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Shyam Ranganathan

Abstract

White supremacy dominates the academy and political discussions. It first consists of conflating the geography of the West (where Black, Indigenous, and People of Color—BIPOC—are to be found) with a specific colonizing tradition originating in ancient Greek thought—call this tradition the *West*. Secondly, and more profoundly, it consists in treating this tradition as the frame for the study of every other intellectual tradition, which since the Romans it brands as religion. The political function of this marginalization of BIPOC philosophy is to shield *Western* colonialism from moral philosophical criticism. The mechanism of colonialism is interpretation—explanation in terms of propositional attitudes, like belief. Not only is this a basic commitment of the *Western* tradition owing to its foundational linguistic account of thought (LAT), the South Asian moral philosophy of Yoga shows interpretation to be the essence of irresponsibility: it undermines the possibilities of choice as it is antilogical and is the mechanism of oppression. In contrast, Yoga, a fourth basic ethical theory (in addition to virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology) identifies an alternate metaethical choice as the essence of moral responsibility: explication—understanding in terms of inferential relationships. Yoga is not only the *locus classicus* for a nondiscriminatory, antioppressive approach to moral standing: it constitutes reason-based, (both ideal and nonideal) normative practices of solidarity with people (including nonhumans and celestial bodies like the Earth). This paper explores the mutually exclusive disjunction between interpretation and explication, the historical impact of these methodologies, and the colonization by the *West* of philosophy in the game of Publish or Perish. Shaking this off is as easy as returning to the philosophically indigenous practice of explication.

Keywords: explication, interpretation, Quine, publish or perish, principle of charity

1. Introduction¹

The view in the literature is that South Asians lacked any tradition of moral philosophy (Ranganathan 2017c, 52–77). This is a carefully curated story to tell about a colonized tradition but also an artifact of colonization. If the only people who seem to care about moral responsibility and moral philosophy are the people from the colonizing tradition, then colonizers seem to be doing the colonized a paternal favor by taking over. And if one can simply erase moral philosophy from traditions that were averse to engaging in colonization—traditions that were colonized, like those of South Asia—one erases views on responsibility that are anticolonial. Not only is this a colonial imposition on South Asia; it is also an affront to philosophy that prevents us from learning about anticolonial moral and political philosophy.

Colonialism is often imagined as an event, with obvious actors, engaging obviously in an oppressive activity. That is to ignore the mechanism of colonialism. It is the imposition of the perspective of the colonizer on the colonized (see LaMonica 2011; Butt 2013). The methodology of colonialism, like colonialism itself, is ordinary. It is *interpretation*: explanation in terms of one's propositional attitudes, like belief (the attitude that a thought p is true). When the colonizer imposes their view on others, they impose their propositional attitudes on others as though that is the appropriate explanation of the colonial encounter. The process of colonization is complete when there is no resistance to this imposition, either because the victims have been exterminated or because the colonized internalize the interpretation foisted on them as their self-understanding. In the case of the absent moral philosophy of colonized traditions, evidence that we've been colonized is that we believe moral philosophy doesn't exist there—and that we engage in moral philosophy as though all the good ideas come from the colonizing tradition.

The tradition of colonialism that has reached all corners of our globe originates geographically in the West. The West is a huge geographic region including Black and Indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas. The common talk of the "West" as though that only refers to Europe and its political descendants is an artifact of this tradition's colonialism, which wipes out diversity and sets itself up as the single standard. I call this colonizing tradition, originating from ancient Greek thought, the West: this is the slanted, overbearing "W" that leans on the "est." As this is a tradition of White people that sets itself up as the standard against which everything else is adjudicated, it is a tradition of White supremacy. White supremacy can be imagined as requiring theatrical performance, like burning crosses or wearing white hoods. But as the global version of colonialism, it is simply normalized. Its genetic marker is that it sets itself up as the default secular tradition and hence the default content of public

¹ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who provided helpful feedback, which allowed me to clarify important points in this paper.

life, and anything from outside of this (any Black, Indigenous or Person of Color—BIPOC—tradition) is religion or spirituality—something that is to be understood not in terms of its contribution to philosophical controversy but measured against the Western tradition: the more it deviates (the less ethnically Western), the more spiritual and religious. Long before racial taxonomies were employed to justify Western colonialism and normalize White supremacy (for an exploration of this history and the literature, see Zack [2018]), religion was created. The idea of religion (*religio*) was itself invented by the Romans to label traditions it would tolerate within its colonial bureaucracy (see Beard, North, and Price 1998; Gordon 2008), and as it spreads, it merely becomes the term for BIPOC traditions. Hence all world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, etc.) have extra-Western, BIPOC origins. Call this secularism₂: the secular is the Western, and everything else is religious. This is a slow process, and it takes centuries—and over a millennium to crystalize. However, it is clear when we study the correlative impact of Western colonialism and the creation of religious identity in newly colonized regions (Masuzawa 2005; Ranganathan 2018b). The evidence for this process includes the simple observation that South Asians had to wait for British colonialism before being informed that their entire history of philosophical controversy covering the full range of issues (across metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, logic), characterizable by no shared position and only the disagreements of philosophy, was a comprehensive religion, Hinduism, while various other traditions simultaneously gained their religious identity (such as Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism) as opt-out positions—opting out of the supposed comprehensive commitments of Hinduism. Under secularism₂, the same position can be articulated by Western and BIPOC sources: whether it is religion depends on its racial origins. When Plato talks about God, the soul, and the afterlife, that is secular philosophy. Said by someone from the Middle East, it's religion. The idea that reality is an evolution of matter, with mind and computational capacities as emergent properties, with no God creating or guiding the process, when said by someone of European descent is secular materialism. Said by Īśvarakṛṣṇa from South Asia, in Sanskrit, two thousand years ago: that's religious, as it's an orthodox position in Hinduism. When Bentham claims we ought to be reducing suffering, that's moral philosophy. Said by the Buddha, that's religion.

Secularism₁, free philosophical thinking, where there is no official position one has to endorse to engage in public philosophy, was the default mode of social engagement in South Asia prior to colonization. The British used a Persian word, “Hindu,” for India (Madan 2003, xii) to rebrand the entire indigenous South Asian tradition (distinct from Islam) a religion: Hinduism (Gottschalk 2012). What was simply a remarkable, extended debate on all topics of philosophy with a diversity of positions is erased by this colonial rebranding (for a review of the literature on this history and

the colonial impact, see Ranganathan [2018b]). As South Asians were colonized by the British, they internalized this external view and began confabulating about their (supposed) shared religion: Hinduism (Ranganathan 2022a). No doubt part of the confusion is that “Hindu” has a referent, fixed by its baptismal colonial event that is ancient (for an account of how naming fixes reference, see Kripke [1980]). The South Asian tradition of philosophy is one of three ancient traditions of philosophy (in addition to the European and Chinese traditions). Everyone is correct for noting the referential antiquity of Hinduism. Yet what the British managed to do was rebrand philosophy, with a masala twist, into a religion, with a mode of presentation consisting in shared rituals and values. If the idea of religion is itself an artifact of Western colonialism, then it is a form of White supremacist, colonial trauma, which amounts to a disruption in people’s access to their own secular₁ philosophical history.

In so far as jurisdictions everywhere draw a distinction between the secular and the religious in accordance with secularism₂, White supremacy has been internalized around the globe. India and China, themselves modern heirs of two of three ancient philosophical traditions, also operates with this model: their own indigenous traditions are treated as religious. China uses the Western philosophy of Marxism as a means of legitimizing its secularism and treats BIPOC religious movements (Falun Gong, the Islam of the Uighurs, Buddhism of Tibetans) as a threat to public order requiring a harsh, genocidal, response (HRW 2019; AI 2000; FIDH 2013). India explicitly wrote into its constitution (as we shall see) that it’s traditions of moral philosophical reflection are religious and have no place in secular life.

What is the political advantage of Western colonialism creating the category of religion to contain BIPOC traditions? To make sure that sophisticated moral philosophy from colonized traditions cannot enter public discourse and pose a threat to its hegemony. With this ruse, White supremacy redefines itself as the content of public reason while depicting BIPOC thought as not in the interest of public order.

In the next section, after a brief review of some ancient positions on moral responsibility we turn to the problem of studying South Asian moral philosophy. Patañjali’s Yoga (Patañjali 2008), one option from South Asia, is most helpful as it begins by contrasting interpretation as the root of moral irresponsibility with an alternative foundation of responsibility, the *explicatory* methodology of Yoga. If we interpret from a Western vantage, we can derive the usual skeptical conclusions about South Asian moral philosophy in the literature and secularism₂. Interpretation also forms the infrastructure for oppression by facilitating various *isms*, like speciesism, racism, sexism. The explicatory practices of Yoga in contrast allow for research, decolonization, and healing from trauma. Also, importantly, the two methods have *historical impact* and implications that account for the transition from the precolonial secularism₁ of South Asia to the colonized, White supremacy of secularism₂.

In the third section I consider how the moral irresponsibility of interpretation is a signature element of the Western tradition that turns it into a global colonizing tradition of White supremacy. This has to do with its ancient, interpretive, linguistic account of thought (LAT). In the fourth section I consider how the antilogical, irresponsibility of interpretation, which changes a metaethical choice into an epistemic failure, becomes normalized.

2. Moral Philosophy and Colonialism

The ancient South Asians, as we learn about them from the earliest surviving sources, such as the Vedas, operated against the backdrop of a naturalistic world view, according to which reality is primarily a rule-governed relationship of natural forces, sometimes conceptualized as elevated persons (*devas*) themselves. It is against this backdrop that the question of the possibility of freedom (*mokṣa*) arises (for an exploration of this history, see Ranganathan [2018d]). If everything is causally determined by natural forces, what room is there for moral responsibility? Some concluded that on the basis of the natural origins of the universe, choice is a ruse and experiences of choosing and responsibility are simply epiphenomenal (Sāṅkhya). Others held that freedom and responsibility are possible by disengaging from the natural world (Jainism). Others adopted a compatibilist position and held that we as parts of the causally determined universe contribute to future causal states and these contributions are our choice and responsibility (Buddhism).

Against the backdrop of these naturalistic positions, Yoga develops as a radical alternative. Yoga is unique among most systematic philosophical positions as it begins with an *ethical choice* between two mutually incompatible methodologies for data processing. Yoga, the methodology, consists of ordering epistemic content in a way that reveals its implications and conclusions. The processor hence is able to understand many different explanations, which preserves their autonomy as knowers and choosers (YS I.2–3). Call this Yogic approach to the data *explication*: this is to render explicit the logic of options. The opposite approach consists in *buying* experiences, observations, propositions, as the content of explanation. Then the individual interprets: they explain via their propositional attitudes. Unlike explication, interpretation ties the agent to an outlook (the content of their propositional attitudes) and then undermines the freedom for choice as it only permits the outlook endorsed by the interpreter (YS I.4). The idea that the universe is causally determined with no room for choice or responsibility is, on the Yoga account, an interpretation, at worst, and just one possible explanation, at best.

Interpretation is widely *acclaimed* in the twentieth-century analytic and Continental literature. Authors as diverse as W. V. O. Quine (1960, 59), early Donald Davidson (2001, 101; 1986, 316), Martin Heidegger (2010), and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1990, 1996) stress the importance of interpretation, often employing the term itself

(Quine, Davidson) or an analogue such as “hermeneutics” (Gadamer) or “Auslegung” (Heidegger) that are readily paraphrased or translated as “interpretation.” It continues in the widely influential idea that reflection is about arriving at an equilibrium of considered judgments (Rawls 1971, 20). Specifically:

- To interpret some package *P* is for the interpreting subject *S* to use *S*’s beliefs *b* in the explanation of *P*.

Explication broadly conceived is about understanding options in terms of inferential support. It includes the application of logical validity to the task of deriving explanations. Logical validity is the property of good deductive arguments such that if the premises of the argument are true, the conclusion has to be true. A logically valid argument can be comprised entirely of false premises that one does not believe, and an argument comprised entirely of true propositions, or propositions one believes, can be invalid. To explicate *includes* employing logical validity to derive from a perspective *P* a theory that entails its controversial claims about *t*. The concept *T* is what theories of *t* are disagreeing about. We can spell out the process in greater detail.

To explicate a perspective *P*—augustly called a “philosophy”—about topic *t*, is to *E*:

- Discern the reasons of *P* that constitute *P*, which entail *P*’s use of “*t*,” and to arrive at a systematization of *P*’s reasons that entails the uses of “*t*.” The systematization of *P*’s reasons that entails *P*’s *t*-claims is *P*’s theory of *t*. The reasons of *P* may be what *P* explicitly says, or what is entailed by *P*.

Then there is the second step:

- Compare theories of *t*: what they converge on while they disagree is the concept *T*.

We shall shortly examine the political and epistemic impact of these two differing approaches.

In the Western tradition, a lot is made of truth. Frege (1988, 36), for instance, defines propositions as the things that can be true or false. But propositions also have another property: inferential support. Inferential support allows us to evaluate various forms of reason, whether deduction, induction, or abduction, in terms of success criteria that are distinct from whether the propositions in question are true or the data is accurate or reliable. Inferential support explains how *modus ponens* (If

P, then Q. P. Therefore, Q.) is valid even though, as variables, P and Q are neither true nor false.

As inferential support is the essence of reasoning, interpretation as a methodology is a formal logical fallacy. Inferential support concerns the relationship between propositions, or data sets, and interpretation focuses on the psychological affirmation of a proposition or data point as though that counts as an explanation. Good deductive arguments, logically valid arguments, can be comprised of propositions one does not believe, and arguments comprised of propositions that one believes can be invalid. By focusing on belief, or any propositional attitude, interpretation allows us to disregard the guardrails of reason. If by virtue of *merely* interpreting one were to produce an argument that passes logical muster, it would be a fluke. W. V. O. Quine (1956) correctly noted that propositional attitudes of an agent like beliefs are inferential duds as any inferential properties they have are mediated by the agent's psychology. And yet when it came to understanding cultural and linguistic aliens, he argued that we have to use the *principle of charity*, which is to interpret foreigners by our beliefs (Quine 1960, 59, fn.2). This is in effect to reserve one's illogicality for understanding foreigners. How Western. This ends up being an influential approach to the study of alien philosophy (see Adamson 2016)—and even when it is criticized, it is also defended (Lockard 2023).

Applying the Distinction

Drawing a distinction between explication and interpretation allows us to see how South Asian philosophy has been interpreted in the Western-dominated academy and how it can and should be studied via explication. If we interpret South Asian discussions of “dharma,” we would explain every use of the word in accordance with our beliefs (within a world of Western colonialism), and the result is that each use of the word would be answerable to its own doxastic fund in our outlook. And the result? We would have to conclude that “*DHARMA* is a concept difficult to define because it disowns—or transcends—distinctions that seem essential to us” (Lingat 1973, 3), that it is used in a “bewildering variety of ways” (Larson 1972, 146), and that “it stands for nature, intrinsic [ontological] quality, civil and moral law, justice, virtue, merit, duty and morality,” to name a few (Rangaswami Aiyangar 1952, 63). In the Indian Constitution, it is also the term that has been conscripted to stand for religion in its self-description as a secular state: *dharmanirapekṣa rājya*—“it is a state with no dharma” (India Language Experts Conference, 1949).

Such interpretive approaches to dharma are the rule and not the exception in a Westernized world. It serves to repackage what is indigenous moral (dharma) philosophy as a strange, gap-ridden, and mystical discourse that is rather evidence of the religiosity of the tradition—with the term “dharma” itself being redeployed as the South Asian word for the West's “religion” (for a survey of such claims, see

Ranganathan 2017b, 52–55). This serves to banish indigenous moral philosophy in the secular₂ India as not relevant to secular discussions of moral and political issues. This might be fine except that interpretation violates Ockham’s razor by multiplying meanings of “dharma” in accordance with the outlook of the interpreter.

If we explicated philosophies, what we would do is employ logical validity to derive from each philosophy that discusses “dharma” a theory that entails *all of its uses* of dharma, and then we would understand the concept, *DHARMA*, as what these theories of dharma are disagreeing about, which we would discover is *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. If we explicated discussions of ethics or moral philosophy in the Western tradition, we would find that they are dissenting about the same topic. Similarly, we could explicate Chinese philosophical discourse about the *TAO*, and we would find that it is also the same concept that theories of the *TAO* are disagreeing about. When we explicate dharma/tao/moral philosophy, we find there is only one basic concept at play—*THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*—and philosophers in all three traditions are contributing to the same area of research: moral philosophy. What this shows us is that *precolonially*, South Asians didn’t have religious identities: they had moral—dharma—philosophical identities. Explication is not only parsimonious; it allows us to understand the contributions of alien philosophers to topics of controversy without having to use our outlook as a gatekeeping criterion. And this reveals four basic ethical theories at play. The first three theories of dharma are familiar in the Western tradition:

- Virtue ethics: The Good (character, constitution) conditions or produces the Right (choice, action). (Vaiśeṣika, Madhva’s Dvaita Vedānta, *Jainism*)
- Consequentialism: The Good (end) justifies the Right (choice, action). (Nyāya, Kāśmīra Śaivism, Cārvākā, *Buddhism*)
- Deontology: The Right (procedure) justifies the Good (actions, called duties, or omissions, called rights). (Bhagavad Gītā’s Karma Yoga, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā)

Interpreters are likely to define these options differently, deferring to their beliefs about them. However, explication reveals the ways in which basic ethical theories are themselves different positions one can take on *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. While there are too many examples of the above ethical theories in the South Asian tradition to name, and as that explicatory work is beyond the scope of this essay (for a closer overview of this history of South Asian moral philosophy, as something explicated, see Ranganathan [2017a]), the above nonitalicized parenthetical examples are within what is conventionally thought of as Hinduism (for a closer look, see Ranganathan

[2019a]). Importantly, disagreements about dharma reveal a historically significant fourth option:

- Bhakti/Yoga: The Right (devotion to the procedural ideal, *Īśvara*, sovereignty) conditions or produces the Good.

We have already reviewed Yoga's metanormative, metaethical choice between two competing methods for data sorting: the explication/interpretation distinction (YS I.2–4). Yoga's normative ethics is an entailment of Yoga as a metaethical, explicatory practice: in explicating and organizing data, we are unconstrained by past data (*tapas*, unconservatism) while determining our own practice according to explicitly chosen norms and values (*svādhyāya*, self-governance) (YS II.1). These two practices of unconservatism and self-governance are the two parts of the procedural ideal of sovereignty, according to Yoga (YS I.23–24). In practicing devotion to this procedural ideal, we engage in the practice of being sovereign, and the resulting good is our own autonomy. "Person" ("*puruṣa*") is the label given to whatever would thrive—be autonomous—given its own unconservatism and self-governance, the essential traits of sovereignty. This includes nonhuman animals and celestial objects, like the Earth.

Yoga provides a nonableist account of ethics and responsibility for two reasons. First, the right on this account is defined not by a success criterion but rather by devotion to the procedure of the Right. One can hence engage in Yoga, *correctly*, before being *able* to do anything further. Secondly, it defines persons not in terms of an ability to engage in this devotional practice but rather in terms of an interest in sovereignty. Hence, ability, or the lack thereof, does not factor into whether someone should be treated as a person with an interest in their own independence. To be devoted to sovereignty is hence to be devoted to the essential interests of individual people and, to this extent, is a state of solidarity with people.

Part of this theory might seem familiar. John Stuart Mill's comprehensive liberalism, according to which agents ought to be free to experiment and determine their own conception of the good, is a *teleological* retelling of Yoga. In Yoga, experimentation (*tapas*) and determining one's own values (*svādhyāya*) produces no extra outcome: it is a procedural reclaiming of one's own autonomy and part of one's devotion to sovereignty. Hence, the end of Yoga is called *kaivalya— isolation* (YS IV.34). For Mill, as a utilitarian, the point is to maximize happiness. This entails nothing about the distribution of utility (see Rawls 1971, 22–27), and hence, it is consistent with conservatism and oppression. Mill exemplifies these trends. On his account, the moral freedom to experiment and self-determine is really only for racially mature people (like his people). Others, like South Asians, would be better off with a despot like Akbar—India's famous Mogul emperor (*On Liberty* I.10). Mill's day job was in the British East India Company (Zastoupil 1994): he was a professional colonizer who had

a familiarity with South Asia. Mill's appropriation of Yoga is widely unknown because South Asian moral philosophy is widely unknown due to the colonizing practice of interpretation. In addition to being racist, Mill's theory was also speciesist: in *Utilitarianism*, he claims that human happiness is more important than nonhuman happiness. Yoga, in contrast, is not concerned with maximizing happiness but is rather concerned with the autonomy of persons, who come in a diversity of shapes, forms, and species.

Yoga involves a criticism of conventional morality, concerned with good persons (virtue ethics), good outcomes (consequentialism), and good practices (deontology). The problem with conventional ethics, according to Yoga, is that it renders the conventionally ethical vulnerable to the oppression of the moral parasite (colonizer) who wants others to be good so they can be taken advantage of. To throw off the parasite, one may have to do what good people wouldn't fathom: diminish utility (by way of activism), break with good practices—and criticize their own complicity in oppression by a concern for their own virtue ethical purity (see Ranganathan 2019b). According to this criticism, good people concerned with good outcomes and good rules will tolerate evil because putting an end to it involves departing from goodness. All the while, moral parasites diminish the expected utility of the conventionally moral via their oppression.

The Isms and Trauma

Yoga entails that responsibly relating to oneself and others is about appreciating and exploring the normative space of personhood, delimited by the practice of devotion to sovereignty. This is a practical space that consists in unconservatism and self-governance. Irresponsibility, in contrast, arises from being devoted to propositional attitudes: interpretation. This results in conservatively hitching oneself to an outlook, while simultaneously being governed (and not self-governed) by that outlook. When people are devoted to propositional attitudes about paradigm cases of persons (say the Western example of the able, human, White, heterosexual, cisgender, man, who is a member of a specific community), they use these propositional attitudes as measures. Any candidate person who deviates from this measure will appear deficient in proportion to their deviation, and then it will appear appropriate to marginalize such candidate people in proportion to their deviation: call this *interpretive marginalization*. And if the order of the listed traits matters to the belief about what makes something a paradigm example of a person, then the severity of marginalization will follow suit. Oppression, such as speciesism, racism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and sexism, is hence made possible by interpretive marginalization.

The *Yoga Sūtra* contains an account of the crisis psychology of the interpreter that gives rise to oppression. The interpreter begins in ignorance by abandoning a

responsible approach to the data. This is a false sense of self called *egotism (asmitā)*, which consists in conflating the power of knowing with the world view—propositional attitudes—of the agent (YS II.3). Then the agent uses their own agency to protect this outlook: they are happy when life is in accordance with it and alarmed when it is not. And this constitutes trauma or affliction (YS II.6). Trauma is not a function of the character of the experience. It is an outcome of *internalizing* experience. Even advantageous experiences can be the source of trauma.

Consider the excellent example that Grant Silva (2019) describes in his paper “Racism as Self-Love.” This is the example of a White person in the United States. The US has a history of institutional racism that spared White people. That is an advantageous position for White people to be in. Nevertheless, a White person in this climate might identify with the political structure of White supremacy they experience, which places them at the top of a racial hierarchy. Silva suggests that this is the source of racism as self-love. Such a White supremacist will feel alarmed when they are on equal footing with a Black person: this equality is a threat to the political structure they identify with. The Yoga analysis of this adds that this is *not* a real self. It is a fake self, generated by the internalization of the experience of White supremacy. But once it is treated as the self, the agent treats the perspective as something that they must fight for as a matter of self-preservation. Racism in this case is borne out of this misplaced sense of self-defense, brought on by the fake self of egotism.

Correlatively, people can survive horrific experiences and leave trauma behind because personhood is not reducible to a set of experiences. Persons are things that have an essential interest in their own sovereignty. Hence choosing devotion to this procedural ideal allows people to recover their agency by engaging in practices of unconservatism and self-governance. What this looks like will vary greatly depending upon a person’s past and the political challenges they face, but the recovery process will be alike in so far as it moves toward the autonomy of the agent (for more about Yoga and its therapeutic applications, see Ranganathan [2022b]; Sullivan et al. [2018]). And, importantly, the recovery is political and involves altering public space to accommodate the autonomous individual.

This analysis of the crisis psychology of the interpreter explains how systemic harm and oppression operate. It is a process lacking intelligence and rooted in the overlap of agents internalizing the same oppressive structures. If one adopts interpretation, one becomes a cell of the sociological regularities of one’s beliefs. And as one’s own agency is set upon reifying these regularities, one perceives any opposition to the project as a personal threat, to which violence is directed as a matter of a confused sense of self-defense. Each one of us disrupts the systematic nature of oppression by abandoning egotism as a sense of self. Our own personal practice of devotion to sovereignty is hence political.

Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra*—in addition to specifying the metaethical choice between interpreting and explicating, and the normative ethical substance of this activity (devotion to sovereignty by practicing one's own unconservatism and self-governance)—specifies a nonideal political, remedial practice (*upāya*). This is called the Eight Limbs of Yoga, and the first limb consists in a famous universal moral prescription, which in turn begins with *ahimsā*. *Ahimsā* literally means “nonharm.” Teleologists like Jains take this to mean *not breaking things* (for more on Jain ethics, see Soni [2017]). In Yoga, *ahimsā* is procedural and consists in *disrupting* systemic harm. The result are social facts (*satya*), with people's requirements intact (*asteya*), personal boundaries respected (*brahmacarya*), and no one appropriating (*aparigrahā*). In effect, our entry into public life, and the condition of any further practice, is anticolonial activism. This is an extremely influential maxim. M. K. Gandhi, in his *Collected Works*, extensively credits Patañjali, the *Yoga Sūtra's* author, for the origins of his political practice of direct action (it is set out at YS II.30–35). Gandhi was influential in inspiring the activism of Martin Luther King (n.d.). Now the procedural approach to nonharm is part of progressive practice the world over.

White supremacy, via interpretation from a Western vantage, makes it seem like all the good moral and political philosophy came from White people. What this hides is the BIPOC origins of important features of progressive moral and political philosophy—namely, Yoga. From Yoga we derive a progressive approach to personhood that entails recognizing anything as a person if they can benefit from their own unconservatism and self-governance and recognizing the politics of direct action as the foundation of further social interaction.

Politics, Trauma and Reason

To further flesh out the distinction between Yoga and anti-Yoga, between explication and interpretation, between unconservatism and self-governance, and the conservative lack of self-governance, consider the case of the 2020 US presidential election. As the election was being finalized, Donald Trump claimed that he had in fact won the election. Many of his followers, who are interpreters, not only believed Donald Trump's claim that he won the election but used this belief as a measure of what transpired. Call these people “Trumpies.” In cases where Trump carried a state or district, Trumpies found no grounds for complaint. In districts and states where Trump lost, Trumpies explained the evidence in terms of their belief. In such cases, ordinary paraphernalia and procedures of voting and counting votes were interpreted as evidence of corruption. In this case Trumpies as interpreters had no way to assess the evidence *independently* of their beliefs. With respect to trauma, it is remarkable how unnerved, and untrusting, the Trumpy interpreter is. The project of the Trumpy culminated in a violent insurrection, aimed at interfering with ordinary democratic procedure in the US, under the pretense that it was the Trumpy that was wronged by

the state. Their endeavor exemplifies the crisis psychology of egotism, where anything out of step with expectations is treated as a threat. One telling trait of the Trumpy as an interpreter is their *lack of independence* from their belief that Trump won the election and their inability not to be influenced by that belief to extraordinary measures.

On the other hand, poll workers were *explicators*. Each ballot was a perspective about who should win various races, and the poll workers organized, collated, and rendered explicit these choices to deductively derive conclusions about races, which were only intelligible in light of the controversy of who should win those various races. For the explicator, dissent and controversy are not toxic: they are our means of finding answers to questions.

A main difference between the explicatory poll worker and the interpreter Trumpy is that the explicator (Yogi) has a way to arrive at *prima facie* truth independently of their beliefs. It's not that poll workers don't have beliefs about who should win various races: it is that those beliefs are not premises for their conclusion about the winner of various races. So the explicator, given inputs that are independent of their beliefs but also gathered through procedural channels, can process the data and arrive at conclusions. This processing of data via procedural channels is the essence of research. The conclusions so reached are not set in stone: they can be revised if new information turns up. If the inputs are gathered by procedural channels, and the data is processed responsibly, the conclusions are *prima facie* true.

In contrast, as the interpreter has no way to arrive at the truth independently of their propositional attitudes that form the basis for their identity, they will act as though they are the victim, when things do not conform to their outlook, and engage in violence accordingly.

3. The Western Origins of Global Colonialism

The Argument for Yoga

Interpreters tend to miss arguments as they are assessing everything by way of their propositional attitudes. So as to be extra transparent for their benefit, and to put arguments in standard form, here is the argument for Yoga/explication.

- (1) P or Q: Either we can take an organizational, Yogic, explicatory, approach to understand the options, or we can interpret the options via our propositional attitudes.
- (2) Not Q: (Interpretation will not allow us to appreciate the logic of the disjunct or the validity of this argument, so) We must reject interpretation.

- (3) Therefore, P: We ought to engage in the explicatory activity of Yoga to understand the options.

Sūtra texts like the *Yoga Sūtra* are comprised of dense aphorisms, relying upon polysemous words to compress arguments. This explicates the implicit disjunctive syllogism in the opening of the *Yoga Sūtra* (YS I.1–4), not in terms of facts, or beliefs, but rather in terms of what is procedurally required to understand the argument. Most importantly, an argument is comprised of propositions, not propositional attitudes, and hence, interpretation is not up to the challenge of understanding arguments. This argument can be flipped to create an *error theory*:

- (1) P or Q: Either an organizational, explicatory (Yogic) approach to thought leads to irresponsibility, or interpretation leads to irresponsibility.
- (2) Not P: (An explicatory approach to thought leads to understanding the options, prevented by irresponsibility, so) We must reject the explicatory explanation of irresponsibility.
- (3) Therefore, Q: Interpretation is the explanation of irresponsibility.

We can also rewrite this as an argument about colonialism:

- (1) P or Q: Either an organizational, explicatory (Yogic) approach to thought leads to colonialism, or interpretation leads to colonialism.
- (2) Not P: (An explicatory approach to thought allows for an open exploration of dissenting positions, which is disallowed by colonialism, so) We must reject the explicatory explanation of colonialism.
- (3) Therefore, Q: Interpretation is the explanation of colonialism.

The two options of Yoga and anti-Yoga, of explanation and interpretation, constitute an inference to the best explanation (abduction)—depending upon what we want to understand. If we want to understand how things go well—responsibly, decolonially—they go well because of Yoga, as this makes clear options. If we want to understand how things go badly—irresponsibly, colonially—they go by way of interpretation, as this limits options. These are metaethical and meta-explanatory choices that constrain how we enumerate options. If we explicate, we can render explicit any number of dissenting options for our abduction, but we will have already chosen the explicatory option as the best option to understand the options. If we adopt interpretation, we can only ever acknowledge what we agree to. These two

metaoptions are exhaustive for an abduction in so far as they bound the continuum from unlimited options to limited options.

LAT, Colonialism, and the West

If one were to interpret the Western tradition as Westerners do, one would use what one believes on the basis of this tradition to explain this tradition. If we explicate, we look to foundational theses and commitments that give rise to its historical trajectory as entailments. If we adopt this strategy, we find that the West in its earliest form was deeply committed to interpretation owing to an ancient commitment that survives to this day.

What connects the contemporary tradition in the form of analytic and Continental philosophy and its ancient origins in Greek philosophy and thought is LAT, codified in the idea of *logos* (for a historical exploration, see Derrida [1998]): one word for speech, thought, and reason. This concept conflates what one would say, what one can think, and reason. Reasoning allows one to contemplate arguments comprised of propositions that one would not say. So actual reasoning pulls these ideas of speaking, thinking, and reasoning apart. But in *logos*, these get conflated, and then the reasonable is depicted as what one would say. And what is it that one would say? We commonly communicate our various propositional attitudes in speech: our beliefs, hopes, and fears. As Tarski's (1944, 1983) work teaches us, merely asserting p is biconditionally (pragmatically) equivalent to the metalinguistic claim that " p is true"—which is an articulation of the belief that p . In other words, when we speak, there's no audible difference between articulating a proposition p and articulating our belief in p . Hence, if by way of speech we conflate a thought and its belief, then by way of speech explanations by way of thought will also be explanations by way of belief: interpretation. *Logos* as the basis of the Western tradition hence creates a tradition that expands by explaining everything in terms of what it would say.

But there are other ways to see how LAT institutionalizes interpretation. Consider a thought experiment called *Planet Ethics/Dharma* (Ranganathan 2018c). Let us assume for the sake of argument the orthodox account of literal meaning as the systematic or basic role of an expression in a language. The literal meaning is hence what allows us to make sense of various uses of a word (see Davidson 1978). Next consider the case of a historical linguistic community that over time separates and migrates to differing geographic locations. Their languages remain mutually interintelligible on the surface. But, in time, each community adopts a distinct ethical theory as their national identity. And hence, in time, their usage of the term "ethical" starts to reflect their national ethical identity. So, in time, each community's word "ethical" would have a distinct systematic and basic roll—a distinct literal meaning—that represents the community's governing ethical theory. And this would happen because as the usage of the term shifts in deference to the national ethical theory, so

to what is basic to the usage shifts (for a classic discussion of reference shifting, see Evans [1996]). If we assumed the linguistic account of thought, when each person in each differing linguistic community says the sentence form “Agents should respect ethical considerations,” they express different propositions. When a speaker from Nation Kant says this, they mean “Agents should respect the categorical imperative.” When speakers from Nation Mill say this, they mean “Agents should respect the greatest happiness principle.” What has happened in this case is that the ethical beliefs of prior generations are in time *encoded* linguistically as the literal meaning of “ethical.” And in so far as the literal meaning of an expression is responsive to shifts in usage, and these are themselves brought about by doxastic change, linguistic meaning as thought is a way to encode beliefs of formative generations as thought. And hence, on the basis of LAT, all explanation by way of thought is explanation by way of beliefs of the formative generations of the language: interpretation.

First, if interpretation is the basis of colonialism (and it is, as colonialism is the imposition of an interpretation), then LAT leads to colonialism as it cements interpretation. Second, as this model of thought is based on a shared communal resource of language, as determined historically by formative beliefs that are reflected in linguistic meaning, moral questions of *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD* will be communitarian in nature against the backdrop of LAT. Third, as language is a peculiarly human artefact, the human constraints on language and its inflation in importance by LAT entails a metaethical anthropocentrism, where the conditions of moral theory and thought are depicted as peculiarly human. So traditions based on LAT, in addition to being colonizing, will tend to be anthropocentric and communitarian. They give priority to humans in one’s own community, secondarily to other humans in proportion to their deviation, and no importance to nonhuman persons (except perhaps if this is a legacy commitment that survives colonization).

This of course fits the Western tradition as developing and engaging communitarian and anthropocentric ethical theories, starting with Plato and Aristotle. Even Socrates, who was being executed by the state, found his whole identity bound up with the laws of Athens (as narrated in the *Crito*). We find this emphasis on community echoed in subsequent moral and political thought in the West, whether from Hume, Kant, Hegel, or Mill. When Bentham breaks with the anthropocentrism of the Western tradition, in the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (chap. 17, section 1), by affirming that anatomy is not morally basic but rather that whether something can suffer is morally basic, he frames the moral standing of animals in terms of their membership in the moral community, which is a communitarian model for moral standing. Both communitarianism and anthropocentrism are forms of *interpretive marginalization*, where the human in a particular community (or kind of community) is treated as the paradigm person.

The interpretive foundations of the West, steeped in LAT, a fundamentally ethical choice (on the Yoga analysis), will also be normalized in discussions of knowledge in interpretive traditions, making it seem like a value-neutral, epistemic foundation and not a moral choice. Knowledge in the West is hence modeled as a belief (Gettier 1963) or some other variety of propositional attitude (Williamson 2002). Reason itself is often modeled after strongly held beliefs in the West, based on LAT. We find this in Descartes, who is famously anthropocentric (Newman 2001) but also regarded as a “rationalist.” After a series of skeptical thought experiments in the *Meditations*, he makes use of his *cogito*, “I think, therefore I am,” as the proposition he cannot doubt, to get him out of trouble. This is not an act of reasoning: it’s a propositional attitude. Rebranding this as reasoning is itself an outcome of interpretation.

Fourth, internally, members of these linguistic communities have no capacity for dissent: their moral culture’s moral outlook is literally encoded in their language. To deny the national ethical theory would be to say something that is analytically false. Hence, such traditions will develop an intolerance for philosophers and those critical of received moral convictions. So whereas in South Asia, which lacked LAT, being countercultural and a philosopher was cool and widely tolerated (see for instance the *Samaññaphala Sutta*), in the Western tradition that starts out with LAT, being a philosopher and countercultural is dangerous. The West hence begins with a series of executions of public intellectuals, starting with Socrates. Correlatively, robustly interpretive traditions based on LAT will conflate thinking and speaking, and insist on free speech *only for* beliefs encoded in their idiolect.

Connected to this intolerance to criticism is the incapacity to appreciate cross-cultural moral disagreement. For speakers of the different languages to disagree about ethics, they have to share an ethical proposition that one group endorses and the other rejects. However, if we assume LAT, on Planet Ethics, the ethical propositions are in each society indexed to their national ethical theory. So in this case, there can be no way to understand the moral disagreement across cultures, as each culture will express moral propositions that cannot be expressed in other moral cultures, even if only to disagree. This gives rise to the impression that people in other cultures simply don’t have any views about ethics, for to have such views would be to work with the ethical claims in one’s own language. The view in the literature about the lack of moral philosophy in colonized traditions is an outcome of this feature of LAT.

Absurdly, the very problem of cross-cultural communication that interpretation—and LAT—creates makes it seem, to the interpreter, that colonialism is the solution. Hence, colonization often involves supplanting local languages in favor of that of the colonizer. Residential schools are one formalized effort to impose the colonizer’s language on the colonized (Hanson, Gamez, and Manuel 2020).

All of these absurdities are avoidable by adopting a Yoga-inspired approach to thought that underwrites successful practice in translation studies (Ranganathan 2018a). Accordingly, the extension of a thought contains the semiotic devices (sentences, barks, chirps) that share a disciplinary use, and the intension of the thought is the common disciplinary use. On Planet Ethics, with this Yogic approach to thought, everyone could use their sentence of the form “Agents should respect ethical considerations” to straightforwardly translate alien claims with the same sentence form as the thought would be the shared philosophical purpose of the claims, which is to make a claim about *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD* (Ranganathan 2018c). Without this Yogic deflationary tweak,

- the apparent anthropocentrism of LAT makes it difficult to understand not only how nonhuman, nonlanguage users could think but also how humans in other cultures that lack our vocabulary could think.

Anti-Semitism in the *West* is also something brought into relief by this analysis. Jews are peoples who often had two linguistic identities: the linguistic identity of the community they live in within the *Western diaspora*, and Hebrew. The *West*, grounded in LAT, where identity is linguistic, depicts Jews as people who have one foot in a *Western community* they live in and one foot out. And if moral practice is grounded on communitarian considerations reducible to linguistic practices, they will seem like double agents. Various anti-Semitic tropes ensue. In South Asia, which lacked LAT, the Bene Israel had existed, according to them, for nearly two millennia with no known anti-Semitism. Their “return” to the state of Israel, which represents in many ways the continuation of a *Western approach* to statehood based on linguistic identity (Hebrew) and not the previous, millennia old diasporic life (Elazar 1997), was sadly not easy (see Kuikman 2014).

China and India

In the Chinese tradition, we find LAT affirmed by Confucius in the *Analects*, in his famous doctrine of the rectification of names (*Analects* 12.11 and 13.3). The theory here is that the proper meaning of nouns is their propositional content, and truthful, clear usage must conform to these meanings. Given this commitment to LAT, Confucian ethics in the *Analects* exemplifies many communitarian and anthropocentric features. Chinese colonialism would hence be a function of this commitment to LAT, in so far as this is bound up with interpretation, which is the mechanism of colonialism. For the Chinese, linguistic identity is orthographic and not reducible to a spoken language. Many different spoken languages (like Mandarin or Cantonese) are Chinese in so far as they can be expressed in the shared Chinese

orthography. The trouble for communities like the Uighurs or the Tibetans who exist in what China regards as their boundaries is that they do not buy Chinese as a linguistic identity, and hence these groups are marked for extinction in China. Correlatively, if they were to employ Chinese as their linguistic identity, they would thereby be normalized within China's colonial frame. Following this analysis, the reason that China did not become a global colonizing tradition like the West is that while the West only has LAT, China also has a tradition of philosophy that is highly critical of LAT: Taoism, which, especially in the *Tao Te Ching*, rejects communitarian and anthropocentric considerations and recommends adopting a disposition of flexibility to the extra-anthropocentric norm of the *Way (Tao)*. The Chinese model of adopting a unitary orthography for various spoken languages satisfies both the Taoist requirement of being open to external norms and also LAT. But this receptivity to the outside norms would also account for how China was receptive first to Buddhism and then to the Western colonialism occurring outside, and to adopting its secularism₂ as part of its ethos.

In South Asia, many philosophers acknowledged the political nature of language and culture by recognizing conventional truth (which we make up)—*saṃvṛti* or *vyāvahārika satya*—as something distinguishable from the actual facts: ultimate truth—*paramārtha satya*. Philosophical inquiry was in general treated as something that concerns the facts, not conventions based on the politics of belief (Ranganathan 2021). Moral (dharma) philosophy in South Asia is virtually unrecognizable to the Westerner as in South Asia, typically, it is disruptive, destabilizing to social conventions, and seeks to bring our behavior in line with the ultimate truth (and each philosophy would have its own story about what that is). Philosophy would hence be tasked with helping us get past treating the contingencies of upbringing, culture, and language as a constraint on understanding (for an overview, see Ranganathan [2017a]; for in-depth school-by-school review, see Ranganathan [2016]). Lacking LAT, the indigenous South Asian philosophical tradition was neither anthropocentric nor communitarian. Yoga exemplifies this very South Asian approach to philosophy as something that concerns the autonomy of the individual, as something distinct from species and community.

Things changed under colonialism when the British introduced the idea of Hinduism as the indigenous South Asian religion in contrast to Islam. Then, as part of its colonial imposition of Western standards of thought, South Asians started to buy LAT. Absurdly, this led to the creation of a Muslim language and a Hindu language out of the same spoken language: Hindustani. The difference? The Muslim language of Urdu is written with Arabic script and the Hindu language of Hindi is written with Devanagari, a South Asian script also used to write Sanskrit (C. R. King 1994). Spoken: same language. Written: different languages. But once these linguistic identities were

invented, they formed the basis for nationalist movements. Urdu became the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Hindu Nationalism becomes possible with the invention of a “Hindu” language. This nationalism exemplifies the crisis psychology of interpretation: everything in accordance with the shared worldview is acceptable, and what diverges is a threat (Sharma 2011). But what most do not notice is that this creature, which claims to represent the interests of Indigenous South Asians, is a continuation of Western colonialism. It requires several innovations that are created by the colonizing tradition, the *West*—like Hindu religious and linguistic identity—that are departures from the secularism₁ of South Asia. Go back far enough, before colonization, and no South Asian would have any clue what you were talking about if you asked about religion—or India!

Overview

In this section I considered the argument for Yoga, and how it can be inverted as an error theory, which accounts for irresponsibility and colonialism. Moral irresponsibility and colonialism are both made possible by the methodology of interpretation, as interpretation reduces our appreciation of the options and colonialism is this heavy-handed imposition of a lack of options. LAT, which gives rise to interpretation, can be found in China, but it was controversial there. Ancient South Asian philosophers were critical of positions like LAT that sought to ground the facts in social artifacts like language. But LAT is assumed and acclaimed in the *Western* tradition, giving it a historical head start in colonialism. In so far as there were noncolonial traditions everywhere else, *Western* colonialism suppressed these as it expanded. What we find in these previously colonized jurisdictions, such as India, is a continuation of the *West’s* colonialism (such as secularism₂) and the adoption of LAT.

4. The Recalcitrance of Colonialism

The disjunction between adopting an explicatory versus interpretive approach to the data is fundamentally a metaethical choice, which has practical consequences. If we choose the Yogic, explicatory approach, we process data responsibly, make room for ourselves as individuals, and engage in a politics of being pro-person. However, in choosing badly, interpreters create epistemic problems for everyone. Having no way to approach the truth independently of their propositional attitudes, interpreters create an ersatz reality of egotism, which they then enforce via violence. Those who deviate from beliefs about paradigm cases are in proportion to this deviation marginalized from ethical consideration. The social world that results from this is a construction out of the beliefs employed in interpretation.

Whether one is an explicator or an interpreter will determine how one treats any tradition. If one is an explicator, one renders explicit basic assumptions of

competing traditions, and their respective entailments, which constitute historical predictions that have empirical import. The *West* is hence not the frame of explanation but an object of explanation. If one interprets, one uses the doxographic resources one inherits as the content of explanation. Typically, in a world of *Western* colonialism, this entails treating the *West* as though it is a default frame of explanation for *every other tradition*.

Choosing interpretation assumes and entails a *willful ignorance (avidya)*, in so far as all explanation has to be routed through the contingencies of one's psychology. This creates several immune responses that insulate the interpreter from having to contend with criticism. I will list only a few here.

Ignorance Is Bliss: See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil. As interpretation is an emotional or emotive approach to explanation, which consists in the interpreter only tolerating what they are willing to endorse, an interpreter will only tolerate what they choose to endorse. So paradoxically, if you point out the problematic outcomes of interpretation, which the interpreter themselves rejects, they will ensure that the criticism does not see the light of day, as it involves what they do not want to endorse.

Begging the Question. As interpreters prefer believing to thinking, which makes reasoning difficult, when pressed to justify their beliefs, they will usually fall back on that belief. This is to beg the question. When pressed to assess an argument, they will measure it against what they believe. So nothing critical can ever see the light of day for the question-begging interpreter. Research for the interpreter is hence a matter of saying what they believe, and hence they assess whether research is compelling or persuasive in terms of whether it resonates with their outlook.

Bad Reasoning. While interpreters are unwilling to use reason as explicators do as a means of research, they can use reason to dress up the propositions they believe into arguments. But often, they will just fail at reasoning. First, in believing that the reasonable is the same as what they believe, they place too much weight on their refutations.

1. If the author is correct (P), then the *West* is a tradition of interpretation (Q).
2. It is not the case that the *West* is a tradition of interpretation (Not Q).
3. Therefore, the author is incorrect (Not P).

The interpreter fancies themselves clever for providing the second premise, which is the negation of the consequent, thereby delivering a concluding refutation of the antecedent. But they incorrectly take themselves to have proven something: the validity of the argument is independent of the truth of any of the propositions in the

argument. Not Q may be false, and still the argument goes through. But often, they don't even manage to produce a valid argument:

1. If the author of this paper is correct about LAT and the West (P), then it follows that belief and thought are conflated in the Western tradition (Q).
2. Western thinkers do not believe that belief and thought are the same.
3. Therefore, the author of this paper is incorrect about LAT and the West ($\sim P$).

The problem here is that this is not *modus tollens* as the second premise is not a rejection of the consequent of the first premise. It rather code switches to a propositional attitude. This confusion between propositions and propositional attitudes is a signature feature of the West, grounded on LAT that confuses the two and gives rise to interpretation. It allows participants in this tradition to perpetually *Whitewash* the history of the West by self-servingly explaining the West in terms of what it believes about itself (as opposed to what is entailed by it), and it constitutes an *ahistorical* approach to the data. The charge is not that the West doesn't believe in distinguishing between thought and belief: rather, it typically does not, and this criticism is a case in point.

Gatekeeping: Publish/Conform or Perish. Strategies of interpretation to avoid dealing with criticism are weaponized by the game of Conform or Perish—the academic version is Publish or Perish. This model brings to fore a dynamic of gatekeeping that predates the current pressure-cooker approach to academic activity. It is also a dynamic that is independent of academia. It captures the pressure that people experience under colonization to adopt the colonizer's narrative to survive games of public participation. But the pressure-cooker academic dynamic of Publish or Perish crystallizes the problem. To simplify this model, let us assume that, at the start, the authors who are contributing writing for consideration for publication are split between interpreters and explicators. Further, let us assume that the reviewers are also split between interpreters and explicators. Given an explication of the origins of interpretation as closely tied to the Western tradition, and a historical awareness of the impact of interpretation with the background beliefs of the West to produce a globalizing tradition of Western colonialism that made its way (via secularism₂) into competing traditions like that of China and India, we know that the doxastic commitments of the interpreter contributors and reviewers (in our world) will be Western. Further, as a simplifying assumption, let us assume that though interpreters make the metaethical choice not to reason as a methodology, they have, by way of their parasitism, learned to arrange the propositions they believe into valid

arguments—as interpreters, they can tolerate these arguments but not an argument that relies on thoughts they do not believe. The explicators will find no reason to reject the interpreter’s own arguments for want of logic. And let us further assume that half of the explicators in any round of the game accidentally share the doxastic commitments of the interpreters, so on interpretive grounds, their papers can be accepted. Finally, to survive the game requires acceptance from both reviewers:

	# of authors	Explicator Reviewer Acceptance	Interpreter Reviewer Acceptance	Survivors
Explicator Authors	100	100	50	50
Interpreter Authors	100	100	100	100

If this game is played recursively, where the survivors of one round of Publish or Perish are the only ones allowed to play the next round, then after the second round only twenty-five explicating authors survived. After seven rounds, they are completely eliminated. The interpreters survive every round.

If interpreters are allowed to peer review academic work, then how can one survive recursive games of Publish or Perish? Even if the population of reviewers was split fifty-fifty between interpreters and explicators, and the choice between the two reviewers assigned to one’s submission was determined by a coin toss, then there would be a one in four chance of two explicators adjudicating. So if one’s hopes for survival rested on having only explicating judges, the chances for survival are bad. In effect, the decolonial explicator has to play the long game, and find some way of staying afloat while interpreters overtake them by Publish or Perish. As reviewers are recruited from the stock of winners of rounds of Publish or Perish, there will be very few explicators in the pool, as they are weeded out. The only way to game the system would be to simply acquire the dominant beliefs of the interpreters as what one wrote on and argued for, but that would be to give up on explication as a strategy. As long as interpreters are treated as though they are competent reviewers of research, interpretation will normalize a violence that gets rid of explicators. This game is the academic version of what goes on in ordinary cases of adjudication in work and in various other settings, such as colonial administration of colonized people, which we might call Conform or Perish.

Given the importance of Publish or Perish to gaining prestigious book contracts with prestigious publishers, which in turn are required to be hired for prestigious academic positions, prestigious institutions and prestigious publications

will be stacked with interpreters, who use interpretive considerations for everything. This further drives the number of explicators to near zero.

To succeed at Publish or Perish, one has to share the doxastic resources of the Western tradition, for it is from there that we get both interpretation as a model of explanation and the beliefs that are employed in interpretation. This amounts to an *unreasonable advantage* for typical White persons. The typical White person inherits the Western tradition as part of their cultural heritage, and they are hence supplied by upbringing with the beliefs and the interpretive practices to succeed at Publish or Perish, or its wider application, Conform or Perish. And this advantage is unreasonable as interpretation is unreasonable.

This unreasonable advantage for White persons facilitated by Publish or Perish suggests that they will tend to get hired for jobs for South Asian (or other BIPOC) philosophy over BIPOC scholars. A moral philosopher doing the kind of work we are doing here will appear too out of step with the Western doxography to be competitive for positions in South Asian philosophy. And correlatively, they wouldn't get a job with a specialization in moral philosophy either, for that would be reserved for someone writing on a Western figure, like Kant or Aristotle. South Asians and others could win in this game for academic recognition, but that would involve acquiring the doxographic identity of the Westerner.

All the ordinary forms of interpretive marginalization that assume a Western-paradigm person will be in effect. This explains not only a preferential treatment in proportion to conforming to Western paradigm expectations but also an existential toll on those who do not. Western departments with affirmative action policies that rely upon Publish or Perish would be thrilled to hire BIPOC philosophers (who conform as much as possible to Western paradigm expectations—conventionally attractive, able-bodied) who produce literature in the Western hagiographical tradition, celebrating Western authors. But BIPOC folks who acquire a Western doxography would also be convinced that their ancestral traditions are religious and not philosophical, and they would hence not be disposed for a job that specialized in the philosophies of their tradition.

Given Publish/Conform or Perish, the mere tokenizing push for diversity in contributors or staffing will simply reproduce Western colonialism and White supremacy as these are the gatekeepers of advancement—so long as interpreters are allowed to adjudicate.

Finally, all of this also explains why the efforts of Westerners—including White feminists—to diversify their syllabi or their publications, and to teach BIPOC philosophy or write on it, is a *horror show*. Instead of explicating the options and allowing the Western tradition to be brought into relief, Western authors interpret BIPOC philosophy according to their Western doxography: White supremacy 2.0.

It ought to be obvious from these preceding considerations that interpretation on the basis of the Western tradition *is not* racially determined. It is rather a metaethical choice that is morally irresponsible. And moreover, these considerations do not entail that BIPOC people are individuals who do not engage in interpretation. Rather, Conform or Perish and the gatekeeping considerations it brings to fore entail that BIPOC people *have to interpret* to maintain a competitive standing and to not be weeded out of public participation in events that are policed by gatekeeping that permits interpretive adjudication. But BIPOC people can only maintain this competitive standing against the backdrop of a historical, globalized tradition of Western colonialism if they adopt the doxography of the Western tradition as their own. This is how colonization becomes localized by Indigenous peoples. And as noted, this is harder for BIPOC folks. It involves accepting a *marginalized* understanding of their own intellectual history as religious, spiritual, and not philosophical. It also involves adopting beliefs from the Western tradition that are alien to their own marginalized BIPOC upbringing. If they attempt to interpret everything on the basis of beliefs that they derive from their Indigenous traditions, they will be weeded out of rounds of Publish or Perish and gatekeeping games in general as these beliefs are outside of the sanctioned doxastic content of the colonizing tradition.

In a Westernized world where many regret colonialism, many will valorize attempts of BIPOC people to interpret on the basis of their traditions: the injustice of Western colonialism will be depicted as the injustice of restricting interpretation to the Western tradition. This results in the expectation that everyone should be given an opportunity to share their opinions on the basis of their respective traditions. The problem is not that BIPOC folks do not get to engage publicly with their own Indigenous interpretations. The problem is interpretation. It survives not because it is reasonable or rigorous. It survives because it is violent. And given the head start the Western tradition has in interpreting on the basis of its tradition, it creates a morally irresponsible, constructed reality where people who inherit the Western tradition as their own ethnic tradition (for the most part, White people) have an absurd, epistemically irrelevant advantage in iterations of gatekeeping exemplified in Publish or Perish—including and especially in academic discussions on BIPOC traditions. People who wish to be allies to BIPOC folks and against this White supremacy would have to abandon interpretation and take up the Yoga activity of explication. This would be reasonable and morally responsible. But for most people accustomed to the White privilege of being able to successfully engage in games such as Publish or Perish on the basis of their ethnic heritage, this involves a departure from their conventional moral expectations that creates the context for moral parasitism. And yes, there will be a loss of expected utility that comes along with this activism.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I contrasted two metaethical choices. Interpretation, an antilogical method, is of the essence of moral irresponsibility, as it limits our appreciation of the options. Given its foundations in LAT, the ancient Western model of thought, it gives rise to a global, colonizing tradition of anthropocentrism, communitarianism, and secular₂ White supremacy. It is sustained by the psychological fragility of the interpreter, who confuses their propositional attitudes for a sense of self and then defends this as a matter of misguided self-defense. The methodology of interpretation not only makes possible oppression by way of interpretive marginalization; it makes it impossible for interpreters to learn. When they deploy interpretation, they destroy what they set out to understand. While philosophy ought to be a discipline of explication, instead, in the West, it is remodeled as an exercise of Eurocentric autoethnography, where Westerners reflect on their beliefs in light of their tradition and further remake proposals on the basis of those beliefs, adjudicated by people who use beliefs derived from the same tradition. The oppressive structures of academic philosophy that are observed in games like Publish or Perish *are not indigenous* to philosophy but rather the expression of White supremacist colonization, via interpretation. The far right, which makes use of racial and religious identities, themselves artifacts of Western colonization, to violently interpret, is just a more flavorful expression of the West—not an aberration.

What is indigenous to philosophy is explication. Learning that we have a choice, at the metaethical level, between explication and interpretation is aided by explicating Yoga as a fourth basic position on *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. Then, the West does not have to be the frame of explanation but rather the object of investigation. We rather participate in the moral responsibility of rendering options explicit. This amounts to a position of solidarity with persons who share an interest in unconservatism and self-governance—a moral interest that transcends arbitrary natural differences.

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