

nature of language and our inescapable egoic isolation. Mijuskovic appeals to Kant, Leibnitz, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche in his lengthy discussion on the unconscious to contend, “the individual subconscious will forever remain latent and submerged but active, unrecognized and powerful, while its manifest surface appearances will be familiar, all-too familiar in nightmares and madness” (163). His treatment of literary examples in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and in William Golding’s *Pincher Martin* rounds out the exploration. Unconscious loneliness is shown to be irrational, ineffable and illogical.

The final chapter addresses several therapeutic practices, drawing out the practical implications of his philosophical explorations. It utilizes cognitive and motivational approaches which he finds a healthier and philosophically justifiable alternative to behavioural and medicinal therapies. Mijuskovic recommends relatively simple, affordable acts, such as establishing friendships, religious practice, and exercise. He sees cultivation of belonging as a natural remedy to existential loneliness. Social bonds enable individuals to empathize, build trust, and turn outward (as opposed to narcissistic obsession with one’s own loneliness). Such alternative measures are preferable to oft abused medicinal treatments.

*Feeling Lonesome* is a must read for anyone interested in philosophy of mind, philosophical psychology, or loneliness. It touches upon our most private selves, our insularity, and our innermost existence in a uniquely interdisciplinary perspective. Mijuskovic encapsulates a life of rich philosophical investigation while tempering his narrative with therapeutic practicality.

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### ***Why the World Does Not Exist***

MARKUS GABRIEL (translated by Gregory S. Moss)

Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015; vi + 239 pp.; \$28.00 (hardcover)

doi:10.1017/S0012217315001067

Markus Gabriel argues that the world does not exist because the world as an ultimate frame of reference must stand outside all the interconnections of ordinary occurrences; however, frames of reference are occurrences that only happen with respect to other frames of reference.

This argument begs at least four questions that Gabriel boldly goes forth in his book to answer: 1. What sort of object is a frame of reference? 2. How and why does anything exist at all? 3. Where are we humans without an ultimate or over-arching frame of reference? 4. How do we humans find or gain meaning in a world of relative frames of reference? I sketch Gabriel’s answers later on.

A Disclaimer: the wording I am using to frame the questions and main argument posed by Gabriel is my wording rather than his own, specialized terminology. One piece of his terminology is important, however, namely his use of ‘fetish.’ In fact, one of the novelties in Gabriel’s book is to use the psychoanalytic concept of *fetish* to dissect the reverence shown towards the natural sciences as opposed to the humanities and arts. A similar fetish is seen in the reverence shown by many philosophers

to naturalism as the most up-to-date intellectual outlook for the intellectually honest and open thinker.

The argument against naturalism as a fetish and for a new outlook on the humanities in general, and religion and the arts in particular, occurs mid-way through the book in Chapters IV and V. Naturalism, according to Gabriel, assumes that there is an ultimate frame of reference for everything—all occurrences—and that the natural sciences have the key to unlocking the mysteries of the ultimate framework for all that exists. “the scientific worldview is based on a distorted perception of rationality. It assumes in all of our efforts to understand we rely upon the construction of hypotheses and the subsequent activity of either proving or discarding them experimentally. Trial-and-error procedures of this type are useful, but they are not appropriate everywhere. They help us to understand the universe [the specific frame of reference of the natural sciences or at least physics]. But the human being and our understanding of meaning are not found in the universe; we do not wise up except by drawing nearer to understanding spirit [specific intellectual, historical, and artistic frames of reference] or meaning [specific systems of sense-making and sense-giving]” (143). This view of science and the philosophy of naturalism as the sole key to complete understanding of everything “is a modern version of fetishism” (151), “the creation of representations of an all-inclusive, all-controlling and ordering world principle” (154).

As I understand Gabriel, looking for a single and ultimate frame of reference, whether based in naturalism, or in fundamentalist religion, or even an invented quasi-religious system, is a form of intellectual fetishism where we turn a single frame of reference into an absolute and all-encompassing approach to the multiplicity of occurrences.

Gabriel finds two antidotes to the pathology of intellectual fetishism (see 162 ff). The first antidote is art. Art often plays against its context or frame of reference by exposing its own frames of reference in a recursive or self-reflexive manner. So art is one way of remedying the tendency to seek a single frame of reference through the artist using the work of art as a means to display the very frame of reference used in the work of art (see Chapter VI, “The Meaning of Art,” 184 ff.). The second antidote is Television: certain shows are ‘shows about nothing,’ and so show how meanings occur in everyday humdrum living where there is no ultimate framework for providing the meaning—no over-arching story-line or plot with some final wrap-up (see Chapter VII, “Closing Credits: Television,” 209 ff.)

I return now to Gabriel’s answers to the four main questions arising from his argument against the traditional quest for an ultimate frame of reference for all occurrences: 1. What sort of object is a frame of reference? It is an intellectual system for providing sense or meaning for specific kinds of occurrences. 2. How and why does anything exist at all? To be is to have meaning within a specific frame of reference. 3. Where are we if we are nowhere with respect to an ultimate frame of reference? We make various frames of reference for providing meaningful occurrences—we are the meaning-makers for all with which we interact, including our selves. 4. How do we find meanings in a world of relative frames of references? “We live together in infinitely many fields of sense which we are always rendering intelligible in new ways. What more could we want?” (208).

In this last quotation I let slip in one of Gabriel’s key technical terms, ‘fields of sense,’ which I think is now clear in its meaning—intellectual frames of reference for

providing meaning to whatever crosses our path. However, I cannot resist answering Gabriel's challenge to the critically-minded reader of what more we could want than living with temporary and relative *fields of sense*. The more we could want, within the frame of reference of the outlook provided by Gabriel in his bold book, is to be reflexively self-critical of all our various frames of reference, our *fields of sense*, in such a way that we could develop more integrated and complete outlooks on what crosses our paths without turning one or another outlook into an intellectual fetish.

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### ***The Epistemic Life of Groups. Essays in the Epistemology of Collectives***

MICHAEL S. BRADY AND MIRANDA FRICKER (eds.)

Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, 272 p.

doi:10.1017/S0012217316000640

Ce recueil de textes s'inscrit dans le champ de l'«épistémologie collective», que l'on peut définir comme l'étude des propriétés épistémiques des groupes sociaux. Afin de saisir l'unité de l'ouvrage, il faut ici entendre les notions de «groupe» ou d'«entité collective» au sens le plus large possible. Un ensemble d'individus interagissant au cours d'une rencontre fortuite, les membres d'une institution déterminée ou les citoyens d'un même État constituent autant de groupes dont il est possible d'analyser les pratiques épistémiques. Quels que soient leurs formes, leurs degrés d'organisation ou leurs finalités constitutives, les entités collectives se livrent en effet à de telles pratiques. Ainsi, une partie au moins de leur activité est à la fois constituée par et orientée vers la formation de croyances, voire la production ou la diffusion de connaissances. L'objectif central de cet ouvrage est d'interroger certaines de ces pratiques et, plus généralement, d'analyser la connaissance sociale tant du point de vue de sa genèse que de sa transmission et de ses effets sur l'environnement épistémique des agents.

On a coutume de distinguer trois champs d'investigation propres à l'épistémologie sociale, champs que l'on nomme respectivement «interpersonnel», «systémique» et «collectif». Le premier se concentre sur le statut normatif des croyances que forment les agents individuels au cours de leurs interactions sociales. Le second évalue les systèmes sociaux au sens large (l'éducation, la justice, etc.) du point de vue de leurs effets épistémiques sur le corps social. Le troisième, enfin, s'intéresse au comportement doxastique de certaines entités collectives considérées comme des agents cognitifs au sens propre. Certains groupes, comme les organisations politiques ou les groupes de chercheurs, sont susceptibles d'être appréhendés de ces trois points de vue. On peut, en effet, à la fois analyser les opérations cognitives de leurs membres, évaluer la connaissance qu'ils diffusent dans l'espace social et les concevoir comme les sujets d'états mentaux épistémiquement évaluables. Ces trois niveaux d'analyse des propriétés épistémiques des groupes se retrouvent dans le présent ouvrage, dont l'un des intérêts est de mobiliser ces interrogations dans une réflexion qui embrasse différents champs traditionnels de la philosophie. Il se divise ainsi en 4 sections