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Cuneiform *Šumma* Sentences: Conditionals or Implications?

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Abstract:
For a long time, it was believed in Assyriology and related disciplines that *šumma* sentences, or grammatical conditionals, which appeared in cuneiform texts and tablets of astrology, exorcism, law, extispicy, oneiromancy, medicine, and divination, were linguistic expressions of logical conditionals. F. Rochberg (2010; 2016) extended this belief, suggesting that they are even material conditionals. Andrew Schumann (2017; 2020; 2021) followed this, claiming that, as a result, we can trace the origin of symbolic logic in cuneiform writings, through which it moved to Greece. In this paper, after presenting this approach, I will challenge it by showing that *šumma*/IF sentences and similar constructs in cuneiform literature are arguments or implications that suffer from the same confusion between conditional and implication that Quine (1953/1966) highlighted when criticizing C.I. Lewis.
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1. The Notion of Conditional Statements

Assyriologists analyzing the tablets of the Mesopotamian civilization, especially in law, medicine, and divination (and to a lesser extent in other disciplines), discovered statements with a consistent syntactic form. As J. Bottéro puts it, "… all these treatises were uniformly developed according to the same framework of thought expression." (Bottéro 1992, 169-70) They recognized this framework as conditional statements and relative phrases (e.g., "whoever"), which functioned similarly to conditionals. Philologists referred to the antecedent of these conditional statements as the *protasis* and their consequent as the *apodosis*.

J. Bottéro further explains the syntactic nature of oneiromancy entries as follows: "Each entry is introduced by a hypothesis (which grammarians call "*protasis*"), to underline the theme of the dream taken as an omen, and ends with an "*apodosis*" to draw from it the pertinent prediction." (114) R. Westbrook describes this framework in law, stating, "The law is expressed as a series of individual cases, the circumstances of which are put into a hypothetical conditional sentence,

followed by the appropriate legal response – in the particular case. For example: If an ox gores an ox and causes its death, the owners of both oxen shall divide the value of the live ox and the carcass of the dead ox. While there is some variation within this framework – for example, the protasis can begin "a man who ...," or the whole rule can be cast as a direct order ("a loan of fungibles shall not be given to ... a slave") – the approach is always the same." (Westbrook 2003, 17) In medicine, we find a similar situation, for example, M. J. Geller follows Rochberg's footsteps (see below) in reading the medical statements as conditional (2010, 12, 15).

The Akkadian conjunction for condition is the word "*šumma*=IF", which is placed in front of the dependent clause. The verb in this clause (if present) is usually in the past tense, typically preterit, while the main clause is usually in the present tense without an equivalent of "then"[1]. An example is the following article (no. 6) from *Hammurabi's* code, translated into English with its Old Babylonian transliteration (Roth 1995, 82):

Old Babylonian Transliteration	**Translation**
šumma awīlum makkūr ilim u ekallim išriq awīlum šû iddâk u ša šurqam ina qātišu imḫuru iddâk	If a man steals valuables belonging to the god or to the palace, that man shall be killed, and also he who received the stolen goods from him shall be killed.

Here we have "*šumma*/IF," the verb of the dependent clause "*išriq*/steals" in preterit (translated into present for grammatical reasons), and the main verb "*iddâk*/to be killed" in the present tense.

However, historians of logic and logicians followed the steps of Assyriologists, adopting their characterization of the essence and nature of Akkadians statements. Thus, the scholarship of Assyriology and the history of logic and science accepted the treatment of conditionality in Mesopotamian scientific treatises. But are they really conditionals? To answer this question, we must jump many centuries into the twentieth-century quarrel of strict implication between C. I. Lewis and W.V. Quine. But before doing this, we need to inspect the supposed cuneiform conditionals more closely.

2. The Conditional in Assyriology, History of Science, and Logic

The interpretation of the Akkadian terms "*šumma*" or "*-ma*" in cuneiform scientific texts has faced several challenges, despite some progress. To illustrate this, I shall consider three examples: the first from a scholar, the second from a historian of science, and the third from a logician.

2.1 Jean Bottéro

Bottéro believed that Babylonian scribes formulated their conditional statements through two main methods: empiricism and apriorism[2]. He described empiricism in Babylonian divination as follows:

> The oldest layers of oracles have thus a very good chance of having been formed in this way: from an observation of a sequence of events that do not have any apparent link between them, but were noticed to have followed each other once, it was thought that such events would always follow one another. That what we would call empiricism. (1992, 132)

The same empiricism is found in medicine (172), where its principle is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* (131). Apriorism, on the other hand, is related to the cuneiform writing system. This system, as we know, used pictograms as a writing medium; for example, a foot represents "to walk" or "to stand up":

> Hence the idea could originate that the two finger-shaped outgrowths, instead of the expected single one, written by the gods on the livers of their victims indicated, beyond doubt, duality, opposition, and conflict, and played in a sense the role of the "pictogram" of rivalry and competition in the "divine writing system," just like the perforations expressed the breach. The way of seeing things became a norm, unexpressed but always applied, based on the rule that governed the writing system: whenever the same sign appeared in an omen, one could "read" in it the same future event. (133)

In oneiromancy, this apriorism is evident, and the relationship between antecedents and consequents is primarily semantic. Conditionals are based "a real, imaginary, analogical, or purely conventional relationship, that made one the sign or the symbol of the other." (119) Even in Babylonian conditional laws, the relationship remains semantic: "what connects the first fact to the second is either custom, traditional social coercion, or the explicit will of the authorities." (172)

Bottéro described the relationship between the antecedent and the consequent of a cuneiform conditional as akin to the relationship between a hypothesis and a conclusion. He noted that "the conclusion drawn in the apodosis is naturally as general and permanent as the elements in the hypothesis on which it is based: venereal disease or "epilepsy" in the medical treatise, and amputation of the hand, the fine, or the imprisonment in the "code" [of *Hammurabi*]." (172)

2.2 Francesca Rochberg and Material Implication

Rochberg considered the *šumma* sentences as evidence of the rationality of cuneiform scholarship (*ṭupšarrutū*). She argued that, in addition to their conditionality, these sentences had a rational origin. She believed that the cuneiform scholars, or *ṭupšarri*, derived their conditionals through analogy rather than through accidental observations or empiricism, as Bottéro thought (Rochberg 2016, 144). From her perspective, this gives *ṭupšarrutū* more credit for rationality. However, as we saw above, Bottéro did not deny the rationality of the *ṭupšarri*; he even considered analogy to be part of the *a priori* attitude of the *ṭupšarri*.

Concerning the conditionality of the *šumma* sentences, Rochberg considered them as material implications: "on a formal analysis, the omens appear to have a greater affinity with statements of material implication (PQ), and in fact, first-order logical statements of the form "P implies Q" are the equivalent of the conditional statement "If P then Q"." (Rochberg 2010, 396) Rochberg's main argument for this is that the antecedents of *šumma* sentences in most Babylonian treatises contain impossible events, such as the sun rising at midnight. These conditions make the truth conditions of *šumma* sentences the same as those of material implication.

2.3 Andrew Schumann and Axiomatization of Treatises

Although Rochberg merely offered "material implication as a possible way to view the logic of the omen statements [and other disciplines]," and stated that "it has been used as a heuristic, without claiming a Babylonian awareness of this logic," (396) Andrew Schumann took this further in a series of papers (2017; 2020; 2021) in which he tried to trace the history of (symbolic) logic back to Semitic thought. Having done this, he then attempted to make links between Greek (symbolic) logic and the supposed Semitic one. Thus, his history of logic has two major claims: (1) that the origin and genesis of symbolic logic lie in the intellectual activities of Semitic people, and (2) that this logic was transmitted to the Greeks and then spread worldwide.

In his genealogical project, Schumann has relied on the Assyriologists' conception of "*šumma"* clauses in addition to Rochberg's findings. The main idea of Schumann's reconstruction is his consideration that the primary domains for practicing symbolic logic in Babylonia were law,

divination, and medicine. Therefore, he viewed the discovered law tablets (e.g., *Ur-Nammu* (ca. 2047-2030 B.C.), *Lipit-Ishtar* (ca. 1900-1850 B.C.), *Hammurabi* (1728-1686 B.C.)) as codes or axiomatic constructions in conditionals. Judges would use these to decide cases through modus ponens or modus tollens rules. Thus, he states:

> The Sumerians and Akkadians founded a legal system for which trial decisions had to be reached by deducing them from the law code by applying the following two inference rules which are basic now for the modern symbolic logic, too: *modus ponens* and *modus tollens*. Recall that *modus ponens* is formulated as follows: if two sentences A and $A \Rightarrow B$ are true, then the sentence B is true, also. The rule of *modus tollens*: if the sentence $A \Rightarrow B$ is true and the sentence B is false, then the sentence A is false, too. Each law code contains **implications** $A \Rightarrow B$ which are examined as true forever. Each court should have considered a factual case C of indictment that was verified by testimonies or signed documents and then the court should have found out an appropriate general A for this C. After that the court judgment can have deduced a verdict B by *modus ponens* applied two times:
>
> $A \Rightarrow B; C \Rightarrow A; C$
> ———————
> B.
>
> The latter sentence is a verdict what should be done (which punishment B should be chosen) according to the rule $A \Rightarrow B$ from the code of laws. (2017, 130, italics in the original, emphasis is mine)

Schumann even considered the Babylonians to have been the discoverers of the logical universal/general and particular, which were amalgamated in their symbolic logic. This claim depends on Rochberg's thesis that *šumma* sentences are first-order logical statements of the form "P implies Q":

> In the Sumerian and Akkadian codes of laws, for the first time there were introduced some general notions as generalizations of particulars. The word to denote a generalization is *mimma* or *mimma šumšu* (Akkadian: "whatever"), e.g.: *mimma mala iddinu ītelli* (Laws of *Hammurabi* §113, §116) "Whatever he originally gave as the loan." Implicitly, it means that suitable Hammurabi laws §113 and §116 concerning all the items given as the loan cover all the cases: "If there is whatever he originally gave as the loan, then rules §113 and §116 should take place." Let us assume that somebody gave an ox as the loan. Then we can apply the following composite implication: "If he gave an ox as the loan (A), then it is the case of whatever he originally gave as the loan (B). From this it follows that rules §113 and §116 of the Law Code of Hammurabi should be applied for giving this ox as the loan (C)." Formally: $((A \Rightarrow B) \& (B \Rightarrow C)) \Rightarrow (A \Rightarrow C)$. Hence, this *mimma* ("whatever") assumes a logically correct construction of conditional propositions (**implications**) with a logical rule of transitivity of **implication**. All the same is as it holds in the modern symbolic logic. (128, emphasis is mine)

Schumann has also extended his reconstruction to the texts of cuneiform divination, applying the same principles as in law. "In Babylonian divinations, each individual forecast is presented strongly as the conditional: "if a sign (omen), then an event"," (2021, 722) and "each complete divination

list (code) was composed rather as a logical system." (725) In addition, Schumann has added an algebraic model for reasoning in omen lists, which I shall display below.

This genealogical project is beset by the following difficulties:

1. Schumann has assumed as a certain fact that the tablets of cuneiform laws are codes. However, there have been many discussions about the nature of these laws, and it seems that they are not actually codes from the point of view of one of the main supporters of the conditional nature of their propositions. Thus, Bottéro says:

> Mesopotamian law was essentially an unwritten law… The principles of the laws were not deduced or formulated in explicit terms, but it was as if they were incorporated in a diffuse mass of traditions that generations automatically transmit to each other in any given cultural group, just as with language. (1992, 181)

2. Schumann considered Hammurabi's Code to constitute the axioms of what we could call the logico-legal Babylonian system. However, even if we accepted Hammurabi's laws as a code, we couldn't accept them as a basis for the sentences of the cases which he claims are inferred according to this code by logical inference.

3. However, for Schumann's argument to be coherent, there must be compatibility between Hammurabi's Code and the codes of the Neo-Babylonian era. We should compare Hammurabi's Code with these Neo-Babylonian codes to see whether they are compatible, especially in terms of penalties. We have only one incomplete published code from the seventh century (about 700 B.C.) (Roth 1995, 143-52), which is nearly from Sippar, the same city as the cases Schumann analyzed. Although it is incomplete, it contains some articles that suggest it was incompatible with Hammurabi's Code. These are as follows:

> **Hammurabi's Code (Roth 1995):**
> 163. If a man marries a wife but she does not provide him with children, and that woman goes to her fate – if his father-in-law then returns to him the bridewealth that that man brought to his father-in-law's house, her husband shall have no claim to that woman's dowry; her dowry belongs only to her father's house.
> 164. If his father-in-law should not return to him the bridewealth, he shall deduct the value of her bridewealth from her dowry and restore (the balance of) her dowry to her father's house.
>
> **The Neo-Babylonian (Sippar) Code:**
> 10. A man who gives a dowry to his daughter, and she has no son or daughter, and fate carries her away – her dowry shall revert to her paternal estate.
>
> **Hammurabi's Code:**
> 167. If a man marries a wife and she bears him children, and later that woman goes to her fate, and after her death he marries another woman and she bears children, after which the father then goes to his fate, the children will not divide the estate according to the mothers; they shall take the dowries of their respective mothers and then equally divide the property of the paternal estate.
> 173. If that woman should bear children to her latter husband into whose house she entered, after that woman dies, her former and latter children shall equally divide her dowry.

The Neo-Babylonian (Sippar) Code:

15. A man who marries a wife who bears him sons, and whose wife fate carries away, and who marries a second wife who bears him sons, and later on the father goes to his fate – the sons of the first woman shall take two-thirds of the paternal estate, and the sons of the second shall take one-third. Their sisters, who are still residing in the paternal home […].

Given these articles, there was no bridewealth in the Neo-Babylonian code, while it was a common practice during Hammurabi's period (Old Babylonian). Additionally, the share of inheritance for the sons is equal in Hammurabi's code, whereas it is unequal in the Neo-Babylonian code, with two-thirds for the sons of the first wife and one-third for the sons of the second wife.

4. There is not only a difference between the Code of Hammurabi and the Code of Sippar, but there is also a difference between the Code of Hammurabi and the legal practices in the Neo-Babylonian period. This supports what we said in point 2, that social changes lead to changes in laws. For example, in the case of a shepherd stealing the sheep he is tending (and they are not temple sheep), the punishment in the Code of Hammurabi is tenfold (*ibid*., no. 265), while in the Neo-Babylonian period, it differs from that and among themselves as well. The judicial text CBS 5330 states that the punishment is equivalent, while the usual penalties in the Neo-Babylonian period were either double or threefold (Holtz, 2014, 38), and sometimes imprisonment (Oelsner et al. 2003, 963). Likewise, the punishment for stealing temple goods, although thirtyfold as in the case of the text YBC 4154 (Holtz, 2014, 52) or in the case of the text YBC 3771 (*ibid*., 178) cited by Schumann, which matches the Code of Hammurabi, could also be imprisonment or burning as in the records of the thirtieth century (Oelsner et al. 2003, 963). Similarly, a slave who tries to claim he is free from his master and is proven otherwise, has his ear cut off in the Code of Hammurabi (Roth 1995, no. 282), while the judges of Neo-Babylonian Babylon are content with returning him to his master (Holtz, 2014, text BM 33084, pp. 70-73). Lastly, the Code of Hammurabi did not recognize imprisonment, while in the Neo-Babylonian era "there is ample evidence that prisons were in use." (Oelsner et al. 2003, 967)

5. Most of what we have shown in the previous point not only highlights the conflict between Hammurabi's Code and the legal practices of the Neo-Babylonian era, but also demonstrates the contradictions within the legal practices of the Neo-Babylonian era itself, which Schumann analyzed and attempted to prove were subject to a legal axiomatic system. Furthermore, in cases of receiving stolen goods, there is no single punishment; Neo-Babylonian judges imposed either thirty-fold or sometimes double penalties (*ibid*., 965).

6. But is it possible for the Code of Sippar to be as axiomatic for the judges of the trials and documents we have for the Neo-Babylonian era? I suspect that it cannot be too (according to 5 above). However, there is a discrepancy between the code of Sippar and the actual legal practice of the Neo-Babylonian era. For example, Article 12 of that Code states that if a woman whose husband has passed away and has no sons, and "if she has no dowry, a judge shall assess the value of her husband's estate and give her some property in accordance with the value of her husband's estate." (Roth 1995, 147) On the other hand, the practice during this period, according to trials and documents, as Oelsner et al. (2003, pp. 938-39) tell us, was that "wives and daughters had no right to inherit but usually received a share of the paternal estate in the form of a dowry or marital gift."

7. If there had been codes used as axiomatic, it would have been mentioned in the texts we have that the sentences and the judgments were according to them, but this is never mentioned, even though the purpose of legal documentation was not for the law itself but as evidence of the judgment or decision (Holtz 2014, 7). One of the few instances where reference to a higher authority is mentioned in the published cuneiform legal texts is the case that was brought to Babylon under the presidency of Simmagir Nargiya (a high-ranking royal official), and after the judgment was confirmed against the defendant, a reference was made to what was called the "*dātu*" as follows: "The *simmagir* and the judges, his colleagues, consulted (lit.: opened) the (royal) regulation [*dātu*]. On the basis of the (royal) regulation [*dātu*] (the payment of)…etc." (Jursa et al, 2003/4, 257) However, the meaning of the word "*dātu*" is very ambiguous as its translators tell us; they suggested it refers "to royal tax regulations and to procedures regulating the repayment of debts and deposits." (ibid. 259) However, the word itself is not Akkadian but a "Persian loan word," (Oelsner et al. 2003, 912) and was used only "in the Achaemenid and Seleucid times." (ibid.) This may exclude the possibility that there was an axiomatic code in both the Old and Neo-Babylonian eras.

The reader may have noted Schumann's treatment of conditionals as implications (see my emphasis in his quotes). It is true that logicians sometimes use the word "implication" when they mean "conditional," and they tolerate this usage. However, in Schumann's interpretation, there seems to be more to consider. This brings us to a notable quarrel concerning implication and conditional that occurred between C. I. Lewis and W. V. Quine in the last century.

3. Lewis and Quine on Implication and Conditional

C. I. Lewis sought to understand the conditional "if...then..." as a form of the verb "*imply*," which he termed strict implication. This contrasts with Russell's material implication (Rochberg's implication). Strict implication, denoted as (*p* strictly implies *q* or $p \dashv q$), means "it is impossible for *p* to be true and *q* to be false, or *p* is inconsistent with the denial of *q*." (Lewis 1918, 332-23) Essentially, "*p implies q* is synonymous with *q* is deducible from *p*." (Lewis and Langford 1959, 122) By interpreting the conditional in this way, Lewis developed his famous five modal calculi, which avoided many paradoxes associated with material implication. Two of the most well-known paradoxes he addressed are:

> Paradox of the Material Conditional: Any false statement implies any statement.
> Paradox of Implication: Any statement implies any true statement.
> (Lewis 1918, 225-226)

In addition to avoiding the paradoxes of material implication, strict implication also addresses the problem that no two propositions can be both consistent and independent, represented as

$$-(p \supset -q).\supset .\ p \supset q \text{ (ibid., 122, 144).}$$

Quine, on the other hand, argued that Lewis had conflated implication with the conditional. He pointed out that this conflation resulted from Lewis confusing the mention of words with their use:

> Modal logic received special impetus years ago from a confused reading of "⊃", the material "if-then", as "implies": a confusion of the material conditional with the relation of implication. Properly, whereas "⊃" or "if-then" connects statements, "implies" is a verb which connects names of statements and thus expresses a relation of the named

> statements. Carelessness over the distinction of use and mention having allowed this intrusion of "implies" as a reading of "⊃", the protest thereupon arose that "⊃" in its material sense was too weak to do justice to "implies", which connotes something like logical implication. Accordingly, an effort was made to repair the discrepancy by introducing an improved substitute for "⊃", written "⥽" and called strict implication. The initial failure to distinguish use from mention persisted; so "⥽", though read "implies" and motivated by the connotations of the word "implies", functioned actually not as a verb but as a statement connective, a much strengthened "if-then." (Quine 1953/1966, 165-66)

4. Are *Šumma* Sentences Material Conditionals? And How Should we Think about Them?

I am going to establish the following points:

1) *Šumma* sentences are incomplete: *Šumma* sentences, as used in Babylonian scholastic texts, are inherently incomplete.
2) *Šumma* (scientific) sentences are implications, not conditionals: Because of their incomplete nature, these sentences function more as implications rather than conditionals. This is because:
3) Babylonian scholars' confusion: The Babylonian scholars made a similar confusion with the concept of "imply" as C. I. Lewis did, but in reverse.

1) By saying that *šumma* sentences are incomplete, I mean that their antecedents are not fully provided, and there are gaps in them. This is particularly evident in the Babylonian laws. As mentioned earlier, Bottéro argued against considering the Babylonian tablets of laws as codes. He viewed them as a "work of science devoted to the exercise of *justice.*" (Bottéro 1992, 179, italics in the original) The tablets of laws were intended to be a compendium of cuneiform experience in the domain of legal knowledge, cast in the form of cuneiform treatises, which "are nothing else but types of paradigms or tables." (178) This can be confirmed by passages in the prologue and epilogue of Hammurabi's Code, as well as other Babylonian codes.

> When the god *Marduk* commanded me to provide just ways for the people of the land (in order to attain) appropriate behavior, I established truth and justice as the declaration of the land, I enhanced the well-being of the people. (Prologue in Roth 1995, 80-81)
> He [*Hammurabi*] gladdened the heart of the god *Marduk*, his lord, and he secured the eternal well-being of the people and provided just ways for the land. (Epilogue in Roth 1995, 134-35)
> At that time, the gods *Anu* and *Enlil*, for the enhancement of well-being of the people, named me by name: *Hammurabi*, the pious prince, who venerates the gods, to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god *Shamash* over all humankind, to illuminate the land. (Prologue, 76-77)

The above quotations contain the aims of Hammurabi's articles. These aims should be added to all the antecedents of *šumma* sentences to make them sensible and complete. I believe we could formulate these antecedents as follows:

a) according to the paradigm of justice,

b) according to traditions, habits, and customs,

c) according to just ways for the people of the land to attain appropriate behavior,

d) according to the eternal well-being of the people to be secured,

e) and according to making justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, and to illuminate the land.

2) The previous claim leads us directly to the second claim: that *šumma* sentences may be treated as implications rather than conditionals. This is further supported by Bottéro's descriptions of their nature. Although Bottéro argued that the Babylonians did not recognize abstract law in their treatises (Bottéro 1992, 178), he still believed there was a necessary (or strict, if we use Lewis' terminology) connection between the *protasis* and *apodosis* of the hypotheses in the treatises, even if it was not an objective one (172-73). I think this paradox of not having abstract laws on one hand, and having a necessary (strict) connection between the antecedent and consequent of the hypotheses in the Babylonian treatises on the other – can only be resolved if we recognize the *šumma* sentences as implications rather than conditionals. This can be confirmed by Hammurabi's announcement regarding the nature of his articles as results:

> In order that the mighty not wrong the weak, to provide just ways for the waif and the widow, I have inscribed my precious pronouncements upon my stela and set it up before the statue of me, the king of justice… in order to render the judgments [*dīn*] of the land, to give the verdicts [*diānim*] of the land, and to provide just ways for the wronged. (Epilogue in Roth 1995, 133-34)
>
> These are the just decisions [*dīnāt*] which Hammurabi, the able king, has established and thereby has directed the land along the course of truth and the correct way of lif. (133)

Now we can reconstruct *šumma* sentences completely, along with the implicit premises we have extracted above. I will choose one article from Hammurabi's Code, which Schumann had already selected, as an example.

> §282 If a slave should declare to his master, "You are not my master," he (the master) shall bring charge and proof against him that he is indeed his slave, and his master shall out off his ear. (132)

This can be reconstructed as follows:
If a slave should declare to his master "You are not my master," then according to the just ways for the people of the land to attain appropriate behavior, the master should bring charge and proof against him that he is indeed his slave outing off his ear.
Or symbolically:

$$p \supset (q \supset r)$$

But according to export-import law:

$$(p \supset (q \supset r)) \equiv ((p \,\&\, q) \supset r)$$

Thus, the article is reformalized as:

$$(p \,\&\, q) \supset r$$

And because it is an implication, it should be:

$$(p \,\&\, q) \vdash r$$

The same approach should be applied to all other articles, with careful consideration of choosing the appropriate antecedents and formalization.

Schumann has successfully reconstructed the rationale behind forecasting by considering events as either favorable (positive) or unfavorable (negative). His main idea is to interpret the connectives algebraically and truth-functionally with the structure $\langle\{-1,+1\}, \neg, \&, \Rightarrow\rangle$, where +1 represents the favorable value and −1 represents the unfavorable value. These correspond to the two values of truth, and the interpretation of the connectives $\{\neg, \&, \Rightarrow\}$ is the same as their usual truth-function interpretation. Thus, for example, the following divinations:

(a) If a man leaves (in order to achieve) his purpose and a star twinkles **from the right of** the man to **the left of** the man – favourable.

(b) If (it) twinkles from **the left to the right** – unfavourable.

(c) If a star twinkles **on the back of** the **man from the right to the left** – unfavourable.

(d) If a star twinkles **on the back of** the man **from the left to the right** – favourable

are reconstructed as follows:

(a) $(+1 \,\&\, +1) \Rightarrow +1$;

(b) $(+1 \,\&\, -1) \Rightarrow -1$;

(c) $(-1 \,\&\, +1) \Rightarrow -1$;

(d) $(-1 \,\&\, -1) \Rightarrow +1$. (Schumann 2021, p. 732)

And as axioms as follows:

(a) $((+1 \,\&\, +1) \Rightarrow +1) = (+1 \Rightarrow +1) = +1$;

(b) $((+1 \,\&\, -1) \Rightarrow -1) = (-1 \Rightarrow -1) = +1$;

(c) $((-1 \,\&\, +1) \Rightarrow -1) = (-1 \Rightarrow -1) = +1$;

(d) $((-1 \,\&\, -1) \Rightarrow +1) = (-1 \Rightarrow +1) = +1$ (ibid. 733)

Schumann interprets *šumma* sentences as axioms, but I think it would be more reasonable to interpret them as arguments or implications that have omitted any qualifiers or modals as follows (I shall put my reconstruction in italics):

(a) If a man leaves (in order to achieve) his purpose and a star twinkles **from the right** of the man **to the left** of the man – favourable.
(aa) If a man leaves to achieve his purpose and a star twinkles ***favorably in the front*** *from* ***the right of*** *the man* ***to the left*** *of the man* ***favorably*** $\vdash$ *favorable.*

(b) If (it) twinkles **from the left to the right** – unfavourable.
(bb) If a man leaves to achieve his purpose and a star twinkles ***favorably in the front*** *of the man* ***from the left to the right unfavorably*** $\vdash$ *unfavorable.*

(c) If a star twinkles **on the back** of the man **from the right to the left** – unfavourable.

(cc) If a man leaves to achieve his purpose and a star twinkles ***unfavorable behind*** *him* ***from the right to the left favorably*** *⊢ unfavorable.*

(d) If a star twinkles **on the back** of the man **from the left to the right** – favourable
(dd) If a man leaves to achieve his purpose and a star twinkles ***unfavorably behind*** *him* ***from left to the right unfavorably*** *⊢ favorable.*

If we accept this analysis, it should apply to the legal implications as well. Each is valid because all antecedents have the value +1, as does the conclusion. Therefore, the entire implication would have the value +1. The difference between my analysis and Schumann's is that while he sees axioms, I see arguments. The Babylonian treatises are not axioms, invitations to a scientific project, or generators for laws; rather, they are results – final judgments that should not be changed, modified, or altered, as Hammurabi and others insisted. I believe this rigidity is a significant reason for the lagging of Babylonian sciences.

3) I propose extending Quine's analysis of strict implication to apply to *šumma* sentences. We should consider that Babylonian scholars conflated conditionals with implications, or rather, they expressed their conclusions, theories, and implications in the form of conditionals. *Thus, a šumma sentence is not merely a singular conditional sentence but a complete argument*. We could say that what Lewis did with *"imply"*, the Babylonians did with *šumma*. Similarly, what Babylonian scholars did with *šumma*, we often do with some qualification. We describe implication as the tautology of the conditional. Therefore, Babylonian scholars intended their *šumma* to express validity, not an accidental relation or truth function.

In fact, the Babylonian scribes made many intellectual confusions. Rochberg highlighted another significant one related to the concept of "*normal*." According to G. Canguilhem, there have been two main ambiguous meanings of "*the normal*" throughout the history of science (of life). These meanings relate "either to being in accordance with the mean or with certain divergences considered insignificant. Yet, it also sometimes designates an ideal, a positive principle of evaluation, in the sense of a prototype or a perfect form. The fact that these two meanings are always linked, so that the term *normal* is always unclear, comes out even in the advice we are given to help us avoid this ambiguity." (Canguilhem, 122) Rochberg has marked the same confusion of ambiguity in the corpus of cuneiform treatises, "if we search for conceptions of the "*normal*" over a range Akkadian divinatory text, the same ambiguities as Canguilhem described for the concept may be found. That is, "*normal*" can be gauged in terms either of a "mean of measurements" or an ideal, a "positive principle of evaluation," where that ideal is determined by the divine scheme of things." (Rochberg 2016, 108).

However, we should emphasize a difference between Lewis and the Babylonian scholars. Lewis confused implication with conditional, while the Babylonian scholars confused conditional with implication. In other words, Lewis used implication or "*imply*" to express a conditional, whereas the Babylonian scholars used conditional or *šumma* to express implication or "*imply*."

There is another difference between Lewis's confusion and that of the Babylonian scholars. Lewis's confusion, or his definition of the proper "*imply*," was intentional, aimed at constructing a logical theory that avoids the aforementioned paradoxes:

> unless "*implies*" has some "*proper*" meaning, there is no criterion of validity, no possibility even of arguing the question whether there is one or not. (Lewis 1917, 325, italics in the original)

On the other hand, the Babylonian scholars' confusion was unconscious. This aligns with the fact that the Babylonians did not have logical terminology. In other words, logic as a discipline had not yet been created, and there was no distinction between syntax and semantics, indicative and interrogative, assertive and modal. Their language, if it existed, was ambiguous and vague, primitive like Freud's language of dreams, as clearly demonstrated by *šumma* sentences. In short, their logical apparatus was defective.

This conclusion disagrees with Schumann's claim that the genesis of logic was in Mesopotamia and was transferred to the Greeks (especially *Chrysippus* and *Cicero*) through law. Schumann supports his thesis by noting the similarity in content and form between the Law Code of Gortyn and Babylonian codes (Schumann 2017, 137-46).

In fact, the similarity in form and content is not strong enough to establish the supposed connection. There should be additional philological evidence, such as specific terminology and terms, which does not exist. However, we can claim (as I believe I have demonstrated here) that legal treatises are not codes or axioms to be inferred from; they are treatises about rights and justice, cast in implications and non-adjustable arguments. The same applies to divinatory texts. The algebraic logic behind these treatises consists of implicit premises and qualifiers. Even if we accepted it as an implicit logic, it would be mere modeling, and we could model any discourse logically or mathematically without claiming that the discourse was intended to be logical or mathematical. Reichenbach expressed it as follows:

> The science of logic is a discovery of the Greeks. That does not mean that there was no logical thinking before the Greeks. Logical thought is as old as thought; every successful act of thinking is controlled by the rules of logic. But it is one thing to apply these rules unknowingly in practical thought operations, and another to formulate them explicitly, so as to collect them in the form of a theory. It is this planned inquiry into logical rules which began with Aristotle. (1968, p. 215)

Logic emerged in Greece due to rhetorical discussions in courts, mathematical arguments, and conflicts of physical theories (Lloyd 1990). Contrary to Schumann's claim that *Cicero* was influenced by Semitic people through law (Schumann 2017, 147-49), it was the reverse; the Semitic peoples were influenced by Greek logic and *Cicero's* rhetoric (Daube 1949).

Schumann may believe that we will someday discover a Babylonian treatise on logic. However, even if he thought this, his belief could never be verified because Babylonian science was not written abstractly. As Bottéro and others noted, Babylonian science was tabular, not abstract. Rochberg also clearly expressed the impossibility of Greek logic being influenced by cuneiform writings as follows:

> That the inferential character of Assyro-Babylonian divination appears to coincide with what was known as the "first undemonstrated" inference scheme of Stoic logic seems on the face of it interesting, but not evidently interdependent. At least no textual (or other) evidence exists to link the two. Cuneiform omen texts continued to be copied throughout the Hellenistic period (4th–1st centuries B.C.) as exemplars from the late Babylonian collections stemming from *Babylon*, *Uruk*, and possibly Sippar attest. The fact of their contemporaneity with the activities of the Stoic philosophers in Athens and Alexandria of the 3rd century and later means nothing in and of itself. (Rochberg 2010, 386, n.22)

The historian of Babylonian mathematics, J. Høyrup, has adopted a similar position to Schumann, but in the field of the history of Babylonian mathematics. He claimed that a proof style exists in Babylonian mathematics and expressed our lack of recognition of it as follows: "If we cannot find traces of this reasoning in extant sources, we may safely conclude that this is due *either* to our failing understanding of the sources *or* to the insufficiency of extant sources as mirrors of educational practice." (Høyrup 2005, 112). However, the evidence supports that Babylonian mathematical proof and logic are subconscious, and Babylonian mathematics was not written as theories but only as problems (Kline 1972, 17). To model something for extracting its sub-logic or sub-proof is different from considering that thing itself as logic or a full-fledged abstract mathematical theory.

In fact, what the Babylonians lacked for establishing axiomatic systems, and thus prominently featuring the concept of proof in their texts, was systematicity. Their thinking was not systematic but rather tabular, limited to specific problems. This is mainly related to the nature of the medium that conveyed their knowledge, namely clay tablets. The Babylonian scribe's text was constrained by the limited size and area of the clay tablet on which the scribe recorded their knowledge. To write an epic like the Epic of *Gilgamesh*, they had to inscribe it on several tablets (about 12 in the fullest extent text we have), which exposed it to separation and dispersion. This is unlike the papyrus medium, which could connect a long text like the Book of the Dead into a single papyrus scroll up to nearly 16 meters long. Indeed, we find the concept of systematicity present in the Rhind Papyrus. In any case, the Greeks' use of papyrus enabled them to grasp the lesson of systematicity well, which helped them develop the concept of proof and axiomatic systems. Marshall McLuhan was not mistaken in his famous phrase, "The medium is the message."

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Notes

[1] For an exact account concerning conditional statements in Akkadian, see Huehnergard (1997, 159-60). In addition to "*šumma*," there is another construction for conditionals, which involves placing "*ma*" after the first verb in the sentence, thereby converting the main clause into a dependent clause. This construction resembles English causal adverbial participle clauses. Thus, the sentence "*ilū šarram ul iškunū-ma mātium iḫliq*" could be read as "because/when/if the gods did not install a king, the land perished" or "the gods not having installed a king, the land perished" (for more details, see ibid., 50).

[2] Bottéro described these two features in most Babylonian treatises as science: "It has to be said that the acknowledgment of this care for abstraction convinces us to speak here of research, not of the individual and accidental, but of the universal and the essential. In other words: of "Science"." (1992, 117) But does science consist only of conditionals?

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Autonomy in Stratified Structures

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Abstract:
This article proposes a minimalist concept of autonomy that is consistent with determinism, but negates fatalism. Drawing on Nicolai Hartmann's stratified ontology, it argues that autonomy is achieved not by suspending physical laws, but by introducing new, higher-level determinations unique to individual entities. The tension between general laws and individual autonomy is resolved by emphasizing the unique properties and individual laws that apply to each entity. The article also explains how this minimal autonomy makes sense of setting goals and attempting to achieve them, demonstrating that even within a deterministic framework, individuals can have meaningful influence over their actions and outcomes.
Keywords: autonomy, stratified ontology, determinism, individuality, philosophy of mind

1. Introduction

In this article, I posit and defend a minimal concept of autonomy, consistent with a variety of determinisms. I argue that autonomy is consistent with and requires:

(1) A special form of determinism, called *axiological determinism*,

(2) The notion of an *individual law*, which I will introduce later.

This autonomy is supposed to be minimalistic in that, it simply negates fatalism – the idea that our actions and decisions cannot make a difference in the world, while foregoing any attempts to defend any specifically moral notions, like being blameworthy, being morally obliged etc. To illustrate this, consider two contrasting scenarios: the first about a completely fatalistic event and the second

about a less fatalistic but still not perfectly autonomous one. Firstly, assume the heat death theory of the far future of the universe is true. In this scenario, nothing that happens between now and the heat death, including our actions, changes the final outcome. All physically possible futures converge at the same end point, rendering individual actions inconsequential. This represents a purely fatalistic view where autonomy is utterly negated. In a less fatalistic scenario, consider a government official whose job is to stamp official documents. The outcome – stamped documents – is influenced by the official's properties such as work ethic, intellect, and even physical attributes like having hands. Unlike the heat death scenario, his specific actions do make a difference. For example, his work ethic determines the quantity of work completed, his intellect ensures the understanding of documents, and his hands enable the stamping process. However, this autonomy is limited. The official would likely just be replaced by another person with similar attributes if he did not do the job, suggesting that while more individual properties matter, perfect autonomy is not achieved.

The question arises: are there scenarios where complete non-fatalism obtains? I will argue that such scenarios exist by drawing on Nicolai Hartmann's stratified ontology and extending it with the notion of individual laws – laws that apply uniquely to a single entity. Stratified ontology can also be used to give classical problems a sort of new dimension, by discussing non-physical forms of determinism. The issue of fatalism comes to light in the context of, what we will call "performative inconsistency objection to determinism". I would like to bring the reader's attention to two forms of the argument. The most basic one is described by Boyle, Grizez and Tollefsen as such:

> If determinism is true, then its assertion, like every other human act, is a determined effect; thus determinism comes to be held on account of the same sort of factors that account for the holding by others of the opposite position. The conclusion drawn is that determinism undercuts the legitimacy of the determinisms claim that his position ought to be preferred to its opposite. By means of an argument of this sort, determinism is rejected, not because it contradicts a thesis which its opponents hold, but because it defeats itself. (Boyle et al., 2008)

> And so one's assent to whichever position he holds has no necessary relationship to the fact that one position is true and its contradictory false. (Boyle et al., 2008)

Therefore, it could be argued that determinism and fatalism collapse the distinction between rationally justified and unjustified beliefs, hence if determinism is true, then there cannot be any arguments for determinism. Our aim in this article is to show determinism in itself does not collapse the distinction. Rather, to be rationally justified is to be under a special form of determinism.

The other form is to be found in Searle's writings.

> If you believe you are determined you will find that you cannot live your life on the presupposition of determinism. For example, if asked by the waiter in a restaurant to choose which item from the menu you want to order you cannot say, 'look, I am a determinist. I will just wait and see what happens. Che sara´ sara´.' Why not? Because that remark is only intelligible to you if you assume that its making was a free, intentional, voluntary performance on your part. The refusal to exercise freedom is intelligible to you only under the presupposition that it is a free action. (Searle 2007, p.70)

In light of this argument the action of "justifying rationally" is simply a special case of a broader performative inconsistency inherent to human actions such as choosing a meal. The crucial insight of Stratified Ontology, that enables us to make progress in addressing this inconsistency is to seek autonomy from physical laws not by suspending them but by the addition of new forms of determination, that are to be found in the higher strata. The proposed concept of autonomy is minimalist because it dispenses with the following theses:

(1) That humans are, in some aspect, exempt from determinism,

(2) That it is possible, in the otherwise identical world, for a person to be in state *x*, as well as for it to be possible for them to be in a state other than *x*. (This state could be, for example, a judgment or a decision.) In other words, the world may differ only concerning the state of the subject.

Regarding (1), the proposed concept of autonomy states that determinism should be accepted, and regarding (2), that autonomy is a partial, not complete independence.

2. Autonomy and Determinism

Physical determinism, states that a complete description of a moment t and the laws of physics, logically implies the complete description of any moment t' following t. However, for the purposes of this article, we need a broader deterministic scheme that may refer to other descriptions and laws of different domains. For instance, theological determinism posits that the description of a human subject logically follows from the complete description of God and the laws of theology. Axiological determinism asserts that the description of the subject's decisions logically follows from the description of the subject's knowledge and the laws of axiology.

Physical determinism: Let $\phi(t)$ be the proposition fully describing t, then a deterministic theory in the physical sense is any theory that asserts:

$$\phi(t), Laws\ of\ Physics\ \vDash \phi(t')$$

One can generalize this scheme to other kinds of determinism.

$$\phi(x), Laws \vDash \phi(y)$$

Where $\phi(x)$ is a full description of arbitrary *x*, and $Laws$ any class of laws.

Axiological determinism is characterized by the following schema:

$$\phi(s), Laws\ of\ Axiology \vDash \phi(d)$$

$\phi(s)$ fully describes information available to subject *s*, including what axiological information s possesses, and $\phi(d)$ decisions made by s. The danger people see in such a view is that knowledge of values turns subjects into value-realizing automata.

2.1 Auto Determination

Let us start by arguing that at least some kind of determinism in the form of auto-determinism is necessary for autonomy. Auto-determinism is simply a limit case of the deterministic schema $\phi(x), Laws \vDash \phi(y)$ for $x = s$ at t and $y = s$ at t' for arbitrary t, t'. Sartre seems to deny the compatibility of auto-determinism with freedom and autonomy.

> What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing – as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. (Sartre 1946)

I take it that the driving intuition behind the thought that a general human essence is anathema to individual freedom is based on the belief that essential properties are immutable by the human subject. Therefore, they form a rigid schema to which one is bound. However, this intuition leads to even more radical conclusions for the following reasons. If we take this thought seriously, there is no reason to stop at essential properties. Accidental properties also come with a rigid schema. For instance, if you want to know physics, there are criteria for what it means to know physics and what physics can truly say. Similarly, if you want to orbit around Jupiter, there are criteria for orbiting and being around Jupiter that are as unresponsive to individual will as any essence. One can choose or reject accidental properties without ceasing to exist, but they do come with a rigid structure, and they limit the subject in his self-conceptions by forming the background. Even if there were a man without essence, he would have to have accidental properties before "conceiving" his identity, and as such, they would limit him. *One is a victim of his times*. Hence, if you follow this line of reasoning, a subject could not exemplify any properties; they would have to be an indeterminate magma. However, this leads to absurd conclusions for the following reasons:

(1) **Lack of Individuation**: If all subjects were indeterminate, there would be nothing to individuate them. Without distinct properties, no subject could be different from another.
(2) **Incoherence**: Indeterminate beings could not be coherently said to be subjects because this would involve ascribing properties such as thought and subjecthood, which contradicts the idea of being indeterminate.

2.2 From the Consequence Argument to Axiological Determinism

I will use the updated version (Huemer 2000) of the original Consequence Argument. (Van Inwagen 1975) I'll change it to fit the notation used earlier.

$\mathrm{N}sp = \text{No matter what } S \text{ does}, p$. It is an update on Van Inwagen's

$\mathrm{N}p = \text{No one has any choice about the fact that } p.$

$\mathrm{N}sp$ therefore, expresses what, I mean by "fatalism".

P_0 is a full describtion of the state of the Universe in some distant past, while P is at or after the moment described by P_0

Rule $\alpha *$: From $\mathrm{N}p$ and $p \Rightarrow q$, deduce $\mathrm{N}q$.

Rule $\beta *$: From $\mathrm{N}p$ and $\mathrm{N}q$, deduce $\mathrm{N}(p\&q)$

1. $(P_0 \& Laws\ of\ Physics) \Rightarrow P$ assumption

2. NsP_0 premise

3. $Ns(Laws\ of\ Physics)$	premise
4. Ns(P_0&$Laws\ of\ Physics$)	2, 3; rule β $*$
5. NsP	1, 4; rule α $*$

Since the Consequence Argument purports to say something about free will and I am purposefully trying to stay away from big notions like that, I will not comment on the Consequence Argument in relation to free will. I am only interested in premise 3, as this is the one most relevant to the minimal autonomy I aim to argue for.

2.2.1 What Are Laws?

In this article, I can only offer a sketch of a view on this matter. Nevertheless, I claim that whatever a law is, it is something such that its content is representable or translatable into a class of logical implications. The arguments of those implications might be about all sorts of things, such as probabilities of something obtaining, properties, relations, etc. Logical implications are material implications that are a logical consequence of the empty set. Connecting laws with logical implications has some clear benefits:

> (1) Logical implications are necessary truths or necessary falsehoods; therefore, this view accounts for the problem of accidental generalizations.
>
> (2) The truth value of a logical implication is not dependent on both of its arguments being true; therefore, we can have laws about counterfactual scenarios.

On this view, we can generalize premise 3 to Ns($Laws$).

2.2.2 Axiological Determinism

Before continuing with the discussion of premise 3, let me introduce the problem of axiological determinism that arises in stratified ontology. Hartmann highlights this issue while discussing what he calls the antinomy of the Ought and teleological determinism.

> In the nature of the "moral free will" are two elements: the "moral will," that which is determined by the principle, and the "free will" which is such that it can decide either for or against the principle. (Hartmann 1932, p.214)

Here, a problem is revealed. Free will, and even the minimalist concept of autonomy, are not mere randomness. As I have argued, autonomy requires auto-determination. On the other hand, given the view of laws as sketched above, Axiology, if it formulates any laws about what can and cannot be good, then the truth values of these laws are fatalistic, not dependent on any subject. We can demonstrate this by slightly modifying the Consequence Argument.

1. $(\phi(s)\&Laws\ of\ Axiology) \Rightarrow \phi(d)$	assumption
2. Ns($\phi(s)$)	premise

3. Ns$(Laws\ of\ Axiology)$	Ontology of Laws
4. Ns$(\phi(s)\&Laws\ of\ Axiology)$	2, 3; rule β $*$
5. Ns$(\phi(d))$	1, 4; rule α $*$

Premise 2 should be read as stating that, no matter what information is available to s at the present time t, it cannot be changed at t. s can, of course, change in the future, but that will change the future state, which is not what $\phi(s)$ is about. Should this kind of fatalism of laws in general and axiological determinism specifically be rejected to save autonomy? I claim, no. Otherwise, we would end up back with the existentialists. I can make no sense of the proposition *object x is subject to the laws of physics* except as being equivalent to *x exemplifies physicality*. In a similar vein, I interpret the statement that *decision x is subject to the laws of axiology* as being equivalent to *x exemplifying rationality,* or *being rationally justified*. In this way, every property corresponds to its own class of laws, and laws to properties. What laws x obeys is a function of its identity; as such, despite the truth value of the laws being fatalistic, obeying them is nevertheless an expression of auto-determination, not unique to rational subjects but common to every being. Hence, if being subject to laws is incompatible with autonomy, then in order to keep autonomy, we go straight back to being indeterminate magma.

2.2.3 Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP) in light of Axiological Determinism

Frankfurt's seminal paper defines PAP as:

> A person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise (Frankfurt 1969)

In it, he makes a powerful case against PAP as a necessary condition of moral responsibility. The concept of minimal autonomy is much more modest than that of a moral subject, but we can still define PAP for it and notice a few interesting properties.

PAP for autonomy: x does something autonomously, if and only if, x could have done otherwise. In the light of axiological determinism, a subject's reasons are simply part of her description, therefore the phrase "could have done otherwise" is simply unintelligible except as ascribing randomness to the subject's action. However, there is a danger looming if we use the usual meaning of determinism, restricted to physical determinism. If their action is determined solely by physicality, then they can be substituted by any physical being. An example of such a fatalistic action could be not being able to escape the black hole.

2.2.4 Where the Conflict Really Lies

The tension between *obeying a law* and autonomy is not in the law itself, but rather in the generality of the law. Continuing with our example, a less fatalistic action is foraging for food. That action is not completely determined by the laws of physics but by the laws of biology. Still, she can be substituted by any living organism. We can go up the ladder to axiology. In doing so, we find she will create the most beautiful thing available, and while she has achieved some relative autonomy from the physical and biological, she still has not reached full autonomy because she can be substituted by any rational subject. Here we part ways with Hartmann. His solution to the issue is to turn axiological determination into a non-determination. The laws, into laws that can be suspended.

> The person must carry within himself, besides the natural determination and that of the Ought, still a third determinant, different from both. And it must be this, through whose intervention the Ought for the first time becomes a determinant. Hence personal freedom does not encounter a determination already completed through the Ought, but one incompleted, the mere claim, the pure demand as such. And in so far as the claim is fulfilled, it is fulfilled only through the freedom. (Hartmann 1932, p.214)

This solution, however, is not a good one, for the following reasons:

(1) It makes no sense to say a law is a "pure demand." A logical implication fulfilled through freedom (something contingent) is not a logical implication. A contingent being cannot be the truth-maker of a necessary truth.
(2) It completely contradicts the whole idea of stratified ontology, the appeal of which is not to undermine the determinism of the lower strata, as that negates their autonomy, but to find autonomy from the lower in novel determinations of the higher. German idealists are criticized for this in many places, and so should he. (Hartmann 1953, p.96-97). It seems like, when Hartmann run out of higher strata to give autonomy from the lower, he abandoned the whole project.
(3) The addition of higher strata that determines whether axiological laws determine the subject, simply pushes the issue one stratum higher. (It is in the vein of Scotus' *will* being above *reason*. Check section 5.2 for comparison Williams 2022, section 5.2)

There is a classic argument against free will indeterminism, that is applicable to the issue at hand. One, very clear version of it, is due to Ayer.

> But now we must ask how it is that I come to make my choice. Either it is an accident that I choose to act as I do or it is not. If it is an accident, then it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise; and if it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise, it is surely irrational to hold me morally responsible for choosing as I did. But if it is not an accident that I choose to do one thing rather than another, then presumably there is some causal explanation of my choice: and in that case we are led back to determinism.(Ayer 1954, p.275)

Lack of determination means also lack of auto-determination; therefore, randomness or any cognitive faculty that works indeterministcally is incompatible with autonomy as well. Hence, we will not reject axiological determinism and instead make changes to stratified ontology.

3. Stratified Ontology and The Two Perspectives

Stratified ontology offers hope for respecting and reconciling two perspectives on the subject. On one hand, we have the perspective in which we think about the goals worth pursuing, the ways of achieving them, and finally, their realization. From this perspective, we believe that these deliberations, goals, and efforts make a difference, that they are not mere epiphenomena, and that we possess an agency that brings about change. On the other hand, there is a perspective that views the subject, and more broadly mental phenomena, as elements of a structure. Here, we see that we are subject to determinations, often unknown to us. This perspective is most vividly utilized in psychiatric pharmacotherapy but also in other fields such as evolutionary psychology.

If one is not convinced of the necessity to reconcile these perspectives without removing the subject from the order of natural determinations, they should consider the depth of the interaction problem caused by substance dualism. An analogous problem arises here because, in light of what has been said about laws, an agent not subject to the laws of nature could not be part of nature. On

the other hand, as Searle notes (Snell 2009), the fact of complete determination of actions and their outcomes by factors external to us would be difficult to reconcile with the requirements of natural history. That is, it is unclear why a costly trait like the cognitive resources needed for planning goals, etc., would arise and persist through natural selection, if they made no difference. Stratified ontology offers hope for solving this problem without inviting the interaction problem because its idea is not to suspend determinations for the sake of autonomy but to add further determinations to achieve autonomy from the previous.

3.1 What are the Strata

I will not fully address the views of relevant ontologists (Hartmann, Chmielecki) here; instead, I will select only the fragments particularly useful for the current discussion. I will briefly present how they understand what a stratified structure is, as there are significant changes I wish to propose. In the simplest terms, strata are distinguished by the laws that apply within them and the categories that differentiate them. One such categorization is:

- Physical Categories: Space, Time, Causality, Substance, Quantity, Quality
- Biologic: Life, Organism, Growth, Reproduction, Adaptation.
- Psychic (Mental): Consciousness, Perception, Emotion, Will, Intentionality.
- Spiritual (Cultural, Axiological): Spirit, Culture, Values, Norms, Freedom, Responsibility.

Strata are also distinct from ”levels.” A single entity can exist in multiple strata, while a ”level“ measures the quantity of these strata. The following strata are distinguished: physical, biological, psychic, and spiritual (Chmielecki additionally distinguishes the strata of intelligible beings). Bacteria exist in both the physical and biological strata, while planets exist only in the physical stratum. Bacteria are at a higher level than planets. It is important to note that the autonomy of a higher stratum relative to a lower one is not a matter of suspending the laws of the lower in relation to an entity from a higher level, but rather adding additional laws specific to the higher layer. In this sense, entities at a higher level have greater autonomy concerning physicality than those at a lower level. Chmielecki, on the other hand, describes the relationship between strata in terms of form and matter. He writes about it as follows:

> The principle of the higher stratum is a certain structure whose building elements – material, substrate, carrier – are ontic entities that serve as determinative principles of the lower stratum. These principles are thus a combination of the "matter" provided by the principle of the lower stratum and the "form" added by the new stratum. The emergence of a new principle involves the formation of a higher-order structure relative to the previously existing structures, meaning a structure whose elements are the structures of the lower stratum; it is therefore a structure of structures. (my translation, Chmielecki 2001, p.28)

In other words, the form of the lower stratum is the matter of the higher stratum. The form reduces the potentialities of the matter to a single realized actuality. I prefer to describe the same concept without using the notions of form and matter, but instead using modal concepts:

1. The ”matter“ or range of possibilities of the lowest stratum consists of all logical possibilities.
2. Properties that are elements of the lowest stratum narrow this range to those possibilities that are consistent with exemplification of the properties by a given object.
3. This narrowed range of possibilities then determines what is consistent with it, and this becomes the ”matter“ or range of possibilities for the higher stratum.

4. Properties that are elements of the higher stratum further narrow this range to those possibilities that are consistent with their exemplification by a given object. And so on.

3.2 Distinguishing Strata

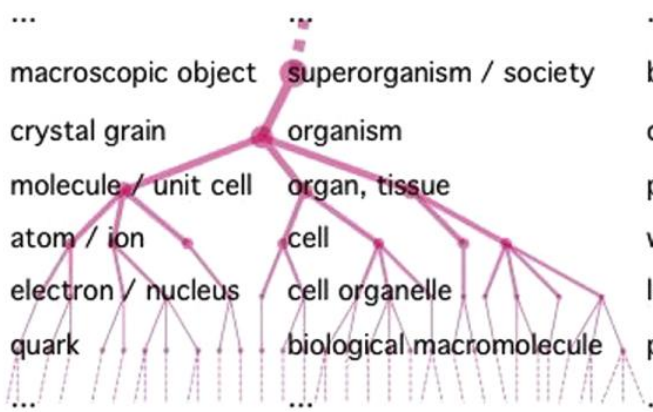
I mentioned that Hartmann distinguishes the strata of physical, organic, psychic, and spiritual being. But why these specific strata and not others? To answer this question, one must note that these strata have specific laws and categories unique to them. However, this answer is not entirely satisfactory. It is easy to see that these strata correspond to various fields of study (physics, biology, psychology, humanities and axiology). But why not create strata based on their subdisciplines and speak, for example, of a stratum of photosynthetic beings built upon the biological stratum? After all, it has specific laws of photosynthesis. What about black holes, or the early Universe? These seem no less distinct from the rest of the physical reality, than a human is to a chimp. By raising this question, I want to point out that radical differences can exist within a single stratum, and yet for some reason, these differences have not been deemed significant enough to warrant the creation of a new stratum based on them.

There are three objections to this way of distinguishing strata:

(1) Just as correctly as one can construct strata from scientific disciplines, one can construct strata from subdisciplines.
(2) One can construct strata from fields of knowledge concerning types of objects other than humans, such as celestial bodies, resulting in a different division of strata in which humans have fewer strata than other objects.
(3) The very distinction between differences that warrant distinguishing strata and those that do not is a manifestation of the researcher's interests – what they consider important–rather than something inherent in the objects of study.

This division is arbitrary and anthropocentric, clearly tailored to the stratified structure of humans, making humans appear as the pinnacle of the real world, occupying its highest tier. This anthropocentrism, however, is unwarranted. Hartmann himself repeatedly emphasizes that the autonomy of the organic stratum relative to the physical is no less noteworthy than the autonomy of the spirit. (Dittrich 2015) captures the issue more accurately, by distinguishing further stratified complexity within the physical, biological, and cultural domains.

Level	Information	Physics	Biology	Literature
$n-1$	I_{n-1}	...	...	...
n	I_n	macroscopic object	superorganism / society	book
$n+1$	I_{n+1}	crystal grain	organism	chapter
$n+2$	I_{n+2}	molecule / unit cell	organ, tissue	phrase
$n+3$	I_{n+3}	atom / ion	cell	word
$n+4$	I_{n+4}	electron / nucleus	cell organelle	letter
$n+5$	I_{n+5}	quark	biological macromolecule	pixel
$n+6$	I_{n+6}	...	...	...
total	$I_{tot} = \Sigma_n I_n$			



Resolution

3.3 Tree of Strata

I propose to distinguish strata and levels in a different way. Instead of considering whether a given property is sufficient to distinguish a stratum, I suggest focusing on the stratified structures of an object's properties. If an object is physical, its extension in time means that for each temporal part of the object, its stratified structure must be determined separately.

Let Γ be the class of properties of object x, and Γ with subscripts represent its subclasses. Let i, j, k be ordinal numbers. I will use the symbol $(x\varepsilon P)$ as shorthand for "object x exemplifies property P." The expression P_j^i denotes the j-th property of the i-th stratum. In equations, I use the symbol ":" as shorthand for "such that." The stratified structure of the properties of object x is defined as follows:

$$\text{Stratum 0:} \qquad \Gamma_0 = \{P_j^0 : \left(x\varepsilon P_j^0 \Rightarrow x\varepsilon P_{j'}^i\right) \Rightarrow (i = 0)\}$$

$$\text{Stratum } i+1: \Gamma_{i+1} = \{P_j^{i+1} : \left(x\varepsilon P_j^{i+1} \Rightarrow x\varepsilon P_{j'}^{i'}\right) \wedge \left(\exists P_k^i : x\varepsilon P_j^{i+1} \Rightarrow x\varepsilon P_k^i\right)\} \text{ for } (i' \leq i+1)$$

In Stratum 0, there are properties such that if $(x\varepsilon P_j^0 \Rightarrow x\varepsilon P_{j'}^i)$, then $(P_{j'}^i) \in \Gamma_0$.

Stratum $i+1$ contains properties such that if $(x\varepsilon P_j^{i+1} \Rightarrow x\varepsilon P_{j'}^{i'})$, then property $(P_{j'}^{i'})$ is not an element of a stratum higher than $i+1$.

The concept of individual property is necessary to distinguish the highest stratum. The exact definition of an individual property is part of my more extensive work, that is not yet published. Here, it needs to be specified only that the unique individual property of x, denoted as "x" describes x fully and uniquely among all possible objects and is not more general than any property. For the purposes on this article in can be considered a conjunctive property of all of the universals exemplified by x.

The Highest Stratum: $\sup(\Gamma) = \{\text{“}x\text{”}\}$

The elements of Stratum 0 are the properties whose exemplification does not logically imply the exemplification of properties from higher strata. In Stratum $i+1$, there are properties whose exemplification does not logically imply the exemplification of properties from higher strata, and in the The Stratum i, there exists a property whose exemplification is logically implied by the exemplification of some property from The Stratum $i+1$. The highest stratum consists of the object's individual property.

The characteristic of this stratified structure is that it begins with the most general properties in Stratum 0 and ends with the least general property in the highest stratum, corresponding to the classical structure of physical-biological-psychic-spiritual as progressing from broader to narrower categories. However, in the proposed theory, a more abstract structure is presented: Stratum 0, Stratum 1, ..., Stratum sup. The exemplification of properties from a lower stratum is not a necessary condition for the exemplification of properties from a higher stratum, whereas the exemplification of properties from a higher stratum is a sufficient condition for the exemplification of properties from a lower stratum.

The autonomy of higher strata relative to lower strata is manifested in the fact that, although a lower stratum must always exist for there to be a higher stratum, it can contain various elements, so higher strata are not dependent on any specific element of the lower stratum. This is a straightforward consequence of the relationship between the more general and the less general properties. Now, let us compare the images of stratified structures according to Hartmann with the proposal presented here. Classically a "real being" (spatiotemporal object) consists of between 1 to 4 strata. 1 stratum objects consist of physical stratum, 2 strata objects consist of physical and biological strata etc. In order to avoid anthropocentrism and arbitrary valuations of some differences as warranting the introduction of new strata, I propose significantly simplifying this structure.

$$\sup(\Gamma) = \{\text{“}x\text{”}\}$$

$$\sup(\Gamma) \neq \Gamma_i = \{P_1^i, P_2^i, \dots\}$$

Laws can be associated with each stratum:

$$Laws\ of\ \sup(\Gamma) = \{\phi \Rightarrow \psi: \phi = x\varepsilon\text{"}x\text{”}\}$$

$$Laws\ of\ \Gamma_i = \{\phi \Rightarrow \psi: (\phi = x\varepsilon P_1^i) \vee (\phi = x\varepsilon P_2^i) \vee \dots\}$$

While ψ can be any proposition. It can be about properties, relations, probabilities, etc. This abstract structure can be concretized by incorporating the results of any science. For example, physical stratified structure is the structure associated with the following laws:

$$Laws\ of\ sup(\Gamma) = \{\phi \wedge Laws\ of\ Physics \Rightarrow \psi: \phi = x\varepsilon\text{"}x\text{"}\}$$

$$Laws\ \text{of}\ \Gamma_i = \{\phi \wedge Laws\ of\ Physics \Rightarrow \psi: \left(\phi = x\varepsilon P_1^i\right) \vee \left(\phi = x\varepsilon P_2^i\right) \vee \dots\}$$

3.4 Levels in the Modified Stratified Structure

An important difference is that in the proposed theory, every object possesses the same number of strata. Perhaps in one entity, the nth stratum contains psychic properties, while in another, it contains photosynthetic properties. However, this does not indicate a more complex structure of properties of the first entity. Equality in the number of strata is a consequence of the law of excluded middle. For any property, an entity either exemplifies this property or its inverse. (We will leave cases to do with Russell Paradox and properties for another time) Another important issue is the distribution of properties of a certain type among the strata. In classical stratified ontology, everything physical is found in the physical stratum, etc. In the proposed modification, it is not the case that a given type of property, e.g., physical properties, is found only in one stratum. Furthermore, it is also not the case that all physical properties are found in lower strata than psychic or spiritual properties. Here are a few examples that support the greater accuracy of such an approach.

Consider the relationship between the psychic and the biological. On one hand, we know of nothing that possesses a psyche and is not a biological organism. This indicates that the property of being biological is in a lower stratum than the property of having a mind. On the other hand, we treat both the mind itself and specific mental states (e.g., pleasure, sadness, hunger, etc.) as common to various biological organisms, such as birds and mammals. This indicates that in this case, the mentioned mental properties are found in strata lower than the biological properties of being a bird and being a mammal. In summary, there is no physical, biological, etc., strata; there are strata 0, 1, 2, … and everything has these strata.

I noted at the beginning the element of physicality brings additional complexity in stratified ontology. The point is to emphasize that in the case of spatiotemporal entities, an additional element of dynamism is introduced. From what we have said, it is already clear that if we look, for example, at the issue of the mind-body relationship, we will see a much more complex structure. Rather than a pyramid where the bodily is lower and the mental higher, there are intertwined cords of bodily and mental properties that pass through many strata and create various entanglements. Additionally, one must consider the greater entanglement created by the stratified structures of different moments.

How a given stratum looks at a given moment is not only related to other strata of the same moment but also to the stratified structure that the entity will have in the past and future.

3.5 The Highest Stratum

In previous sections, I supplemented the stratified structure with the highest stratum, which is the individual property of an object, unique to each object. Based on this, there are individual laws. These are laws in the sense that they describe necessary dependencies and conditionals, but they are individual because they refer to a single object. In other words, the generality to which they refer is the possible worlds in which the given object exists. This connection resolves the tension between generality and autonomy without invoking some undefined metaphysical magma. The tension between generality and autonomy lies in the fact that in the case of general law, the individuality of the object is omitted, and the generality is emphasized. For example, in the case of a physical law, the manifold it refers to is the class of physical objects, where the individuality of these objects is ignored, and their general property of physicality, which establishes exceptionless regularity for the entire class, is emphasized. In this, we see a threat to auto-determination or its insignificance.

In the case of the law of the highest stratum, we have the opposite dynamic. The generality from which we start is the class of possibilities concerning a given object, and what is ignored are the individual differences between these possibilities. However, since what is common to these possibilities is x, the result of this omission is the individual property of x and laws that come with it. This is the crux of resolving the tension between generality and autonomy. Namely, it lies in finding such a multiplicity, in this case, a specified class of possibilities, whose common denominator is something unique.

Individual laws include those that speak about dependencies between strata and those that relate the stratified structures of multiple temporal parts to a single object. For example, for humans, there are laws that specify under what conditions the biological substrate permits the formation of spiritual properties, only psychic properties, or neither. These laws given by the content of the individual property are not elements of any stratum because they are not properties. However, they are what make for the stratified structure, not just a bunch of strata.

Being subject to these laws is a prime example of auto-determinism and autonomy because, in matters requiring determination by the individual stratum, we are absolutely irreplaceable. In this sense, we matter fully in them; we make a difference, we are determined by ourselves, and the world is determined by us.

What might these laws specifically pertain to for humans? I will allow myself a few speculations. One candidate might be some very abstract quale that defines the first-person qualities of being a particular human and influences probability of occurrence of certain mental states. Another aspect that this unique property of a human might pertain to, I suspect, are acts of self-knowledge.

We have established that autonomy is a general feature of beings and in virtue of relations between strata. There is always some degree of autonomy. However, note that this foundation of autonomy, the individual property, can confer different types of autonomy. For example, it might be the case that the lowest stratum of the stratified structure at t fully determines the higher strata at the following t'. This seems to be what reductionist physicalists think. Nevertheless, for example, self-knowledge shows how a higher stratum at t can determine lower ones at t'. For instance, someone noticed that they suffer when they don't drink enough water, so they always drink 2 liters a day. In this case, their observation determines their subsequent biological states.

4. Conclusion

The minimalist concept of autonomy presented here demonstrates how setting goals and attempting to achieve them makes sense. This is achieved by referring to individuality, which establishes that for everything, there is a novelty that only that particular thing can produce. This novelty is the condition for answering the question of why it makes sense for me specifically to make the effort. It remains in line with traditional stratified ontology in the sense that it finds answers to questions about autonomy in the consideration of general ontological issues; the autonomy of the human being is merely one example the closest to us. However, this traditional ontology has been stripped of remnants of anthropocentrism and a lack of consistency in advocating the thesis of the non-contradiction of autonomy with determinism.

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No Perils of Rejecting the Parity Argument

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Abstract:
Many moral realists have employed a strategy for arguing for moral realism by claiming that if epistemic normativity is categorical and that if this epistemic normativity exists, then categorical normativity exists. In this paper, we will discuss that argument, examine a way out, and respond to the objections people have recently raised in the literature. In the end, we conclude that the objections to our way out will do little in the way of motivating those who already do not believe in categorical normativity, thereby severing the power the aforementioned parity argument is designed to possess.
Keywords: Moral error theory, Meta-ethics, Companions in guilt, Nihilism.

1. Introduction

Error theorists, generally, present this sort of argument against moral realism (Zhou, Borchert, 2023, p. 215):

(L1) Moral realism implies the existence of categorical normativity.
(L2) But categorical normativity does not exist.
(L3) Therefore, moral realism is false. [L1, L2]

Typically, (L2) will get supported with a few appeals: (i) categorical normativity being metaphysically queer (Kassenberg, 2021, p. 313), (ii) including categorical normativity into a theory has commitments that aren't as parsimonious as rival theories (Morton, Sampson, 2014; Mackie, 1979), and (iii) categorical normativity being epistemologically queer (Kassenberg, 2021,

p. 313). Moral realists, such as Zhou and Borchert [1], then have decided to respond by constructing the following argument against (L2), known as the Parity Argument[1]:

(L4) Epistemic normativity is categorical.
(L5) Epistemic normativity exists.
(L6) Therefore, categorical normativity exists. [L4, L5]

In what follows, we will not be discussing the motivations for (L5), at least not explicitly, but rather adopt the defence of the position that does not believe (L5), and on some interpretations (L4) to be true.[2] We will in turn discuss what implications our view has and how we can engage in the same sorts of epistemic discourse without (i) appealing to any categoricity that a moral realist would invoke, and (ii) without the sorts of problems people claim we have. So, in section 2, we will be outlining our view as eliminativism about reasons. In section 3, we will discuss what moral realists call the self-defeat objection against our view. Then in section 4, we respond to Zhou and Borchert's 'Moorean objection'. Lastly, in section 5, we conclude that, in Zhou and Borchert's terms, there are no perils for someone who wishes to deny the moral realist's Parity Argument.

2. 'Denying' Categorical Epistemic Normativity

A route for rejecting the parity argument is being sceptical of (L5), and there are really, only two ways to do so. The first method is by arguing that it is false, and the second is to be agnostic on its truth value. Here, we are taking on the latter approach and even believe that the former is too strong of a claim.[3] In light of us being agnostic on the truth value of (L5), we are also not as mentioned in the first footnote, to some other metaphysical view regarding reasons such as instrumentalism. That aside, most of the problematic entailments many epistemic realists bring up stem not from the stronger claim that epistemic realism is false, but from *not accepting* that there are categorical epistemic reasons alone.

Our view is a very weak semantic one, where when we use terms like 'reason', 'should', 'good' and so on, we are merely indexing them to our desires, without accepting a particular thesis on public moral language. For example, we can engage in any sort of reason discourse excluding substantive ontological commitments. So, when we say "we have a reason to drink water" that statement just analytically *means* something along the lines of having a desire to drink water, and that drinking water will satisfy that said desire. However, we are willing to engage with moral realists on their terms. For instance, we will be willing to accept (L4) if 'epistemic normativity' is understood to mean something stance-independent. But, for the sake of clarity, we will specify which sorts of reasons are being talked about, especially in the next section, with discourse about there being no reason to not accept (L5) by our own lights. We find that once we gain such clarity, the argument becomes notably weaker substantively and dialectically.

3. No Self-Defeat

One way that moral realists argue against those that do not accept (L5) is to give a self-defeat objection. What that means is that the thesis one is committed to implies the falsity of the thesis. One clear example of this is if one were to claim: "No one has or will ever claim anything." Booth sums up how the self-defeat argument against rejecting categorical reasons goes as follows:

> The Moral Error Theorist denies that there are moral reasons and moral oughts. But then should not be the Error Theorist, on pain of inconsistency, also deny that there are reasons for belief (hereafter categorical epistemic reasons)? It seems she should. But if she does, she must also then deny that there are reasons for her to believe the Moral Error Theory. (Booth, 2020, p. 2191)

We must clear up that if one rejects the CB thesis 'there are categorical reasons to believe', that does not strictly entail that they believe ~CB. For example, someone may not believe that the number of stars in the universe are even, but that doesn't mean that they then believe the number is not even. But let us even grant that it does, and someone believes 'there are no categorical reasons for belief' and they are responded to with a question such as "Do you have a reason to believe ~CB?" If the person says they don't have a reason to believe ~CB, the thesis would not be self-defeating, since nowhere are they claiming to have any reason for their belief in ~CB. So even if someone took a view that (L5) was false, that does not entail their view is self-defeating.

4. On the Moorean Responses

Here, we will be discussing Zhou and Borchert's (Zhou, Borchert, 2023) comments regarding their relatively new approach to the parity argument; their Moorean objection. Zhou and Borchert introduce their Moorean objection like this:

> If one does not object to the Error Theory on the grounds that it is toothless, it is open for one to object on Moorean grounds. By this, we mean that one can assert that one's confidence in certain judgments –call them Moorean premises– ought to be higher than any philosophical premises or theories which purport to undermine the truth of the Moorean premises. In this context, the Moorean premises would be propositions like 'a person in pain has reason to believe that they are in pain' or 'a person looking at their hands has reason to believe that they have hands'. Streumer's theory says that a person in pain has no reason to believe they are in pain and a person looking at their hands has no reason to believe that they have hands. And this is not a contingent truth, but a metaphysical necessity. So not only has no person in history ever had a reason to believe that they are in pain or that they have hands, but it is metaphysically impossible for a person to have a reason to believe that they are in pain or have hands. (Zhou, Borchert, 2023, p. 229)

Before we discuss the Moorean objection Zhou and Borchert (Zhou, Borchert, 2023) raise, we have to dissolve the seemingly clear implausibility. In this case they are claiming the implausibility of the claim that it is "impossible for a person to have a reason to believe that they have hands", and the like. However, it's unclear what is so implausible regarding that once we plug in the identifier of categorical reason. To illustrate this, if there were some agent that states "I have no reason to believe there is a computer in front of me", we can see the implausibility on some level, but it seems to dissolve once some agent states "I have no categorical reason to believe there is a computer in front of me." This represents a pervasive problem in the argument, which is to act like there is an inherent issue with denying categorical normativity, which goes largely unmotivated.

> The Moorean-inspired response to Streumer's theory is to say that no matter how convincing the philosophical reasoning in support of it may seem, it is rational to reject a philosophical theory with such wild implications. This is not a dogmatic dismissal, but an expression of relative likelihood. The claim is that it is more reasonable to believe that there is something wrong with the complex, controversial reasoning in favour of the Error Theory than it is to believe that a person looking at their hands has no reason to believe that they have hands. This holds even if one cannot identify where specifically the argument went wrong. An uncontroversial example of this move in a different context are Zeno's paradoxes. Even if, upon hearing the paradoxes for the first time, a person cannot refute Zeno's arguments against the impossibility of motion, it is still rational for them to believe in the possibility of motion. They may rationally conclude that Zeno's arguments fail, even if they cannot pinpoint where Zeno's arguments fail. Similarly in the case of the Error Theory, one may conclude that Streumer's arguments

> fail, even if one cannot pinpoint where Streumer's arguments fail. Call this the Moorean Objection. (Zhou, Borchert, 2023, p. 230)

We believe this line of approach fails in two different ways. The first is that we can easily construct a reverse Moorean argument, and the second is that if you are to take a Moorean approach, it leaves you with the non-necessity of the Parity Argument

5. Reverse Moorean Argument

Similar to how the sceptic's claim "the external world does not exist" is implausible, the claim "epistemic normativity does not exist" is also supposed to be. However, there seems to be an issue, regarding those who view denying categorical epistemic normativity as being equivalent to denying epistemic normativity in general. If, when the realist is talking about epistemic normativity, it is baked into their concept that it is categorical, then it is unclear what the unintuitive implication is. Is it supposed to be that if someone desires to hold a belief despite the fact that it's false, they still have a reason to? We do not share this intuition, and in fact it seems false to us. Consider the following case:

You have the ability to select between two sets of beliefs, A and B. For all the beliefs in A, they are true, and for a vast majority of beliefs in set B, they are true, with a small amount being false. However, for the subset of beliefs in B that are false, they have to do with propositions that, if you believed that they were true, would destroy your mental well-being.

To us, it sounds clear that you would have a reason to avoid the truth, and pick B over A. Furthermore, if the view entails that we have a reason to select A over B, then it seems very implausible, and we could make a reverse Moorean argument.[4] In fact, regardless of this particular motivation for epistemic realism being very seemingly implausible, we could make a similar Moorean argument against *categorical* epistemic normativity broadly. Let us stipulate that, prima facie, it seems very implausible to us that categorical epistemic normativity exists. Maybe it has to do with it being non-natural, irreducibly normative, or any other defeasible reason (or for no reason at all). Since we are presented with this seemingly implausible view, that categorical epistemic normativity exists, we could make a Moorean argument in the reverse:

> (L7) If epistemic realism is true, then categorical epistemic normativity exists.
> (L8) It is not the case that categorical epistemic normativity exists.
> (L9) Therefore, epistemic realism is false.[5]

Of course, they would then argue that the denial of (L8) has unintuitive implications, as shown above, they wrote:

> Streumer's theory says that a person in pain has no reason to believe they are in pain and a person looking at their hands has no reason to believe that they have hands. (Zhou, 2023, p. 229)

This claim is either trivial or false. If "reason" here (and throughout the rest of the passage) in the epistemic sense has categorical normativity embedded into it, then of course it is true! If you do not already have epistemic realist presuppositions, this will not motivate you at all. This is analogous to the move where, say a fallibilist claims "I do not believe there's certainty," and the infallibilist replies "so you are uncertain of your uncertainty!" The only reason a fallibilist would view that as a serious objection is if they thought there was an issue with being uncertain in the first place, which is the very thing that they deny. Similarly, the realist's claim here is plainly trivial; that denying categorically normative epistemic reasons entails denying that there is some particular categorically normative epistemic reason for S to believe that P (where P is any proposition). On the other hand, if "reason" does *not* have categoricity baked into it, what was said becomes false. Clearly, if one

had the goal to hold true beliefs, and the belief that P was consistent with this goal, they would have a hypothetical reason to believe that P.

6. Non-Necessity of the Parity Argument

It is unclear why the Parity Argument is even necessary, if it is going to rely on a Moorean argument for a presupposition that the anti-realist will presumably deny (with little in the way of motivating them against that presupposition that is non-question-begging or non-trivial). Why not just start with a Moorean argument for realism, instead of adding extra steps? We develop three possible explanations: (i) that anti-realists will be more likely to accept the Moorean premise in the parity argument than in a traditional Moorean argument for realism, (ii) that the second premise in the parity argument is ostensibly self-defeating to deny, or (iii) that (L5) is even more plausible than the premise "stance-independent reasons for action exist." We will tackle them individually.

(i) It is very unclear why most anti-realists would be more likely to accept the premise that "epistemic normativity exists" than the premise "stance-independent reasons for action exist," given the fact that their scepticism of the latter due to metaphysical worries also leads to scepticism of the former, as was acknowledged in the initial paper. Perhaps there are error theorists who believe in categorical reasons for belief, but not action. However, those error theorists already think there's a disanalogy between the two, and the parity argument is tailored to those who deny categorical reasons in general (not those who accept it in the belief case but not the action case).

(ii) Of course, we have addressed the view that denying (L5) is self-defeating (in the sense of there being no reason to believe it), but regardless, it may ostensibly appear to be so. If the self-defeat merely is ostensible, but really is not so, then the argument may convince people, but it would be doing so at the cost of misleading them into thinking they are denying plausible claims such as "we have a reason to believe that the earth is not flat" when they do not have to. So, in this sense it would not be unnecessary, but instead it would fall to something worse, which is dishonesty.

(iii) We have already given counter-intuition pumps, and it is unclear why the intuition-pumps for stance-independent reasons for action would be less motivating than the ones for stance-independent reasons for belief. In fact, even as anti-realists, we find the intuition-pumps for the former to be more compelling (although ultimately not so). In terms of what most anti-realists think, it sounds like an empirical question, which we would like evidence for.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, then, there seem to be no problems for those who deny the Parity Argument. As illustrated above, the argument regarding self-defeat is one that, when read carefully, does not strictly entail any falsity regarding the ~CB thesis. And the Moorean objection either does nothing to further the dialect by those already unmotivated by the plausibility of categorical reasons for belief, or otherwise renders the Parity Argument unnecessary.

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Notes

1. However, the argument is not uniquely from Zhou and Borchert and can be found in the works of Rowland (2017), Das (2015a), and Cuneo (2012).
2. This is because if one were to claim that all epistemic normativity is categorical, there are strategies by Olson (Zhou, Borchert, 2023, p. 222; Reisner, 2011; Olson, 2014) which appeal to a hypothetical reduction. Our view may be very similar to Olson's instrumentalism, but we are not committed to any thesis regarding 'the nature of reasons', per se. If (L4) is just defining epistemic normativity to be categorical, then we do not reject (L4), only (L5).
3. As will become clear, we do not take a view with regards to the claims that there are or are not categorical normativity. The dialectic we illustrate in section 4 illustrates the end of the dialectic between moral realists and moral anti-realists once it becomes the matter of relative plausibility.
4. Note that accepting categorical epistemic normativity doesn't require accepting that one always has reason to select a true belief over a false one, this is just an objection to the particular motivation we gave.
5. To be clear, we do not use this argument to argue that epistemic realism is false. Instead, we are just demonstrating that someone can use the same dialectical move to make the opposite point, and at minimum cause a sort of draw. We are ultimately agnostic on the existence of categorical reasons.

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Challenges of Non-Soviet Poetry in Minsk During the BSSR Period

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Abstract:
The interview given by Gershon Trestman (born July 29, 1947, Minsk), a Russian-language Belarusian and Israeli poet, prose writer, publicist, and playwright. He is a member of the Union of Writers of Israel, the Commonwealth of Russian-Speaking Writers of Israel "Stolitsa," and the International Federation of Russian Writers. His work has been recognized with the Yu. Stern and Yu. Nagibin awards, as well as a gold medal for "outstanding achievements in literature and the arts" from the California Academy of Sciences. Selected works: *The One Who Crossed the River* (Tel Aviv, 1996); *Golem, or Faust's Curse* (Moscow, 2007); *A Small Country with a Great History* (Israel, 2008, foreword by Avigdor Lieberman); *The Great History of a Small Country* (Israel, 2011); *The Scroll of Esther* (Jerusalem, 2013); *The Land of Olive Guardians* (Jerusalem, 2013); *The Israeli Knot: The History of the Country – The History of Confrontation* (Book-Sefer, 2014); *The Land of Olive Guardians* (Jerusalem, KKL-JNF, 2014); *Job* (Minsk, New Wineskins, 2014); *...Where There Are No Coordinates. Poems and Epics* (Jerusalem, 2017); *The Book of Non-Being* (Minsk, Logvinov, 2019); *Alphabet for Elderly Children* (Jerusalem, 2023).
Keywords: totalitarian society, poetry, existentialism, Minsk

Andrew Schumann: The Soviet Union was a totalitarian society, meaning it maintained complete control over artistic expression and the production of meanings. However, this control was felt

differently in different cities. In Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), artistic life seemed freer – poets had an easier time getting published, public spaces for poetry readings existed, literary salons provided venues for meetings, and even *samizdat* was possible. In Minsk, however, the situation was significantly worse.

In 1966, the only platform for poetry readings – the "Pioneer" cinema – emerged but lasted only a short while before being shut down. For a long time, the only "literary salon" in Minsk was the apartment of Kim Khadeev, but even that was often empty. How did you manage to cultivate a non-Soviet voice in your work while living in Minsk? How did you define your "non-Soviet" stance during that difficult time?

Gershon Trestman: The issue is not so much my "non-Soviet" stance as it is that I remained deeply alien to the official Soviet life surrounding me, with all its standards. My social circle, consisting of "unofficial" individuals with whom I could communicate without hostility, was always extremely small.

Andrew Schumann: The USSR had Soviet poets who enjoyed a degree of conditional creative freedom – like Andrei Voznesensky, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, and Bella Akhmadulina – as well as a whole movement of bard poets such as Vladimir Vysotsky, Bulat Okudzhava, and Alexander Galich. The Soviet intelligentsia eagerly consumed their works, seeking out their books and records. Did you consider these popular Soviet poets to be non-Soviet at the time? Do you consider them non-Soviet now?

Gershon Trestman: Conditional creative freedom? If it existed, it was only within the confines of a small social circle. As the writer Lev Anninsky once told me: "*We are deep-water fish. If we rise to the surface, we'll suffer decompression sickness.*" One can only remain truly free in the depths.

As for the poets and bards you mentioned, despite their undeniable talent, they remained Soviet writers – even when, on rare occasions, they produced non-Soviet texts. Under Soviet rule, literature was forced to assume the roles of a Temple, a Conscience, and a Judge. This situation led to the development of an *Aesopian language*, but Aesopian language cannot replace spiritual or governmental institutions – it merely allows for a cautious probing of alternative viewpoints.

I believe the popularity of these artists stemmed from their ability to create an illusion of conditional freedom through Aesopian language. The vagueness of their formulations allowed readers to interpret their words in multiple ways. However, ultimately, this was still a form of compromise – one that conformed to Soviet censorship and certain prescribed frameworks.

Andrew Schumann: Which poets from Moscow and Leningrad in the RSFSR period were thematically or mentally close to you?

Gershon Trestman: I felt closest to Yuri Levitansky, David Samoilov, and Joseph Brodsky. But I don't value poets solely by their collected works under a single surname – I appreciate specific poems, sometimes even by relatively obscure poets. That said, I hesitate to call any poet "obscure." For me, Vladimir Sokolov or Yuly Aikhenvald – let alone the Leningrad or Moscow schools of that era – were just as significant as Yevtushenko, Rozhdestvensky, or even Akhmadulina.

Your question made me reflect on poets of that time, and I realize that, for me, they have faded. As the brilliant Israeli literary critic Maya Kaganskaya once said to me: "*I reread* Anna Karenina *and must admit, the book has changed a lot in the last thirty years.*" What remains with me is not a memory of individual poets or poems, but a feeling of the literary process. If I were to discuss specific poets and their work now, I would inevitably distort the truth.

Andrew Schumann: The poetry scene in Minsk was much smaller than in Moscow. Who among Minsk poets was mentally and thematically close to you? What did you have in common with Veniamin Blazhenny and Igor Poglazov (Schneerson)?

Gershon Trestman: The main intersection between us was that we were all outsiders in the Soviet reality. Yet, we were entirely different from one another – unique individuals. It is fundamentally wrong to compare poets, as no two are equal in greatness or insignificance. A true poet is one of a kind.

Blazhenny lived a full life and even grew weary of it – he longed for death. By contrast, Igor Poglazov took his own life at thirteen, unable to bear the weight of his own talent. When you ask me to name specific figures, I cannot do justice to each individual's uniqueness without writing an entire monograph. However, I can confirm that a rich literary process existed in Belarus, outside of Soviet constraints.

Andrew Schumann: Russian-language poetry in Minsk was harder to publish than Belarusian-language poetry due to stricter censorship. Did any Belarusian-language poets seem non-Soviet to you at the time? Did the popular theme of the "Partisan Republic" resonate with you?

Gershon Trestman: I never expected my poetry to be published in the BSSR or even in the RSFSR. Among modern Belarusian poets, I feel a connection with Krystsina Banduryna, Ales Razanov, Vladimir Neklyaev, Mikola Zakharenko, Yekaterina Andreyeva (currently imprisoned), Sergey Vaganov, Felix Batorin, Andrey Khadanovich, Maria Martusevich, and others.

Andrew Schumann: Can the theme of the "Partisan Republic" be interpreted in a non-Soviet way?

Gershon Trestman: It would be difficult to separate the Soviet and non-Soviet elements in Belarusian partisan prose without creating an artificial construct. The theme is too deeply interwoven with Soviet ideology. But that is for others to judge.

Andrew Schumann: What philosophical themes do you explore in your poetry?

Gershon Trestman: As Vladimir Mayakovsky said, "*I am a poet – this is what makes me interesting, and this is what I write about.*" Critics – both Israeli and even Belarusian – have written extensively and intelligently about the philosophical themes in my work. But, God knows, Andrew, I didn't understand a word of it. If you have time to read them, please explain my philosophy to me. I'd be grateful.