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# **On Gorgias' Trilemma (a guerrilla ontology communiqué, not an essay)**

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December 4, 2020

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city?” being answered with, “I can’t find it! It is lost!” For this ontological anarchist communiqué on Gorgias’ trilemma, this consideration of architecture is enough for examining the radical implications and applications of the trilemma – the city that is the totalitarian Thing doesn’t exist, but the lost city that is anarchist nothing does exist.

## Conclusion

At the end of this consideration of Gorgias’ trilemma, I am struck by the how much the implications of the trilemma are far greater than Gorgias likely ever thought they would be. More than what might be brushed off as “metaphysical speculation”, Gorgias’ trilemma has been found to undermine the Thing-Reality of totalitarian-ideologies, which thrive on the ideas of statist metaphysicians like Plato and Hegel and their concepts regarding the Object/live.

Through this exploration of both mass-extinction and architecture through the trilemma, Gorgias’ thought has become weaponised for guerrilla-ontologist Reality-destruction. Equally, the reversed trilemma, being found to invite a mystical perspective, has wonderful, awe-inspiring, implications.

It is my hope that this communiqué can be used as metaphysical weaponry for any who seek to rebel against this Reality and who desire the existence of anarchy.

For the total liberation of all individual no-Things from human-Thing-Reality and its destruction!

and progress, for the “socio-economic benefits”, and the conservation/preservation of architectural structures, for the sake of history – it is worth noting that arguably the most defining event of 21<sup>st</sup> century politics thus far is the collapse of the New York Twin Towers (signifying the existential instability of the Totality). The first aspects of architectural production are specicide, to remove non-human people living where they intend to build; ecocide, to remove flora that might be problematic to the architectural Cause; and biocide, to constantly keep nonhuman beings out of the architectural Thing.

That anarchist theories have never designed an anarchist-mode-of-architecture follows from architecture’s totalitarian-form – anarchist architecture is nothing. The closest thing to a design for a radical-architecture that I have ever come across is Lefebvre’s conception of New Babylon, where the cities are constantly being built, deconstructed and rebuilt, with everyone having their personal cathedral – Lefebvre’s “city of the future”. However, this Situationist “promise of liberation or self-fulfilment” would seem to offer only “producing yet more mediation and alienation”, as it would yield to a life of totalitarian-architectural-labourism.

An anarchist architecture, as a critical response to and rebellion against the Totality of human-Thing-Reality – anti-urbanist post-Situationism situations, rather than Situationist unitary urbanism – are best seen (perhaps) in the ghost town, abandoned city and lost city. In these spaces, buildings are not homes, hospitals, schools, offices, shops or whatever they were once named – they are no-Thing. That Pripyat is rewilding, becoming someplace where anarchists are living, situates this abandoned city as an autonomous zone.

A fuller exploration of the idea of an anarchist anti-architecture, anti-urbanist abandonment of the city is desirable, but will be done elsewhere (if it happens at all). There is something funny about the idea of the anarchist city as the lost city: the question, “where is the anarchist

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## Resisting The Logic of Total, Totality and Totalitarianism

*“The Totality is produced thru mediation and alienation, which attempt to subsume or absorb all creative energies for the Totality.” Hakim Bey*

The Totality is everything/every-Thing, as every-Thing is a total. Every-Thing is a complete “this” or “that”, a total, and everything is the Totality – the Absolute, as Hegel called it. The Totality is totalitarian, as totalitarianism is an attempt at totalisation – absolute Thing-being.

The Totality, as an attempt at absolute Thing-being, seeks to make nothing/noThing/nothingness, which is existence, non-existent. Totalitarianism seeks to not-be-anarchy; this is obvious from any reflection of totalitarian regimes. Anarchy, as the collapse of totalitarianism/the-Totality, is nothing, and nothingness/being-no-Thing is anarchy. This is why ideological system-building attempts of Anarchism, which seek to be-some-Thing, ultimately fall apart, as they are situated right on the boundary between the possibility of Thingness and the Thing’s impossibility, which is collapsing into anarchy as nothingness/nothing/no-Thing.

Following the quote above, Hakim Bey states, “(t)he Totality isolates individuals and renders them by offering only illusory modes of self expression, modes which seem to promise liberation or self-fulfillment but in fact end up producing yet more mediation and alienation.”

The most totalising objects of the Totality (often enveloping all aspects of individual’s lives living in human-Thing-Reality and seeking to dominate the world more than any other Thing) are architectural objects. Architecture’s totalitarian qualities are best known in the discussion of Nazi, Fascist and Communist architecture, as well as anti-gentrification discourse. Architectural totalisation is often bound to notions of development

it through global-warming, covid-19 and other inhuman primalanarchy-processes that are collapsing this Reality. Existence as a collapse makes intuitive sense on a more immediate bodily level. First, this is experiential just as falling in love is experiential, as an individual collapses into their lover's embrace. Second is the collapse that occurs during grief, when an individual finds their own mortality thrust upon them through the loss of someone they knew.

## Ontological rebellion

This communiqué began as an act of theft, before turning into an act of vandalism/an-assassination. Its conclusion is a metaphysical-anarchist declaration. This declaration is as follows

- First – nothing/no-Thing/nothingness exists and is all that has ever existed.
- Second – nothing/no-Thing/nothingness is apprehensible and is all that has ever been apprehended.
- Third – nothing/no-Thing/nothingness is communicable and all that has ever been communicated.
- Fourth – nothing/no-Thing/nothingness will exist, be apprehensible and be communicated!

This is written and should be read as nothing and nothing other than a panerotic affirmation of life, which refuses to renounce the world-as-nothing in embrace of the human-Thing-Reality.

This rebellion renders Gorgias' trilemma a paradox that destroys while creating. The negative is positive, as the refutation has been affirmed. This is not a dialectic synthesising a contradiction, but an embrace of being-contradiction – everything doesn't exist and nothing exists.

## Introduction

What follows is nothing short of an act of metaphysical criminality, where the discursive property of Gorgias is taken from him. Not only is Gorgias' property taken in this open act of robbery, it is also defaced, so that while it unquestionably remains Gorgias' trilemma, it is ultimately different. The ontology police might well condemn such anarchistic acts of destruction, but discursive laws were made to be broken.

Gorgias was a sophist, and he is rarely considered outside of Plato's disagreements with his thought – undoubtedly due to the dominance of Platonism within philosophical discourse. His theory on rhetoric is not considered here, as it is ugly. and not needed for stealing his metaphysics.

Throughout this communiqué Gorgias' trilemma is affirmed, reversed, and its radical and mystical implications considered. My conclusion is that weaponising Gorgias' trilemma has the potential to be metaphysically brilliant for radical thought in general, and for rebellious individuals in particular.

Three things should be noted from the start: Gorgias' trilemma doesn't exist; even if it did exist, it would never be apprehended; and even if it could be apprehended, it would be non-communicable.

## Gorgias' Argument

The ontological trilemma that Gorgias articulates is as follows:

1. Nothing exists.
2. Even if something did exist, it would be inapprehensible.
3. Even if it were apprehensible, it would be non-communicable.

As there are no copies of the original text or English translations of *On The Nonexistent* or *On Nature*, Gorgias' work on metaphysics, I am using Sprague's description of his arguments.

On the first matter, Gorgias' argument is the following, according to Sprague

*"Now he concludes in the following way that nothing exists: If anything exists, either the existent exists or the nonexistent or both the existent exists and the nonexistent. But, as he will establish, neither does the existent exist nor the nonexistent, as he will make clear, nor the existent and the nonexistent, as he will also teach. It is not the case then that anything exists. (67) More specifically, the nonexistent does not exist; for if the nonexistent exists, it will both exist and not exist at the same time, for insofar as it is understood as nonexistent, it will not exist, but insofar as it is nonexistent it will, on the other hand, exist. It would, however, be entirely absurd for something to exist and at the same time not to exist. The nonexistent, therefore, does not exist. And to state another argument, if the nonexistent exists, the existent will not exist, for these are opposites to each other, and if existence is an attribute of the nonexistent, nonexistence will be an attribute of the existent. But it is not, in fact, true that the existent does not exist. Accordingly, neither will the nonexistent exist. (68) Moreover, the existent does not exist either. For if the existent exists, it is either eternal or generated, or at the same time eternal and generated. But it is neither eternal nor generated nor both, as we shall show. The existent therefore does not exist. For if the existent is eternal (one must begin with this point) it does not have any beginning. (69) For everything*

Thing, endangered Things or not-endangered Things. Thingness encompasses the Reality of Thingification, the production of architectural Things, agricultural Things, marketable Things, street Things, city Things, plastic Things and so on, until you reach this mass-extinction producing Reality.

Knowledge as violence is a disagreeable notion to advocates of scientific or religious enlightenment/gnosis. What is violence though? Violence means to violate. It is a penetrating act of force that aggresses. Consider the fire that is the first human tool for providing light, how it penetrates and how actively it is embraced as a weapon – fire shines a light on those who die beneath its flames (this is not to put forward a pacifist moral statement that fire is evil as a force capable of killing). Consider next the scalpel that is the tool of a biologist, for the practice of dissection, which penetrates and cuts open the bodies of those nowdead individuals under its blade – bladed weapons being a tool for violence. The pursuit of scientific enquiry has historically inspired much violence, as much as the products of scientific enquiry have enabled mass-extinction production. The final part of this new trilemma – objectification/Thingification is being spoken – pertains to the reductionism of being-spoken. Reducing the world to Things and Objects enables linguistic Reality to function. But reductionism is habitat loss, specicide and totalitarianism, as the world becomes increasingly reduced to the human-Thing-Reality of being-spoken, violence and mass extinction. Reductionism shrinks the world to bare materiality for the means of production to produce with. Reductionism is speaking about a river as a Thing to dam, rather than being more than any description can encompass – a home, place to swim, water source, geophonic orchestra, and so on.

It is noticeable that the existence of nothingness-as-nature is actively destroying the human-Thing-Reality, which attempts to escape existence, by thrusting existence upon

from the trees' bodies, as nights they carry with their bodies throughout the day, rendering the wood endarkened.

Nature as nothingness refers to nature as a process of individualising, becoming and of absence. With regards to nature being individualisation, this should be intuitively obvious, in as much as the individuality of any individual's body is their being-nature – you the individual reading this, the body you are is nature. Nature as becoming again should be intuitively obvious, as the becomings of flowers, baby birds, similar other creations and the destructive becomings of death, all of which are obviously Nature, will be immediately apparent to all who live – as they are life. Nature as absence will likely make less immediate sense, but has two important aspects to it. First: nature as absence pertains to the impacts of this culture's ecocidal war on life and mass-extinction culture; second, nature as absence pertains to the lack of Things as the-absence-of-the-humanThing-Reality.

Nature as No-Thing has three aspects to it. The first of these is as described in the last paragraph – nature as absence of Things. The second is as described by Object-Oriented-Ontologists: the Thing we call “nature”, which lies outside of the human-Thing-Reality, is, in itself, an illusion. The third is a statement of refusal, wherein it is asserted that nature is no-Thing, i.e. not an object for the humanThing-Reality to use.

This suggests to me three further ideas

1. Thingness is mass-extinction.
2. Knowledge as violence.
3. Objectification is being spoken.

Thingness as mass-extinction might seem counter intuitive – surely the loss of species is the loss of Things? Well yes, perhaps! But Thingness doesn't just regard this Thing or that

*which is generated has some beginning, but the eternal, being ungenerated, did not have a beginning. And not having a beginning it is without limit. And if it is without limit it is nowhere. For if it is somewhere, that in which it is, is something other than it, and thus if the existent is contained in something it will no longer be without limit. For the container is greater than the contained, but nothing is greater than the unlimited, so that the unlimited cannot exist anywhere. (70) Moreover, it is not contained in itself. For in that case container and contained will be the same, and the existent will become two things, place and body (place is the container, body the contained). But this is absurd. Accordingly, existence is not contained in itself. So that if the existent is eternal it is unlimited, and if it is unlimited it is nowhere, and if it is nowhere it does not exist. Accordingly, if the existent is eternal, it is not existent at all. (71) Moreover, neither can the existent be generated. For if it has come into being, it has come either from the existent or the nonexistent. But it has not come from the existent. For if it is existent, it has not come to be, but already exists. Nor from the nonexistent. For the nonexistent cannot generate anything, because what is generative of something of necessity ought to partake of positive existence. It is not true either, therefore, that the existent is generated. (72) In the same way it is not jointly at the same time eternal and generated. For these qualities are mutually exclusive of each other, and if the existent is eternal it has not been generated, and if it has been generated it is not eternal. Accordingly, if the existent is neither eternal nor generated nor both at once, the existent should not exist. (73) And to use another argument if it exists, it is either one or many. But it is neither*

one nor many, as will be set forth. Therefore, the existent does not exist. For if it is one, it is an existent or a continuum or a magnitude or a body. But whatever of these it is, it is not one, since whatever has extent will be divided, and what is a continuum will be cut. And similarly, what is conceived as a magnitude will not be indivisible. And if it is by chance a body it will be three-dimensional, for it will have length, and breadth and depth. But it is absurd to say that the existent is none of these things. Therefore, the existent is not one. (74) And moreover it is not many. For if it is not one, it is not many either, since the many is a composite of separate entities and thus, when the possibility that it is one was refuted, the possibility that it is many was refuted as well. Now it is clear from this that neither does the existent exist nor does the nonexistent exist. (75) It is easy to conclude that both the existent and the nonexistent do not exist either. For if the nonexistent exists and the existent exists, the nonexistent will be the same thing as the existent as far as existence is concerned. And for this reason neither of them exists. For it is agreed that the nonexistent does not exist, and the existent has been shown to be the same as the nonexistent and it accordingly will not exist. (76) Of course, if the existent is the same as the nonexistent, it is not possible for both to exist. For if both exist, they are not the same, and if the same, both do not exist. To which the conclusion follows that nothing exists. For if neither the existent exists nor the nonexistent nor both, and if no additional possibility is conceivable, nothing exists.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> THE OLDER SOPHISTS, ed. by Rosamund Kent Sprague (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) pp.42–46.

4. Existence is nothingness – affirmation of Being/The-World as individualisation, becoming and absence.
5. Existence is no-Thing – the destruction of the notion of the world as a Thing and all that implies.
6. Existence is nothing – affirmation of the entire world, Being, life as being dark.

These are undoubtedly monstrous positions to put forward – especially to those who advocate for scientific, religious, spiritual or any other species of enlightenment. This will also likely be transgressing many “nihilist” laws of acceptable discourse, by suggesting nihilism implies anything less than negation, suicide and the active annihilation of the world. At best, this is ontological vandalism, at worst metaphysical assassination.

Again, if you continue you are guilty by association!

## On Nature

The second part of the title Gorgias gave for his work pertaining to the trilemma in *On Nature*. As such and following from the previous section, I will consider nature and/as nothing.

Nature as nothing means that nature is dark, in the sense described earlier. What is nature is somewhat strange but familiar (uncanny), like walking into your bedroom in the dark, making your way to where you sleep, but continually bumping up against the wall, the table, knocking over lamps and waking your sleeping lover as you get back into bed. Think about when you have walked amongst trees and slipped on a stone like a clumsy human, not used to being in this strange environment due to years of urban-experience, thereby making a noise that has inspired some creature to flee from the scene – this is a certain type of darkness. Think also of the shadows that extend



call dark-numinosity, in the sense that existence is mysterious and awe-inspiring, but not enlightened in the sense suggested by claims of theo-numinosity (a religiously or spiritually numinous experience, which is claimed to provide gnosis/knowledge). In this state of darkness, similar to what it is to stand in a dark room or outside at night when there are clouds covering the stars and moon, the shape of Things lose the dimensionality that their Thingness is linguistically defined as. Some being cries out in the night, but what is it – a fox, badger or owl? Perhaps none of them! We cannot say what Thing it is, but we cannot deny that this Being is somewhere in the dark. We can affirm them from our perspective, but cannot grasp them, know them, apprehend them, for they lurk unseen in the darkness of the world. They exist, but are nothing.

The existence of nothing is the final part of the reversed trilemma and perhaps the most wonderful aspect of it. It is the other side to the paradox of nihilism, which rarely gets affirmed – nihilism not as negation, but as positive affirmation. The statement “nothing exists” is just as much an affirmation of the existence of any “nothing” as it is the negation of the existence of everything. Imagine for a moment an individual smiling out before a seemingly endless expanse of flowers, pointing at each, stating “this is nothing” with tears of joy, for the sheer beauty of the nothingness before them. A strange image yes, but this seems to me to be the final part of the reversed Gorgias trilemma – nihilism as active positivity.

This reversed trilemma inclines me towards six further ideas

1. Nothing exists – the affirmation of dark entities.
2. No-Thing exists – the destruction of all Things.
3. Nothingness exists – the affirmation of the processes of individualisation, absence and becoming.

The case for the second part of the trilemma:

*“Next it must be shown that even if anything exists, it is unknowable and incomprehensible to man. For, says Gordias, if things considered in the mind are not existent, the existent is not considered. And that is logical. For if “white” were a possible attribute of what is considered, “being considered” would also have been a possible attribute of what is white; similarly, if “not to be existent” were a possible attribute of what is being considered, necessarily “not to be considered” will be a possible attribute of what is existent. (78) As a result, the statement “if things considered are not existent, the existent is not considered” is sound and logically follows. But things considered (for this must be our starting point) are not existent, as we shall show. The existent is not therefore considered. And moreover, it is clear that things considered are not existent. (79) For if things considered are existent, all things considered exist, and in whatever way anyone considers them. Which is absurd. For if one considers a man flying or chariots racing in the sea, a man does not straightway fly nor a chariot race in the sea. So that things considered are not existent. (80) In addition, if things considered in the mind are existent, nonexistent things will not be considered. For opposites are attributes of opposites, and the nonexistent is opposed to the existent. For this reason it is quite evident that if “being considered in the mind” is an attribute of the existent, “not being considered in the mind” will be an attribute of the nonexistent. But this is absurd. For Scylla and Chimaera and many other nonexistent things are considered in the mind. Therefore, the existent is not considered in the mind. (81) Just as ob-*

*jects of sight are said to be visible for the reason that they are seen, and objects of hearing are said to be audible for the reason that they are heard, and we do not reject visible things on the grounds that they are not heard, nor dismiss audible things because they are not seen (since each object ought to be judged by its own sense, but not by another), so, too, things considered in the mind will exist even if they should not be seen by the sight nor heard by the hearing, because they are perceived by their own criterion. (82) If, therefore, someone considered in the mind that chariots race in the sea, even if he does not see them, he should believe that there are chariots racing in the sea. But this is absurd. Therefore, the existent is not an object of consideration and is not apprehended.”<sup>2</sup>*

The case for the final part of the trilemma:

*“But even if it should be apprehended, it would be incapable of being conveyed to another. For if existent things are visible and audible and generally perceptible, which means that they are external substances, and of these the things which are visible are perceived by the sight, those that are audible by the hearing, and not contrariwise, how can these things be revealed to another person? (84) For that by which we reveal is LOGOS, but LOGOS is not substances and existing things. Therefore we do not reveal existing things to our neighbors, but LOGOS, which is something other than substances. Thus, just as the visible would not become audible, and vice versa, similarly, when external reality is involved, it would not become our LOGOS, (85) and not being*

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<sup>2</sup> THE OLDER SOPHISTS, ed. by Rosamund Kent Sprague (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) pp.42–46.

## The Trilemma Reversed

When I look at the trilemma, with each piece immediately following the other, I notice that it seems to make more sense, intuitively, in reverse order. Reversed, I find the trilemma far more interesting.

1. Everything is non-communicable(/ineffable).
2. Existence is inapprehensible(/unknowable).
3. Nothing exists.

Starting with everything being non-communicable, the entire world is a mystical encounter. This affirms life as an experience that the experiencer finds greater than their perception, affirming the small, absurd and limited animal that they are. An individual stands at the edge of a cliff, feeling the wind on their face, looking out before the vastness of the sea’s waters, unable to see what moves beneath the waters, with birds entering their gaze from out of nowhere, only to disappear moments later and out of their mouth comes a visceral scream of cosmic horror for the sheer absurdity of their perception, followed moments later by a tear of joy and laughter, for how wondrous the world is before them. How on Earth does an individual attempt to communicate this vastness that extends before them, this awesome boundless Being that paradoxically both includes and excludes them? It is simply something language cannot do – words will never fully encapsulate the sheer scale of Being.

What this invites perspective-wise is endarkment, as in the darkness of not knowing who is moving beneath the waters or the darkness of not being able to trace where the birds came from or where they have gone. Endarkenment can be considered the collapse of enlightenment-as-knowledge/gnosis. As such, the statement “existence is inapprehensible” is affirmed by this mystical encounter of ineffability, to invite what I will

*“There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.”*

And

*“It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists.”<sup>12</sup>*

Wittgenstein affirms that what cannot be put into words is mystical and that existence is mystical. So existence cannot be put into words. This affirms Gorgias’ third aspect of the trilemma, the position that any knowable thing would be non-communicable, ineffable, or, if you prefer, mystical.

### ***On the trilemma***

I have affirmed Gorgias’ trilemma through theft. Not only the theft of Gorgias’ three claims, but also the theft of those ideas that I have stolen from those philosophers and philosophies I have used psychic-nomadism to move through. Such acts of wanton ontological anarchy might be distasteful to someone who cares for the rules, but that is not something I care about.

I have affirmed the trilemma. I have not proved it. I have not sought to state “this is true”. Rather, I have used perspectives to affirm a perspective.

Following from this, I will present here an affirmation of what I see as the implications of this interpretation of the trilemma.

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<sup>12</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1922). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul. [11] *Bey, Immediatism*

*LOGOS, it would not have been revealed to another. It is clear, he says that LOGOS arises from external things impinging upon us, that is, from perceptible things. From encounter with a flavor, LOGOS is expressed by us about that quality, and from encounter with a color, an expression of color. But if this is the case, LOGOS is not evocative of the external, but the external becomes the revealer of LOGOS. (86) And surely it is not possible to say that LOGOS has substance in the way visible and audible things have, so that substantial and existent things can be revealed from its substance and existence. For, he says, even if LOGOS has substance, still it differs from all the other substances, and visible bodies are to the greatest degree different from words. What is visible is comprehended by one organ, LOGOS by another. LOGOS does not, therefore, manifest the multiplicity of substances, just as they do not manifest the nature of each other.”<sup>3</sup>*

For the purposes of this exploration, this is how Gorgias’ justification of the trilemma will be seen. His justification of his position strikes me as an attempt at refutation rather than affirmation, which I prefer.

But what if we removed Gorgias from Gorgias’ trilemma? Not Gorgias the name, as this trilemma shall continue to be referred to here as “Gorgias’ trilemma”, but Gorgias the philosopher and his argument. What if we perform an act of ontological theft and steal the trilemma, retaining the three points, while viewing them differently?

In this act of theft, I will seek to affirm the trilemma through a process of affirming the parts that comprise it. I will not at-

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<sup>3</sup> THE OLDER SOPHISTS, ed. by Rosamund Kent Sprague (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) pp.42–46.

tempt to refute Gorgias' refutation or affirm it, but shall leave it as a different journey to the space that is Gorgias' trilemma.

Be warned: continuing to read makes you an accomplice, a co-conspirator, guilty by association, and therefore possibly subject to any and all potential punishments for this crime!

## On The Trilemma

The three individual aspects of the trilemma are each very different, as far as the type of statement they make. Like how "Santa is good" and "Santa is a man" have similar focuses, but are different types of statement – one a moral statement and the other a statement regarding gender; each part of the trilemma is similarly focused, but each of them are so different that those differences are worth affirming, even if they ultimately support the general "problem" (a moral term in itself) of the trilemma.

The first part, "nothing exists", is an ontological statement, in that it pertains to Realities and what is Real. The second part, "if something did exist, it would be inapprehensible", is an epistemological statement, in that it is a claim with regards to what is knowable. Finally, the third part, "even if it were apprehensible, it would be non-communicable", is a linguistic claim.

To commit to this act of philosophical vandalism, cases for each of these aspects of the trilemma will be stated with absolutely no regard for Gorgias' original case.

### Ontology

To consider the ontology of Nothing, the different arguments of Sartre, Stirner, Ockham, Heraclitus, and Deleuze shall be considered and reflected upon. Employing the psychic-nomadic practice that ontological-anarchist rebellion draws from, these ideas will be moved through, with no settlement in any one particular space being made. Rather, drifting through,

that when I am sat at the bottom of the tree. Interpreting Gorgias' second aspect comes into play in this way: while I might have a perspectival sense that the woods are there, I can never fully grasp/know it, since my perspective is constantly moving as I move through the woods.

### Linguistics

Linguistics, as I use the term here, is intended to refer to the study of language, that is, what words can do and how language is used. The final aspect of Gorgias' trilemma is a linguistic statement, "even if it could be apprehended, it would be non-communicable", is a statement regarding what can be said. I am using the Cratylist position and Wittgenstein's thought in his *Tractatus* to affirm this position.

A radical proponent of Heraclitus' philosophy of change and flux, Cratylus' philosophy of language embraces this position. Cratylism argues that, given this ontological condition, words and communications are fundamentally baseless, as they continually change position<sup>11</sup>. As such, we cannot communicate the world as we encounter it, because by the time we generate descriptive language, it has already changed. The words I would seek to use have already moved and are no longer those words. This affirms Gorgias' third aspect, affirming the non-communicability of the world-as-change.

In his *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein makes some statements on mystical phenomenon that affirm the third aspect of the trilemma. There are two basic aspects to mystical phenomenon – first that they are paradoxical, and second, that they are ineffable, meaning that they cannot be spoken or communicated properly in language. Wittgenstein's statements are

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<sup>11</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cratylism>

The problem of dogma is that an argument rests upon some form of foundationalist principle that is based in belief. This belief serves as the platform that the argument is built upon, but has no justification itself. Once you destroy this dogmatic foundational presupposition, the entire argument collapses. Take this example: “Humankind has free will because God gave humankind free will, but animals do not, because God did not give it to them”; the dogmatic foundational belief is that free will is limited to humans because God only gave it to humans. When you introduce a little evolutionary biology to destroy the separation of human-animal and find examples of non-human acts of free agency, the argument is destroyed, but this doesn’t destroy the founding principle. The way to destroy this dogmatic argument is to destroy the God-belief via agnostic or atheistic arguments.

Münchhausen’s trilemma is a huge epistemological issue; effectively, all knowledge claims come under one of these forms of argument. They all have some kind of foundational principle, are circular in some form or another, or are infinitely regressive. The second aspect of Gorgias’ trilemma – that even if there is something, it would be inapprehensible – appears to follow from this quite fluidly, just as the notion that knowledge cannot be justified seems to move organically to “we cannot know/apprehend”.

In one of his notebooks Nietzsche wrote that “there are no facts, only interpretations”<sup>10</sup>. Nietzsche’s epistemological perspective, which arguably destroys Knowledge, is that of perspectivism. Perspectivism is the position that any individual’s perception and understanding of the world is how they interpret it from their perspective. Perspectives are basically points-of-view, or how-you-see. How any individual sees the world is first and foremost dependent upon where they are – from the top of a tree my perspective of a wood is extremely different to

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche, Notebooks (Summer 1886 – Fall 1887)

each of these psychospaces will be visited for only so long as it serves the purposes of this wandering – that is, to affirm “nothing exists”.

But first, what is ontology? Ontology pertains to Realities and what is Real. The statement “look at that cat” is an ontological one, as it is a claim about the type of Thing the speaker is saying “that” is. Equally the response “that is not a cat; that is a sandwich” is an ontological statement. The statement “everything exists” is an ontological statement, as is the statement “nothing exists”.

Sartre’s thoughts on Nothing, as nothingness, are for the most part an affirmation of the presence of absence. This is beautifully articulated in his comment that “(n)othingness lies coiled in the heart of being – like a worm”<sup>4</sup>. Sartre affirms that, rather than a porridge-like world that is thick with Thingness, we live in a world free from cosmic-stodge, where we find ourselves immediately encountering nothingness. This isn’t all that the nothingness worm affirms though. This is equally a comment on the destruction and death that is at the heart of the creativity of life/being.

Stirner also affirms the presence of Nothing in his statement “(a)ll things are Nothing to me”<sup>5</sup>. This is part of Stirner’s eliminative-physicalist rejection of the abstract conceptualisation of the Thing. By rejecting the Thing, i.e. speciesbeing and humanism, in favour of the Unique as a Nothing that creates its being, or, if you prefer, a nothingness coiled in the heart of being. Stirner affirms Nothing.

Deleuze affirms something eerily similar to Stirner’s creative-nothingness in his concept of dark precursor<sup>6</sup>. A dark

<sup>4</sup> (1966). Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology. New York: Washington Square Press.

<sup>5</sup> Stirner, Max, and David Leopold. 1995. The ego and its own. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, and Paul Patton. Difference and Repetition. London: Continuum, 2001. Print.

precursor can be seen as apparent nothingness from which entities emerge, seemingly without reason. An astrophysicist might state that whatever came before the Big Bang is the “biggest” dark precursor, as they encounter it as a nothingness from which “the universe” (the biggest Thing) emerged. Deleuze affirms the dark precursor in his work on difference, which also affirms the uniqueness of all entities.

Ockham’s nominalism, which affirms the Singular as a rejection of philosophical realism (the argument that “categories of Things exist”), arrives at a similar position to both Stirner’s and Deleuze’s affirmations of uniqueness and difference. His position arrives at a radical individuality<sup>7</sup>. If we reject the univers(re)ality of Things, then all entities are singular. Nominalism argues that Things only share names, while being in no way really the same. Singularities are, in a sense, nameless, since names bundle Things into groups/collectives for the purposes of objectification.

In his work *Lightning Storm Mind* (a work dedicated to interpreting Heraclitus), Max Cafard calls Heraclitus an “Unfounding Father of Object Disoriented Ontology”, while stating that that “(o)bjects are always objectionable”<sup>8</sup>. Heraclitus disorients the status of objects/Things in the fragment – “things whole and not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant”<sup>9</sup>. This positions Things as whole and notwhole, as being-thing and not-being-thing, in a position of paradox and contradiction. If harmony and discordancy can be considered the-world, perhaps the not-whole whole, that is drawn together and asunder, can be considered the most objectionable object (dis)orientation of existent nothing?

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Authors/Ockham/Summa\\_Logicae/Book\\_I/Chapter\\_21](http://www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Authors/Ockham/Summa_Logicae/Book_I/Chapter_21)

<sup>8</sup> Cafard, *Lightning Storm Mind*

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.heraclitusfragments.com/B10/translation.html>

## *Epistemology*

Whereas ontology considers what is Real, epistemology considers what is known and what is knowable. The second aspect of Gorgias’ trilemma – even if something did exist, it would be inapprehensible – is epistemological as it pertains to what the mind can grasp/know. Being epistemological, this aspect of the trilemma states a position of radical skepticism – that knowledge is not actually possible. Here I am using Münchhausen’s trilemma, and Nietzsche’s skepticism, to affirm Gorgias’ claim.

Münchhausen’s trilemma consists of three aspects:

1. The problem of infinite regression.
2. The problem of circular arguments.
3. The problem of dogma.

The problem of infinite regression could also be called the problem of “why”. Why is this? Because any answer can be responded to with the question why. Why is this? Because every answer will be incomplete and not be able to account for all possible justifications for a knowledge claim. Why is this? Because there are limits to understanding and to language, which could go on potentially ad infinitum. Why is this? You are just going to have to ask someone else, because this is as far as I will take this line of questioning. And you see the problem of infinite regression, or “why”, here.

The problem of circular arguments is that where a conclusion is dependent upon the premise: a is true because b is true, and b is true because a is true. “It is God’s will that humans do not kill because it is one of the 10 commandments, and it is a commandment that humans do not kill because it is God’s will.” The reason circles, and the speaker has effectively gone nowhere to justify the knowledge claim.