

Block VI Videos 26 through 31 (Language and Imagination)

Introduction: In this block, I believe the series promotes a theistic argument despite itself. As I mentioned in the previous block, free will was my preferred argument for Jehovah, but after watching this block, **video 29** in particular, I have reconsidered my position and placed imagination as my preferred argument (as I will explain at that video). This does not mean that my respect for free will is any less, but rather that now I look at free will as an extension of imagination as opposed to being separate from imagination. My biggest issue with the block is not so much what is said (although there is much left unsaid that should have been included), but the order of presentation. The video on imagination (**video 29**) should have been first, as then we could have had a smooth transition into language, art and natural beauty. On the positive side, it does end touching on morality and ethics, which allows a smooth transition into the final two blocks of the series.

I do find it interesting that this whole block focuses on "meaning," as in **video 16** such a concept was denied. We have seen inconsistencies before, but now that we have **Block V (Free Will and Determinism)** behind us, I want the gentle reader to pay close attention. We have several interconnecting concepts that greatly impact one's view of the gods. If we look at what has been said in the earlier blocks, we see how atheism is tied to determinism (**Topic IV.D.5.ii** and again in **Topic V.C**) and the concept of the absurd (**video 16**). In opposition to this, Jehovah is tied to free will and value. As one watches the videos in this block, I hope one can see how absurd language, imagination and art are in the deterministic sense.

A) Language: The concept of language dominates this block, yet there is a very weak grasp of what language actually is or how it works. I know that the limits of 10-minute videos and the necessary emphasis on philosophy do affect what can be said, yet we spend three videos on this specific subject. I feel at least one of them could have been aimed toward understanding language as it is, as doing so would have made many of the other topics much easier to understand.

But, as I have often said, this series emphasizes the rational over the empirical. The problem is, language is empirical. Language is not a hidden truth that we strive to discover, but rather a reality that exists in the open. There is no hidden truth that would suggest that the English-speaking people are right or wrong in calling a cat a cat instead of, for the sake of argument, a dog. At some point in the English speaking history, one species was called a cat and the other a dog, and the meanings stuck to this day. Language exists only for the purpose of being used. For those who study language, they will talk about words having "currency." This is not by accident. The more a word is used, the more value it has and, conversely, the less it is used the less value it has. When a word is no longer needed, it simply disappears. When a new word is needed, existing words are repurposed or new words are created. Language is therefore the perfect capitalist, and one can only try to manipulate language at one's own risk (as Hank is so kind to demonstrate for us in **video 26**).

For those who want to know more about language, I recommend *The Miracle of Language* by Charlton Laird (1953), although I admit it might be problematic to find a copy. Here are some concepts about language that came out of this book.

1) Limits on Knowledge: While most animals can communicate in one way or another, humans are the only ones that use language. We find this assertion to hold true almost 70 years after this book was published. Contemporary scientific studies on primates who "learned" sign language from man show that even this form of language is severely restricted: they do not ask questions for information. They may ask *for* food, but they never ask *where* food can be found. They assume that if

they do not know where food is, then their handlers do not know where food is either. In short, they act as if others are limited to the knowledge that they have themselves. Humans under 4 years of age act the same way, but eventually learn this abstract concept. This was shown with the Sally-Anne Test. In this test, the primates and children were, with visual aids, given a scenario where Sally placed a cookie in a box and then left the room. After Sally left, Anne took the cookie out of a box and placed it in a nearby basket. Then Sally returns to the room, and the question was asked, "Where will Sally go to get the cookie." Children under 4 years of age and primates would point to the basket, not grasping the concept that Sally would not know that Anne had moved it.

2) Learning Language: Language is passed on to babies, not adults. The teacher of language is whoever cares for the infants. One only needs to look at the Roman Empire for proof of this. They ruled almost the entire known world for about 600 years, yet Latin is a dead language. In contrast, not one significant language of any of their subjects was lost (although Gaelic is dying today). The Spaniards still speak Spanish, the Jews still speak Hebrew, and so on. Even the Italians still speak Italian! When Latin was removed from the courts, the locals had no more use for it.

3) Spread of Language: Language is spread by merchants, and again the Roman Empire is an excellent example. Greece has contributed much to the Mediterranean languages despite its small population, constant internal strife and eventually becoming a race subject to the Romans. But they dominated Mediterranean trade before and during the Roman Empire, and those who wanted to benefit from this trading network had to learn to communicate with them. While the customers did not necessarily have to learn much Greek, they had to speak it often. Likewise, Roman soldiers and other citizens needed to know some of the local language in order to get food, shelter and other needs, whereas the conquered people had little reason to voluntarily interact with the Romans.

4) Fungibility of Language: The creation of new words and the repurposing of existing words is essential to a language that is living, as it gives the words currency. Latin is a favorite for the scientifically and legally minded professions because it is a "dead" language and won't change with time or culture. Therefore, what is written today in Latin is more likely to be properly understood in later times. Muslims claim this is the beauty of the Quoran, as it is the same now as it was 1700 years ago. But a living language is what serves man's needs for the moment. For a quick demonstration and for funsies, I've included a short history of the word "tap." While the writing is mine, all the information came from *The Miracle of Language* (pages 54-56).

5) The Evolution of a Word: "Tap" presumably started with Indo-European "dap," which means "something cut out." This became the Anglo-Saxon "tappe," which means "something cut out to stop a hole." This noun had a verb form meaning "to draw forth liquid by means of a tap." We also have the Old French "tapper," which was adopted by Middle English as "tappe," and meant "a light sound." This soon evolved into "a light strike which produces a sound," and then to "a light strike." Of course, one had to tap in a tap for a hole, which is probably how the two words first merged. But with this union, all kinds of new meanings became possible, as tap now meant to pound in or to draw out. A spigot is the most efficient sort of tap, so it soon replaced other taps. Since running liquid became so important to our lifestyles, faucets also became taps. And what comes out of faucet taps is tap water. But faucets are not tapped in, they are threaded and screwed in. So an entire industry of threaded components are now also called taps: hand taps, machine taps, plug taps, etc., all the way to tapper taps (which is a case of coming full circle in this etymology). Since a spigot tap was so important to the sale of alcohol to the public, we have tap houses and tap rooms selling tap beer. There is a dark humor phrase "to tap the admiral" that was also borne from the association of taps and alcohol. When a person of prestige died on an English warship, he was placed in the only preservative the ship would

have: the barrel of rum. And this is only the beginning. One can tap into any kind of resource, physical or intellectual. Railroads can tap into an industrial area, and such a line becomes a tap line. A piece of metal can be fastened to a shoe to make a tapping noise, and so this piece of metal was naturally called a tap as well. The tapping noise the tap makes when walking can be choreographed into a tap dance. A drummer can certainly tap on a drum, and somehow this musical connection led to a certain piece of music being called "Taps," even though it is traditionally a bugle and not a drum that plays the music. And since this music is used at funerals (especially military ones), we can now say "It's taps for him" to indicate certain death. Although I could go on and on, it's taps for this example.

B) Video Block VI (Language and Imagination):

1) Video 26 (Language & Meaning): A lot of good, basic definitions and concepts are given, and they are generally well presented. I do have a problem with some of what Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks of concerning the cluster group.

i) Currency: If we remember what I spoke of earlier (**Topic A**), I think we have already covered all this with my concept of currency. "Monopoly" and "Candy Land" have a lot of currency when described as a "game." "Russian Roulette" has very little currency as such. In the cluster group explanation, we see an emphasis on the reference (min 1:46) of the word, where in my concept of currency, we see the emphasis on the sense (min 1:54) of the word. This may not seem like a big deal, as most words are usually used as intended. But when we use the cluster group method, the unscrupulous can influence us by suggesting that two very different things are the same. In **video 31**, we will see this in action as the horrid Marco Everistti experiment is compared to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But if we consider the currency of words, then we see just how bankrupt Everistti's claims to art really are.

ii) Parlor Games: The discussion questioning if one's "beetle" is another's "fox," or if one's "red" is another's "green," is a rationalistic exercise and is fun to contemplate. It echoes what was discussed in **video 22** and corresponds to its Thought Bubble of What Mary Doesn't Know. At best, it can help one underscore the importance of being clear when speaking. But there are other ways to do this. At worst, it can lead one to believe that those who disagree with us simply didn't understand us. This may very well be the case, but oftentimes it doesn't matter. Some people are just disagreeable because they want to be. We can't explain away all bad behavior as simple misunderstandings. Language simply has too much currency for that. I have my own Thought Bubble on this point:

Imagine a room with 100 balls in it, but only one of which is red. Except for those who are color-blind, we can expect that anyone given directions to go into this room and not return without the red ball will come out with the same ball that all the others do. But suppose someone deliberately comes out with a different colored ball simply because they didn't want to follow instructions, not because they didn't know what ball was actually wanted.

iii) Parting Shot: I find the whole idea of calling bananas "chom choms" ridiculous. Compare how this show tries to force a new word into the language as opposed to letting words develop on their own as shown above (**Topic A.5**). This new name has no potential currency except between those who have watched the show. Even then, it can only have currency if those who watched it have any desire to play along. Ironically, I would not be surprised if this document is the single greatest source of currency "chom choms" has.

2) Video 27 (Netflix & Chill & Implicature): One of the better videos of the series. To begin

with, this actually does incorporate some philosophy. Certainly not the kind of philosophy normally expected in this series, but philosophy nonetheless. While nearly all the series has been (and will continue to be) directed towards an outlook on life, this video offers practical advice. The more modern philosophers mentioned here are being practical instead of theoretical, so they are not falling into the extreme rationalism trap that plagues so much of the rest of the series. "Meaning" is briefly challenged (so brief it's easy to forget that it was), but the meat of the video works to discuss *how* language works as opposed to *why* language exists. And, because we are accepting the value of empirical evidence, it is much easier to accept what is taught here.

I would propose that metaphorical use of language is not just something we are prone to do, it is essential for consciousness. We cannot speak of anything that we cannot detect with our senses without using the metaphorical. We cannot discuss philosophy, mathematics, history, much of science, art, etc., without the metaphorical. It is the metaphorical that separates language from animal communication.

Finally, understanding Paul Grice's maxims is not only valuable in learning how to be a better communicator, but can be an invaluable tool in knowing when someone is being deceitful. The best liars know how to "flout the maxim" to their advantage instead of telling an explicit untruth.

One of the jokes the late George Burns used in his skits began after making a clear sexual reference at the end of the previous routine. After that, Carol Channing would walk up and say "George, you got it." George, in an attempt to find out what this "it" was, would name off celebrities and Carol would respond to them. None of the named female celebrities would have "it," although many were said to want "it" (some of them wanted George's in particular). In contrast, all the named male celebrities had "it," and while "it" varied in size, Carol claimed George's was the biggest. At the end, we find out that George had personality, and that his personality was the biggest in show business. The punch line was the fact that the majority of the audience was thinking of something quite different because of the earlier sexual joke. This is known as a "snuck premise," with "snuck" being contemporary slang for "sneaked."

Another common form of deception is to be loose and free with what words mean. It is natural for listeners to assume a certain consistency with words. Misunderstandings come about when it happens unintentionally. When one listens to George's routine a second time, one realizes that all the named female stars, while famous, were not known as having a major presence on stage while the male stars did. But such a detail is nearly invisible at the time it is spoken. It is humorous when done for entertainment, but it is dangerously deceitful in serious matters. It is this type of hidden danger that inspired me to critique this series.

3) Video 28 (How Words Can Harm): This video is another example of excellent ideas being presented, yet still arriving at poor conclusions. This is primarily because nearly the entire video only addresses one point of view (as epitomized by suggesting that some words should not be covered by "free speech," and no counterargument is actually given). His offhanded remark at the end of the show saying that there *is* a counterargument is proof of the deception.

To really understand what is going on here, we need to understand how words really do evolve, as I demonstrated with the word "tap" (**Topic A.5**). But, far from attempting to see how words evolve, we are given a quote from Charles R. Lawrence III that essentially claims word evolution is not possible (min 4:54, an example of a snuck premise). I demonstrated this fallacy already in **Topics A.4** and **A.5**, and will demonstrate further shortly. I therefore find Lawrence's position discredited.

i) Disclaimer: One final note before I go on, as this is an emotionally charged video. In no way, shape, or form am I endorsing the deliberate abuse of another person's dignity. I am trying to show that the real problem is not vocabulary, but rather a lack for respect of dignity. We are living in a culture that seems to think that all we need for a perfect society is more laws. This has never worked before, and there is no rational reason to think it will work now. Laws *might* be able to broker a temporary truce, but true peace can only be found between those in mutual respect of each other.

ii) "Faggot": Contrary to what Hank says at min 5:25, being called a "faggot" is not really calling someone "bad" (which I'll explain very shortly). Homosexuals, for quite some time now, have had no problem with words that at one time suggested "moral badness." "Queer Nation" and "Drag Queen" are proudly used in defiance of the judgment these words once carried. "Gay" was actually used to describe a womanizer before its currency changed to a derogatory term for homosexuals, and now it is the preferred term for male homosexuals. The currency of "lesbian" likewise has changed meaning back and forth over time. But "faggot" has a special history in its etymology that will likely keep it as a "hate word" forever. A faggot was originally a stick used for a big fire. When it was acceptable to burn homosexuals at the stake, the victims were soon called "faggots" as well. Unlike the other names homosexuals have gone by (which did focus on one's "badness" as Hank suggests), this particular word goes way beyond simply saying, "I don't approve of your sexual preference." Using this word means, "I hate you so much I want to see you burned alive."

iii) "Baby": The "baby" example is likewise complex. Hank did a great job showing how words can hurt and even brainwash, but he focuses too much on the theoretical harm and too little on what is actually going on. People have a need to identify with something. In no small part, groups like Queer Nation, Drag Queens and LGBT+ formed because those who felt they could not identify with society at large needed to create groups they *could* identify with. They also picked words that already had currency concerning their desired identity. By embracing the existing currency instead of fighting it, the words changed from exclusion to inclusion. And in a similar fashion (although with a lot less cultural baggage assigned to it), lovers like to be called pet names so they can be identified as being extra special to their mate. Indeed, such name-calling both nourishes storge (**Topic VIII.A.2**) and is a healthy result of storge. It is only when love is absent and the term is used to belittle the other's dignity that a problem arises.

iv) "Slut": This is a difficult topic word to discuss here, as it is primarily an ugly word actually born out of moral issues rather than an irrational dislike of others. In regards to the moral matter, I agree that for a Christian to use this word (or any other word) to attack the dignity of anyone else for any reason is inherently a hypocritical act, as the ethics of Christianity call for universal respect of human dignity at all times. For non-Christians, this may or may not be a hypocritical act depending on what their morals are (something I won't address any further here). What makes this word so hard to talk about is the fact that the hypocritical Christians failed to understand how words really work, and the need humans have for an identity. Just like homosexuals embraced the labels they were called, so to have a great many women who are sexually promiscuous and/or desire to be viewed as such. In other words, rather than "shame" certain women into changing, they have actually created a rallying point for those who resent certain sexual moral standards.

v) "Nigger" and "Grandfathered In": These are two words that I feel should have been included in the video but were not. Homosexuals, rather than fight the currency hurtful words had, used existing currency to purchase a new meaning. I don't know if this was deliberate or accidental, but it worked. Homosexuals are widely accepted in our culture now. Compare this to the black community as a whole, who are simultaneously attempting to destroy the word "nigger" while

also making it such an important noun in the Hip Hop culture. This is known as "working at cross purposes," and nothing good will come of it. One cannot discredit a word by encouraging its use.

And we are seeing a growing educational movement designed to tell us, in part, how the phrase "grandfathered in" is racist. And the target audience for this education is both the black and the white. If the currency of a "racist" word is so bankrupt that it has to be taught to *both* the alleged victim *and* the alleged offender, then what we see here is not really a matter of protecting one's dignity, but rather a political power play. It should be no surprise that the hate we see with this term is increasing: one cannot increase the currency of a word and not expect it to be used.

vi) Moral Connections: As the series has not yet talked about morality and ethics, I feel it is a bit problematic for Hank to attack words based solely on moral judgment. As I have discussed previously (**Topic II.F.5.ii** in particular), what one calls moral can vary greatly. If a self-proclaimed Christian acts in ways contrary to Christian ethics, then other Christians have a moral obligation to identify the behavior as being wrong. Corrective behavior (as we will talk about in **Topic III.C.**) must needs be disagreeable. It does no one any benefit for me to call a cold-blooded killer "a decent guy" because I'm afraid of hurting his feelings. Of course, corrective behavior can go too far when human dignity is ignored. "Faggot" clearly crosses this line. "Slut" does so as well, although this is a more nuanced case. Some females who are called "sluts" act and/or dress in certain ways in a deliberate attempt to attack the sensibilities of others. In such cases, while I abhor the use of the word, it is likewise difficult for me to feel any sympathy for those who are trolling for such responses.

vii) Bankruptcy of Censorship: Words, as I said before, only exist for the benefit of man. Words will be created or re-purposed to meet any need man has. To outlaw a word will not remove the need, it will only inspire a new word to take its place. Therefore, we must constantly update this list of banned words as new hate words will always take the place of old ones. And if the "grandfathered in" example is any indication, we have little hope that these words will ever come off this list. The only logical expectation of this system is that, fearful of accidentally saying an outlawed word through ignorance, people will be afraid to talk. Philosophy, mathematics, society, imagination and everything else that requires words to be expressed will be crippled and eventually die. One cannot cut the roots of a tree and expect the branches to flourish. A better idea is to teach people how to recognize and respect human dignity. The more people respect human dignity, the less currency hate words have. The less currency they have, the more likely they are to fall into disuse and disappear from the language.

viii) Example of Futility: This video did a great job showing how extreme rationalism is doomed to fail. However, rather than understand the nature of language and seek solutions based on this knowledge, random ideas were allowed to go in whatever direction they wanted. Instead of showing the student a positive solution to the problem (learning to respect others), a negative one is given (outlaw the words). And this video also shows just how insidious this negative solution is. In a matter of seconds, we went from Lawrence only wanting to ban words that were clearly inflammatory to Stephanie Ross warning us of the evils of using pet names for our lovers (min 6:30).

ix) The Socialist Connection: What we see here is a slippery slope. Again, we begin by addressing Lawrence's "noble" idea of only removing "hate speech," and then quickly transition to Ross' idea that any type of label is harmful. Using words to identify people is not the problem, as meaningful conversation on different social issues needs such labels. It comes back again to denying human dignity. Our culture is attempting to destroy the concept of "male" and "female." This is a refusal to accept the dignity that biological gender has. As a result, biological men started to compete

in women's leagues, which denied the dignity that physically weaker players should have had in a league intended for their physical capabilities. Fortunately, common sense steps took place to remedy this. It is this denial of the dignity of gender that is also the politically motivated movement to allow very young children to have expensive, painful and permanent mutilations to their bodies without parental consent. Fortunately, at the time of this writing, such laws have not passed, but there have been laws proposed at the federal level, and there are schools encouraging children as young as kindergarten to have sex changes. What we saw concerning the "dangerous and contagious spread of religion" in **videos 14 and 15** is being applied to language in this video, only this time legal action is actually being discussed and even acted upon.

x) Parting Shot: I agree with Hank that it is wrong to avoid words, "because they're everywhere, and they're powerful" (min 1:16, an attitude Hank reinforces at min 5:15 and again at min 9:24). This only adds currency to them. But this is exactly what a banned list of words would do. I disagree that we should avoid saying words simply because someone is offended. Again, context is everything. We cannot hope to show someone how to improve themselves if we can't explain where they are deficient. Philosophy is the search for the truth, so one must be prepared to do what it takes to expose untruth. Hank seems to be agreeing with this at min 9:24, but I find his explanation confusing and unsatisfying. I really leave this video with the sense that while Hank had the right idea, he didn't know how to explain it.

4) Video 29 (Nonexistent Objects and Imaginary Worlds): This video is the "diamond in the rough" for the series. It is well thought out and its examples are spot-on. I really have nothing to complain about (except for perhaps the monotonous reiterations of a few concepts). And when I think about why, it seems pretty obvious. The rationalistic approach of the series can truly be free of any empirical considerations here because there are almost no empirical considerations to be had with imagination. As I mentioned earlier, this video gave me some new things to consider.

i) My Revelation: It is widely accepted that we only process a fraction of the information we send to the brain, and that the brain often "fills in the gaps." This is explained by evolutionists as giving animals (at least humans) faster reaction times. Many optical illusions take advantage of this reality, such as using "<3" to represent a ♥. A common explanation for ghost sightings are based on this premise. Through instinct, learning and/or experience, an animal that smells certain odors, hears certain noises and/or sees certain movements may imagine a threat and prepare itself for it. And while humans do the same thing, humans still do it differently.

A human won't just experience an odd sensation and go on general alert. A human will use his imagination to try to determine what could cause the smell, the noise or the movement, and then go on alert for that *specific* threat. In other words, a human does not want to simply imagine a threat exists; a human also wants to imagine the "face" the threat has. Now, I am fully aware this does not discredit determinism, and I can imagine very complex solutions that determinists may use to defend this. But for the moment, I am not attempting to "prove" or "disprove" anything, but rather deciding if further contemplation is warranted. At the very least, I have shown that determinism can't simply be taken at face value on this matter, so I will go on.

If I may move from a predatory threat to the basic need of food, then I would like to bring up the lowly ant. The ant knows how to build a mound and how to harvest the food it finds. But suppose the food is dangling above the ant, close enough to be recognized yet high enough the ant cannot reach it. Theoretically, the ant could build a mound to get it, but this seldom, if ever, happens. Normally, the ant will get excited, send out pheromones that attract and excite other ants, all of which will then scurry

around until one of them finds the support, climbs the support, finds the food at the end of the support, and then sends out another pheromone to let others know to follow her trail. This is what one expects to see out of determinism. But is this what a human does? No.

Normally, a human will attempt to find something to stand on so he can reach it. This is where I think humans, at least, demonstrate free will as I define it (**Topic V.B**). Both the ant and the human have the same physical potential: the ability to climb and to build a mound. Yet they act so differently. And I think this is where determinism (**video 24**) can be legitimately challenged in a very convincing way, and imagination is the key to it.

The human desire for an easier (and safer) solution than to climb up the support will inspire the imagination to picture a means of getting higher (such as a step stool). This generates the choice necessary for my idea of free will to exist. As imagination becomes stronger, one might also be able to imagine a second object as being able to work just as well as the first (say, a large sturdy box instead of a step stool). And once imagination has given choices necessary for free will to take place, imagination can also be used to gain insight necessary for reason to pick the best choice of action (the danger of climbing versus the difficulty of moving a heavy and awkward box versus the time in finding and getting a step stool).

Certainly, as humans, we have an extremely complicated and well-functioning learning system. This may appear to bring me back to determinism, but I don't think so. Determinism can suggest that if I see my mother using a step stool to get something off a high shelf, then I will likewise know how to use a step stool to get that same something off the same high shelf. But I think it breaks down with any new application to an old practice. Does it not take some form of imagination for me to say, "If the step stool was able to get me high enough to reach object A, then I should also be able to use it to reach object B as well"? And if we go back to whoever invented the first ladder-like object, who taught him how to make it? It is not like we see ladder-like structures in nature. I think determinism breaks down and free will steps up (no pun intended) whenever we use familiar abilities and familiar functions for unfamiliar uses.

I also find it hard to accept that imagination would be beneficial if it was evolutionary in the materialistic sense. After all, if there is no free will and reason to interpret imagination, then the animal is basically hallucinating. I would expect this to be more of a hindrance to survival than a boon, yet man has thrived when competing against animals that are greatly superior to him in every way but imagination.

ii) Parting Shot: I find it amusing to see Hank going back to the "No Cat" argument. I've used it several times since he introduced it in **video 4**, most notably in explaining how an omnibenevolent Jehovah can create everything and yet there still be evil in the world (**video 13**). While I have no doubt that going back to "No Cat" was a deliberate (and well played) act on Hank's part, I wonder if he realized the implications this would have concerning Christianity. By using this video to endorse a sense of reality in things that do not have existence, Hank has unwittingly endorsed my views that evil doesn't have existence. Evil is the absence of good, just like darkness is the absence of light. Therefore, we can reason that Jehovah can have created everything that has existence and not have created evil. Evil only becomes "real" by humans refusing Jehovah's goodness.

5) Video 30 (Aesthetic Appreciation): In my opinion, this was a mediocre video. Nothing was really wrong with what was presented, but nothing really good came out of it either. It is clearly intended to lay a foundation for future work, and as such the mediocre performance here could be

justified. Unfortunately, nothing in this series builds on it, so even this potential is lost.

i) The Appeal of Art: I will propose that there is a truth in beauty. Mathematicians since ancient Greece have been fascinated with certain mathematical patterns and formulas simply because they found them appealing and elegant, not because they provided any practical benefit. Here it is 2,500 years later, and physicists are now discovering that these patterns are useful in unlocking secrets of the subatomic universe. It is almost like the universe *wants* to be understood by giving us what is called in the video "good taste." Of course, for something as simple and commonplace as beauty to help us understand reality suggests an intelligent design to the universe (another example of science finding evidence of Jehovah).

That being said, aesthetics certainly does have its form of "compatibilism" (**Block V**). Yes, we seem to be programmed to recognize beauty when we see it, yet at the same time we can see distinct patterns in what it is we consider beautiful. But even so, we all have "guilty pleasures" and like specific things that belong to genres we normally don't like, and *vice versa*. As a Christian, I would suggest that all truly beautiful things, because they are truthful, are facets of God. Unfortunately, our disordered appetites (**video 16** and **Topic VII.C.3.ii**) have perverted this. Sometimes we do not like what is true, and sometimes we like what is untrue. But if our sexual appetite is the most disordered of all our appetites (**Topics VII.C.3.ii** and **VII.C.3.v**), then I think appreciation of beauty is our least disordered. Nonetheless, it is still dangerous to assume morality can be based only on beauty. While God certainly is beautiful, our disordered appetites can make us think things very un-Godlike are also beautiful.

ii) Chained Cat: I think this is a case study of accidentals and essence (**Block IV**). The chain became an accidental to the statue. I showed earlier (**Topic IV.A**) that essence is a noun (in this case, statue), while accidentals are adjectives (chained, bronze). The value of the chain can vary greatly between people. Campus security personnel are likely to value the chain as a protective measure against theft. A political science student with leftist leanings might value the chain as a sign of oppression. Many other values can be assigned to the chain as well. Whether or not this chain is considered part of the artwork will largely depend on the value placed on the chain as an accidental to the statue.

iii) Ignoring Natural Beauty: I would like to point out that, although Hank quickly expanded aesthetics to encompass natural beauty, the video was almost exclusively about art. While this in itself is not a problem, Hank at the same time (and quite subtly) removed the concept of natural beauty from this and future discussions. Philosophy is, after all, the discovery of truth. Beauty can hold its own truth, as there is truth in emotion. Yet emotion is empirical, and once again the extreme rationalism of the series seeks to explain why we feel the way we feel instead of recognizing the feeling itself. Knowing why I might be inclined to like something is not the same as liking it, and we again find a new version of What Mary Doesn't Know (**video 22**). Be that as it may, let us focus on what is presented.

iv) Value: I mentioned that this block accepts the concept of "value," and I believe this video is a good place to remember what was said about accidentals and essentials (**Topic III.A.3**). I claimed that the value of nonliving things is subjective and determined by the individual who values them (**Topic IV.A.1.ii**). This is the key to understanding much of the issues being raised here. If one places value on music, wine or basketball, then naturally one will get more out of these pastimes than one who doesn't. Education can create value as one grows in familiarity with it (storage, **Topic VIII.A.2**), but for those who had some passion (eros, **Topic VIII.A.3**) from the beginning, it will be

stronger still. In this sense, I find the red paintings to be an absurd example. For one to find a different meaning (i.e., value) in one such painting over other identical ones suggests it is not the painting itself. Perhaps how it is presented (including its placement on the wall) is what gives it a higher value compared to the otherwise identical ones.

By understanding what value really means, the whole discussion here about from whom the value of art comes (the artist or the observer) becomes rather silly. The artist places his own value on the piece of art (express his inner feelings, project for art class, needs to sell it for money, etc.). The one who buys it has placed their own value on it (it speaks to them emotionally, it affects the emotions of his customers, teaching aid, gift, etc.). Finally, the one who observes it assigns a personal value to it as well.

v) Communication: Art is a form of communication, so practically everything covered previously (**videos 26-28**) applies here as well. Art, based on a culture's values, gains its own currency. In "free countries," where the individual is valued, art tends to express individuality and attention to detail. In socialist countries, where the collective is valued, art tends to be abstract and indistinct. In cultures with much turmoil, art tends to be surreal and depressing.

vi) Mind-Body Problem Revisited: We see the mind-body problem of **video 22** again as we are presented with concepts that are in direct contrast with determinism. Even Hank suggests something beyond the material must exist (the red painting Thought Bubble at min 4:24). Art, by any meaningful definition, cannot exist without imagination, and while natural beauty is not created through imagination, it is imagination that finds the beauty in it.

vii) Parting Shot: At min 6:03, Hank says "if you really think beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then no one can be wrong about aesthetic beliefs." This is an example of how some ideas seem right and are most often right (or at least harmless). But since value is a personal and subjective thing, I think it is better to consider *why* a particular value is placed on it. As long as the dignity of all concerned is respected by the value placed on art, then I agree it is not wrong. But if the value is based on selfish reasons, then it is wrong. Using my earlier example of the chain on the cat statue representing oppression, where does this value come from? Does such a person feel the university has no right to spend money on the statue and should instead have used the money to lower tuition? Is this not a selfish attitude? Does he not place his opinion above those who might bond (through storge, **Topic VIII.A.2**) with the statue and, by extension, bond with the university? Is not the dignity of those who can appreciate other values of the statue important?

6) Video 31 (Aesthetics: What Good Is It?): Much of what I say here goes back to what I said concerning the last video. If one thinks that I am being overly sensitive to minor suggestions made here or there about where extreme rationalism leads us, I hope the Evaristti experiment will demonstrate the danger I speak of when it is considered "art."

i) Essence of Art: I think the problem proposed in this comes back to using the cluster method instead of using the "sense" of the word (**Topic B.1.i**). We need to go back to the basics of essence and accidentals and remember that accidentals can (and most often do) have an essence of their own (**Topic IV.A.1.iv**). I therefore propose that the essence of art is to express one's imagination (no matter how well or poorly done). Of course, to be able to express something implies communication, therefore my earlier claim that language and art have a lot in common is valid. I do not believe anything said in this series contradicts this proposal. The format art takes, the emotions it stirs, how successful the communication is and the value people place on it (**video 30**) are all accidentals. Now

let us look at the particulars of the disgusting experiment of Evaristti.

ii) Marco Evaristti: We see before the opening credits a perfect example of a snuck premise. At min 0:15, Hank claimed Evaristti "debuted a work of art." Just before the beginning credits, Hank does ask if this was art at all, but no further discussion ever takes place. Then, just before the video summary, we talk about the morality of art and use Evaristti *as the cast study*. We can only use this as a case study for the morality of art if it is indeed art. So let us take a few moments to address this oversight.

My question is, what was Evaristti doing with the blenders? I would have to agree that a certain amount of imagination went into the project, as not just anyone thinks of killing fish in a blender, much less about having someone else do the dirty work for them. By my definition, I do have to accept that the *process* was, in a sickening way, an artful endeavor. But while the process was artful, do we have to accept the finished product as art? Was Evaristti *expressing* his imagination at the showing? By Evaristti's own words, this was meant to classify observers as sadists, moralists or voyeurs. His finished product was not being used to express imagination, but rather as a test so he could label people (something, by the way, Hank claimed was wrong in **video 28**). It seems to me that Evaristti has testified against himself on this matter.

iii) Harriet Beecher Stowe: In the next block, I will speak of culpability, but for now let me just say culpability is a measure of just how guilty one is in moral situations. In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln met Stowe. He was reported to have said, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*] that made this great war." Is Stowe culpable for the U.S. Civil War as Lincoln suggested? Is she responsible for the 620,000 deaths during the war? How does she truly compare to Evaristti as an artist?

To start off with, Mrs. Stowe was trying to give voice to the dignity she believed the slaves had. We see that she was trying to speak for those who could not speak, therefore communication was an inherent part of her work. Mr. Evaristti, however, was trying to test people without them knowing they were being tested. Far from attempting to communicate, he was deliberately attempting to hide his motives. Mrs. Stowe was attempting to stir up righteous outrage against social injustice, something both Plato and Aristotle agreed would be art because of the emotion involved. Mr. Evaristti wanted to label people in a calculated, emotionless way. And if we want to think about culpability as we move into the final few videos of the series, consider that there were several ways for dignity to be restored to the slaves in order for Mrs. Stowe to be successful, but there was only one way for Mr. Evaristti's plan to work.

Mrs. Stowe did truly create a work of art; Mr. Evaristti was running a psychology experiment. Mrs. Stowe had no small part in ending a horrific institution in the United States; Mr. Evaristti had some dead fish and was able to label some people. The comparisons made in this video demonstrate just how easily, without considering the empiricism of the real world, extreme rationalism leads to horrendous conclusions. To not only call Evaristti's experiment "art," but to dare to compare it to something like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, can only take place when the "real world" is ignored.

iv) Censorship: We also talked about censorship here. Hank gave no real indication whether he was for or against censorship, but compared to the obvious outrage he had concerning hate speech (**video 28**), I find this disturbing. By comparing **video 28** to this one, we see a very powerful but subtle contradiction. When we say we should "ban hate speech," our minds focus on stopping someone from harming another with words. When we use the word "censor," our minds focus on the

government intruding on our rights. Both suggest the same method and outcome, but they are accepted by society in very different ways.

v) Natural Beauty: The question of art needing an artist, of course, comes back to what we call art. Like I mentioned in the last video, while art and natural beauty were mentioned as being distinct branches of aesthetics, we never really discussed natural beauty. But if art is an act of expressing the artist's imagination, then animals cannot make art. Humans, however, can create art by manipulating animals, just like they might have manipulated a paint brush or keys on a typewriter.

vi) Quasi-Emotions: I found the idea of "quasi-emotions" rather silly, and sure enough it was a contemporary philosopher who came up with it. Again, we see in this video a failure to understand the accidental of value, or the value love places on things. Art generates emotion through the uniting force of love (**Topic VIII.A**), storge and eros in particular. For us to cry over a movie or book character who dies is fundamentally no different than crying over the death of a stranger we might hear about. By simply being aware, we are able to make a connection to these people (real and fictional) just as we already have to those we've known our entire lives. In **video 44**, Peter Singer is actually suggesting there is something wrong with us as moral agents if we don't connect with people we don't know at all. Whether Singer realizes it or not, he basically took love out of the equation.

vii) Moral Aesthetic: The autonomous view and the moral aesthetic views are both flawed. The autonomous view I've already discussed; it protects hateful art as long as it is not written art. But the problem of the moral aesthetic view is more insidious. I agree that moral outcomes need to be supported by moral means, but that does not mean that the means or outcomes need to be agreeable. I know Hank didn't equate agreeableness with morality here (although he did in **video 21**), but it is easy to forget that they are not necessarily the same.

The moral aesthetic view, by focusing on the death of the fish, missed the point that this was not really art to begin with (the result of the snuck premise). It may look like moral aesthetics were focusing on the *dignity* of the fish (which I would have agreed to), but they really weren't. They were really looking at the *death* of the fish. And while death is truly disagreeable and should be avoided when possible, it (and any other disagreeable attribute) is not by itself grounds for a moral case. In **video 35**, we will discuss Kantianism, and to claim that the lives of the fish outweigh all other considerations is an example of Kantianism. It is in the dignity of all living things to die. If we hold it as an absolute moral position, then how can we justify *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with the 620,000 deaths associated with it, as anything but the most evil book ever written by an American? For that matter, how can we justify freeing the slaves at all with such a death toll if death is to be avoided at all costs?

viii) Thought Bubble: Animals, as I have said before (**Topic B.6.v**), are capable of producing natural beauty, not art. Naruto produced something that some humans, through their imagination, have been able to create an emotional bond with. In **Block VII**, I will discuss the Christian system for determining ethical behavior, but it is my opinion that the artist should be awarded rights to the photos. In justice (**Topic VII.B.2.ii**) to him for all the work, effort and risk he took to acquire and publish these photos (even if unintended), he should be allowed to benefit from any proceeds they might provide. Temperance (**Topic VI.B.2.iii**) will tell us that the copyright laws were designed to protect such efforts, so to deny this protection over an unforeseen event is morally unacceptable. I have much to say about the alleged authority that the animal rights activists have in speaking on behalf of Naruto, but this is not the place for it.

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video 26 link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmwgmt7wcv8>
video 27 link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G30m6XDBTh4>
video 28 link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ESU5ONMMxs>
video 29 link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7v2kESrqDQ>
video 30 link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ5duzln2wI>
video 31 link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDL4Zf2yEa4&t=564s>