as seen in Van Helsing's
vacillating desire to keep Mina silenced. In
drafting a plan of attack, Van Helsing says,

Here comes Madam Mina; not a word to her... it would
overwhelm her and make despair just when we want all
her hope, all her courage; when most we want all her
great brain which is trained like man's brain, but is of
sweet woman and have a special power which the
Count give her... Hush! let me speak, and you shall
learn. Oh John, my friend, we
are in awful straits. I fear, as I
never feared before. We can
only trust the good God.
Silence! Here she comes!
(Stoker 295).

This fear of Dracula arrives with a fear of
"man-brained" Mina, as if she, too, is a
threatening, monstrous figure. Van Helsing
justifies his desire to keep Mina in the dark
by claiming that intelligence will overwhelm
her and make her despair, as it is the duty of
brave, earnest men to protect poor weak
woman (Stoker 286). Van Helsing believes
that the dreadful business of science is "too
great a strain for a woman to bear" (Stoker
223). Mina Harker, then, is a figure that
Stoker uses to attack the metaphysical
dualism that enables the sexual division of
labor and women's exclusion from the
sciences. Her doubleness, as a mash up of
'man-brains' and interest in investigation,
coupled with woman's body, beauty,
sensitivity and nurturing, is both seductive
and fearful. Dr. Seward's desire for a
rational woman is an outlaw emotion, but as
Jaggar points out,

as well as motivating critical
research, outlaw emotions
may also enable us to
perceive the world differently
than we would from its
portrayal in conventional
descriptions. They may
provide the first indications
that something is wrong with
the way alleged facts have
been constructed, with
accepted understandings of
how things are.... Emotions [experienced by women] may lead us to make subversive observations that challenge dominant conceptions of the status quo. They may help us to realize that what are taken generally to be facts have been constructed in a way that obscures the reality of subordinated people, especially women’s reality (Jaggar 181).

As seen with the transcript of Dracula, Mina’s emotions motivate critical research, and her findings challenge the Victorian conception of a reality that has its foundation in scientific thinking, especially as articulated in the Cartesian tradition. Dracula is a being that defies thought, he cannot be thought of like mathematical principles independent of experience, such as the conception of the chilagon, Descartes 1000-sided angle, which is conceivable only through thought and calculation. Mina’s participation in critical investigation, in the composition of a detailed, chronological narrative, therefore, asserts her position in society as the previously inconceivable double-woman. A rational woman, or a double-woman, like Dracula himself, is inconceivable, and this makes her fearful and attractive, since at the time that Stoker is writing, the new woman had not been experienced enough for a body of knowledge to emerge, raise awareness, and educate society about her potential. Van Helsing aims to separate and subordinate women, and the result is the emergence of the new woman, the rational woman.

Dracula shows the men in the novel and its Victorian readers that alternative epistemic models are available already in the late nineteenth century, and that science is not always trustworthy, totalizing, permanent, universal, nor free from superstition and prejudice. The belief that science is the path towards absolute truth is sexist, racist, and classist because it delegitimizes many groups of people and their experiences. Dracula, however, legitimizes Mina’s scientific and passionate
account in order to vanquish the monster. 

*Dracula* is an alternative epistemology—a whole new way of knowing what is real. By highlighting the social anxieties regarding woman’s potential, illustrated by Dr. Seward’s and Van Helsing’s conflicting positions on Mina, the new woman, the monstrous result of man’s overreaching—his desire to master the world—, Stoker argues that science’s claim to universality is merely a pretension.

Through its attack on the division between emotion and reason, *Dracula* is a text that infiltrates and attacks the dominant, patriarchal, rationalist ideas that dominate Western thinking. The scientific method as repellant/crucifix towards alien invaders is inadequate because it is a reflection of the imperialism, racism, and misogyny of the societies that created it (Jaggar 177). Furthermore, dispassionate inquiry, as Descartes’ foundation for science, is an impossible dream, a myth that has exerted enormous influence on Western epistemology, and it has resulted in the historic disenfranchisement of millions of groups of people because it endorses the view that all of nature is a mechanism to be dominated. If myths are ideological when they pretend to be neutral, when they keep the status quo in place, when they fulfill certain social and political functions, and, as in this case, mostly serve the interests of rich white men (a constitution inappropriate for feminism), then *Dracula* attacks Cartesian science. *Dracula* implicitly promotes a "vindication of the silencing of those, especially women, who are defined culturally as the bearers of emotion and so are perceived as more ‘subjective,’ biased, and irrational" (Jaggar 179). Dracula himself is a myth that subverts this dominating metanarrative, as well as the patriarchal brand of rationality that divides male and female, mind and body, knowledge and opinion.
HISTORICALLY, RACIST DEFICIT IMAGERY has been used and repackaged in the commodified forms of hip-hop culture as a primary means of justifying the inherent inequality of American corporate capitalism. Deficit imagery refers to the stereotypical depictions used to affirm the purported innate deficiencies of a particular group or culture. I will argue that stereotypical representations of African Americans in current mainstream hip-hop reflects the modern version of white supremacist ideology sustained by, what legal scholar Reva Siegel termed, "preservation through transformation."¹ According to Michelle Alexander, preservation through transformation is the process through which white privilege is maintained, though the rules and rhetoric change."² The purpose of this essay is to first understand the historical context of the perpetuation of deficit imagery of black culture in America; and second to understand how today's hip-hop perpetuates this imagery. By understanding hip-hop and deficit imagery, we can understand how the wealthy ruling class has

² Ibid.
normalized racial inequality in American culture for the purposes of sublimating working-class consciousness.

**HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION OF DEFICIT IMAGERY**

Slavery was formalized on the basis of "race" to create and maintain a racialized social order that provided whites with white privilege. To maintain social cohesion and complicity among whites, enslaved Africans were necessarily portrayed as incompetent, child-like beasts that needed taming for their own good and for the good of American society. During the post-slavery Jim Crow era (1877-1960s) of legalized discrimination, minstrel show performances of black stereotypes became an American pop culture phenomenon. Dr. David Pilgrim noted, "Rice [the originator of the 'Jim Crow' caricature] and his imitators, by their stereotypical depictions of blacks, helped to popularize the belief that blacks were lazy, stupid, inherently less human, and unworthy of integration."

After the decline of Jim Crow, racist perceptions translated into de facto segregation. Racially discriminatory housing and social policies were purposely used to develop the white American middle-class while depressing the inner cities of sociopolitical and economic capital, resulting in the emergence of suburban white enclaves, along with incipient black ghettos. Instead of addressing the growing income inequality beginning in the 1970s, which was spurred by capitalist exploitation and globalization, politicians legitimated the

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social order by permeating American media with the illusory threat of black criminals and 'lazy' welfare recipients that were the purported cause of their own economic deprivation while simultaneously posing a threat to the stability of the white middle class.\footnote{Alexander, 48-9. See also Andrew L. Barlow, *Between Fear & Hope: Globalization and Race in the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 76.}

In her book, *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander explicating the current form of "preservation through transformation" shown in the seemingly race-neutral political and media rhetoric behind the War on Drugs that has resulted in the ongoing stigmatization, criminalization, and mass incarceration, which "permanently locks a huge percentage of the African American community out of the mainstream society and economy."\footnote{Ibid., 13.} The criminalization and mass incarceration of the stereotypical "criminalblackman" fuels the self-

perpetuating cycle of deprivation whereby the cognitive biases of the media, public, politicians, and criminal justice officials contribute to an ongoing covertly racialized society.\footnote{106-7.} In the next section, I will briefly examine the hip-hop generation along with the subsequent commodification of hip-hop as the current manifestation of deficit imagery used by the capitalist elite to sublimate working class consciousness and maintain structures of racial inequality.

**HIP-HOP CULTURE AND THE PERPETUATION OF DEFICIT IMAGERY: THE EMERGENCE OF HIP-HOP**

Although mainstream hip-hop today offers primarily corporate commodified representations of black culture, writer and hip-hop scholar Bakari Kitwana offered insight into the socioeconomic context in which the hip-hop generation emerged. He
noted, "Many of those pushed out of the mainstream economy take refuge in street gangs. For many, both in and outside of street gangs and cliques, selling drugs is one of the most viable "job" options in the face of limited meaningful employment." 8 According to sociologist and ethnographer Dipannita Basu, "Amidst the fiscal and social crisis of New York City in the late 1970s, hip-hop provided an escape from gangs, drugs, racism, and poverty." 9 These early rappers like Kool Herc, Kurtis Blow, and The Sugarhill Gang, along with rappers from the Golden Age of hip-hop (late 80’s early 90’s), expressed the joys and pains, the difficulties and perseverance involved in inner city life. However, many people today do not associate hip-hop with such dynamic artistry. Although hip-hop emerged as a form of black expression and resistance, since the late 1990s, hip-hop has reflected the interests of the capitalist elite who own media conglomerates.


DEFICIT IMAGERY AND THE CORPORATE COMMODIFICATION OF HIP-HOP

As Basu points out, "major corporate conglomerates control the music industry and [the] increasing fragmentation of production economies results in exploitive and racist labor practices...the industry is white controlled and yields little of hip-
hop’s economic power to its black creators and entrepreneurs.”¹⁰ Thus, when a rapper is viewed in a music video ‘making it rain’ (throwing money in the air) on objectified women while arrogantly flashing weapons and referencing violent activities we must recognize the context of this corporate sanctioned, contrived performance. Social and media psychologist Karen E. Dill points out, "research out of Vanderbilt University documents that at its start, hip-hop and rap were evocative of the culture from which they emerged, and were also anti-corporate. It’s only when the rich, White CEOs saw that rap was marketable (to White suburbanites) that rap content changed into the stereotypical violent and misogynistic brand that is now widely criticized."¹¹

Dill also explains how the corporate media companies profit from deficit imagery shown in mainstream hip-hop culture that has a target audience and primary consumers made up of young white males: "one thing that sells rap music to White suburban kids is the appeal of the 'dangerous minority' Black stereotype. Whites want to vicariously enjoy a subculture that they see as cooler and edgier than theirs."¹²

DEFICIT IMAGERY AND THE WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

When working class individuals view the deficit imagery showcased in current mainstream hip-hop, such imagery is largely regarded as "obscene." Philosopher and political theorist Herbert Marcuse recognized how the moral judgment of obscenity, often rendered on the realm of sexuality, represents an impulse purposely diverted from a moral evaluation of the

¹⁰ Ibid., 258.
¹² Ibid., 182-3.
capitalistic system that thrives on unnecessary inequality and deprivation.\textsuperscript{13} As Marcuse puts it, "The obscene exposures of the affluent society normally provoke neither shame nor a sense of guilt, although this society violates some of the most fundamental moral taboos of civilization."\textsuperscript{14} The stereotypical mainstream rapper is a tragic figure, if not literally a recycled racist minstrel performance – the result of ongoing oppression, commodification, and perhaps internalized racism.

Thus, on Marcuse's analysis, what is truly obscene is not the rapper who carries on about bitches, money, selling drugs, and actively killing other young men from his community. What is obscene is the fact that the capitalist elite in America intentionally created these horrible conditions of depravity in the "ghetto" while purposely profiting from it (e.g. mainstream hip-hop) – all in addition to blaming the oppressed for their continued dysfunction at the hands of an unjust, unequal socioeconomic system. What is obscene is demonstrated by the American corporate capitalistic ideology that inverts the values of human flourishing and replaces it with mindless consumerism, excessive waste, and the pursuit of profits as a superficial means of self-actualization, which ultimately keeps working-class Americans from developing a critical awareness of capitalist exploitation.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Miley Cyrus: Appropriating Stereotypically Black Styles of Dance (i.e., twerking).}
\end{center}


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{15} 12.
CONCLUSION

The systematic, socially structured injustice in America necessitates a complicit white working-class that ignores its precarious socioeconomic status while condemning poor people of color. This essay put forward an analysis of Hip-Hop culture within the context of America’s ongoing structural racism that can serve as a step toward dismantling deficit frameworks of African American communities that prevent white and black workers from uniting in resistance to economic exploitation by the capitalist elite.
Active Hospitality

Jaime Muñoz

HOSPITALITY SEEMS TO BE THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK of most religions, as the welcoming of the stranger is equated to the relationship with the divine. "True hospitality involves openness and transparency and a willingness of both host and guest to reveal themselves."¹ Hospitality is central to Judeo-Christian beliefs because hospitality does not necessarily mean to assist those on the outside of a physical barrier, but involves those within their jurisdictions who are simply disadvantaged. This paper will examine three ways in which the Jewish scriptures and traditions affirm the practice of hospitality. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas interpret those texts and traditions within the context of an active hospitality. Howard Thurman, in his book Jesus and the Disinherited, develops the Jewish perspective of hospitality by emphasizing how Christianity presents Jesus Christ as its fulfillment. Both of the religions utilize their beliefs of hospitality to advocate for social justice.

The faith of the Jewish people is closely connected with historical events, and many of their celebrations embody such events. Three major affirmations of Jewish hospitality are derived from their collective

¹ (eds.) Richard Kearney and James Taylor, Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions (New York: Continuum, 2011), 37.
history. Scripturally, in the book of Genesis, Abraham and Sarah's practice of hospitality earns them the titles as the patriarch and matriarch of the Jewish people. According to Genesis, Abraham makes himself a host to three strangers on a hot day. He invites them into his tent, asking Sarah to prepare a special meal for them. After their short stay, the three strangers reward Abraham and Sarah by announcing the couple will bear a son who will produce the descendants of the nations.  

2 This is significant because the couple is childless due to a condition that makes Sarah barren. The three strangers are not explicitly identified in Genesis, but scriptural scholars and theologians primarily agree that they were a theophany of God; meaning that in serving the strangers, Abraham and Sarah served God.

Another resource of Jewish hospitality originates not only from sacred scriptures, but also from a unique liturgical tradition called Passover. A few generations after Abraham and Sarah, the Jewish people survive a severe food shortage by finding refuge in Egypt. They became strangers within the land of Egypt, and eventually became slaves to the Egyptians.  

3 Passover commemorates the time in which the Israelites were brought to freedom from the Egyptians by the efforts of God. It centers on a meal that is celebrated within the family, re-enacting the night before the ancient Israelites fled from Egypt. The Passover tradition is passed down from generation to generation with strict adherence to its practices.  

4 This is imperative to the Jewish tradition because it constructs "an essential part of Jewish identity as it nurtures a sense of social responsibility, of which hospitality to the stranger is a keynote."  

5 Remembering the moment in which they were strangers and

2 Genesis 18:1-12.

5 Kearney and Taylor, 69.
oppressed helps shape the manner in which they treat the stranger and the oppressed in their midst. Passover "not only constitutes an act of solidarity with Jews around the world, it also, and especially, establishes solidarity with all oppressed people." 6 The celebration of Passover is followed by Sukkot, also known as the Feast of the Tabernacles (or the Festival of Booths).

Upon leaving Egypt, the Israelites roamed the desert for forty years. There, they lived in temporary dwellings as they traveled to their permanent destination in Canaan, the land that God promises them. The Festival of Booths is celebrated by actually living within temporary shelters for a period of time. This reminds them of the time when their ancestors had nowhere permanent to settle in the wilderness, when they lacked a specific place where they could belong, which emphasizes the impermanence of human life, thereby raising their vision to what is heavenly. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's understanding of humanity builds from Sukkot. He asserts that "One task of religion is to transform exile into a pilgrimage, a lonely journey energized by a goal." 7 The Festival of Booths is critical to make out Jewish hospitality because it "symbolizes a movement from security to dependence and interdependence—on God and on other people.

Emmanuel Levinas also draws upon the Jewish festival of Sukkot for his understanding of social systems. An imperative part of the Festival of Booths is actually living within a temporary shelter, which, in modern times, is annexed to the primary house. The booth is made of cheap materials and is supposed be exposed to the natural elements of the world. During that time, a family is supposed to extend hospitality to others from within the booth,

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 71.
effectively forsaking "the security and stability of one's normal dwelling and live in a temporary shelter for a period of time." Levinas considers the booth to be an interruption of "the habitual manner of dwelling in a way that continues to be experienced when one has returned to it." This allows for a form of solidarity with the underprivileged. A sense of homelessness is central to sharing a commonality with others; however, it is contrary to a fundamental sense of the self because it tends to be built on a place to which we belong. Levinas argues that an identity that rests on a particular place is dangerous, particularly because it can separate an individual from others. Neglect and indifference will construct walls to exclude those that do not fall into the idealized boundaries. Social responsibility requires a level of discomfort in order for it to be effective. Overcoming the structures of privilege and oppression in society entails a form of Sukkot because it calls for those that have privilege to give it up—whether it be social capital or financial capital—, thereby becoming like the oppressed. However, if every human being becomes oppressed, then a human oppressor cannot exist, leaving only a free and equal society. Conscience can also appropriate a form of Sukkot, because "Conscience as such strips away the ego's shelter in being; it is an extreme exposure to the Other, an inability to hid from the Other." The sense of vulnerability gained from the Sukkot is essential to equality in society.

While Christianity does not celebrate Sukkot, it still cultivates a form of active hospitality by conforming one's life to Jesus Christ. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Thurman explains how Jesus Christ and his life of love is the model for moving beyond injustice in order to live in the fullness of

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8 74.
9 80.
10 83.
one’s humanity. In order to prove this, Thurman begins with interpreting Jesus in his context of life. He stresses that Jesus was poor, and that scripture mentions Jesus' parents offered two doves (which was permissible under Jewish law, however only under the circumstances in which a lamb could not be provided). Also, Jesus was born to a faithful Jewish family. This made him part of the minority within the Greco-Roman world.

Within situations of class struggles, it is not uncommon for the minority class to be overcome with a sense of loneliness and lowliness. These sentiments can often beget the emotions of fear, deception, and hate. Thurman explain how love is the solution to dismantle what fear, deception, and hate create. Saint John writes, "God is love," and if this is true, then Jesus was the manifestation of love. Although Jesus' divine nature was hidden, he appeared visibly to humanity in a surprising way, as a poor minority. God does not act without a purpose, which Thurman emphasizes when he writes: "It is clear that before love can operate, there is the necessity for forgiveness of injury perpetuated against a person by a group." Jesus expressed this notion through his preaching and practice of the forgiveness of sins, beginning by forgiving the people that perpetuated the circumstances around him.

Thurman draws explicit attention to the human poverty of Jesus as a means to provide the disadvantaged and the disinherited with a space of solidarity with God. Jesus participated in a society in which he was a poor Jew, which rendered him powerless, in social terms, to change his situation or improve it. Thurman writes that "This is the position of the disinherited in

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12 Ibid., 20.
13 1 John 4:8.
14 Thurman, 107.
every age," 15 and compares Jesus in Palestine with the greater part of African Americans. 16 Nevertheless, Jesus still teaches and ministers, and "His message focused on the urgency of a radical change in the inner attitude of the people. He recognized fully that out of the heart are the issues of life and that no external force, however great and overwhelming, can at long last destroy a people if it does not first win the victory of the spirit against them."17 This is similar to the Jewish traditions, especially in terms of breaking the notions of individual and social isolation.

Judeo-Christian hospitality actively aims at ushering in a community in which membership is available to all. The Jewish community does this by recreating historically difficult times in their celebrations. Christianity embraces the underprivileged by worshiping Jesus Christ, the God incarnate (in human flesh), who had a low socioeconomic status in his time. When active hospitality becomes a vital aspect of communal life, then its culmination can show the fulfillment of Judeo-Christian scriptures and traditions—thereby offering a place in which God dwells.

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15 Ibid., 23.
16 34.
17 21.
Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas: Philosophic Influence on Theology

Jaime Muñoz

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO AND THOMAS AQUINAS SERVE as bookends to the middle ages. They share something in common, namely the Christian faith and its philosophical and theological development. The aim of this paper is to show how these iconic medieval philosophers develop the Christian notion of a good life by comparing and contrasting their lines of thought. This paper will encompass certain themes they both emphasize on core subjects of philosophy, particularly epistemology and the origin of knowledge, as well as ethics and the orientation toward the good life. Both Augustine and Aquinas present an ascent which begins with reason and ends in mystical experience of God. In an innovative manner, both thinkers appropriate the classical Greek philosophers, which paved a path for critical developments in Christian theology.

With the spread of Christianity throughout Europe and the conversion of philosophers trained from the different Greek schools, the idea of incorporating Greek philosophy in Christianity became less foreign. Although largely controversial, the tradition of utilizing philosophy to supplement theology ushered in an era that strengthened and refined Christian theology,
much of which is still held in high esteem in the modern world. Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas were the most influential philosophers that carefully adapted Greek philosophy to theology.

Augustine was deeply influenced by the philosopher Plato. Having engaged with different schools of philosophic thought, he found Platonic philosophy to be the most sound to approach theology. Plato was a Greek philosopher that changed the manner of philosophy by reconciling religion, which was more like myth at the time, and the scholastic thought of philosophy. According to Plato, the entire material universe is not reality itself, but rather another immaterial world is the source of all reality. This immaterial world is another dimension of intelligible forms, something without matter, which was a revolutionary concept at the time. Augustine found this extremely relevant in order to have a proper, pedagogic discussion about God because reality could now conceive of a transcendent, eternal realm.

Plotinus was arguably the most influential neo-Platonist philosopher from whom Augustine derived most of his philosophical thought. Plotinus did not prioritize the concern for empirical, scientific investigation into the world like most philosophers of his time because he believed that human beings could figure out the world by contemplating how lower beings obtain their forms. In more basic terms, his understanding of metaphysics was derived from thinking. Augustine utilized this in order to help define Christian beliefs.

He lived a life of luxury, full of pleasure that infatuated his senses; however, he still was not happy. Searching for happiness, he lived by several different philosophies, but to no avail. The journey through the different philosophical lines of thought grounds him in a firm understanding and appreciation of
ne-Pythonism, with which he frames the rest of his philosophy.

With regard to knowledge, Augustine does not judge the senses to be stable sources for truth. According to him, the reality that the senses perceive is constantly changing, thereby causing him to doubt that truth can ever be derived from the senses. Knowledge, according to Augustine, is derived from the mind, because the mind is able to discern and know truth; it goes beyond the senses. He writes in *On Free Choice of the Will*: "unless the things that the bodily senses convey to us get beyond the inner sense, we can never attain knowledge. For we know only what we grasp by reason." Knowledge itself also has a path of ascension, one in which the soul takes seven steps to acquire knowledge. Drawing on Plotinus's model of the ascent of the soul, Augustine argues that one must move from reason to something beyond reason; that is, the mystical, in which one can know God more fully. The first knowledge is the "knowledge of the body," in which the soul contemplates the body and turns its focus to it often. Next is the "knowledge through the body," as the body is able to detect and discern with precision its surrounding environment. Then it moves to "knowledge about the body," where knowledge goes beyond sensory memory and to more of an occupational knowledge, such as preparing food. The fourth type of knowledge is the "knowledge toward itself." As the soul turns on itself, it begins to contemplate something closer to God. Next, "knowledge in itself" is when the soul moves closer to God as it contemplates itself in a pure sense, without the tinge of sin. In the penultimate level, knowledge arranges its focus "toward God," in which the soul is no longer content with being free of sin, but

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it commences to look toward something that is beyond itself, particularly the transcendent of truth, good, and beauty. The last step is "knowledge in God," and it is the point in which knowledge becomes mystical. It is no longer attained by reason because it succeeds that of reason; pushing knowledge from the corporeal things to the incorporeal, the object of this knowledge is considered to be God.  

Augustine presents these states of knowledge because he believes that the chief good for human being is the contemplation of the rational, and that the intellect is to be used in the pursuit of God. It is imperative to distinguish between the truly highest good and the apparent good, and wisdom is required to recognize such differences. Due to the fact that it is only through the highest good, of which God is the source, where one can be truly happy, wisdom is necessary. "And so," Augustine argues, "just as it is obvious that we all want to be happy, it is also obvious that we all want to be wise, since no one can be happy without wisdom. For no one is happy without the highest good, which is discerned and acquired in the truth that we call ‘wisdom.’"  

Within the treasures of wisdom dwell the virtues, which the soul is to live by. Virtue is the perfect love of God, "For virtue makes good use both of herself and of all the other goods

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A Castilian Spanish translation of Augustine's Confessions (Burgos, 1654).


35 (eds.) Hyman, Walsh, and Williams, Philosophy in the Middle Ages, 42.
that go to make man happy."

Distinguishing between four virtues, Augustine held that the all the virtues were forms of love. Prudence is the virtue that lovingly distinguishes between what hinders and what helps. Fortitude allows love to readily bear all things for the sake of the beloved. Temperance liberates the individual to freely give of himself entirely to that which is loved. Justice empowers one to serve only the loved object and, therefore, allows one to rule rightly. The virtues are produced when the soul follows after or imitates something better than itself, which Augustine identifies as God.

Thomas Aquinas found Aristotelian philosophy favorable to rationally refine the theological claims of Christianity. Aristotle was a Greek philosopher who countered the philosophy of Plato (in that he did not find the universals apart from particular things, but within them). Aquinas believed that knowledge can come from empirical observation, from the senses. Along with Nicomachean Ethics, Aquinas used Aristotle’s Metaphysics to venture into a new way of thinking. Metaphysics, or "First Philosophy," is more of a theological branch of science because it deals with the knowledge of the immaterial things through the senses. However, Aristotle presented some challenges that contradicted the Catholic faith. First, he believed that no supernatural or cosmic destiny was prepared for the human soul, directly conflicting with the concept of heaven. Next, he stated that the cosmos is eternal and uncreated, which comes in conflict with the dogma of creation ex nihilo; i.e., out of nothing. Additionally, he believed that the human soul was not immortal, but rather that the soul, in coming to formation along with the body, would disappear once the body dies. This did not sit well with the Christian notion that the soul is immortal.

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36 Ibid, 82.
Without disregarding the dogmas of the Catholic church, Aquinas argued that all truth is one, because it comes from the same source, which is God; e.g., when he states that "The first truth which relates to all can only be one."³⁷ Philosophy, he understood, serves revelation insofar as it helps to logically process an understanding of God, similar to the way Augustine used it to disprove false faith in his time. Although philosophy is not necessarily antithetical to faith, Thomas said that philosophy should be brought under the limits of faith, as it falls short to the fullness of faith, and, thus, does not fully explain faith.

In his Summa Theologiae, Aquinas connects the Aristotelian notion of the human telos with the Christian concept of vocation. Everything was to be considered within the light of this telos, acknowledging that God is the ultimate end of humanity. Aquinas views the human being as a rational animal, and he believed, therefore, that happiness involves the perfection of the rational soul. Like Augustine, Aquinas understands God to be the highest good, and that, therefore, humanity is to be oriented to God, the source of all goodness. He conceives of virtue as a good habitual action, ordering the human being to share in more similarities with God; thereby becoming happier. The virtues are divided into the cardinal virtues and the theological virtues. The carnal virtues are the most tangible ones, while the theological virtues are only acquired by the grace of God.³⁸ Aquinas starts with prudence, because "Prudence or practical wisdom determines how the moral ideal can be realized ... The moral virtues presuppose prudence."³⁹ It involves the excellence of the intellectual

³⁹ Ibid, 108.
power of practical reason. As Dr. Kazor notes, "the judgment of prudence as to the means of realizing the end is said to be true, not by conformity with the way things are, but by conformity with the presupposed ordination to the end by moral virtue."\textsuperscript{40} Next is justice, which acts on the perfection of the will, a similar view to Augustine’s account of right order. The third virtue is fortitude, which gives one "a resoluteness of mind to endure any kind of danger or difficulty, even death itself, for the sake of doing what is morally good."\textsuperscript{41} Temperance, the fourth virtue, engages the precision of ordering passions. It is through the practice of these four virtues that Aquinas claims one becomes receptive to God, who is the ultimate telos.

The last Christian who used the philosophy of Aristotle prior to Aquinas was in the sixth century: John Philoponus. Aquinas was friends with William of Moerbeke, who translated Aristotle from Greek to Latin. This is significant because it made nearly all of Aristotle’s work, which was in Greek, readily available to Europe in the twelfth century. Following the Aristotelian tradition, Aquinas argued that the senses are the means by which we perceive the truth as well, which greatly differed from Augustine. Aquinas stressed a hylomorphic view of the human being, which is the unity of the soul and body.\textsuperscript{42} The mind comes to know of things through the senses, and cannot come to know of anything except through a dependence on sense experience. Yet, similar to Augustine, knowledge and understanding of things moves from the physical to the non-physical. Starting with human reason, an imperfect knowledge of God can be

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Christopher Robert Kaczor and Thomas P. Sherman, \textit{Thomas Aquinas on the Cardinal Virtues: Edited and Explained for Everyone} (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009).
\textsuperscript{42} Aquinas, \textit{Selected Writings}, 45.
attained. 43 Human reason, according to Aquinas, is limited, and, therefore, faith is essential in order to have the best theological knowledge of God. The next step of knowledge is divine revelation, which is primarily given in the Christian sacred scriptures. Such knowledge is still obscure, and cannot, therefore, be the sole basis for perfect truth. The ultimate level of knowing God is the beatific vision, which refers to the almost indescribable event of being in the direct presence of God. This is when God makes himself entirely known, as he is the one truth itself. This understanding is crucial to happiness because, according to Aquinas, "All creatures, even those lacking intelligence, are ordered to God as to their ultimate end, and they achieve this end insofar as they share some similarity with him." 44

Accommodating the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle within a Christian context, both Aquinas and Augustine provided the church with tools to combat heretics, as well as bring order to Christian ethical existence. They mutually saw reason as essential to achieving the good life and happiness. Furthermore, they both acknowledged that perfection was not attainable in the natural life of the human being. Reason, assisted by grace, orient the human being to the telos of life, which is found in God.

43 (eds.) Hyman, Walsh, and Williams, Philosophy in the Middle Ages, 514. 44 Aquinas, Selected Writings, 264.

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