

The Critique of Scientism in Defense of the Political Community

Honors Thesis

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## The Person and Scientism

The potential for human beings to achieve political success, as defined by the formation and maintenance of prosperous communities, can only be fulfilled if individuals understand the importance of the person in politics. Recognition of the person necessitates the understanding of the self; one perceives others as persons once he/she first understands oneself as a person. In other words, one lacking self-understanding will not be able to understand others. The understanding of the self is distinguished from the understanding of the person by the process of introspection into the needs of one's own body and soul. Self-knowledge is accumulated through rigorous introspection, reflection, and actions taken to pursue new experiences. Through these processes and actions, one gains an understanding of one's totality, however, he/she does not come to understand the person until this understanding has been applied to another. The understanding of the person, therefore, represents the actualization of the understanding of the self as applied to another self: the person is only understood completely through interaction with others. Thus, the person must possess an understanding of the empirical, emotional, and spiritual experiences that constitute existence to understand another person in their totality. A complete understanding of all the variations of experience that constitute human existence is, of course, an impossibility. Despite the ungraspable magnitude of experience, persons must pursue the understanding of themselves to engage in meaningful political conduct with others.

The lack of the understanding of the person is a significant problem for political regimes that *a priori* necessitate the uniqueness and inherent value of the person. Liberal democracies presuppose the importance of the person given their foundational notions of equitable freedom and the guarantee of rights. Liberal democracies thereby ensure that the dignity of each person is guaranteed through indivisible rights and freedom. David Walsh elucidates that human dignity is

not a simply theoretical notion but the grounding for political conduct in liberal democracies and that, more strangely, the source of the inexhaustibility of dignity remains elusive. Dignity is an eschatological concept that is impossible to fully understand because it is only known through experience. Thus, one can only learn the value of the person through interaction predicated upon mutual respect, rather than blind obligation to laws that force respect: “It is their integrity of persons, their inwardness, that the notion of dignity seeks to guard. Rights are merely the external defenses against the infringement of what is, strictly speaking, internal... Dignity is not contained in any of the codifiable attributes that make a legal code possible... It is the objectification of what cannot and should not be objectified.”<sup>1</sup> Human dignity is impossible to completely encompass within the framework of rights precisely because it is invisible. Also present in political regimes that ensure freedom is the necessity to allow for people to disrespect the dignity of another person in the form of malevolent action or intentional disregard.

The consequences of disrespecting the person are lamentable as they culminate in the erosion of the person committing disrespect. This depletes the person of their capacity for political friendship. Aristotle describes the highest form of political friendship as virtue friendship. This is distinct from friendship based on usefulness or pleasure, and necessitates a mutual respect for each person in the friendship: “... the complete sort of friendship is that between people who are good and are alike in virtue, since they wish for good things for one another in the same way insofar as they are good, and they are good for themselves... each of them is good simply and good for his friend... the friendship among these people is the most intense and best.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, persons attempting to create the highest form of friendship must

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<sup>1</sup> David Walsh, “Dignity as an Eschatological Concept,” in *Understanding Human Dignity*, ed. Christopher McCrudden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 250-251.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2002), 1156b.

respect the integral dignity of persons. Failure to do so results in friendships based on utility or limited pleasure; virtue is unreachable when dignity is discarded. The inevitable result of the lack of virtue friendship is a prevalent feeling of social isolation or loneliness. Loneliness is an express problem in liberal democracies, despite the political pluralism that characterizes the regime. If persons lack respect for the dignity of other persons, they risk labeling and understanding persons only as members of communities they themselves are not part of. This reduces the person to a simple categorization or minimization of his or her totality, thus negating the potential for virtue friendship as virtue friendship can only be fostered between two individuals understood as persons. Loneliness results when the capacity for friendship has been disintegrated by persons who do not perceive other persons as capable of trust. The opportunity to expose oneself to new knowledge and new persons, when incapable of understanding the person, results in an environment that breeds distrust, objectification, and, most problematically, isolation: “Citizens...especially in Western liberal democracies, increasingly see themselves as *alone*. They feel socially isolated and estranged, and they have arranged their lives in ways that reinforce their experience. The evidence is in many places, including lost confidence in social institutions and eroding norms that hold together our lives in common... When we confront difference, we tend to know what we are *not*, but we rarely come away with the pluralist’s confidence in who we *are*.”<sup>3</sup> The failure to recognize persons in their totality poses a grave threat to political communities as friendship is eroded, loneliness becomes rampant, and trust is forgotten. One fails to understand the individual as a person when they choose to perceive their experiences through a selective lens that excludes the methods that encompass the plurality of human experience. Therefore, a palpable tension exists in liberal democracies, as the

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin den Dulk, “Isolation and the Prospects for Democracy: The Challenge for the Alienated,” *Comment* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2018).

foundational tenets that ensure the existence of the regime must also allow modes of thought that do not include or undervalue the person. One must be able to understand modes of thought that do not recognize the person so that he/she can alert others. Scientism is one such mode of thought that merits attention, due to the minimization the person to mere atoms that define the person under its lens.

Scientism is distinguished by Brendan Purcell as an overvaluing of the knowledge provided through scientific investigation in comparison to the knowledge provided through non-scientific inquiry. The use of measured experimentation to investigate natural phenomena is not expressly scientific, it is when modern natural science is overextended and presented as the only true or valid form of knowledge, instead of knowledge that is valuable in tandem with other forms of knowledge, that it scientism emerges: “If natural science claims to be the total explanation of everything, it becomes ‘scientism’: ‘natural science’ as an ideology claiming to be the only valid science... When a Richard Dawkins insists that unless an issue is decided on the basis of evidence, his presumption is that the only kind of evidence is that required by, say physics or biology.”<sup>4</sup> Purcell’s comments point to the reductionist nature of scientism by explicating that through the lens of scientism, problems can only be solved on the basis of empirical evidence. Evidence or concepts that cannot be measured, such as friendship, freedom or the understanding of the person, are determined to be valueless in the framework of scientism. Knowledge does not decrease in its importance or potential impact to the person if it cannot be reproduced in sterile laboratory conditions, nor is purportedly “objective” knowledge the only knowledge that is true. Political knowledge is of this kind as it must be learned through

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<sup>4</sup> Brendan Purcell, *From Big Bang to Big Mystery: Human Origins in the Light of Creation and Evolution* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2011) 99.

interpersonal action and is expressly non-reproducible. People who lack this knowledge cannot successfully embark on political projects because they lack the foundational understanding of the person.

Scientism, expressed as the only all-encompassing valid system of knowledge, should be characterized as a mode of ideological thinking, instead of as science. . In the work “The Origins of Scientism,” Eric Voegelin elucidates the dogmatic tenets that reveal the political implications of the ideology: “(1) the assumption that the mathematized science of natural phenomena is a model science to which all other sciences ought to conform; (2) that all realms of being are accessible to the methods of the sciences of phenomena; and (3) that all reality which is not accessible to sciences of phenomena is either irrelevant or, in the more radical form of the dogma, illusionary...”<sup>5</sup> First, the mathematical purview of the sciences attempts to extend to all forms of investigation; political, philosophical and sociological investigation is fruitless if it is not verifiable through the quantitative scientific method. Secondly, scientism purports to be able to answer all questions previously investigated through non-scientific methods through evaluation of what Voegelin distinguishes as phenomena, at the expense of substance. In doing so, scientism claims to both the most effective form of investigation and the only one that can provide a correct explanation of experience. Lastly, and most crucially, scientism disregards all modes of investigation and knowledge not directly verifiable by its methods as unimportant or, in the most dangerous case, fundamentally untrue. Voegelin’s tenets provide a foundation from which one can evaluate the works of scientific thinkers and understand the risks scientism poses to politics.

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Voegelin, “The Origins of Scientism,” *Social Research* 51, no. 1 (January 1948): 462.

Scientism and the dangers that stem from it arise in many disciplines of science due to the appealing nature of its ideological qualities. A methodology that promises all-encompassing effectiveness, with the caveat that all knowledge that cannot be evaluated is meaningless, is certainly appealing to those who desire to investigate natural phenomena. Furthermore, demonstrated technological advancement in liberal democracies that provide convenience and comfort to citizens conditions them into perceiving all scientific advancement as positive and that scientism is a framework that provides solutions to common problems. Scientism is evident in several academic disciplines including evolutionary biology and psychology, positivist philosophy, bio-robotics as transhumanism, and neuroscience. It is discussed at length by key scientific thinkers such as Steven Pinker, Richard Dawkins, Alexander Rosenberg, Patricia Churchland, Tom Sorell and Daniel Dennett. Scientism overextends into aspects of experience it cannot encompass such as the traditional purview of the social sciences. Alexander Rosenberg accuses the social sciences of applying personal moral values to misrepresent objective knowledge, such as when a comparative political scientist claims that nuclear weapons will be destabilizing to a political regime while only having cursory knowledge of the physics of fission reaction. Rosenberg claims that the political scientist is adding a normative value to the objective knowledge of physics and that this normative value is predicated upon the political scientist's knowledge of physics. However, the political scientist's analysis should not be considered as unilateral predicated upon his/her understanding of nuclear physics, as the complexities of international relations are predicated upon the understanding of political interaction. Rosenberg's characterizes those who do not subscribe to science as an all-encompassing method of investigation as followers of transcendent spiritualism who risk the fate of civilization by utilizing non-objective methods. Ironically, this typifies the ideological preaching of scientism:



“...who are we as scientists to wake them from their dogmatic slumber? But the stakes for science and for civilization are too high to treat those who deny its objectivity in the way we would treat those who claim the Earth is flat.”<sup>6</sup>

Scientists desire to explain all knowledge as having a basis in scientific investigation, thus reducing all knowledge to knowledge that can be explained by scientific means. This is thoroughly demonstrated in the writings of evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, and neuroscientist Patricia Churchland. Both thinkers engage in biological reductionism in their accounts of the gene and the brain respectively. In *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins provides an explanation of altruism and selfishness through the evolution of the human being. In doing so, he neglects the express intentionality of human sacrifice in altruistic actions and concludes that all actions are motivated by the selfishness of genes to ensure survival, despite utilizing qualifying terms to elucidate his argument. Churchland's book, *Touching a Nerve: Our Brains, Our Selves*, explains that due to advances in the understanding of the brain, investigation into traditional philosophical problems should be conducted as scientific investigation into the workings of the brain. With this argument, Churchland suggests that human beings are indivisible from their brains and that neural activity is synonymous with human action. Dawkins and Churchland's biological reductionism minimalizes the person and fundamentally mischaracterizes human interaction. When persons practice politics, they do not explain the motivations for community building, friendship and trust in the scientific terms employed by evolutionary biologists and neuro-philosophers because they lack the personal character exemplified in personal interaction. One learns to trust another by gaining an understanding of him or her as a person, not by understanding their chemical makeup or neural activity. Neural information, while measurable,

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science: Second Edition*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 191.

does not describe the interactions of human beings as they experience them. Therefore, persons who attempt to engage in political conduct who utilize a neuro-chemical understanding of the person will accomplish nothing that furthers the development of the political community.

Two key thinkers who elucidate the political importance of the person in contrast to the dangers scientism poses to politics are Sir Roger Scruton and David Walsh. Scruton examines the understanding of man's relation to God and the natural world. In doing so, he describes the shortcomings of scientism. Scientism, as Scruton explains, fails to account for any "the sum being greater than the parts" instances found in aesthetical understandings of knowledge in its attempt to achieve the unachievable transcendental perspective. This is expressly relevant to politics, as the aesthetical analysis of the natural world and art mirrors the complete understanding of the person. Scruton's texts, *The Face of God* and *The Soul of the World* illustrate the problems of scientism through aesthetical evaluation of music, art and architecture, the elucidation of the first person perspective as the root of self-knowledge, and a thorough critique of biological reductionism. Furthermore, Scruton's discussions of scientism illuminate that the person cannot be evaluated through scientific inquiry exclusively as scientism does not account for the "I" of the person. The "I-You" relationship, as Scruton explains, accounts for the understanding of the person that neuroscience cannot elucidate. Finally, Scruton's understanding of the sacred and theology, while not expressly utilized in contrast to scientism, reinforces his foundational notions of the person. Scruton places priority on the understanding of personal knowledge, gained primarily through "I-You" interactions, to illustrate the importance of treating individuals as irreplaceable persons worthy of respect. Political success is predicated upon respect of another's human dignity, rather than objective qualification or usefulness. The community based on the latter is functional, but it will not contain mutual trust or political

friendship. Furthermore, and most importantly, Scruton's notions of scientism allow the reader to understand that the person must remain the most important actor in politics as the understanding of the self permits one to understand others as selves in and of themselves, participate in genuine political conduct and ultimately, form successful political communities.

In turn, Walsh elucidates that politics provides a foundational ground for individuals to recognize the limitations of individual human existence and surpass them through communal cooperation based on the shared understanding of human dignity. Scientism does not allow for the initial recognition of personal limitation and instead prescribes limitless possibility at the cost of the aforementioned qualities of human experience. In *The Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, Walsh demonstrates that the scientific understanding of the person is not satisfactory. Similar to Scruton's petition to God, Walsh explains that the objective evaluation of knowledge purportedly utilized in scientism cannot and does not account for the eschatological grounding of humanity that Walsh elucidates as expressly relevant to the understanding of the person. Additionally, Walsh's critique of the methodology of scientism, including the scientist understood as a person, how knowledge is considered, and the scientific method as a framework, does not satisfy the criterion scientism aims to achieve. In a manner similar to Scruton, Walsh analyzes various forms of aesthetics, including painting and music, to illustrate the parallels between human creation and divine creation. This emphasizes the importance of the person as a unique creation deserving of respect. Walsh's work thus complements Scruton's and demonstrates that scientism undervalues the person to the detriment of the political community. Scruton and Walsh's discussions allows one to understand the failings of scientism while concurrently comprehending the political importance of the person. The two thinkers serve as

instructors that allow for the understanding of the threat scientism poses to the irreplaceable human dignity necessary within liberal democracies.

An exclusively scientistically constructed community would not include the distinctly human elements of wonder and aesthetical appreciation. Wonder at natural phenomena, in contrast to scientific curiosity fulfilled through experimentation, allows persons to practice aesthetical appreciation that in turn trains them for political interaction. Walsh's understanding of politics reinforces the notion that human beings must understand each other as persons to engage in political conduct, as the perception of one's political partner as a person solidifies the political enterprise on a mutually understood motivation for the common good. Therefore, taking both thinkers' political understandings into account, the recognition that the person is the most important actor in politics is best grasped through the recognition of limitation and an aesthetical appreciation of the world that allows one to understand the irreplaceable dignity of the person. Following this, persons can interact with others to further their understanding of persons and begin to form successful political communities. Scientism cannot account for this understanding of the person and is thus inferior to Scruton and Walsh's notions of political personhood.

## Scruton and Scientism

Scientism, as Roger Scruton elucidates in his critique, promises the potential scientific practitioner a system of investigation that is able to penetrate and understand the totality of reality through objective observation. In doing so, scientism misrepresents the knowledge it seeks to gain and those persons investigated. The scientific practitioner, him/herself a person, is both inaccessible and unaccounted for by his/her methodology while paradoxically necessary for the facilitation of the methodology: “Scruton argues that as the scientific paradigm has come to be the only universally accepted paradigm of understanding, the scientific method has been appropriated to answer questions that cannot be answered by science. As a consequence, questions of fundamental importance to human existence are either ignored or superficially considered.”<sup>7</sup>

Scruton’s critique of scientism contrasts the scientific understanding of objective knowledge with what Scruton distinguishes as “subjective” knowledge. Objective knowledge alone will not provide a sufficient grasp of personal interaction, aesthetic appreciation, or human dignity. Scruton utilizes subjective knowledge to refer to the personalized perspective of the world possessed by every person. However, Scruton’s use of this distinction gives credence to the importance of objective knowledge over “subjective” knowledge, as the distinction itself implies preference towards either objective or “subjective” categories. Thus, the separation of knowledge that Scruton utilizes carries the arbitrary distinctions it is meant to avoid. Instead of referring to knowledge as “subjective,” the term “personal knowledge” avoids the pitfall of

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<sup>7</sup> Erin A. Dolgoy, “The Scientific and the Scientistic: Roger Scruton on the Consequences of Modern Science,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 45, no. 4 (2016): 244.

categorization that the “subjective” distinction entails. The term personal knowledge was previously utilized in this manner by Michael Polanyi as a superior term that better captures the way persons know and engage with one another: “In so far as the personal submits to requirements acknowledged by itself as independent of itself, it is not subjective; but in so far as it is an action guided by individual passions, it is not objective either. It transcends the disjunction between subjective and objective.”<sup>8</sup>

Scruton works, *On Human Nature*, *The Face of God* and *The Soul of the World*, argue that the scientific framework is insufficient in accounting for the person, as he/she is not equivalent to his/her biological components exclusively. The scientific practitioner, as Scruton explains, suggests that the motivations for human action are reducible to foundational biological processes. Biology does provide a technical basis insofar as biological processes facilitate higher functions. However, biological processes do not subsume higher functions such as intentionality, described by Scruton as action undertaken that is predicated upon the understanding of the person as an “I” having an effect on others. Biology cannot account for intentionality alone nor can it be comprehended through an understanding of biology alone: “Although it may provide a necessary backdrop, a physicalist account of the human being in terms of molecules, drives, neurons and causal forces cannot make sense [the person]... For Scruton... the person is not reducible to the physical processes of body and brain... As ethical, artistic and religious subjects, we are led upwards into different forms of explanation not downwards to our biological constitution.”<sup>9</sup> Scruton’s critique of scientific reductionism culminates in his discussion of the

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 300.

<sup>9</sup> David Fergusson, “Book Review: The Face of God, written by Roger Scruton,” *Ecclesiology* 11, no. 2 (May 2015): 255.

“Archimedean point.” The scientific practitioner displaces him/herself from his/her fellow persons to attempt to reach a position of total objectivity. According to the scientific practitioner, this allows him/her to authentically investigate reality free from personal bias. However, as Scruton explains, the scientific finds him/herself “nowhere” as they cannot engage with other persons nor properly understand the object they desire to investigate. This costs the scientific investigator his/her understanding of the self, and thus the scientific cannot engage with other persons.

Scruton provides an alternative to scientism through his discussion of aesthetics in music, painting and environment. Scruton utilizes these categories as proxies for moral conduct between persons, as shared aesthetical appreciation between persons illustrates how aesthetical appreciation of created works mirrors the appreciation of persons themselves. Thus, persons develop their understanding of one another as irreplaceable beings, not replicable objects. The person is prepared to engage in communal conduct with others through practice of the appreciation of art as pseudo moral categories.

Scruton concludes his critique by illuminating the notion of the “transcendental.” This refers to the certain knowledge, with no foundation, that one is a unique and individual person who participates in experiences. Scruton’s critique of scientism encourages one to embrace personal knowledge, rooted in the notion of the transcendental, so that the community can achieve political success. The understanding of personal knowledge is essential for the practice of politics as it must be drawn from interactions with other persons who share a mutual understanding of the unique dignity of the person. Through the understanding of personal knowledge, one finds commonality with others by understanding the dignity and freedom of the person celebrated by liberal democracies: “The key to the moral life, in Scruton’s eyes, is the

concept of the person, which, he says, must occupy the center of our lives and our motivations as we give account of ourselves to one another. It is worth noting that he centers the moral life on the person and not on the good or on happiness, understood as that which transcends and completes us as persons.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Scientific Biological Reductionism**

The first facet of scientism that Scruton explores resides in evolutionary biology and psychology. Scruton explains, through the examples of Richard Dawkins’ genetic theory, Patricia Churchland’s “neuro-philosophy” and Benjamin Libet’s brain imaging experiments, that the scientific framework commits reductionist fallacy in its description of persons as deterministic autonomists. The scientific ideologue, attributing action to genes as in Dawkins or the brain in “neuro-philosophy,” finds him/herself unable to account for notions such as altruism, responsibility and freedom in a manner that is genuinely representative of the person engaging with others as an “I.” Scruton illuminates that the scientific ideologue reduces the person to a mere facet of his biology, rather than a dignified being **emergent out of biology**.

Scruton explains that scientific ideologues such as Dawkins present the person as a facilitator for their genes in the process of sexual reproduction. In doing so, Scruton suggests that Dawkins’ model for human behavior commits reductionist fallacy in ascribing human action to genes exclusively. Dawkins’ argument suggests that the human gene is intrinsically selfish, as all actions, including actions understood as altruistic by the person committing them, are enacted to

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<sup>10</sup> David P. Maher, “Roger Scruton’s *On Human Nature* and the Starting Point of Science,” *Society* 54, no. 6 (December 2017): 577.



increase chances of reproduction: “Dawkins sets out to explain goals and rational choices in terms of genetic materials that make no choices. He describes these materials as ‘selfish’ entities, motivated by a reproductive ‘goal...’ In a cogent biological theory all such teleological idioms must be replaced with functional explanations.... Natural selection tells us that winning strategies will be selected, even when they describe the behavior of genes that want nothing at all.”<sup>11</sup> Genes, defined by Dawkins in exclusively functional terms, equate the person to the “actions” of their genes through reductionism.

In response to criticisms of the kind that Scruton makes, Dawkins explains that his argument does not completely negate the influence of other factors. Genes exert a statistical influence on the action of individuals, but, as Dawkins explains, it does not override the interpreted influences of social politeness or understanding of contraception: “We, that is our brains, are separate and independent enough from our genes to rebel against them... we do so in a small way every time we use contraception.”<sup>12</sup> Dawkins’ retort does not solve the criticism of the reduction of human choice. He simply places the deterministic characterization on the statistical influences of stimuli persons infer and continues to describe the person as components of his/her body, while also personalizing these parts by stating they “rebel” against other parts. This discussion epitomizes the scientific mistake of discrediting the totality of the person, while concurrently assigning those same personal qualities to components of the body. Dawkins is thus engaging in a game of moving the personal qualities to different parts of the body rather than dispelling the notion altogether. Personal knowledge is not discredited by Dawkins’ explanation, rather, it is simply shuffled onto components of the person. The choice to rebel may “occur” in

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<sup>11</sup> Roger Scruton, *On Human Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene: New Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 332.

the brain as a result of neural activity, but that does not mean that the person is equal to the brain. Dawkins' shell game of personalization minimalizes the weight of moral choice for persons.

The bodily components that are statistically influenced to remain docile are not overruled in a mathematical balancing act by those that desire to rebel. The person engages in moral action that requires the totality of their personhood. This is particularly apparent in situations where rebellion is expressly difficult, such as tyrannical oppression. Persons, particularly in totalitarian political regimes that disrespect the dignity of the person, make the choice to rebel to secure the dignity of others after they have experienced or witnessed extreme hardship. Similarly, while altruistic actions may make a person appear suitable for reproduction, as it demonstrates the desirable quality of communal protection, the person making this sacrifice is acting in an intentional moral capacity wherein his/her dignity is deprioritized for the sake of others. In this manner, altruistic actions are understood as being committed to defend against objectification, not as selfish actions that make one appear desirable: "...it is a substantial theoretical claim that functional attributes exist *because of* their function. And until that theory is produced, the claim is without weight.... that explanation only gives a *sufficient* condition for 'altruism' and only by redescribing altruism in terms that bypass the higher realms of moral thought."<sup>13</sup>

Scruton contends that describing altruism simply as a strategy for continuing one's genetic legacy, as scientific ideologues do, equates the sacrifices made by individual human beings for their friends to the sacrifices of insects for their colonies. He explains, through the example of Matt Ridley's work, that the scientific ideologue describes altruism in terms of "game theory" wherein altruism is merely the most effective mode of conduct for persons to

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<sup>13</sup> Scruton, *On Human Nature*, 16-17.

secure the opportunity to pass along one's genes. Altruism is once again relegated to an ultimately "selfish" action that ensures reproduction. Scruton characterizes Ridley's conception of altruism as a minimalist conception of sacrificial action between persons, wherein the person's action is indistinguishable from that of an ant: "Ridley's argument employs a minimalist conception of altruism, according to which an organism acts altruistically if it benefits another organism at a cost to itself. The concept applies equally to the soldier ant marching into the flames... and the officer who throws himself onto the live grenade... The concept of altruism, so understood, cannot explain... the distinction between those two cases.... Rational beings have a motivation to sacrifice themselves, regardless of genetic advantage."<sup>14</sup> Scientism, as Scruton elucidates, misrepresents personal sacrifice, and thus assertion of moral choice, as selfish genetic influence. Persons have sufficient motivations to sacrifice themselves for others through actions that are essentially inter-personal.

Scruton identifies the scientific explanation of moral action that removes uniqueness from actions committed by persons as the "charm of disenchantment:" "...the appeal that comes from wiping away the appearance of human distinctiveness... Such would-be explanations assimilate human to animal conduct by giving the most superficial description of both. In particular they leave out of consideration the radically different *intentionality* of the human response."<sup>15</sup> The scientific ideologue's disregard for the intentionality necessary in altruistic actions speaks to scientism's failure to account for human behavior. If a person commits a positive action towards another for the purpose of financial, social or sexual gain, the action cannot be considered altruistic as it has been corrupted. Reducing altruistic action, action taken

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<sup>14</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Face of God* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 26-27.

<sup>15</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 28.

for the sake of another person with no thought of gain, to selfish action expressly “disenchants” the distinctly inter-personal action of giving oneself freely to another: “Human generosity is mediated by concepts like gift, sacrifice, duty, sanctity... The emergence of these concepts is what most needs explaining, since they create what seems like an impassable chasm in the evolutionary story. You don’t cross that chasm merely by misdirecting the behavior that creates it.”<sup>16</sup>

Scruton’s apt characterization of the “charm of disenchantment” as appealing notes the important hypocritical element in the actions of the scientism practitioner. The scientific ideologue attempts to provide an objective explanation of morality and free choice, but by doing so intentionally commits a free choice. This action provides personal satisfaction or pleasure to the scientific ideologue, and is thus understood as an action that must either be an act of rebellion against genetic motivations, or an intentional action made as a free choice. Scientism thus concentrates intentionality singularly with the practitioner of the methodology, allowing an escape from the reductionism employed. The person practicing scientism becomes the sole enactor of intentionality in the context of his/her investigation, rather than a person responding to intentionality with his/her own actions. The scientific practice of reductionism, in the context of intentionality, fails to provide an alternative explanation that supersedes the notions of altruism. The person, and his/her behavior, is not properly accounted for in the scientific framework.

Scruton elucidates how “neuro-philosophy,” a system of philosophy that regards neuroscientific knowledge of the brain as the most important method for solving moral and technical problems, fails to replace the person as the center of philosophical and political

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<sup>16</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 28.

importance. Neuroscientists such as Patricia Churchland posit that if human beings wish to understand themselves they must investigate the workings of the brain through the lens of evolutionary biology that accounts for moral concepts as sequential adaptations that allow success in reproduction in contrast to defining human beings on the level of interpersonal understanding, based on morality that evaluates free choice and responsibility: “Patricia Churchland recommends that we ask ourselves just what philosophy has contributed to the understanding of human mental processes... The answer is not much, or even nothing at all... neuroscience takes over... [and provides] better explanations of human behavior than could ever be obtained from that old-fashioned language of belief, perception, emotion, and desire.”<sup>17</sup>

Adaptations are “hardwired” in the brain and are described as contrary to the notions of freedom and moral choice. Scientistic ideologues note that the knowledge of “hardwired” adaptations, known through the use of neural imaging techniques, is interpreted as evidence that the nervous system functions as a series of response and nonresponse triggers to environmental stimuli, thus rendering moral choice nonexistent. In this understanding, human bodies are mere shells for the computation mechanism housed in the top compartment: “The ‘I...’ is like a passenger, pacing the deck of a vast oceangoing liner, while persuading himself that he moves it with his feet.”<sup>18</sup>

Scruton explains that if the moral explanation for human action is indeed insufficient as claimed by “neuro-philosophy,” the genetic adaptation argument must prove sufficient. Despite scientism rendering morality and freedom as illusory human constructs, the argumentation utilized by scientistics suggests that persons still possess the capacity for choice. The scientistic

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<sup>17</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 51.

<sup>18</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 52.

investigator initiates his/her inquiry by making a choice, the kind that scientism would deny objects of its study. Dawkins, as discussed previously, attributes moral choice to a series of competing statistical influences on the brain, but in doing so, he is simply attributing to the brain the freedom to make choices, rather than the person of whom said brain is a part. The scientific investigator is not equal to his/her brain, as it is not the brain that shares neuroscientific discoveries intended to illuminate itself. It is the person who shares with others, not the brains of persons: “He [the person] lives in a space of his own, the space of a human life in which he moves and feels and thinks. He must, if his experience is to be both real and metaphysically possible, inhabit a world of other people, who can identify him... his body in that space will contain a brain.... That belongs to the person... when he says, speaking in the first person, ‘I am here’. The brain that the scientist simulates has no connection... with the brain of the person he supposedly controls...”<sup>19</sup>

Scruton highlights the fallacy assigning the qualities of the person to the brain through the analysis of a quote from Churchland, wherein she provides an explanation for the behavior of social animals utilizing neurochemicals such as oxytocin and vasopressin as mediators for pair-bonding. Scruton explains that “neuro-philosophy” assigns the sensations of pain and pleasure to the brain itself, when the sensations are experienced as separate from the brain. In doing so, Scruton petitions for the use of folk psychology, the study of pedestrian personal encounters conducted without the use of scientific terms. Churchland posits that folk psychology is a primitive method of explanation to be surpassed by the superior methods of neuroscience. However, Scruton contends that folk psychology is in fact superior to Churchland’s “neuro-philosophy”: “In response I should say that the *brains* of social animals feel neither pleasure nor

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<sup>19</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 48.

pain. Pleasure and pain are what *we* feel, and we are not identical with our brains... If this is what it is, to replace ‘folk psychology’ by ‘neuroscience’, then we should protest that neuroscience purchases its explanations at the cost of facts. Indeed, we are not dealing with a new science of the human being at all, but with an outpouring of neurononsense.”<sup>20</sup>

Folk psychology retains the understanding of personal intentionality in choice making, thus prioritizing the person him/herself as the topic of inquiry by the researcher. Scruton ironically utilizes Churchland’s pejorative stance on folk psychology against her by explicating that if “neuro-philosophy” were to surpass folk psychology, it would render the goal of explaining the actions of persons pointless: “We would be able to describe our mental condition only by investigating our brains, and the give and take of reasons between me and you would, since it depends on the first person privilege, disappear.... In short the neuroscience would be left with nothing of interest to explain. That is just one thought among many tending to the conclusion that our way of representing the human world is not replaceable by neuroscience...”<sup>21</sup>

In folk psychology, the recognition of the self in others is thus ensured such that the interpretation of the person is genuine. Scruton explains further that if the adaption argument is correct, those who are not disposed to follow it due to statistical influences would necessarily have died off, regardless of their internal reasoning for these behaviors. The internal reasoning of the person, the moral judgements one makes after pondering one’s understanding of the environment, is the manner in which the person interprets experiences and makes decisions, instead of blind obligation to genetic laws. In contrast, the scientific ideologue who perceives human conduct as a gladiatorial ring wherein those with superior adaptation always emerge

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<sup>20</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 44-45.

victorious in a Hobbesian “state of nature” fails to take the argument to the stage of communal development as Hobbes does. Scruton explains that mathematical reasoning, as the process of solving mathematical proofs, mirrors the manner in which persons engage in moral judgement to find a conclusive answer to problems. In this manner, mathematical reasoning stands as an example of the internal discipline of reasoning independent of adaptation:

We can easily show that mathematical competence is an adaptation. But that shows nothing about the distinction between valid and invalid proofs, and it won't give us a grasp of mathematical reasoning. There is an *internal* discipline involved here, which will not be illuminated by any amount of psychology, just as there is an internal discipline of moral thinking which leads of its own accord to the conclusion that a given action is obligatory... it is the moral judgment, rather than some blind instinct that compels them....<sup>22</sup>

The practice of politics exemplifies Scruton's description of moral thinking, as persons who behave on instinct alone forgo conduct with their political partners in favor of their own position. The person who behaves in this manner prioritizes him/herself rather than perceiving his/her partner as a self and recognizing their personhood. The internal discipline, understood as self-knowledge, that Scruton elucidates is present in all deliberation must be understood for one to engage with others genuinely as persons: “...the word *you* does not, as a rule, *describe* the other person; it summons him or her into your presence, and this summons is paid for by a reciprocal response. You make yourself available to others in the words that call them to account to you... In the I-You encounter we act for reasons of which we are aware and which the other can ask us to declare.... we can, through our dialogue, directly affect what each of us does.”<sup>23</sup>

Scruton's description of freedom as contingent on inter-personal conduct highlights the importance of participation with other persons in the understanding of the person. The

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<sup>22</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Scruton, *On Human Nature*, 70.



scientific's desire to discover the origin of freewill in objects like the brain misses the point that one's freedom is discovered in cooperation or disagreement with other persons when confronted with choices. Once one understands that persons possess the freedom to make choices rather than being slaves to their instincts, one understands the motivations of others to contribute to their community as genuine, as they are intentionally making these choices. This recognition of intentionality, as discussed in the cases of sacrificial and altruistic acts, is not understood as emerging from individual organs in the body of the person, rather, it is only after the effects of the action are felt in the understanding of another person that one understands their capacity for moral decision making and self-government. Thus, one respects another's capacity for choice when one possesses the understanding of freedom.

Finally, Scruton challenges the interpretations of Benjamin Libet's experiments utilizing electroencephalography and magnetic imaging of the brain that suggest that free will and human choice are illusions. Libet's images show that when a person is asked to choose between two alternatives, a burst of neural activity occurs in the motor-centers of the brain. The tested person also self-reports that his/her decision was made moments after the choice was initially presented; the action of "choice" has already been undertaken by the brain. Scruton explains that some researchers extend the results of this experiment to suggest that the brain is the source of all action and that the person is merely a shell through which the brain operates: "Some cognitive scientists... draw the conclusion that our impression of free choice is therefore an illusion, since 'choice' comes always too late, after the action has been set in motion by the brain.... talk of the

person and their actions is imply a loose and ignorant way of describing what should really be described in terms of a brain and the body that it moves.”<sup>24</sup>

Scruton explains that Libet’s experiment necessitates *a priori* that an event in the brain is equivalent to the decision a person makes in response to a set of choices. Furthermore, Libet’s experiment implies that choice is only valid if preceded by a neural stimulation as modeled by the experiment, and that the intentions of a person are only valid if they can be marked by a precise unit of time. The latter requirement arises due to the additional necessity of measuring the neural responses in terms of a rate of activity over the seconds elapsed. This implies a causal sequence of neural stimulation to active decision making that is contingent on the idea that a precise amount of stimulation taking place in a precise amount of time is sufficiently equivalent to a choice being made. Scruton explains that this experiment only disproves freewill if freewill is assumed to be subsequent to measured neural activity, and that this line of argumentation demonstrates the same fallacy of searching for “objective” criteria in the experience of the person: “The Libet experiment leads to the denial of free will only if we assume free choice to be an eruption in the stream of neural events. But to see freewill in that way is to look for it in the world of objects and not in the point of view of the subject, where it belongs... freedom is not a kind of causality, still less an interruption of the causal order. Freedom emerges from the web of inter-personal relations... It is not a blip among objects but a revelation of the subject.”<sup>25</sup>

Scientific ideologues, such as evolutionary biologists, describe the human being as incredibly simple while concurrently emphasizing the complexity of other organisms such as insects. This minimizes the importance of the person and personalizes the actions of lower

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<sup>24</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 43.

animals: "...when biologists try to develop an account of the human being that is founded in the Darwinian picture of how we came to be, all too often they end either by describing us as far simpler than we are, or by describing the lower animals as more complex than *they* are... notice the implications: worker-bees... are fully fledged Kantian persons, whose view of the world is exactly the view that we should take..."<sup>26</sup> This description of animals presents the emergence of a moral capacity manifest in behavior that necessitates the behavior be perceived as moral *by* nature. Scruton comments that scientism does not explain away the mysteries of human behaviors; it instead misplaces the mystery in the actions of animals and disenchant the actions of persons.

A case study involving the capacity for mathematical reasoning by honeybees recently published in *Science*<sup>27</sup> magazine illustrates the scientific fallacy of humanizing animals through personalization. Scarlett R. Howard and her colleagues claim that honeybees demonstrably understand the concept of "nothing," defined mathematically as the empty set containing no numbers, after learning the concept through classical behavioral conditioning. Their discussion begins with a series of statements that contextualize the human understanding of zero throughout history. Following this, Howard *et al.* immediately establish an equivalence between persons and said animals by anthropomorphizing the understanding of zero held by animals: "Bees demonstrated an understanding that parallels animals such as the African grey parrot, nonhuman primates, and even, preschool children.... Several ancient human civilizations lacked the full understanding and importance of zero, leading to constraints in their numeric systems (1).

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<sup>26</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 25.

<sup>27</sup>Scarlett R. Howard et al., "Numerical ordering of zero in honey bees," *Science* 360, no. 6393 (June 2018): 1124.

Interestingly, some vertebrate animals have recently demonstrated a capacity to acquire and understand this numerical concept.”<sup>28</sup>

Howard *et al.* frame the discussion of honeybee’s understanding of zero with the notion that vertebrate animals and humans share this understanding and from this, the honey bee’s understanding is equivalent to that held by humans as it is equivalent to vertebrate animals. This establishes a foundation of personhood through anthropomorphism. Honeybees were placed in sterile conditions and trained through conditioning experiments to expect a reward when they landed on the panel containing fewer distinct black figures on a white backdrop. Howard *et al.* sequentially trained the bees to differentiate between numerical representations of one through six, and came to the conclusion that honeybees can differentiate zero from one based on the final experiment where bees selected the representation of nothing consistently over the representation of one.

Attributing qualities of mathematical interpretation, i.e. the recognition of nothing as the empty set containing no numbers to insects like honeybees suggests that the honeybees perceive their environment in the same manner as persons and then interpret the environment. However, the honeybees in the experiment cannot understand zero as persons do, because they do not possess the *internal* discipline that Scruton describes in persons. The honeybees are not understanding the concept of nothingness as persons do, they are understanding nothingness as honeybees do which does not include the interpretation of the zero set as distinct from numbers. In attributing that quality to honeybees, scientific practitioners edge closer to ascribing full personhood to creatures that do not share the capacity of the person. Howard *et al* states:

“Because it can be demonstrated that an insect, with a different brain structure from primates and

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<sup>28</sup> Howard et al., “Numerical ordering of zero in honey bees,” 1124.

birds, can understand the concept of zero, it would be of high value to consider such capacities in other animals.”<sup>29</sup> Ascribing “high value” to the personalized capacities of animals concurrently lowers the capacity of persons by assuming that the personalized capacities of honeybees are equal to those of the person. Biological reductionism hinders the person from recognizing his/her grounding as an irreplaceable bearer of dignity, thus obstructing his/her capacity to engage in political conduct with others.

### **“Nowhere” and the Archimedean Point**

Scruton, having accounting for the scientific reductionism in evolutionary biology and neuroscience, turns his attention to the person him/herself through analysis of the first-person perspective. Scruton elucidates that persons announce themselves and engage with others with the understanding that the persons is an “I.” Scruton then, in contrast to the notion of “I,” introduces his fundamental problem with scientism; the pursuit of objectivity at the expense of the person pursuing it. The scientific practitioner, in his/her pursuit of an objective vantage point, termed the “Archimedean point,” prevents him/herself from engaging with other persons responsibly as the practitioner is attempting to perceive them exclusively as an object. Scruton prioritizes the understanding of the person in contrast to the scientific goal of objectivity.

Scruton explains that the term “I” is a deictic term, relating to the person as the context for the term itself that denotes the capacity of the person to identify him/herself as a self to others through the acknowledgement of the first-person perspective. The first-person perspective allows individuals to make statements that demonstrate the understanding of the self, such as “I am in pain” or “I must finish this paper;” one cannot be mistaken that one is reporting one’s state

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<sup>29</sup> Howard et al., “Numerical ordering of zero in honey bees,” 1126.

of affairs when speaking in the first-person (barring mental instability): “When I say I am in pain, wanting to leave the room... or worried about my son, then I am reporting states of affairs about which I cannot... be mistaken... Self-consciousness presupposes the privileges of first-person awareness, and the existence of these privileges is also assumed in our interpersonal dialogue.”<sup>30</sup> Persons engage with one another on these assumptions because they are ensured that their first-person perspective is accurate.

In the scientific understanding, deictic terms such as “I” cannot be utilized, since the understanding of the person is lost within the desired objective framework of scientism. Scruton explains, through the use of a notion originally elucidated by Thomas Nagel, that analysis that does not account for the “I” necessarily cannot evaluate the person conducting the analysis. The desire of scientism to replace the understanding of person necessitates the destruction and reconstruction of the understanding of interaction. According to scientific practitioners, interpersonal interaction must be perceived from a removed position wherein the scientific investigator can freely observe the interaction without fear of damaging the authenticity of said interaction by participating in it. In this analysis, as Scruton explains, the perspective of scientism is necessarily confined to a third-person perspective of existence. Persons are described as he or she from an impersonal perspective that is held by the scientific thinker to elevate him/herself to a position of objectivity: “Imagine a complete description of the world, according to the true theory... of physics. This description describes the disposition of all the particles, forces and fields that compose reality... Not a thing has been overlooked; and yet there is a fact that the description does not mention... namely, which of the things mentioned in the

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<sup>30</sup> Scruton, *Soul of the World*, 30-31.

description am I? Where in this world of objects am I?”<sup>31</sup> In this manner, the analysis and description of inter-personal action is collapsed to a distinctly non-personal manner; explanations of human behavior are described in terms that no human is able to relate to on the basis of their own experiences.

The scientific observer him/herself is forgotten in his/her investigation, thus leaving him/her “nowhere.” Attempting to push the person peg into the objective hole results in either the dismal of the operation altogether as in the forgoing of the first-person case, or the depersonalization of the person peg into an object that fits the objective hole. Objects are easily understood in terms of their causal relationships to other objects and thus fit the predictable models employed by scientificists. The scientific observer who employs these methods when attempting to understand the person must proceed with their investigation in a manner that is contrary to their being as a person; in effect, he/she must forgo their understanding of the person. Scruton’s description of the scientific observer as “nowhere” is an important signifier of the separation of the scientificist from other persons and the responsibility inherent in interaction with persons. Thus, the scientificist observer turns away from this horizon when he/she turns his/her gaze downwards toward the empirically understood world at the cost of the vista of persons before him/her: “The identification of any object in the first-person case is ruled out by the enterprise of scientific explanation. So science cannot tell me who I am, let alone where, when, or how.”<sup>32</sup>

Persons must perceive themselves as a component of the world on which they act, and are acted upon by others, to gain an understanding of responsibility. Scruton elucidates that persons

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<sup>31</sup> Roger, *The Face of God*, 31.

<sup>32</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 31.

who present themselves to each other in the first-person, thus engaging in interpersonal “I-You” relationship, become present to one another as equitable beings in the world and share in the responsibility to understand one another as such: “What we are for ourselves minutely reflects what we are for others, since it is through our dialogue with others that we understand how we appear in the world. The I-You encounter shapes both me and you... By learning to see myself as you see me, I gain control of my situation, as a being in the world. Through the life of civil society... I shape myself as another in the eyes of others, and so gain consciousness of myself.”<sup>33</sup>

The scientific observer denies him/herself the opportunity to participate in this initial sharing of public responsibility and thus limits him/herself from the world he/she seeks to investigate. Human beings express their desires toward each other, their communication holds the potential for a shared understanding of commitment to promises, consistent obligation to one another, and the taking of responsibility for other persons. The scientific observer in “nowhere” forgoes the public responsibility shared by those who are mutually perceptive, in the pursuit of an objective perspective that cannot possibly be verified.

In the attempt of the scientific investigator to place him/herself in the situation where he/she can objectively perceive all matters, the so termed “Archimedean point,” the scientific investigator him/herself cannot verify the validity of his/her own position. Precisely because the investigator is a human being, the “Archimedean point” he/she has “reached” cannot be verified as the true “Archimedean point” as this would require a person who is above that investigator, thus causing a philosophical dilemma of verifying the “Archimedean point” of that person in an endless regress. The scientific thinker is caught in an ironic trap of his/her own making wherein

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<sup>33</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 64.



he/she necessitates some other person who can verify his/her position, but cannot find them due to his/her removal from the world into “nowhere.” The scientific observer’s disconnect from the world has robbed him/her of the everyday interpersonal experiences that shape individuals into the people they can become. Scruton points out that persons do not require the precise knowledge of scientism to understand that this is true; to understand that responsibility to one another is inherent in interpersonal action. Scruton compares and contextualizes this point with man’s relationship to God. He explains that the seemingly impassable gap encountered and conquered in person to person relations is present in the relation between God and man:

What matters to us are not the invisible nervous systems that explain how people work, but the visible appearances to which we respond when we respond to them as people... It seems, then, that there is an impassable metaphysical gap, between the human object and the free subject to whom we relate as a person... Yet we constantly cross that seemingly impassable metaphysical barrier. How is this? And if we can understand how it is, will that help us to solve the problem of the relation between the transcendental and the immanent God?<sup>34</sup>

The impassable gap is routinely approached in the initiation of interpersonal conduct, crossed with the acknowledgment of one’s personhood by another, and understood as surpassed when the person is easily able to engage in conduct again. In this manner, the responsibility to hold one’s hand out to another so that the other person can cross the gap with confidence in his/her perception as a person, so to speak, is recognized and understood by all persons who participate in interpersonal interaction. From “nowhere,” the scientific practitioner does not describe the behaviors and actions of human beings as they are understood by the humans who are engaging in or committing them. Scientism can describe the objective world in great detail, but it cannot account for the person conducting the experiments, doing the “objective” analysis and publishing the findings of scientific inquiry. Scruton’s case for the importance of the first-

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<sup>34</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 48.

person perspective allows one to recognize that to operate under the requisites of scientism, one must forgo the true understanding of the person developed in cooperation in the sharing of public responsibility. Scientism certainly allows one to gain an understanding of objects, but, as Scruton elucidates, one loses the understanding of the person. Scruton aptly illustrates the conundrum of describing persons with scientific terms exclusively: “The human world, I maintain, is ordered by concepts that are rooted in dialogue, and therefore in the first-person perspective. But there is no room in causal theories for terms like ‘I’ and ‘you...’ ”<sup>35</sup>

### **Appreciation of the Person, Art and the Earth through Eros and Agape**

Scruton provides an alternative to scientism in the form of personal knowledge gained in the appreciation of the person in interaction. This appreciation of the person can only be comprehended once one has mastered understanding the person. This is practiced in the appreciation of works of art and the natural world, understood as unique representations of the person-creator and as a personal entity worthy of “I-You” encounters. In this manner, the aesthetical category of beauty found in art and the natural appreciated by the person is discussed as a stand-in for moral and political phenomena found in interpersonal interaction. Scruton illustrates the appreciation of art as a pseudo communal space wherein persons participate in the shared reflection of the art as it relates to them as persons. Scruton’s alternative to the scientific practitioner’s understanding of beauty as a motivation for reproduction exclusively allows one to gain a better understanding of the person, art and the natural world. Scruton outlines the necessity of understanding the sentiment behind the appreciation of beauty found in *eros*,

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<sup>35</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 45.

platonic love and *agape*, Christian based neighborly love, in contrast to the notion of beauty as a motivator exclusively for the purpose of sexual reproduction. A synthesis of the platonic understanding of *eros* as contemplative of the person, erotic love that respects the person's body as an extension of one's personhood and communal *agape* allows the person to redeem their erotic passion through aesthetical appreciation of the person and the building of communal trust. Scruton's discussions concerning the analysis of art, musical composition and the natural world allow one to practice understanding persons through the appreciation of irreplaceable creations.

Scruton explains, through examination of platonic *eros*, that the base form of erotic love objectifies the person by perceiving him/her as a beautiful object to possess rather than a person who possesses beauty. The love of beauty, in contrast, respects the dignity of the person by considering the person him/herself as an extension of the universal beauty that aligns one to another through appreciation: "He [Plato] identified *erōs* as the origin of both sexual desire and the love of beauty... sexual desire, in its common form, involves a desire to possess what is mortal and transient, and a consequent enslavement to the lower aspect of the soul... The love of beauty is really a signal to free ourselves from that sensory attachment, and to begin the ascent of the soul towards the world of ideas... That is the true kind of erotic love... an instance in the here and now of the eternal idea of the beautiful."<sup>36</sup> The scientific understanding of beauty is comparable to the base form of erotic love, as it objectifies the relations between persons as motivation for sexual reproduction. Scruton clarifies that the contemplation of beauty is still rooted in physical erotic passion towards the person, thus *eros* always risks the objectification of the person and the disregard of trust.

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<sup>36</sup> Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40-41.

Scruton elucidates that *agape* is discussed as a contrasting notion to *eros* that does not objectify the person due to the unconditional characterization of neighborly love. Scruton explains that *agape* entails neither a distinction between persons nor a desire for the erotic pleasure of bodies and therefore does not risk the objectification of persons. A society based on *agape* alone is functional but does not provide a method for intentional interaction between specific persons that develops trust, sexual relationships and reproduction. Thus there is a place for a contemplative *eros* between persons in private and a public commitment to *agape* between persons in a community: “Plato’s mistake was to think that normal sexual desire is directed towards the beautiful body... The solution to the problem of desire is not to overcome it, but to ensure that it retains its personal focus. A society based on *agape* alone is all very well, but it will not reproduce itself... Hence the redemption of the erotic lies at the heart of every viable social order...”<sup>37</sup> Scruton raises the example of sanctified marriage as a synthesis between *eros* and *agape* that allows trust to be maintained in private while unconditional love is provided back to the community: “the purpose of the sacrament is to incorporate *eros* into the world of *agape*... the purpose, where it exists, is everywhere the same: to ensure that the private face of the lover can at a moment become the public face of the citizen, or the outgoing face of the friend...”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, persons must utilize contemplative *eros* in a manner predicated on trust that does not objectify persons during erotic passion, and the publicly practiced *agape* to further the development of community.

The scientific practitioner, while providing experiment subjects a form assuring confidentiality, does not intentionally practice trust in his/her methodology, as he/she must

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<sup>37</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 104.

displace him/herself from what is being investigated. A scientific notion equivalent to *agape* would be contrary to the understanding of beauty as a sexual adaptation, as neighbor love necessitates that persons engage with others for the sake of the other, rather than utilizing others for the sake of themselves in reproduction: “The attempt to explain art, music, literature, and the sense of beauty as adaptations is surely both trivial as science and empty as a form of understanding. It tells us nothing of importance about its subject matter, and does huge intellectual damage in persuading people that after all there is nothing about the humanities to *understand*, since they have all been *explained* – and explained away.”<sup>39</sup>

Scruton utilizes the example of the kiss to illustrate how trust between individuals counteracts the risk of objectification in private appreciation of the person. Scruton’s considerations of eroticism displayed in passionate kissing elucidates how the redeemed notion of *eros*, understood as the synthesis of contemplative *eros* and *agape*, is superior to the scientific concept of the kiss. Scruton explains that while sharing a kiss is considered objectively as two flesh objects connecting as a successive motivator to engage in sexual reproduction, further analysis outside of the lens of scientism reveals that the kiss is an expression that exemplifies trust and sacrifice between persons. The sculpture “Eros and Psyche,” by Canova, as Scruton explains, captures in its most realized fashion the moment when desire between two persons is at its climax. The kiss, captured by Canova, is a perfect recreation of how persons give themselves to another once they have established trust. The two lovers are drawn to each other through *eros*, but are united in their trust for one another guaranteed in the synthesis of *eros* and *agape* in an “I-You” relation: “The lips are offered as spirit, but they respond as flesh... Hence the kiss the most important moment of desire – the moment in which

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<sup>39</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 144.

soul and body are united, and in which lovers are fully face to face and also totally exposed to one another... The pleasure of the kiss is not a sensory pleasure: it is not a matter of sensations, but of I-You intentionality and what it means.”<sup>40</sup>

Scruton’s description of the kiss reveals the shortcomings of scientism. First, Scruton’s identification of the pleasure of the kiss as a non-sensory pleasure is apt; the pleasure derived from the kiss is dependent upon the intentionality of both participants during the kiss. If the kiss were merely an activity of pure sensory pleasure, mistaken or unwanted kissing would be similarly characterized. Objective measures of kissing cannot place the kiss into these categories, thereby missing the purpose of the action entirely. Secondly, the shared pleasure between two parties during the kiss is predicated upon the understanding of the “I-You” relationship, thus *a priori* necessitating the understanding of the person. Human beings may act upon each other as if they are objects, but may unburden each other of that objectification if they understand one another as persons and embrace desire through the understanding of intention in the form of contemplative *eros* predicated on trust. Scruton explains that persons kissing face one another directly, looking into each other’s eyes, and then proceed to kiss with eyes closed. The pair lock eyes to communicate the intention described in *eros* while the closing of the eyes by both participants illustrates that neither wish to objectify the other by perceiving their bodies before their souls and that both participants trust in the intentions of the other: “...the kiss is the most important moment of desire – the moment in which the lovers are fully face-to-face and also totally exposed to one another. The pleasure of the kiss is a matter not of sensations, but of I-You intentionality and what it means.”<sup>41</sup> Both persons trust that the other person possesses the

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<sup>40</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 84-85.

<sup>41</sup> Scruton, *Soul of the World*, 99.

understanding of the self and has recognized that understanding in their partner, thus facilitating the “I-You” relationship through acknowledgment and trust. Persons in the kiss give themselves to each other fully after trust has been recognized as they no longer fear objectification. In this manner, the understanding of *eros* is essential to the person for establishing in private interaction what can be extrapolated in the shared public appreciation of beauty in art.

Scruton’s analysis of classical musical compositions exposes a fault of scientism that speaks to the larger problem of how scientism fails to analyze the natural world. When human beings interpret a piece of music, as Scruton explains, they do not consider the music as the quantifiable assembly of frequencies played in sequence; they hear not the sounds the music consists of but the music itself. Scruton extends this, proposing an analogy that describes listening to music as a participatory analysis within the space the music occupies: “In describing the *music*, you are not describing *sounds* heard in a sequence; you are describing a kind of action in musical space, in which things move up and down in response to each other and against resisting fields of force. These fields of force order the one-dimensional space of music... In describing pitched sounds as music, we are situating them in another order of events than the order of nature.”<sup>42</sup> The kind of action Scruton identifies is the practice of understanding the dignity of the art as one would the dignity of the person.

Scruton’s use of the concept of space is not to be confused with a geometrical or mathematical understanding of space. The space described is a phenomenological space; it does not merely situate the music, but describes how one hears what one hears when one listens to it. This is familiar to the concept of the private space and the public space, wherein individuals

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<sup>42</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 37-38.

participate in the understanding of themselves and others respectively. By participating in the communal appreciation of created works, the person engages in the practice of understanding dignity with other bearers of dignity who are also learning. In this manner, participation in the “musical space” trains one for participation in communal relations as he/she has learned to respect and understand the irreplaceability of unique works. With this understanding, the person is able to successfully practice *agape* with others in his/her community, thus mastering the aesthetical appreciation of the person: “[Music] moves as *we* move, with reason for what it does and a sense of purpose... It has the outward appearance of an inner life, so to speak, and although it is heard not seen, it is heard as the voice is heard, and understood like the face... Unlike us, however, music creates the space in which it moves. And that space is ordered by fields of force that seem to be radiated from the notes that occur in them.”<sup>43</sup> The space of music reflects the communal activities of persons in a space of communal appreciation that appears self-generating and welcoming to others. This understanding of how humans hear music, and music itself, is in express contrast to the reductionist account of music that *hears* only the sounds comprising music.

Music in the context of scientism is merely the sequence of pitched sounds, as the restraints of scientism necessitate that the interpretation of the “musical space” is valueless. To the contrary, as Scruton illuminates, the experience of listening to music and all that it entails is not illusory as scientism would suggest, it is the sole manner to authentically experience the art: “These things that we hear in music are not illusions: someone who fails to hear them does not hear all that there is to hear, just as someone who fails to see the face in a picture fails to see all that is there. Music is certainly part of the real world. But it is perceivable only to those who are

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<sup>43</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 148.



able to conceptualize and respond to the sound in ways that have no part to play in the physical science of acoustics.”<sup>44</sup>

One cannot really *hear* the music by only analyzing the rhythmic pattern of sounds, nor can one fully appreciate a painting if all that is perceived is the indexed colors and geometric lines. The person cannot appreciate the natural order of the world if he/she does not engage in an understanding that mirrors the understanding of the person. Scruton identifies the contrasting scientific understanding of the natural world with the notion of *Verstehen*, the reflection on the world as an opportunity for introspection, emotional investigation and personal interpretation: “When looking on the world in this latter way [*Verstehen*], as an object of our attitudes, emotions, and choices, we understand it through the conceptions that we use of each other, when engaging in justifying and influencing our conduct. We look for reasons for action, meanings, and appropriate occasions of feeling. We are not explaining the world in terms of physical causes, but *interpreting* it as an object of our personal responses.”<sup>45</sup> This understanding of the world, as Scruton clarifies, is an alternative mode of conceptualizing the world that emerges in the form of inter-personal dialogue. The person participates in the process of *Verstehen* with others, and thus gains introductory experience in understanding the person by relating objects of the world to other persons. The person is not displacing him/herself from the world by conceptualizing the world in this manner, he/she is understanding the world as he/she would a person by participating with the world to further his/her understanding. Scruton states that *Verstehen* recognizes the beauty in the world and allows for the facilitation of “I-You” encounters thus teaching one to understand the person through investigation of the world: “It is

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<sup>44</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 39.

<sup>45</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 32.

when addressing you as an I like me that I describe the world in terms of the useful, the beautiful, and the good... In science we describe the world to others; in *Verstehen* we describe the world for others, and mold it to the demands of the I-You encounter, on which our personal lives depend.”<sup>46</sup>

Scruton utilizes the inter-personal quality of sacredness found through the process of *Verstehen* to elucidate how persons must perceive the world in terms of intrinsic value rather than utility. This is clarified through a discussion of sacredness and a comparison to friendship between persons. Scruton argues that the world itself possesses a sense of sacredness whereby human beings must recognize the “I” of the world. Scruton explains that the concept of the sacred necessitates the understanding of a practice of inter-personal relationships. As such, this concept is unique to human beings and is only possible because of a readiness to engage with the world in this way: “the experience of the sacred is interpersonal. Only creatures with ‘I’ thoughts can see the world in this way, and their doing so depends upon a kind of inter-personal readiness, a willingness to find meanings and reasons... True architects do not subdue their material to some external purpose; they *converse* with it... Because we are subjects the world looks back at us with a questioning regard, and we respond by organizing it in other ways than those endorsed by science.”<sup>47</sup> The scientific works upon the world rather than with it: a one-sided conversation in which the world does not participate.

The inter-personal conversation that takes place between the person and the world itself is predicated upon the person’s respect for the dignity of the world. Scruton explains that the dignity of the world is recognized as an intrinsic value that is prioritized over the utilitarian value

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<sup>46</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 33.

<sup>47</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 128-129.

of the resources of the world. In this manner, persons participating in the aesthetical appreciation of the beauty in the planet practice a relationship that mirrors friendship: “Your friend is valuable to you as the thing that he is. To treat him as a means – to use him for your purposes – is to undo the friendship.... Friendship is supremely useful, so long as we do think of it as useful. Likewise with the environment.... We gain the benefits of the earth when we cease to aim for them. And that is the role of beauty... It utters a quiet but absolute ‘no’ that can be overridden by violence, but not removed by calculation.”<sup>48</sup> Aesthetical appreciation of the earth allows one to recognize the beauty in other persons which in turn furthers the development of trust through the practice of private contemplative *eros* and communal *agape*. Scruton’s presentation of scientism contrasted with aesthetical appreciation of the person, art and the world allows one to develop his/her understanding of the person while concurrently elucidating the crucial communal attributes of trust that are essential to the person.

Scruton utilizes aesthetical categories as this allows persons to easily practice a respect of dignity as they would the dignity of the person without the risk of objectification that is inherent in personal interaction. Thus, the person engaging with others understands the moral imperative inherent in respecting the dignity of other persons and is able to proceed in political projects that benefit his/her community. Persons learn to understand the dignity of the person through the understanding of the dignity of created works.

### **The Un-replicable Understanding of the Transcendental**

Scruton solidifies his understanding of the person by elucidating the importance of the transcendental perspective, the knowledge that requires no criteria for confirmation that one

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<sup>48</sup>Scruton, *The Face of God*, 132.

holds that he/she is a unique and indivisible being recognized as him/herself assuredly. Scruton explains that the recognition of this perspective, mirrored itself in the scientific pursuit of the “Archimedean point,” allows persons to recognize their inability to stand outside causal laws and instead direct their efforts to understand the Being of others, the transcendental qualities of truth, goodness and unity inherent in personhood. This perspective, in contrast to the scientific pursuit of objectivity, allows persons to discover the transcendental perspective in the other through forms of conduct such as friendship. The scientific practitioner cannot achieve the transcendental perspective through removing him/herself from others; it is only recognized in tandem with persons.

Scruton, following the argumentation of Kant and his successors, outlines the importance of recognizing one’s transcendental perspective and that of others. Scruton states: “I know that I am a single and unified subject of experience... I know this on no basis... without the use of criteria of any kind – this is what is (or what ought to be) meant by the term ‘transcendental’ The unity of consciousness ‘transcends’ all argument since it is the premise without which argumentation makes no sense...”<sup>49</sup> Scruton illuminates that the *a priori* knowledge of the transcendental perspective is not deducible by examination of causal laws yet it is understood as true by all persons able to make “I” statements. As discussed, the scientific thinker’s pursuit of the “Archimedean point” leaves him/her isolated, as no person can verify his/her position as objective. The scientific thinker is effectively attempting to stand outside of the causal chain he/she desires to investigate: he/she is attempting to reach a transcendental perspective from which he/she can know without doubt that he/she is perceiving events as they are. Causal laws, like those of science, as Scruton identifies, neither account for nor explain how individuals are

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<sup>49</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 72.

supposed to understand, relate to, or follow said laws. Therefore, the scientific thinker has doomed him/herself to failure when he/she has committed to achieving a perspective outside of causation. The understanding of these experiences can only be gained through reflection on the experiences themselves. He/she, by recognizing his/herself as the observer, has already subscribed to the unity of consciousness as he/she knows for certain that he/she is alone in investigating the phenomena. The scientific practitioner can investigate objects dictated by causal laws once he/she acknowledges his/her transcendental grounding, not once he/she has become removed from it.

The scientific practitioner initially appears trapped in a lonely and paradoxical position, but Scruton illustrates through a discussion of transcendental freedom and Being that the scientific can re-situate him/herself in the world of causal laws. Scruton explains that Kant makes a clarification that moral agents, persons, are defined by the notion of transcendental freedom that distinguishes freedom as a concept that is of the transcendental category as distinguished from nature. In this manner, persons are both a part of nature but also exist as an end in and of themselves not bound by causality: “Freedom, however, belongs, not to nature, but precisely to that ‘intelligible’ or transcendental realm to which categories like causality do not apply. I exist as a ‘thing-in-itself,’ bound, not by causality, but by the laws of practical reason.... Freedom, then, is a transcendental ‘idea,’ without application in the empirical world. And, in knowing ourselves to be free, we know ourselves at the same time as part of nature and as members of a transcendent world.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Roger Scruton, *Kant* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2010), 81-82.

The person is situated in and bound to a world of causal laws but also acts with freedom as a bearer of dignity able to identify him/herself in the first-person. Therefore, the scientific practitioner has already demonstrated the ability to engage in practical reasoning, deciding by reason how to act as a free being in the attempt to observe the causal laws. To investigate natural phenomena as the scientific desires, he/she must metaphorically “step back” from his/her attempt to achieve a transcendental perspective and embrace what Scruton elucidates as the relational picture of the world achieved through the understanding of Being.

Scruton explicates that the question of Being, the search for an entity that provides a *reason* for the whole of existence rather than a cause, is puzzling due to philosophical conundrums of infinite regress. The Being that created the Being is the Being that justifies its own rationale with the very same rationale. However, Scruton suggests that persons can understand Being if they understand the notion as *granted* to them through existence. Scruton, drawing on the writings of Aquinas that describe the transcendental qualities of Being, notes that the qualities of truth, unity and goodness are understood as belonging to everything real insofar as the presence of these qualities cannot be discerned by pinpointing their source or location but only through mention of the world in its totality. From this, Scruton explains that Aquinas has laid out the connection between the person and the world as given to him/her and the solution to the scientific’s impossible quest for the transcendental perspective: “a sympathetic reading of Aquinas would suggest... that he is showing the deep connection between the world of contingencies, and the world of values. Being presents us with unified individuals, and therefore with plenitude; it presents us with truth, and therefore with knowledge; and it presents us with goodness and therefore with the end or purpose of the world. These are *a priori* features of

being, and ways in which being *makes itself known to us*.”<sup>51</sup> Scruton’s illustration of Being allows the scientific practitioner to understand his/her connection to the world in a manner that allows for investigation as he/she desires, without getting caught in the trap of seeking the transcendental perspective.

The world is revealed to the person in relation to the person through the understanding of the transcendental qualities found in persons. The transcendental view of the world in its totality is impossible for persons to achieve if they are looking in the wrong place; persons must look to one another to discover their relation to the world. This is achieved through the development of friendships with other persons who understand the relational picture of the world. Persons who share this understanding necessarily recognize the dignity of unified persons and thus respect one another; and they recognize the person as a source of goodness and thus perceive them as an end in and of themselves. Persons therefore are capable of forming virtue friendships with this understanding of Being, alleviating them of the loneliness that is guaranteed in the pursuit of the transcendental perspective. The scientific is thus granted a more genuine and effective manner of investigating the world that neither leaves them alone nor paradoxically binds them in the assumption of the unity of consciousness: “People find themselves bound by *nontransferable* attachments. These attachments invest the other with a unique value and distinguish him from all others in the universe. People find their fulfillment in this way, by discovering objects of attention and affection for which *there are no substitutes*.”<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>51</sup> Scruton, *The Face of the God*, 168.

<sup>52</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 93.

Scruton's critique of scientism provides a valuable guide for persons to recognize and understand their personhood in its totality and the political ramifications of the scientific ideology. Biological reductionism does not provide a sufficient alternative to the moral motivations of persons, as it de-personalizes and personifies humans and animals respectively when convenient. Concepts such as dignity and freedom are not "explained away," rather, they are merely attributed to organs within the body of the person while the scientific investigator him/herself continues to make intentional acts as if he/she did possess freedom. By committing these actions, the investigator finds him/herself "nowhere" as he/she has removed him/herself from the world he/she desires to investigate in the pursuit of the un-verifiable "Archimedean point." This prevents the scientific from participating in interpersonal responsibility, thus robbing him/her of the political potential to share in the public responsibility of maintaining a community. Scruton demonstrates, through a discussion of the aesthetical appreciation of beauty found in persons, art and the world itself in the practice of contemplative *eros* and communal *agape*, that trust for other persons cannot be developed in the scientific understanding of beauty as a motivation for reproduction as contained in base erotic love. Additionally, understanding art and the world as imbued with dignity allows for persons to practice the understanding of the person. Finally, Scruton's elucidation of the transcendent "I" and Being allows the scientific thinker to escape the lonely "nowhere" in favor of a *granted* world that is relational to him/her and therefore, is treated as an entity to be investigated with others in friendship. Scruton's work has elucidated that persons must engage with one another to understand both themselves and others in totality. Practitioners of scientism would do well to consider his words with reverence and weight, as the stakes are too high for any person to neglect his/her potential as a moral and political actor.



### **Walsh and Scientism**

The methodology of scientism described by Scruton in the preceding chapter points to the rejection of limitation for persons. Limitation, understood as the framework that binds persons to the natural order of existence of which they are a part, is reformulated in the scientific

framework as a hurdle to overcome in the pursuit of the understanding of reality. The “Archimedean point” pursued by modern scientism as the basis for objectivity is also the basis for power over objects. Scientism thus prescribes a reality wherein persons are not bound by limitations and are therefore free to prosper unrestricted. Humans are thus masters of their destiny and power. However, the objectivity and power imagined in scientism results in persons occupying a paradoxical state where they must define how they will utilize their power from an unverifiable position of objectivity. Complete power over objects threatens the person by including him/her under the guise of objectivity. The understanding of the person is lost in the scientific rejection of limits.

David Walsh articulates in *The Growth of the Liberal Soul, After Ideology, The Modern Philosophical Revolution, Guarded by Mystery* and *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being* that limitation allows persons to recognize their common ground, recognize each other’s dignity and surpass said limitations through communal cooperation grounded in the understanding of the person. Walsh’s notion of communal success is distinct from the Hobbesian notion of limitation as Walsh prioritizes the recognition of the irreplaceability of the person in his analysis. Persons do not participate together out of a necessity to achieve the end goal of community, rather, it is in participation that they recognize that persons are ends in and of themselves due to their foundational dignity.

Walsh presents a philosophical project in *Politics of the Person* that places the person as an unknowable whole reality, an undefinable being who cannot be understood in totality but experienced if one is to engage with him/her. Walsh rejects reductionist frameworks such as scientism that categorize the person as mere organic material being that is easily understood in totality through objective perception, as Marc D. Guerra explains: “...neuroscientists now

proudly declare that through their pioneering research we will very soon be able to map out the biochemical workings of the brain and unlock the mechanical, material basis of human consciousness. Each chapter in Walsh's challenging and stimulating book casts light on the crushing depersonalizing effects that such reductionist accounts necessarily have on our appreciation and understanding of the human person."<sup>53</sup>

Walsh combats the depersonalization of scientism with the assertion that the person cannot be authentically encapsulated within any framework that claims to provide a definition. Persons, as Walsh states, "...are not God and thus we do not create the world out nothing, but we bear a God-like responsibility for enacting its order. All that we do is done with a view to the whole... Through endowing the universality of the whole each has uniquely given himself or herself as a whole. Each is the singular without which the universal could not be."<sup>54</sup> Persons are not omnipotent creators of their own reality, rather, they embody reality to authentically understand one another. In this manner, scientific practitioners commit a crucial misstep that Walsh characterizes as a "self-forgetfulness" of the person that is meant to benefit from the discoveries of investigation as an end in and of themselves. Scientific investigation disregards the responsibility to treat persons as a dignified end in and of themselves, resulting in the sublimation of the person into the process of scientism or reconstitutes the person in the rejection of limitation, as exemplified in transhumanism as a repudiation of limitation entirely.

Walsh's theoretical conception is not without a practical counterpart. While the person cannot be defined, limitations in the form of the order of reality, do define the person. As such,

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<sup>53</sup> Marc D. Guerra "David Walsh. *The Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*," *Society* 55, no. 4 (August 2018): 376.

<sup>54</sup> David Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 82.

Walsh illuminates that persons need limitations to properly reflect themselves as related to reality and to one another: "...one needs to be able to talk not only about the person in relation to other persons, but also in his relation to the world—including but not limited to the natural world—in which he inescapably finds himself. Natural limits, as well as conscious transcendence, define the human person."<sup>55</sup> Walsh explains that the person is revealed in cooperation within frameworks that do not attempt to encompass the person. The frameworks seek to convince one of personhood through cooperation between persons. Both science properly practiced and art, as Walsh elucidates, provide persons with limitation, the empirical framework and metaphoric language respectively. Science properly practiced prioritizes the use of empirical knowledge for the understanding of the person as a dignified "Thou," distinct from objects, discovered in cooperation between persons. Discovery of new information, necessarily in cooperation with others, motivates the scientist to recognize the person as the true end of his/her investigation. Art, through use of metaphoric symbolization, articulates the truth of personhood and stands as a mode of being for persons to discover each other.

Walsh's presentation of the person showcases the insufficiencies of scientism and allows persons to recognize one another as the end of communal conduct.

### **The Place of the Person and Scientism**

Walsh elucidates that the scientific dream of mastery of objects results in persons repudiating their status as a component of nature in favor of a self-determined status of master who stands beyond nature. From this new vantage point as master, the scientific practitioner proceeds forward with total freedom to determine his/her direction, forgetting that his/her drive

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<sup>55</sup> Marc D. Guerra, "David Walsh. *The Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*," 377.

originates as a component of nature. Persons have the freedom to decide their own limitations and goals, but are paradoxically restricted by the necessity of defining these goals in perpetuity as they are their own rule-makers. From this, Walsh examines the scientific attempt to reconstitute the person as a material being in his/her totality, ironically reinforcing the need for a foundation in the form of materialism, while concurrently claiming that persons are to be manipulated as objects. This suggests that the person is replicable and not unique, as seen in the propagation of bioethics and cloning. A further reconstitution of the person is found in the proliferation of technology as a manifestation of humanity's mastery over nature. The person is driven to achieve godlike status by producing technologies that resolve any problem he/she encounters. However, this increases intolerance for discomfort while concurrently reducing satisfaction with the current amount of comfort. Technology thus ends in the person continuously striving for more comfort, only to face disappointment with his/her accomplishment.. Persons cannot be abandoned or forgotten if they have a ground to land on; technological societies risk leaving persons behind for the sake of communal progress, that in time, finds itself lacking a community to advance.

Walsh notes that scientific knowledge, as the dominant framework of knowledge to guide humanity, was initially embraced in the seventeenth century as a contrast to and rejection of the teleological understanding of persons and the environment they inhabit. Walsh describes the teleological understanding of nature as the foundational perspective of reality wherein persons are grounded by intrinsic purpose provided by "innate" ideas that are known to them through biological and external limitations. Science provided a "relief to man's estate," described by Francis Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning*, where human beings freed themselves from natural limitations through scientific progress founded on knowledge as power. However, as

Walsh aptly points out, “If science holds a monopoly on truth, how do we validate the truth of this monopoly?”<sup>56</sup> Walsh does not explicitly advocate for a return to the Greek notion of “causes” as a method for understanding reality, rather, the concept is utilized as a contrast to scientific reasoning. The scientific project, as Walsh states: “...seemed premised on our capacity to forget that we ourselves are part of nature... mastery over nature is itself a drive of nature, one whose viability depends on its purely natural status. Problems arise only when it is extended to the whole. Limitlessness becomes the enemy of attainment. We can assert our power over nature only to the extent that we do not seek to impose our power on the whole of it, for then we would no longer occupy a place within nature from which our power might be employed.”<sup>57</sup>

A significant problem identified by Walsh that arises from persons attempting to master the whole of nature is the effects of global warming. Walsh elucidates that the conceit that humanity is on the path to irreversibly damaging the biosphere precludes that humanity has placed itself outside of the natural order to claim the responsibility for repairing its mistakes. Humanity, as Walsh describes, may not have predicted the consequences of assuming mastery, but is forced to bear the responsibility to correcting the mistakes made in this position: “Nothing in nature speaks to us of the harmony that must be restored. It is we human beings who must assume responsibility for a natural order that no longer leads or instructs us. Returning to nature is no longer an option for those who have eaten the fruit of mastery. Consciousness may have been the first unnoticed step but it has carried us inexorably beyond all natural limits.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> David Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>57</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 88-89.

<sup>58</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 88.

Greenhouse gas emissions that have exponentially increased since the industrial revolution may now be too large to counteract, forcing humanity to reconcile the consequences of self-declared mastery. As it turns out, restrictions that are cognizant of humanity as a component of nature preserve both the natural order of the planet as well as the persons who inhabit it. Walsh elucidates that the scientific response to correct the mistakes of mastery is a step backwards into nature, wherein persons are defined as material beings who are malleable just as is nature.

The place of the person is defined by scientism as an exclusively material component of nature. If human beings themselves can be manipulated, perhaps the mistake committed can be solved through their own enterprise. In this manner, mastery of nature is not truly forgone, the parameters of nature have merely shifted to include the person him/herself as both material and master. Therefore, the surpassing of limitation necessarily entails the establishment of new end goals for humanity that humanity must set. Persons must determine new goals that they can achieve through their own means thus motivating persons to improve their means to achieve these goals. However, as Walsh illuminates, these goals include the malleability of persons themselves thus dividing the person into his/her material components and the conscious component that must manipulate the material: "Personhood has begun to assume a kind of ghostly reality easily detached from its mere physical basis. Biology has become peripheral to consciousness. Despite the widespread awareness of our physiological processes... we are closer than ever to the understanding of ourselves as disembodied spirits, largely indifferent to our disposable outer shell."<sup>59</sup> The challenge for the person is thus to establish a definition of the person that preserves his/her uniqueness, recognizes him/her as a part of the natural order of reality, and prioritizes dignity. Walsh illuminates that the scientific constitution of the person as

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<sup>59</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 33.

material, as seen in the examples of bioethics and cloning, does not authentically represent the person.

Walsh challenges the arguments of Michael Tooley and Peter Singer concerning the definition of a person within the field of bioethics. Tooley and Singer suggest a list of perceptible criteria to define the person centered on the conception of self-expressed identity. This grounding of the person is made with humanist intentions, as the person who lacks a concrete definition cannot be defended. If a creature does not possess knowledge of its self as a self, and cannot articulate this, it should not be considered a person: “The individual must be conscious, capable of deliberate engagement with the world around him or her, and therefore of knowing the self and the non-self in their fundamental distinction... it is only at the point of conscious self-identity that a person can wish for his or her own continued existence as a singular identity. Legally this is the most crucial step... Without personal identity there can be no assertion of personal rights.”<sup>60</sup> Walsh points out that Singer, in a contradictory manner, insists that adult animals also possess a rudimentary idea of self and should therefore be counted as persons. Additionally, since newborns and fetuses do not *yet* possess the capacity for self-identification, they may legally be manipulated as non-persons: “Newborn humans are no different from newborn kittens [under Tooley and Singer’s criteria]. Lacking even the minimal capacity of self-awareness, they can be disposed in the same way.... The mistake has been to assume we could talk about persons in a non-personalist way... The other must always be a Thou if he or she is to escape become an It.”<sup>61</sup> Confident that persons can exist dually as masters of material and

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<sup>60</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 42.

<sup>61</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 43-44.



material themselves, scientific practitioner's definition of the person is misaligned from the outset.

The notion of personal uniqueness is challenged by the possibility of cloning technology. Human beings may not be able to solve all problems now, but perhaps through genetic modification they can create a person who can. Walsh rebukes this notion by elucidating that an authentic clone, as a perfect copy of an individual person, cannot truly be created as the person extends beyond his/her genetic characteristics: "What revolts us about cloning human beings is that it seems so blatant a devaluation of the singularity of persons. At root, however, it is impossible to clone a person for the person has always already stepped outside what it is to be a clone. If one cannot be a member of a species, then one emphatically cannot be a clone of another. Whatever their characteristics, persons are not what they are. We dimly intuit all the time about the persons we know..."<sup>62</sup> To define the person as their genetic footprint for the purposes of reproducibility is to reconstitute the person as an object for experimentation, while concurrently positing the experimenter-persons as a master of persons. The place of the person is defined as a place for some persons only, while those who possess the knowledge to manipulate others are defined as masters: "For it is when we ponder the techniques and possibilities of genetic engineering and behavioral control the radical lostness of our situation becomes clear.... The quest for 'relief of man's estate' has here clearly reached a limiting point, once the human being who is to be benefited has no existence apart from the benefits that are bestowed.... What is certain is that nothing is being done for the sake of the concrete human being before us."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 250.

<sup>63</sup> Walsh, *After Ideology*, 14.

Walsh has elucidated that the dream of mastery over reality, propagated by scientific practitioners, engages in a self-defeating enterprise by recognizing the need to define the person, placing him/her within a framework as a limitation to said mastery, and then considering the person as a malleable object to be manipulated. The scientific practitioner suggests an alternative goal for the person; scientific knowledge will be utilized to make persons comfortable and happy through technology. Persons can utilize the vantage point as masters to improve the lives of others through the use of reasoning to provide comfort. Technology thus stands as a representation of the power of persons as knowers of useful knowledge and the makers of their own comfort. Communications between persons have been made incredibly efficient through an interconnected network of satellites, expanded medical knowledge of the human body makes the treatment of disease and sickness faster and more effective and efficient industrial food production has removed the need for hunting and gathering in the western world. As Jacques Ellul writes in *The Technological Society*: "...we are unable to envisage comfort except as part of the technical order of things. Comfort for us means bathrooms, easy chairs, foam-rubber mattresses, air conditioning, washing machines, and so forth. The chief concern is to avoid effort and promote rest and physical euphoria."<sup>64</sup> Reason is utilized as a force of instrumentalization and the person merely needs to relax and focus on whatever he/she enjoys. However, as Walsh illuminates, the instrumentalization of reason for the comfort of persons is not without consequences.

As technology is constantly outdating its previous incarnation in terms of efficiency, persons paradoxically desire improvement while losing confidence in the current iteration of technology. As the availability of comforts increase, persons' capacity for discomfort diminishes.

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<sup>64</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 66.

This encourages persons to pursue efforts for greater comforts, leading to further diminishment in tolerance for discomfort. The goal of securing comfort proves to be hollow, as once comfort has been secured persons must provide a new artificial goal, either greater comfort or an arbitrary increase in the efficiency of technology, to strive for without addressing the underlying problem that the person who will enjoy the comfort is the source of the progression towards the securement of the comfort itself. Walsh notes that although persons are free to pursue creating more efficient technologies in liberal democracies, it does not result in comfort amongst all who have embraced freedom, rather, the knowledge as power, expressed through efficient technologies, has dominated persons. Once technology has demonstrated that persons can utilize reasoning to secure comfort, withdrawing that pursuit requires the recognition of the faults of the instrumentalization of reason to serve the production of technologies.

Walsh elucidates that persons in technological societies, despite being comfortable, harbor nostalgia for ages less technology proficient. The instrumentalization of reason to secure comfort through efficient technology has not been embraced by all persons with open arms: “All around us we see evidence of the refusal to submit to the demands of efficiency. Nostalgia for the old, monuments of spiritual aspiration, the worldwide revival of ancient religious forms, the power of orgiastic political movements of destruction, and the protest impulse that has driven artistic expression for more than a century all testify to the profound ambivalence with which the success of the instrumental rationality has been greeted.”<sup>65</sup> Combatting technology, as Walsh explains, is thus understood as a challenge for philosophical reflection, wherein persons must be directed toward the negative consequences of technology. Walsh points out that technology must be directed toward an end goal, as technology by itself is merely a tool to achieve said goal. This

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<sup>65</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence*, 2.

requires a rationality above the instrumental reason utilized in the production of technology. The recognition of the necessity for a direction for technology is the first step for persons to free themselves from technology, as Walsh discussed with regards to the lukewarm reception of the instrumentalization of reason: “Technology, which treats everything as a means and nothing as an end, cannot furnish its own purpose. Instead, it undermines all final goals, refusing to acknowledge anything as an end in itself. Everything is drawn into its imperious grasp, and nothing is allowed to stand in judgment over it. We are left with a technique of control that can direct everything itself.... Man himself cannot submit to the same instrumentality; otherwise the instrumentality ceases to have any purpose”<sup>66</sup>

The purposelessness of instrumentality in technology is observed in the negative effects of internet communications through smartphones and social media services. In a study concerning smartphone addiction in youth for *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*<sup>67</sup>, Emriye Hilal Yayan, Yeliz Suna Dağ and Mejmet Emin Düken found that those who utilized the internet for communications purposes reported significantly higher loneliness scores: “The Internet addiction and loneliness scores of the young who use the Internet for chatting were significantly higher and their peer relationship mean scores were significantly lower.... There were strong positive correlations between Internet addiction, loneliness, and smartphone addiction and negative correlations between peer relationships and Internet addiction, loneliness, and smartphone addiction.”<sup>68</sup> Similar findings were reported by Melek Kalkan for *Children and Youth Services Review*<sup>69</sup>, who concluded that students who engage in problematic Internet use, defined as the

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<sup>66</sup> Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence*, 2-3.

<sup>67</sup> Emriye Hilal Yayan, Yeliz Suna Dağ and Mejmet Emin Düken, “The effects of technology use on working young loneliness and social relationships,” *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* (July 2018): 1

<sup>68</sup> Yayan et al., “The effects of technology use on working young loneliness and social relationships,” 3.

<sup>69</sup> Melek Kalkan, “Predictiveness of interpersonal cognitive distortions on university students’ problematic internet use,” *Children and Youth Services Review* 34, no.7 (March 2012): 1305.

inability to stop internet usage despite mental deterioration, had correlated interpersonal cognitive problems: “problematic Internet use is significantly correlated with interpersonal cognitive distortions, and interpersonal cognitive distortions are significant predictors for problematic Internet use.”<sup>70</sup> Communication technology meant to assist persons in making connections with others has resulted in the propagation of loneliness amongst its users. Persons cannot simply find a place within their technological society as a reconstituted aspect of the instrumentalization of reason, they must understand how to utilize technology to help them understand each other.

Finally, technological integration with the physical components of the person stands as an example of reconstructing the person from a scientific framework. This arises in the modern transhumanism movement. Transhumanism poses a particular problem for liberal democracies as it encourages persons to surpass each other in terms of function through body modification, thus compromising equality and dignity between persons. This undermines the notion of personhood by allowing persons the opportunity to, on a whim, change their appearance and feelings and thus redefine themselves. Michael S. Burdett characterizes the transhumanism movement as a mythologization of the advancement of technology, wherein the person physically embraces the goals of the technological society through body augmentation: “Transhumanism radicalizes the myth of progress. It asserts that not only does technology transform society and the economy for the better, but also individual human experience can be affected... Transhumanists claim we need not resort to indirect measures to bring bliss and progress, instead, we have the power to

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<sup>70</sup> Kalkan, “Predictiveness of interpersonal cognitive distortions on university students’ problematic internet use,” 1307.

engineer this outcome by applying technology directly to the human body.”<sup>71</sup> These “indirect measures,” including the recognition of personhood through communal development, are easily avoided by the transhumanist by installing a dopamine supplement into his/her bloodstream. With no concept of the person to restrict them, those with the resources will augment themselves and thus differentiate themselves from persons not augmented, effectively creating two classes of persons. Liberal democracies face new challenges in ensuring that equality between persons is maintained with the liberty to augment one’s body; a limited liberty that in actuality restricts the person to an instrument of the technological society he/she is a member of. Scientism, in the form of technological reliance and eventual definition of society thereof, subsumes freedom, dignity and equality: “Without a conception of what a human being should be, the power, far from serving man, becomes his master.... Even happiness cannot provide a goal, because what is to constitute happiness is susceptible of unlimited modification. What has evaporated is the idea of man as something fixed whose good is to be served.... Without an understanding of human nature as something given, however ill-defined the parameters may be, there ceases to be anything substantive to benefit.”<sup>72</sup>

The place of the person is not successfully defined by scientism. Persons as masters of nature find themselves lost without a foundation, prompting the scientific practitioners to reduce the person to material. However, equating persons to malleable material does not reconstitute persons as a part of a natural order, they are concurrently masters and material to be replicated or transformed. Technology suggests an alternative constitution of the person defined as the maker

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<sup>71</sup> Michael S. Burdett, “The Religion of Technology: Transhumanism and the Myth of Progress,” in *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*, ed. Calvin Mercer and Tracy J. Trothen (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015), 142-143.

<sup>72</sup> Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 74.

of comfort. However, unless persons recognize the need for reason above the instrumentalization of reason utilized for technology, they will come to be defined by technology rather than how they use it: “There is no limit whose boundaries we cannot contemplate transgressing. Even the prospect that we are approaching an end point where the human being will be defined wholly in functional terms does not seem to raise the alarm that the entire enterprise will then have lost its own justification and purpose. Whose estate is to be relieved when man himself has been absorbed into the instrumental chain?”<sup>73</sup> Walsh’s discussion illustrates that the definitions of the person provided by scientism do not present the person as he/she is. However, he provides the reader with two frameworks that accurately conceive personhood.

### **Science Properly Practiced**

Walsh elucidates that scientism, in the manner of reconstituting the person as a cog in the machine of instrumentalization in technology, dehumanizes the people it aims to make comfortable. However, the faults of scientism do not damn the practice of scientific investigation entirely. Walsh clarifies, in a manner similar to Scruton’s discussion of the inability of scientism to account for the person, that while the person utilizing the processes of science is ultimately unknowable through them, the processes themselves and the resultant knowledge gained are inherently social practices. In this manner, the scientific thinker cannot escape the personal dimension that underlies the processes of scientism, i.e. scientific inquiry properly practiced. The horizon of persons, described by Walsh as the foundational manner through which persons engage with reality, is the terminating end of scientific investigation conducted properly. Scientific investigation, conducted without the authoritative bend of scientism, is revealed to be

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<sup>73</sup> Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 75.

an avenue to the person him/herself. In this manner, persons learn to engage with one another through properly practiced scientific investigation and evaluation.

Walsh initiates his discussion of science properly practiced by illuminating a paradoxical mistake committed by the scientific practitioner. The visible innovations in technology provided by scientific inquiry, as Walsh notes, have led the scientific practitioner to assume that the process of science itself is similar to the matter that is investigated by science. The scientific method is assumed to be of the same character as the phenomenon it investigates, that is, understandable exclusively through empirical means. The matter being investigated empirically, the scientific practitioner suggests, must be evaluated necessarily by an exclusively empirical method. With this notion, the scientific practitioner acclimatizes him/herself to the self-forgetfulness that characterizes the objective framework of scientism.

Walsh solidifies his point through the example of artificial intelligence in machines. He explains that since machines have demonstrable traits of intelligence, such as mathematical reasoning and adaptation based learning, they are quickly approaching humans in terms of quantifiable intelligence. Furthermore, since machines do not become distracted or need rest, the potential for machines to surpass humans in terms of intellectual ability is rapidly becoming a tangible reality. Walsh explains that the scientific practitioner creating artificial intelligence has reduced the notion of human intelligence to a purely mechanical process that can be intimated by machines. If persons can create objects that resemble persons through the use of an exclusively empirical framework, perhaps persons themselves fit under said framework: "It is a testament to how thoroughly science has forgotten itself that it could confuse thought with its object. All of the interest has focused on what the machines do... but what humans do, the more profoundly inaccessible, remains shrouded in mystery... Can machines think if it is merely an imitation of



what human thinking is?... The erasure of the boundary between inventor and invention is not just a question for the reality of the inventor. It also eliminates the possibility of understanding the invention.”<sup>74</sup> The scientific dream of mastery exemplified in the creation of “life” capable of surpassing its creator necessarily depends on a firm boundary between the creator and the invention.

The scientific practitioner has no foundation from which to determine what machine “intelligence” is, if the intelligence of the person is not understood first. Scientific self-forgetfulness negates the impressiveness of artificial intelligence by negating the capacity of the person to recognize it as impressive: “It is the artificial character of the intelligence that is so impressive, but that depends on our retaining the irreducible understanding of intelligence as such. When robots ‘know’ as we do, then there will cease to be anything striking about them. They are amazing inventions only so long as there are persons whose capacity to be amazed attests to the surpassing criterion by which our creations are measured.”<sup>75</sup> The scientific practitioner has thus placed the framework on the level of the matter he/she is investigating, mischaracterizing the intellectual process that, at the outset of the investigation, has determined what matter can be analyzed through its methods. The method is thus placed at a paradoxical position of being equivalent to the matter it investigates while concurrently determining how and what matter can be investigated. The scientific practitioner, committed to the methodology, is trapped by adherence to the method that is misaligned with the reality it investigates.

The scientific trends in neuroscience elucidate the trait of self-forgetfulness, particularly when contrasted with an example of properly practiced science provided by neuroscientific

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<sup>74</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 101-102.

<sup>75</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 102.

Alzheimer's research. In contrast to the scientific goals of neuroscience evident in the propagation of "neuro-philosophy," discussed by Scruton in the preceding chapter, that serve to reconstitute the person as a shell for the brain, Lennart Mucke discusses potential solutions for Alzheimer's disease in a summary article for *Nature*<sup>76</sup>. Mucke's description of neuroscience as a tool to assist investigators in alleviating the degeneration of the cerebral cortex and hippocampus places the person as the end of science properly practiced. The end goal of the scientific investigation is not to discover the root causes of Alzheimer's by better understanding the effects of human aging on the production of neuro-proteins, rather, the end goal is to prevent the cognitive decline of persons so that they may lead fuller lives. Mucke states: "As we gain a greater understanding of the mechanisms of AD [Alzheimer's disease], drugs can be aimed at its root causes... Large scale risk-factor profiling using genomic and proteomic screens may make it possible to identify subgroups of patients who stand to benefit... Zeroing in on the most responsive patient populations could make clinical trials more effective and guide long-term prevention strategies."<sup>77</sup> Persons are not subsumed into the process as units simply seeking to understand Alzheimer's, they utilize the knowledge they have gained practically to assist others and improve the standing of the community by preserving life. The dignity of the person is paramount in science properly practiced and is misaligned in the practice of scientism.

At the core of proper scientific investigation is a communal activity wherein persons collectively engage with reality to gain knowledge that will provide benefits to the community. Science properly practiced avoids the self-forgetfulness of the person in scientism by recognizing that the person is not separable from reality through investigation; persons participate with one

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<sup>76</sup> Lennart Mucke, "Alzheimer's disease," *Nature* 461, no. 15 (October 2009): 895.

<sup>77</sup> Mucke, "Alzheimer's disease," 897.

another and reality itself through the conduction of the investigation: “Not only is science an activity of persons, but also its very meaning is derived from the openness to reality that is identical with the person.”<sup>78</sup>

In this manner, persons act with reality instead of upon it as in scientism. Walsh explains that this is precisely the reason why scientific development is subject to the societal forces of competition and groupthink, as the process itself is not objective; scientific inquiry itself is guided by persons towards the success of the common good as the best outcome of scientific practice. The findings of said inquiry must be directed towards the benefit of persons and not persons toward the benefit of inquiry to avoid the pitfalls of scientism. The person properly practicing science works in tandem with reality as a pseudo-person to uncover the mysteries that confront him/her, thus discovering the person through solitary investigation, or, engages with other persons for the sake of communal good, thus also pointing towards persons. Science properly practiced in the former manner avoids the pitfall of forgetting the person by recognizing that the person cannot be subsumed by the methodology, while in the latter case, science properly practiced is directed entirely towards the person: “Objective knowledge turns out not to be what it thought it was, that is, a perspective from which we can contemplate and the master the universe in which we find ourselves. Science is rather a way station on the road to the complete unmastering of ourselves that the other alone can accomplish.”<sup>79</sup>

Walsh elucidates that persons review the resultant knowledge in cooperation with others as a communal activity just as scientific inquiry properly practiced is conducted as a communal activity. When the scientist engages in scientific inquiry, he/she proceeds on the knowledge of

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<sup>78</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 96.

past scientific inquiry conducted by other persons, either hoping to advance or confirm the efforts of the other persons, and with the confidence that his/her work will be valued in a similar manner. At the outset of proper scientific inquiry, as Walsh explains, the investigator is not taking the authoritative mindset prescribed by scientism, rather he/she is participating in a communal intellectual process. Thus, he/she “unmasters” him/herself in the presence of the other: “Science is not just social in the extrinsic sense of requiring the cooperation of others. It is also intrinsically social in the sense of the mutuality of presence that is the very mode of scientific existence. What is meaningful or significant... is what every other would perceive as meaningful or significant as well. We measure not just reality but ourselves in the minds of one another.... In this sense the collaborative enterprise of science is derived from the mutuality of all scientists.”<sup>80</sup>

Walsh’s characterization of science as intrinsically social due to inherent “mutuality of presence” does not simply mean that science requires multiple persons to be conducted practically. Science properly practiced requires persons other than the investigator to verify that the information discovered is meaningful or significant to persons in general; the scientific community emerges through the discovery of each other as a consequence of the scientific investigation. The knowledge found in scientific inquiry must be interpreted, as Walsh elucidates, by persons utilizing intellectual methods that are expressly non-scientific, defined meaningful or significant by Walsh as directed towards the person. In this manner, science is not the wellspring of knowledge that represents the culmination of the intellectual progression of humanity that will ultimately subsume the person. Science properly practice serves as mode of investigation that ends in the horizon of the person. Atomic physicist, Robert Oppenheimer concurs with Walsh’s notion of properly practiced science being pointed towards the person. He

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<sup>80</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 93-94.

states that even in the seemingly disconnected field of atomic physics, the scientist is motivated and ultimately defined by his activities in relation to the lives of others: “Even in science... we are again and again reminded of the complimentary traits in our own life, even in our own professional life. We are nothing without the work of others our predecessors, others our teachers, others our contemporaries. Even when, in the measure of our adequacy and our fullness, new insight and new order are created, we are still nothing without others. Yet we are more.”<sup>81</sup>

Science properly practiced ends in the horizon of the person as the scientist ultimately seeks to find others through the mutuality all scientists share. In this manner, communities emerge that prioritize the person as the end of the investigation of reality. Kristina Rolin, in her article “Scientific Community: A Moral Dimension<sup>82</sup>,” argues that proper scientific communities stand as moral communities due to their epistemic responsibilities to their specific communities, and the larger community of humanity. She introduces the notion of “epistemic cosmopolitanism,” the notion that special epistemic responsibilities to one’s local community i.e. the community of psychologists, anthropologists, mathematicians etc. are further distributed as general epistemic responsibilities that are universal. From this she justifies that scientific communities, if they maintain their general epistemic responsibility to prioritize persons as knowers of reality, stand as moral communities with moral duties toward their members and persons universally: “When special epistemic responsibilities are understood as distributed general epistemic responsibilities, the tension between the two disappears. The universal and impartial nature of general epistemic responsibilities is not in conflict with the local and partial

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<sup>81</sup> Robert J. Oppenheimer, *Atom and Void: Essays on Science and Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 74.

<sup>82</sup> Kristina Rolin, “Scientific Community: A Moral Dimension,” *Social Epistemology* 31, no. 5 (2017): 468.

nature of special epistemic responsibilities when the latter are seen as a means to implement the former. By following one's special epistemic responsibilities, one fulfils one's share of general epistemic responsibilities."<sup>83</sup> In this manner, persons employing science properly practiced enter into relationships with others through the fulfillment of responsibility to one another, reality, and persons universally.

Science properly practiced emerges as a mode of knowledge wherein persons discover the personhood of others by recognizing the person as the end of inquiry, as opposed to the scientific methodology that collapses the person within the methodology: "The interpersonal horizon within which science is practiced has pervaded its subject matter. What makes scientific inquiry of interest to us is also what makes it of interest to others. From there we extrapolate to others with whom the exploration of reality may put us in contact. We are prepared to enter into relationship with them. At that point they cease to be objects of scientific inquiry since we cannot simultaneously study them and get acquainted as persons."<sup>84</sup>

### **Discovery and Scientism**

The scientific practitioner perceives the scientific framework to be the definitive method of investigation of reality. He/she conducts experimental procedures to ensure that knowledge is valid through the reproducibility of the results of the experiments. If an experiment cannot be reproduced under the same conditions, it is considered an outlier or fluke; the results are invalid and are not proper knowledge. However, Walsh notes that the discovery of new knowledge is at the heart of scientific investigation properly practiced. New knowledge that shatters the expectations of the individual scientist, as Walsh elucidates, signifies the capacity of

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<sup>83</sup> Rolin, "Scientific Community: A Moral Dimension," 478.

<sup>84</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 97.

nature to reveal itself as more intriguing and deeper than understood previously. The scientific model, as opposed to the desire of the scientific thinker who propagates its superiority, must change with the discovery of new information. The model must fit the reality it investigates, rather than forcing the reality into the model. Discovery as the key motivation of the investigator is analogous to the manner in which persons are motivated to interact with one another. The potential for the fulfillment of the common good in cooperation with others, as Walsh demonstrates, allows persons to engage with one another and reality by fulfilling intuitions of curiosity as discussed in science properly practiced. The motivation of the scientist, despite the protests of the scientific practitioner, is discovery that surpasses the model of scientism.

Walsh explicates that the sheer overwhelming amount of information provided to persons by nature invites persons to participate with it, thereby fulfilling their curiosity and forcing persons to reevaluate their preconceptions of nature. Despite nature's seemingly infinite capacity to surprise the investigator, this does not discourage him/her from probing further into the mystery. Persons are not discouraged by new discoveries, they are invigorated to discover more. For example, Mora et al.<sup>85</sup> notes that the striking amount of biodiversity present on Earth, estimated at 8.7 million species in total, of which only 1.2 million have been discovered, points to the depths of yet undiscovered information presented by nature. To discourage persons from "reinventing the wheel" of interpreting knowledge as scientism does is a disservice to both the capacities of persons and the phenomenon they investigate: "Far from being captured by the material it investigates, thought is a perpetual reaching beyond itself to discover the horizon within which it might grasp what it seeks to know. The affinity of thought is thus less with the

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<sup>85</sup> Camilo Mora et al., "How Many Species Are There on Earth and in the Ocean?," *PLoS Biology* 9, no. 8 (August 2011): 1.

content of its reflection than with what it senses is transcendent and imminent as the very possibility of its becoming what it seeks.”<sup>86</sup>

The person is not motivated to simply reproduce previously discovered knowledge in an endless pursuit of accuracy, he/she is drawn to knowledge precisely because it reveals the world to be more than the person has previously understood it to be. Concurrently, nature is not concerned with the framework that persons utilize to analyze it, it confidently stands as itself. The failure of scientism to shift its framework, when demonstrated by its own methodology as inaccurate, misrepresents nature and prevents persons from pursuing the discovery of new knowledge: “We are led by the intuition that it [nature] might yield an even deeper initiation into the mystery of matter far beyond the stale and stable theories so far reached.... The thrill of discovery is not just a subjective viewpoint. It is almost as if nature conspires to lead us on with the prospect of ever more enthralling possibilities hidden within.... The delight of the scientist who discovers unknown dimensions seems inchoately echoed by nature itself.”<sup>87</sup> Nature, as Walsh explains, facilitates a personal relationship with the one who seeks it out.

By standing as the wellspring of accessible knowledge, nature mentors the person into personhood by providing an infinite source of fulfillment for discovery. This does not place the person into servicing nature by revealing it to others, rather, it is the facilitation of openness to the other that assists the person him/herself in facilitating that same openness between him/her and another person. Nature discloses itself to the person and in doing so prevents the closure of complete understanding. Just as a person cannot be known in totality, only discovered as a wealth of experience and potential, nature cannot be wholly understood by one framework in its

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<sup>86</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 124.

<sup>87</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 117.



totality. Scientism misunderstands its relationship to nature by seeking to understand completely what cannot be understood by persons because it is precisely in the capacity to explore new discoveries that nature remains so alluring. The scientific goal of total knowledge defeats the personal motivation of discovery thus invalidating the entire enterprise. Walsh furthers this argument concerning the misaligned motivations of scientism by illuminating the manner in which science avoids solving the fundamental questions it investigates. The scientific practitioner is not motivated to discover the answers to these fundamental questions, as Walsh discusses, because this would be engaging in a self-defeating enterprise.

Crucial to the self-defeat of scientism is the necessary removal of wonder as the initiating phenomenon that provides motivation for the satisfaction of curiosity through discovery. This initial state of wonder is shared by all persons who desire to question reality, allowing Walsh's "mutuality of presence" between persons through a shared desire. The scientific goal of total understanding prevents persons from experiencing authentic wonder, as scientism has mastered nature by providing persons with all the answers. In this sense, scientism terminates the cause for knowing and threatens the existence of its own enterprise. Aristotle illustrates the purpose of wonder in a description of philosophy as the supreme science pursued because persons love to discover: "For it was their curiosity that led men to philosophize and that still leads them. In the beginning, they were curious about difficulties close at hand. Then they progressed little by little in this respect and raised difficulties of greater consequence... Therefore... as men philosophized to escape ignorance... it is evident they learned in the pursuit of knowledge, and not for some useful end..."<sup>88</sup> As Aristotle describes, the initial curiosity of wonder motivates

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<sup>88</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 982b 10-15

persons to undertake difficult problems, solve them, thus bettering their understanding, and then approach more difficult problems.

In the understanding of political science as a science of persons, the political scientist becomes curious as to how he/she can better the lives of those in the community, utilizes their reason to solve an apparent problem, and then repeats the process with a new, more difficult problem. In this manner, science properly practiced, initiated by curiosity about nature, and political science share the same starting point, and, if science properly practiced is aimed towards the community, the same end. Consider the struggle to improve water quality in one's municipality. A concerned citizen proceeds in one of two manners to affect change once he/she has become curious as to how to improve his/her community: he/she utilizes political skill and knowledge involving arguments advocating for the benefit of the community to affect legislative change that requires the support of local government and citizens, actualized through scientific knowledge practically, or, he/she begins with proper scientific inquiry that demonstrates through empirical knowledge that improved water quality will benefit the municipality. Following this, the citizen-scientist is reliant on political methods to implement the positive results of his/her findings for the community to prosper. The politician and the scientist both require the specialties of the other to serve the same end of improving their community. The person, recognized as the end of science and politics, stands to prosper through cooperation by multiple methodologies.

Science properly practiced pierces the unfathomable depths of knowledge that characterize nature, and in doing so, recognizes the inherent personal quality of the investigation. This firmly points towards the horizon of the person through the fulfillment provided by continuous discovery: "Science, despite the hubristic cloak in which it is often wrapped, has no

more been able to pierce the mystery than philosophy.... In the end it is only because we too are part of nature that we are capable of the adventure of deepening understanding that yet never achieves its goal. Science is an inescapably personal activity, possible at once because persons are within nature and at the same time beyond it.”<sup>89</sup> Walsh’s description of science as a personal activity signals one to understand the culmination of discovery in science properly practiced as the person him/herself. From this notion, the person understands him/herself as more than he/she is just as he/she recognizes this capacity in others. With this understanding of the personal, motivated by discovery, persons excise their potential in all matters, most importantly, communally as political actors.

Walsh illustrates that to define an expressly pragmatic purpose to the disclosure of nature is to minimize the importance of the personal relationship one has with nature as the relationship one has with the person: “To ask what purpose it serves would be to misunderstand the transcendence of purpose entailed, for surprise exceeds all that could be anticipated within the economy of purpose. The gift of disclosure ruptures the boundaries of closure. New boundaries will then be assigned but we know that they too will be overwhelmed... Only persons can be surprised... Their mode of being present as not being present is an invitation to the gift of discourse that nature recurrently furnishes.”<sup>90</sup> Just as nature furnishes discourse, persons who have embraced this understanding furnish the very same discourse by “being present as not being present” with others who also have embraced this understanding. This is no more apparent, as Walsh explains, than in the facilitation of communal action as political actors. Persons commit actions with others, whether unknowingly or knowingly, already in their purview. In doing so,

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<sup>89</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 120.

<sup>90</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 118.

persons create a common world through the discovery of the impact of their actions on others and are shaped by the world they create as they too are persons within the community. Thus, discovery, found in science properly practiced, in spite of the scientific ideology, culminates in the person by allowing them to discover other persons: “We act not just in regard to others but also with them in mutuality. It is as if the space of our coming together precedes our coming together. In acting we are not alone but already in relation to others who similarly hold us in our purview. We do not create the political, the political creates us.”<sup>91</sup>

### **Art, Metaphor and Science**

Walsh illustrates that science properly practiced allows persons to approach the horizon of the person as an inherently communal activity. In a similar fashion, persons who create art also engage with one another in community, but, as Walsh explains, these persons actively participate in the horizon of the person as their created art emerges only from truth. Art, as a mode of discovering the person, reveals the skill of recognizing what is in what is not. Walsh explains that this skill is the only manner in which persons can recognize the personhood of others, as this recognition forces them to place themselves in the place of the other to understand what is unspoken. Walsh clarifies that while science properly practiced works with nature in the quest to uncover the meaning of the enchantment persons experience through observation and experience, the creation of art allows for the immediate expression and understanding of enchantment between persons through the use of metaphor.

While scientific investigation fails to both conceptualize enchantment and requires technical expertise to understand, art requires only the openness to one’s articulation of truth as it

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<sup>91</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 234.

is understood. Art thus represents the knowledge gained from nature in a more authentic, though less technical, understanding. Furthermore, Walsh's discussion of art illuminates that persons, through the presentation of art in the public sphere as an articulation of the truth of reality, are bound together in the pursuit of common good founded on truth. The artist articulates the truth of reality in the creation of symbolic representation, i.e. the use of metaphor, thus presenting a luminous force of truth that draws persons together to defend it: "The public space is illuminated by a light that subterfuge cannot stand. Untruth, the lie that seeks to conceal the common world, cannot endure when its falsity is exposed by truth resplendent.... That is the great contribution of art to the political... The symbolic universe of the nation creates a common world only because the symbols emerge with the imprint of truth already stamped upon them. That work of distillation of truth is the work of art. Culture is, like cult, a revolution. Artists are its seers."<sup>92</sup>

Walsh elucidates that art unites individuals in pursuit of the common good in a manner similar to Scruton's discussion of the appreciation of beauty in art as a practicing ground for political conduct. Walsh extends Scruton's discussion by illustrating that the political conduct in the public space can only occur when persons are united in their faith that truth and art not only invite persons to engage with one another politically but gives persons the confidence to proceed in political ventures precisely because art cannot produce false truths.

Walsh explains that art perceived in the public space, since it requires the artist set aside his/her predilections and embrace the truth of the art, stands as a repellant to untruth that seeks to cloud the community. Art, as an articulation of the truth of reality, is distinct from propaganda which utilizes the work of artists to serve an ideological cause due to art's full openness to the

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<sup>92</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 165.

whole of reality as opposed to the perversion of reality inherent in ideological regimes. Persons who create art to further the goals of these regimes as propaganda are themselves restricted from reality as they are situated within the ideological prison of the created reality. In this manner, the inability to access the truth of reality prevents the creation of authentic art, as exposure to the truth of reality would render the ideological pursuit worthless: “No great art can be in the service of ideology.... The one-dimensional stridency of ideology, vainly masquerading as the fullness of reality, cannot withstand the probing of artistic openness. As soon as the artist puts himself at the service of a closed political system he has sold his soul. Almost by definition, the vocation of the artist calls him to resist all closure of the openness to the horizon of mystery.”<sup>93</sup>

Art as radiant truth in comparison to propaganda can be understood through the analysis of the propaganda art “Stalin’s care brightens the future of our children!” by Irakli Toidze and the art “Punishment by Mosquitos,” by gulag survivor Nicolai Getman. The former work consists of robust Stalin holding a child, who himself is waving a Soviet Union flag, intending to convey a feeling of confidence through the portrayal of a supportive and strong leader who will lead his citizens to prosperity. Of course, the reality invoked by the rosy color scheme of the painting could not be further from the true reality of Soviet-life depicted in Getman’s art. “Punishment by Mosquitos” depicts a skeletal gulag prisoner being subjected to the torture-death known as komariki, wherein the offending prisoner is stripped naked, tied to a tree in a manner resembling crucifixion and left to mosquitos that drain him of blood in view of other prisoners beyond the fence of the camp, resulting in death in under an hour. Gutman’s painting forces the viewer to confront the horror of the reality of the gulag camps through use of focus and color.

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<sup>93</sup> David Walsh, *Guarded by Mystery: Meaning in a Postmodern Age* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999) 151.

The prisoner is placed squarely in the middle of painting, blocking the background that contains a vibrant pasture of oranges and greens. In front of the man, a broken fence makes up the foreground, tacitly guiding the onlooker to the man as the true representation and most important focus of the art. The propaganda stands as a well-crafted, but ultimately hollow creation that only represents the false truth of the ideology, while Gutman's art presents a horrific, but truthful, creation.

Walsh elucidates that a dramatic disclosure of truth occurs in the process of science properly practiced, as both art and science attempt to probe nature by immersing the person in the enchantment of nature known to him/her as the motivation for discovery. However, the person is easily led astray by the scientific practitioner's need to remove him/herself from the enchantment in the hopes of gaining a more authentic understanding of nature. To the contrary, as Walsh elucidates, proper disclosure can only occur if the person is open to being disclosed to, that is, to listen to what nature is saying in the form of experience and enchantment. In this understanding, both the scientist and the artist have the responsibility of accurately understanding and articulating to others the knowledge nature has provided. Art is able to accomplish this directly, as both created art and nature present knowledge in terms of metaphoric interpretation, while science properly practiced can provide only approximations of knowledge empirically validated. Science properly practiced, through the process of questioning initiated in discovery, questions nature to give voice to nature in a pseudo-personal manner. In turn, art also engages with a nature in a pseudo-personal manner, however, art does not question nature, it translates nature into symbolic representation to articulate the truth of nature. The person questioning nature opens him/herself to nature to give voice to nature, but must limit him/herself to the confines of his/her understanding by conceding the superiority of nature in the questioning

itself. The artist, embracing nature with complete openness, engages in an equitable relationship with nature, while the scientist remains a pupil of nature:

Both art and science are different modes of that going within, putting oneself aside to put oneself in place of the other.... It is the obligation of both the artist and the scientist to be true first of all to the material that draws her or him into its disclosure. Her or his work is to give voice to that which initially has no voice... Science may give voice to the silence of nature, but art is made possible by the address that it receives. Each is an overhearing, although it makes all the difference whether questions are asked of nature, as science does, or one simply opens to the self-questioning of nature, as art does. The latter is the more intimate relationship.<sup>94</sup>

Walsh's comparison of art and science illuminates the important distinction between questioning and openness that characterizes both frameworks. Even in science properly practiced, the person assumes a diminished relationship with nature as he/she is reserved and distanced from the natural phenomenon through the questioning process. The observations of the scientist are indeed an expression of "going within" nature to understand phenomenon, but the voice of nature it presents is not entirely authentic as the scientific framework insists upon perceiving nature as expressly non-metaphoric. Scientism fails to give nature a voice whatsoever, as it expressly rejects the notion of a reciprocal relationship between the person and nature. The framework of art, as Walsh elucidates, exceeds science's attempt by freely immersing itself within nature in a manner that necessitates the removal of partialities and the acceptance of nature as it is.

Consider the examples of landscape painters. Artists such as Thomas Cole, Claude Lorrain and Caspar David Friedrich witness nature, are bewildered by its magnitude and then seek to understand it through metaphoric representation. Friedrich's "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog," articulates the overwhelming magnitude of the ocean in comparison to the person, thus

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<sup>94</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 169-170.



illustrating man's position relative to the whole of nature truthfully, and more effectively, than a quantitative document detailing its breadth and depth. The onlooker who examines Friedrich's figure, a man standing atop a ridge overlooking the sea, extended into the foreground of the painting obscured by fog, can instantly place him/herself within the painting and absorb Friedrich's articulation of the vastness of nature in comparison to the person through metaphor. In this manner, Friedrich has metaphorically translated the truth of nature to the person who observes his creation, just as he has absorbed the truth of nature personally through metaphoric understanding by opening himself to nature without questioning. Persons thus engage with nature on the personal horizon precisely because they embrace their relationship with nature as they would another person. Walsh states: "The difference is that science is incapable of relating to it [nature] at the personal level to which art responds. The capacity for a far deeper insight into nature through art arises, not from a superior grasp of evidence, but from its opening concession that no accounting for data can penetrate to the unaccountable. Art can access the inaccessible because it operates within a personal horizon."<sup>95</sup>

Art is able to illustrate the enchantment of nature because the only concern of art is truth. Art directly articulates truth to those who experience it. The individual artist, as Walsh notes, may experience doubts regarding the authenticity of his/her work, but this does not impact the validity of the art itself, as this is confirmed or disconfirmed in the public space of the community. Art thus allows for persons to engage politically with other persons, as persons can stake their understanding of the truth on art they perceive as an authentic articulation of the personhood they perceive in others. As such, art possesses inherent political responsibility for

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<sup>95</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 173.

citizens, as what they create reflects their community and vice versa. This is exemplified in the creation and erection of statues in the public area in towns and cities.

Statues, specifically recreations of significant historical figures, are created and erected in public squares of municipalities as a reflection of what the community promotes. The community is reflected in the statue as a symbol, not only of one of its finest members who embodied those ideals, but of the ideals themselves. The removal of Confederate monuments in the United States in 2017, as well as the removal of John A. Macdonald statues in Canada in 2018, exemplifies the political responsibility inherent in public art. Those demanding the removal of the statues believe that the statues no longer reflect their communities and therefore, it is incumbent upon the citizens to exercise their political responsibility to remove art that no longer reflects their community. In turn, those wishing the statues to remain are arguing that political responsibility to one's community entails understanding and acknowledging uncomfortable pasts and maintaining connection to the historical evolution of the community. Statues, as public art, move persons to consider their political responsibility in the creation and erection of art. Persons live in a technological age but they are moved by art: "We may think of ourselves as living in a scientific age but science, despite its enormous impact, extends only to a narrow elite. For the most part we remain as susceptible to superstition and irrationally, especially in our judgment of the results of science... Art alone is capable of providing a semblance of that global rationality so indispensable to existence as a whole. Nowhere is this more evident than in the convergence between art and politics..."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 163.

Walsh explicates that the metaphoric quality of art is essential to the understanding of the person, as it allows persons to understand what cannot be grasped by observation alone. Before the person creates a work of art, he/she must understand that persons possess the skill to understand metaphoric knowledge prior to perceiving art, and trust that other persons will be able to demonstrate that understanding in the appreciation of created art. Metaphoric understanding between persons is what enables art to have the capacity for metaphoric meaning in politics. Art, as a representation of dissent in the face of injustice, necessitates the understanding of the person: “Art is possible because there is in reality a point at which the metaphoric openness of its layers can be grasped by what utterly escapes the possibility of metaphor.... For reality to disclose, for metaphor to work, there must be hiddenness as such since only what cannot be disclosed can grasp what is disclosed. All of reality is therefore one gigantic metaphor of the person, the disclosure of what cannot be disclosed that can nevertheless be glimpsed...”<sup>97</sup> Art allows the understanding of reality in a manner that is true to both reality and the person understanding it. Science properly practiced is able to engage with reality but remains closed due to distancing the person from reality and scientism refuses to engage on an equitable level with reality. Walsh’s comparisons between art and science illustrate metaphor to be vital to the person and to political action.

## **Conclusion**

Scientism, as Walsh elucidates, is a framework that does not adequately account for the material it desires to investigate. Scientism attempts to establish the person through

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<sup>97</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 186.

reconstitution as a master, material, or comfort maker, but misrepresents the person as above natural order, malleable or a creature of comfort respectively. This is contrary to the necessarily personal quality of science properly practiced, wherein persons participate with each other in the communal understanding of nature. Persons, engaging in science properly practiced, embark on a path to discover personhood within other persons as they stand in relation to each other. Art, as Walsh explains, participates in the horizon of the person due to its articulation of metaphor. This allows for the communal understanding and sharing of truth, embodying art with political responsibility. Art and science emerge as modes of persons desiring to understand the personhood of others. Walsh's accounts of scientism, science properly practiced and the person, allow persons to understand the importance of maintaining their connection with nature, understand the scientific faults of self-declared mastery and self-forgetfulness, the nuanced framework of science properly practiced in comparison to scientism and art, and the fundamentally personal horizon that persons discover in each other. Walsh demonstrates that scientism pales in comparison to both science properly practiced and art, as the person must be understood as he/she underlies the reality the process seeks to investigate. Scientism is not only a framework for the person that disintegrates him/herself practicing it, it is ultimately insufficient for discovering what it cannot understand.

### **Beyond Scientism and Towards Political Community**

Scruton and Walsh, through an examination of scientism in relation to the person, have argued for the irreplaceable dignity of the person. In contrast to the reductionist reconstitution of

the person in scientism, Scruton and Walsh present the person as the center of the political community that must be understood through interpersonal conduct founded on personal responsibility. In this manner, individuals develop their understanding of personhood, not from an objective vantage point as in scientism, but in view of one another in the public sphere. The scientific practitioners, as Scruton and Walsh have illustrated, misrepresents the person in the expressly non-personal scientific framework; the person is recognized, developed and actualized in the action of the political community.

Political communities are forged through cooperation. A foundational order of conduct must be established and understood between persons *a priori* to the promotion of said order to other communities. Politics of the person ensures that members of the community are not constricted within the framework of ideological thinking that ultimately subsumes them, as in scientism, rather, the person is recognized and verified in the view of others through cooperation. Practically, persons discover the opportunities for cooperation with those closest to them. Scruton and Walsh elucidate that politics is practiced best when the person is understood and engaged with as both the purpose and end of conduct.

Scruton and Walsh's political understanding of the person is drawn from *How to be a Conservative* and *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* and *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being* respectively. Scruton utilizes a direct writing style that treats the reader as a friend invited into a communal gathering. In this manner, Scruton's writing reflects his discussion of persons by prioritizing the reader as worthy of participating in and contributing to Scruton's understanding of politics, community and rights. Scruton illustrates that the person must be recognized as a unique being capable of responsible conduct with others to serve the common good, with the support of an inherited community that is worthy of defense: "He [Scruton]

appreciates that the free and responsible individual is unthinkable without a political community that grounds the reciprocal obligations of free men and women.... Scruton articulates a liberal conservatism that balances commitment to territorial democracy, the self-governing nation-state, and support for those mediating institutions between the state and the individual that give life to active citizenship.”<sup>98</sup>

In turn, Walsh presents the reader with a comprehensive investigation of liberalism in a tutelary manner that respects the reader as one who is willing and able to tackle challenging material. The complexity of the person, in concept and in the reality of the reader, is respected by Walsh’s style and content as his dense philosophical, historical and spiritual reviews do justice to the notion of personhood. Daniel Choi states, in reference to *Growth*, that Walsh guides the reader in confronting the problems of modern liberalism through understanding the origins of the liberal tradition. The reader is asked to take Walsh’s pedagogic hand in his exploration of liberalism and the person: “Walsh calls on us to immerse ourselves in this tradition and to learn from it. It differs from the liberal thought of our century, which liberty, having lost most of its intrinsic and constitutive appeal, serves mainly to promote economic growth, shield us from fearsome dictators, and free us to our various conceptions of the good.... Walsh argues that the current notion of liberal freedom... is really a case of liberal amnesia that has been worsening over time.”<sup>99</sup> Walsh’s work in *Growth* and *Politics of the Person* embrace the reader as a person capable of understanding the complexity of persons. The form of Scruton and Walsh’s writings reinforces the content, i.e. the person.

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<sup>98</sup> Daniel J. Mahoney, “Defending the West in All Its Amplitude: The Liberal Conservative Vision of Roger Scruton,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 45, no. 4 (2016): 283.

<sup>99</sup> Daniel Choi, “The Growth of the Liberal Soul by David Walsh,” *The Independent Review* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1999): 476-477.

Scruton and Walsh discuss the rights of persons, particularly what Scruton describes as “freedom” and “claim rights,” to illuminate how the person is actualized within the community. Following this, Scruton and Walsh’s understanding of liberal culture and the notion of “progress” elucidates the missteps persons commit in liberal democracies. Finally, the person is recognized as the center of political life in the inter-personal, associational, national and universal community. Walsh and Scruton demonstrate that the person must be recognized and understood “bottom up,” beginning with person-to-person conduct and culminating in the universal community of persons.

### **The Written Person in Scruton and Walsh**

Scruton’s presentation and style prioritizes the person through direct simple prose, compact length and friendly tone. In turn, Walsh’s work engages the reader in a pedagogical manner that prioritizes his/her philosophical understand of complex materials such as crises facing modern liberalism, the spiritual foundations of liberal democracies and the person in politics. Attention to the form of Scruton and Walsh’s writing assists the reader in understanding their political thought on the person, community and rights by illuminating the prioritization of the person formally through prose thus unifying the discussion practically and theoretically. Analyzing both authors’ work in tandem, particularly in their discussions of art, allows one to better understand how to prioritize the person in the communication of ideas through written work and direct interaction. The person must be prioritized in the act of communication itself just as he/she is recognized as the end of communication.

Scruton’s intent is to treat the reader as a person capable of recognizing and understanding his/her personhood, with the help of a more experienced friend, i.e. Scruton. He

frequently identifies the reader with the pronoun “we,” uniting himself with the reader in discussion. In doing so, Scruton forges an intentional bond with the reader that strengthens the reader’s investment in the material. In this manner, Scruton is not merely speaking with the implied “we” of the author-reader communication inherent in reading, he is expressly acknowledging an inter-personal relation with the reader him/herself that easily allows for the understanding of the topics and their applicability to the person. This is exemplified in Scruton’s discussion of the intentionality of human action as compared to animals. Scruton states: “When we ascribe intentional states to a dog, it is by way of explaining its behavior. But of course, it is *we* who formulate the explanations, and who contribute the concepts used in framing them.... Whatever computational framework we develop, by way of explaining the passage from input to output in the mind of a dog, it is in terms of the physical world... The dog’s beliefs are beliefs *de re* [about the thing] not *de dicto* [about what is said]: we identify them in terms of the things *we* notice...”<sup>100</sup> Persons seeking to understand the intentionality of dogs make the mistake of applying a framework that is exclusively understandable to them, *de dicto*, while the dog’s intentions and beliefs are exclusive to the dog *de re*.

Scruton does not commit this error when speaking to the reader as a person *de re*, through the use of collective terms and direct prose. Note the usage of “we” in the passage. It is not a group of persons, or Scruton himself that makes these observations about human ascribing intentionality, it is the italicized “*we*” who engage in ascribing our states of intentionality to creatures such as dogs. Scruton does not displace himself, nor the reader from the mistakes that persons commit, rather, he unifies himself and the reader with the universal community of persons in understanding intentionality. Furthermore, the use of “we” illustrates Scruton’s

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<sup>100</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 45-46.



argument that personalizing animals concurrently misapplies personhood to animals, and disservices the authenticity of animal intentionality as its own entity. Persons are uniquely identified in the passage with the communal “we” while the dog is identified with the singular colloquial term for its species. This efficiently elucidates the notion of recognizing persons as worthy of dignity distinct from animals and prepares the reader for Scruton’s discussion of first-person awareness.

Scruton elucidates, through the use an example utilizing the first person “I,” that persons engage in intentional action with the assumption that others persons recognize their personhood through acknowledgement of “I.” Scruton’s direct prose and simple examples effectively clarifies what could be misconstrued as a complex understanding of intentionality and perception: “I do not look on the other, still less on myself, as an organism, whose behavior is to be explained by some hypothesis concerning the nature of its intentional states. I look on the other as I look on myself – as an “I,” whom I *address* in the second person, and whose self-attribution of reasons takes precedence, for me, over any third-person vision of what makes him tick.”<sup>101</sup>

First, Scruton utilizes himself in the example, reinforcing an easy empathic connection to the reader previously established with his earlier use of the communal “we.” Second, Scruton’s use of person to person *address*, conversation, as an example of a mode of understanding between people practiced intentionally, mirrors Scruton’s intentional *address* of the reader. The reader, having placed him/herself in conversation with Scruton metaphorically through the reading of the text, is placed into conversation by Scruton identifying himself in the example of

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<sup>101</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*,47.

address with the other. The other represents a stand-in for the reader, as he/she has already been placed in pseudo-conversation with Scruton by reading the text. The reader easily understands Scruton's notion of recognizing other persons after one has understood him/herself as a person worthy of the first-person "I." Third and finally, Scruton's prose directly establishes a foundation for conduct between persons that is distinct from the scientific third-person understanding and this is solidified with the use of a simple pedestrian example of conversation. Scruton's discussion of the first person is immediately identifiable to the reader even if he/she lacks nuanced epistemological knowledge due to the simple nature of Scruton's language. Scruton, from a position of authority as the author, states that he does not view other persons in a first person manner, then clarifies that he views himself as an "I," just as all persons do. He then states that this perspective equates himself to all other persons in stark contrast to the third-person perspective of scientism that necessarily places the observer above the other. By establishing an equal level between himself and the reader early in the text, Scruton invites persons to engage with him in thought as a friend, rather than as a banal lecturer whose concern is the material he/she presents, rather than the audience before him/her.

Scruton's pseudo-friendship with the reader in writing expressly relates to the content that is the person in politics. The reader establishes a relationship with Scruton that mirrors the relationships forged through responsible conduct with persons in the communal setting. The reader places his/her trust and attention in Scruton as he articulates his position, thus treating him as a dignified individual. In this manner, the reader recognizes the place of the person in the community as one who listens and communicates and as a dignified individual reflected in Scruton's discussion of rights. Walsh engages the reader in a similar but distinctly pedagogic manner. This form establishes a pseudo reader-teacher relationship that allows the reader to be

guided in their understanding of the person in a manner that mirrors the guidance that a community provides to its members. Walsh elucidates that the political community should, through individual, associational and universal relations, facilitate the understanding of the person by guiding its newer members through conduct. Walsh's form reflects the content, as demonstrated in his comprehensive, rigorous argumentation that necessitates a teacher to guide the reader.

Walsh's texts, considerably longer and more comprehensive than Scruton's, engages the reader as an eager student willing and ready to learn from an experienced mentor. At the outset of each chapter of *Politics of the Person* Walsh provides an outline that details the following pages to allow the reader to understand the purpose of the chapter in relation to the person. This short outline does not subsume the chapter by over explaining Walsh's arguments, rather, Walsh's outline prepares the reader for dense argumentation utilizing multiple notions. In this manner, Walsh has the reader's best interest in mind from the perspective of an instructor who does not wish to overwhelm his students with too much information but still desires to challenge them to absorb and understand intensive material. Consider the outline Walsh presents for the second chapter entitled "Persons as beyond Good and Evil." His outline explains the broad strokes of chapter, without revealing the nuance of his argumentation:

...the whole moral tradition... has been rooted in the recognition of life as an unending struggle... We simply have not made that acknowledgement integral to moral discourse. The present chapter attempts a beginning in this task. Nietzsche, we will discover, is not so bewildering.... [W]e will examine Kant's evocation of this dynamic as a mysterious unfathomability that has not been well served.... This will, third, provide us with a way of enlarging the moral conception of moral language.... Persons, we finally see, are more than the categories applied to them.... Beyond the moral categories there is the more fundamental decision for or against being enacted by every one of us.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 55-56.

Walsh's use of the communal "we" unites the reader with Walsh in journey into the person. However, instead of traveling as friends as with Scruton, Walsh acts as a guide to the reader so that they may arrive at the destination of the person. By tracing the path of the arguments he is about to lay before the reader, Walsh ensures that his message, that could be lost in unguided hands, is successfully delivered to the reader. The person seeking to understand others is directed towards his/her goal by a person who has sought and arrived at this goal. Walsh succeeds at presenting personhood with the complexity it deserves and can now present personhood to others through his written work.

Walsh's style and prose are not as easily grasped as Scruton's. Walsh strings multiple complicated notions together in single sentences in order to elucidate the complexity of his ideas. However, the complexity of Walsh's texts should not be viewed as a hill that is too steep to climb, rather, the complexity should be perceived as a testament to the complexity of the persons that can never be fully captured. Walsh does not purport to deliver a full account of the person in his works, rather, he encourages readers to recognize the dignity persons deserve through his presentation of the person as an irreplaceable bearer of dignity. This approach is in direct contrast to the scientific goal of representing and defining the person in his/her totality simply from a theoretical framework. Walsh explains that the only action that can accurately encompass the irreplaceable dignity of the person is the sacrifice of the whole person him/herself: "It is only those losses to which a person has wholly submitted that can be regarded as retaining the dignity of a human being. The whole person must be given in the action.... The person always

communicates by going beyond all that is said. By contrast, exchange is what can be reduced to terms of a contract.... The dignity of the immeasurable cannot be measured.”<sup>103</sup>

Walsh’s writing style breaks down incalculable human dignity in a manner that respects the subject matter by refusing to downplay or minimalizes its importance. Walsh first states that it is only through the action of self-sacrifice that the dignity of the person is respected; he/she cannot be reduced to bartering chips for political or financial gain. Dignity, as Walsh then states, is not equivalent to matter that be exchanged between persons; it must be embodied and practiced through conduct. Ultimately, dignity, exemplified authentically only in self-sacrifice, cannot be quantified. Walsh’s written work does justice to dignity through acknowledgement of its complexity and irreducibility. Scruton and Walsh’s work, when analyzed together, allows one to gain a superior understanding of the person than either thinker has achieved alone, as demonstrated in their discussions of art.

Scruton discusses various works of art in relation to the face of the person as the first stage of desecration or objectification through the removal of personhood. In turn, Walsh’s discussion of art is more comprehensive, considering the whole medium in relation to the person. Scruton’s work utilizes the example of art to assist the reader in grasping the importance of engaging in person to person interactions directly; persons understand the conduct of one another primarily through reading each other’s faces. From Scruton’s work, the person is readily prepared to tackle Walsh’s argument that encompasses the totality of art in relation to the person him/herself.

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<sup>103</sup> Walsh, “Dignity as an Eschatological Concept,” in *Understanding Human Dignity*, 256-257.

Scruton discusses Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" to illustrate the sacredness of the face. The face is not merely the sensory hub of the person in the way of the scientific homunculus, rather, it is the foremost gateway to the person found in conduct: "Botticelli's great picture reminds us that the human face is to be understood in quite another way from the body-parts of an animal. Animals do not see faces, since they cannot see that which *organizes* eyes, nose, mouth... namely the self, whose residence those features are. The face is therefore not just an object among objects, and when people invite us to perceive it as such... they succeed only in defacing the human form... We can desecrate only what is sacred."<sup>104</sup> Once again, Scruton's contrast between animals and humans, emphasized in importance with the use of "we," drives home his comments on Botticelli's work. Venus's face is not covered in the painting while she covers her genitalia and breasts. Her face is not an object to be appreciated and should not be defamed in exploitive manners. Persons who understand the importance of the face can better engage in moral conduct that avoids desecration.

Consider Walsh's comments on art in relation to Scruton's. Walsh describes beauty in art in relation to the person in totality, and while not as easily grasped as Scruton's face-to-face emphasis, more accurately articulates the depth of the person: "Through art beauty stands apart from the person who apprehends it, as a permanence available to all other persons. Art provides therefore a unique avenue on the person who stands outside of all saying and yet is disclosed within the very saying. Through art we see that persons are not simply marked by the evanescence of their presence in time but that they also aspire to the permanence of truth that radiates beyond the persons who glimpse it."<sup>105</sup> Walsh's words elevate art beyond Scruton's

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<sup>104</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 109.

<sup>105</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 159.

usage of art as a tool to better understand the relations between persons. Art in Walsh's conception is the first step towards truth that acts as a beacon toward persons to discover others. Walsh's employs several contrasting statements to articulate the incompressible totality of the person. Persons are marked by evanescence and yet they aspire to truth beyond them. Art provides an avenue to the person who is outside of said art but still can be captured in the creation of art. These paradoxical statements require a guiding voice to navigate that Walsh expertly provides. In this manner, Walsh's comments complement Scruton's direct articulation of the person by presenting the person in accurate complexity.

Taken together, Scruton and Walsh's works present the person as the central political entity. The reader utilizes Scruton's texts as his/her first stepping stone to the person, engaging with the text in the friendly manner Scruton's prose intends. Following this, the reader approaches Walsh's more challenging texts with the confidence developed in understanding Scruton's work. Scruton's texts point persons towards Walsh so that they may continue to develop their understanding of personhood while Walsh's texts further that development. In this manner, the reader gains a nuanced understanding of the person that allows a recognition of the political importance of the person. Scruton and Walsh's discussions of human rights exemplifies this notion in a manner that prioritizes the dignity of the person.

### **Human Rights and Dignity**

The irreplaceable dignity of the person must be safeguarded by members of the community in the public sphere. It is not sufficient for persons to practice conduct between each other privately; the person must be actualized in the community. In the liberal philosophical tradition, notably in the works of John Locke, the person is affirmed and embodied in the notion of legalized human rights that are inalienable and granted to every person in the community.

However, as Scruton notes, rights should not be utilized as a substitute for the understanding of the person as this reduces the person to a simple list to tenets. Furthermore, this is exemplified in the over-proliferation of rights into what Scruton characterizes as “claim rights,” rights imposed on persons as duties to their fellow community members. In this manner, persons are not treated as irreplaceable individuals, as they are burdened by excessive rights that benefit others. Walsh characterizes the rapid increase in rights in modern liberal democracies as a fundamental misunderstanding that must be rectified before liberal states propagate the notion of human rights. To solve this crisis, Walsh proposes a return to the foundational notions of personhood, and necessary limitations, found in the philosophical liberal tradition. In this manner, the public sphere propagates the person through notions of responsible conduct, dignity and personal limitation. Finally, Scruton and Walsh’s understanding of rights illuminate that the scientific understanding of the person as a unique biological being does not act as a substitute for foundational human rights that prioritize the moral action of persons in the community.

Scruton elucidates that human rights are best perceived as an avenue toward freedom understood as a “sphere of personal sovereignty,” wherein persons are guaranteed personal boundaries so that they may freely engage in consensual relations. Rights do establish limitations on the conduct of persons, one cannot infringe on the boundaries of another without express invitation, but allow for the practical exercise of substantially more free actions than if one had no rights: “The primary function of the idea of a right... is to identify something as within the boundary of me and mine.... Without those fixed points negation and free agreement are unlikely to occur... my sphere of action is liable to constant invasion by others, and there is nothing that I can do... Rights, then, enable us to establish a society in which consensual relations are the norm, and they do this by defining for us the sphere of personal sovereignty



from which others are excluded.”<sup>106</sup> Rights that establish boundaries that enable freedom in consensual action, termed “freedom rights,” are therefore understood as justifying universal acceptance by all persons since they enable persons to engage in meaningful conduct. In contrast, “claim rights” imposed on persons do not enable conduct, rather, they add additional punitive duties to offending persons. Thus, “claim rights” do not practically exist as safeguards, they hinder rather than foster persons. This is exemplified in Scruton’s discussion of education, health, work and standard living conditions as human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UHDR).

Extending the universality of human rights to “claim rights” without a firm grounding as the UDHR does imposes duties on states and persons within them. Article 14 states that every person has the right to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries, effectively placing duty on all communities to foster all communities. Article 22 states that all persons possess the right to social security, without specifying the necessary effectiveness or source of guarantee that would enable the realization of the person’s “...social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and free development of his personality.”<sup>107</sup> Dignity cannot be realized through an external imposition of its importance, rather, it must be understood through practical conduct. Scruton notes that the libertarian would object to “claim rights” due the necessity of their external imposition by a state or inter-state governing body. In this manner, persons do not develop their understanding of dignity through the recognition of the person, instead, dignity is an imposed duty enforced on persons: “...large, vague claims require a massive expansion of state power, a surrender to the state of all kinds of responsibilities that previously vested in individuals, and the

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<sup>106</sup> Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 86.

<sup>107</sup> “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” United Nations, accessed September 17<sup>th</sup> 2018.

centralization of social life in the government machine. In other words, claim rights push us inevitably in a direction that, for many people, is morally and politically dangerous.”<sup>108</sup>

The notion of enforced “claim rights” is thus malleable to the whims of the persons who enforce them, and these persons, lacking the understanding of personhood, lack the crucial universal moral component of freedom rights. Additionally, Scruton explains that these “claim rights” do not encompass the totality of the person as they do not account for the possible violation of the person: “Persons can be harmed in ways that are not adequately summarized in the idea of a violation of rights. They can be polluted, desecrated, defiled – and in many cases this disaster takes a bodily form.”<sup>109</sup> “Claim rights” are not a substitute for the understanding of the person grounded in conduct and solidified in responsibility.

Walsh characterizes the reliance on rights as self-justifying as an effective but insufficient manner of justifying moral conduct in liberal democracies. The challenge for liberal democracies is to find a manner of conduct that reinforces the irreplaceable dignity of the person, without attempting to enforce that understanding upon persons: “The language of that public debate can be refined to appeal only to arguments that pertain to the exercise of rights, or to the common good defined in material or secular terms... It is an arrangement that works remarkably well, eliminating a whole range of difficult and unnecessary disputes from the public arena... The great challenge is to find a means of bridging the gap between such personal growth of the soul and the common ethos... What I am suggesting is a growth of the liberal soul.”<sup>110</sup> The growth of the liberal soul can only occur once the person has solidified him/herself on a foundation of

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<sup>108</sup> Scruton, *Soul of the World*, 84.

<sup>109</sup> Scruton, *The Face of God*, 158.

<sup>110</sup> Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 312-313.

liberal principles justifiable through personal responsibility and interpersonal conduct in the public sphere.

Persons attempting to justify the propagation of the liberal order, without relying on the existence of the order itself or the notions of rights, must look to personhood itself for their answer. The person precedes the political order that is comprised of persons, as such, liberal democracies must strive to authentically represent the person by allowing all persons the capacity to discover their personhood. In this manner, liberal democracies, if they prioritize the foundation of individual freedom as described in Scruton's freedom rights, enable persons to practice responsibility for themselves and others as bearers of dignity: "At its best, the liberal construction evokes the realization that the highest purpose of human existence is served through the actualization of an order that has no purpose beyond itself than the full emergence of the practice of self-government... The culminating expression of political order is that in which the human good as human is served, and that involves the unfolding of the specifically human capacity for free intelligent donation of self in responsibility and love."<sup>111</sup>

Freedom to engage in consensual relations, as Scruton elucidates, grounds the importance of the person in individuals as the success of their conduct depends on both parties treating the other with dignity. If one party forgoes the dignity of the other, he/she betrays both the other practically and the foundational notion of dignity as it is the foundation of the relation itself. Therefore, individuals must articulate a set of symbolic representations of the person that facilitate conduct in the public sphere. Walsh complements and furthers Scruton's freedom rights by elucidating that the recognition of these rights both enables the understanding of dignity

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<sup>111</sup> Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 315.

between persons and illuminates dignity as the source of the justification of universality of freedom rights. Persons develop their understanding of dignity through meaningful conduct with others who are grounded by universal rights thus engaging in a self-supporting practice that renews the liberal order. The person is *a priori* to the notion of rights, allowing rights to stand as an affirmation of the person: “What cannot be alienated cannot be fully named. Rights are not the same as dignity, for dignity requires us to go beyond the mere acknowledgement of rights, but rights are the epiphany of the dignity of the persons.... It is the affirmation of the incalculability of each one that is the primary legal affirmation of dignity.... Rights are our refusal to trade in the untradeable. It is in the defense of rights that dignity is resplendent.”<sup>112</sup>

Walsh and Scruton’s work concerning rights allows the person to understand that he/she must prioritize the dignity of the other in the public sphere to reinforce him/herself and his/her polity. In the same manner that dignity is understood by assigning it as a blind duty to persons with no foundation, the empirical foundation provided by scientific biology and mathematical physics does not provide persons with an avenue towards dignity. Walsh clarifies that although biological processes can justify the worldview that each person is an irreplaceable being due to unique markers in DNA, the moral person is not born fully formed. The scientific conception of the person reduces the person to his/her components, as discussed by Scruton previously, but also minimizes the personal growth of the person that is forged in conduct. Walsh states: “What makes a human being a human being is more than the sum total of the chemical organization of its elemental molecular body. The ingredients do not constitute the whole.... Whence arises this concrete whole that is a unique, irreplaceable human being whose trajectory points beyond the

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<sup>112</sup> Walsh, “Dignity as an Eschatological Concept,” in *Understanding Human Dignity*, 258.

whole world? It cannot arise as an afterthought...”<sup>113</sup> Biological knowledge of genetics may allow one to understand the chemical processes of reproduction, but it does not allow one to understand how a newborn becomes a full-fledged person.

Human rights, not extended as “claim rights,” allow communities to uphold dignity through symbolic representations. Liberal democratic communities that preserve the capacity to freely engage with others allow their citizens to develop an understanding of dignity and personhood, grounded in freedom rights. The person is prioritized, resulting in a stronger understanding of dignity and the rights that uphold it: “Rights, by which the other takes precedence over me and over all others in the moment, are merely the external expression of what has already occurred in the mutuality of persons to one another. This is the secret of the appeal of the language of rights that has superseded over all other political formations. In the application of rights there flashes the recognition that this how persons are in relation to another.”<sup>114</sup> However, persons are not apt to sit content with their lot. In the most altruistic cases, they hope to improve their standing for the purposes of the common good. Persons “progress” rather than perfect. Walsh and Scruton suggest that “progression” is not an apt goal for persons, rather, they should face their deficiencies head on in cooperation with others.

### **Culture, Progress and the Person**

Walsh, in *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, postulates that liberal democratic citizens are faced with a number of problems, including the demand for economic growth and rampant narcotic use for escapism, but possess the ability to solve them. The true challenge is to solve the problem of convincing persons to solve the problem. Responses to this crisis emerge from two facets. The

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<sup>113</sup> Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 298.

<sup>114</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person*, 252.

first, described by Scruton, is a reactionary “culture of repudiation” that deconstructs the foundational tenets of liberal democracy to account for the modern callousness of liberal democracies. If liberal democracies were *never* great, as the deconstructionists suggest, it makes sense that persons are unsatisfied with them. Both Scruton and Walsh discuss the works of Richard Rorty to demonstrate that western liberal cultural is not merely a set of “pragmatic” cultural conventions but is instead the source of said conventions that enable virtue amongst persons. The second, more optimistic response, arises as the notion of “progress.” The foundational notions of liberalism are good for persons, but citizens must ensure that all peoples are equal in receiving the positive benefits. Walsh criticizes the notion of “progress” as an illusory idea that relies of self-justification and the need to consistently “perfect” the current version of liberalism for one that better reflects the tenets of liberal democracy. Finally, Walsh and Scruton demonstrate this to be a hollow goal through a critique of John Rawls’ account of fairness provided in *A Theory of Justice*.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, liberal democracies emerged as the *de facto* regime for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the 21<sup>st</sup>, and possibly all future centuries. Walsh suggests that liberal democracies face a challenging crisis, not in the form of an external threat by competing regimes, but from within. Liberal democratic citizens lack the will to truly face the internal problems that plague them: “A peculiar ambivalence, a conflict of inclinations grips us, and we are unable to shake free of the desuetude that overwhelms us. We cannot take action because we are not yet willing to undergo the painful reorientation.”<sup>115</sup> Walsh illuminates three factors to which citizens must orient themselves: the loss of confidence in the effectiveness of liberal democratic principles arising from a lack of shared trust in liberalism, the corrosion of the

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<sup>115</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 14.

liberal ethos through the propagation of neutrality, and a growing awareness of these factors paired with no concrete solutions. Walsh characterizes the crisis as a “collapse of the center” of liberalism initiated within its own foundations. Persons are struggling to solve this crisis through different political paradigms, particularly exemplified in welfare-state liberalism:

We recognize that it is specifically a crisis of liberal order itself, not attributable to any extraneous factors.... The search for new political paradigms... testifies to nothing so much as the defunctness of the old orientations... The extension of liberal principles into welfare-state liberalism... has reached its limits. The welfare state ceases to serve the welfare of its beneficiaries when it has transformed them into its wards... An order of liberty presupposes some limits that lie beyond even benevolent control.<sup>116</sup>

Walsh utilizes the example of welfare-state liberalism to solidify his discussion of the crisis. The goal of ensuring welfare for all persons, through taxation on all persons, to primarily support those who are the least able, ironically does not enable persons to stand by themselves and actualize their potential. Rather, as Walsh suggests, enforced support of the few has stunted the growth of persons by reconstituting them as beneficiaries. Liberal democracies presume that persons must have freedom to succeed in their ventures, but concurrently allow persons to exercise their freedom to fail, thus incorporating a self-defeating enterprise within its principles. Benevolent control, as Walsh illuminates, exemplifies the liberal crisis of recovering the “liberal center” through verification of foundational liberal tenets, only to face the paradoxical recognition that justification cannot avoid returning to the tenets themselves: “The parallel intellectual straining of the limits of liberal principles has reached an equivalent transparency, collapsing in the recognition that the quest for foundations impregnable to skeptical critique is an impossible enterprise. There are no foundations beyond foundation.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 18.

<sup>117</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 18-19.

Scruton, in turn, suggests that a response to the “impossible enterprise” of justifying foundational liberal tenets, such as equality and liberty, emerges in the form of the deconstructionist “culture of repudiation,” whose members attack and reveal the notions of liberalism to be, at best, fundamentally flawed. Scruton states: “If you look at the organs of opinion in Britain and Europe... such as the universities... you find... a culture of repudiation. Take any aspect of the Western inheritance of which our ancestors were proud, and you will find university courses devoted to deconstructing it. Take any positive feature of our political and cultural inheritance, and you will find concentrated efforts in both the media and the academy to place it in quotations marks and make it look like an imposture or a deceit.”<sup>118</sup> They espouse that solution to Walsh’s identified crisis is not to correct the problem, but instead to illuminate that the foundations of liberal democracy are not worth saving in their current form and must be reconstituted through repudiation.

Scruton discusses the example of political correctness, specifically the self-condemning character of inclusionary politics to illustrate the actions of the “culture of repudiation.” Despite the proposition that political correctness entails nondiscrimination in language, thought and action, Scruton notes that a concurrent trend of condemnation of western cultural identity and values also emerges as a component. The inclusion of others is only possible with the exclusion of the old, ironically suggesting that repudiation of the old liberal order necessarily entails practices that run contrary to the goal of inclusive policies: “... The Director-General of the BBC recently condemned his organization and its programmes as obnoxiously white and middle-class. Academics sneer at the curriculum established ‘Dead White European Males’.... All such abusive utterances express the code of political correctness. For although they involve the

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<sup>118</sup> Roger Scruton, *How to be a Conservative* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 39-40.



condemnation of people on grounds of class, race, sex or colour, the purpose is not to exclude the Other but to condemn Ourselves.”<sup>119</sup> The “feel-good” ask for inclusion entails the sinister ask for exclusion of those who established the liberal tenets the deconstructionists claim to rectify. The exclusion of persons necessitates the exclusion of ideas held by persons.

Scruton identifies the repudiation of reason itself as the most destructive aspect of the “culture of repudiation,” most notably found in the works of Richard Rorty. Rorty and his contemporaries, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, suggest that reason itself is simply an appeal for Western culture over the culture of other groups, thereby concealing claims of superiority inside purportedly contextual logical precepts. Truth is not verifiable through rational discourse, at best, knowledge is actualized as useful beliefs from a foundationless, culturally contextual source, defined by Rorty as “pragmatism:” “...they [pragmatists] view truth as... what is good for *us* to believe. They see the gap between truth and justification not as something to be bridged by isolating a natural and transcultural sort of rationality which can be used to criticize certain cultures, but simply as the gap between the actual good and the possible better.... For pragmatists, the desire of objectivity is... the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of “us” as far as we can.”<sup>120</sup>

Truth is thus defined only by the identification of membership in a “us” that can include everyone, if they agree with Rorty’s initial proposition that truth is only useful knowledge to benefit said “us.” The validating factor of truth is agreement that what is true is true by virtue of agreement on said truth. The membership in the group “us” defines truth as it interprets it, while concurrently rejecting the notion of a verifiable universal truth altogether. Therefore, as Scruton

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<sup>119</sup> Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 82.

<sup>120</sup> Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22-23.

concludes, the pragmatist engages in contradictory argumentation: “Hence we have gone around in a circle, defining truth by utility and utility by truth. Indeed, it is hard to find a plausible pragmatism that does not come down to this: that a true proposition is one that is useful in the way that *true* propositions are useful... There is no constraint on us, beyond the community to which we have chosen to belong. And because there is no objective truth but only our own self-engendered consensus, our position is unassailable from any point of view outside of it.”<sup>121</sup>

Walsh characterizes Rorty’s position as the epitome of ironic commentary on liberalism, and extends Scruton’s understanding by suggesting that Rorty’s works are best viewed as an example of the self-awareness of the liberal crisis. Walsh, quoting Rorty, explains that Rorty’s promotion of a “we” is founded on the solidarity between members who extend their sympathy to one another. Rorty advocates for an enlargement of this solidarity to secure liberal order without generating the moral fortitude required for that growth: “The solidarity that is required to treat all others with dignity and respect can be promoted only through the enlargement of our existing feelings of solidarity. ‘The wrong way is to think of it as urging us to *recognize* such a solidarity exists antecedently to our recognition of it...’ Rather than argument, he proposes the existential enlargement of our sympathy with the suffering of others as a means of securing a liberal order.”<sup>122</sup> Walsh’s comments point to another paradoxical problem in Rorty’s thinking. Rorty claims to reject the foundations of liberal order as exclusively culturally contextual for pragmatic utility, but in its place suggests another foundation laid by persons extending sympathy to one another. Skeptical persons question Rorty’s substitution of the enlargement of sympathy in the same manner that Rorty questions the foundations of liberal order. A foundation

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<sup>121</sup> Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 84-85.

<sup>122</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 53-54.

has been suggested in place of foundations, but without the historical inheritance that constitutes the liberal order.

Scruton illuminates that Rorty promotes a community through liberal tenets while rejecting those tenets to achieve membership in the community of the “culture of repudiation.” He explains that those who are dissatisfied with their inherited liberal order search for a new community that better reflects their understanding of truth. However, Scruton points out that the new community of the “culture of repudiation” necessitates the destruction, not the integration, of the previous liberal order:

In short, the vast changes in the cultural life of Western societies have their origin in the search for community, among people for whom the old loyalties have lost their appeal.... young people are given new beliefs based on equality and inclusion, and are told that the judgement of other lifestyles is a crime. If the purpose were merely to substitute one belief system for another it would be open to rational debate. But the purpose is to substitute one *community* for another. The project, however, is a purely negative one... there is no such thing as a community based in repudiation. The assault on the old cultural inheritance leads to no new form of membership, but only to a kind of alienation.<sup>123</sup>

Scruton’s characterization of the lack of membership in the new community proposed by the “culture of repudiation” is noted by Walsh as the fundamental mistake of forgetting the person, and the personal perspective he/she operates under. In this manner, the challenge of justifying liberal tenets, or not justifying them in the case of Rorty, commits the scientific mistake of attempting to stand outside of the person to gain a more objective viewpoint on the whole enterprise of liberalism. Walsh states: “We cannot avoid the inclinations and pulls that already draw us in particular directions even if we believe, like contemporary deconstructionist liberals, that they are utterly groundless.... We cannot step outside the perspective of human beings to gain any more objective viewpoint on the whole. We cannot penetrate beyond the

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<sup>123</sup> Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 89.

mystery of the process within which we find ourselves, nor reach any more definitive account of the inescapable structures of order that compel us.”<sup>124</sup> Those who wish to reconstitute the community of persons from the outside in engage in the same fallacious thinking as the scientific investigator pursuing the “Archimedean point” in search of an objective vantage point. To correct this mistake, the second response to the liberal crisis emerges; the notion of “progress” beyond the current liberal order to a more accurate representation that will reaffirm the foundational tenets in the minds of the persons who embody them.

Scruton elucidates, in his explanation of the historical emergence of conservatism, that the success of the Enlightenment depended upon confidence and maintenance of institutions. Without faith in the foundational tenets of liberalism and their embodiment in citizenship, civic association and good government, the pursuit of “progress” would not flourish: “Liberal individualism offered a new and in many ways inspiring vision of the human condition; but it depended upon traditions and institutions that bound people together... The Enlightenment proposed a universal human nature, governed by a universal law, from which the state emerges through consent of the government. The political was henceforth shaped by the free choices of individuals... it made no sense without the cultural inheritance of the nation state.”<sup>125</sup> If the confidence in the cultural inheritance is removed, the prospects of the project are jeopardized, as the secure foundations of liberalism are cast in doubt. Walsh furthers this by suggesting that the lack of confidence does indeed compromise the project of the Enlightenment and reveals the hollowness of “progress.”

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<sup>124</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 261.

<sup>125</sup> Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 79.

Walsh explains that a significant factor that prevents liberal democratic citizens from recognizing the need to reorient themselves to their foundations is the “illusion of progress.” He states that as the liberal order has evolved throughout history, persons have come to expect renewed “progress” in their moral quality as they seek to correct their mistakes through conduct. However, this faith in continued “progress” was shattered with the unspeakable malevolence committed by persons during 20<sup>th</sup> century global conflicts, leaving those alive with their faith in liberal foundations shaken and reminded of the seeming invariance in their capacity for barbarism: “...the experience of three global conflicts in the twentieth century... has worn of the luster of progress.... Yet the dream of progress dies hard.... The very notion of history suggests something progressive... But liberalism, like the ideological movements it opposed, extrapolated its own limited progress into an infinite future. It forgot that no historical advance escapes the fate of the history that brought it forth, in which nothing remains forever...”<sup>126</sup>

“Progress”, as Walsh elucidates, cannot be pursued indefinitely as this presupposes that liberalism stands outside the historical framework from which it evolved, thus contradicting the notion of progression from a foundational starting point. Similarly, “progress”, like science, cannot be subsumed and accounted for in an aspect of liberal society, as Walsh explains: “It is also not simply progress within the fairly narrow range of science and its technological applications. The most significant aspect of history is the history of the emergence of order, fragile and reversible as each advance is.”<sup>127</sup> The advancement of technology, discussed in the previous chapter, does not substitute for the understanding of the person. “Progress” is thus

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<sup>126</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 83.

<sup>127</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 83.

meant to reaffirm the liberal democratic citizen's faith in their foundational tenets, but the actualization of this reaffirmation proves more difficult than expected.

Scruton and Walsh turn their attention to the writings of John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* to elucidate how the mere extension of liberal principles in the name of "progressive justice" does not equate to their fulfillment by persons. Scruton lays out Rawls' argument for the redistribution of resources based on his "veil of ignorance" thought experiment. Rawls asks the reader to imagine he/she can perceive the world before he/she is born. From this vantage point, Rawls suggests that one would desire to be born in the best possible circumstances with the most resources. Therefore, it is the duty of governing bodies to ensure that all are given equally desirable opportunities, including persons yet to come. This is achieved through the redistribution of wealth to those less fortunate to reach unanimity in society: "A conception of justice based on unanimity in these circumstances would indeed be weak and trivial. But once knowledge is excluded, the requirement of unanimity is not out of place and the fact that it can be satisfied is of great importance. It enables us to say of the preferred conception of justice that it represents a genuine reconciliation of interests."<sup>128</sup>

Scruton criticizes the practical fulfillment of Rawls' conception of justice, suggesting that said redistribution would inevitably have to be carried out through the state, effectively removing person-to-person sharing of wealth. Rawls' justice is concerned with the outcomes of redistribution, not the necessary responsibility founded in personal conduct that would motivate persons to redistribute wealth: "...if we look at justice in Rawls' way, we weaken the connection between justice and responsibility, and remove the concept from our ordinary practical

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<sup>128</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 122.

reasoning. It is precisely the emphasis on outcomes, rather than actions, obligations, and responsibilities, that has led to the overriding of ordinary contract...”<sup>129</sup> Rawls’ “veil of ignorance” is itself ignorant to the manner in which persons practice justice, subsuming them into a system of redistribution that must be managed by the very persons who let resources become so unequal originally.

Walsh’s consideration of Rawls highlights Scruton’s observation of the practical difficulty of implementation while putting forward deeper criticism of Rawls’ understanding of persons in general. Walsh explains that Rawls’ premise of redistributive justice necessitates the assumption that persons will desire more resources than their neighbor, behaving in greedy or envious ways to attain them, only to have these problems solved with the redistribution of wealth resulting in benevolent social arrangements. Rawls’ theory of justice thus necessitates the institution be able to mold the person through a “top-down” manner: “Rawls is asking us to accept the progressivist premise that human nature is susceptible to... institutional determination.... Are not envy and vanity more deeply rooted temptations than Rawlsian liberalism seems to expect?” Rawls’ optimistic portrayal of persons is justified through a scientific based argument which Rawls compares to the natural theory of evolution: “In arguing for the great stability of the principles of justice I have assumed that certain psychological laws are true... one might ask how it is that human beings have acquired a nature described by these psychological principles. The theory of evolution would suggest that it is the outcome of natural selection; the capacity for a sense of justice and moral feelings is an adaption of mankind to its place in nature.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Scruton, *Soul of the World*, 89.

<sup>130</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 440.

Walsh characterizes progressivist aspirational theories such as Rawls' as reliant on the mere extension of liberal guarantees and opportunities to persons, including human rights and freedoms, rather than their actualization in the conduct of persons in the form of personal responsibility. Legal codification of liberalism is merely the first to achieve its fulfillment, not the final step that will convince persons to behave according to those codes. Walsh highlights a number of disturbing trends to solidify his point: "As members of a liberal society we are appalled to discover that the cumulative solicitations for the rights and autonomy of individuals have only spawned greater indifference and irresponsibility. A mushrooming of out-of-wedlock births can surely not be blamed on a lack of information... Nor can the surge of white-collar crime and socially condoned cheating of all types be attributed to a lack of material and psychic privileges."<sup>131</sup> The mere expansion of liberal tenets does not teach persons to maximize themselves; persons must practice these liberal activities in conduct with one another to solidify their understanding of them.

Scruton and Walsh's works solidify the importance of persons facing the challenges brought before them without repudiating their culture or attempting to distance themselves from it to reach an unrealizable state through "progress." Walsh states: "Expanding individual liberty without the correlative moral discipline does not promote autonomy. In most human beings, it only encourages self-serving irresponsibility.... it is only the dream of progress that has allowed the liberal philosophy to overlook its own deficiency altogether by reassuring us that the evolution of humanity itself will take care of our moral improvement."<sup>132</sup> It is through the

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<sup>131</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 87.

<sup>132</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 87.



practice of communal conduct that persons do take care of their moral improvement, as emphasized in Scruton and Walsh's discussion of the person in community.

### **The Community of Persons**

The person maximizes his/her potential when he/she participates with others in a communal setting that is conducive to moral development. As Walsh illuminates, the person cannot simply be expected to "progress" with the extension of liberal tenets, they must practice moral conduct to actualize them. Scruton and Walsh emphasize the importance of face-to-face interaction between persons, illuminating the importance of friendship in communal conduct. On the foundation of friendship, persons create and join in civil associations that stand as actualizations of their liberty. Scruton and Walsh discuss the writing of Alexis de Tocqueville to elucidate the importance of maintaining civil associations, specifically volunteer associations. Scruton and Walsh then elucidate the importance of the nation-state for the person, with Scruton emphasizing the significance of territory for what he terms a "society of strangers" that characterizes liberal democracies. Finally, Walsh solidifies the person within the universal timeless community of all persons that is grounded in the self-sacrifice of its members. In this manner, communities are never truly extinguished or forgotten, as sacrifices of its individual members echo beyond temporary failures to stand as a universal representation of the person.

Scruton, as discussed, places supreme importance on the capacity of persons to form friendships with one another in the sharing of each other in conduct and art. He furthers his discussion by contextualizing friendship in the city or *polis*. Aristotle describes three distinct types of friendship: utility based on usefulness, pleasure based on capacity for fun or sexual pleasure, and virtue based on moral constitution. Scruton explains that the successful *polis* makes fostering virtue friendship between citizens and the city itself its purpose and that cities can fall

short of this ideal by binding their citizens by utility, or seducing them with pleasure. In this manner, the individual relations between persons are reflected in the form of their city: “The citizen is the friend of the state, which reciprocates his friendship. Only the virtuous *polis* can be based in friendship of this kind [virtue], and the virtuous *polis* is the one that encourages virtue in its citizens.... [M]odern states offer their citizens a *deal*, and they require nothing of the citizens beyond respect for the terms of the deal.... [A] political order [based on pleasure] is founded neither on duty nor contact but on fun. The citizens are all part of a single fun machine...”<sup>133</sup>

Walsh complements Scruton’s description of Aristotelian friendship by illuminating that persons actualize their moral knowledge in pursuit of realizing it in concrete forms. Persons, as Walsh explains, are free to engage in any number of pursuits, not unlike Scruton’s discussion of the three kinds of friendship. However, once persons engage in virtuous action, they recognize the emergence of moral knowledge as a beacon of their success and pursue it further: “The more we respond to the glimmerings that at first attract us faintly, the more they become beacons of light irradiating the path before us with unanticipated intensity.... Development has largely occurred within ourselves, in the way that we view the world and the measure we apply to it.... Moral knowledge is inherently concrete knowledge. It emerges only to the extent that we participate in following it.”<sup>134</sup> Conversation, as Scruton explains, is the primary activity within which this emergence occurs.

Scruton explains that friendship is established through conduct between persons, primarily in conversation. He illuminates that persons must purposefully decide on how and what to converse about, lest they reduce their conduct to mere scientific utilitarian technology or the

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<sup>133</sup> Scruton, *How to be Conservative*, 130-131.

<sup>134</sup> Walsh, *Guarded by Mystery*, 56-57.

overly sexualized flirtation found in the conversations in Huxley's *Brave New World*. Scruton states: "If we are to propose conversation as our model of political order... we need to answer the questions: conversation in what circumstances, between whom and of what kind?... when all forms of community are regarded as equally worthwhile, provided only that the participants consent to them, we lose sight of the distinction between associations in which people make no demands of each other, and associations in which moral discipline grows between the participants..."<sup>135</sup> Conversation must be undertaken with consideration for the virtue of one's partner, best practiced in person-to-person interactions.

Scruton explains that virtue friendship is best forged in an atmosphere of leisure, where persons interact with one another in a face-to-face manner that necessitated awareness of one's appearance in the eyes of the other. Both participants freely forfeit an amount of control to the other, allowing conversation to dynamically unfold. In this manner, persons learn as much about themselves as they learn about their conversation partner. Scruton cautions that this process does not occur when face-to-face is forgone, as exemplified in digital friendships conducted over the internet. Scruton explains that these friendships do not necessitate that persons forfeit control, as persons swipe through potential interactions on their command exclusively. In this manner, person are fundamentally withdrawn, not given to the other: "At any moment I can turn the image off, or flick to some new encounter. The other is free in his own space, but his is not really free in mine, since he is entirely dependent on my decision to keep him there. I retain ultimate control... All interaction is at a distance, and can affect me only if I choose to be affected.... There grows between us a reduced-risk encounter, in which each is aware that the other is

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<sup>135</sup> Scruton, *How to be Conservative*, 131-132.

fundamentally *withheld*, sovereign within his impregnable cyber-castle.”<sup>136</sup> The process of friendship is flippantly given to persons, without any of the components that allow for the development of virtue that proper friendship enables.

Walsh and Scruton’s discussion of persons engaging freely in friendships highlights that conduct must be practiced knowledgeably, with recognized responsibility for the other: “It is a process that depends upon real conflicts and real resolutions, in a shared public space... Anything that interferes with that process, by undermining the growth of inter-personal relations, by confiscating responsibility... is an evil.... and one we should resist if we can.”<sup>137</sup> Resistance is demonstrated in the practice of genuine conduct; the formation of civic associations in one’s community.

Scruton points out that the same freedom that allows people to engage in friendship also allows them to retreat into isolation. However, the entire community of persons does not fall prey to similar destructive tendencies due to the proliferation of civil associations. Scruton draws his understanding of civil associations from Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* stating: “Of course, if people turn their backs on one another, live behind closed doors in suburban isolation, then... [the] sense of neighborliness dwindles. But it can also be restored through “little platoons”... By joining clubs and societies... by acquiring sociable hobbies and outgoing modes of entertainment, people come to feel that they and their neighbors belong together, and this ‘belonging’ has more importance, in times of emergency, than any private difference...”<sup>138</sup> Persons who engage in civil associations with others inspire those who have retreated into

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<sup>136</sup> Scruton, *How to be Conservative*, 149.

<sup>137</sup> Scruton, *How to be Conservative*, 150.

<sup>138</sup> Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2002), 49.

isolation to emerge from their self-imposed caves and engage with others, fostering responsibility between all persons.

Walsh characterizes this goal of retrieving person from the darkness of isolation as fanning the “scared flame” of association in order to provide light to those encapsulated in blackness. This can be challenging for liberal democratic citizens, as the tenet of equality does not provide a hierarchy for those unfamiliar with associations to readily engage. Persons, all equal in both their capacity to slip into isolation and to engage with one another, find the foundation for their cooperation through association, specifically, association engaged in on a voluntary basis: “...individual powerlessness must be the occasion for prompting the exercise of liberty in schemes of voluntary cooperation within... local communities. Individually they can do nothing so they are compelled to act together... It is the very circumstance of their equal isolation and impotence that calls forth the necessity of a free conjunction of wills.”<sup>139</sup>

These associations must be engaged in voluntarily with the maintenance of virtuous relationships as a priority. If they are undertaken on the basis of utility, persons merely need to respect the initial terms of agreement and will only contribute the minimum amount of voluntary effort to retain membership. If it is based on pleasure, persons quickly grow bored and desire different associations. Walsh concludes that Tocqueville’s observations of American associations exemplify the capacity of liberal democratic citizens to prioritize the person in voluntary conduct, thus growing their sense of personal responsibility through virtuous friendship: “The result, Tocqueville observed, is... [the] invisible, although more crucial, avenue of the inner growth of the citizens in self-responsibility.... Through exercising the art of association they

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<sup>139</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 223.

acquire a taste for cooperation and develop the virtues indispensable to the maintenance of the order in which they live.... The value of permitting and encouraging people to take the initiative themselves, for all of its untidiness, was incalculable.”<sup>140</sup> The person is understood and encouraged to facilitate that understanding with others in communal civil associations.

Scruton and Walsh prioritize the importance of civil associations for liberal democratic citizens through the works of Georg Hegel’s *The Philosophy of Right*. The growth of persons’ sense of personal responsibility compels them to stay in these associations and eventually settles in a common area that becomes a community. Scruton elucidates that, after the establishment of a common space, persons are animated by a spirit of *oikophilia*, the love of *oikos* meaning one’s home, the people who comprise it, and the surrounding territory they occupy. In this manner, persons acquire a distinct sense of “we,” not based on membership defined by self-defined concepts of truth, as in Rorty’s writings, but on a mutual love of a shared community with defined parameters: “The *oikos* is the place that is not just mine and yours but *ours*. It is the stage-set for the first-person plural of politics... We must vest our love and desire in things to which we assign an intrinsic, rather than an instrumental value, so that the pursuit of means can come to rest, for us, in a place of ends. People settle by acquiring a first-person plural – a place, a community and a way of life that is ‘ours’.”<sup>141</sup> Persons invest themselves in their communities as dignified institutions comprising of intrinsic value, as they are comprised of persons who have intrinsic value. In this manner, the first-person plural that allows for communication between dignified persons is developed in the community.

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<sup>140</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 223-224.

<sup>141</sup> Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 25.

Scruton explains that *oikos* on a national level is the necessary component that allows democratic nation-states to function, as liberty enables citizens to disassociate with the fundamental first-person plural “we” that embodies accepting liberal tenets. An animating national *oikos* allows for the formation of compromises across time enabled by the persons’ equal opportunity to engage and argue with one another. In this manner, one is trapped in a “society of strangers,” he/she is placed within a group of people at birth that he/she does not know intimately and must find a place for him/herself, through compromise with others. From this, as Scruton elucidates, persons necessarily are given an “inherited community” from which their communal “we” identity emerges as citizenship. This citizenship is verified in times of crisis or conflict, as Scruton states: “The community of strangers cannot really be understood without reference to other generations. It is an *inherited community*.... In any crisis this becomes immediately clear. A threat of war or invasion, an economic collapse, or some unprecedented damage to the social fabric all turn our attention to the historical community. It is *we who* now must fight, must put our backs against the wheel, must mend our ways...”<sup>142</sup> Scruton illustrates that one’s *oikos* in the form of an inherited community facilitates a pre-political loyalty rooted in the notion of a territorial home. Citizens of this inherited community are therefore imbued with a sense of purpose specifically tied to their nation-state that is particularly pertinent for democratic states, as Scruton illustrates: “Of course, the nation-state is not the only possible form of pre-political membership. But the alternatives – tribes, creed communities, or customary communities united by an imperial power – are no longer available to us, and in any case are hostile... to democratic politics. Nationhood is the best we can offer by way of pre-political

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<sup>142</sup> Scruton, *The West and the Rest*, 57.

loyalty that delivers territorial jurisdiction and individual citizenship as its natural political expressions.”<sup>143</sup>

Walsh, in turn, elucidates the importance of recognizing the binding force of *oikos* from the person to the “we” of the nation-state in a manner distinct from Scruton’s conception of pre-political nationhood. The state stands as the actualization of the “we” arising from the exercise of liberty. In this manner, the nation stands wider and stronger than any civil association ever could, in terms of both practical realization and intention. While the civil association is founded on interpersonal conduct, the nation-state interrelates the goals of the individual with the larger communal goals of the national identity: “The modern state is in this sense ‘the actuality of concrete freedom’ and derives its ‘prodigious strength’ from its ability to interrelate the individual and the political. It is not only that individuals see their interests protected by the state but also... their individual interests in service to the state.... It [the state] points towards a more stable expression of the universal order shared by human beings, which is so recognized precisely because it is the order that arises from their own free subjectivity.”<sup>144</sup> The “universal order” is elucidated by Walsh as reachable by persons, through action in their political community.

Walsh explains that persons only necessarily exist communally through participation in the public good and that this ability to participate communally is shared by all human beings. Although the universal community has no physical manifestation, persons recognize their mutuality in the sacrifices they have made for their community: “We might say that the political community is the concretization of... [the] universal community, the point at which the

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<sup>143</sup> Scruton, *The West and the Rest*, 60-61.

<sup>144</sup> Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 175-176.



eschatological intersects with time.... Composed of those who are ready to give all in its defense, it cannot be defeated by any inner rupture. Dissension cannot occur when every member has already put every other member ahead of himself or herself.”<sup>145</sup> The person may die, the civil association may disband and the nation-state may fall, but the universal community of persons will remain as long as it pursues the common good.

Walsh concludes *Politics of the Person* with a resounding remark that solidifies the person as the possibility, the driving force and purpose of politics; an encompassing being that cannot be reduced or entirely destroyed. The person stands as the purpose of politics when politics operates as politics of the person: “Persons cannot be sacrificed for the common good, not only because it is not right, but also because it is impossible. They have already expended themselves on its behalf and, even if they wanted to give more that they can give, they cannot do so. They remain a community of persons, a community of those who know another as uncontainable in any of their enactments. The only fitting community of persons is the community that mutually embraces one another as persons.”<sup>146</sup> This statement is echoed by Scruton in this propagation of conduct between persons as the forge for the understanding personhood: “Human beings find their fulfillment in mutual love and self-giving, but they get to this point via long path of self-development, in which intimation, obedience and self-control are necessary moments. This is not a hard thing to understand once we see the development of personality... But it is a hard thing to practice. Nevertheless, when we understand things rightly, we will be motivated to put virtue and good habits back where they belong, at the center of personal life.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 238.

<sup>146</sup> Walsh, *Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being*, 243.

<sup>147</sup> Scruton, *On Human Nature*, 112.

Walsh and Scruton's combined work concerning human rights, liberal culture, progress and the community of persons allows one to understand the notion of personhood so they may engage in conduct with others. The best way to improve one's community is to begin with oneself and then turn one's gaze to the other. Scruton and Walsh's presentation of the person, in contrast to the presentation of scientism, stands as a testament to the irreplaceable dignity of the person. The person is only understood in view of another.

## Conclusion

F.A Hayek characterized and popularized the notion of scientism as a type of prejudice, removed from proper scientific inquiry as a misshaped understanding of how to investigate the world. Hayek states: “The scientistic as distinguished from the scientific view is not an unprejudiced view but a very prejudiced approach which, before it has considered its subject, claims to know what is the most appropriate way of investigating it.”<sup>148</sup> By judging the material he/she seeks to investigate, the scientistic practitioner pre-emptively judges the material he/she is attempting to understand objectively.

Scruton and Walsh comprehend and masterfully articulate Hayek’s foundational notion of scientism while expanding beyond his conceptualization with their combined understanding of the person. Scruton illuminates the reductionist fallacy found in the scientistic practices of biology, evolutionary psychology and “neuro-philosophy” to reveal the foundational fault in the scientistic search for the “Archimedean point” that cannot be verified. Scruton provides an alternative mode for investigating the world in his description of the person, discussed in reference to works of art and the transcendental perspective. In this manner, the reader is not left in the lurch with no alternative to the scientistic framework, rather, he/she is imbued with the understanding of the person that allows them to successfully engage in conduct with others.

In turn, Walsh contextualizes his discussion of scientism in relation to the person at the outset of his argument, revealing that the place of the person is not found within the framework of scientism as a reconstituted master of nature. Rather, the place of the person is discovered in relation to others. Walsh’s person-centered philosophy establishes parameters for his

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<sup>148</sup> F.A. Hayek, *The Counter-Revaluation of Science* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1952), 24.

understanding of the person in science properly practiced and art. Science properly practiced illustrates that the motivation of the individual scientist is illuminated as the discovery of new material in cooperation with others that can supersede established framework. Art allows persons an alternative representation of truth through the use of metaphor as well as an avenue toward the person in the appreciation of created works.

Taken together, Scruton and Walsh's understanding of the person is reflected in the form of their writings thus unifying the presentation with the content that is the person. In their understanding, the person forms the center of political life and is not to be subsumed within the notions of rights or cultural "progress." Rather, the person is recognized and actualized in cooperation "bottom up," beginning with the self, initiating in friendships, developing into civil associations, extended into the nation and recognized in the universal community of persons.

Scruton's work serves as an invitation of friendship to the reader, while Walsh's texts tutor the reader with comprehensive guiding argumentation. In this manner, Scruton's work on scientism and the person should be perceived as a stepping-stone to Walsh's more thorough discussions. While Scruton's work is more direct and quickly elucidates complex ideas in a readily understandable manner, Walsh's work demonstrates a more complete understanding of the person given a greater attention and detail showcased in argumentation. In this manner, Walsh's texts are a better reflection of the person him/herself by approaching, but never truly reaching the impossible totality of, the complexity, depth and impact of personhood.

Scruton and Walsh's texts stand as an impressive testament to the political importance of the person and the mistakes of engaging in scientific thought. Persons are understood best in the view of the other; the person is recognized and ratified as the center of political life in conduct with others.



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