



ON DIGESTING

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The following article, if it can be called an article, pays parodic tribute to Bertrand Russell's seminal 1905 paper, "On Denoting." It is a work of satire, meant to express the perplexity of a student who, upon returning to academic philosophy after a long hiatus, is confronted by Russell's notoriously mystifying work on the very first day of class. Readers familiar with the original may notice several phrases reproduced verbatim. No disrespect is intended towards Russell, nor are the tone and content of this piece meant to disparage the serious work of other authors featured in this publication.

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By "digesting" I mean a process such as any one of the following: the eating of a food, some food, any food, all food, the present food in your mouth being chewed, the present food in your mouth being swallowed, the food in your stomach being broken down, the broken-down food travelling through your small and large intestines, the food waste exiting your body. And I take the same to be true of liquids that one is apt to refer to not as food but rather as beverages such that the swishing or gargling of some beverage is also what is meant by digestion, so long as the beverage is then swallowed. Thus, the chewing or swishing or gargling of a food or beverage is only digestion in virtue of its being the precursor to swallowing, which then (save for instances of regurgitation) leads to the complete digestion of the food or beverage. Of digestion we may distinguish three cases: (1) Digestion that is regular, e.g. the digestion of anyone not troubling themselves with engaging in philosophy. (2) Digestion that is constipated, e.g. the digestion of anyone belonging to the group of people engaging in Continental

Philosophy. (3) Digestion that is incontinent, e.g. the digestion of anyone belonging to the group of people engaging in Analytic philosophy. The recognition of such categories of digestion is an issue of immense difficulty; indeed, it is nearly impossible to put forth a theory of digestion that does not immediately expose itself to all manner of rebuttal. However, all the usual protests with which I am familiar are overcome by the theory I am about to propose.

Of Regular Digestion and the people who enjoy it, we need not overly concern ourselves, for that is the digestion of the people *doing* things, making the world work, and *building* the actual armchairs in which the rest of us waste away. Thus, we are left with two remaining types of digestion: Constipated and Incontinent.

Let us begin with the latter. Of the incontinent, we may say that they are all Analytic (or simply “Anal” for short), but never anal-*retentive*, for to be anal-retentive is to be constipated, and to be constipated is to be continent *to a fault*. But we know that this cannot be so in the case of Anal Philosophers since they are not continental, which is taken here to mean *of or relating to continence*. By the Law of Non-Contradiction, Anal Philosophers cannot be both continent to a fault and not continent at the same time. And since *some* case of digestion must be attributed to every human being—even those studying Anal Philosophy—and since we have already ruled out Regular Digestion (which is to say continent digestion) and constipated digestion (which is to say *ubercontinent* digestion, or continence to a fault), we must conclude that Anal Philosophers fall into the third category, namely Incontinence.

Having firmly, painlessly, and smoothly established the incontinence of Anal Philosophers, we are ready to move onto the third case of digestion, namely that of Continental Philosophers (or simply “Conts” for short). As has been shown, regular digestion has been reserved (yes, by God) for those humans actually *participating in the world*, that is to say not restricting their existence to an armchair only to then doubt the existence of that armchair and themselves. Further, we have already established that the Anals are those suffering from *incontinence*. There remains then only one case of

digestion: constipated digestion, which is to say continence to a fault. This is the digestion of the Conts, and this is owing to the fact that Conts are continent, by definition, but not regular (see *God*). And since Conts cannot be both continent and *incontinent* at the same time, they can only be the third form of continence, namely *ubercontinent*, which is to say constipated.

Now I can already smell your fiery, spiced objections from the next stall over: “Wait, aren’t Anals supposed to be dry, not Conts?” But this is met by the distinction between the dryness of one’s philosophy and the dryness of one’s excrement, for, as not *all* philosophy *is* excrement, we must distinguish between these two kinds of dryness. But wait, I sense a further objection, this one languid and wafting: “Aren’t Conts more verbose, which is to say they use up more paper? And isn’t the use of more paper associated with *incontinent* digestion, which is to say digestion that is not dry but rather more wet and therefore *in need of* drying?” But this objection is met by a further distinction, namely between paper used to *write* excessive excrement and paper used to *wipe* excessive excrement. The former is here being attributed to the Conts while the latter is being attributed to the Anals. Thus it can be said succinctly that by both “dryness” and “paper using” we may be referring to one of two distinct qualities, the one attributable to philosophy—which is not *always* excrement—and the other attributable to digestion, and defecation in particular, which is to say the necessary and often solemn parting of ways *with* excrement.

The consequences of this theory are massive and long-lingering. But of these I will say nothing for the moment. Do think twice, dear reader, before you decide to flush this theory of Digestion down the toilet. For after attempting to squeeze out one of your own—perhaps one less messy and freckled with stubborn complications—you may at last come to realize, after innumerable huffs and puffs, that the paper upon which this theory has been written is indeed suited for something more than wiping.