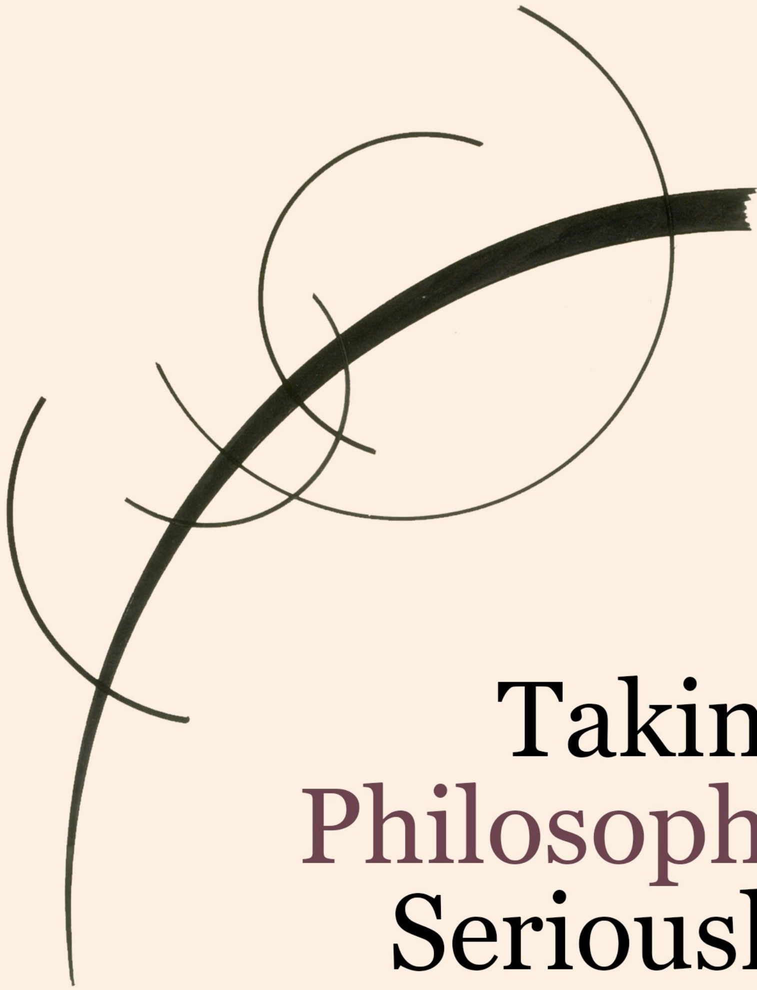

Taking Philosophy Seriously

Lydia Amir

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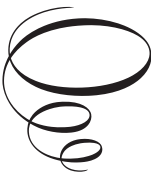
By

Lydia Amir

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



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By Lydia Amir

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To my beloved Cedric who nobly suffered for my career.

To my friends, who fed him, and nourished me with their love and support wherever I was.

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The other as "Lydia Amir," in *The Philosophy Clinic: Practical Wisdom at Work*, edited by Stephen Costello, Chapter 8: 105-18. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy, along with science, was founded in the 6th century BC by the mathematician and astronomer Thales of Miletus.[1] Renowned for his wisdom during his lifetime, Thales was primarily remembered in Western civilization as an absent-minded fellow. While examining the sky he fell into a well; and, at least according to Plato's version of the story, this incident provoked the laughter of his servant.[2] Since this memorable beginning of science and philosophy alike, the list of philosophers ridiculed for confining themselves to theory at the expense of practice has been long.[3]

---

[1] Following Aristotle's account in *Metaphysics* (bk. 1, 983b6.3).

[2] (*Theaetetus*, 174 b-e). The anecdote stubbornly remained from Aesop to Martin Heidegger, albeit with some variations. Diogenes Laertius, Tatian (recorded by Stobaeus), Cicero, Ovid, Philo, Eusebius, St. Augustine, Tertullian, Pierre Damien, Michel de Montaigne, Francis Bacon, Pierre Bayle, Jean de La Fontaine, Voltaire, Immanuel Kant (who told it on Tycho Brahe), Ludwig Feuerbach, Eduard Gans, and Heidegger, all referred to it. For a longer list, see Blumenberg (2000).

[3] Plato himself generalizes the incident: "The same jest applies to all who pass their lives in philosophy," he adds (*Theaetetus*, 174 b). The tradition of the ridiculous philosopher views philosophy first as laughable in the eyes of society, and later, as laughable in the eyes of theologians and philosophers who prioritize practice over theory. The habit of ridiculing academic philosophers begins with Heraclitus, who laughs at his predecessors, followed by the Cynic Diogenes who scorns Plato. The Hellenistic philosophers Epicurus and Timon the Skeptic ridicule other philosophers, and Lucian mocks them all for their abstractions. In the Middle Ages, theologians follow in the footsteps of those critical philosophers: they ridicule philosophy's emphasis on reason in order to prioritize faith in God and the salvation it grants. In the controversy over the nature of philosophy, Renaissance philosophers such as Desiderius Erasmus and Montaigne laugh at medieval philosophers and theologians who are entangled in abstractions instead of prioritizing life as the true philosophic and theological concern. In modern times, the third Earl of Shaftesbury ridicules theorical thought and academic philosophy. He is followed by Friedrich Nietzsche and George Santayana and, more recently, by Gilles Deleuze. In the spirit of Erasmus and Ludwig Feuerbach, Søren Kierkegaard ridicules Georg W. F. Hegel's abstractions and Hegelian theologians who are forgetful of the individual's genuine life of faith (see Amir 2013; Blumenberg 2000).

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The charge of restricting oneself to theory would not be appropriate unless philosophy ought to be relevant to life. Indeed, its dissociation from everyday concerns has been widely considered a deviation from its original purpose.[4] While Plato put the blame for the uselessness of philosophers on society's ignorance of their potential (*Republic* 489b), sociologist Georg Simmel accused philosophers of refusing "to do their job properly," by which he means, "something for which there is still no better description than the somewhat old-fashioned expression, wisdom about life" (Simmel [1921] 1971, 235).

"Taking philosophy seriously," the title of this book, points to doing philosophy's job properly. *Contra* Simmel, however, what this requires is not at all clear. For philosophy has been variously defined over the millennia of its existence, and its very definition is deemed a philosophical problem.[5] Even by focusing on contemporary views of philosophy in order to narrow down the possibilities, we cannot easily answer the question of what "philosophy" includes. One of the reasons for this confusion is that philosophy is, nowadays, a divided discipline.[6] Even more divided is the recent movement of Philosophical Practice, whose theory and practice seek to make philosophy practical again.[7] Thus, not only is the practice of

[4] To take an example, in *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains*, Paul Oskar Kristeller comments on the importance of humanist treatises of the Renaissance. He writes, "They derive added importance from the fact that *some of the genuine and more concrete problems of moral philosophy were apparently neglected by professional philosophers of the time*, and thus the humanists prepared the ground for a more systematic treatment of the same problems by later philosophers. *This seems to be the function of poets, writers, and amateur thinkers at any time when the professional philosophers are absorbed in technicalities and refuse to discuss certain basic problems*" (Kristeller 1961, 18; italics added).

[5] See John Passmore's essay, "Philosophy, Historiography," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967). The controversies over philosophy's nature have recently attracted some attention, e.g. Cohen and Dascal (1991), O' Hear (2009), Ragland and Heidt (2001), Plant (2017). Plant's references point to valuable further bibliography (2017).

[6] Between the Analytic (even in its post-Analytic phase) and Continental traditions. On this topic, see Bernard Williams' "What Philosophy Might Become?" the last essay in *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline* (2009).

[7] In Amir (2018), I differentiate between the following practical activities or theories about practice. First, public philosophy or philosophers commenting publically on social and political issues. Second, lawyers for philosophy or philosophers who articulate ideas for silenced part of the population and fight for them. Academic philosophers who specialize in ethical, social, legal, and political issues without the ambition nor the interest of seeing them implemented. Finally,

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philosophy divided by theoretical concerns about philosophy's nature; it is furthermore divided by questions about the purpose and the means of practical philosophy as well as the relations it should maintain with the academe.

Taking Philosophy Seriously addresses these issues with the aim of outlining a framework in which all factions of philosophical practice can participate without dismissing the significant differences between them. It addresses academic philosophy as well, as it conceives the practice of philosophy as if on a continuum, which begins with the successful appropriation of philosophical theories that effective teaching requires and ends in sharing them with various audiences according to their needs and capacities. It distinguishes accordingly between perfectionism as radical philosophy for the few and meliorism as democratized philosophy for the many, and suggests that the latter should attract our attention both within the academe and outside of it.

This book presents meliorism as philosophy's contemporary challenge. Counterintuitively, meliorism is especially significant in liberal states, where adult education is unattended in many areas that seem necessary for taking effective advantage of one's opportunities. The tools for activating these liberties are not luxuries to be used in an ethical project of self-perfection. Rather, they are necessary for the survival of democracy. This is so because they involve moral and intellectual virtues without which individual autonomy is meaningless, and liberty without the capacity to realize it is an empty notion.

To be fruitful, philosophic education requires individual attention. Philosophical practice can play a vital role within contemporary societies, as the service that philosophical practice offers is both necessary and rare. Since no other discipline can fulfill the needs it addresses, philosophers are subject to a responsibility to their communities on which I have elaborated in *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (Amir 2017a).

The current volume proposes a melioristic program that enhances democratized philosophy, and thus offers tangible solutions to many problems the new field of philosophical practice encounters. It introduces a detailed educational vision needed both in the academe and outside it, whose feasibility I have witnessed in many years of practice.[8] It challenges

---

philosophers involved in practical practice whose aim is to bring philosophy to the many, not by merely writing books about philosophic subjects that may be palatable to most, but engaging philosophically with anyone, to enlighten his philosophical interests, needs, and problems.

[8] For nearly 40 years, I have taught philosophy in Universities and Colleges in various continents (Asia, Europe, South and North America), lectured to and

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the divide between theory and practice by revealing its artificiality in philosophy. It aims to engage practical and academic philosophers alike in a meta-philosophical discussion that is required to answer the crisis philosophy faces, both internally and externally.[9]

The first chapter, "Taking Philosophy Seriously," outlines the main themes that the remaining of the book develops. This chapter further identifies philosophic goals and means that cut through the alleged divide

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conducted workshops with various audiences worldwide. Along my academic career, I have worked since 1992 as a philosophical practitioner with organizations, groups, families, couples and individuals.

[9] Although philosophy is considered part of the humanities, its fate should be dissociated from the contemporary crisis the former undergo. The reason does not lie in philosophy's alleged closeness to science, in contradistinction to the rest of the disciplines that are currently listed as humanities. Rather, I believe that philosophy's usefulness is more easily noticeable, its lessons more immediately applicable to contemporary concerns, and its objective of much more significance than the rest of the disciplines deemed humanistic, although they all contribute to its goal. This is not to diminish the respect I have for foreign languages, literature, history, drama and musicology (in short, the rhetorical tradition, as well as the Arts). Thus, to appreciate my argument, it may help to realize how encompassing the term "humanities" is. The Stanford Humanities Center refers to the humanities thus: "The humanities can be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience. Since humans have been able, we have used philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record our world. These modes of expression have become some of the subjects that traditionally fall under the humanities umbrella. Knowledge of these records of human experience gives us the opportunity to feel a sense of connection to those who have come before us, as well as to our contemporaries" (http://shc.stanford.edu/what-are-the-humanities). In the National Endowment for the Humanities homepage, we can find the following formulation. It says: "According to this definition, which was used by the U.S. Congress when the National Endowment for the Humanities was established in 1964, the humanities include, but are not limited to, history; literature; philosophy and ethics; foreign languages and cultures; linguistics; jurisprudence or philosophy of law; archaeology; comparative religion; the history, theory, and criticism of the arts; and those aspects of the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, government, and economics) that use historical and interpretive rather than quantitative methods" (https://www.neh.gov/about). Bertrand Russell argued that the study of history and anthropology should supplement philosophy's abstract knowledge (1956). More recently, Martha C. Nussbaum's insistence on the usefulness of literature is understandable, given the interest she has in developing the emotions. However, she requires that the study of literature involve moral philosophy, which points to the centrality of philosophy to any liberal education (2010). She defends this centrality in (1997).

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between theory and practice and among various factions of philosophical practice. To that purpose, I first emphasize the significance of abstract thought within the practice of philosophy: the disengagement it occasions is a valuable tool, provided it is provisional. Second, I highlight the importance of epistemology and identifies an agent-based epistemology of intellectual virtues as suitable to the practice of philosophy. Third, because of the close association of moral and intellectual virtues, I advance the view that philosophical practice has a significant moral role to fulfill within democratic and liberal societies. Among various ideas this book advances, let me mention here two: In sharing the tools needed for self-integration, philosophical practice enhances integrity. And, in making autonomy, an epistemological and moral virtue, accessible to as many persons as possible, the practice of philosophy contributes to reducing the gap liberal societies leave unattended between their members.

Following the introductory first chapter, the book is further divided into six parts. They address the main issues philosophy taken seriously and the new field of philosophical practice may encounter. I begin by tackling the understudied philosophic mentors-apprentices relationship: I point to the main problems it often creates and evaluate the means philosophers have used to reduce or avoid them (Part I). I follow with a detailed analysis of the challenges brought by the emulation of past philosophers, who have considered the practice of philosophy a necessary feature of the discipline (Part II). I further examine some unduly neglected topics in philosophy and its practice (Part III). I contribute to the latter by reconsidering the means available to philosophical practice (Part IV), by rethinking the tools it uses (Part V), and by indicating the problematic assumptions of this field as well as the unique benefits it brings to the very discipline of philosophy (Part VI). Let me briefly elaborate on each part.

Part I, "Philosophers as Mentors and Apprentices," addresses the philosopher's education. It analyses the relationships between philosophers-teachers (or mentors) and proto-philosophers (or apprentices), their mutual yet no necessarily compatible needs and the problems these relationships may create. Rarely addressed, this subject is of relevance both to academic philosophy and to the renewed emphasis on philosophy's practice. Through an historical analysis that yields insights into contemporary concerns, I highlight both the need for a teacher (Chapter 2) and the necessity of self-education (Chapter 3). As the tension between these two requirements is obvious, I introduce various methods philosophers have used to prevent or attenuate it.

Part II ("Practical Philosophers—Some Antecedents") considers landmarks in philosophy's past that can be especially useful or dangerous

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for philosophers to emulate today. It addresses the Hellenistic philosophies—Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Pyrrhonism, as well as Cynicism (Chapter 4)—the modern Socratic philosopher of the British Enlightenment, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (Chapter 5), and the Danish 19th-century philosopher, precursor of existentialism and critic of Georg W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard. Let me explain these choices.

Since the Sophists and Socrates, philosophy has been at least partly considered a practical discipline whose aim is moral and political. This view of philosophy is exemplified not only in Plato's dialogues but also in his Academy and in the often-perilous travels he undertook to Syracuse with the hope of implementing his views. While the aim of Aristotle's Lyceum was no less moral and political than his teacher's, the theoretical part of Plato and Aristotle's metaphysical philosophies, as well as the Aristotelian view that the pursuit of theoretical knowledge has value in itself, came immediately under attack. The Cynics ridiculed these views, and the Hellenistic schools of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Pyrrhonism replaced them with practical philosophies, often modified in Roman times to be even more palatable.

The Hellenistic schools' impressive appeal to wide audiences position them at first sight as ideal antecedents to the renewed endeavor of making philosophy practical—the movement known as philosophical practice. In Chapter 4, I engage in a thorough analysis of these philosophies, including Cynicism, in order to probe the plausibility of this claim as well as the difficulties it may create. Instead of reviving distant and somewhat problematic Alexandrian roots, I propose the Enlightenment as the genuine origin of contemporary philosophical practice.[10]

Chapter 5 follows on this proposal by identifying the third Earl of Shaftesbury as largely responsible for the revival of interest in philosophy's benefits. His role within the British Enlightenment indicates that, by making virtue the content of happiness and good breeding the goal of philosophy, this Modern Socratic made philosophy necessary for the new class of citizens his politics purported to create. Implementing his views today would single out philosophical practice from psychology and self-help books alike, yet at a price, which philosophical practitioners would not easily pay.

Thus, I move on in Chapter 6 to the 19th century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, whose existential interests constitute a *prima facie*

[10] The Renaissance occasioned a revival of Hellenistic and Classic philosophies, yet I skip here the significant role of Michel de Montaigne as a practitioner of philosophy. For an elaboration of this view of Montaigne, see Chapter 1 of Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana* (work under contract for State University of New York Press).

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antecedent for philosophical practice. While voicing concerns about Kierkegaard's religious aims, this chapter outlines the many ways in which his philosophy is of service to philosophical practice, and proposes his dialectical movement between the concrete and the general and back as a model for practicing philosophy.

Part III ("Unduly Neglected Topics") addresses four uncommon practical topics that are significant yet usually neglected both in philosophy and in its practice.

Chapter 7 addresses the reasons for the contemporary neglect of Benedict Spinoza's ethics, whose key epistemological and moral virtue of understanding I introduce in the opening chapter of the book as particularly interesting for the practice of philosophy. I find the possible reasons for eschewing Spinoza unconvincing, and list good reasons for embracing his ethics, as it answers contemporary concerns and sensibilities better than many other theories.

Chapter 8 tackles the human condition and questions the capacity of humor, even when considered a survival tool, to ameliorate the human predicament. The negative note on which this chapter ends has been the spur of further research. The thesis of *Homo risibilis*, first introduced in Amir (2014) and elaborated on below (Chapter 15), reveals that some form of the comical is uniquely adaptable to the human condition. The significance of humor for all Hellenistic schools as well as for Shaftesbury and Kierkegaard that part II highlighted points to its role in exoteric philosophy. I further elaborate on the interiorization of humor, which enables the enculturated philosopher to approach himself as an exoteric audience with the aim of enhancing self-knowledge and self-change (Chapters 9, 12 and 15).

Chapter 9 brings us to the boundaries of Western philosophy by addressing the neglected topic of educating one's will, its role in self-integrity, and its contribution to philosophy as alternative spirituality. A sufficient understanding of what it takes to educate the will as well as a practice of willing well may mark the difference between philosophy's power and impotence. As willing well is living well, the education of the will is particularly relevant to philosophical practitioners, who may have to face the charge that philosophy is impotent in bringing about personal change. In this chapter, I draw on the program advanced by the famous philosopher of religion, Robert C. Neville (1978) for the education of one's will to attain self-integrity through self-image, action, consciousness, and commitment. Following my critical engagement with his program, I further propose a philosophic tool that makes self-integrity more palatable to persons who are not fully committed to ideals, or well versed in Eastern

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practices, or interested in the use of psychoanalysis.

Chapter 10 puts sexuality on the agenda of practical philosophers.[11] Since sexuality is intrinsically amoral, the responsibility of devising our own sexual ethics is up to us. As an ethical field, party to the good life, sexuality is the business of philosophers and especially of practical philosophers. A powerful and puzzling force to contend with in everyday life, sexuality's opacity, senselessness, and inherent incapacity of successfully completing the confused project it aims at, no less than its transgressive nature, have been amply discussed in the philosophic and psychoanalytic literature. However, its successful incorporation within a good life is no small feat, an ambitious goal this chapter aims at. This is all the more important since the various narratives of liberation are entangled in social and political agendas that, counter-intuitively, may obscure the individual's duty to himself. Were we to embrace Montaigne's view, that "it is an absolute perfection and virtually divine to know how to enjoy our being rightfully" (Montaigne 1967 III, chap. 13, 857), we would realize that this "know how" is not only a philosophic adventure of self- and other-knowledge, but also an initiation to wisdom. As such defined, sexuality pertains to philosophers' interest, if not responsibility.

Part IV reconsiders the means for practicing philosophy. Since Socrates, the notions of self-knowledge and dialogue loom large in reflections about the practice of philosophy. Thus, the three chapters comprising this part critically assess the possibility of self-knowledge, given the predominance of the unconscious both in philosophy and in psychology, and of dialogue, both the intra-personal and inter-personal varieties. In Chapter 11, Sigmund Freud's view of the role of the unconscious, Jean-Paul Sartre's criticism of it, and the shortcomings of the latter's alternative are thoroughly examined. My proposal to further self-knowledge through an innovative form of intra-personal dialogue follows (Chapter 12). I further examine in Chapter 13, finally, the conditions for a fruitful inter-personal dialogue rather than a polite exchange of two monologues.

Part V reevaluates, in two chapters, the tools available to philosophical practice. Chapter 14 proposes a method for the practice of philosophy that enables us to take philosophy seriously. It provides philosophic goals and means to implement them, and recommends using philosophy rather than relying on other kinds of counseling for which philosophers do not have the required training.

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[11] I first did so in Amir (2017b), in *New Frontiers of Philosophical Practice* (2017c), among various new directions and topics for philosophical practice this anthology advances.

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Chapter 15 addresses the thorny problem of the possibility of self-change or even full-fledged transformation, through philosophical tools, and offers the means for all to pursue such goal in view of attaining the good life. To that purpose, I engage in a critical revision of several themes that are inherent to a philosophical good life. These topics involve the relation between the tragic and the comic, the conditions of self-knowledge, the ability to acknowledge one's ambivalence and the capacity of better deliberation. Additionally, I address the relation between reason and emotions, between joy and suffering, and the conditions for endowing one's life with meaning and for grounding compassion in it. Finally, I clarify the possibility of living with unsolvable conflict and of eventually resolving the conflict that characterizes the human condition. I further advance humor as a potent tool for living well and introduce a new vision of the good life, *Homo risibilis*, as well as detailed exercises for implementing it. The views this chapter introduces answer the requirement that the practice of philosophy may have to enable moderate self-change or full-fledged self-transformation for those who seek it. Moreover, because we are not fully rational, the tool proposed there affords a more efficient implementation of philosophic ideals, including those that are not endorsed in this chapter.

Part VI ("Problems and Benefits") addresses the hurdles philosophical practice encounters by uncovering three questionable assumptions at its core (Chapter 16), but also highlights the unique benefits this field provides to the very discipline of philosophy (Chapter 17). This last chapter calls for a meta-philosophical discussion that reconsiders the divide between theory and practice. In addition, as most students of philosophy do not become professional philosophers, academic philosophers could use philosophical practitioners' experience in sharing philosophy with various audiences. I further propose a criterion of relevance to assess the curriculum and the manner in which one teaches philosophic theories. These devises could facilitate imparting philosophy in ways that enable the audience to appropriate its lessons and would make sure that philosophy, through its revised past theories and its future contribution to contemporary needs, stays firmly in the academe and thrives outside of it as well.

Several concluding remarks, based on two written interviews, sum up my views as shaped by experience in the practice of philosophy, both inside and outside the academe. They disclose my personal path whilst recalling this volume's ideas as well as those advanced in *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017a).

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Most of the chapters comprising this book are considerably revised and updated essays and articles published separately over the last fifteen years. Whilst their content aims at academic accuracy, I have rewritten them in an accessible style to engage not only academic and practical philosophers, either students or accomplished scholars, but also professionals in other disciplines, such as in education and the helping professions, as well as the general public.

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CHAPTER ONE

TAKING PHILOSOPHY SERIOUSLY

There are various ways to practice philosophy. This variety may account for the tension between academic and practical philosophers, and among philosophical practitioners. In this chapter, as well as in the remaining of this book, I attempt to reconcile the factions by proposing a view of philosophy and its practice that can tolerate divergences. I explain what taking philosophy seriously means and I distinguish between radical philosophy (perfectionism) and democratized philosophy (meliorism). In the remainder of the chapter, I explicate what meliorism entails by focusing on three topics. First, I assess the significance of abstract thought within the practice of philosophy. Second, I propose an agent-based epistemology of intellectual virtues as an epistemological model suitable for the practice of philosophy. Given the inter-connectedness of intellectual and moral virtues, finally, I advance the view that philosophical practice has a significant moral role to play in democratic and liberal societies.

1. Taking Philosophy Seriously

Taking philosophy seriously means recognizing its potency whilst remaining faithful to its objectives. Two main approaches to philosophy seem not to take it seriously enough. The philosophy professor, who holds that philosophical theory is irrelevant to life, exemplifies one approach. The philosophical practitioner, who believes that philosophical theory is not significant for its practice, exemplifies the other approach.

The philosophy professor, who believes that his discipline is not relevant to life, may not be taking his profession seriously enough. Were he to take seriously his profession as a teacher of philosophy, he would thereby participate in one form of philosophical practice, for good teaching implies appropriating the matter at hand and the ability to communicate the essential in a way that answers the audience's capacities and interests. Imparting philosophical theories without a Socratic emptying of previously held conceptions is hardly possible. In addition, mere theoretical understanding of philosophical theory is no understanding, I argue, not necessarily because of the so-called existential features of philosophy, but

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because a theory has to be exercised or essayed, as Michel de Montaigne would say (1967), in order to effectively comprehend what it could be.

If this is true, there is no discontinuity between academic philosophy and philosophical counseling.[13] The practice of philosophy can be pictured

[13] The criticism of academic philosophy did not begin in this century, nor did it begin with the philosophical practice movement. In a way, Socrates initiated it with his criticism of the Sophists; Arthur Schopenhauer rekindled it with his attack on Georg Wilhelm F. Hegel. Michel de Montaigne, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche took part in in it, as well as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. In the twentieth century, we may add John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault, the existentialist philosophers, as well as the Spanish-born American philosopher, George Santayana, to the long list of philosophers who were critical of the way philosophy was approached in the academe. Let me elaborate on Santayana, as his views on the matter may be less known. The very discipline of academic philosophy rubbed Santayana the wrong way. "That philosophers should be professors is an accident," he wrote, "and almost an anomaly. Free reflection about everything is a habit to be imitated, but not a subject to expound; and an original system, if the philosopher has one, is something dark, perilous, untested, and not ripe to be taught, nor is there much danger anyone will learn it." Looking back on his Harvard days in *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1921), he spoke of the new breed of philosophy professor who was "very professional in tone and conscious of his *Fach*," "open-minded, whole-hearted, appreciative," but also "toasted only on one side." In "On Philosophers and Philosophy," he notes, "there is a sense in which [William] James was not a philosopher at all. He once said to me: 'What a curse philosophy would be if we couldn't forget all about it!' In other words, philosophy was to him what it has been to so many, a consolation and a sanctuary in a life, which would have been unsatisfying without it. It would be incongruous, therefore, to expect of him that he should build a philosophy like an edifice to go and live in for good" (Santayana 1921, 56-57). More recently, Michel Foucault has rekindled the views of the Greeks, Benedict Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard by saying: "More important, however, than scrutinizing the lives of others, each philosopher must direct critical attention and creative imagination to her own concrete deeds and life-experiences as well as to her own ideas . . . . At every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying with what one is doing, with what one is" (Foucault 1984, 374). Richard Shusterman sums up the views shared by Dewey, Wittgenstein and Foucault by noting that "the disrespect for mere academic philosophizing" stems from the view that "philosophy had a much more crucial, existential task: to help us lead better lives by bettering ourselves through self-knowledge, self-criticism, and self-mastery. Philosophy is more than thought; it is a life-practice where theory derives its real meaning and value only in terms of the life in which it functions, in the concrete pursuit of better living" (1997, chap. 1). The idea of philosophy as "self-help" in the art of living was once philosophy's prime goal, and it remains a worthy one. Yet it may bring a scornful smirk from

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as if on a continuum, which begins with the successful appropriation of philosophical theories that understanding requires and ends in sharing them with various audiences according to their needs and capacities. Thus, these requirements, which make of philosophy a practical discipline, merely define effective teaching and learning, which naturally assumes the teacher's prior understanding of the material at hand.

The philosophical counselor who believes that philosophical theory is not important is not so different from the professor who does not take philosophy seriously enough. For this counselor does not trust his own discipline, philo-sophy, to bear fruitfully on life's problems and interests. Thus, he emulates forms of counseling taken from other disciplines, such as psychology, New Age theories, and so on. Not to take philosophy seriously is not to trust its potency, not to take advantage of the wealth of wisdom it contains, but rather to sell it short.

Reflecting adequately is the seal that differentiates philosophy from psychology and New Ages theories. The difference between philosophy and psychology lies in the emphasis on reflection: philosophical reflection is general or abstract yet its power derives from this characteristic feature. The difference between philosophy and New Age thought lies in the emphasis on adequacy: adequacy stems from rigor of thought, from arguments that establish the reliability of conclusions. This locates epistemology and logic at the heart of philosophical practice, although papers and articles on practical philosophy hardly address these topics.

Thus, to take philosophy seriously is to be loyal to its objectives. Forms of communication may differ among the consultancy, groups outside the academe, and the classes within the academe, but the objectives have to be the same. Otherwise it is no longer philosophy.

I have found three interrelated objectives of philosophy that we could agree on. First, philosophy aims at truth, at least by *via negativa*, through the eradication of our errors (Popper 1962). This means that the philosopher aims at truth rather than happiness, choosing the former over the latter if he has to.[14] Second, philosophy aims at liberation, even partial,

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most professional philosophers. As one of them writes, "The idea of philosophy as a deliberate life-practice that brings lives of beauty and happiness to its practitioners is as foreign to professional philosophy today as astrology is to astrophysics" (Shusterman 1997, 3). Yet another contemporary philosopher warns us: "Philosophy is a wonderful subject but it does not make a human life . . . Too much of it is not good for a person" (McGinn 1989, vi).

[14] Truth is the philosopher's happiness. Among other classical formulations of this idea, recall Descartes' view (1991, vol. 3: Letter to Princess Elizabeth, 6 October 1645), and more recently, André Comte-Sponville's. The latter states that the

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from illusions, preconceptions, and self-centered perception. Third, philosophy aims at wisdom, even if negative, in the sense of realizing that I do not know, yet also of actively finding out what I do not want to know, which results in a better understanding of the human condition. The relation that holds among these objectives seems to be the following: liberation from untruth is the path to wisdom.

To further elucidate these notions, it propose to distinguish between two traditions within philosophy: one tradition may be called perfectionism, or radical philosophy, the other, meliorism, or democratized philosophy. While we may be more familiar with the former, both traditions live on in academic philosophy, and are practiced in the variety of philosophical practices. Both are valid and significant forms of philosophy; however, unawareness of the differences between them results in tension among counselors as well as between practitioners and academics.

Those who are familiar with Eastern philosophy may recognize in this distinction the Western analogue to the main schools of Buddhist thought: on the one hand, the Hinayana school, or small vehicle, which leads to personal liberation, and, on the other, the Mahayana school, or large vehicle, whose goal is to help others achieve liberation. Other ways of describing these alternative approaches could be "radical" *versus* "piecemeal" philosophy, "elitist" *versus* "democratic" approaches, or philosophy that is more oriented towards liberty *versus* philosophy that is more oriented towards equality. Let me elaborate on each of these approaches to philosophy.

2. Radical Philosophy: Perfectionism

Unless one is a genius, philosophy is a mug's game.
Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil*

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choice between happiness and truth is indicative of philosophers: because we made this choice, we are philosophers, and not the other way around. As human beings, we require happiness, and as philosophers, we are committed to the truth, in the same way that scientists are. However, truth predominates, if we have to choose, otherwise we are no philosophers: "Le philosophe, on s'en doute, fait un autre choix, qu'à vrai dire il ne choisit pas. Ce n'est pas en effet parcequ'il est philosophe qu'il fait ce choix; c'est parce qu'il fait ce choix qu'il est philosophe. Il est l'effet, plutôt que le sujet de ce choix qui le définit . . . Toujours est-il qu'il a 'choisi', lui, doublement la vérité et le bonheur. Comme le savant, il a souci du vrai; et comme nous tous, cette exigence d'être heureux. Mais le vrai prime: s'il faut choisir entre une vérité et un bonheur, il choisit la vérité. Il ne serait pas philosophe autrement" (Comte-Sponville 1993, 199).

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Any teacher of the history of philosophy cannot avoid noticing the radical enterprise that philosophy is. If the lecturer does not notice it, his students will not fail to do so. Philosophy is revolutionary, time and again, and for various reasons. It presents itself as an alternative to established religion, and to all other establishments. It is highly critical of society's values: it dismisses the common-sense, non-critical views of regular persons, urging them to examine their lives and not take appearances at face value; it presents itself as an alternative to the common societal views of happiness—riches, pleasure, and power or fame. It requires a conversion to forms of thought and allegiances foreign to most persons. It assumes that radical change is possible through the transformative power of thought, through sole understanding and practice. It is comprehensive, keeping touch with other disciplines but in a supervisory and critical stance, perfectionist and ambitious in answering all worthy needs, including spiritual ones. It prescribes the highest ideals, in morality and ethics: it aims at nothing less than liberty, happiness or peace of mind, and even at philosophic redemption. It is for the few. Rare are those who live according to its requirements and even fewer dare claim that they do.

Consider, for example, Arthur Schopenhauer's description of the requirements of "mere" philosophizing:

> The two main requirements for philosophizing are: firstly, to have the courage not to keep any question back; and secondly, to attain a clear consciousness of anything that *goes without saying* so as to comprehend it as a problem. Finally, the mind must, if it is really to philosophize, also to be truly disengaged: it must prosecute no particular goal or aim, and thus be free from the enticement of will, but devote itself undividedly to the instruction which the perceptible world and its own consciousness impart to it. (Schopenhauer, 1970, *Essays and Aphorisms*, "On Philosophy and the Intellect," section 3)

The perfectionist tradition within philosophy is immensely rich, and as perennial philosophy it redefines itself time and again, being the sole enterprise whose definition and role are subject solely to internal criticism (meta-philosophy is part of philosophy, while meta-psychology, for example, is part of philosophy of science). It was repeatedly dying or declared dead, losing its best minds to the established religions or the sciences, which it helped create, but like the phoenix, it has always been reborn out of its ashes.

You may believe that this philosophical spirit has been forgotten in the time elapsed since Antiquity, during which Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Cynics, Stoics, Cyrenaics, Epicureans, and Pyrrhonists may have lost

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much of their impact. You may change your mind by taking a second look at Benedict Spinoza, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, George Santayana, the existentialists, and the movement called "philosophical practice."

Those who offer perfectionist teaching have to be themselves on this path; otherwise, they do not understand the content of their teaching. Usually, they avoid presenting themselves as sages, and the path they are pointing at may be reached by shared search. Moreover, contrary to common opinion, they can be pluralists, for various philosophical schools give different definitions of liberty, happiness, peace of mind, and even philosophic redemption. In this tradition, truth is lived more than known, and the appropriate model is that of the sage (see Neville 1978, 47-70).

Perfectionism is for a minority, yet the majority of philosophical schools are of this type. (Even existentialism, which is seemingly a democratization of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, posits authenticity as an ideal, which, by embracing anxiety, contradicts common views of happiness, and is, therefore, a rare achievement.) Today, the academe's interest in perfectionism is being revived.[15] When pointing below to philosophy's limitations in effecting self-transformation, and, thus potentially frustrating its adherents,[16] I am referring to this tradition of philosophy.

3. Democratized Philosophy: Meliorism

I use the term "meliorism" to refer to less ambitious theories than perfectionist philosophies. These meliorist philosophies would better fit common sense as well as the psychological needs and social goals of regular persons, who may be skeptical about the feasibility of perfectionist ends and means. For example, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* may qualify as meliorist, if we exclude its tenth chapter, which addresses the few (1941). Among the philosophers who provide melioristic philosophies, we can count Montaigne, David Hume, John Locke, Bertrand Russell, and Karl Popper.

This is the tradition that requires further development, both in the academe and outside of it. A melioristic philosophical practice should be faithful to philosophy's objectives and methods to deserve the title "philosophic," and thus differentiate itself from psychology and New Age theories and practices. This means that the objectives proposed above

[15] See, for example, Hurka (1994) and Cavell (1994).
[16] See Amir (2004b). I will address this topic below (Chapter 16).

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(truth, liberation, and wisdom) should be sought through adequate reflection, which, in turn, should be ensured through philosophic methods, such as abstract thought, logic, and epistemology, yet made accessible to what Aristotle calls "the many."

In what follows, I explain what such a melioristic practice may entail. To that purpose, I first elaborate on the significance of abstract thought within the practice of philosophy. Second, I propose an epistemological model suitable to the practice of philosophy: rather than a belief-based epistemology, I offer an agent-based epistemology of intellectual virtues. Given the inter-connection of intellectual and moral virtues, I finally argue that philosophical practice has a significant moral role to play in democratic and liberal societies.

Before elaborating on these topics, let me briefly introduce them in order to show how they work together. First, because philosophy is an abstract discipline, its practice also calls for abstract thinking. In practicing philosophy, it is best done by moving from the concrete to the abstract and back. By appropriating the insights gained in the abstract, one is faithful to philosophy (abstract thought) as well as to the goals of practical philosophy (the concrete). Rather than being a hindrance, the abstract considered in this light seems to be philosophy's specific therapeutic tool.

Second, epistemology is the core of philosophy. Its value lies in developing one's autonomous thinking. By making use of an epistemology of virtues, philosophical practitioners could enhance intellectual virtues, which, to my mind, are what philosophy is about. This argument is closely related to the question-and-alternative-answers method I propose for the practice of philosophy.[17] Let me explain how. Knowledge, as "intelligent development," is associated to the capacity of adopting additional or alternative points of view. This fits Jean Piaget's account of the development of thought (1932) and the role that alternative points of view have played in the history of sciences (Holmes 1976). Adopting different points of view fosters epistemic virtues such as impartiality and openness to the ideas of others. Critically assessing different answers develops one's intellectual sobriety, or the virtue of the careful inquirer who accepts only what evidence guaranties. Additionally, the entire process of a practice of philosophy that is faithful to philosophy furthers the development of the virtue of intellectual courage, which includes perseverance and determination.

Finally, an ethics whose focus is on developing moral virtues, an aretaic ethics, seems to be the moral theory that more easily appeals to

[17] See Amir (2003). I introduce this method below (Chapter 14).

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persons and professionals of all creeds.[18] Its value lies in developing one's solidarity with one's fellow human beings. Following Russell's Spinozistic ethic (see Blackwell 1985), who said that "one could stretch the comprehensiveness that constitutes wisdom to include not only intellect but also feeling" (Russell 1956, 174), I suggest that developing better feelings is a worthy philosophic goal (Amir 2002; 2004a), best attained through virtue ethics.

Luckily, the goal of furthering moral virtues[19] need not be pursued independently of the goal of developing intellectual virtues. Feelings and intellectual virtues are interwoven, and their operation shows how blurry the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue really is, a point that is forcibly made by Linda Zagzebski (1996). Spinoza made understanding, which is an intellectual virtue, the key to all the virtues (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 26), and understanding different points of view brings forth pluralism, tolerance, and acceptance, which furthers solidarity with our fellow human beings.[20]

John Benson sums up my main goal by defining autonomy in a way that makes it both a moral and an intellectual virtue: "The virtue of autonomy is a mean state of character with regard to reliance on one's own powers in acting, choosing, and forming opinions" (Benson 1987, 205). He argues, "Autonomous moral thinking is closely parallel to autonomous theoretical thinking, the one being concerned with what should be done, the other with what is the case. . ." (Benson 1987, 208). Because autonomy is related to both courage and humility, it exemplifies how cognitive and volitional processes are associated:

> To be autonomous in one's thinking calls for intellectual skills, including the ability to judge when someone else knows better than yourself. But it calls also for the ability to control the emotions that prevent those skills from being properly exercised. (Benson 1987, 213)

These three tools of meliorist philosophical practice (appropriating abstract thought in practice, fostering intellectual virtues, and developing more encompassing feelings through moral virtues), could enhance autonomy. This in turn would help to minimize the tension between freedom and equality, which plagues every democratic and liberal society. This worthy goal could be considered the ultimate objective of a democratized philosophical practice. Let me elaborate on what has been

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[18] See Oakley and Cocking (2001) and Amir (2010).
[19] See Amir (2003) and Chapter 14 below.
[20] On Spinoza's philosophy, see Chapter 7 below.

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succinctly stated so far, beginning with the role of abstract thought in Kierkegaard's philosophy.

A. The Abstract

At the end of *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard writes, "If our generation has any task at all, it must be to translate the achievement of scientific scholarship into personal life, to appropriate it personally" (Kierkegaard 1965, 328). By "scientific scholarship," Kierkegaard means Georg W. F. Hegel's philosophy, which was the dominant philosophy of his time. This quotation designates his task as it differs from Hegel as well as the link that associates him with Hegel (Stewart 2003, 647). The notion of appropriation is clearly at least a part of what lies behind his famous notions of repetition and reduplication.

Kierkegaard was critical of the accepted view of philosophy in the nineteenth century. He thus sought alternative models in Greek philosophy or in religious literature to juxtapose to the then contemporary praxis of philosophy. He echoes in these words Epictetus, who is reported to have said:

> If what charms you is nothing but abstract principles, sit down and turn them over quietly in your mind: but never dub yourself a Philosopher, nor suffer others to call you so. Say rather: He is in error; for my desires, my impulses are unaltered. I give my adhesion to what I did before; nor has my mode of dealing with the things of sense undergone unchanged. (Epictetus 1937, CIX, 157)

For Kierkegaard, abstract thought is significant if rightly used in order to clarify intellectual confusion and to serve the passion of desiring a better way of life. For existential dialectic is concerned also with bringing about reconciliation between thought and being. However, this sort of dialectic achieves this within existence and within the strictures which existence places upon the human being. Kierkegaard describes the means by which this is carried out as "subjective reflection." Subjective reflection, unlike its objective counterpart, proceeds not away from, but toward, existence, namely the existence of the individual human being. It is called "subjective" because it turns towards the "subjectivity," that is, the innermost personal being of the single individual. It is concerned not with establishing a speculative system but with applying the categories of abstract thought to the concrete existence of the individual human being. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard writes:

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> While abstract thought seeks to understand the concrete abstractly, the subjective thinker has conversely to understand the abstract concretely. Abstract thought turns from concrete men to consider man in general; the subjective thinker seeks to understand the abstract determination of being human in terms of this particular human being. (Kierkegaard 1941, 315)

Thus, whereas objective reflection only moves in one direction, namely, away from existence to the abstract and essential, subjective thought moves in two directions. First, it makes the movement of objective reflection. That is, abstract thought is employed to obtain a conception of existence and of the categories that make it up. Secondly, it bends objective reflection back on itself and applies it to existence. A circular movement is created in which thought first moves away from existence but is then turned back and applied to its point of origin. Thus, a dialectical movement is established between existence, the abstract conception of existence, and the existential application of this conception.

A similar movement can be found in ascending Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge and their related emotional states, the first kind being existential and concrete, the second abstract and scientific, while the third is an implementation in particular practical cases of what has been understood only abstractly in the second kind of knowledge (Spinoza 1985).

The significance of this movement in Kierkegaard's thought is twofold. First, subjective reflection provides the individual with the means with which to understand his personal existence. By means of the first movement, namely that of abstract thought, he acquires the concepts with which to understand himself. Thus, in the case of the passage from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* quoted above, abstract thought provides the individual with a concept of humanity, which he can then employ to interpret and comprehend his own individual humanity. By making the second movement of subjective reflection, that is, by applying the abstract concept of humanity to himself, the individual achieves an understanding of his own humanity. In this sense, then, subjective reflection is a reformulation of the Socratic dictum "know thyself," the process by which the individual comes to achieve a greater understanding of himself (Kierkegaard 1941, 314-16).

Secondly, subjective reflection has an ethical function. That is, it not only provides the human being with the wherewithal with which to interpret his existence, but also provides him with the means with which to develop and improve this existence. For Kierkegaard, the categories of objective reflection are not only forms of thought but are also possibilities. Kierkegaard holds that the process of abstraction employed in abstract

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thought results in an object or aspect of reality being transferred *ab esse ad posse* (see Law 1993, chap. 3). This is necessary in order to transform an external reality into a thinkable form. These conceptual possibilities constitute not only the basis for thought, but are also possibilities for action. If the individual discovers that his existence does not correspond to his abstract conception of what existence ideally is, he is compelled to "act" to restructure his existence so that it corresponds to this conception.

The question now arises as to how this dialectical process of subjective reflection results in the overcoming of the contradiction between thought and being that existence brings about, and to which Kierkegaard was particularly sensitive. The individual, who posits an identity between them in his own personal existence, overcomes this division. That is, through his application of the categories of objective reflection (thought) to his own existence (being) he brings about an identity: by attempting to live according to his conception of what existence truly is the existing individual brings about an identity between thought and being. This identity is short-lived, for striving rather than reaching a "result" characterizes living. Nonetheless, the identity between thought and being that one reaches in moments of passion is worth striving for.

Kierkegaard's concept of subjective reflection can be seen as a paradigm for philosophical practice.[21] The movement from the individual and concrete to the general and abstract, and back, is one of the main assets of philosophical practice.[22] The intellectual and ethical functions of this dialectic do define philosophical practice's main tool, as I see it: abstract thought in the service of individual life.[23]

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[21] On this topic, see Amir, "Søren Kierkegaard and the Practice of Philosophy" (2006b), and Chapter 6 below.

[22] See Amir (2003, 37), and Chapter 14 below.

[23] By temporarily disconnecting the client from his more personal concerns, the abstract allows for a space, sometimes a necessary hiding space, for understanding, and maybe self-transformation, to take place. The abstract as an inward space where thought expands and freedom is gained without the tyranny of personal fear is one of the great therapeutic inventions of philosophy. However, any solution to a problem that would remain at the abstract level is useless. Self-philosophical counseling as well as philosophical counseling for others presuppose some knowledge of the art of shades and light. Some people will perish from too much light, according to Plato (Plato, *Republic*, 1961; Amir 2001); all neurotics, that is, all of us, need the shade, according to Freud (Amir 2006a; 2017); and the value of an individual might well be the quantity of truth (light) she can bear, according to Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1974). I explain how to translate this into the practice of questions and answers in Amir (2003), which describes the method I use in counseling, as well as in Chapter 14 below.

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B. Intellectual Virtues

Epistemology and logic are the most powerful tools against the New Age Movement's laxity of thought. A philosophical practice that is faithful to philosophy's objectives has to address epistemological issues. In *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (Amir 2017), I have argued that philosophical practitioners have an edge over psychologists of all trainings in dealing with moral problems and dilemmas. Moreover, notwithstanding psychology, I emphasized there philosophical practice's ethical role. I would like to stress here its epistemological role and to unite both roles *via* the proposal to use virtue epistemology in philosophical practice. To this purpose, I introduce virtue epistemology and emphasize the interconnectedness of moral and intellectual virtues.

1. Virtue Epistemology

In her groundbreaking work, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (1996), Linda Zagzebski argues,

> We can distinguish several types of virtue theory by the ways in which they relate the fundamental moral concepts of a virtue, the good, and a right act. A pure virtue theory makes the concept of a right act derivative from the concept of a virtue, although there is more than one way such a theory can relate virtue to the good…. Happiness-based virtue theory and the more radical motivation-based virtue theory are two forms of pure virtue theory that can be developed in ways that adequately handle epistemic evaluation. (Zagzebski 1996, 77)

Almost five decades ago, Roderick Chisholm observed that "many of the characteristics which philosophers and others have thought peculiar to ethical statements also hold of epistemic statements" (Chisholm 1969, 4). In the last twenty years, parallel to a revival of interest in virtue ethics, there has been an interest in virtue epistemology.[25]

Virtue epistemology, as characterized by David Solomon, "would not be belief-based; it would be agent- or end-based in that virtue would be more basic than belief. It would focus on the cognitive set-up of the agent rather than on episodes of cognitive activity in isolation" (Solomon 2003,

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[25] For the renewed interest in virtue ethics, see Amir (2010).

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80).[26] In a similar vein, another virtue epistemologist suggests that instead of focusing on static states such as belief and the evaluation of these as justified or constituting knowledge, we might instead focus on evaluating and regulating the activities of inquiry and deliberation and the role of virtues in such evaluation and regulation (Hookway 2003).

Zagzebski summarizes in her introduction (1996) the short contemporary history of the intellectual virtues. The idea of intellectual virtue was introduced into the epistemological literature by Ernest Sosa (1980; see also 1991), but Sosa does no more than mention an association with virtue ethics. Subsequently, "virtue epistemology" has been used as another name for reliabilism, the view according to which the epistemic goal is to form true beliefs and not form false beliefs. The works of Lorraine Code (1987) and James Montmarquet (1986) come closer to linking epistemology with virtue ethics, but neither one derives the concept of epistemic virtue from a background aretaic ethics or pushes the similarities between intellectual virtue and moral virtue very far.

Zagzebski further develops a virtue theory that is inclusive enough to handle the intellectual as well as the moral virtues within a single theory. She argues that intellectual virtues are, in fact, forms of moral virtue, and that intellectual virtue is properly the subject of moral philosophy. This claim is not intended to reduce epistemic concepts to moral concepts in the way that has sometimes been attempted, she argues. Rather, it is intended to extend the range of moral concepts to include the normative dimension of cognitive activity: normative epistemology is a branch of ethics.

A virtue-based epistemology is preferable to a belief-based epistemology for the same reasons that a virtue-based moral theory is preferable to an act-based moral theory (see Statman 1997). Zagzebski notes the current neglect of epistemic values, such as understanding and wisdom, which have been significant in the history of philosophy (Zagzebski 1996, 2, 43-51). These values are especially significant, I should add, for philosophical practice.

Epistemology is a practical activity, according to Solomon:

> Just as moral philosophers find themselves asking epistemological questions, epistemologists are centrally concerned with questions about our practical life. After all, the central problems of normative epistemology are

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[26] Among contemporary philosophers who have written on epistemology, a few seem to be moving in the direction of a radical virtue epistemology: Jonathan Knaving (1992), Linda Zagzebski (1996), and Alasdair MacIntyre (1990). Zagzebski's work has deeply impressed me, thus, my account of epistemology is heavily indebted to her.

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> problems about what to do. To believe or not to believe, that is the question—or at least one of them. Even the most avid naturalizers in epistemology must recognize the centrality of evaluations of ourselves and others to our epistemic life. (Solomon 2003, 60)[27]

Among the various forms of epistemology, virtue epistemology seems to be the most practical, and thus highly relevant to philosophical practice. As I have recently elaborated on practical epistemology,[28] I wish to continue here with the relations between moral and intellectual virtues.

2. The Interconnectedness of Moral and Intellectual Virtues

It is a commonplace of Western philosophy to regard human cognitive and feeling processes as distinct and relatively autonomous. At least, it is usually thought that cognition is capable of operating independently of feeling and that it ought to do so in the rational person, whether or not feeling is actually independent of cognition. This part of our philosophical heritage is so strong that philosophers have maintained what Michael Stocker (1980) calls a "purified view of the intellect," long after it was given up by cognitive psychologists and in spite of the fact that a few philosophers like David Hume (1983) and William James (1937) called attention to the close connection between believing and feeling.[29]

Related to the alleged independence of the cognitive and feeling processes is the alleged distinctness of the intellectual and the moral virtues, a position we owe to Aristotle. Although it is no longer usual to draw the distinction in precisely Aristotle's fashion, few philosophers have doubted that the division is deep and important. At any rate, few philosophers have opposed Aristotle's claim that such virtues as courage and temperance differ in nature from such qualities as wisdom and understanding.

One exception is Spinoza, who connected both the passions and virtue with adequate ideas of God's nature, and who made understanding, which is an intellectual virtue, the key to all the virtues:

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[27] Christine McKinnon (2003) argues for the advantages of applying feminist ethics to epistemology since it permits an account of a broader range of cases of knowing than those standardly discussed, in particular, knowledge of oneself and others. She argues that a virtue approach in epistemology is better suited to giving an account of knowledge of persons than traditional approaches.

[28] I refer the reader to Chapter 11, "Intellectual Virtues," in Part V, "Practical Epistemology," in Amir, *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017).

[29] See Zagzebski's discussion (1996, part 1, sec. 3).

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> Again, since this effort of the mind, by which the mind, in so far as it reasons endeavors to preserve its being, is nothing but the effort to understand . . . it follows . . . that this effort to understand is the primary and sole foundation of virtue, and that . . . we do not endeavor to understand things for the sake of any end, but, on the contrary, the mind, in so far as it reasons, can conceive nothing as being good for itself except that which conduces at understanding. (Spinoza, 1985, *Ethics*, part 4, prop. 26, parenthetical references removed)

Spinoza has solidly unified the moral and intellectual virtues, as no other philosopher seems to have done.

Hume is another apparent exception to the alleged distinctness of the intellectual and the moral virtues. Hume insisted that the distinction between the intellectual and the moral virtues is merely verbal. Additionally, such qualities of intellect as wisdom, a capacious memory, keenness of insight, eloquence, prudence, penetration, discernment, and discretion should count as among a person's "moral" virtues since they are as much objects of praise as his honesty and courage (*Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Appendix 4). Hume also said it is merely a verbal matter whether the class of virtues includes all the human talents and the class of vices all the human defects. Thus, he is using a much broader notion of virtue than that which dominated philosophy both before and after (Appendix 4, paragraph 1). Hume's inclusion of intellectual virtues within the class of moral virtues therefore loses most of its drama.

Julius Moravcsik has argued that Plato makes no sharp distinction between moral and nonmoral virtues, whether in terms of the source of virtue or its function (Moravcsik 1992, 300).[30] Aristotle, however, does make such a division. He makes a further division within the intellectual virtues between those that aim at speculative insight or theoretical knowledge and those that pertain to practical thinking aiming at the production of artifacts or the performance of acts. These virtues are art (*techne*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) respectively.

When we consider how entrenched the distinction between moral and intellectual virtue is in Western philosophy, it is remarkable that Aristotle's grounds for distinguishing them are so unpersuasive. Zagzebski challenges these grounds, and in the process addresses the issue of distinguishing "the moral from the intellectual virtues on the grounds that the former but not the latter involves the proper handling of feelings,

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[30] For example, Plato recognized the need for natural feeling and moral rectitude in the apprehension of truth, particularly in moral matters, and gave a dramatic argument for their power in the seventh epistle (Plato 1961, Letter VII, 344a-b, 1961).

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whereas the latter but not the former involve the proper direction of cognitive activities" (Zagzebski 1996, 146).[31]

Benson defines autonomy in a way that makes it both a moral and an intellectual virtue. As mentioned above, he defines autonomy as "a mean state of character with regard to reliance on one's own powers in acting, choosing, and forming opinions" (Benson 1987, 205). He argues,

> Autonomous moral thinking is closely parallel to autonomous theoretical thinking, the one being concerned with what should be done, the other with what is the case . . . . Autonomy is a proper degree and kind of reliance on others, what is proper being determined by the end of the activity in which one is engaging. (Benson 1987, 208-9)

This virtue, Benson says, is closely allied to courage, as well as to humility, and it shows the connection between cognitive and volitional processes:

> To be autonomous in one's thinking calls for intellectual skills, including the ability to judge when someone else knows better than yourself. But it calls also for the ability to control the emotions that prevent those skills from being properly exercised. (Benson 1987, 213)

Various philosophers, such as Zagzebski (1996), Karl Popper (1965), and his followers (Agassi and Jarvie 1987), may have their own lists of intellectual virtues and their own agenda of how to further them.[32]

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[31] For examples of how intellectual virtues or vices involve feelings, see Blaise Pascal's argument that self-love weakens the love of truth and leads to self-deception, the deception of others, and hypocrisy. These can be seen as partly intellectual vices (*Pensées*, 1961, 348). Two of the few important philosophers in the history of philosophy who discuss intellectual vice, Francis Bacon and John Locke, associate intellectual failings with the passions and the moral vices. Both Bacon and Locke emphasize the connections between moral and intellectual character in their enumerations of the ways things can go astray in human thinking. See Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Book I, aphorisms 41-44, 49, 52-62; Locke, *On the Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 3, 208-9; also *Essay* IV.20.

[32] See Karl Popper (1963) and his followers' (1987) critical rationalism for a method of improving thinking for scientists as well as nonprofessionals. I elaborate on Popper and Agassi's views in the following chapters. See also Zagzebski's detailed many-staged method for developing intellectual virtues (Zagzebski 1996, 152-55). The stage after *akrasia* is intellectual self-control, she writes: "At this stage, a person has to stop herself from accepting inadequate evidence or poor testimony or lapsing into ways of speaking and reasoning of which she disapproves. However, unlike the previous stage, she does it successfully. Still, she

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However, philosophical practitioners may join in the debate that contemporary virtue epistemologists have initiated. Sharing the experience they gather from various publics, they may help to determine the intellectual virtues most needed today by citizens of different nations.

C. Moral Virtues

The past forty years "have witnessed a dramatic resurgence of philosophical interest in the virtues. The charge that modern philosophical thought neglects the virtues, once apposite, is by now outmoded; and the calls for a renewed investigation of virtue and virtue ethics are being answered from many quarters" (Velazco y Trianoski 1997, 42).[33]

Daniel Statman characterizes virtue ethics as a "rather new (or renewed) approach to ethics, according to which the basic judgments in ethics are judgments about character" (Statman 1997, 7). Virtue theory argues that the aim of the moral life is to develop those general dispositions we call the moral virtues, and to exercise and exhibit them in the many situations that life sets before us. This approach to ethics is recognized as a viable alternative to act- and principle-centered and consequentialist theories.

Aristotle is the philosopher who is best known for his emphasis on the cultivation of the virtues. When Aristotle is not taken as the prime model of virtue ethics, the classical philosophers generally are: Martha C. Nussbaum, for example, argues that these philosophers are relevant to our lives on the basis of the resemblance she notices between Antiquity and our times (Nussbaum 2000, 41). New Age movements, theories, and practices represent a thoroughly different influence, which urge us to search for inspiration in non-Western and pre-Christian civilizations.[34]

Interesting as these cultures may be, I believe that the applicability of Pagan or Pre-Christian values to contemporary issues is problematic. For

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lacks the virtue because she finds it difficult to weigh evidence properly, judge authority reliably, or reason with care. Her behavior may be correct, but it is not grounded in a 'firm and unchangeable character,' as Aristotle characterizes the person who truly possesses virtue. The final stage is the intellectual virtue. Examples include intellectual carefulness, perseverance, humility, vigor, flexibility, courage, and thoroughness, and the virtues opposed to wishful thinking, obtuseness, and conformity" (155).

[33] See Velazco y Trianoski (1997, 53n1), for a relatively updated list of recent work on the virtues.

[34] For the New Age movement's characteristics, see Hanegraaff (1998), Heelas (1996), and York (1995).

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all Westerners are post-Christians in the same way in which we are all post-Freudian. That is, whether or not we are Christians, we are part of a civilization that is heir to the Christian world. Consequently, we are all profoundly influenced by Christian values. This may be the reason for the revival of interest in Aquinas. To the Aristotelian list of the moral virtues, he added the theological virtues of charity, hope, and faith, as well as various Christian virtues, such as humility.[35]

Spinoza is a virtue ethicist who has been neglected in the literature. However, I see clear advantages for Spinoza's approach over Aquinas and Greek and Roman philosophers', because he is a post-Judeo-Christian philosopher. He is also the most Eastern of Western philosophers (with the possible exception of Arthur Schopenhauer), his thought often being compared to Buddhism (e.g., Wetlessen 1979). He could pass for a New Age theorist, sharing the broad appeal of this movement's goals, but without the logical and epistemological deficiencies that plague the New Age movement's theories (see Grossman 2003).[36]

Russell's philosophy echoes Spinoza's ethical goals (see Blackwell 1985). Russell seems to believe in the necessity of developing an impersonal feeling that would be constitutive of wisdom. He writes:

> Our age is in many respects one which has little wisdom, and which would therefore profit greatly by what philosophy has to teach. The value of philosophy is partly in relation to thought and partly in relation to feeling, though its effects in these two ways are closely interconnected. On the theoretical side it is a help in understanding the universe as a whole, in so far as this is possible. On the side of feeling it is a help toward a just appreciation of the ends of human life. (Russell 1956, 178)

He argues that the development of impersonal feeling is closely parallel to the development of impersonal thought. At least equally important, the former also ought to result from a philosophical outlook. This is so because our desires, like our senses, are primarily self-centered. The egocentric character of our desires interferes with our ethics, Russell explains. However, "in the one case, as in the other, what is to be aimed at

[35] For the revival of interest in Aquinas' ethics, see Casey (1990) and Ramsey (1997, especially 177n1). Ramsey maintains that "just as mainstream ethics a generation ago consisted largely of debate concerning utilitarianism and Kantian theories, it is now for the most part concerned with debate over virtue ethics and versions of objectivist or natural law ethics [principles]" (Ramsay 1997, x).

[36] I elaborate on the contemporary relevance of Spinoza's virtue ethics in Amir (2010), which can be found with revisions in Chapter 7 below; and in Amir (2012), an article that has been reprinted in various places (2015a; 2015b; 2017).

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is not a complete absence of the animal equipment that is necessary for life, but the addition to it of something wider, more general, and less bound up with personal circumstances" (see Kuntz 1986, 107ff). Thus,

> What philosophy should do in matters of feelings is very closely analogous to what it should do in matters of thought. It should not subtract from the personal life but should add to it. Just as the philosopher's intellectual survey is wider than that of an uneducated man, so also the scope of his desires and interests should be wider. A man who has acquired a philosophical way of feeling, and not only of thinking, will note what things seem to him good and bad in his own experience, and will wish to secure the former and avoid the latter for others as well as for himself. (Quoted in Kuntz 1986, 107ff)

Wisdom involves affects, Russell argues, because comprehensiveness alone does not constitute wisdom. There must also be "a certain awareness of the ends of human life." For example, the best way to overcome the fear of death, according to Russell, is to make your interests gradually broader and more impersonal, until "bit by bit the walls of the ego recede, and your life becomes increasingly merged in the universal life" (Russell 1956, 52).[37] Russell rightly notes, however, that it is "by no means uncommon to find men whose knowledge is wide but whose feelings are narrow." These men lack what he refers to as "wisdom" (Russell 1956, 174).

Liberating one's thought frees from an intelligence focused on narrow interests. My proposal of a method developed around questions and critically assessed alternative answers, which does not shun abstract thought, develops one's intelligence. The effect of such an approach is the furthering of intellectual virtues—an essential role of philosophy. An agent-based epistemology of virtues is more suited to philosophical practice's goals and means than a belief-based epistemology. Moreover, because intellectual virtues are moral virtues, a virtue epistemology harmonizes with the ethical endeavor that philosophical practice is. Thus, a virtue ethics, equipped to harmonize reason and feelings, be it in the Spinozean way I propose, also echoed in Russell's philosophy, or in any other way, best serves the ethical goals that can be furthered in the philosophic consultation. Finally, an ethics of virtues avoids the skepticism that plagues postmodern morality and circumvents the aesthetic turn in

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[37] Various philosophical counselors have argued that the main goal of philosophical practice is to educate the emotions (e.g., Shibles 1998; 2001). I have followed Russell's view that "the good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge" (Russell 1957, 56) and have argued that developing better feelings is a worthy philosophical goal (e.g., Amir 2002; 2004a).

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ethics that is so fashionable. Allow me to elaborate on this final argument in favor of virtue ethics.

Virtues and vices are currently out of fashion. Morality has become a matter of taste in postmodern thought, a shift that has been deemed the aesthetic turn in ethics. Discussing morality is not fashionable in non-postmodern circles as well. Thus, scholars such as Bernard Williams (1985, 29) and Richard Wollheim (1984, 215-16) emphasize the difference between ethics, which has a connotation of individual development, and morality, which has an undertone of obligation.

The *bon ton* today is to avoid issues of values by talking about aesthetic self-realization (e.g., Shusterman 1992; 1997). Aesthetic self-realization follows the Nietzschean injunction to become what one is. It is predicated on an individual becoming that eschews the confines of a definition of human nature. A criticism is in order here, however: the content of aesthetic self-realization involves an immense effort to better oneself. The motivation and on-going effort that are needed cannot be justified on aesthetic grounds alone, because arbitrary self-fashioning would not provide the discipline required. When one compares the philosophical aesthetic ideal of self-realization with other aesthetic ideals, the difference is the ethical nature of the former, as Dewey rightly notices.

Ethics should not be narrowed down to morality. An ethic of virtues, which shuns rules and obligations, avoids this pitfall, and represents, therefore, a viable alternative to a philosophical aesthetic ideal of self-realization. Moreover, I consider this kind of ethics a better answer to the question, what is the good life, because it provides a justification and a possible motivation that the aesthetic ideal cannot provide.

Concluding Remarks: Note on a Contemporary Debate

A meliorist philosophy should be faithful to philosophy's objectives (truth, liberation, and wisdom) and methods (adequate reflection, using abstract thought, logic, and epistemology), yet made accessible to all. The three tools of meliorist philosophical practice proposed in this chapter (appropriating abstract thought in practice, fostering intellectual virtues, and enhancing more encompassing feelings through moral virtues), will hopefully enhance the autonomy of those who aspire to it. Furthering autonomy helps to minimize the tension between freedom and equality that plagues every democratic and liberal society. This worthy goal may be considered the ultimate objective of a democratized philosophical practice.

If meliorism and perfectionism were both loyal to philosophy's aims and methods, the same virtues championed in perfectionism would also

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predominate in meliorism. The difference would be that the high ethical ideals of perfectionist philosophy, as well as its demand for a radical break with the presuppositions of ordinary society, would be discarded.

This proposal amounts to a palatable program of effective self-integration along life's way. It can be an overarching goal for philosophical practice, considered as the discipline of putting philosophy into practice.

Defined as such, meliorism also inscribes itself within a contemporary academic debate. Richard Rorty's proposal of dividing the self into two heteronymous domains, the public moral domain, and the private "ironic" or perfectionist domain (Rorty 1989), may prove unnecessary. This is significant insofar as Rorty's proposal stands in the way of intellectual integrity. In contradistinction, Stanley Cavell defends the conscious cultivation of distinctive self-perfection. He explains that his goal "is not simply to show that [self-perfection] is tolerable to the life of justice in a constitutional democracy but to show how it is essential to that life" (Cavell 1994, 56). Meliorism, more adapted to the many than perfectionism, yet as essential to the life of justice in a constitutional democracy, may more easily fulfill Cavell's goal.

Meliorism's aim is to provide the citizen, myself included, with necessary tools to live autonomously in a liberal democracy. The considerations on which its necessity can be established involve a political debate about the virtues of negative and positive liberty (Berlin 1969). They also require taking a stand in the controversy about the assistance societies should give to their members to help them meaningfully fulfill their liberties by developing their capacities.[38]

Having legal rights may not be sufficient; one should have the means to exercise those rights. The right to the "pursuit of happiness" is empty, if the tools to develop and harmonize an individual's intellectual and moral capacities are lacking. In attaining intellectual and moral integrity, we become autonomous not only *de jure* but also *de facto*. Unless philosophers help in this endeavor, democracy will not be valued enough to survive its tensions. Neither is it sufficient to write on these issues, as some academics do. An active and involved philosophical practice helps minimize the tension between liberty and equality that plagues every liberal society.

Though a perfectionist in my personal life, in my practice— unless asked specifically to provide perfectionist tutoring—I am a meliorist. I offer the means to ameliorate one's thinking as its bears on life with the

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[38] Such a controversy can be staged between Dewey and Rorty. Richard Shusterman introduces this debate in *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (1997, 71-5).

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overarching goal of attaining to moral and intellectual integrity. The advance may be partial but it is proportionate to the effort invested. If the philosophical practitioner concentrates her efforts on that which is relevant to the majority of persons, she would succeed in her task because she offers a useful service to her community. To the contrary, the power a philosopher may assume and its necessary consequence—heteronomy for those who listen to him—seem to encapsulate the danger of perfectionism in consultation or private tutoring, where the philosopher serves as the ideal to be emulated.

By accepting the humbler task of meliorism, we minimize the risks of power and personal influence, we fulfill an indispensable role in society, and we realize an important educational goal. One should act where one is needed and not where one fancies.[39] At the very least, respectability for philosophical practice depends on this ethic.

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[39] For a diagnosis of contemporary needs that require philosophical work, see the first chapter in Amir, *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017). Updated versions of many of my works, to which I refer in this chapter as well as in the following ones, can be found in that book or further below in this one.

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PART I

PHILOSOPHERS AS MENTORS AND APPRENTICES

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CHAPTER TWO

THE NEED FOR A TEACHER

Where both are friends, it is right to prefer Truth.
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Except from some notable exceptions, philosophers have not written much on philosophers' education. When they do write on education, they focus on children. We often forget that philosophy itself is (young) adult education. Thus, philosophers' writings on education do not exhaust the profound relationship between these two fields.

As philosophers often wished to educate humanity, they approached rulers who were able to influence humanity. Indeed, philosophers were often part of societal power systems. However, the education of the powerful differs from the education of philosophers. One reason is that philosophers tend to see themselves as self-taught and to emphasize their autonomy and radicalism. This in itself may explain why relatively little has been written on the education of philosophers.

As can be gathered from the history of philosophy, however, for all their self-education and desire for autonomy, would-be philosophers need teachers. A teacher can take many forms: a book, an imaginary model, or a living example. No less than the student needs a teacher, the teacher needs students, though for different reasons. When the student is lucky enough to find a mentor and the master an apprentice, the relationship is usually problematic or turns out to be so after a while. This relationship is further complicated by aspirations to autonomy on both sides, and by the intimate bond that commonly forms between teacher and learner.

This chapter addresses the understudied subject of the education of philosophers by philosophers. Because the would-be philosopher seems to need other philosophers, the understudied topic of the mentor-apprentice relationship is of interest.

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1. Philosophers on Education

Philosophers' views on education are mainly on children's education. However, philosophers have usually viewed children as different from adults. In addition, as a rational activity, philosophy was not considered suitable for children.

On the Stoic view, for example, infants and children up to the age of about fourteen are constituted very differently than adults (Laertius, *Lives*, 7, 55-56; see Becker 1998). Benedict Spinoza's view on the matter is remarkable. "A man of advanced years," he writes in the *Ethics*, "believes their [infants'] nature to be so different from his own that he could not be persuaded that he was ever an infant, if he did not make this conjecture concerning himself from [the example of] others" (*Ethics*, part 4, proposition 39, scholium). Additional examples include Immanuel Kant, who thought that children are not completely rational (Herman 1998) and Aristotle, who held that good habits are all the moral education we can give to children.[40] Plato changed his mind twice about Socrates' predilection for engaging children in philosophical discussion. Several early Platonic dialogues portray Socrates as eager to engage young minds in philosophical inquiry. By contrast, the Socrates of the *Republic* warns of the danger of introducing young people to elenctic discussion, reserving philosophy for mature minds. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates again engages a young person in the deepest of philosophical enquiries, now with a warning that such enquiry must be conducted fairly.

In *The Philosophers*' *Child*, Susan Turner and Gareth Matthews concluded that "following this development we may ourselves reflect on both the intellectual potential children embody, as well as the safeguards that may be necessary to keep philosophy from corrupting young minds" (Turner and Matthews 1998, 4). Matthews, who was instrumental in the movement known as philosophy for children, continued this line of thought in *Philosophy and the Young Child* (1980) and *The Philosophy of Childhood* (1994). Philosophy for children has since developed to become a worldwide movement.

I do not wish to discuss here the merits of introducing philosophical themes and methods to children. Following the tradition of the history of philosophy and the biographical material I have found, I assume in this chapter that philosophy is (young) adult education.[41] On such a view,

[40] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, chap. 3, 1104b4-1104b26; bk. 10, chap. 9, 1179b26.

[41] Some etymological comments may be helpful, since etymology is always revealing. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty notes (1998, 11n1) that "education" derives

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therefore, little can be drawn from writings on the education of children in order to understand philosophers' education.

Philosophers' writings on education strictly speaking do not exhaust the important relationship philosophy maintains with education. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty begins her fascinating *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives* thus:

> Philosophers have always intended to transform the way we see and think, act and interact; they have always taken themselves to be the ultimate educators of mankind. Even when they believed that philosophy leaves everything as it is, even when they did not present philosophy as the exemplary human activity, they thought that interpreting the world aright—understanding it and our place in it—would free us from illusion, direct us to those activities that best suit us. Even pure philosophy—metaphysics and logic—is implicitly pedagogical. It is meant to correct the myopia of the past and the immediate. (Rorty 1998, 1)

She rightly concludes,

> Philosophical reflection on education from Plato to Dewey has therefore naturally been directed to the education of rulers, to those who are presumed to preserve and transmit—or to redirect and transform—the culture of society, its knowledge and its values. (Rorty 1998, 1)

Most philosophers in the past were not solely philosophers by training and profession. Whether due to that fact or not, they were part of the power system: many were tutors,[42] still more were advisers,[43] activities that time

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from *e-ducare*: to bring out, draw forth and from *e-ducere*: to lead out. Its double etymology suggests both drawing something out of the learner, and leading the learner out to a new place. *Erudire* typically suggests taking someone or something out of a rude or crude condition. Our "doctrine" and "indoctrinate" come from *docere*, to teach; and, of course, *disciplina* covers both senses of the English "discipline." "Instruction" comes from *in-struere*: "to build into." Hence, the German *Bildung* to shape, form, cultivate. The German *erziechen* gives: to bring up or train. The verb "to school" derives from the Greek *schole*: discuss at leisure, and *scholion*: a commentary, interpretation. The French use "formation" as well as "education." Greek has the general term *trophe*: rearing, and *paideia,* which refers to the bringing up of young children, both surprisingly limited.

[42] Plato tutored Dionysius, Aristotle taught Alexander the Great, and Locke was a tutor of the third Earl of Shaftsbury, later a philosopher in his own right. Hobbes was the tutor of the Cavendish family from his graduation until his death in 1679. Hegel spent most of his life as an educator, and between 1794 and 1800, he was a private tutor.

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and again conflated the distinction between philosophers and sages.[44]

This may give the false impression that philosophers were successful in educating rulers. Neither Plato nor Aristotle had much influence on humanistic education in Rome. Isocrates (436-338 BC), who established and headed an alternative higher education school to the Academy and the Lyceum held that role. Mediated by Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (*The Training of an Orator*), written in the first century AD, Isocrates was very influential on humanistic education in the Renaissance (Machiavelli's *The Prince* [1513], Castiglione's *Courtier* [1528]) and the Modern Period. His

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[43] Centuries before the movement called "philosophical practice and counseling," philosophers were advisers. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* shows Socrates giving advice, preaching the virtues of agreement between brothers, pointing out the advantages of self-control to those who seemed much in need of it. According to Donald Dudley, the cynic Crates gave services as a "public consultant" to the Athenian people (Dudley 1967, 52). Many cynics followed this example in Antiquity. In the Hellenistic period, Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics all agreed upon peace of mind as philosophy's main objective. The Romans appreciated this practical approach. Plotinus gave advice and reconciled many disputes.

Cicero defined philosophy as the art of life, a view that became predominant during the Renaissance, at least among cultivated men. It can be found as late as the seventeenth century: John Selden, for example, considered philosophy as nothing else but prudence, or the art of life.

Many philosophers have offered practical advice in relation to their philosophy. An example is John Locke in *Some Thoughts concerning Education*. Leibniz's views on the duty of the powerful to hear philosophers' advice are discussed below. Bertrand Russell is another well-known example of a philosopher ready to give advice on the conduct of life.

Not all philosophers agreed on the importance of this role of the philosopher, not even in the Hellenistic period. Already Ariston, a Stoic of the third century BC, argued that the business of philosophy was to produce the good actor for the play of life (Laertius, *Lives*, VII, 160), not to coach him in separate roles. He rejected not only Logic and Physics, but also one branch of ethics, the study that gave advice on the conduct of marital affairs, on the management of servants' affairs, and so on (von Arnim, 1903-1905, 50 358). Cleanthes in particular seems to have devoted attention to it. Ariston rejected such precepts as improper for philosophy. They were too numerous and too particular to be embraced under the laws of Philosophy, which should be brief and universal (see Dudley 1967, 100-101).

[44] Is there a difference between a philosopher and a sage? John Passmore, in trying to elucidate the meaning of "philosophy," suggests that the advice philosophers give "rests upon, but does not constitute, the successful completion of a philosophical task. In this respect, the philosopher differs from the sage: not uncommonly the whole content of the sage's 'wisdom' consists in advice" (Passmore 1967, 219). On sages and philosophers, see Passmore (1967, 217-19), Woodruff (1998, 14-31), and Neville (1978, chap. 3: "The Sage").

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conservative and traditional view emphasized the legacy of culture (language, literature, poetry, history and music) with the orator as its ideal, in contradistinction to the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition whose main interests were science and philosophy and its prominent representative the philosopher.[45]

2. Teaching Philosophers

Is there a difference between teaching would-be politicians and philosophers? To take some well-known examples: was there a difference between Plato's teaching at the Academy and his tutoring of Dionysius? Between Aristotle's lectures at the Lyceum and the education of Alexander? We know there was. Already Xenophon differentiates between Socrates' teaching of philosophers and his teaching of gentlemen.[46] Plato portrays Socrates as failing with Alcibiades and Lysis, both renowned as ambitious politicians, for their unwillingness to espouse philosophy as a complete way of life (Scott 2000, chap. 4). Only in the case of Plato's views in the *Republic* do the philosopher and the ruler's education coincide.[47] Already

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[45] This is not the whole story of Renaissance education. Rorty notes in her introduction to *Philosophers on Education*: "In radically different ways, St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), Martin Luther (1483-1546) in "Letter to Mayors. . . On Behalf of Christian Schools" (1524) and "On the Duty of Sending Children to Schools" (1530), and Desiderius Erasmus (c.1469-1536) in *Education of the Prince* (1516) developed new measures of integrity, new criteria for the unity of the outer and inner man…. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1526/1556) is a handbook for spiritual directors, who are charged with reconstituting the minds—the senses, imagination, desires, and so the will—of the faithful" (Rorty 1998, 5).

[46] Xenophon focuses on how Socrates "took care that his associates be self-sufficient [*autarkies*] in the actions appropriate to them" by providing them with whatever knowledge was "appropriate for a gentleman" (*Memorabilia*, 4.7.1). It becomes clear in the discussion that Socrates' own self-sufficiency was of a different character than the self-sufficiency of his gentlemanly associates. Socrates "taught them up to what point the properly educated gentleman should be familiar with any particular subject" (*Memorabilia* 4.7.2) but his own knowledge often exceeded this limit (see O'Connor 1994, 169).

[47] At the end of Plato's *Republic*, philosophic inquiry is reserved for the few, the well-tested or well-educated people. Zhang LoShan (Rorty's pseudonym) sums up the education they get: Beginning with "children's pastimes," myths, music (*Republic*, 3.398-403), and gymnastic training (*Republic*, 3.409-11), and then mathematics (arithmetic, plane and solid geometry), astronomy, and harmonic theory (7.521-37), persons with both passion and aptitude for philosophic devotion are introduced to dialectic (*Republic*, 7.531-40). LoShan rightly concludes, "But

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in Aristotle, there is a difference between the theoretical life, fit for the philosopher, and the active life, fit for the politician (*Nicomachean Ethics,* bk. 10).

Two examples from modern times indicate that there is a difference between educating politicians and philosophers. Thomas Hobbes' education of generations of young Cavendishes was centered on the practice of rhetoric. Richard Tuck explains:

> This was the essential technique for young men who, through the accident of birth, were going to play a major role in the councils of the kingdom. In a summary of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which he wrote for his pupils, Hobbes described the practice of rhetoric as resting "on the common opinions that men have concerning *Profitable* and *Unprofitable*; *Just* and *Unjust*; *Honourable* and *Dishonourable*…."[48] The skilled orator or writer would manipulate the existing opinions of his audience in order to win them round to his own point of view, and Hobbes devoted a great deal of effort to showing his young charges how they could win victory at the council table or in Parliament. (Tuck 1998, 149)

When advising philosophers, however, he urged them to attend consciously to their own differentiation in terms that are akin to self-creation:

> If you will be a philosopher in good earnest, let your reason move upon the deep of your cogitations and experience, those things that lie in confusion must set asunder, distinguished and every one stamped with its own name set in order; that is to say, your method must resemble that of creation. (Hobbes, *Works*, 1, 13; quoted in Mintz 1962, 18)

To take another example, Patrick Reily (1999) reports that Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz wrote a letter on the education of a prince.[49] Later on, he discussed his own education in letters he wrote to the French Platonist Remond.[50] However, Reily notes,

> He never wrote a substantial essay on the education of that class of intellectuals that (he thought) should give enlightened counsel to those among "the great" who are more "powerful" than "reasonable": "Those to

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unless we take the whole of the Republic to exemplify it, Plato does not offer a description of dialectic, let alone an analysis" (LoShan 1998, 37).

[48] Harwood (1986, 41); quoted in Tuck (1998, 155n2).

[49] Leibniz, "*Letter on the Education of a Prince*." In *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, edition of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences (Berlin, Darmtadt, Leipzig, etc. 1923-), 4th ed., vol. 3 (1987), 542-57.

[50] Leibniz, "Letters to Remond," in C. I. Gerhardt, 1875-1890.

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> whom God has given reason without power . . . have the right to be counselors [while the powerful] must listen patiently, and not throw good counsels to the winds."[51] Since Leibniz was, or considered himself, largely self-taught, he may have thought that the education of independent thinkers was too individual and idiosyncratic to permit useful generalization. (Reily 1998, 191-92)

Leibniz considered his autonomy as a thinker the result of his self-education and of his focus on novelty in each science, even before comprehending its established content. His reward, he said, was double:

> First, I did not fill my head with empty and cumbersome teachings accepted on authority of the teacher instead of sound arguments; second, I did not rest until I traced back to the issues and roots of every teaching and had penetrated to its principles. By such training, I was enabled to discover by my own effort everything with which I was concerned. (Leibniz 1969, 222)

At first sight, philosophers' education seems to be mainly self-education. This may explain why not much has been written on teaching philosophers. Although a journal named *Teaching Philosophy* exists, the kind of educational relationship a philosopher has with his close student may more appropriately be called an apprenticeship. This relationship is hardly described in the literature, as far as I know, except for two instances. Gregory Landini's recent monograph on *Wittgenstein's Apprenticeship with Russell* (2007) contains no material on the relationship between the two thinkers; in David Edmonds and John Eidinow's *Wittgenstein's Poker* (2001), however, much information is given about how this relationship went sour (39-53). The second instance I have in mind is Joseph Agassi's invaluable monograph on the years of his apprenticeship with Karl Popper (1993). It enables us to understand better the advantages, dangers, and possible tragic outcomes of this kind of relationship. This study is especially interesting since Agassi is himself now someone to whom the titles of the chapters in his *A Philosopher's Apprentice: In Karl Popper's Workshop* may apply, such as "The master's class" or "At the feet of the great thinker."[52]

Looking back at the history of philosophy, some examples of such relationships can be found. The Socratics, both early (Aeschines, Plato,

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[51] Leibniz, *Grundriss eines Bedenckens von Aufrichtung einer Societät in Teutschland*, in *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, IV (fourth series), 1, 530-31, 1923.

[52] This is especially interesting to me as I have been his apprentice for many years, during the time he was my Doctoral Thesis adviser, but also before and after.

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Xenophon) and modern (Popper, Leonard Nelson, and Agassi) address the issues involved in teaching philosophy, as do the Cynics and other Hellenistic philosophers. St. Augustine's view of the teacher inside and its modern alternatives (Cartesians, Naturalists, and Freudians) are also an important source. In modern times, the views of Francis Bacon, Michel de Montaigne, René Descartes and Spinoza are all relevant to the education of philosophers. The third Earl of Shaftesbury, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Søren Kierkegaard, all nostalgic for Ancient philosophy as a radical call to change one's whole personality, contributed to the subject. Some information on other philosophers' views of the matter can be drawn from letters and scattered remarks, the kind of material that usually finds its way into biographies.

One common theme in these sources is the philosopher's autonomy. Philosopher Ben-Ami Scharfstein, who wrote a unique book on the psychology of philosophers, *The Philosophers: Their Lives and the Nature of Their Thought*, emphasizes the philosopher's interest in creating recognizably personal extensions of himself. Thus, the philosopher demands autonomy or "the right to constitute himself imaginatively or intellectually as he pleases." He "would expect a person of this kind to be stubbornly individual in what most concerns him and to resist all encroachments on his self-expression" (Scharfstein 1980, 89).

Scharfstein gives many examples of the early origin of philosophers' autonomy and of the ways in which they often demanded and exhibited it. He lists the proud independence that characterized Socrates; the "elbowroom in all directions" that Montaigne needed; the detachment from philosophical tradition to which Descartes strove; the distance from community that Spinoza desired; Hobbes' need, even when young, "to prove things after" his "own sense"; Locke's hatred for a "slavish temper"; David Hume's decision, born in illness and depression, to depend on his own reasoning alone; George Berkeley's resolve to be his own man; Kant's obstinate freedom and advocacy of freedom; Friedrich Schelling's axiom, "The beginning and end of all philosophy is—freedom"; Nietzsche's exclamation, "Independence of soul! . . . No sacrifice is too great for that"; Wittgenstein's satisfied remark, "It is good that I did not let myself be influenced"; Edmund Husserl's view that everything in true philosophy must be established by the philosopher's own thought, the "radical attitude of autonomous self-responsibility which the meaning of a philosophy demands," and so on (Scharfstein 1980, 89).[53]

[53] Montaigne, "On Vanity," (1956, 740); for Hobbes, see Mintz (1962, 2); for Schelling, see Margoshes (1966); Nietzsche (1974, aphorism 98); Wittgenstein, (1978, 11); Husserl (1931, 29). I have written on the desire for autonomy, its lack,

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For all his autonomy, however, the would-be philosopher seems to need other philosophers. The rest of the chapter examines the mutual need of philosophers, the student's need for a teacher and the mentor's need for an apprentice.

3. The Would-Be Philosopher's Need for a Teacher

The would-be philosopher may be lonely, isolated in his natural surroundings. The encounter with philosophy provokes a crisis, or helps resolve a crisis. Philosophers are so different from their peers, some afraid that they are mad, that they have a great need for a parent-like teacher, "a friend." Various philosophers describe their conversion to philosophy, many times precipitated by an encounter with a philosopher or a philosophy book.

The teacher can take many forms. First and most common in the history of philosophy, one can learn about philosophy from writings. Many philosophers read and reacted to one philosopher, with whom they "dialogued," even if the latter was dead. Some examples are St. Augustine with Cicero,[54] Spinoza with Descartes,[55] Johann Gottlieb Fichte with Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (Heimsoeth 1923, 27-32), the third Earl of Shaftesbury, who abandoned his tutor John Locke for Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius (Voitle 1984, 13), and Nietzsche, who found Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* in a second-hand bookstore.[56]

However, reading may not be enough. Nietzsche insists on the significance of the philosopher's personality. He describes his yearning to "discover a philosopher to educate me, a true philosopher whom one could

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and its relevance for the encounter between a philosopher and an aspiring philosopher or client in Amir (2003; 2004).

[54] St. Augustine described what happened to him while reading Cicero's *Hortensius*: "Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart . . . 'Love of wisdom' is the meaning of the Greek word *philosophia*. This book kindled my love for it" (*Confessions* 34.7-8).

[55] Descartes, according to Colerus, was Spinoza's *Leermeester* (Freudenthal, 1899, 39; quoted in Nadler ([1999, 13).

[56] Nietzsche describes thus his encounter with Schopenhauer's book: "I do not know what demon whispered to me, 'Take this book home with you' . . . . I threw myself into the corner of the sofa with the newly acquired treasure and began to allow that energetic, gloomy genius to take effect on me . . . . Here I saw sickness and health, exile and refuge, hell and heaven" (Hollingdale 1973, 51).

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follow without any misgiving because one would have more faith in him than one had in oneself" (1983, *Untimely Mediations*, 2, "Schopenhauer as Educator," 139). Looking for "moral exemplars and models" (1983, 132), like "a son being instructed by his father" (1983, 134), he discovers Schopenhauer:

> I had discovered the educator I had sought for so long. But I had discovered him only in the form of a book, and *that was a great deficiency. So I strove all the harder to see through the book and to imagine the living man* whose great testament I had to read and who promised to make his heirs only those who would and could be more than merely his readers: namely his sons and pupils. (Nietzsche 1983, *Untimely Mediations*, 2, 36; italics added)

He further explains:

> I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example . . . this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books—in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing, what they wore and ate, and their morals, rather than what they said, let alone by what they wrote. (1983, *Untimely Mediations*, 3, 136-37)

A role model is therefore important for a philosopher. Nietzsche, like all those who are nostalgic for Ancient philosophy's requirement of complete transformation, is right in insisting on life details. Thus, James Conant argues in "Biography and Philosophy":

> There is a distinctively philosophical role for biography to play in the practice of ancient philosophy . . . . One must have some understanding of the lives that the authors of Sceptical, Stoic or Epicurean texts aspire to lead in order to understand such texts. One way of acquiring such an understanding is, while reading such texts, through imaginatively entering into the conception of how one ought to live that the texts themselves presuppose. (Conant 2001, 44n9)

Bertrand Russell has noted the significance of role models in Plutarch's famous *Lives*. In ancient Greek and Roman times, all biography contained an element of philosophical biography, which aimed to highlight that which was exemplary in such a life. Thus, for the ancients, lives could not be evaluated independently of philosophical considerations.

The role model may be imaginary. The Stoics, who found it hard to point to a living embodiment of their ideal, recommend, "Lose no time in setting before you a certain stamp of character and behaviour to observe

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both when by yourself and in company of others" (Epictetus 1937, CLXIV, 175).

The founder of Stoicism, however, was lucky enough to begin with a book that led him to a living example. As Diogenes Laertius tells us (*Lives*, VII, 2-3), when Zeno was reading the second book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* in an Athenian bookstore, he asked the owner where men like Socrates could still be found. Crates happened to pass by, and the owner, pointing to him, said to Zeno, "There, just follow that man." Zeno did precisely that, and thus became Crates' disciple.

If in luck, then, one can learn from a living philosopher. Philosophers are often persuasive presences, mentors, even saints. Socrates was extraordinarily attractive to his disciples, including Plato. As Plotinus' loving disciple, Porphyry, tells us, Plotinus searched for a philosophical mentor. His failure to find someone adequate depressed him, until an understanding friend "sent him to Ammonius, whom he had so far not tried. He went and heard him, and said to his friend, 'This is the man I was looking for.' From that day on he stayed continually with Ammonius" (Plotinus 1966, 9). Plotinus, too, proved to be a magnetic philosopher-father, who inspired such devotion that "many men and women of the highest rank, on the approach of death, brought him their children, both boys and girls, and entrusted them to him along with their property, considering that he would be a holy and god-like guardian" (Plotinus 1966, 25, 31).

Searching hard and travelling far to find a teacher was common practice in Antiquity, as Diogenes Laertius tells us (*Lives*, 7: 310). Indeed, Hellenistic writers tried to establish uninterrupted successions of philosophers by classifying them as teacher-pupil relationships. This means that we cannot count on biographies or anecdotes for telling us the truth about successions or about the relations between teacher and student.

I must pass over the Middle Ages and ignore India and China. To all these cultures, Scharfstein tells us, "the saintly philosophical mentor is an indispensable figure" (Scharfstein 1980, 8). Moving to Modern Europe, the real or apparent saintliness (or heroism) of some its philosophers has been far more influential than is evident from the prosaic biographical words allotted to them in the usual history of philosophy. According to Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, while lecturing on morality, Kant "was almost worshipped by his students, who took every opportunity of letting him know it . . . . People used to wait attentively to see him as he crossed the courtyard" (translated in Klimke 1951, 36, 38; quoted in Scharfstein 1980, 398n4). Though Schopenhauer never knew Kant personally, he regarded himself as his true disciple and inheritor. To those who venerated

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him, G. E. Moore was surely the philosopher-saint, while Wittgenstein was the philosopher-demon. Russell, too, could inspire veneration.

I hope these examples have sufficiently established the would-be philosopher's need for a teacher. It remains now to be seen whether this need is mutual.

4. The Philosopher's Need for Students

Does the teacher need the student? What for? Is it for securing the teacher's immortality, as David Blacker, following Plato, has intimated (Blacker 1997)? Is it for furthering his own education, as Socrates did? Is it for soothing the teacher's doubts by convincing others to share his worldview, as many philosophers have done? Is it for alleviating his solitude that a philosopher shares his views, even at the risk of being killed when coming back into Plato's cave? Does he feel a responsibility to propagate the truth? Does the truth come with an imperative to be shared? Is teaching a gift to others? If yes, of which kind?

In the history of philosophy, some philosophers-teachers depended on their students more than others: without their students' writings, we would not have known them. To take a few examples, the Socratic dialogues reveal Socrates, as does Timon's account of Pyrrho of Ellis; Arrian wrote Epictetus' *Discourses*, and most of Aristotle's texts survived thanks to his students' notes. If a philosopher writes, the student may be nevertheless significant, as significant as non-verbal communication is for promulgating one's ideas. Non-verbal communication between individuals takes place when they are in intimate contact. Its more apparent effects on the history of philosophy are through the faithful disciples who propagate a philosopher's ideas and, sometimes, his mannerisms.

Epictetus emphasizes the teacher's dependence on his students:

> There is an art of hearing as well as of speaking . . . one who proposes to hear philosophers speak needs a considerable training in hearing . . . . Show me what good I am to do by discoursing with you. Rouse my desire to do so . . . . Thus we also have certain natural desires, aye, and one that moves us to speak when we find a listener that is worth his salt: one that himself stirs the spirit . . . show yourself worthy or fit to *hear*, and then you will see how you will move the speaker. (Epictetus 1937, LXXXI, 147-48; see also *Discourses*, third book, chap. 23)

The philosopher who believes he understands is at odds with his surroundings. Tension is created because his achievement has come at the price of his isolation from those who uncritically accept societal values.

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He may therefore need to communicate with others, yet on the condition that they share his views. In this sense, philosophy is a medium for mutuality. Spinoza writes:

> It is part of my happiness that many others should understand as I do, and that their understanding and desire should be entirely in harmony with my understanding and desire. (Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of Intellect*, section 14)

Human mutuality is more difficult to achieve and human happiness more distant without understanding, which is passed on by means of philosophical persuasion.

I may think that if you approve of my ideas, you are indirectly approving of me. As you state your disagreement, I feel the hint of physical tension. Thus, persuasion can be seen as a form of attempted mutuality, which is disturbed in the end by resistance. Resistance expresses, among other things, my need to assert myself rather than yielding to others' thought. Because the need for intellectual self-assertion is so strong in creative thinkers, it is likely to deafen them to whatever is inconsistent with their own thought.

The resistance to persuasion may have yet another cause. Philosophers, writers, and their likes may themselves be hard to persuade just because their persuasive energies are directed against their own concealed doubts. Scharfstein highlights the self-doubts exemplified in the behavior of Descartes, Hegel, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Russell. The sometimes-truculent self-assurance they have expressed and their stubborn attempts to persuade may have been meant to still their own doubts (Scharfstein 1980, 6-7).

What about Socrates? His alleged self-sufficiency in both Plato and Xenophon's writings[57] has raised an interesting discussion. If Socrates was a paradigm of self-sufficiency, why was so much of his philosophical activity bound up with relationships to other people? Why were Socrates' lovers attractive to him?

In addressing these questions, the renowned Socratic scholar, Gregory Vlastos, focuses on Socrates' epistemological reasons for caring about other people. Noting the importance of dialectic and elenchus to the Socratic conception of philosophical understanding, Vlastos maintains that Socrates was interested in finding support for the doctrines on which he based his life. Leaving aside any pious duties of general benevolence, on

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[57] See Scott (2000, 128n20, chap. 4, 218-19, chap. 5) for the former and O'Connor (1994) for the latter.

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Vlastos' final view Socrates desired partners in elenctic argument who could be fellow-seekers after moral truth (Vlastos 1991, 177; see O'Connor 1994, 152n3).

Gary Alan Scott advances another explanation of the teacher's self-sufficiency: teaching may be a pure gift. Indeed, Socrates portrays himself in Plato's *Apology* as the god's gift to the city. In addition, following Nietzsche's interest in teaching as a spiritual gift, Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille, and Jacques Derrida show an interest in the topic of gift giving. Scott concludes his discussion of their views by asserting, "Socrates' gift undercuts the (false) dichotomy between self-regard and other-regard, egoism and altruism" (Scott 2000, 232n13). The charge of egoism, arising from Socrates' frequent claims to be benefitting himself by practicing philosophy in the way he does, is not a fatal counterclaim against the purity of his gift.

This reading answers the Nietzschean criticism of Socrates' alleged dependence on his students (*Twilight of the Idols*, "The Problem of Socrates"). Nietzsche, however, creates Zarathustra in contradistinction to his view of Socrates, as an example of an overflowing generosity that generates the teacher's spiritual gift. This is how he describes it:

> The gift-giving virtue is the highest virtue. Verily, I have found you out, my disciples . . . . You force all things to and into yourself that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love. Verily, such a gift-giving love must approach all values as a robber; but whole and holy I call this selfishness. (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, part I, chap. 22, "On the gift-giving virtue," 1)

According to Nietzsche, the teacher (Zarathustra) takes in order to benefit his students.

To conclude, teachers may need students but only of a certain kind. Students need teachers but for other reasons. The needs may be mutual but not necessarily similar or even compatible. The mutual but dissimilar needs of philosophers, of the would-be philosopher for a teacher, and of the mentor for an apprentice, may be at the origin of the problems such relationship often create.

5. Problems between Mentor and Apprentice

Various problems may arise between a philosopher-mentor and a philosopher-apprentice. I have identified three related issues that involve personality worship, an erotic bond that is misused, either by the teacher (sexual abuse) or by the student (falling in love with the messenger rather

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than the message), and relationships that eventually go sour.

A. Personality Worship

Personality worship is not foreign to philosophers. Hegel was fortunate with his disciples, who venerated him as "a philosophical world saviour" (Rosenkranz 1971, 383). We saw above that Kant, G. E. Moore, Wittgenstein, and Russell were also idolized. This was ancient practice: The Pythagoreans, who were the first to describe themselves as philosophers (according to a tradition deriving from a disciple of Plato, Heraclides Ponticus), attributed everything they created to Pythagoras.

As early as the end of the fourth century, the Academic and Peripatetic style of philosophy seemed to be the exception. Anthony Long, a prominent scholar of the Hellenistic Period, notes that the "Guru type of Greek philosopher," whose principal concerns were ethical, was common at that time. Those philosophers did not belong to a monolithic group. However, Long maintains that the early Academic and Peripatetic emphasis on systematic discussion and written exposition can be sharply distinguished from Stilpo, Crates, and others' informal and more individualized teaching. Another characteristic Long highlights is that "the followers of Epicurus and Pyrrho were alike in treating their leader as a quasi-divine and unique discoverer of… [equanimity's] grounds" (Long 1978, 84n15). So were Plotinus' followers.

Along these lines, in *A History of Cynicism*, Donald Dudley maintains, "Philosophy brought to the masses inevitably differed from the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle; from the noble quest to satisfy the curiosity of the intellect it has descended to become Daily Strength for Daily needs" (Dudley 1967, 53). This kind of practice may be potentially dangerous as it causes dependence between the philosopher and his audience.

Whether Socrates was such a Guru is debatable. Xenophon and Plato picture a Socrates who inspired his associates with a passionate desire to imitate him. However, he seemed to push his interlocutors towards a crisis, a shameful public display of their ignorance, while seducing them in the first place as the potential answer to their innermost desires and ambitions.[58] Further discussion of Socrates brings us inevitably to eroticism.

[58] See Morrison (1994), O'Connor (1994), Scott (2000).

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B. Eroticism

In her groundbreaking work on the role of biographical anecdotes in antiquity (2004), Ava Chitwood remarks that the student-teacher relationship in philosophical biography is often presented as a love affair between two philosophers, a relationship that is not precluded by age differences. She explains that biographers generally attempt to make the information about their subjects concrete and personal; thus,

> Philosophical influence becomes a love affair, much as philosophical differences become a feud. The terms and their implications (*paides*/*errates*) owe much, according to the great Greek scholar, Karl Dover, to Plato's "exploitation of the Athenian homosexual ethos as a basis of metaphysical doctrine and philosophical method." (Dover 1972, 16; quoted in Chitwood 2004, 11).

However, Chitwood's explanation does not exclude the possible eroticism of the mentor-apprentice relationship. Some of the accounts I gave express the not-un-erotic love of disciples for their teachers. Moreover, love can work more directly in making its philosophic conversions, as in the case of Socrates, the wonderful old exemplar of the personal and philosophical *eros* as one. Charles Kahn notes the significance of Socrates' eroticism already in Aeschines' Socratic dialogues (1994), earlier than Plato and Xenophon's well-known depictions of Socrates as the master of erotics. Another example is Hipparchia (c. 300 BC), who converted to Cynicism when she fell stubbornly in love with Crates (Laertius, *Lives*, 1, 399).

Love, potency, pregnancy, birth—these are common terms used to describe creativity. As Scharfstein argues, an actual connection exists between sexual and otherwise creative life (Scharfstein 1980, 98-99). Some modern philosophers have regarded their love for a woman as decisive, not only for their personal lives, but for their philosophy as well (examples are Friedrich W. J. Schelling's Caroline, Auguste Comte's Clothilde, John Stuart Mill's Harriet).

One of the potential dangers of the eroticism of the mentor-apprentice relationship is referred to today as "transference." In *Socrates as Educator*, Scott claims that Plato's dialogues repeatedly exemplify the danger of falling in love with the messenger and not the message. The critique of discipleship that Plato builds into his portrayal of Socrates underscores the risks of using charismatic figures and methods that rely heavily upon imitation and upon *ad hominem* argumentation. Perhaps this is also the main reason, in dramatizing more than two dozen of Socrates' innumerable conversations, that Plato shows the philosopher succeeding

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only momentarily or in small measures with select interlocutors. More pronounced success might only trivialize what is at issue in his approach to these youths and lead readers to underestimate the odds against the popularization of philosophy. Socrates' modest success might also minimize the risks of misappropriation to which even Socrates, who proclaims not to teach, nevertheless remains vulnerable.

Time after time, Socrates interlocutors are shown falling in love with the philosopher instead of with philosophy. Scott argues that this may be a problem endemic to the role of the philosophical exemplar, in which Plato casts him; but this problem may threaten all teachers and mentors in the process of nurturing others. He further notes that Plato wrote these dialogues in such a way as to illuminate the problem we now call "transference" and to show how closely the *eros* that can lead one to philosophy is related to honor-love (*philotimia*), spiritedness (*thumos*), and the desire to get more than one's fair share (*pleonexia*) (see Scott 2000, 176-77). This is the student's potential misuse of the erotic relationship.

The teacher's misuse is abuse. While Socrates was free from it, this may not always be the case. Yet this subject is rarely publicly debated. Hazel Rowley's recent *Tête-à-tête* is an example of the sexual use a philosopher (Sartre, in this case) made of his followers (Rowley 2006).

The erotic bond that may be inseparable from teaching and learning is prone to different kinds of misuse, either by the teacher (sexual abuse) or by the student (falling in love with the messenger rather than the message). However, the relationship can go sour for other reasons as well.

C. Relationships Go Sour

Paul Valerie wrote, "Philosophy cannot suit anyone except the person who creates it, and even in him it is always in an inchoate stage," the stage of always being born (Valerie 1973, 593, no. 1927). Some people have a natural resistance to ideas other than their own. Leibniz said that one is violently disturbed when compelled to follow the thoughts of someone else (Leibniz 1969, 152-53). Kant also tells us of the great difficulty he has in grasping the ideas of other philosophers (To Reinhold, March 28, 1794, in Kant 1972, 662), as does Husserl (Spiegelberg 1965, 90). The difficulty in following others is the converse of the intensity of thought in their own direction and in response to their own needs. Even apart from such creative resistance, a philosopher is naturally more difficult to persuade than a nonprofessional is, as he lives an intellectually competitive life.

When in spite of such difficulties, philosophers become allies the relationship can go sour. For when a mutual opponent is absent, the allies'

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differences grow more apparent. The criticism levelled by an ally may strike as hard as that levelled by a member of our family, who resembles us, shares our sensitivities, knows our weak and sore spots, and enters into our lives in every way.

Let us consider some examples. Descartes' relationship with his disciple, Henricus Regius, also called Henri le Roy (or, de Roy), began to sour when Descartes required that everything Regius wrote be approved by Descartes, and Regius desired to be both Cartesian and independent (Descartes 1970). Grown old in battle, Kant praised those of his disciples who had remained loyal, deploring the "ludicrous passion for originality" that has misled other disciples, such as Fichte (Saner 1973, 13; chaps. 6, 7; 203-4). Husserl, who revered his own teacher, Franz Brentano, painfully abandoned him and went his own way, only to perpetuate bitter relationships with his own disciples, Eugen Fink, for example (Spiegelberg 1965, 2, 740, n125). Nietzsche's prophet, Zarathustra, entertains ambivalent relations with his followers, hating his friends and urging his students to leave him:

> Go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And better still: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you.
>
> The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends.
>
> One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you pluck at my laurels?
>
> . . . . You had not yet sought yourselves when you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore, all belief is of so little account.
>
> Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me will I return to you*.[59]

The relationships within the circle of Popper's followers has been notorious for their violence. Agassi's autobiography, *A Philosopher's Apprentice: in Karl Popper's Workshop*, is loaded with emotions: aggression, ambivalence and melancholy (1993). Agassi himself follows Eastern teachers' practice by reacting violently to students who refuse to be autonomous by clinging dependently to him: I am not your mother, he says (Fuks 2008). Wittgenstein, once an apprentice to Russell, grew to dislike his mentor (Edmonds and Eidinow 2001, 39-53). Both Georg Henrik von Wright and Norman Malcolm's testimonies of Wittgenstein repeat the themes of sectarianism among his students, the pain it caused

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[59] From Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, quoted in *Ecce Homo*, forward, 4; see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, part 3, chap. 11, "On the spirit of gravity," 2; part 1, chap. 22, "On the gift-giving virtue," 3; see *Gay Science*, Prelude in German Rhymes, 7.

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him, and the failure he felt as a teacher. Because he exemplifies most of what can go wrong in the mentor-guru type of philosopher, I quote both testimonies to conclude this chapter:

> There grew much unsound sectarianism among his pupils. This caused Wittgenstein much pain. He thought that his influence as a teacher was, on the whole, harmful to the development of independent minds in his disciples. I am afraid that he was right. And I believed that I can partly understand why it should be so. Because of the depth and originality of his thinking, it is very difficult to understand Wittgenstein's ideas and even more difficult to incorporate them into one's own thinking. At the same time the magic of his personality and style was most inviting and persuasive. To learn from Wittgenstein's without coming to adopt his forms of expression and catchwords and even to imitate his tone of voice, his mine and gestures was almost impossible. The danger was that the thoughts should deteriorate into a jargon. The teaching of great men often has the simplicity and naturalness which makes the difficult appear easy to grasp. Their disciples usually become, therefore, insignificant epigones. The historical significance of such men does not manifest itself in their disciples but through influences of a more indirect, subtle, and often unexpected kind. (Von Wright, quoted in in Malcolm 1984, 17)

Malcolm's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* echoes this experience:

> He believed that his influence as a teacher was largely harmful. He was disgusted and pained by what he observed of the half-understanding of his philosophical ideas, or a tendency towards a shallow cleverness in his students. He felt himself to be a failure as a teacher. This, I believe, was a source of constant torment to him. (Malcolm 1984, 53)

Concluding Remarks

I have investigated in this chapter the mutual need of philosophers, of the would-be philosopher for a teacher, and of the mentor for an apprentice. The fruitful outcome of those not necessarily similar needs is complicated by the aspirations to autonomy of both teacher and student and by the strong erotic bond the tradition commonly ascribes to learning and teaching. Thus, such a relationship is not devoid of dangers. I have identified three related problems that may arise between a philosopher-mentor and a philosopher-apprentice. These include personality worship, an erotic bond that is misused either by the teacher (sexual abuse) or by the student (falling in love with the messenger rather than the message), and a relationship that goes sour usually because of both teacher and student's needs for autonomy, the teacher's need for influence and the

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student's growing need for independence.

Various philosophers have attempted to avoid the potential dangers I have enumerated in the mentor-apprentice relationship, either by educating for self-education or by pushing the student away at the appropriate time. These include the Socratics, both ancient (Aeschines, Plato, Xenophon) and modern (Nelson, Popper, Albert Einstein, Agassi), the Cynics and their counterpart Eastern teachers (such as Zen and Taoist masters), early Modern philosophers, philosophers of the Enlightenment, and those like Shaftesbury, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, who were nostalgic for the Ancients' view of philosophical education as complete transformation. However, further discussion of these contributions will await the next chapter.

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Chapter Three

Teaching Self-Education

This chapter addresses the means to enhance self-education in view of avoiding the problems the mentor-apprentice relationship may create. In the previous chapter, I have identified three related problems that may arise between a philosopher-mentor and a philosopher-apprentice. These include personality worship, an erotic bond that is misused either by the teacher (sexual abuse) or by the student (falling in love with the messenger rather than the message), and a relationship that goes sour usually because of both teacher and student's needs for autonomy, the teacher's need for influence and the student's growing need for independence.

Various philosophers attempted to avoid the dangers identified above. Among them, we can count the Socratics, both Ancient (Aeschines, Plato, and Xenophon) and Modern (Leonard Nelson, Karl Popper, Albert Einstein, and Joseph Agassi), the Cynics, and their Eastern counterparts, such as Zen and Taoist masters. Later, Early Modern philosophers, philosophers of the Enlightenment, and those thinkers, like the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Søren Kierkegaard, who were nostalgic for the ancients' view of philosophical education as radical transformation, attempted to curtail the possible dangers involved in teaching.

The three following sections introduce three answers to the question the chapter addresses, what are the means to enhance self-education? Each answer begins with Socrates as the supreme philosophic example of both the autonomous individual and the consummate teacher.

The first answer regards philosophical education as a gift. Beginning with Socrates, this view has been further developed by Nietzsche. Later on, following the contribution of Marcel Mauss' analysis of the "gift," it became the topic of a (post-)modern ethical debate involving Georges Bataille, Jacques Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard.

The second answer regards philosophical education as a teacher-less education. Beginning again with Socrates, this view was reprised by Shaftesbury in the eighteenth century and by Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century, and was endorsed by modern Socratics such as Popper, Nelson,

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and their follower, Agassi.[60] In another key, Socratic education evolved into the view that philosophers should not have human teachers at all, as can be seen in St. Augustine's interpretation of Christ as the teacher within and in some modern counterparts of it. Socrates' notorious irony as a means to further teacher-less education has been reprised as humor in Shaftesbury and Kierkegaard's Socratic endeavors.

Socratic irony is also at the origin of the Cynics' sarcasm, later attenuated into humor by Crates; coupled with unconventional teaching methods, such as violence and humiliation, Cynics' educational tools pertain to the third and final answer to the question this chapter addresses. The final answer includes such diverse examples as Cynic teachers, Zen Masters, and Nietzsche's advice. They can be subsumed under the title "unconventional methods to promote autonomy and further self-education." Let us begin with the first answer, which considers philosophical education to be a gift.

1. Philosophical Education as a Gift

Can education be a gift? Could it liberate the student from debt and the teacher from dependence, thus making the relationship easier and avoiding its becoming sour? In the history of philosophy, two examples of philosophic education as a free gift stand out: first, Socrates, who famously saw his activity as a gift to the city, and second, Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who insists on his overflowing virtue as a teacher, inspiring thereby a renewed discussion of the gift of education by Mauss, Bataille, and Derrida.[61]

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[60] On Shaftesbury as a precursor of some features of Popper's Critical Rationalism, see Amir (2016a) and (2016b).

[61] The ethical Nietzschean concept of gift giving has recently been the focus of interest in various disciplines, and in ethics, it has reached the status of a key concept. See for example, Berking (1999), especially part IV, "Morality and Society," and Schrift (1997). Alan D. Schrift writes, "The theme of the gift, then, can be located at the center of current discussions of deconstruction, gender, ethics, philosophy, anthropology, and economics. It is . . . one of the primary focal points at which contemporary disciplinary and interdisciplinary discourses intersect" (Schrift 1997, "Introduction: Why Gift?" 3). Readers interested in economy should consult in the anthology Schrift edited the contributions of Hélène Cixous (148-73), who proposes a "feminine" economy of gift and generosity, and Pierre Bourdieu (1997a; 1997b), who considers the question of the gift to be ultimately a *political* question.

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A. God's Gift to the City

All discussion of educational gifts must begin with Socrates. In the *Apology*, he publicly announces for the first time what had previously been implicit in his daily practice. Considering himself "the god's gift" to the Athenian people, the greatest benefactors of all (36c-d), he warns the jury against the prosecution of the case (*Apology* 30d-e). Throughout the Socratic dialogues, Plato makes sure Socrates is incorruptible. Indeed, Plato makes Socrates' incorruptibility—by money, gifts, honors, and even sexual favors, as the encounter with Alcibiades illustrates—a prominent feature of Socrates' characterization. This way of describing Socrates and, by extension, philosophy, as Socrates practices it, appears to be extremely important to Plato's portrayal. The incorruptibility of Socrates is also vital to his characterization of the philosopher's role as a *paideutes*, a lover, and a gadfly in the city. Thus, it should be no surprise that Plato has Socrates argue in his defense that, far from benefitting personally from his practice in the city, he has neglected his own affairs in order to do the god's work, always refusing to accept a fee (or to enrich himself in any other conventional way) for his services (see *Apology* 23c, 31c). As Gary Alan Scott explains,

> This stance is vital to his philosophical practice, because it keeps Socrates uniquely free in several important respects: to converse with whoever he wishes, to be able to speak the truth, to be unconstrained by his interlocutor's evaluation of him or any need to make him feel good, to be mastered by no one, and to be in no one's debt. (Scott 2000, 31)

Furthermore, Scott maintains that because Socrates considers himself a gift from god as well as the city's greatest benefactor, and Plato locates him "in a distinctive gift economy instead of a market economy based upon exchange." Thus,

> The connection between two essential characteristics of Plato's Socrates—the notion of the philosopher as a benefactor and the characterization of his gift as being incomparable with the kinds of goods that can be exchanged––underwrites the contrast that Plato is drawing between Socrates' behaviours and practices, on the one hand, and prevalent conventions, on the other hand. (Scott 2000, 170)

Taking Aristotle as a source for the conventional ethos governing Athenian practices of gift exchange in the fifth and fourth centuries, the logic governing the benefactor/beneficiary relationship in Aristotle's

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account oblige the other or render him indebted.[62] It will be helpful at this point to recall Aristotle's view of the philosopher as a friend.

B. Philosophy as Friendship

When discussing friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, philosophy comes up in Aristotle's discussion of how to repay benefactors. Aristotle compares the Sophists' use of knowledge for honor and gain to the relationship between the true philosopher and his student. The latter is a friendship based on excellence in which the philosopher bestows the greatest benefits for the sake of the friend (1164a33-b6). The philosopher is willing to be a benefactor to those who are his inferiors; he is even, Aristotle suggests, the benefactor by excellence, and the philosophic friendship that Aristotle presents as paradigmatic of virtuous friendship is not that between two mature philosophers but that between a philosopher and his student. Nor is Aristotle idiosyncratic in this choice: both Plato and Xenophon portray Socrates as the friend of his students, but they do not present him as the close friend of other philosophers, and are reticent even about depicting conversations between Socrates and those students such as Plato who were most nearly his equals.[63]

Protagoras was not a true philosopher because he used knowledge in the service of gain, and he was not a true friend because he accepted only students who could pay and gave them only what they paid for. A true teacher, like Aristotle's teacher, Plato, in contrast, must have real affection for, and interest in, his students. Although not his equals, they must be sufficiently promising and sufficiently akin to him that he can take pleasure in their company and find the activity of teaching them inherently rewarding. Aristotle does not explain just how teaching may be helpful for the philosopher, but Plato's own portrayal of Socrates suggests that even more important than the value of being pressed to get one's thoughts in the clearest possible form may be the value of watching what happens to others' souls as they confront certain arguments. Moreover, in the case of

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[62] See Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, bk. 7, chap. 3: 1238b22-26; *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 4, chap. 3: 1124b10-13; bk. 9, chap. 7: 1168a9-12; bk. 8, chap. 13: 1162b6-13; bk. 9, chap. 1: 1164a33-b7. See also Scott (2000, chap. 1, section 1c).

[63] In her excellent discussion of Aristotle's view of friendship, Lorraine Smith Pangle remarks that it would be surprising if mature philosophers who knew and respected one another did not develop some sort of friendship based on mutual admiration, a sense of kinship, and shared benefits from discussions. Evidently, the greater degree of activity and warmth, and surely the more decisive benefits, would be found in a teacher-student friendship (Pangle 2003, 134).

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Socrates, whatever profit he gained from these discussions seems to have been supplemented by the enormous pleasure he took in the simple act of conversing with promising young people.

Why, then, does Aristotle suggest that we owe some reward to the philosophic teacher? The philosopher has not acted for a reward and does not need one. While the gratitude and affection of a good student will surely please him, they are not crucial to him, and being wise, he can have little concern for honor. Perhaps the strongest sense in which gratitude and affection are fitting is that they are a good man's natural responses to someone who has helped him. Indeed, one betrays an impoverished soul if one does not respond in this way. If honoring the philosopher is fitting, the chief reason must be that it is good for us, or good for others who may take notice to recognize excellence:

> One [should] make a return to those with whom one has studied philosophy; for their worth cannot be measured against money, and they can get no honour which will balance their services, but it is perhaps enough, as it is with the gods and with one's parents, to give them what one can. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.1; quoted in Pangle 2003, 222)

The discussion of philosophy as friendship is closely associated with the issue of taking fees for philosophical discussions, an issue which I now address.

C. Fees

In taking fees for philosophizing, analogous to taking fees for a sophistic education, the philosopher, like the sophist, makes himself and his expertise available to anyone who can pay. Moreover, in so doing, the philosopher loses the right to refuse his services or to terminate them once begun (see Blank 1985, 10-20). In short, the philosopher loses his autonomy. Making philosophical truth readily available to all who can and wish to pay for it assimilated the philosopher to the sophist, who has been criticized as making philosophy available to all those who can pay. One begins to discern the analogy between sophists and prostitutes (*pornai*), which Xenophon drew explicitly (*Memorabilia* 1.6.13).

Why is prostituting oneself, making oneself available to all those who can pay, especially odious if one is a philosopher? The answer lies in the nature of philosophy, both the activity and its subject matter, at least as Diotima taught it to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Philosophy, the search for truth, is an act of friendship and love between willing partners and Socratic conversation is the spiritual or intellectual analogue of physical

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intercourse (*Symposium*, 203bff; see also Blank 1985, 22-24). Given this erotic conception of the philosopher's activity, to take a fee for it is antithetical to the enterprise itself. It would "commodify" what cannot be commodified. Further, it would entail extreme bad faith on behalf of the philosopher. To be a prostitute taking a fee for "love" is one thing, to be a philosopher engaged in a joint venture for truth is something quite different. To conflate the two is illicit, a sort of category mistake; it is to bring together a false ideal of love with a true one. At least in the whorehouse one is (hopefully) aware of its illusory status as an abode of love. In Socratic conversation there are not, however, or ought not to be, any illusions. One must say what one thinks, without encumbrance, and not dissimulate.[64] Moreover, to demand a fee for this is to demean it, to assimilate philosophy to a craft-like instrumentalism, and, correlatively, to obligate the philosopher and thereby remove his autonomy and freedom.

Lorraine Smith Pangle sums this up thus:

> To retain one's independence and autonomy, not to be obligated to talk to anyone willing to pay, is crucial. To be "available" not merely assimilated philosophy to sophistry, but also provides the reason why such assimilation is odious. It forces the philosopher to engage in acts of extreme bad faith, to pretend to engage in an act of friendship. (Pangle 2003, 158)

In his study of Socrates and Maimonides' dislike of fees, Daniel Frank notes how teaching for a fee is compared with the prostitute's activity (Frank 1996). Oliver Leaman interestingly connects fees and academic language in the following argument:

> Once philosophers did start teaching for payment, they no longer were concerned to transmit their subject in the way in which one friend would talk to another, and so the language of philosophy changed from being interesting and witty to becoming highly academic, technical and obscure. (Leaman 1996, 4)

What was, then, the example of philosophy as a gift that Socrates gave us?

D. Philosophy as a Gift: Socrates

In contrast to the way the gift functions in Athenian economy, Socrates' gift requires no repayment, since for the most part its recipient does not even recognize it as a gift. In general, it is fair to say that practically all the

[64] See the references in Brickhouse and Smith (1994, 14nn21-22).

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characters, who converse with Socrates, do not recognize what he is offering them or they misconstrue or misappropriate the gift he gives them. Socrates can nonetheless claim, however, that he has conferred upon Athens the greatest benefit, because the gift he gives his fellow citizens is not improvement but moral perplexity "with all its painfulness," as Richard Kraut noted in *Socrates and the State* (Kraut 1984, 225). What is more, at the same time that Socrates is conferring his gift and through the very same activity, he claims to be benefiting himself.

Unlike the way in which the gift functions in Aristotle's account, Socrates' gift is designed to liberate and empower rather than to enslave its recipients. This further distinguishes it from gifts in what are referred to as "potlatch economies," following Mauss' description (1990 [1950]). Throughout the dialogues, this unlikely philanthropist consistently avoids becoming enmeshed in the prevalent forms of market exchange. This policy is dramatized by the examples of his encounters with Thrasymachus and Alcibiades and is made explicit by his testimony in the *Apology*. At the same time, Socrates somehow always manages to gain the upper hand in the dialogues within the conventional ethos governing gift relations. He prides himself on the freedom that this posture secures for him, and many of his interlocutors express the offense they feel at Socrates' "air of superiority."

Because it is the nature of Socrates' gift to be incommensurable with the kinds of gifts that can be exchanged, and that often mask a kind of warfare, Plato forces his readers to go beyond the exchange framework of the conventional ethos of benefaction to grasp the nature and function of Socrates' gift. This gift is not well construed within a restrictive or limited economy such as that which underwrites Aristotle's account of benefaction and Mauss' description of potlatch. One obvious reason for this is that it is not recognized as a gift by most of his interlocutors. It is in the nature of the purest kind of gifts to go unnoticed by their recipients.

Is Socrates' gift then a "pure" gift, an act of pure generosity that carries with it no implied obligation to reciprocate because it goes unrecognized by its recipients and because Socrates expects nothing in return? If so, then Socrates' gift might be conceived of within a general or an unrestricted economy. Construed in this way, one wonders whether the failure of Socrates' interlocutors to recognize that a gift is being given is evidence of a fault or a misuse of Socrates' gift, as Nietzsche charged, or whether this is rather its necessary condition. Nietzsche criticized exactly that in several of his books, and perhaps most clearly in *Twilight of the Idols*, especially in the section entitled "The Problem of Socrates." Nietzsche accuses Socrates of being a decadent, inasmuch as he needs followers to

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philosophize as he does. The adoration of these fawning disciples, Nietzsche would say, is what Socrates gets out of his philosophical practice.

Following Nietzsche's portrayal of Zarathustra as a gift-giver, to which we shall attend shortly, and Mauss' work *The Gift* ([1950] 1990), the notion of the gift has attracted various thinkers (Bataille 1997; Baudrillard [1972] 2001; Derrida 1998). A pure gift within a general economy, as Derrida and Bataille have stressed, must be an act of excess, of pure squandering. If we should understand Socrates' gift as a pure gift, then he would have no need for his interlocutors or his associates, and he should not care about how any of them choose to live. Plainly then Socrates' gift cannot be a "pure" gift in this sense.

Thus, there are weighty reasons for rejecting both a restrictive and a general economy as fitting frameworks within which to understand Plato's portrait of Socrates' gift. A *tertium quid* emerged from the notion of a circulating gift, a gift that arises neither from an act of squandering nor from the desire to enslave another, but rather from the gift's own intrinsic powers. This is the notion of the gift that arises: something that must be shared with others, something sacred that one must pass along for one's own good. Alan Schrift points out that the second-generation commentators on Mauss have focused more closely upon the spiritual significance of the gift and the idea of a circulating gift than on the practice of potlatch (Schrift 1997, 1-22). This was chiefly due to the influence of Nietzsche's view on gifts, to which I turn now.

E. Philosophy as a Gift: Nietzsche and Beyond

Nietzsche occupies a significant place in the recent discussion of gift giving, due to his genealogy of the notion of guilt and the ethics of generosity he advocates.

One way of understanding gifts is through the concept of guilt: gift and sacrifice belong together, sacrifice is related to debts (*Shulden*) and debts are related to guilt (*Schuld*). Helmuth Berking explains:

> We do not know how guilt came into the world, but we can investigate what it may have meant to owe *something*, and try to show how this *something* gradually fell away, how guilt (*Schuld*) came out of debts (*Shulden*) and how obligations came out of the relationship formulae brought about by exchange. (Berking 1999, 51)

Nietzsche gave an amazingly simple answer to the "genealogy of morals." Guilt, he argued, comes from owing. Creditor and debtor (*Shuldner*) form

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the basic configuration, but its obvious core is the idea that there is an equivalent for damage and pain, that debts can be settled through suffering. The creditor, as it were, acquires a right to cruelty, which he executes by making the other suffer in a "veritable festival." Nietzsche bases his critique of morals on the exchange relation, or rather on the law of obligation in which punishment, precisely as pain and suffering, serves as compensation to the injured party. Punishment, however—at first, the right of masters—is one of those outer bulwarks which were erected against the instincts of freedom, but which in the end only caused them to turn inward. Someone who is too weak to harm others will harm himself:

> Hostility, cruelty, the delight in persecution, raids, excitement, destruction all turned against their begetter. Lacking external enemies and resistances, and confined within an oppressive narrowness and regularity, man began rending, persecuting, terrifying himself, like a wild beast hurling itself against the bars of its cage . . . . This fool, this pining and desperate prisoner, became the inventor of "bad conscience." (GM, 218)[65]

Thus began the malady of a humanity whose history has been one of resentment and guilt: "Guilt comes from debts, and debts are settled with violence, with murder and homicide, torture and enslavement. Retribution, however—repentance, atonement, reparation—remains a sacred duty" (GM, 52).

Resentment and guilt cannot be the source of a healthy morality. They have to be exchanged for self-sufficient strength. "Interestingly," Michael Slote remarks,

> this new form of self-sufficient strength can help us to justify some further kinds of altruistic behavior, and ironically enough, it is Nietzsche, the self-avowed egoist, who shows us how to do this . . . . As Nietzsche points out in *Beyond Good and Evil* (section 260), *Joyful Wisdom* [i.e., *The Gay Science*] (section 55) and many other places, one can also be moved to do things to other people out of a self-sufficient sense of having more than enough, a superabundance, of things. Nietzsche thinks this kind of "noble"

[65] I have used the following abbreviations for Nietzsche's works: EH for *Ecce Homo*, GS for *The Gay Science*, GM for *The Genealogy of Morals*, Z for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, GA for *Werke: Gross-Oktav-Ausgabe*. Unless otherwise indicated, usually by p. (for page) preceding Arabic numerals, references to Nietzsche's works are the abbreviation of the book and the relevant section in Arabic numeral. For example, GS, 3, refers to *The Gay Science*, section 3. When referring to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Arabic numerals refer to chapters and P stands for Prologue. Roman numerals refer to parts of books. For example, Z, II, 1, means *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, part II, chapter 1.

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> giving is ethically superior to giving based on pity or a sense of obligation. (Slote 1997, 249)

Gary Shapiro has made the most contributions to this area of scholarship on Nietzsche (Shapiro 1997; 1991). Bataille, a Nietzschean and Hegelian French follower, helped popularize Nietzsche's ethics of generosity through his own version of this ethics that he termed "expenditure" (Bataille 1985; 1988; Stoekl 1997).[66] Now, as Shapiro points out,

> Clearly squandering (*Verschwenden* or *Vergeuduung*) has at least a double value in Nietzsche's texts. From the nihilistic standpoint analyzed in *The Will to Power,* section 12, squandering is seen as a loss that weakens and exhausts the agent; the recognition of that waste leads to the belief that everything is in vain. Yet Zarathustra's uses of *Verschwenden* and similar terms suggest the Dionysiac joy in destruction, expenditure, and *dépense* which inspired Bataille. (Shapiro 1997, 285)

Following the second option, I propose that we examine Zarathustra's character and his most prominent characteristic, the gift-giving virtue. For as Harold Alderman notices, Nietzsche "portrays the character of Zarathustra as the paradigmatic philosophical individual and enjoins us, especially in part IV of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to appropriately imitate that character" (Alderman 1997, 149).

Nietzsche writes in the preface to *Ecce Homo* that with Zarathustra he has "given mankind the greatest present (*Geshenk*) that has been made to it so far" (EH, 219). The book itself involves a discourse about the gift. Most obviously, in the first part of this text, the gift is never far away; it is announced at the beginning and eventually becomes the subject of a chapter: "On the Gift-Giving Virtue" (*Von der schenckenden Tugent*). The question of the gift is internal to the text of *Zarathustra*. What is it to be a gift, to be a giver, to be a receiver; these questions arise throughout the book ("a gift for all and none"). The text clearly problematizes giving and everything associated with it.

In the series of economic speeches in which he weighs and measures the "three evils"—sex, the lust to rule, and selfishness—Zarathustra considers each of these, both in the "evil" form in which it is conventionally stigmatized and the transvalued form in which it appears to him after his return home. Of the lust to rule (*Herrschsucht*), he says:

> The lust to rule—but who would call it *lust* [*Sucht*] when what is high longs downward for power? Verily, there is nothing diseased or lustful in

[66] On Bataille's philosophy, see Amir (2016c).

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> such longing and condescending. That the lonely heights should not remain lonely and self-sufficient eternally; that the mountain should descend to the low plains—oh, who were to find the right name for such longing? "Gift-giving virtue"—thus Zarathustra once named the unnamable. (Z, III, 10)

In "Zarathustra's Prologue," Zarathustra addresses his first speech to the sun, which he personifies and praises for its s*chenkende Tugend*: "You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine?" Zarathustra too is overfull:

> Behold, I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands out-stretched to receive it . . . . I would give away and distribute (*verschenken and austeilen*), until the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches. (Z, I, P, 1)

Moreover, at the same time that he praises the sun, which always gives and never receives, he names the deficiency, the vice that corresponds to the gift-giving virtue: "So bless me then, you quiet eye that can look upon an all-too-great-happiness without envy [*Neid*]!" Envy, we learn later (for example, in "On the Tree on the Mountainside," Z, I, 8), is a disease of the eye, the evil eye that characterizes the economic stance of the resentful who practice a morality of good and evil.

Die schenkende Tugend, like other virtues, requires courage, as giving and receiving are both fraught with danger. Nietzsche read that in Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Gifts."[67]

On the one hand, in the chapter, "On the Gift-Giving Virtue," Zarathustra says to the men in the market place, "I love him whose soul squanders itself, who wants no thanks and returns none; for he always gives away and does not want to preserve himself." Moreover, at the beginning of the fourth part he describes himself as a squanderer "with a thousand hands" (Z, I, 22). Zarathustra soon comes to stand in relation to his followers as a giver of gifts, and his followers are very eager to receive

[67] Emerson wrote an essay on "Gifts" (1983). A large part of the substance of the debt that Nietzsche often expresses to Emerson is a complex of themes drawn from economic thought, taken in the most comprehensive sense: debts, gifts, compensation, squandering and the like. The external signs of indebtedness have often been noted. Nietzsche's notes for *The Gay Science* and for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are full of references to Emerson and citations from his essays. On Emerson's economic thought, see Grusin (1988). Discussions of Nietzsche's reading of and use of Emerson's writings can be found in Baumgarten (1957); Hubbard (1958); and Walter Kaufmann's "Translator's Introduction" in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1974, 7-13).

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his teachings as gifts from on high.

On the other hand, unlike his followers, Zarathustra knows the dangers involved in gift giving; he knows that the gift is a *pharmakon* (or poison, to use Derrida's notion)[68] for those who benefit from receiving the gifts often feel beholden to the one who gave them. Zarathustra thus cautions those who have nothing to give to be reserved in accepting, because "great indebtedness does not make men grateful, but vengeful; and if a little charity is not forgotten, it turns into a gnawing worm" (Z, II, 3).

To be able to give gifts rightly, Zarathustra claims, is an "art [*Kunst*]" (Z, IV, 8), and great care and skill is required in order to prevent feelings of indebtedness in the recipients of one's generosity. For Zarathustra, overfull with wisdom, giving is a "necessity" (Z, III, 14), and while his followers may return eternally to the words of their teacher, his gifts will not be repaid, as he confesses not to know the happiness of those who receive. This, Zarathustra realizes, is his ultimate poverty: his hand never rests from giving. However, by remaining committed to the affirmation of giving even beyond what he possesses, Zarathustra is never impoverished by this need to give, nor does he ever reconsider his judgment that the gift-giving virtue is the highest virtue.

Nicolai Hartmann refers in *Ethics* to one of the three "self-sufficient virtues" as *die schenkende Tugend*, acknowledging that it was without a name until Nietzsche attempted to define it (Hartmann 1932, 2, 332-40). Hartmann associates it with "spiritual gifts." The law of giving and taking that pertains to such gifts is distinct from that which governs material goods, for he who bestows such gifts is in no way diminished by doing so. In the presence of those with this creative genius, "all hearts are open. No one goes away from them except laden with gifts, yet no one can say what he has received" (1932, 2, 336). It is a "virtue without sacrifice," because "the imparter simply overflows" (334-35).

The question is, of course, is Hartmann right? Is the gift-giving virtue a spiritual gift, thus governed by other laws than those governing material goods? Is Emerson (1983) right when he says that the wise man's presence is a gift?

Nietzsche believes that this kind of noble giving is ethically superior to giving based on pity or a sense of obligation: "I give no alms," says Zarathustra, "for that I am not poor enough" (Z, I, P, 2). In the chapter on

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[68] Jacques Derrida frequently draws attention to the gift as *pharmakon*, often in the context of a comment on Mauss. For example, in "Plato's Pharmacy," he cites Mauss' call to examine the etymology of "gift", which comes from the Latin *dosis*, descending from the Greek word for a dose of poison (Derrida 1981, 131-32). More recently, he refers several times to the gift as *pharmakon* (1992).

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"The Gift-Giving Virtue," Zarathustra takes leave of his students and asks them to take leave of him, but not after accepting a farewell gift on this occasion for symbolic exchange. He transforms the ritualistic scene of giving a gift to an esteemed teacher into an occasion for praise of an unrestricted giving, which Bataille later labels *dépense*. Moreover, in the third section of the discourse, Zarathustra admonishes the young men to "lose me and find yourselves." Isn't this also a squandering of his disciples, a willingness to let them be dispersed and disseminated rather than identifying them as his intellectual progeny or property? Later Zarathustra will squander or "waste" the higher men assembled at his cave by simply blowing them away. I further address the squandering of disciples with the purpose of furthering their autonomy in the third section below.

Understanding philosophical mentorship as a spiritual gift ideally will liberate the teacher from resentment, dissatisfaction, and from clinging unnecessarily to her apprentice. To what extent it liberates the apprentice is unclear and is contingent on the apprentice's capacity to give. For paradoxically, the capacity to receive without resentment is closely associated with the capacity to give. It may well be that only the future gift-giver will be the best apprentice, owing to his capacity to take shamelessly. If mentor and apprentice part ways before the apprentice fully develops and before the relationship deteriorates into an open competition of gift-givers, they may avoid a few problems.

This model of education assumes that the individual has to be educated before he tends to his self-education, that is, that authority—beneficent and generous as it may be—is necessary. The next answer to the question of how to promote self-education takes the teacher out of the equation, in the hope of avoiding the pitfalls of education.

2. Teacher-less Education

Another way of liberating the relationship of the philosopher-mentor with the philosopher-apprentice from its burdens is to understand it as an encounter in which both the teacher and the student are learning. Paul Woodruff uses "teacher-less education" to describe Socrates (Woodruff 1998, 22). This is also the view of modern Socratics in the skeptical tradition, such as Shaftesbury, Kierkegaard in some of his writings, Popper, Nelson, and Agassi, a follower of the two preceding. This view evolves into denying the very existence of the human teacher, as can be seen, for example, in Augustine's view of Christ as the teacher within, and in some modern counterparts of it, such as René Descartes' view of innate

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ideas and Freudian views of education. Again, the right place to begin is with Socrates.

A. The Model of Socrates

To learn from Socrates, you must be guided, as he is, by the desire for knowledge and you must set the highest value, as he does, on learning. To live under the influence of this desire is to be a philosopher as Plato understands the term: a lover of wisdom. Socrates has been the prototypical teacher in European thought and the model philosopher for the same reason. He is dangerous, exciting, a wellspring of dissatisfaction, spreading a wave of yearning to know what is evidently beyond the powers of human beings.

Socrates' peculiar form of teaching involves turning his mind to philosophy in opposition to traditional forms of teaching and culture. Through his description of Socrates' life in the dialogues, Plato develops and defines a concept of philosophy as a distinct practice, with its own particular aim, standards, and methods. If individuals turn to philosophy, their lives are transformed; they set wisdom and virtue as their goals instead of power, wealth, or reputation; and their peers may fear that they have become useless. The critical stance of Socrates' philosophy threatens traditional religion, morality, and perhaps the foundations of democracy. We may see the quarrel between Socrates and his accusers in the *Apology* as well as the contest between Socrates and the sophists as a basic disagreement concerning the value of Socrates' education pedagogy.

Philosophy, however, is not just another addition to the Athenian curriculum; it does not compete directly with other subjects for the attention of students. Philosophy threatens to transform altogether its devotees' lives as well as the actions that they undertake. Love in the life of a philosopher is turned from personal erotic desire into a shared passion for knowledge. Socrates' life was dedicated to unceasing education, for himself and for those around him, and it has been both a gift and a challenge to the notion of liberal education that was emerging then under the name of *paideia*. It has been a gift because of Socrates' power to draw people into philosophy, and a challenge because of Socrates' refusal to make philosophy immediately useful to his society. Philosophy, as Socrates pursued it in Athens, seemed to lead nowhere but to more philosophy.

This description refers to the Socrates of the early dialogues, that is, the *Apology* and other works that are consistent with it. In addition, I draw on passages from other dialogues that either reflect on, or further illustrate,

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Socratic education as we find it in the early dialogues. However, we should keep in mind that Plato's description of Socrates is not altogether consistent throughout his work.

Socrates denies that he is a teacher, and the people he questions often deny that they have anything to learn from him. Socratic education puts the responsibility for learning in the hands of the learner. Socrates speaks humbly enough, but his aim is not modest: it is to transform people's lives by coaxing them into thinking as a philosopher thinks (Woodruff 1998, 14). His aim is to goad his companions into examining their beliefs and their lives, especially in relation to virtue or the good condition of the soul. Socrates' practice of philosophy is an education for everyone, including himself. He demands no prerequisites of the boys and men he draws into his conversations, and he claims no special qualifications for his own project in self-education. Education as Socrates conceives it is a lifelong pursuit (Woodruff 1998, 15).

Since he refuses to assume the role of a teacher, Socrates does not take responsibility for his companions' education. Thus, his aim in these conversations must be his companions' self-education, as well as his own, as he explicitly says. He is always bent on learning something, or at least on examining his own beliefs, and he tries to draw his companions into their own projects of self-examination. In his own case, the project evidently continues throughout his life (*Hippias Major*, 304c-e). It preempts all other studies, as we learn from the *Phaedrus* (230a, 235c). Its purpose is self-knowledge, according to the *Phaedrus* passage just cited, but in most dialogues, its result is mainly negative—a constantly revived sense of the philosopher's own ignorance on matters of the greatest importance.

There is some irony in Socrates' repeated disclaimers of knowledge, but he seems genuinely committed to the view expressed in the *Apology*, that his human wisdom lies precisely in this gentle paradox: in his knowing that he is not worth much as far as wisdom is concerned (23b). What Socrates knows best is how to maintain his own sense of ignorance by examining himself directly; and Plato shows Socrates also indirectly challenging his own views by questioning partners who have adopted Socratic positions but are unable to defend them. Such dialogues illustrate dramatically the failure of Socrates' best opinions to count, by themselves, as defensible knowledge.[69]

[69] Several Socratic positions are undermined in the *Charmides*, and, famously, Socratic definitions of courage and beauty are refuted in the *Laches* and *Hippias Major*, respectively. How to interpret the dialogues is a subject of controversy: the great Socrates scholar, Gregory Vlastos, for example, holds that the dialogues of

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Socrates spends much of his time examining himself, reflecting on his own views, and protecting himself against the conceit that his opinions should be taken for knowledge. Paul Woodruff deems it a "teacherless education" (Woodruff 1998, 22).[70] It remains to be seen how the notorious Socratic irony is related to teacher-less teaching and what its fate was since the fifth century BC.

B. Socratic Irony

Plato presents Socrates as a character whose irony is part of his teaching device and generally of his relationships with others. Xenophon's Socrates, for example, has none of the arrogance and very little of the irony of his Platonic counterpart.

"The history of the word [irony] is relatively well known," Alexander Nehamas explains:

> Originally terms of abuse, *eirôneia* and its derivatives, which first appeared in the works of Aristophanes, carried the sense of dissembling, shamming, and deceiving. The same sense is sometimes found in Plato. In a form slightly more complex than that of its original Aristophanic uses it survives as late as Demosthenes. (Nehamas 1998, 50)

However, in some other cases in Plato's dialogues, a radically new sense of *eirôneia* appears for the first time. The *eirôn*—the person who uses *eirôneia*—is now no longer simply a cunning, dissembling hypocrite, an outright deceiver who intends and needs to escape completely undetected. The *eirôn* is now transformed into a subtler character, who lets part of his audience know that his words do not obviously or necessarily express his considered opinion, that he does not always mean what he says, and that he does not mind if some people are aware of his dissembling. The dissembling is no longer secret, at least not for all of one's audience.

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self-examination illustrate a different method from the one Socrates uses in the *Euthyphro*.

[70] For Socrates on education, see Scott (2000), Woodruff (1998) and the bibliographical note there (30-31). Platonic dialogues that illustrate Socratic education or self-education include the *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Major*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Protagoras*, and probably Book 1 of the *Republic*. Reflections on Socratic education are found in Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*; Socrates illustrates a somewhat similar method with a slave in the *Meno*; and there is an important discussion of education as midwifery in the *Theaetetus*. For the Platonic Socrates see Vlastos (1991; 1994). For a fine corrective, see Charles H. Khan (1996).

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Socrates concretizes and embodies this new understanding of the term.

The Socrates who is the nearly exclusive preoccupation of modern scholarship is that of Plato's dialogues—so much so that the claims advanced by other Socratics have almost entirely disappeared from the discussion. However, in ancient doxography Plato's portrayal of Socrates was not accorded the primacy it receives in contemporary scholarship. Anthony A. Long concludes his survey of ancient evidence thus: "Plato, or what we call Plato's Socratic dialogues, appear to have been widely regarded as neither more nor less authentic witnesses to Socrates than Xenophon's writings" (Long 1988, 154). In his own time and place, Plato's Socrates was only among several competing interpretations of Socrates' philosophy.

One reason for the dominance of Plato's Socrates in analytic scholarship is the attention accorded to Socrates' irony. However, it is only recently that irony gained significant. Plato's account became central only with Friedrich Schleiermacher's translation of Plato and, simultaneously, with Diogenes Laertius' book ceasing to be the basic manual of ancient history and falling into oblivion. Thus, Nehamas argues that "only since Romanticism's interest on irony has Socrates' irony come to the fore" (Nehamas 1999, 94). In the nineteenth century, the ironic Socrates, to this day the sole Socrates we accept, replaced the comical Socrates. Hegel, in particular, occupies a transitional position between our present attitude toward Socrates and the approach that, until his time, had relied on Xenophon as the primary source for Socrates' views and character.[71]

As Plato presents him,[72] Socrates' audience is often unsure whether he is serious or joking. His notorious irony is the manner by which he evokes so ambivalent a response, using it at one moment to underline his essential seriousness, at another to call into question the grounds for this seriousness. The seriocomic character of Socrates is most fully elaborated in the *Symposium*, where it forms one of the central themes of Alcibiades' encomium. Alcibiades characterizes Socrates as making the serious problematic by taking none of the normal things seriously, while devoting himself with great seriousness to arguments about cobblers and carpenters. Diogenes and his followers, such as the Cynic Demonax, also share this perverse stance, as we will shortly see.

What makes his ironizing posture so offensive to others is that irony insulates and detaches Socrates from others; hence, many characters do not feel that they can ever truly connect with him, and this causes them to

[71] See Nehamas (1999, 94) and Narcy (2000, 284).
[72] *Gorgias* 481b, *Phaedrus* 234d, *Apology* 20d, *Republic* 337a.

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regard Socrates as arrogant and condescending. Because irony in the form of mock humility involves an assumption or a pretense of superiority that dissociates the ironist from others, shielding him or her from scrutiny, this superiority makes irony a kind of *hubris*. Detached superiority manifests itself to others as arrogance.

The Platonic Socrates has been "the most influential model in the history of irony," Norman D. Knox explains:

> Neither Socrates nor his contemporaries, however, would have associated the word *eirôneia* with modern conceptions of Socratic irony. As Cicero put it, Socrates was always "pretending to need information and professing admiration for the wisdom of his companions." When Socrates' interlocutors were annoyed with him for behaving in this way they called him *eirôn,* a vulgar term of reproach referring generally to any kind of sly deception with overtones of mockery; the fox was the symbol of the *eirôn.* All serious discussions of *eirôneia* followed upon the association of the word with Socrates. These occurred in two contexts, the ethical and the rhetorical. In ethics, the field of observation was a habitual manner of behaving, a type of human character, and here the notion of irony as actual lying persisted, narrowed however to understatement. "As generally understood," Aristotle said in the *Ethics,* "The boaster is a man who pretends to creditable qualities that he does not possess, or possesses in a lesser degree than he makes out, while conversely the self-depreciator disclaims or disparages good qualities that he does possess. Midway between them is the straightforward sort of man" (1925, bk. IV, 7. 1-17). Aristotle recognized that understatement (*eirôneia*) varying degrees differ from the truth, including outright lies. Of the two evils defined, he preferred irony because it was unostentatious. (Knox 1973, 636)[73]

[73] In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1925, bk. IV, chap. 7, 1-17), Aristotle mentions "affected humbugs" whose "mock humility seems to be really boastfulness," Knox further explains. This makes of irony "a lie meant to reveal the truth." In the *Rhetoric*, however, Aristotle refers to it as a "gentlemanly" sort of jest: irony seems less problematic from an ethical point of view because it is limited to the brief figure of speech. Knox maintains, "it was in the rhetorical tradition that this structure came to explicit definition." I quote his entire explanation, because we often confuse by the various meanings of irony: "The full pattern was formulated by the fourth century BC *Rhetoric to Alexander:* irony is blame through praise and praise through blame. This definition, by shifting attention from the logical content of an ironic statement to the implied diametrically opposed value judgments, opened the way to the later, sometimes misleading formula, that irony is saying the "contrary" of what one means. Moreover, this definition implied two aspects of irony: "to blame by praise" is satiric irony; "to praise by blame" is comic irony, for undesirable characteristics attributed to a sympathetic victim draw the audience's

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The *eirôn* was a liar for Demosthenes and Theophrastus as well, even a less respectable one, as he understated his powers for escaping responsibility. Thus, the portrait of the ironic Socrates was accepted by Plato's followers, but was used as a reason for rejecting both irony and Socrates' approach by Aristotle and especially by his followers. Not only did the Peripatetics reject irony (Theophrastus, *Characters*, I, 1-6), so did the Platonists, as the Aristotelian analysis according to which irony is a vice was widely accepted by Platonists from the first or second century AD onwards (Sedley 2002, 45).

Moreover, as Zoja Pavlovskis maintains (1968), the Epicurean school "disliked irony much as it shunned rhetoric, perceiving in both a kind of artifice incompatible with the pursuit of truth."[74] They dismissed both Socrates' irony and Socrates, but were emulated in their dislike of irony by the Stoics. Although they venerated Socrates, the Stoics "did not find irony worthy of study and rejected it altogether as foul: 'for no one manly [*eleuthros*] and grave [*spoudaios*] engages in irony.'"[75] The Cynics preferred "sardonic laughter" to "the refined weapon of irony" (Dudley 1967, ix). Following Aristophanes' footsteps, the *eirôn* did appear in comedy, and in the *silloi* of the skeptic Timon. Generally, however, "sympathy for, and even interest in, the ironic character seems to have dwindled" (Pavlovskis 1968, 24).

Knox further explains that Cicero distinguished between irony as an isolated figure of speech and a pervasive habit of discourse. He considered Socratic irony an admirable thing, and set thereby the limits of the field during the following centuries. Along the same lines, Quintilian wrote, "a man's whole life may be colored with irony, as was the case with Socrates, who . . . assumed the role of an ignorant man lost in wonder at the wisdom of others."[76] For Quintilian, that "mild" and "ingratiating" goodness was expressed by irony (Knox 1973, 638). By the time of Cicero, then, "a concept of humor, very close to that of the [Aristotelian] *eirôn*, had somehow experienced a resurrection" (Pavlovskis 1968, 28). Thus, George Converse Fiske maintains,

> The conception of ironic humor was domiciled in the Scipionic circle at Rome probably in large measure by the efforts of Panaetius. The humor of

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attention to his real virtues. Ariston pointed out that Socrates' way of exalting his opponent while depreciating himself exemplified the full pattern" (Knox 1973, 637).

[74] Pavlovskis (1968, 24). See Cicero, *Brutus*, 292; Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* (2001, 2.17. 15); Plutarch, *Against Colotes* (1967-1964, 1127A).

[75] Stobaeus, in von Arnim (1903-1905, III, 161. 4).

[76] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* (2001, 9. 2. 44-53).

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> Scipio himself appears to be a Roman approximation to the ideal of the Socratic *eirôn*. Indeed Cicero in several passages . . . expressly attributes to Scipio the Socratic irony. We thus have explicit evidence of the familiarity of the Scipionic circle with this conception. (Fiske 1920, 100-4)

This is not the place to unfold the history of irony in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (see Knox 1989). From Roman times to the early eighteenth century, irony as conceived by Cicero and Quintilian lived on the edge of rhetorical theory. It was brought to the public by French and English satiric literature.

There are modern developments of Socratic irony as a means to protect the teacher's autonomy as well as the autonomy of his students and listeners. Cicero's humor was revived in Modern times by the third Earl of Shaftesbury in the eighteenth century, who in turn influenced Johann Georg Hamann and Kierkegaard.[77]

We can now turn to these philosophers, who followed Socrates' example not only through the indirectness of their writings, but also through a revival of his irony metamorphosed by *Zeitgeist* into humor.

C. Shaftesbury and Kierkegaard: Humor as a Means to Teacher-less Education

At the beginning of the Modern era, various philosophers reflected on the conditions necessary for enabling radical self-education. Their common advice was to eradicate authority. In his essay "On Education," Michel de Montaigne admonished against books and rote learning, promoting the use of reason and love of wisdom instead (1965). Francis Bacon and Descartes opposed scholastic and humanistic education because it required one to accept the authority of the books of antiquity. Both Bacon and Descartes furthered self-education, Bacon by denouncing the four kinds of idols which plagued our thinking, and Descartes by teaching us how to think through his rules of the mind. Some of Descartes' books on education were meant for schools, to replace the Aristotelian model of education that was the norm at that time (see Garber 1998). As a rule, Descartes' books were intended to educate, the reader doing himself what the writer did, repeating autonomously the writer's thought processes. Benedict Spinoza taught us how to educate the imagination, moving from a prone-to-error mode of thinking to modes leading to better thought and hence to better

[77] For the relations among these three thinkers, see Amir (2017).

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feelings.[78] These concerns were mirrored in various forms of writing and, except for Spinoza, in writing in the vernacular instead of Latin.

The third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) was party to these concerns. He regarded his philosophy, in fact, as deriving its inspiration from the teaching of Socrates, not only as expressed in what might be called its more orthodox form by Plato, but also as interpreted by Xenophon in a more popular way. He purposively avoided a systematic exposition of his thought: the challenge for the philosopher and for all teachers who wish to edify is to enhance rather than undermine the autonomy of their students. The purpose of philosophy is the creation of moral agents; inducing passivity will not do. The form of Shaftesbury's collected writings, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, is meant to meet this challenge, to make readers into philosophers and to ensure that they would be morally intelligent agents in the world. Shaftesbury has been influenced by the methodology of skeptics, from the ancient schools to Pierre Bayle. He believes in the benefits of free exchange and encourages his readers to pursue the truth. That open-ended quest is the discursive practice he seeks.

Though the inspiration of Shaftesbury's philosophy was Greek, its main purpose was practical and related to contemporary needs. He was interested not so much in discursive reasoning as in reforming the morals, manners, and tastes of his own day. He criticized the philosophy of his time for being disconnected from practical affairs and shying away from its role as moral and political education. The philosophy he proposed was practical: he considered philosophy to be part of one's education, and this education involved a systematic use of humor and wit in soliloquy, conversation, and writing.

Attempting to ally philosophy with good-breeding and polite society, Shaftesbury intended to create a new gentleman, who would not converse idly, as well as a new philosopher, who would be active in the world. He attempted to make philosophy available by liberating it from the Cambridge Platonists' boring and pedantic manuscripts. For, he wrote of philosophy,

> She is no longer active in the world nor can hardly, with any advantage, be brought on the public stage. We have immured her, poor lady, in colleges and cells, and have set her servilely to such works as those in the mines. Empirics and pedantic sophists are her chief pupils. (Shaftesbury 1999, 2: 4-5)

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[78] See Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and *Ethics*. On imagination in Spinoza's thought, see Lloyd (1998).

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He recommends forms of writing that are anti-authoritarian (such as letters, dialogues, and miscellanies) in order to give advice without appearing assuming:

> In reality, however able or willing a man be to advise, it is no easy matter to make advice a free gift. For, to make a free gift indeed, there must be nothing in it which takes from another to add to ourselves. In all other respects, to give and to dispense is generosity and goodwill, but to bestow wisdom is to gain a mastery which cannot so easily be allowed us. Men willingly learn whatever else is taught them. They can bear a master in mathematics, in music or in any other science, but not in understanding and good sense.
>
> It is the hardest thing imaginable for an author not to appear assuming in this respect . . . . My pretension is not so much to give advice as to consider of the way and manner of advising . . . . I have taken it strongly into my head that there is a certain knack or legerdemain [lightness of touch] in argument, by which we may safely proceed to the dangerous part of advising and make sure of the good fortune to have our advice accepted if it be anything worth. (Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy*, 1999, 1: 8)

The editor of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, Laurence Klein, explains that Shaftesbury ridiculed sermons and lectures, as well as philosophical writing as "formal, systematic, consistent, methodical, and abstract." The authoritarian or "magisterial" style of the pulpit and the classroom are unsuitable for the edification he considered the core of philosophic education. Originating from the Latin word *magister*, magisterial refers to the schoolteacher as well as the magistrate. Thus, Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* was meant to be a collection of "rhetorical gambits aiming to represent a discursive practice distinct from that of the lecture or the sermon" (Klein 1999, xiii).

The originality of Shaftesbury's project consisted of linking comic forms to anti-authoritarian writings (see Prince 1996, 36-37) and in using humor to dismantle one's authority and enabling autonomy of thought in conversation and in reading. For humor enables thinking as self-reflection, both in the individual in solitude and in company. It is a key to self-education. All you have to do is ask: is it ridiculous? Its goal is not only politeness, nor only to appeal to a larger public in writing exoteric writings, but to allow persons to do something, to think by themselves, which is always edifying. It is a tool of thought, a special corrective of false gravity, over-enthusiasm, romanticism, sentimentality, of excess of every sort and especially of vice. Humor and wit are thus important in philosophic conversation with others and with oneself, as well as in

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writing philosophy.

Laughter's merit is that it creates distance, opening the field for the examination of truth. Thus, the conversation develops without any of the speakers appropriating or claiming authority. The conversation then takes a form where freedom is essayed, and truths are proposed, corrected, and established through discussion. Thus, philosophy can be a knowledge polished by conversation, a discourse refined by the rules of tolerance and convention that it chooses, an inquiry that criticizes itself by laughter, and appreciates itself in the beauties and pleasures of the truths it discovers. It strengthens the liberty of questioning of subjects, which do not depart from a real liberty of spirit, thanks to a liberty of tone and the form of discourse they hold. Shaftesbury's intellectual activity can be cast as a search for an adequate version of philosophy, whether as an introspective operation or as a social activity. In turn, this search had ramifications for philosophy as writing. Shaftesbury's worries about the possibility of moral education are resolved with the use of humor. Humor liberates both the reader and the author: the author becomes unassuming while the reader is free to appropriate the moral truth as he wishes.[80]

Shaftesbury had an immense influence in aesthetics. Kierkegaard was directly influenced by him,[81] but also by Shaftesbury's translator and disciple in the topic of humor, Hamann.[82] As George Pattison writes:

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[80] For Shaftesbury's humor, see Malherbe (2000), Larthomas (1986), Jaffro (1996), and Chapter 1 of Amir, *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard* (2014a).

[81] See Amir (2014b).

[82] See Amir (2017). For the significance of Hamann, see Berlin (1994) and Berlin (1999, 40-45, 48-49). For an analysis of the role of humor in his thought, see Alexander (1966, chaps. 7, 8); for Shaftesbury's influence on him, see Deupmann-Frohues (1999). For his influence on Kierkegaard, see Andersen (1982). I address these subjects in my *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard* (2014a). Hamann's style is to conform deliberately to the truth in Christ, i.e., to the condescension of God in Incarnation and in the Spirit. Truth is always fleshed. His authorship must conform to this "one single truth," the incarnate Christ. Hence, his humorous concreteness, his unity or concentration. Hence the calculated offense: if the truth is the condescension of God in forms that create offense (divinity appears in lowly forms), then offensiveness must characterize the style of the witness to this truth. The most elevated concept should be juxtaposed to the trivial, lowly, and eccentric. This is the concept of *Stillbruch*. Conformity to the Incarnation means conformity to the "truth which lies in concealment," the theological theory of *Knechtsgestalt Christi*, the contradiction of Christ himself appearing in the "form of a servant," as the Apostle Paul says in his letter to the Philippians (2:7); divinity most often appears

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> The originality and distinctiveness of Kierkegaard's approach to communication . . . is not . . . entirely without precedent . . . . A model for such an authorship was that of J. G. Hamann, for Kierkegaard the humorist par excellence. (Pattison 1992, 66-67)

Believing he is the first Socrates of Christianity (although he had an antecedent in Augustine), Kierkegaard devised the indirect communication or "maieutic relationship" to enable the reader "to stand alone—by another's help" (1967-1978, 1, 650, sec. 15):

> My idea, the basis of my life . . . one of the most original ideas in many centuries, and the most original ever expressed in Danish, is that Christianity needed an expert in maieutics, and that I was the one . . . The category for deploying Christianity does not suit Christendom. Here it is maieutics which is suitable, for it takes as its point of departure the notion that people have the highest good, but wishes to help them realize what they have. (J, 1968-70, VIII A 42)[83]

Kierkegaard admired Socrates' maieutic method. Truth, for Kierkegaard, is the religious life, yet he aims to follow Socrates. The ideal teacher causes truth to be born in another, but does not have any claim on truth.

According to Kierkegaard, Christianity demands from the human being a constant struggle against the phenomenal world ("the immediate"). He can prepare for the religious leap, which will reveal the existence of the Absolute, only by totally renouncing the finite. Kierkegaard desires to help people free themselves of the immediate. As a master of indirect communication, he does not preach, nor directly ask the reader to become religious and renounce his immediate life. Rather, Kierkegaard's version of Socrates' Athenian marketplace is his authorship through which his discussion with others takes place.

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in lowly form, and therefore one may fail to recognize it. Hamann insisted on some variety of this theory as the inescapable precondition of valid aesthetic, ethical, and religious knowledge. For in the case of his ethics one must recognize the genuinely moral man is always better than he appears to be—the "hypocrite reverse." In the area of philosophy, we find that authentic knowledge is not a product of overweening reason but of ordinary language, which occupies a humbler station in the scheme of things than the ratio. As for theology, divinity appears most redemptively in lowly, despised, or foolish form, in *forma servi*. Hamann's very idea of aesthetic unity not only parallels his theology, but the latter also grounds the former. There are logical connections between Hamann's aesthetics and faith; hence his use of humor.

[83] J refers to Søren *Kierkegaard's Papirer*, edited by Niels Thulstrup, 2nd edition, 1968-70, and JP to *Journals and Papers*, edited by the Hongs, 1967-1978.

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Alongside the non-religious pseudonymous works, which, in the main, point to religious themes, Kierkegaard published religious discourses under his own name. Even there, as Julia Watkin notes, he makes it clear that he is "without authority," and that the discourse is as much directed to himself as to the reader. Toward the end of his life, he wrote some larger religious works. To tone down the impression of being a religious author, he published at the same time nonreligious or "aesthetic" pieces. By this means, works apparently written directly to the reader take a non-authoritative aspect. Kierkegaard's authorship thus presents a many-faceted mode of question-and-answer that resembles Socrates' method and the Platonic Socrates' ultimate goal of the good, the true, and the beautiful (Watkin 2001).[84]

Kierkegaard's theory of indirect communication can help us understand his maieutic. Kierkegaard believes that the truth, which is inwardness, cannot be taught directly. When truth is pointed at indirectly, through jest, the recipient of the communication has to decipher the message alone. That is, only the person whose inwardness matches the communicator's subjectivity understands what the latter is talking about in earnest. Kierkegaard explains that both jest and earnestness are needed in indirect communication because they render the inward situation of the subjective thinker. True earnestness is both jest and inwardness, and true communication should render this faithfully. Moreover, the role of the jest is not, as is often maintained, to awaken the person with whom I communicate; rather, it is to be recognized only by him who is truly earnest. So why communicate at all? Kierkegaard gives two reasons: benevolence, and the subjective person's need of expressing himself. Only the truly earnest can understand what Kierkegaard says, because only he recognizes the sort of comedy (irony, humor, satire, or caricature, the latter being subsumed under humor) Kierkegaard is using, and therefore, infer the sort of tragedy, or pathos, which he is talking about.

In *Training in Christianity*, Kierkegaard explains the origin of the mixture of jest and earnestness: it is a "sign of contradiction." This is Kierkegaard's version of the New Testament's wording, "a sign which shall be spoke against" (Luke 2: 34), or a sign which contains in its very constitution a contradiction. Moreover,

> To justify the name of "sign," there must be something whereby it draws attention to itself or to the contradiction. However, the contradictions contained in it must not be such as to cancel the two terms and bring the

[84] I endorse Julia Watkin's account of Kierkegaard's religiosity as presented in *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy* (Watkin 2001).

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> sign to naught, nor must it be such that the sign becomes the opposite of a sign, an absolute enigma. A communication that is the unity of jest and earnestness is such a sign of contradiction. It is by no means a direct communication; it is impossible for him who receives it to tell *directly* which is which, because the communication does not *directly* communicate either jest or earnestness. The earnestness of such a communication lies elsewhere, in the intent of making the receiver independently active, which is the highest earnestness in the case of communication. Such a communication, however, must make sure of something whereby it draws attention to itself, whereby it prompts and invites one to take heed of the communication. And, on the other hand, the unity of jest and earnest must not by any means be madness, for then there would be no communication; yet a communication in which either jest or earnestness absolutely predominates is direct communication. (Kierkegaard 1967, 124-25)

In a section titled "the impossibility of direct communication," Kierkegaard explains that indirect communication can be produced by "the art of reduplicating the communication." To "reduplicate" is to exist in what one understands. This is obtained by reducing the communicator to something purely objective, to nobody, and then composing qualitative opposites into unity. Most of Kierkegaard's writings follow the example he gives: composing jest and earnest in such a way that the composition is a dialectical knot—and with this to be nobody. Thus, one must undo the knot by oneself in order to get something out of this form of communication. Johannes Climacus (Kierkegaard's pseudonym in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*) explains the same process as "double reflection" (Kierkegaard 1967, 132-33). According to Walter Lowrie, "This aptly exemplifies his methods, and the importance of reducing to nil the personality of the communicator suggests one of his reasons for writing pseudonymously" (Lowrie 1967, 133n1). In *My Point of View as an Author*, Kierkegaard repeats the same. He states, "the equivocalness (dialectical redoubling) is present to the very last" (Kierkegaard 1998, 33). Louis Pojman explains how this is done:

> We throw out hints, symbols, signs, and suggestions; tell parables and stories which turn the auditor within. This is where irony serves as an appropriate speech act, which if unraveled, points to something hidden. Likewise, for Kierkegaard, humor has its essence in paradox, in the juxtaposition of opposites, and so points to what cannot be spoken. Humor is the mode of discourse, through this use of the paradox, which uniquely points to the irreducible duality between temporality and eternity. Life itself, in its contradictoriness, reflects this essential duality. (Pojman 1984, 302)

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This is where Hamann's influence is noticeable. For Hamann, this duality is the very essence of Christ. A Christian writer, who wants to awaken the reader to Christianity, must point to this duality when expressing himself through humor. Humor for Hamann and Kierkegaard expresses a most significant feature of reality. This is why it can be used as a means to let the reader reach truth alone.[85]

More modern Socratics, whom I address next, will give up humor and adopt a teacher-less education devoid of the modern counterpart of Socratic irony.

D. Modern Socratics: Karl Popper, Leonard Nelson, and Joseph Agassi

The critical rationalism of Popper and his followers revives Socrates' educational mission, as interpreted by Popper.[86] Popper states his main view of learning in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*:

> All the known historical examples of human fallibility . . . are *examples of the advance of our knowledge*. Every discovery of a mistake constitutes a real advance in our knowledge . . . . *We can learn from our mistakes*.
>
> This fundamental insight is, indeed, the basis of all epistemology and methodology; for it gives us a hint how to learn more systematically, how to advance more quickly . . . the hint, very simply, is that we *must search for our mistakes* . . . . Criticism, it seems, is the only way we have of detecting our mistakes and of learning from them in a systematic way. (Popper 1962, 2, 375-76)

Popper argues that Western civilization owes its rationalism and faith in the rational unity of man and the open society to the ancient Socratic and Christian belief in intellectual honesty and responsibility. He equates intellectual honesty with Socrates' call for care of the self and self-criticism. Later, he adds humility to this short list of intellectual virtues (Popper 1962, 2: 243-44, 190). In *Conjectures and Refutations*, he insists

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[85] For an elaboration of this point, see Amir (2014a).

[86] See Popper (1959; 1962; 1965; 1996), and his followers Joseph Agassi and Ian C. Jarvie (1987), for a method of improving thinking for scientists as well as nonprofessionals. See John Wettersten (1987), who credits Otto Selz with the psychology, Popper with the methodology, and Agassi with the pedagogy associated with critical rationalism. Wettersten argues that the unity between the three is both historical and logical.

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on the readiness to take chances as a requisite for critical rationalism.[87] In the introduction to *The Myth of the Framework*, he writes:

> Critical rationalism is a way of thinking and even a way of living. It's a faith in peace, in humanity, in tolerance, in modesty, in trying to learn from one's mistakes, and in the possibilities of critical discussion . . . [it's] an appeal to reason. (Popper 1996, xiii)

Popper's views should be developed as pedagogy, according to his follower, Agassi:

> Dialectics remains the only useful practical logic. This is the message of the leading masterpieces in contemporary philosophy of science, Karl Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* and *Conjectures and Refutations* . . . . We have scarcely developed its application to education . . . . we have not attempted to apply this to educational practice. (Agassi 1993, 245)

This has been partly done by Agassi himself, "partly" because Agassi is critical of various Popperian ideas on education and has been influenced by others, such as Homer Lane, Albert Einstein, and Nelson, as well as by Imre Lakatos' view of group dynamics.[88]

What makes Agassi's testimony on Popper interesting is that he has been the latter's apprentice and has written the sole (modern) book on philosophical apprenticeship I know of (1993). The relationship went sour, as he explains in the beginning of his book: "This is a melancholy account both of my [seven-year] apprenticeship with Sir Karl Popper, the greatest living philosopher, and of my way of having resigned myself to his rejection of myself and of my work" (Agassi 1993, ix). As he explains in the epilogue of the book, this apprenticeship is ongoing:

> In a sense, my apprenticeship, like any, is never ending. The strong interaction, chiefly intellectual but also personal and emotional, could not terminate all at once, especially since, as I have told you, we never quite let go of each other. (Agassi 1993, 243)

According to Agassi, Popper spoke of the romantic element of education, which he considered unavoidable and even possibly benign. Teachers have

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[87] See Popper (1963, 36, 27). For critical rationalism as a method, see Popper (1963, vii, 14, 46, 56).

[88] With the help of a former student, Agassi has recently published a pedagogical book about the logic of disputes and argumentation (Agassi and Meidan 2016).

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to educate children for autonomy; hence, they have to push the non-autonomous to autonomy, and they can do so by serving as role models. Not only is it a fact that students are not autonomous, Popper said, they have to be taught somewhat dogmatically, though in the hope that they will later rebel, and they should even be trained and prepared for rebellion. Popper regarded all individuals as having a natural, childlike need for a closed society that must be transcended by reason (the open society). This view supplemented a communalist vision that he had developed earlier (1927). Moreover, in his biography (1974), he notes that a dogmatic stage needs to precede a critical or rational one. Furthermore, the description Agassi gives of Popper's teaching method in the 1950s indicates the latter's emphasis on dogmatism: Popper believed that the ideas presented would serve the students as a point of departure for criticism or rationality, and autonomy (1993).

Agassi has challenged "Popper's claim that Socrates' teaching needs to incorporate one element of authoritarianism" (Wettersten 1987, n38). He does not like using dogmatism as a means to autonomy and criticism. Rather, he begins with the students' autonomy:

> Popper told me of one of the great non-dogmatic teachers he knew, Leonard Nelson. I confess: I am allergic to all dogmatism. In his own classes, Nelson would invite questions and criticism from the start (as Popper did regularly too, let me repeat). If he received none, he would not complain or make adverse comments, but in a most friendly manner would close the meeting in hope that in the next class they would be some participation. This, said Popper, shows that a teacher must provide the material for students so that they have something to rebel about. I rebelled. I at once adopted Nelson's position. I acted many a time according to the above description, especially in Israel. (Agassi 1993, 18-19)

While Socrates taught people to be self-critical, the view of what a good teacher is took a wrong turn in the West, according to both Agassi and Popper.

Agassi's educational writings largely build upon ideas developed by Popper. Moreover, Agassi occasionally articulates significant educational questions in footnotes or passing points made in works whose central concerns do not appear to be related to educational matters. Much of what Agassi says about education is an attempt to apply ideas developed by Einstein in such works as *Out of My Later Years* (1950).[89] He makes no

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[89] See also Einstein (1954); for the influence of Einstein on Agassi, see Swartz (unpublished paper, n16). However, there are other influences: "Throughout his educational writings, Agassi has noted that his ideas and questions are an

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claim that his educational ideas are original. He does not present a new philosophy of education, Ronald Swartz argues, but offers instead "a creative interpretation of the thought of a variety of scholars and educational reformers who have struggled to understand and articulate educational problems and questions." Thus,

> One reason why I consider Agassi's educational writings to be significant is that for nearly four decades he has made an effort to keep alive a saying educational tradition. That may help people learn to avoid a great deal of the unnecessary pains and suffering that education . . . inflicts. (Swartz, unpublished paper, 14)

Along these lines, Agassi explains:

> I do not know if I have a distinctive philosophy. And if so, what it is; but I hope I am relatively free of the stern poise that the philosopher has inherited from his predecessors and which Feyerabend rightly rebels against, even if a bit childishly. I do hope that my philosophy is distinctive as one that expresses a more considerate and more friendly feeling for the unnecessary pain that humanity still inflicts on itself: there is too much suffering anyway and we should deeply regret any case in which we add to its stock. This vision is not mine; I learned it from my master, and if it has an originator, it is Democritus, whose immense sensitivity to suffering shines through the fragments of his writings that are extant, and who was known in Antiquity as the laughing philosopher. (Agassi 1993, 206)

Ben-Ami Scharfstein argues that one of the reasons the mentor-apprentice relationship goes sour is the mentor's need to persuade others of his views, which is resisted by the student.[90] Persuasion can be seen as a form of attempted mutuality, he argues, disturbed, in the end, by resistance. This resistance expresses, among other things, our need to assert ourselves intellectually rather than be incorporated into someone else thought. Because the need for individual existence or intellectual self-assertion is so strong in creative thinkers, it is likely to deafen them to whatever does not

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outgrowth of the educational views developed by Homer Lane, A. S. Neill, David Greensberg, Bertrand Russell, Janusz Korczak, Anton Makarento, Carl Rogers, Mgr. E. J. Flanagan, Leonard Nelson, Albert Einstein and Karl Popper. Furthermore, Agassi has acknowledged that Plato's early dialogues have had a significant impact on the way he approached educational problems" (ibid, 17). Swartz notes, "Unlike [Lawrence A.] Cremin and John Dewey, Agassi has taken the word of people such as Neill and Lane seriously. This is not as easy to do as Agassi seems to suggest" (ibid, 14).

[90] See Amir (2009) and Chapter 2 above.

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serve their own thought. However, the resistance to persuasion might still have another cause, he explains. Philosophers, writers and their likes may themselves be hard to persuade just because their persuasive energies are directed against their own concealed doubts (Scharfstein 1980, 6-7).

Agassi would say that the best way to minimize the dangers Scharfstein describes is to use Immanuel Kant's idea: aim not to convince; rather, aim to help students and readers to think for themselves. It matters little who is the originator of an idea, Kant added, in comparison to its merit.[91] Agassi has adopted the Royal Society of London's motto on autonomy as his own: "Sworn allegiance to no master/ wherever with her the wind me carries/ a visitor I travel" (Horace, *Epistles*, I.i.14; Agassi 1993, epigraph of chapters 2 and 11). In *A Philosopher's Apprentice: In Karl Popper's Workshop*, he explains:

> My self-esteem derived solely from my view . . . that I was independent and that my independence itself had made me an unusual philosopher. Independent thinkers, regrettably, are very scarce nowadays, especially in philosophy . . . . Albert Einstein and Karl Popper preached freedom from all authority. All. A new age has come. From now on, those who wish to follow Reason can do so out of love, not out of submission, not out of acceptance of a harsh regime. Life is harsh enough as it is; we need no educators to make it worse. (Agassi 1993, 11, 2)

Agassi explains that the age of reason considered autonomy as inconsistent with education. Its ideal was self-imposed education, or self-education. All other education it viewed as imposed. Thus, education proper became the anathema of the age of reason. Bacon criticized it and Jean-Jacques Rousseau offered an alternative to it in his educational writings. Kant held that schooling disciplines, and that we need discipline to get the self-discipline required for autonomy.

He considers these claims absurd, however. Since what constitutes autonomy is quite a difficult question, we would be better off inquiring instead what individuals need in order to behave as self-educators instead than educatees: what autonomous characteristics are required, and to what degree? Contemporary self-education means studying in groups and with the aid of instructors who have no authority to discipline their students, rather than individual gathering of information directly from nature.

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[91] Agassi's testimony continues thus: "I was deeply impressed, not knowing that this was the sentiment commonly expressed in the Age of Reason . . . . I did not know that the sentiment was not commonly practiced, much less that it has been violated even by Kant himself when he dismissed the ideas of his best critic, Solomon Maimon" (Agassi 1993, 207).

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Students can be autonomous, if encouraged to use their own natural thought processes, such as curiosity, activity, and problem solving, in improved ways. Agassi's approach to teaching considers rationality a natural process that needs encouragement and some direction, perhaps, in order to go its own way and attain its ends. Like Spinoza, he sees rationality as a natural expression of human nature. Thus, he differs on that point from Popper who argues in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* that humans decide to be rational in order to control and even eliminate their own natural tendencies (Agassi 1987, 5).

Agassi has been influenced by Nelson's Socratic method (1965) and by his view that the teacher has authority with regard to method and procedures (Agassi 1987, 8). He has also been influenced by Lakatos' emphasis on group dynamics and on intellectual and psychological aspects of support groups. He explains:

> Philosophy needs promotion . . . the audience of the promotion . . . [has] to be independent of mind . . . and able to decide for themselves. In the received jargon, they should be autonomous. This idea clashes with the view that there is an obligation to endorse science—or art, or anything else. This move is thus revolutionary. Philosophy should promote autonomy. This is not the received opinion . . . . Socrates, the model philosopher, was concerned with the moral conduct of his fellow citizens and he expressed this concern everywhere he went, in street-corners, in gyms and in banquets . . . . Can philosophy play some role of policing without becoming a thought police? . . . . Socrates had to fight against confusion and self-deception as he fought for rationality . . . . There is a better meta-ethical principle than Wittgenstein and Sartre who deemed immoral whatever they preached against, be it unclear thinking or self-deception: be as rational as you can! . . . But trying to impose any of them [meta-ethical principles] is an error; certainly, no intellectual police force can do this. We have the right to cling to errors, and even act on them—as long as public responsibility permits it . . . . whatever is the role of philosophy, and whatever policing is required for discharge of this role . . . it is what Socrates said it is: legally permitted but morally forbidden, as harmful to others but more so as harmful to one's own soul. (Agassi 2003, part I, "Autonomy," 48-53)

Agassi further asks whether the role of philosophy as Socrates has envisaged can become a social institution, and answers in the positive, because it already is an institution. It is called education with the aim of autonomy, and it is in the hands of parents, teachers, and preachers. However, parents do not know what autonomy is, as we are all ignorant about it, preachers usually preach against it, and "few teachers advocate autonomy, and fewer know how to teach it. Nor is this easy…" (Agassi

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2003, 53).

Popper argued in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* that we need the Socratic care for souls: citizens should be helped in their self-education in autonomy. The obstacle is that the autonomous individual should be rational and submit to science. Can we learn science with no authority at all? In principle we can, as long as listen carefully to presentations of ideas, so to understand them well before criticizing them, as the critical attitude recommends. That means that some sympathy is needed for the provisional suspension of criticism, something Agassi realized after his studies.

Agassi further explains how Popper's theory of science necessarily requires autonomy and advocates democracy:

> Autonomy is the mere rejection of external authority and so it is better to refer to it as self-reliance. If there were an authority to trust, we would not know what it is, or how to find and follow it. Thus, nescience (Popper's term for "learned ignorance" in his theory of science) leaves us with hardly any option other than autonomy (as we read in Plato's early dialogues and in [Galileo] Galilei's late writings). What, then, is the rule of conduct, intellectual and moral, which is adequate to those who are ignorant and wish to be autonomous? What does learned ignorance demand of its adherents? That they should not consider themselves superior to others. It thus "almost" advocates democracy. Nescience entails democracy in the presence of the maxim that only the knowledgeable have the right to rule and stay above critical scrutiny. Critical scrutiny is characteristic of democracy alone. Hence, nescience invites agreement about agendas and these are essential to democracy. It thus allows a consensus-without-authority, especially regarding what we do not want to discuss. Excluding an item from the agenda, just as with including it, must be tentative and remain tentative come what may. (Agassi 2003, part I, "Autonomy," 32)

What about the heteronomous? In addition, what to do with those who are hostile to science or democracy? Agassi argues that it is important not to separate between heteronomous persons and those who aspire to autonomy; although with the former, the exchange is educational rather than a critical debate:

> It is unhealthy to have an agenda that only suits the autonomous nescient; an agenda for autonomous individuals who share learned ignorance, and only for them. It might separate the autonomous nescient from others. It is thus dangerously close to esotericism. Obviously, esotericism is anti-scientific and anti-democratic as it may all too easily serve as a means to block the criticism that outsiders might offer. We may consider the traffic of ideas and opinions with those who are heteronomous and/or hostile to

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> science or democracy on a different level of discourse, as engagement in education rather than engagement in critical debates. (Agassi 2003, part I, "Autonomy," 33)[92]

Agassi's proposal is a radical Socratic teacher-less education, which will be appraised shortly, but not before I conclude the current answer to the question of how to promote self-education with additional, non-Socratic, proposals for teacher-less education.

E. The Teacher Within

Another approach to teacher-less education is St. Augustine's refutation of the knowledge-transfer model of education, according to which a teacher transfers knowledge to a learner by means of speech or writing (*De magistro*). Augustine identifies the teacher within with Christ, yet there are other candidates for the teacher within. For Descartes, a stock of innate ideas and the natural light of reason, which God endows on people when he creates them, plays the role of the teacher within. According to modern naturalists, the role of the teacher within could be played by hard-wired cognitive dispositions that are part of our evolutionary legacy. According to Freudians, we only learn what we are unconsciously interested in.[93]

The second answer to the question of how to promote self-education comprised several versions of teacher-less education. Yet all are problematic. Is Socrates' education really a teacher-less education? If yes, why the irony, when irony always presupposes superiority? It is true that the irony may be Platonic: in that case, Plato would be ironic rather than Socrates, and would falsify the portrayal of Socrates. Popper advances this view, when comparing favorably Socrates' humor with Plato's scorn and irony (1962, I, 194, 197). Alexander Nehamas' opinion is that Plato is ironic towards his readers, who see themselves as superior to Socrates' victims (Nehamas 1999, 48). For Gregory Vlastos, Socrates is not ironic, but rather says the truth that only appears paradoxical to his listeners (Vlastos 1991).

Apart from the issue of irony, can the teacher really be a learner when there is no other teacher (like Christ, for example)? A similar problem arises with Shaftesbury and Kierkegaard's use of humor: these thinkers

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[92] For Agassi's educational views, see also Agassi (1984, 1985).

[93] For Augustine on teaching, see Harrison (1998). For Descartes on education, see Garber (1998). For the Freudian view, see Winnicott (1996), Freud (1953-1964), and Phillips (1998).

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know what the preferred worldview is and lead the reader toward it, albeit indirectly. The inquiry is not open-ended since they are false skeptics. Similarly, Popperians are not so tolerant towards non-Popperians: the very label "dogmatists" used to describe them says it all. Finally, Agassi, who assumes the students' autonomy from the outset, thus making self-education their responsibility, keeps repeating that he always fails: he has to dismiss repeatedly classes because the students do not take charge of their education.

However, there are means of promoting autonomy that are more unconventional than those Agassi uses. They constitute the third answer to the main question this chapter addresses.

3. Ridicule, Abuse, Violence: Unconventional Methods to Promote Autonomy

The Cynics' unconventional relationship with society, which transferred onto their relationship with their students, the Zen Masters' unorthodox teaching methods, and Nietzsche's violent breaking of the mentor-apprentice relationship share enough traits of violence, humiliation, laughter, ridicule, and abuse to be summed up together in this final section.

A. The Cynics

The Cynics took Socrates seriously and exaggerated some aspects of his behavior and thought.[94] Infected with pride, the Cynic has the notion that he was sent by God to govern people, and that if anyone wishes to secure the services of a ruler, he should be chosen (Navia 1996, 129). His existence within a given community is marginal, since he acts as if he does not belong to it. However, from another point of view, it is anything but marginal, since he becomes involved with the daily affairs of people, as a busybody and meddler. He forever engages everyone in conversation and argument, asks embarrassing questions, critically assesses and more often condemns all that he sees and hears, upsetting the status quo of those who surround him, invalidating and defacing in word and in action their moral and social currency, and acting as a social pest and as an examiner. This involves insulting people and provoking them by public masturbation and animal-like behavior in order to demonstrate that society's values are

[94] For the Socratic origins of the Cynics, see McKirahan (1994). For the Cynics' philosophy, see Dudley (1967), Navia (1996).

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unnecessary for one's happiness. Simple virtue will do.

The Cynic thus represents an outstanding example of autonomy. Yet he, too, had to learn from another. We are told that Zeno and Hiparchia left everything to become Crates' disciple and wife, respectively. Let me elaborate on Zeno's encounter with Crates, then.

Diogenes Laertius tells us (1931, *Lives*, VII, 2-3) that once, when Zeno was reading the second book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* in an Athenian bookstore, he asked the owner where men like Socrates could still be found. Crates happened to pass by, and the owner, pointing to him, said to Zeno, "There, just follow that man." Zeno did precisely that, and thus became Crates' disciple. Crates tried to cure him of his modesty by asking him to carry a bowl of lentil soup through the streets. Zeno, in shame, sought to hide the bowl under his cloak as he walked, but Crates broke it with his staff. In greater shame Zeno ran away with the soup dripping down his legs, while Crates followed him shouting, "Why are you running, my friend? Nothing dreadful has happened to you!" The part about the embarrassment caused to Zeno by the bowl of lentil soup is a variation on two similar anecdotes told about Diogenes: he, too, like Crates, "tested his prospective disciples in order to see how far they were willing and able to display shamelessness in public places."

There is something new about Crates in comparison to other Cynics. Crates observed that it is impossible to find any human being who is free from flaws, and this, of course, includes himself. In every person, he added, just as in every pomegranate, one of the seeds is always going bad (Laertius 1931, *Lives*, VI, 89). The pride and self-assurance that we find in Diogenes, as well as the self-righteousness of Antisthenes, are either absent or at least less noticeable in Crates. He recognizes the shortcomings and faults of all those around him, but does not fail to notice his own: like the rest, he, too, is in need of spiritual healing, for which reason he welcomes the opportunity of being healed by others, especially when they use the bitter medicine of insult, abuse, and ridicule. Like the ancient *pasupatas*, who were members of an Indian ascetic sect, Crates also appeared to seek (or at least not avoid) contempt and condemnation from others as a means of cleansing himself from flaws and strengthening his character. However, the endurance of insults and mistreatment on his part discloses a certain humility in him, which absolves him from the first tragic flaw that we identified earlier as belonging to Cynicism, namely pride. This is why Crates can be credited with humor, which often includes self-deprecation, in contrast to abuse of others and irony, which excludes the joker.

Shamelessness as a way of testing the apprentice and of teaching him

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to bear insults and provoke the crowd seems to be an original means to secure autonomy from society. It is also a sure way of securing autonomy from one's teachers from the very start of the relationship. The best proof is that one cannot imagine a gang of Cynics. Unconventional teaching methods, which include humiliation and laughter, are used by Eastern teachers, especially by Zen Masters. Let us turn now to these methods.

B. Zen Masters

One of the most influential forms of Buddhism outside of India was Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism. Various studies have been done of the comic spirit of Zen, and of its origin, of which the most relevant for the purpose of this chapter is Michel Clasquin's "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh: Attitudes towards Humour and Laughter in Ancient India and China" (2001).[95]

Clasquin explains how "the slim, aristocratic figure of the Buddha with its barely perceptible smile has been replaced in Buddhist art by the broad grin of Pu-Tai (Japanese: 'Hotei'), still familiar today as the jolly, fat, 'laughing Buddha' of curio shops around the world" (Clasquin 2001, 98). In *The Laughing Buddha: Zen and the Comic Spirit*, Conrad Hyers, tells us of its origin:

> Historically he is identified with a wandering priest named Cho Tai-shi (who died around 916 AD) who carried a large linen sack (hence the name "Pu-Tai") with whatever possessions he had, and who was popularly believed to be an *incognito* appearance of Maitreya Buddha. (Hyers 1973, 46; quoted in Clasquin 2001, 98)

Clasquin further recounts the origin of the "three laughing monks," yet another favorite motif of Zen Buddhist art:

> It originated in a traditional tale of a monk who had taken a vow never to cross the bridge connecting his island hermitage to the mainland. Two fellow monastics visited him, and on seeing them off, they were so absorbed in conversation that the island monk walked across the bridge before he was aware of his own actions. All three of them then collapsed into a helpless fit of laughter…. The monk, so the story goes, returned to his hermitage and never broke his vow again. However, he did not brood on the one time he had broken it. (Clasquin 2001, 98-9)

We encounter here a different attitude towards humor and laughter than

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[95] See, additionally, Hyers (1989; 1973), Blyth (1959; 1969), and Suzuki (1956, 1974).

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the attitude in traditional Buddhism, he notes. The uproarious laughter of Zen monks and their masters, the clowning of revered teachers, their fooling around, their jokes about the most sacred things for other Buddhists, including the Buddha himself, are teaching devices in Zen Buddhism. For example, Hyers tells us about a Zen master who "clapped his hands and gave a loud roar of laughter" (Hyers 1973, 33), and Clasquin about Zen monks who "'battle' with each other, trying to outdo each other in series of puns, witticisms, and non-sequiturs" (Clasquin 2001, 99). He further explains:

> In Zen, though, such behavior is not merely odd; rather, it expresses the essential freedom from constraints the master has attained through years of disciplined meditation. The antinomian moments are recorded while the long hours of contemplation that made them possible are not. A master can use non-discipline to expose the absurdity of the human situation, and thus encourage the student to further discipline and the eventual attainment of satori. Humor has become a teaching device in its own right. (Clasquin 2001, 100)

To account for this radical change in the appreciation of humor in Buddhism thought (from its early days to its later Chinese development), we should turn to China's own history of humor. A. C. J. Lee and others have noted the wry humor in the sayings of the Taoist masters (Lee 1993; Hyers 1973, chap. 10). Clasquin notes that many Chinese artists were famous for unorthodox lifestyles, and acted in eccentric ways that resemble the Holy Fool in other societies (Hyers 1973, 50-54; Clasquin 2001, 100). Most importantly, because Zen is Buddhist at heart, much of its comic spirit should be associated with Hinduism and especially Taoism. This should not surprise us, given that "Asian religious and philosophical thought is inherently humorous, if we dig deep enough into it" (Clasquin 2001, 100). Thus, the humor of the Zen masters may be a legacy from Taoism, which saw life as the dynamic interplay between "the way" and the "ten thousand things."[96]

The koan exercise is another Zen teaching device, which plays with the reason of unreason, as laughter does. The koan is generally some statement made by an old master, or some answer he gives to the questioner. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki explains:

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[96] For Taoism, which undoubtedly influenced early Ch'an masters in China, see Lee (1993), Hyers (1973, chap. 10). For humor in Ancient Chinese philosophy, see Harbsmeier (1989). For humor in Ancient India and China, see Clasquin (2001). For Confucianism, see Liao (2001, chaps. 5-6). For humor in Eastern religions, see Moore (1977).

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> When such problems are given to the uninitiated to solve, the aim of the master is to unfold the Zen psychology in the mind of the pupil, and to reproduce the state of consciousness of which these statements are the expression. When the koans are understood the master's state of mind is understood, which is *satori* (enlightenment) and without which Zen is a sealed book. (Suzuki 1974, 135)

The verbal method includes paradox, going beyond the opposites, contradiction, affirmations which are "so irrelevant, so inappropriate, so irrational, and so nonsensical—at least superficially" (1974, 122)—repetition, exclamation, and silence. Suzuki further explains:

> There is no logic, for life is superior to logic. There is something stronger than ratiocination. We may call it impulse, or instinct, or, more comprehensively, will. Where this will act there is Zen . . . . The swinging of a stick, the crying of a "Kwats!," or the kicking of a ball must be understood . . . as the directest demonstration of life—no, even as life itself. The fleeting, unrepeatable, and ungraspable, always says the truth. (Suzuki 1974, 129)[97]

Apart from the comic means and the koans, the master's teaching devices sometimes involve inflicting a bodily injury or a nervous shock.[98] These teaching devices are coupled with a lack of dependence of the apprentice on the teacher, with no personal demands from the apprentice, and with no authority in the master as an intermediary to *satori*. It seems as if the laughing monks and the maddening koans are meant to snap the apprentice out of rational thinking, but also to prevent veneration of the master, which opens the door for the appeal of the message instead of the beauty of the messenger.

C. Nietzsche: Breaking the Revering Heart, Sending the Apprentice Away

Nietzsche generalized his personal development into a blueprint for creating philosophical geniuses. First, he says, excel in your culture and learn everything you can in order to embody the best culturally acclaimed

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[97] See Suzuki (1956, part IV, "Techniques of Zen"), and Suzuki (1974, chap. 1, "Initiation").

[98] Agassi follows Eastern teachers' practice by reacting violently to students who refuse to be autonomous and cling too dependently to him: I am not your mother, he says. See Fuks (2008, 64).

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human being, both intellectually and morally (the camel). Then reject everything (the lion). Finally, create something of your own (the child).[99]

Nietzsche refers to the three existential stages described in the first chapter of *Zarathustra*—the camel, the lion, and the child—as three metamorphoses of the soul. A later note, "The Road to Wisdom" refers to these stages, which he experienced in his life (GA, XIII, 31, m.t.). There, the stage of the camel is characterized by a willingness to be burdened by values and knowledge. It is weighted mainly by reverence (Z, I, 1), and is also a period of community: a person studies the best he can, lives in society and accepts its values, worships all and endures anything "heavy." In this way, his false consciousness is created and empowered until he, as an individual, is lost in this generality. Nietzsche writes about this period in his "Road to Wisdom" note: "Worship, and obey and learn better than anybody else. Gather in you all that is worth worshipping and let them struggle in you" (GA, XIII, 31).

Associated with obedience, the notion of reverence occupies an significant role on the road to redemption: one should learn first how to obey in order to command, *a fortiori* when self-commanding is the goal. Reverence thus seems a necessary stage to overcome on the road to creation. Nietzsche describes reverence as answering a human need ("man is but a revering animal") and asserts that it is owing to reverence that perhaps we find the strength to live (GS, 346). The camel stage is characterized by reverence (Z, I, 1) and the breaking of reverence is described as a very painful, yet necessary, act. It is required because you have a "terrible alternative: Either do away with your venerations, or—*with yourselves*!" (GS, 346). Breaking the "revering heart" is the condition for being true (Z, I, 1) and being true is "the possibility of few" (Z, II, 8). A first step towards freedom, it cannot be smoothly attained. Nietzsche sums it up in "The Road to Wisdom" thus: "The second stage: break the revering heart when you are *most tightly attached*. The free spirit. Independence . . . period of wildness. Criticism of all what was revered (idealization of the unrevered), attempt at opposite valuations" (GA, XIII, 31 m.t.). The third stage is defined as "Great decision whether suitable for positive attitude, for affirmation. No longer any God, nor man above me! . . . Only for a few" (GA, XIII, 31 m.t.).

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[99] *Z*, I, 1, "On the Three Metamorphoses." Descartes has already prescribed the rejection of all values acquired though culture and education. According to Richard Schacht (1998), Friedrich Schiller's views on aesthetic education influenced Nietzsche's injunction to create something on one's own.

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In order to reach the third stage one has to leave the master. Nietzsche's system is a formal one: one has to invest it with one's own content in order to adopt it. Yet one cannot be a Nietzschean and a believer.[100] In "Schopenhauer as an Educator," Nietzsche insists that students have to leave teachers at a certain point in order to find themselves as individuals with their own values. From *The Gay Science* on, the responsibility to liberate the student lies with the teacher:

> *Vademecum-Vadeteceum* [literally: "go with me—go with yourself"] Lured by my style and my tendency, you follow and come after me? Follow your own self faithfully—Take time—and thus you follow me. (Nietzsche, GS, Prelude in German Rhymes, 7)

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra famously says, "This is *my* way; where is yours?"—thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the* way—that does not exist" (*Z*, III, 11, 2). Elsewhere, Zarathustra says, "Now I go alone, my disciples. You too go now, alone. Thus I want it. Verily, I counsel you . . . Verily, my brothers, with different eyes shall I then seek my lost ones; with a different love shall I then love you" (*Z*, I, 22, 3). Additionally, in the forward to Nietzsche's intellectual biography, *Ecce Homo,* Zarathustra is quoted thus:

> Go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And better still: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you.
>
> The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends.
>
> One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you pluck at my laurels? . . .
>
> You had not yet sought yourselves when you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all belief is of so little account.
>
> Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me will I return to you.* (See Z, III, 11, 2; quoted in *EH*, forward, 4)

Zarathustra's attitude may be compared with Christ's words: "One who grasps at self will lose it, but one who rejects self on my account will gain it" (Matthew 10:39; see also Matthew 16:25).

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[100] For Nietzsche on education, see Cooper (1983), Aloni (1989), Golomb (1985), Gordon (1980), and Schacht (1998).

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To conclude, the third answer this chapter offered addressed unconventional ways of furthering the apprentice's autonomy, such as violence, humiliation, and laughter or scorn. Nietzsche's device is violence primarily towards oneself (break the heart when most adoring), but also towards the apprentice (send him away). Violence coupled with humiliation is meant to distance the student from the master, as we have seen in the Cynic and Zen examples. Laughter or scorn shocks the apprentice out of his ways, forces him to think for himself, and shakes his fundamental credulity, as the Cynic and Zen masters have discovered. Not only does it snap the student out of a damaging dependence on the master, it snaps him out of admiration for him, which is perhaps the main key to the apprentice's autonomy and self-education. The efficacy of these methods comes at a price: the violence involved may deter many educators.

Conclusion

Following up on Chapter two, which analyzed the possible pitfalls of the mentor-apprentice relationship in philosophy, this chapter focused on the question: how can we promote self-education in order to circumvent the dangers described? I have identified in the previous chapter three related problems that may arise between a philosopher-mentor and a philosopher-apprentice. These are personality worship, an erotic bond that is misused either by the teacher (sexual abuse) or by the student (falling in love with the messenger rather than the message), and a relationship that goes sour because of both teacher and student's needs for autonomy, the teacher's desire to influence and the student's growing need for independence. In this chapter, I proposed three main answers to these problems, divided into several sub-answers. First, teaching philosophy as a gift, second, teaching philosophy as a teacher-less education, and third, unconventional methods to further the apprentice's autonomy, such as violence, abuse, laughter, and scorn. All of these answers had weaknesses and faced objections.

Education is mostly self-education. Thus, the method chosen should accomplish three things. At least, it should not obstruct what the student would have learned on his own, nor promise the apprentice more than philosophic education can provide (so as to avoid making him dependent on us), nor burden him with our own fears of autonomy and loneliness when it is time to depart. This places the responsibility on the teacher. It is easier to bear if the teacher does not struggle with his own autonomy. However, as Aristotle already noticed, the more one invests the more one is attached. The trick is to invest effortlessly, effort being the sign that the apprentice's autonomy has been violated. Even better, renouncing

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investment is the surest way to preserve one's own autonomy: knowledge is not ours to impart, not even as a gift.

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Part II

Practical Philosophers—Some Antecedents

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CHAPTER FOUR

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHIES AS PROBLEMATIC ANTECEDENTS

Hellenistic philosophies share characteristics that lend themselves easily to emulation by contemporary philosophical practitioners. There is another side to this affinity, however, as some of these characteristics also represent the most significant dangers facing the practice of philosophy. The pertinence of the discussion of the merits and disadvantages of Hellenistic philosophies lies in that the same characteristic is often both a source of admiration and a potential danger for contemporary philosophers. Following a thorough examination of Hellenistic philosophies, I evaluate their capacity to serve as best models for contemporary practical philosophy, and propose instead the Enlightenment's view of philosophy as the proximate origin of, and more suitable model for, philosophical practice.

Introduction

"Hellenistic" is a term which refers to Greek civilization, and later Graeco-Roman civilization in the period beginning with the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC) and ending, by convention, with the victory of Octavian over Mark Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. During these three centuries it is neither Platonism nor the peripatetic tradition established by Aristotle that occupied the central place in ancient philosophy, but Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism, all of which were post-Aristotelian developments. The influence of these schools continued with significant emendations into the Roman period and later.[101]

Cynicism should be counted as a Hellenistic philosophy too. Although not a school of philosophy in the proper sense of the word, there were men and women in the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire who called themselves Cynics, modelling their preaching and life on the

[101] Among the many introductions to Hellenistic philosophies, Long (1974) and Nussbaum (1994) are especially helpful.

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uncompromising style of Diogenes. Moralist, iconoclast, and preacher: these descriptions catch something of Diogenes' character. He shared none of Aristotle's interests in logic or metaphysics, and attacked the city-state as an institution by advocating an ascetic life based upon "human nature," the rationality of which was at variance, he argued, with the practice of Greek society. This repudiation of accepted customs was backed up by reference to the supposed habits of primitive men and animals. Behind Diogenes' exhibitionism and deliberate affront to convention lay a profound concern with moral values that derives from Socrates.

There were also a number of minor philosophical movements in the early Hellenistic period all claiming to be descended from Socrates' teaching. They established traditions that anticipated certain aspects of Hellenistic philosophy and that influenced or even competed briefly with the new schools. Among them, Antisthenes, Aristippus of Cyrene, and Eucleides of Megara are noteworthy.[102]

I propose, first, to delineate the main characteristics of Hellenistic philosophies, and second, to evaluate their suitability as models for philosophical practice. When not stated otherwise, I will mean "Hellenistic philosophies" to include Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Pyrrhonism. Due to the differences between these schools and Cynicism, reference to the latter will be explicit. When necessary, Pyrrhonism will be excluded, due to the differences between that school and Epicureanism and Stoicism.

1. Characteristics of Hellenistic Philosophies

Hellenistic philosophies share several characteristics. They consider philosophy to be a worldly art, they posit an ideal of tranquility, and they have a radical agenda whose purpose is to develop a new self. Moreover, these philosophies are taught by example, they emphasize self-empowerment and self-mastery, they encourage conversion by describing the effect that associating with a philosopher can have on one's life. Furthermore, they have a practical agenda, they develop universalist and revisionary technologies of the self, and they are transmitted through personal advice and often with humor. Let me explain each of these significant characteristics, on some of which Anthony A. Long, the prominent Hellenistic scholar aptly elaborate in *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (2006), among other studies.

[102] For a detailed account of the minor Socratics, see Guthrie (1969, vol. 3).

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Philosophy as a worldly art: Hellenistic philosophy strives to make itself relevant to a wider social group than do the philosophies of Plato or Aristotle.[103] Thus, Martha Nussbaum explains in *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*,

> The Epicureans, Sceptics, and Stoics approach philosophy not as a detached intellectual discipline but as a worldly art of grappling with issues of daily and urgent human significance: the fear of death, love and sexuality, anger and aggression. Like medicine, philosophy to them is a rigorous science aiming both at understanding and at producing the flourishing of human life". (Nussbaum 1994, 1)

Ataraxia: All Hellenistic philosophies posit an ideal of tranquility, complete *ataraxia* or "untroubledness," whose essential condition is the rational control of one's desires. Paul Woodruff argues that Epicurus may have learned it from Pyrrho (D. L. 9. 64), who is said to have encountered it in India (D. L. 9. 61; Woodruff 1993, 161). Long considers these schools to be "experiments in philosophical power," which were influenced by Socrates' general vision of the philosophical life (Long 2006, 22). All schools emphasized carefully reasoned views of "nature," but the conception of philosophy that underpins this inquiry is, in Epicurus' words, "an activity which by arguments and discussion brings about the happy life" (Long and Sedley 1986, 25K).

Radicalism: The schools' "common emphasis on austerity and frugality is not simply a recommendation to prune one's diet and give up unnecessary luxuries, but rather an invitation to enter an alternative world and acquire a new self," Long explains (Long 2006, 13). Much as Modern anthropologists consider the interests and needs of selves as well as the very notion of self as social constructs, Hellenistic philosophers encouraged their followers to get rid of their pre-philosophical selves. Instead of what is actually required by human nature, these selves were products of social values. Thus, "the happy and virtuous self that the Hellenistic philosophers seek to define is at its most distant from the ordinary attitudes and satisfactions in the area of needs and motivations"

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[103] Polemo became the head of the Platonic Academy in 314 BC, three or four years before Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, arrived in Athens. With his fourth head, the Academy seems to have moved away from mathematics, metaphysics, and dialectic to concentrate upon ethics. Polemo is reported to have said, "A man should train himself in practical matters and not in mere dialectical exercises" (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 4.18; referred to below as "D. L."). Plato regarded dialectic as the best moral training, because it prepared its practitioners for an insight into the nature of goodness.

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(Long 2006, 15). Moreover, we find much common ground between the three Hellenistic schools, which all maintain that many common desirables and deficiencies are merely conventional, with no basis in human nature or an enlightened understanding of the world. Ordinary psychology is inverted, for the purpose of a reconstructed self, who will view the world with eyes not distracted by passion.[104]

Personal example: Many Hellenistic philosophers lead lives that seem largely consistent with their theories, and they strike their audiences as men "who have liberated themselves to a remarkable degree from conventional sources of anxiety" (Long 2006, 14). Long further explains that "their project is to make individual happiness a universally accessible objective, something whose foundations can be fully ascertained and shown to depend on two fundamental conditions—correct understanding of the world and human nature, and excellence of character" (Long 2006. 14). Although comic poets used to mock the philosophers for failing to agree on the nature of "the good,"[105] Long notes a "remarkable consensus among Hellenistic philosophers about what sort of character they wish to cultivate" (Long 2006, 14). Diogenes Laertius, for example, tells us, "Epicurus is said to have recommended Pyrrho's character but his [Epicurus'] own doctrines' (D.L. 9.64)" (quoted in Long 2006, 14). This character is a new kind of hero, a living embodiment of philosophical power, a figure whose appeal to the Hellenistic world consists in self-mastery and whose main features will be delineated below.

Self-empowerment: The popular impact of Hellenistic ethics is due to the leading figures' interpretations and embodiments of the Socratic paradigm. Long explains, "They provide their audience, as Socrates did, with reasons for cultivating a life that is admirable by some of the criteria of conventional morality, but convention, for convention's sake, plays no more part in their reasoning than it did in Socrates'" (Long 2006, 145). This accounts for the leading Hellenistic philosophers' ethical outlook, which is "radically unconventional in many of the attitudes it prescribes." Most importantly, he sees this radicalism as a consequence of "the technologies of the self" that are at the heart of their ethical project:

> Hellenistic ethics transfers to the self traditional notions of leadership and political control. The consequence of internal power over oneself is

[104] Pyrrhonism and Stoicism denounce desire (*epithumia*) with its concomitant mental pain (*lupē*), while the Epicureans retains a non-pejorative use of those terms. Still, Epicurean's desires are restricted to those that are "natural and necessary."
[105] See, for example, Philemon, fragment 71 Kock. Quoted in Long (2006, 14).

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> conceived as the foundation of supreme authority without qualification. Thus, an Epicurean is promised divinity—"you will live like a god among men"—and the Stoic sage is the only king. (Long 2006, 145)

The same idea appears in Plato. However, Hellenistic society was an age of kings, political and philosophical, temporal and spiritual. In this, it differed from the era of Socrates. As a reflection of self-mastery and philosophical power, the institution and experience of monarchy are significant. These are perceived to be at the center of the relationships several philosophers had with kings: Diogenes and Alexander, Pyrrho and Alexander, Zeno and Antigonus Gonatas, Sphaerus and Ptolemy Euergetes, Arcesilaus and Eumenes of Pergamum.[106] Long further explains:

> The concentration of power in the hands of Hellenistic monarchs and generals, together with the vicissitudes these figures experienced, helped to give currency to the notion of a related yet strikingly different paradigm—a self that is authoritative and utterly consistent in all circumstances—and whose power consists in an inversion of monarchical appurtenances, minimal possession, minimal material needs, hierarchical subordination of conventional interests to a controlling rational outlook, and adaptability. (Long 2006, 15)

Thus, we may understand Stilpo of Megara's response to Demetrius, son of Antigonus, when the latter wished to restore Stilpo's plundered property: "I have lost nothing that belonged to me, since no one has removed my education, and I still have my reason and understanding" (D. L. 2.115; quoted in Long 2006, 15).

Self-mastery: Zeno was the paradigm of self-mastery or empowerment in Athens (D. L. 7.27). Frugality, contentment with poverty, rejection of overtures from Antigonas Gonatas, and detachment in social behavior are just about all that the biographical tradition offers by way of justification for this renowned philosopher. Similar stories about other philosophers abound in the tradition. Zeno's cult of poverty has precedents in the actions of the Cynic Crates, who gave up all his wealth (D.L. 6. 87), and Stilpo of Megara.

For Pyrrho, we have to turn to Timon's eulogistic testimony of his skeptic teacher. He invites his readers to see his master as a paradigm of equipoise, set apart from "the famed and unfamed alike, unstable bands of people, weighted down on this side and on that with passions, opinions

[106] Earlier notable examples are Plato's close relationship with Dionysus and Dion, and Aristotle's with Alexander.

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and futile legislation" (Long and Sedley, 1987, 2B). Pyrrho travels light. He acts "so easily and calmly," and is so detached from other voices, that Timon likens him to the sun in his role as humanity's leader and luminary (Long and Sedley, 1987, 2D). Apart from Timon, the biographical tradition emphasizes Pyrrho's self-conscious cultivation of a mind-set that would make him as close to imperviousness to circumstances as possible (Long and Sedley, 1987, 1A-C). He is said to have talked to himself as a way of practicing to be virtuous, and a string of anecdotes are recorded concerning his ability to withstand pain and danger.

On Epicurus, we have the moving first-person testimony of his deathbed letter to Idomeneus:

> I wrote this to you on that blessed day of my life which was also the last. Strangury and dysentery had set in, with the extreme intensity of which they are capable. But the joy in my soul at the memory of our past discussions was enough to counterbalance all this. I ask you, as befits your lifelong companionship with me and with philosophy: take care of the children of Metrodorus. (Long and Sedley 1987, 24D)

Hellenistic philosophy seemed to be able to deliver the happiness that it promised.

Conversion: A phenomenon related to self-empowerment, self-mastery, and personal example is conversion—the contrast between a lifestyle before and after associating with a philosopher. "We are asked to believe that Polemo, who became head of the academy, was converted by Xenocrates from a dissolute way of life to a stubborn consistency of character, so that he 'did not even turn pale when a mad dog bit him in the thigh' (D. L. 4. 17)" (Long 2004, 12).[108] As noted above, the lives many of these philosophers lead seem to be largely consistent with their theories, and they impressed those who saw them as free to a large extent from the anxiety that most of us experience.

Epicurus says, "Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers no therapy for human suffering of the soul."[109] Zeno wins fame because he exemplifies in his life as well as in his teaching a commitment to self-mastery, consistency of character, and independence from conventional ideas of happiness predicated on chance and material success.

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[108] Long explains that "apocryphal though many biographical anecdotes must be, in the case of the Hellenistic philosophers they largely derive from Antigonus of Carystus, who was close enough in date to his subject matter to have appeared ridiculous if the general tenor of biographies was fabrication" (Long 2006, 12).

[109] Quoted by Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 31, in Usener (1977), 221, and Long and Sedley (1987) 25C.

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The Hellenistic philosophers are not the first Greeks to teach practical ethics. Like Plato and Aristotle, they are influenced by the life and philosophy of Socrates, whom the Stoics take as the best actual paradigm of their own ideals. Moreover, some central tenets of Hellenistic ethics, especially the idea that there is an ultimate goal in life and that practical wisdom is essential to happiness, were explored by Aristotle and possibly inherited from him. However, historians are correct in finding something fundamentally new in the style and goals of what we call Hellenistic philosophy. It is what Michel Foucault called a "technology of the self" (Foucault 1988).

Universalist and revisionary technologies of the self: With the help of philosophy, we can work on ourselves, like craftsmen. Using rational reflection, it is up to us to decide certain aspects of what the world is like. As well as to decide who we are, what matters to us, and what value and description we are going to give to our experience. To decide, additionally, (and this is the boldest claim), what we want, and not regard ourselves as the passive recipients of desires, media pressures, or as the victims of other people's exploitation. The Hellenistic art of life includes the remarkable proposal that genuine happiness depends on our making the most skillful use of ourselves and of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Unlike Aristotle, Zeno and Epicurus start their reflections on a good human life by asking questions about the pre-cultural nature and psychological constitution of all normal human beings. With what motivations and potentialities are we endowed as neonates? What are we to imagine we are as bare selves, so to speak, before culture and contemporary ideology began to shape us? One effect of this methodology is to give the starting point of Hellenistic ethics an unrestricted universalist scope. The bare self is anyone's self, irrespective of gender, status, ethnicity, or chronology.

A second effect of this methodology is to make their ethical project radically revisionary. By starting with the pre-cultural self, Stoics and Epicureans gave themselves the space to ask what we can and should make of ourselves if we let our basic human nature rather than conventional ideology take charge of our values and human development. The idea is that an understanding of this nature can and should serve the technologist of the self, shaping our innate potentialities in more life-enhancing ways than cultural norms themselves offer to us. These arts of life presuppose that the culture in which we find ourselves is seriously flawed, and actually encourages us to neglect a life lived in accordance with our nature.

Turning now to technology, these schools propose that in virtue of our basic human nature, once it is properly understood, we all have the basic equipment we need for shaping our lives in an excellent way. This means,

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shaping them not simply or even primarily for interpersonal or restricted moral situations, but in order to live well at all moments, private or solitary as well as public and socially interactive. These philosophies do not require that we live outside of culture. Rather, the proposal is that the Stoic or Epicurean technology of the self is available to us and should become our entire culture because it is can be integrated with any actual culture. Apart from the basic material necessities of life for health and survival and the guidance offered by philosophy itself, we do not need further additives from the environment, or at least additives that we are not equipped to provide for ourselves except at the limits imposed by illness or external coercion. These philosophies are supposed to equip us to become self-sufficient and well-functioning persons for all seasons.

Both Stoicism and Epicureanism posit a natural good for human beings. The work that "natural" does in the Hellenistic concept of a natural goodness is to identify the constituents of the supreme value, happiness, with something that "belongs" to us in virtue of the way we are factually constituted. Everyone naturally seeks happiness, but without the guidance of philosophical reason, we are prone to seek it in things that do not belong to our innate and properly mature natures.

There are differences between the schools.[110] In light of their differing views of the natural human good, the two philosophies arrive at divergent

[110] The Epicureans claim that their specification of the human goal (*telos*) as *ataraxia* or peace of mind requires pursuing only such instrumental goods—pleasure sources—as are necessary to us because of our natural needs. There is nothing inherently right or obligatory about *ataraxia*; we desire it because of our psychological constitution. Morality enters the theory as the second step. To secure our natural good we need friends, mutual benevolence, and virtues of character that dispose us to act only in ways that are consistent with a trouble-free consciousness. See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* (Diogenes Laertius, 10.127-32) and Cicero, *De Finibus* (1.66-67). In Stoicism, the concept of what naturally belongs to us is more complex. The Stoics agree with the Epicureans that it must be identified by reflecting on our basic impulses and human constitution. However, they disagree with the Epicureans over what such reflection delivers. According to the Stoics, what naturally belongs to a mature human constitution is not a hedonistic calculus, designed to promote a preponderance of pleasure over pain, but the perfection of our distinctively human nature, our god-given rationality (see D.L. 7.85-86). Because as individuals we share a rational constitution with other human beings, and because we are naturally disposed to bond with them, the Stoics conclude that anyone's achievement of virtue or rational perfection is inherently advantageous to all virtuous persons. The primary motivation, as with Epicureanism, is the achievement of one's good or happiness, but the virtues that form this good generate actions that are also right and beneficial *per se* in every social context.

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evaluations of the value of pleasure, rationality, and virtue. Thus, rationality and virtue are only instrumental goods for the Epicureans, instrumental for the achievement of *ataraxia*. In Stoicism, by contrast, virtue itself is identified with the perfection of rationality and hence becomes identical to the human good as such; everything else, including pleasure and with the exception of badness (equivalent to irrationality), is demoted to the status of "indifference," that is, neither good nor bad. In spite of these fundamental divergences, however, both philosophies have much in common when we view them as technologies of the self.

Long lists the following six presuppositions that Epicureanism and Stoicism hold together, apart from their naturalistic and universalist foundations:

> In order to flourish as human beings, we require the following. (A) Criteria for action that are systematically anchored to our long-term objective. (B) A system of values that is plausible experientially. (C) A comprehensive world-view or a theory of how human beings fit into the world as a whole. (D) A system of values that makes minimal demands on the state of the world in which we happen to find ourselves. (E) Total commitment to the proposition that happiness depends largely or entirely on our individual characters, mentalities, and rational plans of life. Finally, (F) commitment to the view that failure to achieve happiness is the result of motivations, emotions, and actions that are incompatible with the concept of an obtainable good that belongs to us by nature. (Long 2006, 31)[111]

Personal advice: Zeno's teacher, the cynic Crates, served as a "public consultant" to the fourth century BC Athenian people. This activity had an impact later, although it is difficult to evaluate its actual influence.[112] Due to the interest of this topic to the practice of philosophy, I will elaborate on the circumstances in which such an activity flourished.

In the latter half of the fifth century BC, the ordinary Athenian is forced to rely on his own resources in the conduct of his affairs. The laws of the States lay down certain limits that cannot be transgressed without punishment; but in that very important section of human affairs, which does not come within the province of the law, but on which happiness so largely, depends, the average person has no guide. Religion can satisfy his craving for ritual in the State ceremonies, or provide emotional stimulus in the Mystery Cults, but it gives no advice on the conduct of his everyday affairs. The two great schools of Philosophy, the Academy and the

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[111] For an elaboration of these points, see Long (2006, 31-38).

[112] Dudley (1967, 52). See Dudley (1967, chap. 7) for the influence Cynics and Stoics had on politics.

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Peripatetics, are scholarly and scientific in spirit; Theophrastus warned his pupils that the mastery of his doctrines would demand a world of labor.

For his recurrent problems, the ordinary person cannot derive help from these schools of philosophy, but has to consult oracles, consider dream interpretations, or rely on the advice of his friends (it is interesting to see how ancient discussions of friendship always insist that to give helpful advice is the most important function of a friend). However, oracles are sometimes expensive and generally ambiguous, while one's friends often know little more than you do yourself. Advice from a man like Crates, himself detached from the ordinary business of life, has value because it was impartial, clear, and related to a known standard of values. We may picture him doing much what Socrates is portrayed as doing in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, preaching the virtues of agreement between brothers and pointing out the advantages of self-control to those who seem much in need of it.

To us, Crates, the cheerful hunchback who renounces his wealth, who makes one of the few successful love-matches known in Greek literature and has a talent for literary parody, is a pleasant and interesting figure. But as Donald R. Dudley notes in his study of Cynicism,

> Philosophy brought to the masses inevitably differed from the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle; from the noble quest to satisfy the curiosity of the intellect it has descended to become Daily Strength for Daily needs. For the life of the average Athenian of his day he [Crates] was perhaps more important than Theophrastus or the learned professors of the Academy. (Dudley 1967, 53)

In contrast to Diogenes with his combative style and acerbic tongue, Crates is remembered as a benevolent figure and, thanks to his role as arbiter of family quarrels, was actually revered as a household deity in Athens (Apuleius, *Florida* 22: V.H. 18 G).

Others have emulated Crates' activity, notably the Cynic Demonax in the second century AD. Combining the "philanthropy" of Crates with the skepticism and nihilism of Menippus, he is described thus:

> He also made it his concern to compose quarrels of brothers, and to negotiate peace between husband and wife. On occasion he spoke words of reason to angry mobs, and usually persuaded them to serve their country in a sensible manner.

Toward the end of his life, he too was venerated as a "good spirit and divine visitation in houses." Dudley reports:

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> He used to eat and sleep uninvited in any house which he happened to be passing . . . When he died, the whole city attended his funeral, especially the philosophers, who carried his body to the grave. (Quoted in Dudley 1967, 160)

Unless the panegyric is closely exaggerated, and there is no reason to believe that it is, Demonax can stand with Crates as an embodiment of the Cynic ideal of service toward humankind.

Philosophers' habit of giving advice was criticized even in Hellenistic times, for example, by the heterodox Stoic Ariston of Chios.[113] The teachings of Ariston represent a protest against the additions with which Zeno has encumbered the simple Socratic ethics he has taken from the cynics. The ethical system of Ariston posits a different *telos* than that of Zeno; instead of "a life lived in harmony with Nature," we are commended to "a life of complete indifference to everything between virtue and vice." To illustrate this precept, he borrowed Bion's simile of the Actor: the wise man will be as the good actor who, whether cast as Thersites or Agamemnon, will play his part well (D.L. 7.160). To continue with the simile, the business of philosophy was to produce the good actor, not, according to Ariston, to coach him in separate roles.

Ariston rejects not only Logic and Physics, but also one branch of Ethics, referred to by Diogenes Laertius (7.84) as "suasions and dissuations" (*parainetichos topos*). This part of Ethics dealt with giving prescriptions and proscriptions based upon the theory already laid down in the three broad categories of Stoic Ethics, namely, "on impulse," "on good and bad things," and "on passions" (von Arnim, 1903-1905 50.358). According to Seneca, this study "dat propria cuique personae nec in universum componit hominen," that is, it gives advice on the conduct of marital affairs, on the management of servants, and so on. Cleanthes in particular seems to have devoted attention to it. Ariston rejected such precepts as improper for philosophy. They were too numerous and too particular to be embraced under the "laws of Philosophy, which should be brief and universal." For, says Ariston,

> Consider the case of one giving precepts on marriage. He must advise separately the husband who has wedded a virgin, and he who has a wife

[113] Ariston left the Stoics school while Zeno was ill, and came for a time under the influence of Polemon. He did not open a school of his own till after the death of Zeno, i.e., probably after 260. He lectured in the Cynosarges, as Antisthenes had done.

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> who has known sex before marriage, he must provide rules for living with (a) a rich wife, (b) one without a dowry. Must he not also cater for, (c) a barren woman, (d) a prolific one; (e) a mother, (f) one who is a stepmother? (Quoted in Dudley 1967, 100-1)

This was a field of study fitted rather for the nurse and the schoolmaster: in any case, it was superfluous for the *sophos*, who, having grasped the central principles of *arête*, or virtue, would necessarily act virtuously in individual cases. Ariston seems to be the exception, though, as most Hellenistic philosophers did give personal advice.

Humor in the service of philosophy: Paradox was a fundamental part of Greek philosophy from its beginnings. Long explains, “In our use of the term ‘paradox,’ we have lost its connection with *doxa*, and so we tend to think of philosophical paradoxes as either mere puzzles or perversity. However, a paradox is literally a thought that is incongruous with commonplace beliefs. Greek philosophers trade on paradox because the dialectical tradition, via its Eleatic origins, trained them to think in terms of a dichotomy between conventional opinion and unascertained truth. On this way of looking at things, the world is up for grabs, so to speak” (Long 2006, 10). Mere convention should not be the basis of our beliefs. Rather, they should be based on reasons. The innovative strategies of the Hellenistic Philosophies thrive on paradox, Long further explains, “in the sense that they are designed to challenge, intrigue, and undermine complacency. Defense of traditional thought is clearly less their concern than following the argument wherever it takes them” (Long 2006, 10).

Cynicism influenced Hellenistic philosophies (see Long 1996). One important Cynic trait is the use of laughter to help convey paradoxical thinking, with the aim of attracting and influencing a wider audience. As this topic is rarely addressed, I will elaborate on the use of humor for philosophic purposes in Hellenistic times.

Although it is to the Cynics’ influence that we owe the use of humor for philosophic purposes, the first literary productions of the Cynics seem to have been predominantly “serious.” Diogenes used dialogues and epistles, the tragedies of Crates “bore the most solemn stamp of philosophy,” while his epistles “were written in a style closely resembling that of Plato” (D.L. 7.98). But it was soon found that the style suited to the intelligentsia of Athens was far above the heads of the audience to which the Cynics addressed themselves. Diogenes himself discovers that “when he spoke in earnest on serious subjects, none stayed to hear him, but when he began to whistle, a crowd soon gathered” (D.L. 7.27). The common people, unlike the eager young companions of Socrates, have neither the leisure nor the inclination to “follow the argument wherever it might lead, not caring how

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many digressions were made, provided that truth was attained in the end" (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 172 d). They want the lessons of philosophy presented in a palatable and easily remembered way; their tastes are fairly represented by the collection of aphorisms, none of them more than three words long, inscribed in a stone at Cyzycus around the year 300 BC. Clearly, for such an audience simplicity was all. The literary forms that comprise the serio-comic were developed primarily to cater to their needs. The prose forms of the serio-comic were mainly the adaptation and popularization of "Socratic" literature, while in verse the influence of the old gnomic poetry, the Mime, and Comedy are all discernible.

The evolution of the serio-comic is in the main an attempt to adapt the "Socratic" forms of popular philosophical propaganda to the requirements of the Hellenistic age. The conversation and character of Socrates has given rise to the Socratic dialogue, which perhaps achieves its best form in the hands of Plato. Parody and myth, an element of the laughable, were introduced by Socrates' irony and Plato's fancy. An example of the *Symposium*, which was a less serious form of composition, the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon was the first to gain popularity from the third century BC onwards. Finally, Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle used the epistle for philosophical exposition. Such were the traditional forms for philosophical propaganda available by the end of the fourth century BC, according to Dudley (1967).

The Cynics also used verse for their propaganda. It had of course always been one of the staples of Greek education—Lucian says that "the sayings of wise men and the great deeds of old and moral stories are set to verse that they may be easily remembered" (Lucian, *Anacharsis*, 21). The Cynic curriculum cultivated the serio-comic. Theognis, Simonides, and Aesop had been popular in the circle of Socrates; and both tragedians and comedians had claimed to be the instructors of the public (see Aristophanes 1958, 339). However, as a model for gnomic and satiric verse it was necessary to go back beyond the fifth century to such writers as Theognis, Hipponax, and Archilochus. Crates was the first of the Cynics to revive the old measures: the iambic, appropriate for satire from the time of Archilochus, appears in several fragments; elegiacs are used for the "Hymn to Euteleleia" and the parody of the epitaph of Sardanapalus; hexameters appear in the parodies of Homer.

Tradition is unanimous that the Cynic Diogenes is remarkable for his powers of ridicule and repartee. Anecdotes show him in conflict with Antisthenes, Eucleides, Plato, and Aristotle among the philosophers and with Demosthenes, Philip, Alexander, Perdiccas, and Craterus among statesmen and tyrants. His comical writings are didactic, undertaken to

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expose the artificiality of convention. The same explanation may be adduced for his notorious eccentricities—how he enters a theatre when everyone else is leaving it, how he is going about in broad daylight with a lighted lantern, looking for an honest man.

Diogenes' philosophic wit is further developed by Crates, Zeno's teacher, who combines philosophical consulting with humor. Crates believes that the fog or confusion (*typhos*) that plagues most persons is curable, but not through grand schemes of political reform, like those of Plato, or through harsh language and exhibitionism, as with Diogenes, but through a commitment to people's welfare on a one-on-one basis. This is why the Theban hunchback would literally run from house to house, rendering himself useful in the task of curing those infected with *typhos*. His presence alone, they say, was sufficient for people to come to their senses and regain control over their emotions. Moved by their unfortunate condition and showing no signs of misanthropy, he would cure them by means of gentle discourse, accompanied by much joking, laughter, and merriment, and above all, by the example of his life. Plutarch reports that "he passed his whole life jesting and laughing, as though on perpetual holiday" (*De tranquilitate animi*, 4.226E). His very reproofs were delivered not with bitterness, but with kindliness. To him, we owe the word "philanthropy," literally, the love of people.

Crates publicizes his Cynicism by writing satirical verse. The surviving lines, in a variety of meters, include parody of archaic poetry. This device can be interpreted as one of Crates' contributions to the Cynic practice of defacing the currency, and is directly imitated by the Pyrrhonist Timon. The opening of his most famous poem begins by parodying the Homeric description of Crete (*Odyssey* 19.172-73). Crates stamps his mark on the Cynic tradition not just through poetry but also through records of his remarks. Many of these set the scene for what later became stock Cynic themes—the indifference to exile and the necessity of freeing oneself from passion to attain to happiness. His fragments, however, are clearly informed by a satiric or serio-comic perspective: "He used to say that we should study philosophy until we see in generals nothing but donkey drivers" (D.L. 6.82).

Crates emerges as a Cynic who disseminates Diogenes' ethical principles in attractive and satirical verse. Thus he probably did as much as anyone to make Cynicism familiar to an audience far wider than that of other philosophers. In addition to his wife Hipparchia and his brother Pasicles, Crates' pupils included his brother-in-law Metrocles, who is probably the first to collect and publish Cynic "sayings" (*chreiai*), as well as Monumus of Syracuse. The latter's "trifles blended with covert

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seriousness," are early examples of the serio-comic style—a hallmark of Cynic literature associated particularly with Crates and his followers (see Demetrius, *De Elocutione* 170, V H 66 G).

Of the prose genres, the most highly developed is the diatribe. The diatribe is originally synonymous with dialogue as describing the conversations of a philosopher, as evidenced in Plato's *Apology* (37D). It is probably in this sense that the writings attributed to Aristippus are called *diatribai* (D.L. 2). Diatribe as a literary genre appears to have been the work of the Cynic Bion. The chief characteristics of the diatribe as Bion developed it are its use of allegory, anecdote, and quotation, its appeals to an imaginary adversary, etc. It is obviously a popularized form of the dialogue. As the diatribe is not a "zatetic" argument but an exposition, there is only room for one main speaker, and the other characters of the dialogue are dispensed with, or combined in the "imaginary adversary." The definition of Hermogenes is worth quoting: "diatribe," he says, "is a moral exposition of some brief topic" (*Rhetorica Graecorum*, III, 406). After Diogenes, the Cynics abandon the "serious" dialogue though the form was adapted for comic purposes by Menippus.

In later times, too, the Cynic writers of the third century BC are still a potent force**.** The diatribe becomes an important literary genre, and the influence of Bion thus affects not only the diatribes of Seneca, Musonius and Epictetus, but also the sermons of Dio Chrysostom, and, at a later period, those of Synesius, Themistius, and Gregory of Nazianzen**.** The old view of satire as a purely Roman production has long been abandoned; and George C. Fiske (1966) shows how marked is the influence of Bion's diatribe in Lucilius and Horace. Menippus, again, is the model of Varro in his *Satirae Menippeae*—thus indirectly influencing Petronius and Seneca––and is of course of great importance for Lucian.

The Cynics create from the "Socratic" literary forms and from the old gnomic poetry a powerful and many-sided instrument for popular philosophical propaganda, and the serio-comic is a fertile influence successively on Hellenistic, Roman, and later Greek literature. The early Stoics follow the example of Crates. We have iambics associated with Zeno, Cleanthes, and Ariston, while Cleanthes uses hexameter in his famous "Hymn for Zeus." Cercidas invents a new meter, the "meliambus." The Stoics always use Cynic literary genres for what may be called their exoteric teachings. The vehicle for Stoic popular propaganda or preaching is the diatribe, the chief genre of the serio-comic in literature. The canons of the diatribe demand stock figures, traditional metaphors and similes, which anyone wishing to preach to the standard texts would find ready-made.

In contrast to the Stoics, Epicurus specifically denies that the wise man

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would "practice Cynicism" (D. L. 10.119). However, the principles an Epicurean should adopt concerning satisfaction of desires, as well as attitudes to society, self-sufficiency, and freedom have much in common with Cynic precepts. This affinity is most clearly seen in the satirical tone of the Epicurean maxims, many of which call attention to the vanity of conventional human motivations.[114] Cynic tendencies are still more evident in our accounts of the philosophies of two of Epicurus' rivals, the Cyrenaics Theodorus and Hegesias.

There are also pronounced Cynic elements in Timon's Pyrrhonist critique of the philosophical tradition. Whether their official acknowledgment of the Cynics is positive or negative, the new Hellenistic schools recognize that Cynicism is an ethical movement that anticipate and adumbrate some of their own leading concerns. They all imitate the Cynics' use of humor for conveying a serious message.[115]

They also imitate the Cynics' habit of ridiculing other philosophers and intellectuals in general. Exemplified by Diogenes' attacks on Plato and Aristotle, this habit continues through attacks on the Stoics: the complexity introduced by Cleanthes in Physics and by Chrysippus in Logic, are not of interest to Cynics. Cercidas attacks the dialectical studies of Sphaerus and his followers. If the *Symposium* of Menippus were a

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[114] See Epicurus 1970, *Principal Doctrines* 15, 21, 29, *Vatican Sayings* 21, 25, 33, 46, 65.

[115] The great quantity of moralizing verse that characterizes the Hellenistic age cannot all be attributed to the Cynics, though it is safe to say that Cynic influence gave the first impetus to that literature. In addition, it is noteworthy that this gnomic poetry exhibits the same features as the moralizing prose of the diatribe, the anecdote, and the serio-comic. It abounds with quotation and parody, with anecdotes, and with examples taken from the familiar figures of the past. Heracles, Odysseus, Socrates, and Diogenes were the stock heroes of the prose literature: verse adds new figures to the gallery. Hipponax, a wanderer, a beggar, and noted for his mordant wit, was obviously well suited to appear as "Anima naturaliter Cynica"; so were the slave Aesop and the barbarian sage Anacharsis. Poetic anecdotes and aphorisms could be attributed to the Seven Wise Men. For didactic purposes the verse of the older writers and philosophers were parodied; parodies of Phocylides, Xenophanes and Pythagoras were also in circulation in Hellenistic times. Dudley says that "the popular philosophy of the Hellenistic age has so many features in common with Cynicism that it is difficult to decide where Cynic influence begins and ends in the case of individual writers of the period" (1967, 114). On Crates, see Navia (1996); for the Cynic influence on Hellenistic literature, see Dudley (1967, chap. 5), and for the Hellenistic schools, see Long (1996). Long (1978) explores in detail Timon's Cynic leanings. For the attacks of the schools on each other, see Dudley (1967, 106-7). On wit and humor within philosophy, see Amir (2014a; 2000b).

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model for that of Lucian, it would seem that the Stoics are especially mocked; in any case, it is likely enough that they were also the target of the satire poured forth on all dogmatic schools by Menippus.

Of all the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, that of Epicurus adheres most faithfully to the teachings of its founder and keeps the strongest hold on its adherents. The Cynics ridicule Epicurean loyalty. Two books of the satires of Menippus are expressly directed against the Epicureans and their reverence for the festival of their founder (D.L. 6.101).

The Cynic spirit of antagonism to the dogmatists finds an ally in Timon of Phlius, and it is not surprising that in his satiric writings Timon follows Cynic models. His *Silloi* or comic verses are clearly an imitation of Crates, who himself has parodied Homer's *Odyssey* and showed the wretched state of the philosophers in Hades. Timon is also following Crates in his use of the iambic meter for purposes of satire; and in the numerous "tragedies" he composes he may have been influenced by those of Diogenes. "Indeed," Dudley explains, "were it not for his exposition of the philosophy of Pyrrho, we should class Timon with Menippus as the outstanding literary representatives of the Cynics' nihilism" (Dudley 1967, 107-8).

The Cynic's use of humor influences Hellenistic philosophers both in their serio-comic writings and in their attacks on other schools. I have explained at some length this characteristic of Hellenistic philosophies for it is seldom commented on and it may be relevant to the work of contemporary philosophical practitioners.

2. Assets and Dangers of Hellenistic Philosophies

Hellenistic philosophies present many assets worth emulating. True, today, Stoic indifference to the goodness of material well-being is considered unacceptable, as is Epicurean austerity, and both schools' absence of any public policy for social welfare. One asset they do have is the appeal to individual selfhood, treating the moral domain as something we will naturally internalize if we make happiness a project that depends on our making the best (that is, most skillful) use of everything at our disposal in every circumstance, including our social environment. The art of life we can learn from Hellenistic philosophies incorporates the moral domain within its broader interest in a life guided by reflection on how best to shape our natural motivations and potentialities. It asks us to base happiness on what we can get from our own mental resources, when these are deployed in non-exploitative ways that make us, and not the state of the world, the controlling element in our own flourishing. Accordingly, we

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can modify our motivations in ways that are self-benefiting and other-benefiting, we can reconsider conventional values, and learn to extirpate the passions that make us miserable as well as prone to unethical impulses.

The most compelling idea that can be gleaned from Hellenistic philosophies, shared by Stoics and Epicureans, is that any satisfactory ethics must be psychologically attractive, self-fulfilling, and completely self-shaping, as distinct from being self-denying, externally imposed, and only relevant to parts of one's life. It makes the radical call of philosophy appealing: nowhere else is it as clear that, contrary to common opinion, happiness requires hard work and internal change. However, this characteristic has another side as well: as it is highly demanding, its emulation in philosophical practitioners' consultation may prove problematic. I further elaborate on this topic below.

Obviously, philosophical practitioners emulate the practical agenda of the Hellenistic schools, their conception of philosophy as the art of life, and their penchant for giving practical advice based on general principles. The history of philosophic advice since the Hellenistic philosophers is worth recalling. In the Alexandrian period, Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics agree that philosophy's main objective is to lead individuals to peace of mind. Their practical approach appeals to the Romans: Cicero defines philosophy as "the art of life," a view that influences the Renaissance view of philosophy (Cicero, *De Finibus*, 1914, III, 2, 4). During the Renaissance the Ciceronian conception of philosophy comes to be predominant, at least among ordinary cultivated men; as late as the seventeenth century John Selden writes, "Philosophy is nothing else but prudence," by which he meant that prudence is the art of life (quoted in Passmore 1967, 219). The popular conception of the philosopher, as exemplified in the phrase "taking things philosophically," indicates a similar attitude. Many of the best-known philosophers have offered practical advice that is closely related to their general philosophical views (for example, John Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*).

When Bertrand Russell argues that philosophy should be neutral, he is not suggesting that the philosopher should be less ready to offer advice than other people (Russell 1914). Indeed, few philosophers have been as ready as Russell was to give advice on the conduct of life. In his valuable discussion of the philosopher as adviser, John Passmore remarks:

> As a person unusually practiced in critical discussion, the philosopher may well have a special responsibility to do so. Furthermore, it would be very strange if, merely in virtue of investigations, he were not sometimes in an unusually good position to offer advice. Even if the philosopher can do no more than show people that they are talking nonsense, as Wittgenstein

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> once thought, this can be made the basis for advice on how to avoid talking nonsense. In all such cases, however, the advice rests upon, but does not constitute, the successful completion of a philosophical task. In this respect, the philosopher differs from the sage: not uncommonly the whole content of the sage's "wisdom" consists in advice. (Passmore 1967, 219)

The point to remember is that in contradistinction to the sage, the advice is based upon, but does not constitute, the successful completion of a philosophical task. This point is of extreme importance to philosophical practitioners and I will return to it below when discussing the danger of charlatanism.

Hellenistic philosophies' ideals of universalism and self-empowerment as well as their technologies of the self are worth emulating. It is not clear to what extent we can still work with a pre-Freudian notion of the self, however, which involves complete transparency to reflection. This requires taking complete charge of one's life and full responsibility for indulgences of emotion or appetite, in short, to claim complete authority over the self. [116]

Related themes are Hellenistic philosophers' extremism, revisionism, and insistence on personal example. Although these characteristics are harder to emulate, they should not be considered less appealing aspects of Hellenistic philosophies, with the exception of one possible problem already foreseen by Stoicism. The Stoics fought against extremism within their philosophy, with Paneatius and Posedonius sweetening for the Romans the more difficult tenets of the school. The problem I foresee is the frustration consultants may experience when confronted with such an ambitious and demanding program. A radical change of one's values, a conversion to philosophy, and the loss of a former self are threatening to most persons. Claiming that happiness is within one's reach, depending only on the person's will to change thoroughly, can be counter-productive and discouraging for persons who cannot do it. [117]

Finally, humor in philosophic writings and discussions has been rare since Hellenistic and Roman times, notwithstanding some exceptions with the likes of Michel de Montaigne, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, George Santayana, and Russell. Philosophy needs to be transmitted in a manner that is designed to improve the understanding and lives of its students, and for no other purpose. As Oliver Leaman notes,

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[116] See Chapter 11 below for the impact the controversy over the unconscious has had on philosophical practice, and Amir (2006b).

[117] I have elaborated on this concern elsewhere. See Amir (2004).

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> Once philosophers started teaching for payment, they no longer were concerned to transmit their subject in the way in which one friend should talk to another, and so the language of philosophy changed from being interesting and witty to becoming highly academic, technical and obscure. (Leaman 1996, 4)

This feature of philosophy can be redeemed in a consultancy, where the friendly aspect of philosophy can come to life, even if fees are involved.[118]

Apart from the features of Hellenistic philosophies that are worth emulating, there are also potential dangers inherent in those philosophies, to which philosophical practitioners are especially prone. One danger is subverting the goal of philosophy. The goal of philosophy is not happiness nor peace of mind, and the philosophical argument that brings no happiness is not empty. The unintellectual spirit of some Hellenistic philosophies is worth emphasizing: "The view that Epicurus was only interested on a rough-and-ready philosophical methodology is mistaken, but there is no denying his unintellectual posture," writes Long (Long 1974, 112). While Epicurus is unintellectual, the Cynics are frankly anti-intellectual, and the Pyrrhonists, whose peace of mind follows from withholding judgment (*epochē*) or giving up any claims to knowledge, reach an unintellectual conclusion even if based on intellectual reasons.

In contradistinction to these schools' views, the goal of philosophy as traditionally understood is truth. The French contemporary philosopher André Comte-Sponville reminds us that although the philosopher may hope that the truth leads to happiness, if given a choice between truth and happiness, she chooses truth.[119] Otherwise, philosophers are undistinguished

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[118] On fees in philosophy, see Frank (1996). On the relevance of fees to problems in teaching philosophy, see Amir (2009a) and Chapter 3 above.

[119] Among other classical formulations of this idea, recall Descartes' (1991, vol. 3: Letter to Princess Elizabeth, 6 October 1645), and more recently, André Comte-Sponville's: "Le philosophe, on s'en doute, fait un autre choix, qu'à vrai dire il ne choisit pas. Ce n'est pas en effet parcequ'il est philosophe qu'il fait ce choix; c'est parce qu'il fait ce choix qu'il est philosophe. Il est l'effet, plutôt que le sujet de ce choix qui le définit . . . . Toujours est-il qu'il a 'choisi', lui, doublement la vérité et le bonheur. Comme le savant, il a souci du vrai; et comme nous tous, cette exigence d'être heureux. Mais le vrai prime: s'il faut choisir entre une vérité et un bonheur, il choisit la vérité. Il ne serait pas philosophe autrement" (Comte-Sponville 1993, 199). Rather than choosing differently, Comte-Sponville explains, the philosopher is a philosopher because he values truth as well as happiness: like the scientist, he needs truth, and, like all of us, he yearns for happiness. Nevertheless, between the two, he prefers truth, and if he had to choose between

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from New Agers, who would endorse any technology that brings happiness, regardless of its objective truth. Indeed, truth is reinterpreted as a completely subjective experience within the New Age movement, which is a good reason to differentiate philosophers from New Agers.[120]

The second and related danger in emulating Hellenistic philosophies lies in what Long aptly calls "the Guru type of Greek philosopher" (Long 1978, 70). This is a type of wise man who turned up in the Greek world from the sixth century BC onwards and increasingly, it seems, in the second part of the fourth century BC. While his principal concerns are ethical, he does not belong to a monolithic group. To take an example, Zenon's teacher, Stilpo, has strong interests in dialectic which the Cynics do not share, and one may argue about whether Socrates, whose influence on all later gurus is certain, should be classed with them or not. However, a sharp distinction can be drawn between the early Academic and Peripatetic concentration on systematic discussion and written exposition and the informal and more individualised teaching of Stilpo, Crates, and others. By the end of the fourth century the early Academic and Peripatetic style of philosophy look like the exception. Zeno and Epicurus have begun to establish themselves; the Academy is apparently concentrating upon ethics. Only in the Peripatos is there a lively continuation of scientific research.[121]

The emphasis on more informal and individualised teaching had consequences, some benign, some more dangerous. Degenerating into sloppy thinking or idle dogmatism is a real danger for Hellenistic philosophers. As Long reminds us, the head of the skeptical Platonic academy, Arcesilaus, more than any thinker of his lifetime deserves the credit for ensuring that Hellenistic philosophy remains true to the classical tradition of rigorous argument (Long 2006, 96). It is not clear who would fulfil this role today with regard to philosophical practice, granted that the same danger confronts philosophical practitioners, especially those who insist on differentiating practical from academic philosophy.

The future of philosophy in Hellenistic times seemed to lie with the individual who had a charismatic personality, a brilliant style of repartee, and a powerful ethical message. The sheer popularity of philosophy and

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them, he would choose truth over happiness—he would not be a philosopher otherwise. On this issue, see also Amir (2006a).

[120] On the New Age movement's characteristics in comparison with philosophy, see Amir (2009a), and Chapter 1 in *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017).

[121] For the Academy at that time, see Dillon (1977, 39-43); for the Peripatos, see Sedley (1977, 75-77).

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the range of options available inevitably influenced the way in which *avant-garde* philosophers or their disciples presented their views.[122] Epicurus had no scruples about using the tactics of the advertising man in attracting the attention of his audience.[123] The appeal of the system of the Cynics depended largely on the personality of its leader, and lacked a comprehensive theoretical background that might assure its survival. For example, Ariston was a most persuasive speaker, and was nicknamed "the Siren" (D.L. 7.166). He also had wit. However, his system resembled the Cynics' in its dependence on the personality of its leader. All these characteristics of Hellenistic philosophers are present to varying degrees today and can easily be described as potential pitfalls for philosophical practitioners.

The proliferation of the Guru type of philosopher had more alarming consequences, some of them reminiscent of modern-day cults. First, as Long remarks, "the followers of Epicurus and Pyrrho were alike in treating their leader as a quasi-divine and unique discoverer of its [equanimity's] grounds" (Long 1978, 84n15). Second, ethics in the Hellenistic period was such a hot subject that it led disciples to follow the master blindly, even to suicide. Cicero tells us of the Cyrenaic Hegesias, who adopted as his version of the goal of life (*telos*) "living without bodily or mental pain" (D.L. 2.95). He made an argument that death would remove one from bad things, and as a result many of his devotees committed suicide—so many that Ptolemy Philadelphus prohibited him from lecturing (Cicero, *Tusculanae disputations,* 1.83). Even a totally forgotten figure like Hegesias can indicate the significance of this cultural phenomenon as well as its dangers, especially in the early years of the third century, when the range and variety of the options reached its maximum.[124]

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[122] This concern with self-presentation is particularly evident in the efforts many philosophers made to align themselves with authorities from the past, to appropriate a respectable tradition for themselves. A further characteristic of the competing schools is the way in which they borrowed terms and concepts from one another; and yet another common feature of the philosophical scene, stimulated by the same conditions, is the intense criticism of contemporary rivals. See Sedley (1976).

[123] See, for example, the "fourfold remedy" (*tetrapharmakos*): God presents no fears, death no worries. And while good is readily attainable, bad is readily endurable" (Philodemus, *Adversus Sophistas*, 1987, col. 4, 9-14; Long and Sedley 1987, 25). At first glance, it is astonishing in its simplicity, optimism, and complacency. See Frischer (1982) on "advertising" in Epicurean recruitment.

[124] Later, some options, like early Pyrrhonism, faded out, or were assimilated into another philosophy, as the absorption of the Cyrenaics into Epicureanism exemplifies.

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A third danger is charlatanism. A characteristic of the growth of Cynicism in the second century AD was the influx into the movement of a large number of charlatans. The most vivid picture of this aspect of Cynicism is that given in the *fugitivi* of Lucian. The dialogue opens on Olympus, where Zeus and Apollo are discussing the suicide of Peregrinus Proteus. They are interrupted by the entrance of Philosophy, weeping, and complaining of her treatment on earth. She has been outraged, she complains, not by the vulgar mob, as in the days of Socrates, not by philosophers themselves, but by a race of half-breeds,

> whose dress and look and equipment is like my own, and who claim to be enrolled under my command, and give themselves out as the pupils and comrades and devotees of Philosophy. But their life is an abomination, full of ignorance and boldness and depravity, and of great insolence towards myself.

This reminds us of Dio Chysostom's remark in the first Tarsian oration, that there is nothing in their appearance to distinguish the Cynic charlatan from the true philosopher. In Lucian's *fugitivi*, Philosophy complains that her present aggressors are a low type of humanity, mostly slaves and hirelings, whose lack of leisure deprived them of any acquaintance with Philosophy in their youth, her very name they had never heard. However, when they grew up and saw the esteem in which philosophers were held, and the license of speech allowed to them, and the influence they possessed, they considered Philosophy to be a potent despotism. They had no means of learning the necessary and true attributes of the profession; but on the other hand, their trades were shabby and laborious, and offered a bare livelihood, and many found slavery insupportable. So summoning up boldness, ignorance, and shamelessness, and practicing new forms of abusiveness, they assumed the garb of a philosopher, and like Aesop's donkey, thought they were the lion when they had put on its skin and brayed:

> Many of them seduce the wives of their hosts and lead them off to be philosophers too, quoting Plato's dictum that women should be held in common . . . their behaviour at banquets, and their drunkenness would be a long story to narrate . . . . No two things are more utterly opposed than their precepts and their practices . . . . And then, the greed of their mendicancy! Some even make a fortune out of it, and then, good-bye to the wallet, cloak and tub! . . . So the average man holds Philosophy in contempt, and thinks all its adherents are like the Cynics. (Lucian, *fugitivi*; quoted in Dudley 1967, 146)

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Philosophical practice is especially prone to a similar contemporary danger, *mutatis mutandis*. This danger is related to the problem, outlined above, of distinguishing between the sage, whose "wisdom" resides in giving advice, and the philosopher, whose advice is based upon, but does not constitute, the successful completion of a philosophical task.

A careful study of Hellenistic philosophies can reveal the dangers of charlatanism, extremism, and un-intellectualism in the Guru type of philosophers—dangers that may also constitute their popular appeal—and these warning can apply also to philosophical practitioners. An attractive ethics, a practical agenda, a view of philosophy as the art of life, the legitimacy of advice, the message of universalism, the tools for self-empowerment, viable technologies of the self, and the use of humor in service of the truth are some of the most important assets these philosophies possess, worthy of emulation. The interest of the discussion of the merits and disadvantages of Hellenistic philosophies lies in that, often, the same characteristic is both a source of admiration and a potential danger. This is what makes Hellenistic philosophies so pertinent to philosophical practice.

Conclusion

Hellenistic philosophies are often singled out as good models of contemporary philosophical practice. We have seen in what respect this is true. Notwithstanding Hellenistic philosophies' assets, there are also dangers inherent in these philosophies, to which philosophical practitioners are especially prone.

For this reason, I propose the Enlightenment's view of philosophy as a more suitable model for the practice of philosophy. While philosophy could be viewed as therapeutic in the Enlightenment, Enlightenment thinkers put more emphasis on adult philosophic education for all than on private advice from personal teachers.[125] Undoubtedly, philosophy was widely popular in Roman times, partly due to the relaxation of the requirements imposed by Hellenistic philosophies. To my mind, however, the true source of contemporary philosophical practice is the Enlightenment, granted that the Enlightenment's revival of the discursiveness of philosophy, of the Socratic ideal, and of Ancient philosophy in general is a subject of investigation.

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[125] On the Enlightenment as a source of philosophical practice, see Amir (2015) and Chapter 5 below.

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This source is rarely mentioned in the literature on practical philosophy maybe because many of its adherents are postmodernists or at least Romanticists and thus perhaps do not wish to recognize their debt to the Enlightenment's project. Acknowledging this potential origin may diffuse confusion in the contemporary philosophical practice movement and help practitioners avoid dangers common to the new practice and Hellenistic philosophers.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SHAFTESBURY AS A PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHER

Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (1671-1713), the British Enlightenment philosopher, put the practice of philosophy on the agenda. As the most important Modern Socratic, he made philosophy significant for this happiness-driven century in a way that could not be shared by his contemporaries. Not only did he use philosophy to educate a new class of citizens, but he also made philosophy necessary for virtue, and virtue, in turn, indispensable for happiness. In contradistinction to his tutor, John Locke, and the latter's followers, who made pleasure the content of happiness, the combined neo-Stoicism and neo-Aristotelianism that Shaftesbury endorsed accounted for his equating virtue with happiness, thus making philosophy as "the study of happiness" a necessity for all.

Introduction

Philosophical practitioners who search for antecedents of their work usually point to Greek and Hellenistic philosophies. However, it is the Enlightenment that is the proximate source of the current practice of philosophy, granted that the Enlightenment's revival of Hellenistic philosophy is acknowledged. In what follows, I introduce the practical vision of philosophy held by the most important Socratic of the Modern era, the British Enlightenment philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (1671-1713). In order to do justice to his innovative vision of philosophy, I present it against the background of the representative thought of his age. To that purpose, I briefly outline the Enlightenment's revolutionary view of reason and happiness, elaborate on its most important philosopher (who was also Shaftesbury's mentor), Locke, and trace the latter's influence on other eighteenth-century philosophers. I introduce Shaftesbury's thought as a practical philosophy, highlight his disagreements with Locke and his followers, and assess the Shaftesburean legacy by comparing his thought with the contemporary practice of philosophy against four criteria: audience, politics, happiness, and virtue.

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1. The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was an eighteenth-century European movement that forms the historical root of many characteristics of modern culture (such as secularism, utilitarianism, and materialism). According to Ingrid Merikoski,

> Immanuel Kant described it as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage," and suggested that the Enlightenment freed man from his inability to use innate understanding without guidance from another person. More broadly, the Enlightenment as it unfolded in certain parts of Europe stressed above all the autonomy of reason as the key tool through which human thought and action might be explored. (Merikoski 2010)

She further explains that it is with France that the term *Enlightenment* has become most closely associated, due to Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Voltaire hoped to regenerate humankind by emphasizing the primacy of reason. Rousseau attempted to elevate humankind over the individual to attain "the greatest happiness of all" over individual concerns.

How did Enlightenment thinkers view happiness? Darrin M. McMahon explains in *Happiness: A History*:

> Whereas classical sages had aimed to cultivate a rarified ethical elite—attempting to bring happiness to a select circle of disciples, or at most to the active citizens of the *polis*—Enlightenment visionaries dreamed of bringing happiness to entire societies and even to humanity as a whole. (McMahon 2006, 212)

Enlightenment authors wrote more about happiness than had authors in any previous period in Western history. In doing so, they hoped to break with all previous norms, dispelling the mystery and mystique that had surrounded the notion of happiness for centuries. Whereas earlier ages had cloaked it in religion or fate, Enlightenment authors would unveil it in its natural purity. In addition, whereas previous ages had searched for happiness in faith, enlightened observers would aim to see it clearly in its own right. From the combined precedents of Renaissance humanism and innovative Christian theology, influential voices drew conclusions on the possibility of pleasure and felicity on earth. Neither the reward of the next world nor the gift of good fortune or the gods, happiness was above all an earthly affair, to be achieved in the here and now through human agency alone.

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The work of forging this new vision of happiness, which contrasted both with the tragic and with the Christian evaluation of the human condition, was a collective enterprise that was slowly developed over the course of centuries.[127] However, for many Enlightenment thinkers, two men stood far above the rest: the creator of physics, Isaac Newton, and the creator of metaphysics, John Locke (D'Alembert [1751] 1995, 81-83). Whereas Newton demonstrated the universal laws that governed the motion of the universe; Locke revealed the universal laws that governed the workings of thought. Taken together, the two presented a portrait of nature that convinced their more radical interpreters that, when allowed to run as it should, the world was leading us on a happy course. As it is Locke's thought that is relevant for our purposes, I now address his views on happiness and their influence on eighteenth-century thinkers.

2. John Locke and His Followers

In the opening book of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke criticizes innate ideas and sets out an empirical basis for knowledge.[129] Rejecting innate ideas and advancing the notion of *tabula rasa* had the effect of wiping our slate free of sin. A Calvinist by birth who never completely renounced his faith, Locke always retained a healthy understanding of the human potential for egotism and self-regard, yet rejected the idea of Calvinist sin. His theory of mind dealt a crushing blow to the view that individuals were inherently deficient, tending naturally towards corruption. Moreover, if not impeded by original sin, what was to prevent them from successfully pursuing happiness?

In the chapter "Power" in book 2 of the *Essay*, Locke uses the phrase "the pursuit of happiness" four times. The force that draws people near and moves them is "happiness and that alone." The "general Desire of Happiness operates constantly and invariably" upon all human beings, keeping them forever in motion (Locke [1689] 1991, 258, 283). Happiness is a sort of human or emotional gravity, a universal force, which moves desire. Desire is "scarce distinguishable from" uneasiness—Locke's term for "all pain of the body" and "disquiet of the mind." As we are continually attracted to pleasure and continually repulsed by pain, "*Happiness* then in its full extent is the utmost Pleasure we are capable of, and Misery the utmost pain" (Locke [1689] 1991, 258).

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[127] For the Christian vision of happiness, see McMahon (2006). For the vision embodied in Greek tragedies, see Nussbaum (1986).

[129] See Carey (2006, chap. 2).

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In his influential study of the Enlightenment, McMahon gives Locke a significant place. Whereas Christian moralists had argued for centuries that pleasure was dangerous and pain our natural lot, Locke stood this proposition on its head. In His infinite wisdom, God had designed men and women to seek pleasure and feel pain naturally, and Locke considered that this was as it should be. Thus, "Pleasure in us, is what we call Good, and what is apt to produce Pain in us, we call Evil," Locked maintained (Locke [1689] 1991, 259). McMahon concludes, "In Locke's divinely orchestrated universe, pleasure was providential. It helped lead to God" (McMahon 2004, 11).

Locke mitigated his hedonism by emphasizing that through reason—the "true candle of the Lord"—men and women could be persuaded to take a long view of their happiness. However, he continued to see the highest happiness as that of the world to come, unable, like Newton, to dispense with the Christian doctrine of ultimate rewards (Locke [1689] 1991, 274).

Locke's view of happiness explains the primacy of pleasure in eighteenth-century thought.[135] Along with Benedict Spinoza, Locke was a primary influence on materialistic theories.[136] In *Man a Machine*, Julien Offray de La Mettrie describes organic machines composed of matter endowed with the ability to think. Because human beings are more advanced than animals and plants, but not different in kind, they should follow the dictates of nature. They are simply machines intended for happiness. Pleasure is the same as sensuality, which is the same as happiness: at root, they are the same feeling, whose duration and intensity may differ. The longer lasting, more delicious, enticing, uninterrupted and untroubled this feeling is, the happier one is (La Mettrie 1750, 120).

Another Enlightenment materialist and atheist tract is Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*. Holbach refuses to leave any place for spirit or soul, and considers the idea of God an obstacle for our well-being. Happiness, measured exclusively in terms of pleasure, is the reward of freeing ourselves from God. Released from repression, guilt, and false belief, pleasure could finally flow free.[137]

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[135] See Porter (1996).

[136] For Locke's influence on the French Materialists, see Yolton (1991).

[137] Holbach shares La Mettrie's materialism, yet differentiates himself from the latter's egoism. He maintains that "Nature," flanked by "virtue," "reason," and "truth," will reveal to all right-thinking minds that happiness lies in more than the subjective fulfilment of individual desire. "Man cannot be happy without virtue," where virtue is defined as our willingness to "communicate happiness" to others (Holbach 1999, II, 358). It is in our self-interest to serve the interests of those around us. By making our fellows happy, we make ourselves happy. Denis Diderot

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In making these claims about the centrality of pleasure, Holbach and La Mettrie were drawing self-consciously on the tradition of the Greek philosopher Epicurus.[138] Before them, Locke had done the same, albeit through the interpretation of the French priest Pierre Gassendi. For all his endorsement of pleasure, however, Epicurus was no hedonist, but rather an ascetic, who counselled a rigorous curtailment of desire to steel the self against disturbance, and guard against self-inflicted pain. The aim of the Epicurean sage was ataraxia, the freedom from anxiety, the minimization of pain.[139] Thus, while philosophy was conducive to Epicurean happiness, it was irrelevant to the practice of hedonism. Despite the significance of happiness for the Enlightenment, I suggest that the view of happiness held by Locke and his followers did not require the help of philosophy for its success. Rather, it is Shaftesbury, Locke's dissident student, who should be considered now if we wish to find genuine foundations for the practice of philosophy in the Enlightenment.

3. Shaftesbury as a Practical Philosopher

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), was raised and educated in his grandfather's household by Locke, according to the principles laid forth in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Anthony's grandfather founded the Whig party, which he generally supported. Reviving the ancient ideal of the active philosophical life, Shaftesbury attempted to harmonize a political life with a philosophical one, alternating

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and the Utilitarians shared this conclusion; Charles Taylor notes that it is in no way obvious, however, and does not follow from the premises of Holbach and company. If human being are pleasure-seeking machines, corrupted by nature to maximize their own enjoyment at every turn, why should they work to maximize the pleasure of their fellows? On this point, see Taylor (1989, 327-29).

[138] La Mettrie paid repeated and open homage to Epicurus in such works as *The System of Epicurus*, *The Art of Enjoying Oneself*, *The School of Sensual Pleasure*, and the *Anti-Seneca* (also entitled *The Discourse on Happiness*). In *The Art of Enjoying Oneself*, however, he distinguishes between the vulgar hedonist, who favors abundance without conscience, and the philosophic hedonist, who chooses quality with consciousness.

[139] Defying the more general classical tendency to separate matter and mind, Epicurus, and more explicitly his Roman successor Lucretius, had taught that the world was a swirling mass of atoms that comprised both body and soul. The soul was not a substance apart, nor was it intended for an afterlife. When one accepted this basic truth, Epicurus argued, one could dispel the false fears of divine punishment or eternal damnation that caused us continual anxiety and pain, allowing us to focus instead on the more enlightened goal of attaining pleasure.

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between intense public service and periods of philosophical retreats, up until he abandoned London for reasons of health (1711).

Shaftesbury founded the "moral sense" school of ethics, according to which natural affection for virtue predisposes human beings to act virtuously. Much of Shaftesbury's work differed from the dominant style of philosophical discourse of his era and the philosophical tradition since then. His philosophy was very much in vogue during the first half of the eighteenth century, however, so Oliver Goldsmith was prompted to write that Shaftesbury had "more imitators in Britain than any other writer" he knew.[140]

Although educated under Locke's care, Shaftesbury resisted the opinions of his mentor in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.* (1711).[141] He returned to a form of reasoning favored by the Ancients. He adopted Neo-Stoicism combined with Neo-Aristotelianism, with special emphasis on Socrates as the founder of these schools. The most important Socratic of Modern times, Shaftesbury maintained, "The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system."[142] Notwithstanding the Greek and Roman sources of his thought, Shaftesbury's main purpose was to address contemporary needs. More interested in reforming the morals, manners and taste of his day than in discursive reasoning, he aimed at promoting liberty by devising a cultural program for a post-courtly European culture. To this end, he criticized the court, ridiculed the church, and rebuked contemporary philosophy for its aloofness from practical affairs and neglect of its role as a source of moral and political education.

In his notebooks,[143] Shaftesbury considers three different ways to think about philosophy. First, subtle speculation, which would put it on a par

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[140] Goldsmith (1759, 15). Shaftesbury profoundly influenced eighteenth-century thought in Britain: Francis Hutcheson, Joseph Butler, David Hume, and Adam Smith were all heavily indebted to his notion of the moral sense. Shaftesbury's work had also a significant effect on French deists, such as Voltaire and Rousseau. Moreover, he affected Germany through his notion of enthusiasm, which influenced the Romantic idea of the creative imagination that was developed by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Moses Mendelssohn, Johann W. von Goethe, Johann G. Herder, and Friedrich Schiller.

[141] Shaftesbury ([1900] 1963; referred to below as "CR."

[142] Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy*, iii, 1; in CR I, 189.

[143] Shaftesbury ([1900] 1992). The notebooks are journals of self-examination. Organized topically, they offer an irregular record of Shaftesbury's inner life, mostly between 1698 and 1704. They are tools for self-investigation and for self-command, which amount to a kind of moral workbook. Shaftesbury wrote much of the material in the notebooks while immersed in deep intellectual engagement with the Roman Stoics Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. For discussion of the notebooks, see Klein (1994, 70-90). For Shaftesbury as Stoic, see Tiffany (1923, 641-84).

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with mathematics and the sciences. Second, the study of happiness, with happiness conceived as something dependent on external goods, and so philosophy itself would be concerned with those external goods. Third, the study of happiness, with happiness conceived as something dependent solely on the mind, as the Stoics taught. Shaftesbury is drawn to the last of these, conceiving philosophy as a psychotherapeutic activity whose aim is to help us overcome "disquiet, restlessness, anxiety."

Shaftesbury tells us that his "design is to advance something new, or at least something different from what is commonly current in philosophy and morals."[144] Hardly distinguishable from good education, philosophy for Shaftesbury is a practical endeavor. His intention to bring philosophy back to everyday life explains the themes, design, and style of his work. Like Hobbes and Locke, who strengthened their influence by writing in plain language, Shaftesbury aims to reach a lay audience unfamiliar with philosophical terminology. He endeavors to rescue the philosophical tradition of the Cambridge Platonists from their dull and pedantic folio volumes, in order to make it available to individuals of culture and sensibility. Thus, Shaftesbury bemoans philosophy's fate in the modern world:

> She is no longer active in the world nor can hardly, with any advantage, be brought on the public stage. We have immured her, poor lady, in colleges and cells, and have set her servilely to such works as those in the mines. Empirics and pedantic sophists are her chief pupils.[145]

It seems that he convinced his contemporaries of the importance of his project. Joseph Addison, the editor of the *Spectator* and a close reader of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, informs subscribers of the paper's policy to bring "philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses."[146]

Shaftesbury maintains that a more polite approach than the lecture or the sermon is required for a more effective philosophy. For Shaftesbury, "politeness," a term referring to the conventions of both good manners and refined conversation, fulfils the fundamental rhetorical necessity of making concessions to the knowledge, interests, and attention span of an audience. In this respect, Laurence Klein explains that Shaftesbury aims to regulate "style or language by the standard of good company and people of the better sort" (Klein 1999, xiii). He means members of the English upper

[144] Shaftesbury, *Miscellany*, III, i; in CR II, 251-52.
[145] Shaftesbury, *Moralists*, I, 1; in CR II, 4-5.
[146] Quoted in Brett (1951, 41).

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orders, wealthy though not necessarily landed gentlemen, educated and literate, though not necessarily erudite—men of the world who could be reached through humor, playfulness, variety, and open-endedness. Thus, Shaftesbury replaces the magisterial manner of his forebears with a polite form of writing that is more informal, miscellaneous, conversational, open-ended, and skeptical.

Shaftesbury maintains that philosophy should make people effective participants in the world. Neither an intellectual discipline for specialists nor a profession, it is instead wisdom accessible to every thoughtful individual: "If philosophy be, as we take it, the study of happiness, must not everyone, in some manner or other, either skillfully or unskillfully philosophize?"[148] In order to philosophize more skillfully, or become more rational, we should practice our reason. If we conversed openly, using wit and humor to convince and especially to refute one another, we may use reason more often. Shaftesbury never doubts that a genuinely free interplay of ideas ensures that the best idea will prevail; only bad ideas suffer when subjected to free and humorous treatment:

> I can very well suppose men may be frightened out of their wits, but I have no apprehension they should be laughed out of them. I can hardly imagine that in a pleasant way they should ever be talked out of their love for society, or reasoned out of humanity and common sense. A mannerly wit can hurt no cause or interest for which I am in the least concerned; and philosophical speculations, politely managed, can never surely render mankind more unsociable or uncivilized.[149]

Philosophy is a practical activity in pursuit of moral self-knowledge and moral transformation. Virtue is a noble enthusiasm that forms an inward harmonious beauty. An indirect approach is more suitable to it, since we cannot directly teach this kind of morality. Moreover, as no one likes advice, offering unsolicited advice is often perceived to be presumptuous. Thus, humor is necessary for an author intent on giving moral advice, as well as for the inward dialogue or soliloquy, whose purpose is self-criticism and self-growth. Humor is also necessary for conversation, because rationality is developed using reason, reason in turn advances through criticism, and criticism is effective only when accompanied by humor. Thus, humor plays an important role in conversation, as well as in self-conversation and writing.

Becoming moral involves becoming a kind of "self-improving artist."

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[148] Shaftesbury, *Moralists*, iii, 3; in CR II, 150; see 153.
[149] Shaftesbury, *Essay*, ii, 3; in CR I, 65.

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The "wise and able Man" is he who "having righter models in his eye, becomes in truth the architect of his own life and fortune."[150] Shaftesbury's moral theory culminates in an aesthetics of creative "inward form," and his legacy is none other than the Greek idea of the beauty of morals.

Stoic reflection on the beauty of the universe establishes a principle of order in the creation that is matched by the unity of human nature. This unity is evident in shared convictions in matters of taste, morality, and a recognition of the divine. Shaftesbury reasserts the notion of innateness, and attempts to shield it from Locke's critique by insisting on the existence of a natural disposition toward virtue. He rejects Locke's unsociable portrait of human beings as motivated by self-interest. Shaftesbury not only objects to Locke's views on innateness, he also turns against his positive theory of morals. In particular, the assumption that humankind requires rewards and punishments to maintain any degree of moral commitment offends him. Locke situates human beings as appetitive agents who merely obey the law out of prudential considerations. However, Shaftesbury considers disinterestedness as consonant with human nature. Locke relies increasingly on Scripture to remedy the deficiencies of human reason, that is, the failure to pursue notions of duty with adequate attention. Shaftesbury's anti-clerical stance leads him to make of religion a moral affair that does not rely on a revealed text.

Shaftesbury seeks to reinstate some forms of innateness in order to guarantee a distinction between virtue and vice that is rooted in nature. In particular, Shaftesbury reintroduces the Stoic notion of "prolepsis." A prolepsis is a natural "anticipation" or inclination that makes it possible to recognize certain ideas or to hold certain beliefs. Effectively, it is an innate idea or common notion, but one which does not guarantee moral knowledge *per se*. The "prolepsis" supplies criteria, but requires some cultivation and development, which the practice of philosophy can provide.

In characterizing human nature, Shaftesbury turns decisively against the Epicurean tradition he associates with Hobbes and Locke. In his correspondence, Shaftesbury suggests that there are only two real schools of philosophy in antiquity: a hedonist tradition uniting Epicurus and the Cyrenaics, and a Socratic tradition uniting the Academics, Peripatetics, and Stoics (Shaftesbury [1900] 1992, 359). Aristotle's and the Stoics' commitment to virtue and their rejection of pleasure as the human goal makes them party to this Socratic philosophical tradition.

[150] Shaftesbury, *Moralists,* iii, 2; in CR II, 144.

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In his answer to the critique of innateness, Shaftesbury reinstates norms of sociability, moral affection, and the divine, inspired by a Stoic conception of human nature that identifies internal resources in the form of prolepses. Bringing his opponents back to a more sociable norm characterized by a certain levity in religious conflicts, his allowance for ongoing dispute in religion is dependent on preserving a territory of genuine agreement that he locates in human nature and its inbuilt tendency to recognize principles of virtue, design, order, and beauty.

However—and this is the crucial part of my argument— together with practice and cultivation, criticism is necessary in order to form virtue or taste. In addition, following Epictetus' view, ethics still requires reason, which ensures the "right application of the affections." Thus, philosophy as a guide to better reasoning is necessary in order to create moral agents whose taste in matters of virtue should be educated. Philosophy is necessary for virtue, and as virtue constitutes happiness, philosophy in turn may be considered necessary for happiness. Philosophy is moreover sufficient for happiness, as the domain of religion is reduced to ethics alone.[152]

The vision that makes philosophy necessary for happiness is what distinguishes Shaftesbury from most thinkers of the Enlightenment,[153] I argue, beginning with Locke, whose hedonistic, rather than strictly Epicurean view of happiness makes philosophy irrelevant to its attainment.

Shaftesbury's view of civility and politeness targets a more elite audience than Locke's, however. To be sociable is to be a part of an elevated collective, a body of like-minded individuals who achieve a consensus on moral, social, and political questions. All would not attain sociability, which, like taste, results from the cultivation of innate capacities. Shaftesbury's account of sociability, as Hans-Georg Gadamer pointed out, has more in common with the German concept of *Bildung*, a

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[152] For Shaftesbury's deist affiliations, see Alridge (1951).

[153] Shaftesbury was not the sole Enlightenment thinker who held the view that virtue was happiness. Adam Smith emulated him, among others. True happiness, Smith believed, showing his partial indebtedness to the Stoics, lay in "tranquility and enjoyment," which had less to do with economic condition that it did with virtue (Smith 1987, 149); see Griswold (1999, 217-27). In fact, the "beggar who suns himself by the side of the highway" may well possess the same happiness as kings (Smith 1987, 185). Thomas Jefferson, who studied Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* closely, observed toward the end of his career "happiness is the aim of life, but virtue is the foundation of happiness," echoing Benjamin Franklin's observation that "virtue and happiness are mother and daughter" (quoted in McMahon 2006, 330).

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process of self-cultivation (Gadamer 1975, 10-27). Indeed, Shaftesbury's philosophy is at the origin of this notion.[155]

4. Shaftesbury and the Contemporary Practice of Philosophy

If we share today the Enlightenment's view of happiness, Shaftesbury may prove relevant to the contemporary practice of philosophy. McMahon sums up this view of happiness as follows:

> No less an enlightened figure that Voltaire continually paid deference to the contingency and uncertainty of human experience, refusing to discount entirely the "fatality of evil." Similarly, Immanuel Kant, the celebrated author of "What is Enlightenment?" mocked the facile association of happiness with reason and virtue, even denying that happiness was the goal of the human life. But many persons of the time saw happiness in nature where previous centuries had seen salvation in God. Convinced of the natural harmony of the universe, and of humankind's ability to control it, they put forth a world in which happiness was part of the order of things. Human beings could be happy, they believed; they should be happy. And if they were not, then something was wrong—with their institutions, their beliefs, their bodies, their minds. In this respect, at least, we continue to walk in the Enlightenment's way. (McMahon 2004, 164-76)

What is the relation of the current practice of philosophy with the Enlightenment's goal of happiness and with Shaftesbury's view of happiness as virtue? How does Shaftesbury's view fare in comparison with ancient examples of philosophical practice? I will use four criteria to answer these questions, focusing in turn on audience, politics, happiness, and virtue.

Audience: When philosophical practitioners search for antecedents of their work, they tend to refer to Greek and Hellenistic philosophies. However, Greek philosophers are not egalitarian in relation to philosophy: Socrates chooses his students carefully and let them observe when he practices his elenchus mostly on prominent men of the city. His goal is to reveal publicly their ignorance in order to allow his students to infer their own ignorance. Plato believes philosophy is for the few, and Aristotle clearly considers the theoretical life of the philosopher-scientist superior to the moral life that is accessible, if not for all, at least to those who can

[155] See Horlacher (2004, 409-26). For a fuller presentation of Shaftesbury's philosophy, see the first chapter of Amir (2014).

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appreciate the good and the beautiful. Hellenistic philosophers emphasize the gulf between the wise and the fools, the philosophers and the vulgar. True, in Roman times, philosophy is widely popular, partly due to the relaxation of some of the most challenging tenets of Hellenistic philosophies. However, the modifications to these tenets are dubious from a philosophical point of view, as is the tendency to see philosophers as gurus, with the concomitant cult of personality and the dependence it encourages.[157] In those respects, Hellenistic philosophies should not be idealized, nor necessarily emulated as the sole source of the contemporary practice of philosophy.

I suggest that the proximate source of the current practice of philosophy can be found in the Enlightenment, granted that the Enlightenment's revival of Hellenistic philosophy is a subject that needs further investigation.[158] The Enlightenment is rarely mentioned in the literature on philosophical practice, perhaps due to postmodern criticisms of its view of reason. However, the Enlightenment is significant for the practice of philosophy because the democratization of philosophy from the eighteenth century onwards helped create a new class of educated citizens. Today, we are heir to the Enlightenment's goal in that the practice of philosophy can be offered to *all* in its melioristic rather than perfectionistic mode.[159] That is a boon that also limits philosophy's ambitions. This point is further clarified through thinking about the relation between politics and philosophy.

Politics: In her impressive discussion of Hellenistic philosophies in *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (1994), Martha Nussbaum criticizes Hellenistic philosophers. She emphasizes their indifference to politics and their attempt to perfect individuals one by one, "as if perfect people could in fact be produced without profound changes in material and institutional conditions" (Nussbaum 1994, 505). In order to salvage the ideal of philosophic self-sufficiency, Hellenistic philosophers may not have wanted to acknowledge that the success of their enterprise awaits and requires political and social alterations.

In contradistinction to the Hellenistic philosophers, Shaftesbury promotes political changes in England that facilitate the relations between politics and philosophy. He champions both the discipline of philosophy as education for a new class of citizens and witty rational discussion as a novel form of popular (and philosophic) conversation. However, his attempt at a more profound self-transformation according to Stoic ideals, which can be seen in his notebooks, leads him to realize that the

[157] See Chapter 4 above, and Amir (2009b; 2009c).
[158] See Long (1986).
[159] See Chapter 1 above, and Amir (2006).

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philosophical self always loses to the societal self. This, in turn, prompts him to renounce the political life in order to perfect himself in relative isolation. Ultimately, then, his view of philosophy restricts its benefits to the "club" or the small group.

This was also the reality of Hellenistic philosophies. To answer Nussbaum's criticism about the indifference of Hellenistic philosophers to laws and institutions, philosophic advancement is always more radical than that which can be offered by legal-political structures, and in this sense, I suggest, it is superior, although legal-political structures may make it accessible, at least in principle, to more individuals. Indeed, the postmodern dismissal of the ideal of sovereignty or autonomy, along with the contemporary emphasis on change through societal rules and political laws, can be seen as yet another manner in which the potency of philosophy can be undermined. Perfectionist visions of philosophy should not be given up, I suggest, although according to John Passmore's *The Perfectibility of Man*, from the eighteenth century on we understand by this term a gradual, rather than a radical, change (Passmore 1970, 157).

Happiness: The notion of happiness already had a long history by the eighteenth century. However, the idea that institutions should be expected to promote it, and that people should expect to receive it in this life, was a tremendous novelty. It involved nothing less than a revolution in human expectations, while raising, in turn, delicate questions: Just who, precisely, was worthy of happiness? Was it for all? Was happiness a right or a reward?

Today, happiness has become a research field of the social sciences, including psychology, thanks to the relatively new field of positive psychology. The social sciences concentrate on (subjective) well-being;[162] however, happiness is not the same as well-being; and, happiness is certainly different from another fashionable concept—the willed well-being called positive thinking.[163] *Eudaimonia* or happiness includes an

[162] For well-being and subjective well-being as objects of contemporary scientific research, see Eid and Larsen (2008), Huppert, Baylis, and Keverne (2003), and Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008). Positive psychologists such as Alan S. Waterman have recently elaborated another version of happiness, which translates *eudaimonia* as "personal expressiveness." *Eudaimonia* indeed captures a sense of "happiness," as Richard Kraut argues, and should thus compete with happiness as personal well-being. It is not (relative) personal expressiveness, however. This seems to be a mistranslation into psychological terms that research can assess or measure. See Waterman (1993) and Kraut (1979).

[163] For positive thinking, see Fletcher (1897), and Peale's best-seller (1952). For a deadly criticism of positive thinking, see Ehrenreich (2009).

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objective, optimal condition for human beings, and does not simply consist in subjective feelings of contentment.[164] Happiness has a normative component, which is fulfilled by discipline, necessary frustration, and hard work. The flower of a life well lived, it is not a right but an achievement. As Shaftesbury endorses this latter view of happiness, his vision necessarily clashes with the contemporary view of well-being.

Virtue: Closely related to the issue of happiness is the issue of its contents, whether in terms of pleasure or virtue. Locke foresaw the current situation when he described the possibility, which he wanted to rule out, that each person would find pleasure in something different and deem that happiness (Locke [1689] 1991, 258). In order to avoid this relativistic attitude toward happiness he relied on punishments and rewards in the afterlife, thereby making more room for religion than Shaftesbury thought necessary.

It seems today that Shaftesbury has lost his fight against hedonism. In addition, as I attempted to show above, in contradistinction to Epicureans, who need their desires pruned, other hedonists make philosophy irrelevant. Philosophy could make a difference today through the renewed assertion that virtue is happiness. This may give an edge to philosophers, as psychologists are not trained in ethics and certainly not in virtue ethics.[166]

There are various difficulties with this suggestion, however. First, the contemporary emphasis on virtue is usually associated with religion rather than with philosophy. Consequently, persons who are interested in virtue often turn to religious ethics rather than to philosophic ethics. Second, even those who champion virtue ethics do not currently take it to involve internal work on desires and emotions; rather, they mainly see this kind of ethics as involving acceptance of one's emotions and desires (Nussbaum 1994, 466). Third, if practical philosophers were ready to agree with Shaftesbury that virtue is happiness, they would have to exemplify virtue or happiness—a standard to which most of them are reluctant to hold themselves. Finally, this vision of happiness is unfashionable today because it requires philosophic reflection, discipline, and commitment.

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[164] See Kraut (1979, 167-97). For philosophic views of happiness, see McGill (1967), Quennell (1988), and Bok (2010). Valuable work has been conducted in other languages than English. See, for exemple, in French, Comte-Sponville (2000) and Lenoir (2013).

[166] See Amir (2005), Amir (2009a), and Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, in *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017).

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Conclusion

The relationship of the current practice of philosophy to the Enlightenment's aim of happiness for all and to Shaftesbury's view of happiness as virtue is not as straightforward as one could wish. However, the discussion of Shaftesbury's relevance along the four criteria (audience, politics, happiness, and virtue) indicates that current practical philosophy has much to gain from recognizing itself as a qualified form of Enlightenment philosophy. Shaftesbury's contribution to the British Enlightenment is particularly palatable. If practical philosophers would endorse his (and others') view of virtue as the core of happiness, they would be assured of offering something different from the social sciences' current visions of happiness. This may encourage them to exemplify this form of happiness, but such exemplification need not be a requirement: many conjugal advisers are divorced, why wouldn't the philosopher be miserable?

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CHAPTER SIX

KIERKEGAARD AS A MODEL FOR PRACTICING PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter, I consider the relevance of the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard to philosophical practice. I introduce, first, the main tenets of his thought. Second, I examine the possible contributions they may make to philosophical practice. Finally, I exemplify through practical cases how his authorship can be helpful in philosophical practice.

1. Main Tenets of Kierkegaard's Philosophy

Kierkegaard's writings contain elements from a variety of disciplines. His works are certainly philosophical, but also psychological, as they deal with the psychology of human ideas and experience. The Danish philosopher is also a significant literary figure and a religious writer, as he states in his *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*.[168]

This last fact is easily lost because, despite holding a Christian view of existence, Kierkegaard does his best to distance himself, as well as his views, from his readers. Instead of explaining in his works how he understands the world, he explores the psychological and intellectual perspectives of a number of philosophies of life. Common to all the views is the notion of a goal in life and its effect on the individual, as well as on the community and human society generally. He uses a series of pseudonyms for that purpose, each work written under them inviting the reader to consider whether Kierkegaard's description and assessment of

[168] In the first section of this chapter, I heavily rely on Julia Watkin's excellent account of Kierkegaard's philosophy in the *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy* (2001), also found in Watkin (2010). I refer the reader also to the entries "Stages" (2014a) and "The Individual" (2015), which I contributed to *Kierkegaard's Concepts,* vol. 15 of *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception, and Resources*, and to Chapter 2 of my *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard* (2014b).

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the various possible goals of life, and the path to them, are correct.

Kierkegaard admired Socrates' maieutic method of teaching through discussion. He aimed to emulate this ideal of the teacher who causes truth to be born in another, but does not have any claim on truth. Although Kierkegaard hides his personal viewpoint by using pseudonyms, it is clear in his writings that he regards Christianity as the highest religion. Both the Greek world, as representative of paganism, and Judaism, as the forerunner of Christianity, point to the highest life that Christianity represents for Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's view of Christianity as the highest life can also be contrasted with Hegelianism, in which religion and Christianity are subordinate to philosophy.

However, he makes a sharp distinction between Christianity (*Christendommen*) and Christendom (*Chritenheden*). He urges the believer to look for the content of Christianity in the New Testament rather than in the institution of the Church. Christendom, on the other hand, is Christianity expressed as a historical sociopolitical institution, to which Kierkegaard is extremely hostile, especially in the writings of his last years. The outcome of the historical spread of Christianity was the Church as an institution, which is not properly aligned with living as a Christian according to the New Testament.

According to Kierkegaard, Christianity demands from the human being a constant struggle against the phenomenal world ("the immediate"). He can prepare for the religious leap, which will reveal the existence of the Absolute, only by totally renouncing the finite. Kierkegaard uses indirect communication to help people free themselves of the immediate. He does not preach, nor directly ask the reader to become religious and renounce his immediate life. Quite the contrary, as he declares in his *Journal*s:

> My idea, the basis of my life . . . one of the most original ideas in many centuries, and the most original ever expressed in Danish, is that Christianity needed an expert in maieutics, and that I was the one . . . . The category for deploying Christianity does not suit Christendom. Here it is maieutics which is suitable, for it takes as its point of departure the notion that people have the highest good, but wishes to help them realize what they have. (J, VIII A 42)[169]

Thus, he describes fictional discussions throughout his authorship, which becomes Kierkegaard's version of Socrates' Athenian marketplace.

Alongside the non-religious pseudonymous works that, in the main, point to religious themes, Kierkegaard published religious discourses

[169] St. Augustine proposed something similar.

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under his own name. Even there, as Julia Watkin notes, he makes it clear that he is "without authority," and that the discourse is as much directed to himself as to the reader. Toward the end of his life, he wrote some larger religious works. To tone down the impression of being a religious author, he published at the same time nonreligious or "aesthetic" pieces. By this means, works apparently written directly to the reader take a non-authoritative aspect. "Kierkegaard's authorship thus presents a many-faceted mode of question-and-answer that resembles Socrates' method and the Platonic Socrates' ultimate goal of the good, the true, and the beautiful" (Watkin 2010, 6).

Various scholars do not trust Kierkegaard's claim in *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*. He presents himself there as a religious writer, a claim they consider ironic. They argue that the direct commentary on an authorship is really just another form of indirect communication. That is, just as one cannot take the previous pseudonymous works as direct expressions of what the author thinks, so, too, one cannot trust the commentary on the authorship as a genuine expression of the author's own view and aims. This problem, and perhaps the problem of the indirect pseudonymous authorship as a whole, is greatly ameliorated by a thorough study of the entire work, and especially of the pseudonymous material.

Careful study of the authorship does reveal a number of underlying ideas Kierkegaard wishes we would grasp.[171] First, although the works written under different pseudonyms express different perspectives on life, they all work together to illustrate that the aesthetic life, the life lived for the gratification of the senses, cannot ultimately work because it is contrary to nature, contrary to the fundamental structure of the human psyche. The right path is clearly that of the ethical-religious existence.[172] Second, significant aspects of human existence, notably the nature and structure of the human psyche, are expounded upon by all pseudonyms, but instead of forming a contradictory picture, their views form a clear and integrated presentation of Kierkegaard's thought on the nature and purpose

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[171] Julia Watkin gives the following example: in *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's non-Christian pseudonym Vigilius Haufnienssis speaks about the gate as the object of the ancient Greek's anxiety but allows that only the Christian God, and not the Greek fate, has independent existence. She argues that here the voice of Kierkegaard himself is clearly heard (Watkin 2001, 7).

[172] Kierkegaard indicates quite clearly that Johannes the Seducer is an example of one living wrongly: spiritually speaking, he is bound to come to a bad end. The aesthete A is talented but unhappy. Judge Williams represents civic contentment. Only the struggling and suffering religious believer is on the right path, but has only his suffering as an indication of that.

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of human life.[173]

Nevertheless, modern scholarship has devised a variety of ways to read Kierkegaard's authorship. This is due not only to scholars' inventiveness, but also to the fact that Kierkegaard himself is many-sided as a thinker. If we further consider his self-proclaimed irony[174] and the pseudonymity of much of his authorship, Kierkegaard's writings appear to be a vast field awaiting the tools of competing schools of thought.[175]

My own position is that Kierkegaard's authorship can be read as an integrated whole as long as one is sensitive to the ways in which the various characters and pseudonyms speak for themselves alone and are not to be homogenized. To understand the basic aim of Kierkegaard's writings, however, it is important to unravel his own private assumptions about the world, especially when his view of life is embedded in an authorship of such complexity. In what follows, I endorse the account of Kierkegaard's philosophy given in *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy* (Watkin 2001; reproduced in Watkin 2010), before I turn to evaluate its relevance to philosophical practice.

A committed Christian who was trained for the ministry, Kierkegaard considered the Christian worldview true. However, as we cannot be certain of the existence of God, Christianity should be accepted by faith. It is "against the understanding," in the sense that it seems impossible to human understanding. That Kierkegaard had a Christian understanding of the world can be too easily overlooked, given that he expounded the psychology of a wide range of views of life in his authorship.

Kierkegaard is a dualist, albeit not a body-mind dualist in the Cartesian sense. Rather, he divides existence into temporality and eternity. The former is the space-time of our daily life and the latter the dwelling place of God. While despair following one's rejection of God is Hell or damnation, eternity is the human goal of those who relate to God in this life and after it. "Because the individual is located in this bipolar situation with a foot in temporality and at least a potential foot in the eternal realm, humans can experience anxiety and despair," Watkin explains (2010, 9).

Kierkegaard equates human eternity and authenticity through the potentiality every human being has for spiritual life. Our body is part of

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[173] This view is held by various scholars, e.g., Watkin (2001, 8-10) and Sylvia Walsh (1994, *passim*). Roger Poole argues that this clear view is reached at the price of "reducing . . . the sheer incompatibility of the pseudonymous' views" (Poole 1998, 64). For a detailed exposition of the latter view, see Poole (1993).

[174] For Kierkegaard's self-proclaimed irony, see Cross (1998) and Garff (2002).

[175] For competing schools of thought about Kierkegaard, see Gouwens (1996, 3-19) and Poole (1998).

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the animal Kingdom, but our soul can actualize its potential by making a choice that would enact an implicit synthesis between the temporal and eternal parts in one's nature. The temporal part is made of necessary factors on which one has no control and the eternal part is the freedom to act. "This second synthesis develops through the exercise of moral choice, with the aid of self-awareness and self-knowledge," Watkin further clarifies (2010, 9).

It follows that taking temporality for one's goal of life will create problems for the immature individual who mistakes his real identity. His self-centeredness leads him to an aesthetic way of life, one that is dedicated to temporal pleasures or to defiance of that which cannot be changed. Only the choice of a moral life begins the movement toward spiritual life, as "there can be no relationship with the eternal, or God, outside ethics, even if the person concerned appears to practice some form of religiosity" (Watkin 2010, 9). Moreover, only the turn toward eternal values can grant the person the balance he seeks. The mere turn toward "morality" (*Saedelighed*) based solely on temporal values is not genuinely moral: it replaces "personal egocentricity… by purely materialistic codes of self-preservation of the society in question" (Watkin 2010, 10). Thus, Kierkegaard describes not only various pleasure seekers (unreflective and deliberate) but also various forms of morality, out of which only one is genuine: "Real morality must be based on some form of eternal value that transcends the community" (Watkin 2010, 10).

Kierkegaard denies the world-affirming religion of his main ethicist, judge Williams. He has no right to present a religious position because of his mild altruism. Although he fights with self-centeredness, and mentions the possibility of ethical dilemma and religious renunciation, his attempt to reconcile temporal and spiritual goods in living a godly life in society fall short of true religiosity, which requires "dying to the world." This strict altruistic view of religion, which the pseudonyms Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus explore and Kierkegaard recommends, gives up "for the sake of the eternal even the morally good things of the world, such as marriage and prospering in the community" (Watkin 2010, 10).

Kierkegaard's famous doctrine of the "stages on life's way" embodies this religious teleology. As accounts of human emotional life with a religious teleology, the stages also envision a particular goal for human existence that Kierkegaard terms *Salighed*. For Kierkegaard, this flexible term embraces "happiness," "eternal happiness," and "blessedness." Louis Pojman rightly says, then, that in Kierkeggard's philosophy the human being "has an essence, a *telos*, and authentic selfhood is realizing that

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telos" (Pojman 1999, 35).[176]

Watkin's ending of her Introduction to *The A to Z of Kierkegaard's Philosophy* is a fitting conclusion of this part of my chapter:

> Despite holding a traditional Christian view of existence, Kierkegaard does his best to distance himself and his views from his readers. Instead of exposing his own views in his works,[177] he prefers to explore the psychological and intellectual perspectives of a number of life-views. The reader is invited by each of the pseudonymous works to consider whether Kierkegaard's description and assessment of the various possible goals, and the path to them, are correct. Finally, the entire authorship invites the reader to consider to what extent, if at all, Kierkegaard's assessment of the human predicament is correct. In addition, if he is correct in his negative assessment of the human predicament of living solely for temporal goals, to what extent is Kierkegaard correct about the cure? (Watkin 2010, 10)

2. The Relevance of Kierkegaard to Philosophical Practice

When attempting to assess Kierkegaard's possible relevance to philosophical practice, some salient features of his thought immediately come to mind, while others, being less obvious, require a more thorough presentation. Moreover, the *prima facie* relevant features prove on further elaboration to embody dangers for philosophical practice as a liberal enterprise. I have divided, accordingly, this section into two subsections: I present, first, the *prima facie* relevance of Kierkegaard's authorship to philosophical practice. Second, I follow by addressing the less obvious, though more potent, features of his thought that are relevant to philosophical practice. Both sections elaborate on and expand the tenets presented in the first part of the chapter.

A. Prima Facie Relevance and Its Dangers

At first sight, Kierkegaard's work seems to excel as spiritual literature, as a good, albeit religious, reading on moods, emotions, and such conditions as despair and anxiety, as an introduction to the significance of maieutics

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[176] See my entry "Stages" (Amir 2015) and Chapter 2 in Amir (2014b).

[177] As Robert C. Roberts puts it, Kierkegaard's concern is with the reader's coming to understand other matters rather than understanding Kierkegaard as Kierkegaard (Roberts 1986, 6). As editors and translators Howard and Edna Hong observe, "no writer has so painstakingly tried to preclude his readers' collapsing writer and works together and thereby transmogrifying the works into autobiography or memoir" ("Historical Introduction," in Kierkegaard 1985, xi).

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and philosophic education, and as a demonstration of the role of the comic, a privileged form of indirect communication, in maieutics.

The task of human existence, as defined by Kierkegaard, of sorting out the complex chaos of one's emotional life into a life that is characterized by the consistency and stability of emotions, is quite appealing. However, the proposition that the unity in one's life is achievable only through a Kierkegaardian form of Christianity may be erroneous, and even if suggested indirectly, is still potentially misleading. Moreover, irony and humor may be beneficial in self and others' education, but Kierkegaard knowingly Christianizes humor by infusing it with guilt and suffering. Readers should be aware of Kierkegaard's goals before trusting his writings, unless they are interested in being lured into converting to Christianity.

1. Excellent Spiritual Literature

Whoever is interested in the soul's spiritual pilgrimage will find inspiring and consoling words in Kierkegaard's authorship. Michael Plekon lists some of the "kinetic metaphors" that erupt in Kierkegaard's language for the self: it is variously described as a "wanderer," a "wayfarer" or "pilgrim," a "traveler" and a "seeker." Kierkegaard also visualizes human existence as a "journey" or "way." Similarly, such theologically derived metaphors are applied to the path of the religious individual, in particular the Christian, who is called to "imitate" Christ, or literally "follow after." Other images include characterizations of the self as a "stranger," an "alien" or "foreigner" in the world and "emigrant" consigned to "restlessness" in existence (Plekon 1980, 349).

Kierkegaard's anthropological contemplation results in a dynamic vision of the self on pilgrimage ("stages on life's way") that stands in marked contrast to traditional metaphysical "substantive" visions of the self. The self is not a static "something," possessed or lost like "an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc." (SUD 33). To be a self is to be engaged in a dynamic process, one involving a journey or progress of one's moods and emotions on the way to self-clarification, which Kierkegaard calls "becoming a self before God."

2. Good (religious) literature on moods and emotions, on despair and anxiety

How one can make a transition from moods to emotions, from chaos to continuity, from sin to blessedness, Kierkegaard sums up in his categories of the "stages" or "spheres" (*Stadier*) of existence. These are the aesthetic,

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ethical, religious, and, within the religious sphere, "natural" religiosity (Religiousness A) and Christianity (Religiousness B).

The notion of stages is best understood within the context of Kierkegaard's larger goal of providing an account of human moods and emotions and the quest for continuity and unity in one's existence. This Kierkegaard calls "the eternal," and for him it is grounded ultimately in the relationship to God as the source and goal of one's existence. For Kierkegaard, the task of human existence is in large part that of sorting out the complex chaos of one's emotional life—the problematic of moods—into a life that is characterized by the consistency and stability of emotions. In this transition from moods to emotions, a dominant theme is that of attaining a unity in one's life. However, for Kierkegaard, this goal of continuity, integration, and stability is also theologically oriented; Kierkegaard's famous doctrine of the "stages on life's way" embodies this religious teleology.

As an account of human emotional life with a religious teleology, the stages also envision a particular goal for human existence. He refers to it as *Salighed*, a flexible term that includes the senses of "happiness," "eternal happiness," and "blessedness," as we have seen above. The goal is anything but hedonistic; rather, it carries strong overtones of "task" and "striving." Concerned not only with "feelings," it aims at the transformation of a person, including emotional transformation, as one who is earnestly oriented toward the task and gift of relating to God.

Finally, Kierkegaard's construction of a Christian philosophy or, as he puts it, "a Christian epistemology," involves two interesting features. First, he consciously develops Christian ideas out of the rudiments of secular concepts. His treatment of "dread" and "despair" in *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death* are good examples of this strategy. The process of Christianizing ordinary secular concepts, infusing them with a potency they did not appear to have at first glance, is interrelated with the second important feature of Kierkegaard's philosophy: the strategy of constructing a framework in which the move into Christian faith is shown (albeit indirectly) to be eminently reasonable.

The philosophical practitioner may appreciate an authorship that deals philosophically with psychological concepts, such as moods and emotions, despair and anxiety (see Amir 2005a; 2005b). However, it is important that she realizes that these are imbued with Christian meanings.

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3. Maieutics, indirect communication, and the comic

Another important aspect of Kierkegaard's philosophy is its emphasis on the "maieutic relationship." In his journals, he defines it as enabling the reader "to stand alone—by another's help" (JP 1: 650, sect. 15). This seems especially relevant to philosophical practice and innocuous enough. The problem for the liberal philosopher begins when Kierkegaard argues that the aim of the maieutic relationship is to deceive the other into the truth. Furthering our understanding of Kierkegaardian maieutics, moreover, it turns into a theory of indirect communication, which presents new problems if we want to emulate them in philosophical practice.

Kierkegaard believes that the truth, which is inwardness, cannot be taught directly, and therefore true earnestness is a mixture of jest and earnestness. That is, the comic is a necessary ingredient for the maieutic relationship: irony for the ethicist, humor for the religious person, with satire and caricature subsumed under humor. The recipient of the communication would have to decipher the message alone. The knot created by the serious and the comical cannot be untangled otherwise. That is, only the person whose inwardness matches the communicator's subjectivity will understand what he is talking about.

Once again, the liberal philosopher might balk at this deceptive form of maieutics. The role of the comic in Kierkegaard's maieutics may also be frowned upon. My sympathy for humor is well known (Amir 2002; 2006; 2007). However, Kierkegaard uses it in his maieutics as a sign of true superiority on the issue of the good life (see Amir 2014b). Moreover, his concept of humor is consciously Christianized, as the humorist embodies the highest world-view before religion and the last *terminus a quo* before the religious life. Humor, for Kierkegaard, incorporates the concepts of guilt and suffering, but falls short of Christianity because the humorist lacks the capacity for repentance. The humorist has an idea of what the higher life might be but fails to get there. While Kierkegaard's thoughts on humor and its relationship with suffering are profound and interesting, the guilt it involves may be at odds with non-religious philosophers' views.[178]

At this point, we may despair of making any use of Kierkegaard's writings if we are not Christian or at least religious. However, less obvious features of his philosophy are especially relevant to the general enterprise

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[178] For Kierkegaard on humor and irony, see John Lippitt's *Humor and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought* (2000), and the second chapter my *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard* (2014b). For a view of Kierkegaardian humor as especially relevant for philosophical counseling, see Hansen (2002).

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of philosophical counseling. Unraveling them might reveal Kierkegaard to be an invaluable friend of the practice of philosophy.

B. Features of Kierkegaard's Philosophy that are Especially Relevant to Philosophical Practice

Kierkegaard advances various ideas that are highly relevant to the general enterprise of philosophical practice. In what follows, I elaborate on his diagnosis of various diseases of reflection, his view of philosophy as a "way," his social criticism of philosophy and theology, and his emphasis on existence rather than on abstract thought. Furthermore, I propose to use his account of the relations that hold between abstract thought and existence as a paradigm for philosophical practice.

1. Diseases of reflection, philosophy as a "way," social criticism of philosophy and theology

Kierkegaard is part of a long tradition in the West that sees human life, including the philosophical and religious understanding of life, in terms of illness and health, disease and deliverance from it. As David Gouwens notes, the diagnosis may be relatively mild (a person lives in misunderstanding or error) or it may be of a deeper spiritual malady (sin). In either case, this tradition postulates that the prior condition of "ill health" includes, as Kierkegaard puts it, diseases of "reflection" (Gouwens 1996, 27).

"Reflection" is a broad term for Kierkegaard, indicating not only thought and intellectual activity, but the character or tone of one's imaginative and affective life. For this tradition, salvation as a search for truth becomes a search for wholeness and unity over time.[179] It involves self-analysis and self-examination as a necessary part of "coming to the truth," and recognizes that *this kind of thinking is both a clarification of intellectual confusion and a passion desiring a better way of life.* In the task of clarifying one's vision, philosophy is a way of wisdom and even spiritual rebirth. For this reason, Gouwens rightly emphasizes that Kierkegaard saw philosophy, especially in its Greek origins, not as a subject, but as a "way" (Gouwens 1996, 28).

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[179] Connell (1985) explores this theme. For Kierkegaard's diagnostic reflections on the self, in particular the diseases of "reflection," including those that he feels afflict the practice of philosophy and theology, see Gouwens' excellent analysis (1996, chap. 1).

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Philosophical and religious reflection in this tradition are not specialties of the few, or arcane realms of knowledge, or matters of technical expertise alone. Rather, they are exercises in a discipline aimed at attaining wisdom, a spiritual self as well as an intellectual *via disciplinae*. For Kierkegaard, writing at the culmination of modernity, this tradition of philosophy and religious reflection as a spiritual discipline, a tradition stemming from Socrates and continued in Christianity, was in danger of being undermined. The personal and human element in philosophical reflection and in ethico-religious existence is inevitably sacrificed.[180]

Kierkegaard believes that it is necessary to combat two factors that undermine our quest for authentic existence, namely, Hegelianism and "Christendom." These are both expressions of a tendency to conceive existence and existential problems in terms of knowledge. In the case of Hegel, this tendency is evidenced in the attempt to understand existence in objective, traditional terms. In the case of Christendom, it manifests itself in the treatment of Christianity as a doctrine requiring mental assent or dissent on the part of the existing individual. In Kierkegaard's opinion, they rob the human being of his self-understanding, his development as a self, and ultimately his God-relationship. He sees in Hegel and Danish Hegelianism, which epitomize in his own day the speculative thinkers who exemplify the platonic movement, a two-fold problem, related to, first, dangers inherent in thinking and second, the particular institutionalization and professionalization of philosophy and theology in the modern age.

Thus, Kierkegaard's diagnosis of the diseases of philosophical and theological reflection is not only a general critique of reflection's dangers, but also "a social critique of how philosophy and theology are done in the modern age" (Gouwens 1996, 29). Philosophical practitioners may be sympathetic to this critique, at least as far as philosophy is concerned.

2. Emphasis on existence rather than on abstract thought

Drawing heavily on Hegelian categories and dialectical methods, Kierkegaard turned Hegel "outside-in," as Alastair Hannay succinctly put it (Hannay 1982, 19-53). The Hegelian dialectic is transposed from the sphere of essence to that of individual human existence. Kierkegaard concedes that Hegel's speculative construction of the realm of essence and

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[180] On the development of a vocabulary of self-fulfillment in modernity and its conflicts with a "disengaged reason" of instrumentalism, see Taylor (1989). However, Kierkegaard stands in a different philosophical and theological tradition, one more concerned with "self-purification" than with "self-fulfillment."

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the nature of the categories within it may well be correct in itself. In existence or in "existential dialectics," however, it is the principle of contradiction and not that of identity between thought and being that is valid (CUP, 270-71).

The difficulty with Hegel's system is that he cannot reach reality by thinking, because as soon as thought begins to control the real it translates it into the sphere of the possible. Kierkegaard shows how this reality becomes a problem for thought by concerning himself with the further question of how far the thinking ego is interested in the reality of its own existence. Here the point is that he cannot simply take cognizance of his own specific and characteristic existence. As soon as the reflecting subject performs this act of self-awareness, it automatically differentiates itself as such as a subject from its empirical reality as an object. It does not make this differentiation without keen interest: rather, in making it, it measures the empirical subject against a conceptual ideal subject. By this act, the ego becomes conscious of itself as an existing ego. It does not thereby become the ideal ego but neither does it remain the empirical ego; the position is rather that as the ego, which is interested in its own existence, it is a mediator between the two; rather, since the ego is interested in its own existence, it is a mediator between the two. However, it is precisely in this middle term that reality lies, in this "interesse" as a mediating activity, in the literal sense of the Latin "inter-esse."

As soon as the immediately existing ego attains consciousness of itself this immediacy is suspended by the new awareness of a contradiction between the ideal and the real. In terms that are more precise this happens because consciousness makes clear its concern about the decisive contradiction, and in so doing affirms itself. Therefore, Hermann Diem rightly maintains,

> Kierkegaard's whole existential dialectic circles around this attainment of self-consciousness by the ego, by which it becomes aware of itself as existent and so wins reality. This is fundamentally its sole and ever recurrent theme, every implicit aspect of which is unfolded. With relentless persistence the ego is pinned down to this position with no possibility of escape into the bypaths of speculation. (Diem 1959, 22)

One of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms phrases it as follows: "Existence involves a tremendous contradiction, from which the subjective thinker does not have to abstract, but in which it is his business to remain" (CUP, 313H).

As soon as Kierkegaard's pseudonyms begin characterizing this essential contradiction between the ideal and the real, his philosophical

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anthropology emerges. This is a contradiction between "the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the becoming" (CUP, 89). Another expression for the eternal and temporal is "psyche and body" (CA, 85), which results in a contradiction between the inner and the outer (CUP, 89). To "finitude/infinite," Anti-Climacus adds "possibility/necessity, and consciousness/unconsciousness" (SUD, 29).

This essential contradiction has far-reaching consequences for any attempt to comprehend existence. Since thought no longer corresponds to reality, there is no guarantee of knowing whether that which is thought is an actual expression of existence. This means that thought is penetrated by a radical uncertainty. Any replacement for Hegelian philosophy must take this uncertainty as its starting point. In contrast to Hegelian dialectics, existential dialectics places a strict limitation upon the activity and competence of thought. It functions very much like a border guard, allowing thought to press forward to its legitimate boundaries, but stopping it from encroaching on existence itself. That is, thought may be legitimately employed in the clarification of existential issues, but it must stop short of absorbing these issues into itself and reducing them to its categories. Existential dialectics, then, does not explain existence but helps the human being to become aware of crucial existential issues.

Furthermore, existential dialectics entails the reduction of the status of thought. In existence, thought finds that it exists alongside such categories as will, feeling, and imagination. Consequently, although thought plays a significant role in the existence of human beings, it does so only in conjunction with these non-intellectual elements.

3. The right relationship between abstract thought and existing: A possible paradigm for philosophical practice

Abstract thought is important if one uses it rightly in order to *clarify intellectual confusion and to serve the passion of desiring a better way of life.* For existential dialectics is concerned also with bringing about a reconciliation between thought and being. However, it accomplishes this within existence and the strictures that existence places upon the human being. Kierkegaard describes the means by which this is carried out as "subjective reflection." Subjective reflection, unlike its objective counterpart, proceeds not away from but towards existence, namely the existence of the individual human being. It is called "subjective" because it turns towards the "subjectivity," that is, the innermost personal being, of the single individual. It is concerned not with establishing a speculative system but with applying the categories of abstract thought to the concrete existence

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of the individual human being. Kierkegaard writes:

> While abstract thought seeks to understand the concrete abstractly, the subjective thinker has conversely to understand the abstract concretely. Abstract thought turns from concrete men to consider man in general; the subjective thinker seeks to understand the abstract determination of being human in terms of this particular human being. (CUP, 315)

Whereas objective reflection only moves in one direction, namely away from existence to the abstract and essential, subjective thought moves in two directions. First, it makes the movement of objective reflection. That is, abstract thought is employed to obtain a conception of existence and of the categories that make it up. Secondly, it bends objective reflection back on itself and applies it to existence. A circular movement is created in which thought first moves away from existence but is then turned back and applied to its point of origin. A dialectical movement is thus established between existence, the abstract conception of existence, and the existential application of this conception.

The significance of this is twofold. First, subjective reflection provides the existing individual with the means with which to understand his own personal existence. By means of the first movement, namely that of abstract thought, the individual acquires the concepts with which to understand himself. Thus, in the case of the passage quoted above, abstract thought provides the existing individual with a concept of humanity. This concept can then be employed by the individual to interpret and comprehend his own individual humanity. By making the second movement of subjective reflection, that is, by applying the abstract concept of humanity to himself, the individual achieves an understanding of his own humanity. In this sense, then, subjective reflection is a reformulation of the Socratic dictum "know thyself." It is the process by which the individual achieves greater self-understanding (CUP, 314-16).

Secondly, subjective reflection has an "ethical" function. That is, it not only provides the human being with the wherewithal with which to interpret his own existence, but also provides him with the means with which to develop and improve this existence. For Kierkegaard, the categories of objective reflection are not only forms of thought but are also possibilities. Kierkegaard holds that the process of abstraction employed by abstract thought results in an object, or aspect of reality, which is being transferred *ab esse ad posse* (see Law 1993, chap. 3). This is necessary in order to transform an external reality into a thinkable form. However, these conceptual possibilities form not only the basis for thought, but also possibilities for action. If the individual discovers that his existence does

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not correspond to his abstract conception of what existence ideally is, he is compelled to "act" to restructure his existence so that it corresponds to this conception.

The question now arises of how this dialectical process of subjective reflection results in the overcoming of the contradiction between thought and being that existence brings about. This division is overcome by the existing individual positing an identity between them *in his own personal existence*. That is, through his application of the categories of objective reflection (thought) to his own existence (being), an identity can be created. By attempting to live according to his conception of what existence truly is, the existing individual brings about an identity between thought and being. This identity is short-lived, for living is characterized by striving and not by reaching a "result." Nonetheless, the identity between thought and being that is reached in moments of passion is worth striving for.

Kierkegaard's notion of subjective reflection may be considered a paradigm for philosophical practice. I have argued that the movement from the individual and concrete to the general and abstract, and back, is one the main assets of philosophical practice (Amir 2003, 37, and Chapter 1 above). The intellectual and ethical functions of this dialectic do define philosophical practice's main tool, as I view it: abstract thought in the service of individual life.

In concluding this part, I would like to add that Kierkegaard's philosophy could be applied *simplicitas* to philosophical practice, if the counselee is in search of spiritual growth and the counselor is a convinced Christian. In other cases, one should be aware that Kierkegaard's philosophy is consciously biased: it uses the stages to lead to his own view of Christianity and presents it as the sole answer to the human predicament. The aesthetic stage is doomed to failure, the ethical stage is short-lived because any form of morality is inferior to Christian ethics, and any religion is inferior to Christianity, including institutionalized Christianity that for Kierkegaard is a gross misrepresentation of Christianity. Kierkegaard's psychological analysis is also consciously biased: his concepts of the self, of despair, anxiety, and even humor are assigned Christian meanings. His maieutics, which serve one truth—man's *telos*, to be attained only through Kierkegaard's view of Christianity—and which makes legitimate use of deception in order to dissipate illusion, is a dangerous tool to be emulated in philosophical practice.

As a precursor of existentialism, however, Kierkegaard does provide us with a general framework for philosophical practice. Moreover, some of his ideas are very powerful, e.g., the necessary contradiction in life, and

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therefore the role the comic inevitably plays in it, the different life-views embodied in the stages and the way in which they contradict each other, the tendency we all have for the aesthetic and for self-deception, etc. For philosophical practitioners who love Kierkegaard but do not share all of his ideas, Kierkegaard's general framework for philosophical practice has to be amended to suit liberal goals.

3. Some Specific Uses of Kierkegaard in Philosophical Practice

Reading Kierkegaard is an almanac for the philosophical practitioner. Confronted with various life-views and concrete exemplars of human lives, the practitioner finds himself undergoing a process of philosophical counseling. This process proves helpful later on in recognizing familiar philosophical types in the consultation. While avoiding seeing them through Kierkegaard's religious interpretation, Kierkegaard sharpens our understanding of specific life-views. Some of us would not endorse his conclusions, specifically the conclusion that most life-views are inherently unsatisfying because they fall short of Christianity. For this reason, dealing with each life-view's problems remains an original and joint enterprise of both counselor and counselee. This sometimes confronts the counselor with some unsettling questions. Let me give some examples of the problems as well as the benefits that identifying Kierkegaard's types in philosophical practice may bring. As I find John Lippitt's description of Kierkegaard's philosophy extremely helpful (2000), I rely on it in the following sections before assessing its relevance to philosophical practice.

A. The Fantastic Thinker

Kierkegaard often deals with abstract concepts by presenting the reader with concrete exemplars of human lives. The fantastic thinker depicted in *The Sickness unto Death* is a person whose knowledge is not matched by self-knowledge. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard's pseudonym, Climacus, explains

> We need to be brought to see that, on issues such as death, immortality, gratitude to God, and marriage, we should resist our intellectual inclinations to think about these issues in abstract terms and acknowledge them as questions that need to be engaged on a first-person level. The central message to Climacus' intellectual reader, then, is that she should note how she faces the temptations of over-intellectualizing these very personal issues; and that these temptations are forms of ethical-religious

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> evasion. ("Interesting sermon on how I need to confront my own death, Reverend. By the way, have we you read that new book comparing attitudes to immortality amongst the ancient Greeks and the Egyptians? Absolutely fascinating. The author argues…") By turning the question of immortality into an abstract question about humanity in general, the intellectual, through a form of psychologically subtle self-deception, avoids the impact the question has for her, as an existing individual human being. (Lippitt 2000, 25)

This is highly relevant to philosophical practice. One of the types of persons who may be attracted to philosophical counseling is the intellectual—Kierkegaard's fantastic thinker—who wants to increase his knowledge while shunning self-knowledge. While one may argue that philosophical practitioners should provide intellectual services without pointing to psychological elements in the counselee's quest, the possibility of a subtle psychological self-deception raises some questions. If self-deception is to be combated in philosophical counseling, isn't it the counselor's work to disclose such a possibility? Alternatively, should she go along with intellectual discussions about ethics without ever addressing the question of the client's own moral outlook and integrity in implementing this outlook?

B. The Aesthete's Despair or Boredom

The fantastic thinker is one form of the aesthetic life. One of the frequent clients in the consultation is the aesthete, as described in the papers of A in *Either/Or* I. As John Lippitt explains, Kierkegaard's pseudonym in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

> views the papers of A as presenting "an existence-possibility that cannot attain existence" (CUP, 253H).[181] A defers the call existence makes on him by various forms of self-deception, including "by the most subtle of all deceptions . . . thinking" (CUP, 253H)…. Such a "fantasy-existence" as A's, Climacus argues, is no existence at all. It "run[s] aground on time. At its maximum, it is despair. Consequently, it is no existence, but "existence-possibility oriented towards existence" (CUP, 253H). (Lippitt 2000, 74)

We all encounter such aesthetes: Romantic lovers in love with love instead of a woman, of women instead of one woman; or, holding on to different talents that are never actualized instead of choosing one profession, or

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[181] The "H" refers to Howard V. and Edna H. Hong's translation of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1992).

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holding on to eternal youth instead of choosing responsibility. Kierkegaard helps us understand these life-views and the misery they bring with them.

We might think that philosophical counseling would help the aesthete to choose and thereby begin his ethical life. However, as Lippitt explains, Climacus further allows himself to express the view that "there is a problem with the ethical life as *Either/Or* portrays it,"

> What is significant about the ethicist Judge Vilhelm [William] portrayed there is that he "has despaired" (CUP, 253H) and "has chosen himself" (CUP, 254H)….Climacus objects to the Judge presenting things as if he "found himself . . . immanently" (CUP, 257-58H) in or through despair, and that "by enduring the despair the individual would win himself" (CUP, 258H). This depends upon believing that self-discovery is ultimately a matter of *will*; put another way, the Judge's view is predicated on self-sufficiency. Climacus views this as being fundamentally mistaken, since he doubts that the ethical self has the resources within itself necessary to conquer despair. Thus, for the first time, in this section he introduces the religious: "It is in this moment of decision that the individual needs divine assistance" (CUP, 258H). (Lippitt 2000, 74-75)

Through this and the work of other pseudonyms, Kierkegaard convinces us that despair cannot be conquered by will. Moreover, this very fact is the proof of our being dependent on God and the proof of the existence of God (Pojman 1993, 14). While we might reject Kierkegaard's religious interpretation of despair, we should not disregard the unsettling insight that despair cannot be conquered by will. Is it true? If it is, what has philosophy to offer when one is in despair? More generally, what has philosophy to offer when a person seeks change, even if the change is as concrete as ceasing to be a possibility-lover and beginning to be a ready-to-get-married-to-one-girl person? I have argued (Amir 2004b, and Chapter 17 below) that the issue of self-change in philosophy should be given more attention; that philosophical counseling might be frustrating for a counselee, for he might get a clearer vision of his predicament without receiving any tool for getting rid of it. Kierkegaard makes us think about the crucial issue of the possible limitations of philosophical practice.

C. Couple Counseling: The Aesthete and the Ethicist

One of the most fruitful ideas to be found in Kierkegaard's authorship is his theory of stages or spheres of life. One does not climb the stages chronologically, even less so necessarily. Most people remain in one of the forms of the aesthetic stage all their life. The aesthetic stage is described as a life-view whose main criterion of the good life is pleasure and whose

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main tools are possibilities. The life of the aesthete consists in disjoined, fragmentary episodes. As such, it is incommensurable with the ethical stage, whose coherence and unity fashion another kind of selfhood. "The ethicist distinguishes itself from the 'hiddenness' of the aesthetic by becoming 'open,'" Lippitt explains (2000, 75): in contradistinction to the aesthetic hiddenness, the ethical stage is described as involving duty and openness. The ethicist chooses himself and becomes open through the public manifestation of his choice. This life-view is ideally exemplified in the disclosure that marriage is. Possibilities he used to contemplate are manifested now in his life, as he commits himself by choice to ethical projects, which he publicly discloses (Lippitt 2000, 74-75).

A "mixed" couple of counselees, one an ethicist and the other an aesthete, may benefit from a discussion of Kierkegaard's stages or spheres. First, discovering and articulating their respective life-views gives coherence to their experiences. Second, perhaps for the first time they may understand the coherence of the other's life-view. Third, a respect for the other may grow out of his new capacity for expressing himself and what matters to him coherently. Finally, though their differences might never be resolved and the gap between them might now seem wider, unraveling the basic controversy that gives birth to so many disputes about details might ameliorate the relationship because there will be no more reasons to fight. Living with difference is a viable option when deference follows. Separating is also an option, but at least the couple knows what the basic "misunderstanding" is all about. Some couples value this knowledge as a liberation from guilt, and find it helpful in giving them invaluable tools for finding a better match in the future.[182]

Conclusion

I have attempted in this chapter to deepen the *prima facie* appeal that Kierkegaard may have for philosophical practitioners. I have suggested we take seriously Kierkegaard's underlying aim, which I hope I have successfully unraveled, of convincing the reader that the religious life of the true Christian is the highest life. I have found features of his philosophy that are relevant to a secular enterprise of philosophical counseling, however, and to concrete cases one may encounter in the practice. Finally, I have singled out his notion of subjective reflection as

[182] Also of interest is Kierkegaard's view on love, mainly expounded in his *Works of Love*. I have elaborated elsewhere on his view (Amir 2004a, 18, n7), which is highly reminiscent of Plato's theory of love (see Amir 2001).

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especially appealing for understanding the movement between the concrete and the abstract that the practice of philosophy represents. I have concluded that one can turn this notion into a paradigm for philosophical practice itself.

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PART III

UNDULY NEGLECTED TOPICS

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CHAPTER SEVEN

REVIVING SPINOZA'S ETHICS

Benedict Spinoza's ethics is excluded from contemporary discussions of virtue ethics. I challenge the reasons for that omission; I assess the significance of his ethics, its relevance to current concerns in ethical theory, and its appeal as a source of non-relative virtues that are not primarily reflecting Western values.

Introduction

Daniel Statman characterizes virtue ethics as a "rather new (or renewed) approach to ethics, according to which the basic judgments in ethics are judgments about character" (Statman 1997, 7). Virtue theorists maintain that the aim of the moral life is to develop those general dispositions we call the moral virtues, and to exercise and exhibit them in the many situations that life sets before us. This approach to ethics is now recognized as a viable alternative to act- and principle-centered and consequentialist theories. The past forty years "have witnessed a dramatic resurgence of philosophical interest in the virtues. The charge that modern philosophical thought neglects the virtues,[185] once apposite, is by now outmoded; and the calls for a renewed investigation of virtue and virtue ethics are being answered from many quarters" (Velazco y Trianoski, 1997, 42).[186]

Aristotle is best known for his emphasis on the cultivation of the virtues. One of the reasons the revival of his ethics proves problematic, however, is that his aristocratic values and his paganism clash with contemporary values. When Aristotle is not taken as the prime model of virtue ethicists, the Classical philosophers usually are. However, reviving Classical values in the contemporary world, even if those values are not

[185] Becker (1975), von Wright (1963), and Taylor (1988) make this criticism, among others.
[186] For a relatively updated list of recent works on the virtues, see Velazco y Trianoski (1997, 53n1).

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Aristotelian, is not devoid of problems. For regardless of the religiosity of their upbringing, Westerners have been profoundly influenced by Christian values. This may be the reason for the renewed interest in Thomas Aquinas. To Aristotle's list of the moral virtues, Aquinas added theological virtues (hope, faith, and charity), and various other Christian virtues that make sense within the life of the Christian, such as humility.[187]

Spinoza's ethics may be better suited to our times than Aquinas' and Greek and Roman ethics. However, Spinoza has been unduly neglected in the literature on virtue ethics. I would like to put on the agenda the viability of Spinoza's ethics by highlighting its relevance for today's concerns, and by challenging the validity of the reasons for its omission from contemporary discussions of virtue ethics.

1. Spinoza's Ethics is Significant

Spinoza's ethics has been praised from many quarters. Don Garrett, the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, assesses it thus: "Spinoza's ethical theory is innovative, systematic and important. It is, in fact, despite the brevity of its presentation, one of the most important ethical theories of the modern era" (Garrett 1996, 269). In *A History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell begins the chapter on Spinoza with the following eulogy: "Spinoza is the noblest and most lovable of the great philosophers. Intellectually, some have surpassed him, but ethically, he is supreme" (Russell 1979, 559).

The centrality of ethics in Spinoza's philosophical project is unmistakable even in the title of the most systematic presentation of his philosophy: *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*. The *Ethics* seeks to demonstrate a broad range of metaphysical, theological, epistemological, and psychological doctrines, which constitute, support, or elucidate the premises for Spinoza's ethical conclusions. Spinoza sees ethics as the knowledge of "the right way of living."[188] He primarily seeks to improve the character of human beings, both himself and others, by improving their self-understanding. Spinoza seeks improvement of the intellect, and, specifically, his own, not merely as a theoretical exercise. Rather, this improvement is sought chiefly as "a remedy against three ethical hindrances—the overvaluing of wealth, fame, and sensual pleasure—and

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[187] For the revival of interest in Aquinas' ethics, see, e.g., Casey (1990) and Ramsey (1997, *passim* and 177n1).

[188] The phrase is taken from the first paragraph of the appendix to the *Ethics,* part 4, and can be found in the preface to part 3 as well.

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as an instrument for distinguishing, appreciating, and achieving the one true and eternal practical good—liberty, which is identical with happiness and peace of mind" (Garrett 1996, 288-89).

Various characteristics of his philosophy contribute to making his ethics relevant to contemporary trends of thought. It is a *naturalistic* philosophy of *immanence*. While there is a God in Spinoza's philosophy, He is not a personal God who issues decrees. Rather, He is identical with nature. The human being is part of nature and therefore part of God. Spinoza's philosophy is one of *activity*, whose explicit goal is to improve action and to minimize passivity. It is a philosophy of *self-preservation*, in which psychological and moral consequences follow from the physiological conatus or vital impulse to persevere in one's being. It is a philosophy of *power* or successful self-perseverance, which in turn is identical with virtue. It is a philosophy that emphasizes the *body* as much as the mind, for it sees them as identical.[189] It is a philosophy that sees *self-love* as the highest good, and considers it as identical with liberty, happiness, and peace of mind.

Moreover, it is a philosophy that is *realistic* about human nature and that illuminates the causes of human behavior without condemning it. It is a philosophy that gives *emotions* a crucial role in determining our well-being. Both a psychological and ethical *egoist*, Spinoza devises an ethic that would satisfy the *altruist*'s nonretributivism. In Spinoza's ethics, morality is not submission to an alien rule, but is *determination by the law of one's nature*, which is universal and objective. It is an ethics that *inverts* the traditional relationship between happiness and virtue: contrary to traditional morality's view, it is because we are happy that we can be virtuous (*Ethics*, part 5, prop. 42). It is a philosophy that promotes *health*, both physical and psychological.

In order to accomplish that, it bothers with specifics: Spinoza's philosophy offers *remedies* against the passions that plague and paralyze us. Though very ambitious in its goal, it is a philosophy whose path towards it is *gradual* and never fully completed. Finally, it is a philosophy that is *feasible*, as testified by Spinoza's concluding words in his *Ethics*: "If now the way, which I have shown leads to this, seems very difficult, yet it can be found . . . for all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare" (*Ethics*, part 5, prop. 42, scholium).

Garrett argues,

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[189] Spinoza holds an interesting view of human nature, according to which body and mind are aspects of a sole reality. For Spinoza's resolution of the mind-body problem, see Harris (1992, chap. 5).

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> In its naturalism, its practical rationalism, its asymmetrical conception of moral freedom and responsibility, its nonretributivism, its emphasis on virtue as well as consequences,[190] and its close relation to social and political theory, Spinoza's ethics is a forerunner of, and of special relevance to, contemporary trends in ethical theorizing. (Garrett 1996, 308)

Moreover, Spinoza's ethics is particularly relevant to the challenge a global world represents for moral theorizing. The current situation may require ethical theories that appeal to persons with different cultural backgrounds. Spinoza's ethics combines the virtues of Antiquity (Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism)[191] with a profound Christian influence.[192] Although similar influences can be found in Aquinas'

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[190] Garrett further explains: "Although self-preservation first appears in the *Ethics* as a tendency towards temporal duration, the achievement of adequate understanding—which is the highest virtue—allows a participation in the eternal that is a kind of perseverance in one's being. Accordingly, the highest virtue is not merely a means toward self-preservation; it is itself a kind of self-preservation. That is, the very consequence at which Spinoza's consequentialism aims is also, at least in its most important manifestation, a state of character" (Garrett 1996, 308).

[191] A number of ancient influences are evident in Spinoza's ethical theory, according to Garrett: "From Plato, he accepts a conception of ethics as concerned with the conflict between reason and the passions, and the distinction between understanding the eternal, on the one hand, and sensing or imagining the merely durational, on the other. From Aristotle, he takes a conception of ethics as concerned with virtue and a kind of human flourishing whose highest expression lies in the life of active reason. From the Stoics, he appropriates the ideal of an internal freedom found in reconciling oneself to the necessities of nature. His own ethical theory, however, is distinctive, and not reducible to any of these influences" (Garrett 1996, 309). For Aristotle's and the Stoics' influence on Spinoza see Wolfson (1934, chap. 9).

[192] Spinoza's biography can account for the notable Christian influence in his writings. Although Spinoza's parents reverted to Judaism before his birth, his family was "Marano." The "Marano" were Spaniard Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity but kept the Jewish religion and tradition secretly. They were nonetheless expelled with all Jews from Spain in 1492 and fled to Portugal. Expelled again from Catholic Portugal, they traveled through the south of France to Amsterdam, where they initiated a new Jewish community of Sefarad or "Spanish" Jews. Spinoza was born there in 1632 to a family that had been strongly influenced by Christianity for many generations. Spinoza's relationship with Judaism seems simpler than his relationship with Christianity. He abandoned the Jewish religion quite early in his life, and the Jewish community excommunicated him at the age of twenty-four. There is a controversy regarding the extent of the influence of Jewish thought on his philosophy. For Spinoza's biography, see

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philosophy, Spinoza, unlike Aquinas, is a post-Judeo-Christian who rejects from both religions features that may alienate non-religious persons.[193] One of the outcomes of this endeavor is a worldly oriented philosophy, which is another reason for preferring Spinoza to Aquinas.[194]

Spinoza's philosophy has affinities with Buddhist, Japanese and Chinese thought.[195] With the possible exception of Schopenhauer, he is the most Eastern philosopher in the West. Today, Eastern and Pagan philosophies are prized due to the postmodern criticism of Western civilization and to New Agers' criticism of established Christianity.[196] Due to its creative mixture of Classical and Christian influences and to its Eastern affinities, Spinoza's ethics may prove to be more suited to our times than each of these traditions is separately.

The wealth of influences and affinities that characterizes Spinoza's ethics may give it an edge in addressing problems moral relativism creates. His ethics may be an answer to "the provinciality and ethnocentricity" that risk plaguing virtue ethics.[197] Alasdair MacIntyre attempts to solve virtue ethics' possible weakness by arguing that in addition to the notion of virtue as tied to historically and culturally situated roles, there is a notion of virtue that is tied to a human *telos* applying to all human beings.[198]

Nadler (1999). For Jewish influences on Spinoza, see Yovel (1988, vol. 1), and Nadler (2001).

[193] Spinoza's attitude to the Judeo-Christian moral tradition is complex. He endorses the Christian view that hate is to be overcome by love of those who hate us (*Ethics*, part 3, props. 43-44; part 4, addenda, prop. 11). He rejects Christian asceticism and guilt, however, and maintains that such central Christian virtues, as humility, repentance, and pity are not virtues at all but rather evils. As forms of sadness, they indicate lack of power. Finally, Spinoza's God is very different from the Christians' God, as He does not issue any commands, and does not desire that human beings should live well.

[194] For an interesting comparison of Aquinas and Spinoza, see Byrne (1994, 121).

[195] For a study of the affinity between Spinoza and Buddhist thought, see, for example, Wetlesen (1972; 1977). For Spinoza's affinity with Chinese thought, see Hu-Shih (1977), and with Japanese thought, see Saito (1977). For Spinoza's affinity with Eastern thought in general, see Hessing (1977).

[196] See Amir (2009) or Chapter 1 of *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017).

[197] Referring to Aristotle's defense of slavery in the *Politics*, Robert Solomon writes, "The problem with virtue ethics is that it tends to be provincial and ethnocentric" (Solomon 1997, 212).

[198] See MacIntyre (1985, chap. 15, and "Postscript," 272-78).

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However, this universalistic claim has been criticized for being incompatible with MacIntyre's historicism.[199] Statman explains,

> The problem of universality is connected to the problem of justification. If we could anchor the virtues in some general theory of human flourishing, we could thereby grant them universal application, assuming that such a theory would apply, more or less equally, to all human beings. Since, however, such an anchor is not available, we are left with changing intuitions about virtues and vices, upon which no universal claims can be made. (Statman 1997, 20)[200]

It is precisely such an anchor that Spinoza's philosophy can provide, for the following reasons. First, Spinoza is no relativist. Although he believes that the terms "good" and "bad" used in current moralities denote only our desires, he is also persuaded that there is an absolute good towards which we strive when our thinking is not confused (see Harris 1992, 8-9). Second, Spinoza's philosophy can supply the required anchor because the virtues that Spinoza advocates may be more congenial to a wide variety of persons from different cultures than virtues proposed by other virtue theorists.

If MacIntyre is right in asserting that "there must be some non-relative virtues [that are essential in all societies], although, to be sure, with local variations and interpretations, such as courage, honesty, generosity, congeniality" (Solomon 1999a, 37), Spinoza's ethics may be a good source for non-relative virtues. It may prove helpful for resolving ethical problems that are created by globalization, such as the need for non-relative virtues that are not solely, or even primarily, reflecting Western values.

2. Spinoza's Ethics Is Ignored

For all its appeal, Spinoza's ethics has been almost universally ignored in the twentieth century. Garrett explains,

> On the whole, twentieth century interest in Spinoza's writings has focused—in contrast with Spinoza's own priorities—more on his metaphysics and epistemology (especially in the English-speaking world) and on his social and political theory (especially in the European continent) than on his ethical theory proper. (Garrett 1996, 269)

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[199] See Putman (1987), and the sources he mentions in (99n8).
[200] Richard Kraut (2007) has recently attempted to do so.

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Edwin Curley wrote in 1973, "It is a rare book on ethics which does not have at least a passing reference to Spinoza. But it is an even rarer book which has more than a passing reference."[201] There are almost no references to Spinoza in monographs about or anthologies of virtue theories. Curiously absent from an essay on paradigmatic individuals who are models for virtue ethics (Alderman 1997), Spinoza fares better in English works which probe specific virtues (e.g., Casey 1990), and even better in similar works in French (e.g., Comte-Sponville 1988).

I suspect there are four reasons for this silence in the English-speaking world. First, the notorious difficulty of Spinoza's philosophy. Second, the central role emotions play in his ethics, whilst emotions are devaluated in contemporary philosophy in general and in ethical theory in particular. Third, the difficulties involved in implementing his ethics. Fourth, Spinoza's metaphysics—interwoven as they are with his ethics—which seem to contradict contemporary scientific theories.

1. One reason for disregarding Spinoza's ethics may be the notorious *difficulty* of Spinoza's philosophy. Roger Scruton writes, "Spinoza's greatness and originality are hidden behind a remote, impassive and often impenetrable style. Few have understood his arguments in their entirety; fewer still have recognized their continuing moral significance" (Scruton 1986, vii). The challenge involved in understanding Spinoza's philosophy may repel some readers and thus eclipse a possible interest in Spinoza's ethics.

This can be amended. There have been recent publications on Spinoza's ethics that make it more congenial to contemporary readers.[202] Even more helpful is Neal Grossman's recent monograph that introduces the philosophy of Spinoza as adapted for a new age with exercises (2003).

2. Another reason for silencing Spinoza's ethics may be the *devaluation of emotions* in contemporary philosophy in general and in ethics in particular. Martha Nussbaum notes, "Philosophers often refuse themselves that immersion in the messier emotions because they think that it's bad form or it's not really philosophy" (Nussbaum 2000, 15). This may explain why "students reading Spinoza are typically brought up short after book II of the *Ethics*, leaving out what Spinoza himself certainly took

[201] Curley (1973, 354). Curley mentions the exception of Broad (1930). The majority of recent works that have shed light on Spinoza's ethical theory have treated it as one of the various themes of Spinoza's philosophy, instead of addressing his ethics as a contender alongside other more famous ethical theories.

[202] Such as Delahunty (1985), Donogan (1988), Lloyd (1994), and especially Bennett (1984).

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to be the heart of the project, three brilliant books on the emotions."[203]

Nussbaum rightly maintains, "If philosophy's aim is to describe the truth, then it has to be willing to immerse itself in the messier, darker aspects of human experience, and to write partly from within that experience" (Nussbaum 2000, 40). However, this is what Spinoza did, although it might seem misplaced to associate his rationalism and the common view we have of the salvation he proposes through knowledge, with emotions. Although his own conduct was singularly free of uncontrolled passion, Spinoza did not believe it was possible for human beings to become free of passion, nor did he advocate complete suppression of emotion and desire. As finite beings, he held, we can never wholly free ourselves from the overwhelming forces of external causes, and in times of great stress especially, even the wisest and most steadfast are liable to be overcome. However, apart from inherent human weakness, rational and free action itself is not devoid of emotion—quite the contrary. According to Spinoza, such action is the highest fruit of the human being's urge to realize his own true essence, the power of the intellect, and it is always accompanied by pleasant and invigorating emotion.

The role Spinoza allotted to the emotions led Winifred Tomm to appreciate his "usefulness for feminists" (Tomm 1988, 66).[204] Both Robert Solomon and Daniel Statman remark that virtue ethics is sometimes

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[203] Solomon (1999a, 41). For example, Jonathan Bennett, one of the most prominent recent commentators on the *Ethics*, ends his commentary after book II. By way of contrast, see the sensitive treatments of Spinoza by Neu (1977), Yovel (1988), and Rorty (1991).

[204] Winifred Tomm asserts, "Philosophers have traditionally emphasized male objective rationality at the expense of female subjective emotionality, thereby marginalizing women's interests and activities" (Tomm 1988, 66). She wants to counterbalance what she considers a male-oriented ethics of principle and individualism with an ethics that does not rest on the dictates of reason but rather on emotion and a feeling of interrelatedness with others. She argues of Spinoza and the Indian philosopher Vasubandhu that "their usefulness for feminists lies in the connections they make between an ethics of compassion and a metaphysics of interrelatedness in their theories of human nature. Their theories of human nature revolve around the assumption that emotion and reason are inseparable" (Tomm 1988, 67). Among the feminists cited by Tomm are Nel Noddings (1985) and Carol Gilligan (1982). Against a rational will that understands its freedom as incompatible with desire, Spinoza is thought to offer "a holistic metaphysics which assumes the inseparability of thought and sensation." This "holism" has its source in Spinoza's "mode-identity" thesis, or the assertion (in the *Ethics*, part 2, prop. 7, scholium) that a mode of extension and a mode of thought are the same thing expressed in two ways (Tomm 1988, 68).

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deemed a feminine ethic; both reject this characterization yet for different reasons.[205] Apparently, Spinoza is no exception to the charge of "femininity" when it comes to ethics, due to the extensive role emotions play in his philosophy. This charge, however, at least as presented in Tomm's interpretation of Spinoza's ethics and metaphysics, has been undermined.[206]

3. A third reason for discounting Spinoza's ethics might be the *difficulty in implementing* it. This may be true; at least Spinoza never denied it: "And of course," he writes in the last sentences of his *Ethics,* "what is found so rarely must be hard. For if salvation were at hand, and could be found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare" (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 42, scholium).

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[205] Solomon (1997, 213), Statman (1997, 17). The former rejects the statement that virtue ethics is a feminine ethic because he wants the discipline to be gender-free. "The importance of emphasizing the virtues (including the so-called 'feminine' virtues)," he writes, "should not be held captive to gender distinctions." The latter rejects it because most of its adherents are men: "Many of its supporters are males, which does not of course mean that virtue ethics is a masculine sort of theory" (Statman 1997, 34n109). For the difference between feminine ethics and feminist ethics (as well as maternal ethics and lesbian ethics), see Derry (1999).

[206] Laura Byrne's main purpose in her essay "Reason and Emotion" is to undermine misinterpretations of Spinoza's ethics. Her criticism of Tomm is important enough to be quoted at length. She argues against Tomm, "Receptivity is not the aim of Spinoza's ethical teaching. The good does not lie in receptivity . . . . [For] passivity is never virtuous . . . Impotence is external determination. Receptivity and sensation, the notions that . . . Tomm wish to stress, are impotence in so far as they are ways in which we are affected . . . Spinoza's discussion of benevolence and fortitude as different sources of our being in a right relation with others equally demonstrates a suspicion of receptivity . . . . The desire to come to another's aid can be motivated by something other than receptivity. Fortitude refers to the actions of the mind grounded in thinking, or adequate ideas. Generosity is the desire to be in a right relation with others following from fortitude rather than emotional interconnectedness (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 59, scholium). Furthermore, the good available to reason, formation of adequate ideas, and knowledge of God can be enjoyed equally by all (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 36). Generosity as such, rather than being founded on a principle that is equally the root of envy, has a ground that can be shared without conflict . . . . Reason urges involvement with others, not because we are emotionally connected to them, as does benevolence, but because they are profitable (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 18, scholium) . . . . Tomm misconstrues Spinoza's concept of desire no less than she does his attitude to emotional interconnectedness" (Byrne 1994, 114, 117-18).

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However, Spinoza states in a preceding sentence that the goal of his ethics is attainable: "If the way I have shown to lead to these things now seems very hard, still, it can be found" (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 42, scholium). More precisely the goal is the way, for the liberation Spinoza depicts is progressive and its benefits proportional to the level of understanding attained. It is important to emphasize that Spinoza is an egalitarian in ethics, even for women, a democrat in politics and is extremely tolerant towards religious (mis)conceptions of moral excellence. It is true that he dedicated himself to a life of contemplation in order to achieve the goals his philosophy sets. Because he held a Hobbesian view of humankind, he is also pessimistic about the capacity of most people to achieve the goal he proposed. However, those features that seem to undermine Spinoza's egalitarian creed are not peculiar to him and therefore should not single him out among other virtue ethicists.

Indeed, an elitist view of human excellence may be at the root of virtue ethics' focus on virtue and character in ancient Greece; only a small group of people is capable of reaching true *arête* or virtue as excellence. For Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, this view is closely associated with the significance of the intellectual virtues, without which moral virtues are out of reach. As the intellectual virtues are hard to achieve, moral virtue is also much rarer than assumed nowadays. Amélie Rorty notes the oddity of current virtue ethics that follows the Greeks regarding the centrality of virtue but follows Immanuel Kant with regard to the egalitarian character of virtue (Rorty 1988).

"If Rorty—and Aristotle—are right about the necessity of the intellectual virtues for moral *arête*," Daniel Statman remarks, "virtue ethics might lead to quite a different view about the equality of human beings than the one we inherited from Kant" (Statman 1997, 12). While most friends of virtue ethics recommend it precisely because it fits our current moral intuitions,[207] Richard Taylor (1985; 1988) contends that releasing ourselves from the deontic tradition with its "empty concept of obligation" entails a completely new view about the desired traits of character and the desired form of life. Rorty's emphasis on the importance of intellectual virtues also might bring virtue ethics to depart from some commonly accepted intuitions concerning the egalitarian character of the ethical domain.

Thus, Spinoza's pessimism regarding the universal applicability of his ethics should not single him out among virtue ethicists. Nor should it single him out among other ethicists. To take the paradigmatic example of

[207] See Henry Richardson's remark that Michael Slote in *From Morality to Virtue* (1992) does not seek to re-invent ethics but rather to offer "a different basis for the life we already live" (Richardson 1994, 703); see Statman (1997, 22).

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an egalitarian ethics, Kant's ethical theory does not require intellectual virtues, it is still very difficult to implement.

4. Finally, a crucial reason for the silence surrounding Spinoza's ethics may be the *metaphysics* that underlie it. The charge that Spinoza's ethics is embedded in metaphysics should not single him out, because it can be made against most ethics. Harold Alderman maintains that "as a class, moral claims are traditionally grounded in metaphysical claims; that is, it is recognized that it makes sense to say 'one ought to do so and so' only because the injunction presupposes that 'some decisive aspect of reality is of such and such a nature'" (Alderman 1997, 147).

The main problem of Spinoza's ethics is more likely to lie in the kind of metaphysics he advocates, and more specifically, in his determinism. Still, to take Aristotle's ethics as an example, contemporary virtue ethicists feel free to adopt Aristotle's views partially, thereby ignoring either his metaphysics or some of his ethical views—such as his view of slavery or of women—of which they do not approve.[208] Would that be feasible in the case of Spinoza? Is Spinoza's ethics viable without his determinism?

Bertrand Russell thought so, for he wrote about Spinoza,

> It is necessary to distinguish his ethics from his metaphysics, and to consider how much of the former can survive the rejection of the latter . . . when we come to Spinoza's ethics, we feel—or at least I feel—that something, though not everything, can be accepted even when the metaphysical foundation has been rejected. (Russell 1979, 559-60)

Unraveling the principal stages of Russell's Spinozistic itinerary, Kenneth Blackwell shows how Russell came to adopt a Spinozistic ethics (Blackwell 1985). However, Russell dismissed Spinoza's metaphysics because it is not compatible with modern science. Such dissociation conforms to the conception of philosophy he developed in his *Problems of Philosophy* (1912). In the CBS program, "Invitation to learning" (1941), Russell declared that no ethic can be deduced from any metaphysic whatsoever, and that from beginning to end metaphysics is completely erroneous (quoted in Blackwell 1985, 86).

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[208] Gregory Velazco y Trianosky remarks, "The difficulty for some of these [scholars] has been how to adopt some more or less Aristotelian notion of human flourishing without Aristotelian metaphysical commitments, but at the same time without abandoning the search for an alternative to utilitarianism (see Wallace [1978, 34], MacIntyre [1985, 187-9]). Others (Taylor [1985], Nussbaum [1988]) seem willing simply to endorse Aristotle's claim that our function is a life of rational activity despite whatever metaphysical difficulties may attend it" (Velazco y Trianosky 1997, 48).

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Pierre Macherey maintains that Russell was aware of the impossibility of definitively dissociating ethics and metaphysics. In Spinoza's case, the most interesting characteristics of his ethics rise and fall with his metaphysics, and his ethics fails to convince readers who are not pantheistic. Macherey argues that Russell's attempt to demonstrate that Spinoza's metaphysics is a theoretical fiction is itself a fiction with no reality to ground it. For,

> It is not easy to dissociate in Spinoza's thought that which pertains to ethics and that which pertains to metaphysics: Russell, who attempts a dissociated reading of this system in order to sort out its positive and negative aspects, becomes enmeshed in insurmountable paradoxes. His attempt attracts admiration and sympathy but fails to convince (Macherey 1993, 305; my translation).

The reason it is difficult to dissociate Spinoza's ethics from his metaphysics may lie in the inverse relationship that holds between the two. Rather than building an ethics on metaphysics, which is what Spinoza seems to be doing in his *Ethics*, Garrett maintains that "Spinoza's choices concerning which metaphysical, theological, epistemological and psychological doctrines to emphasize and develop are largely determined by their usefulness in supporting his ethical conclusions" (Garrett 1996, 262). If this is true, we can either reject Spinoza's ethics altogether or reconsider the attractiveness of his metaphysics.

A first step in that direction would be to re-examine Russell's contention that Spinoza's metaphysics is not compatible with modern science. Errol Harris has more recently defended the opposite view, that Spinoza's philosophy is compatible with modern physics (Harris 1973, 250-54). Nor is he alone in suggesting that Spinoza's metaphysics does not clash with contemporary views. Garrett, whose interpretation of Spinoza's necessitarianism is considered "the strongest one available" (Curley and Walski 1999, 241), also believes that Spinoza's metaphysics is compatible with contemporary scientific metaphysics:

> Because Spinoza derives his ethical theory in formal geometrical order from his metaphysics, anyone who rejects that metaphysics may also reject his demonstration of ethics. His necessitarian, monistic metaphysics, in turn, is based largely on a strong Principle of Sufficient Reason. Few contemporary philosophers would accept his strong version of that principle, and few would accept his necessitarianism or his monism in the form in which he expressed them. Most contemporary philosophers, however, would agree that the universe in general, and human behavior in particular, are at least approximately deterministic at large-scale level

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> (allowing for quantum indeterminacies), and that the human mind is a part of nature that is identical with some part of the human body. (Garrett 1996, 308).[209]

Garrett concludes by emphasizing that "*the most important aspects of Spinoza's ethical theory may well prove nearly as adaptable to this contemporary scientific metaphysics as they are to his own seventeenth-century scientific metaphysics*" (Garrett 1996, 308; italics added). If Harris and Garrett are right, the most significant obstacle to Spinoza's metaphysics has been removed. With no initial obstacle, one can investigate further the viability of Spinoza's metaphysics, assessing it also in the end in light of the attractiveness of his ethics. This, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

I have advanced four reasons for the silence surrounding Spinoza's ethics. First, the difficulty of understanding his philosophy. Second, the central role emotions play in his ethics, whilst emotions are devaluated in contemporary philosophy in general and in ethical theory in particular. Third, the difficulties involved in implementing his ethics. Fourth, most importantly perhaps, the alleged contradiction between the metaphysics that grounds Spinoza's ethics and contemporary scientific views. My assessment of these reasons disclosed that some of them point to weaknesses Spinoza shares with other virtue ethicists, although he fares better on at least one of them; some reasons point to characteristics of his ethics that can be seen as advantages.

To recapitulate, the second reason—the central role emotions play in his ethics—may be seen as an advantage: it has singled out Spinoza as useful to feminists (Tomm), although this view of Spinoza's ethics and metaphysics has been disputed (Byrne). The third reason—the difficulty of implementing his ethics—points to a weakness he shares with other virtue ethicists. However, Spinoza has the advantage over other virtue ethicists of being an egalitarian and a democrat. Some scholars (Garrett, Harris) have contested the grounds of the fourth reason—his metaphysics being at odds with contemporary scientific views. Others (Russell) who take this charge seriously dissociate his metaphysics and his ethics and adopt the latter. If such dissociation can be done, which some scholars doubt (Macherey), this is also a characteristic Spinoza shares with other virtue ethicists such as Aristotle.

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[209] For a discussion of the strong principle of sufficient reason Spinoza adopts Garrett refers the reader to Bennett's discussion of "explanatory rationalism" (Bennett 1984, chap. 1) and to Garrett (1991). For a further understanding of Spinoza's necessitarian, monistic metaphysics see Della Roca (2002).

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Conclusion

I have not found substantive reasons for leaving Spinoza outside the renewed interest in virtue ethics. There is no weakness in his ethics that cannot be found in other versions of virtue ethics. There are, however, weaknesses other systems of virtue ethics share from which his theory is exempt. Moreover, various characteristics of Spinoza's ethics are particularly relevant to contemporary concerns in ethical theory, including the future of ethical theory in a global world.[210] In this respect, Spinoza surpasses all virtue ethicists. This should suffice for putting Spinoza's ethics on the agenda.

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[210] I further pursue this subject in Amir (2012) and in Chapter 4 of *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (Amir 2017).

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE HUMAN CONDITION: HUMOR, HUMILIATION, AND HUMILITY

Dear Friends, this humiliation persists, it persists to this day. Man has much to suffer on earth. What horrible suffering! I hardly think of anything but that, brother—the humiliation of man.
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

Dignity seems to be a human creation, and is often at odds with nature. It may be associated with *hubris* or human pride. The inevitable fall from *hubris* leads either to humility or to humiliation—a middle stage between *hubris* and humility. When pride is hurt and dignity impaired by the very nature of indomitable, indifferent, and secretive life, awareness of humiliation as a preferred state is crucial. It is crucial because it helps those who feel that humility is beyond their power or below their will to avoid humility, at the same time that it keeps the fighting and ambitious spirit of *hubris*. Moreover, awareness of our humiliation enables us to apprehend a significant, although painful, truth about the human condition.

I propose to characterize the human condition as humiliating. I then suggest that man's task, courage, and wisdom lie in a full acknowledgment of humiliation as the core of the human condition. Humor is allotted a place of honor in this scheme: no more a mere entertainment, nor even a key to a better world, humor is a servant of truth. While reviewing the complex relationship between humor and humiliation, I uncover some problems in using humor to cope with the human condition *as* humiliating, thereby pointing to new challenges for theorists of humor. Thus, humor is disclosed as a potential vehicle of truth, a capacity I view as more praiseworthy than any of its additional assets, yet without any known theory to account for it.[211]

[211] Various scholars argue that humor reveals some truth (in the Heideggerian sense) about the universe. See, for example, Gelvin (2000) and Zwart (1996). As for humor and its relation to the virtues, the following works are worth mentioning:

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1. *Hubris* or Pride

Hubris, in ancient Greek, was used to denote spiritual pride: to be arrogant, to get above oneself, to lust or to set out to imitate the gods. "Do not try to become Zeus," the poet Pindar exhorted his readers. For, he continues, "mortal things suit mortal best."[212] By the fifth century BC, it was established that to set oneself up as being godlike, whether in respect to happiness, power, or anything else, was the surest way to ruin.[213] As a means to fight this tendency, the human being, in relation to the gods, was often enough represented as a mere victim: "Zeus controls the fulfillment of all that is," wrote the poet Semonides of Amorgos in the seventh century BC, and disposes as he will. However, insight does not belong to human beings: "We live like beasts, always at the mercy of what the day may bring, knowing nothing of the outcome that God will impose upon our acts" (Dodds 1951, 303).

The tone changed with the great Greek philosophers. Like Plato before him, Aristotle put himself in direct and conscious opposition to the Greek tradition, as expressed by Pindar, that it is wrong for human beings to try to imitate the gods. "We ought not to listen," Aristotle admonishes us, "to those who counsel us 'O man, think as man should' and 'O mortal, remember your mortality.'"[214] Thus, from Aristotle to Plotinus, the Godlike human being was the advocated ideal.

Pindar and Aristotle are two eminent representatives of a controversy about *hubris*, or human's spiritual pride, which was to shape the history of human self-consciousness and run unresolved until this day. Of course, the pride of the Athenian tragedies is not the same as the pride which figures in the penitential psalms of the Middle Ages, nor the same as Renaissance pride or the various modern ways in which pride expresses itself: the pride of the human being changes and so do the habits of self-consciousness. Nevertheless, Robert Payne, who wrote an encompassing history of pride, believes he can detect the leitmotiv of the continual development of pride: "Through the whole of Western history," he says, "there rings the continual implacable cry: Non Serviam," meaning the refusal to obey, to submit (Payne 1960, 305).

Roberts (1988), Morreall (2010; 1999), Lippitt (1999), and Comte-Sponville (1995).

[212] Pindar, *Isthmian Odes*, V, Lines 14-16, quoted in Dodds (1951, 302).

[213] As the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* warns us: "In fame unmeasured, praise too high, lies danger: God's harp lightning fly to stagger mountains" (Lines 467-69).

[214] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. X, 7 (1953, 305).

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Payne sees in this cry the cause of human tragedy and wonders if the virtue of humility still has any meaning (1960, 309). "Pride rules us," he says, "and pride must be abased"; the human being's "acute and anguished sense of solitude can only grow deeper," unless "the regimen of humility takes hold of us" (1960, 311, 312). By no means is Payne's attitude towards pride the sole possible or even sensible one. To cite just one example, John Passmore, another authority on this subject, contends, in direct opposition to Payne, that "Non Serviam," the refusal to obey, to submit, is "the great glory of humanity, the fount of human creativity, the guardian of freedom" (Passmore 1970, 290). Passmore can say this because he differentiates between kinds of pride, and the one he advocates is "man's pride in what he is doing in his work, as distinct from pride in himself for having done it" (1970, 289). This kind of pride is compatible, in his view, with humility.

With Pindar and Aristotle, we saw an ancient dichotomy, with Payne and Passmore—a modern controversy. However, even a short survey of the history of pride cannot ignore the in-between influence of Christianity.

The Christian church had been interested in pride in its denouncement of the human being's sinful attempt to achieve the self-sufficiency and independence which the Greeks took as their ideal: to become what the Lord God of Genesis describes as "one of us." St. Augustine sometimes spoke of pride as the root of evil, for Adam's sin originated in pride (1970, 342n65). To take two modern examples, for Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth *hubris* is the sin of sins. They partake in the traditional Christian view that pride is a vice, and that humility, resignation, and self-surrender are virtues (Niebuhr 1945, 266-70; Barth 1970, 4-7).

It is clear then that if we want to pass a judgment on human's pride and to understand its role in shaping both the human condition and our attitude toward it, we should have a closer look at the complementary notion of humility.

2. Humility

Humility is defined as "humbleness, meekness; humble condition."[215] It is as a Christian concept that it had its most powerful influence. In Judaism, the equivalent word for humility has come to be considered as a virtue at a rather late stage and much less emphasis is laid on it than in Christianity (Elitzur 1987, chap. 15). Let us then consider the main Christian interpretations of humility.

[215] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 52.

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According to Thomas Aquinas, humility is a moral virtue that consists "in keeping oneself within one's own bounds, not reaching out to things above one" (Aquinas 1972). Catholic theology regards it as part of the cardinal virtue of temperance in that it represses inordinate ambition and self-esteem without allowing the human being to fall into the opposite error of exaggerated or hypocritical self-abjection. Hence, humility is considered the foundation and *conditio sine qua non* of the spiritual life, because it subjects reason and will to God. Christ enjoined it in His teaching[216] and especially by His example,[217] and many of the saints followed, so that St. Augustine could write, *Tota Christina religio humilitas est* ("The whole of the Christian religion is humility"). St. Benedict in his "Rule" set forth twelve degrees of humility, and since then spiritual writers have systematically studied it and arrived at various enumerations, especially with regard to its development both in the life of the religious in general[218] and that of the mystics in particular.[219] Protestant theologians have variously defined humility. Martin Luther regarded it as the joyful acceptance of God's will, and modern Protestant moralists (e.g., Albrecht Ritschl) identify it as complete resignation to our unconditional dependence on God.

Pride and humility are two alternative ways of being in this world. However, not everyone can or wants to be humble: humility can be conceived as a "broken spirit," which may not appeal to many people. For others, humility is an ideal that they find very difficult to fulfill. As for pride, the non-theological case against it is that it inevitably brings sorrow, disappointment, and suffering.

There is a third alternative of being in the world, but I am afraid that this one is not a matter of choice. It involves the notion of humiliation that is etymologically related to humility through the Latin *humilis* (low).

3. Humiliation

Let me begin this section with some clarifications. The human being's lot on earth is common knowledge; however, what we call "the human condition" may be subjected to different interpretations. Awareness of the human condition is an individual matter. Even if we could agree on the right interpretation of the human condition, we may differ in the degree of

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[216] For example, Luke, 14.11, Matthew, 18.4.
[217] Matthew, 11.23; Philippines, 2.7.ff.
[218] For example, St. Ignatius Loyola's *Exercises*. See Passmore (1970, 292-93).
[219] I refer to St. Bernard and J. Tauler. See Gilson (1940).

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our awareness of it, maybe also in our motivation to be aware of it at all. As this lot is common knowledge, I will leave out its common descriptions. Rather, I will propose an approach to the human condition, and explain why it is important to be aware of it.

One of the widely known characterizations of the human condition is as “frustration.” According to this view, human’s needs, demands, ambitions, and ideals cannot be fulfilled for various reasons (e.g., a non-cooperative world, the clash with other men’s needs, demands, ideals, the contradiction between man’s own different needs) and the outcome of this failure is the feeling we call frustration. In earlier publications (Amir 1984; 2011), I described the human condition in a similar vein. Since then, however, I realized that we use the same term, namely, “frustration,” for minor, well-delineated and specific cases (e.g. queuing for a movie ticket only to be told that the last ticket has just been sold) as well as for the accumulative effect of the total sum of frustrations.

The repeated use of the term “frustration” for the day-to-day disillusionments and defeats erodes its validity as a true description of human experience. We end up with a concept that must encompass more than its undermined meaning can bear. As the human condition seems to be best described as a continuous, a chronic—if one may say so—frustration, I suggest that we try to find a stronger concept to differentiate the chronic from the ephemeral, the inevitable from the contingent. In addition, there is more to the human condition than chronic frustration: a feeling of helplessness, of impotence as regarding this frustration, accompanies it. Finally, there is one more demand that is relevant to the human condition: one has to be painfully aware of one’s chronic frustration and one’s helplessness with regard to it.

I propose to call the feeling that results from this awareness of chronic frustration and of the impotence regarding it “humiliation.” By humiliation I mean “the state of being humiliated”;[220] and “humiliate” is defined as “lower the dignity or self-respect of; mortify.”[221] If the human is aware of his chronic frustration and his impotence regarding it, he cannot but feel impairment in his dignity, a wound in his pride: the human condition is humiliating, not just frustrating.

I don’t know if we can talk about an animal as being frustrated in a given situation; but I think we cannot talk about a humiliated animal, because humiliation is a proper human emotion, as it involves self-consciousness—the awareness of the impairment of such human

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[220] *Webster Third New International Dictionary*, 1101.
[221] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 52.

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inventions as dignity or pride. It is because the human being has a sense of his dignity that he can feel cheated, debased, insulted—in a word, humiliated—by the way life deprives him slowly but systematically of everything he values and cherishes: of knowledge, of power, of control, of his ideals, his health, of the love of his beloved, and finally of life. The human being has created a dignity and a pride that life refuses to acknowledge. How did this happen? How could this happen?

It seems that the human being's predicament stems from the development of his self-consciousness; this self-consciousness was the breaking point from his animal past and from then on, by further development, the source of his pride as well as the source of his alienation from the world and its lower inhabitants. This self-consciousness made him aware of an inward contradiction—the contradiction between his necessary activity as an active creature, on the one hand, and his passive and suffering existence, on the other. If activity is taken in the broader sense of all of man's endeavors, we can find in this initial contradiction the seed of the human being's chronic and inevitable frustration (which will eventually result from his necessary activity) as well as the seed of his feeling of impotence (which will eventually result from his passive and suffering existence). At the same time, we can already detect in the contradiction the germ of the two alternative ways of escaping it. The awareness of his activity (in the broader sense proposed above) will lead to pride, and the awareness of his passive and suffering existence will be the root of humility.

These two alternatives—refined over the course of years—will not be acceptable if the human being aspires to preserve his dignity; humility is a renouncement of it and pride will always lead to an impairment of it. The choices he must make are not satisfying and he cannot abide by one solution or the other. An understanding of the initial contradiction mentioned above leads to an understanding of the human being's humiliating condition. The human being seems to be climbing a pillar; he sometimes reaches almost the top, receives a blow, falls downward, stops a little higher than humility, feels the temptation, overcomes it (or alternatively, tries to be humble but fails) and climbs upward again to the middle-stage of humiliation—to rest a while and ruminate about his condition. Then he tries again.

One may wonder: what does all this have to do with humor?

4. Humiliation and Humor

Theories of humor have made use of the notion of humiliation; in fact, the long relation of humor and humiliation can be traced back to Plato. He is

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credited with founding the Derision/Superiority Theory with his observation, "At the sight of tragedies the spectators smile through their tears . . . even at a comedy the soul experiences a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure . . . pleasure of seeing other people humiliated."[222] To take a more modern example of this relation, we may quote Henri Bergson, whose own theory of humor has affinities with the Derision/Superiority Theory. He writes, "Laughing always implies a secret or unconscious . . . an unavowed intention to humiliate" (Bergson 1928, 135).

These views are popular to this day. However, the pertinent question is whether the relation between humor and humiliation is one-sided. Plainly speaking does humor "use" humiliation but cannot be "used" by it? Moreover, if it can, in what ways can humiliation use humor?

At first glance, it seems that humor could be relevant to humiliation in three ways, the first two of which contradict each other:

1. as a defense mechanism against the awareness of the human condition as humiliating;
2. as a vehicle of the painful truth about the human being's humiliation, which otherwise will be unacceptable;
3. as a means of coping with the painful awareness of our humiliation.

I will attempt to answer the question of the relevance of humor to humiliation by considering the major theories of humor (in their classical formulations as well as in their modern ones).[223] I propose to begin with a more detailed exposition of the still very popular Derision/Superiority Theory.

A. Derision/Superiority Theory

At first glance, this oldest known theory of humor seems a good candidate for answering our question, for as explained above, this is the theory that links humor and humiliation. To quote a modern exponent, though not an adherent of it: "Derision theory is based on the premise that we laugh down at others. Its basic drive is to humiliate, to subjugate, to disparage"; it sees humor as "an attack on the individual dignity" (MacHover 1988, 31, 34). According to this theory, finding something humorous necessarily involves a feeling of triumph and superiority, and this is why we laugh at

[222] Quoted in Eastman (1922, 123). See Plato (1961, *Republic*, 3.388; *Republic,* 5. 452; *Laws*, 7. 816; *Laws*, 11. 935-936; *Philebus*, 48-50).

[223] The division follows Monro (1951), Morreall (1983; 1987), Clark (1987), and others.

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human incompetence, clumsiness, clowning, and misfortune. Thomas Hobbes gave this theory its classic formulation, when he said that laughter expresses "a sudden glory arising from some conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly" (Hobbes 1840, 46).[224]

Given the interpretation of the human condition as humiliating, it may be possible to explain both why this theory is so popular and why some of us cannot find anything funny in humiliation, and even utterly dislike humor that uses humiliation. (If slapstick comedy does not make you laugh, and if you are the only sad and moved person in the cinema when watching a Charlie Chaplin movie, while everyone around you is laughing, you are one of those people.) It seems that those who laugh heartily use this kind of humor as a strong defense mechanism against the awareness of their own condition as humiliating; those who do not laugh, sense intuitively that receiving the cream cake right in the face is the best illustration of the human condition. Thus, humor of this kind can also function in this context as a vehicle of truth. Indeed, it has functioned as such, through some universal cinematic and literary anti-heroes. The different degrees of motivation for becoming aware of the human condition, which I mentioned above, appear in the individual's reaction toward such anti-heroes and their misfortunes—toward the lowest kind of slapstick comedy misfortunes to a Charlie Chaplin, a Soldier Svejk, or a Don Quixote. Thus, the Derision/Superiority Theory may be interpreted as providing two ways in which humor can be linked to the human condition as humiliating, namely, as a strong defense mechanism or as a vehicle of truth.

Still, a most important question remains, can humor help us cope with our humiliation? Can this theory explain how humor could help us? According to Plato's formulation of the theory, I believe the answer is negative: although he mentions pain, it is pleasure that is derived "from seeing other people humiliated." Now, if we take into consideration that as we partake in the human being's humiliation, it is also our humiliation we "see," I cannot figure out how we can derive any pleasure from this sight.

There is another possibility, though, namely, to try to see ourselves as if we were "other people," but I am afraid it will not do on a universal or cosmic scale, for we would have "to look down," so to speak, at ourselves—from where? We would need to place ourselves above or beyond the human condition and in doing so, we would exclude ourselves from that condition.

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[224] This quote is from *Human Nature*. See also (Hobbes 1840, *Leviathan*, I, 6).

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Let us turn to Bergson's phrase, "Laughing always implies . . . an intention to humiliate." When his phrase is applied to our purpose, we reach sheer absurdity, because if we succeed in laughing at our human condition, i.e. our humiliation, it will be, according to Bergson, with the intention of humiliating ourselves. However, this absurd possibility is overruled by another phrase of Bergson's, "Depict some fault, however trifling, in such a way as to arouse sympathy, fear, or pity; the mischief is done and it is impossible for us to laugh" (Bergson 1928, 136). It is clear that when the human condition as humiliation is involved, self-pity arises too, and thus laughter is impossible.

Hobbes' theory seems to be most promising, for his description includes a comparison not only with others but also with ourselves, in a former state. Let us recall that laughter expresses "a sudden glory arising from some conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly." However, imagine that we suddenly realize, in some situation, that our condition is humiliating; this realization would be the realization of our infirmity, and because we would now be in an emotionally worse state than before the realization, we would not be able to conceive any "eminency in ourselves" nor feel any "sudden glory." Perhaps we could recognize in the reversal of situations, namely, the sudden fall instead of the sudden glory, an old comic trick, and thus might manage a smile at our human condition? I doubt it, because our sudden fall, i.e., the recognition of humiliation as the human condition, will be so painful that it seems unlikely that we could even notice the irony involved. Moreover, if we could detect some irony, we would have to play God, looking ironically at our fellow men, for if we include ourselves in that number, the ironical eye laid on us would just increase our humiliation. However, there is another possibility: perhaps "the sudden glory" would arise because we would think our eminency consists of the very fact of perceiving the truth about our condition. In this case, the infirmity of others or ourselves would lie in our former ignorance. This is the only interpretation that fits Hobbes' definition, because in at least one respect, we would have to judge ourselves as superior. However, I believe that the reaction to that superiority would vary much with individuals, and from a physiological point of view, would not go further than grinning (or crying). In any case, humor would not be involved, as this seems to be one of the cases of nonhumorous laughter that Hobbes' formulation allows for.

With the dismissal of this interpretation, it seems that the Derision/Superiority Theory does not provide a possibility of using humor for coping better with human condition as humiliation. Let us turn then to Relief Theories of humor.

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B. Relief Theories

Aristotle referred to the power of laughter to relieve us of nervous tension in his comments on catharsis in comedy. We had to wait for Herbert Spencer for a more explicit theory of laughter as a release of energy (Spencer 1911). According to Spencer, laughter occurs when some emotion has built up but then suddenly seems to be inappropriate (If I feel fearful because I think I hear someone following me, for example, then upon discovering that it was only the echo of my steps, I might break into laughter).

Obviously, nothing in the theory could account for the use of laughter at the human condition as a means of humiliation. Nor can it account for humor as a vehicle of truth, or a self-defense mechanism with regard to humiliation. The reason is simple: relief and humiliation exclude one another.

Spencer influenced, among others, John Dewey and Sigmund Freud (Freud 1976). Freud's theory of humor will be just sketched here: in all laughter situations, we save a certain quantity of psychic energy, which turns out not to be needed. Laughter is the discharge of this superfluous energy. We need not go into details to see that this theory cannot explain how we may use humor for coping with the human condition as humiliation. This is so, whether the energy saved is normally used to suppress forbidden feelings and thoughts, or it is energy in thought or in emotion—the energies involved in what Freud calls jokes, the comic, and humor, respectively. Nevertheless, if feelings of humiliation or frustration are "forbidden feelings" in Freud's sense, then his theory may link humor to humiliation. This can be done both as a defense mechanism (against the awareness of this and similar feelings) and as a vehicle of truth, since the discharge in laughter of the saved energy (which is usually used to suppress those forbidden feelings) may allow for a momentary glance at truth, in this case, the humiliation involved in the human condition.

C. Incongruity Theories

From some scattered comments in Aristotle, *via* Immanuel Kant (1892) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1909), to contemporary refinements of it—by Michael Clark (1987), Mike Martin (1987) and John Morreall (1983; 1987; 1989; 1999)—the incongruity theory is the most widely accepted philosophical theory of humor today. The basic idea of the theory of the Humorous as the Incongruous is the following: because we live in an orderly world, we have come to expect certain patterns among things,

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properties, events, etc. When we experience something that does not fit these patterns, or that violates our expectations, we laugh.

Many cases of incongruity are not humorous. Alexander Bain collected a few. He wrote:

> There are many incongruities that may produce anything but a laugh. A decrepit man under a heavy burden, five loaves and two fishes among a multitude, and all unfitness and gross disproportion; an instrument out of tune, a fly in ointment, snow in May, Archimedes studying geometry in a siege, and all discordant things; a wolf in sheep's clothing, a breach of bargain, and falsehood in general; the multitude taking the law into their own hands, and everything of the nature of disorder; a corpse at a feast, parental cruelty, filial ingratitude, and whatever is unnatural; the entire catalogue of vanities given by Solomon—are all incongruous, but they cause feelings of pain, anger, sadness, loathing, rather than mirth. (Bain 1875, 282-83; quoted in Clark 1987, 144)

The human condition involves an incongruity; none of our expectations of the world is fully met: we expect intelligibility, justice, meaning or purpose, and some compatibility between the world and ourselves. As Stephan Crane, in the *Red Badge of Courage*, puts it, "A man said to the universe: 'Sir, I exist.' 'However,' replied the Universe, 'that fact has not created in me a sense of obligation'" (quoted in MacHovec 1988, 31).

Our dignity as intelligent creatures with a sense of value is impaired by a silent and non-cooperative universe; we feel humiliated and thus The Great Incongruity (as I will call the lack of compatibility between the human being and the universe) cannot produce mirth, no more than the incongruities listed by Bain can.

The two other functions of humor that can be of any relevance to humiliation are irrelevant according to the incongruity theory: neither a defense mechanism against humiliation nor humor as a vehicle of truth seem to be involved in this theory as presented so far.

The last hope of finding a theory that would explain how humor could be used in the case of the Great Incongruity lies in the modern refinement of the Incongruity Theory. Clark or Martin's refined theories are not helpful, though I cannot elaborate on this point in this chapter. I propose, therefore, to concentrate on Morreall's theory of Incongruity, which he has consistently defended since 1983.[225] I will probe the theory in some detail, for it will allow me to draw some general conclusions at the end of the chapter. In one of his writings, he says, "According to the incongruity theory, the basic phenomenon to explain about humor is humorous

[225] Morreall (1983, chaps. 5-6; 1987, chap. 16; 1989; 1999, chap. 3).

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amusement, henceforth simply 'amusement,' and amusement is explained as the enjoyment of incongruity" (Morreall 1989, 7).

Morreall is aware of the fact that there might be different reactions to incongruity: we may react with negative emotions, puzzlement, or amusement. The obvious similarity between the first two reactions to incongruity is that they involve "an uneasiness or tension based on our dissatisfaction with things as they stand" (Morreall 1989, 7). "The first two," as Morreall tries to show, "are evolutionary continuations of the reactions of all higher animals to incongruity; the third, amusement, is our uniquely human response to incongruity" (1989, 6). I would like to elaborate on the negative emotions. Morreall explains:

> Negative emotions are such unpleasant or painful experiences as fear, anger, jealousy, regret and shame . . . . In these negative emotions, what bothers us is some violation of what we see as the proper order of things, the order on which our expectations are based . . . . In all negative emotions some situation that matters to us is judged, at least subconsciously, to be not as we think it should be, and we feel a practical concern about this incongruity. (Morreall 1989, 6)

Puzzlement and negative emotions as reactions to incongruities exclude amusement. However, under the right conditions, incongruities usually yielding negative emotions and incongruities usually yielding puzzlement could be perceived as amusing. The example Morreall gives is finding an alligator in the bathtub or finding a saxophone in it. The former will probably yield fear and the latter puzzlement. However, were the alligator small and the tub deep enough, or in the case of the saxophone, were I in a mood where I didn't need to figure everything out, I might find either the alligator or the saxophone funny to behold in the tub. "The important thing to notice here," he sums up, "is how different amusement would be from the other two reactions in amusement not only is everything acceptable just as it is, everything is enjoyable just as it is" (1989, 9).

Morreall is quite aware that it is important "to see ourselves more objectively, 'from the outside,'" and to laugh at ourselves. But he restricts this self-directed humor and this objectivity to "a world of which we are not the center seeing ourselves as just one human being among many," and fostering thus the development of morality (1989, 14). He links humor and aesthetic enjoyment: "When the world is too much with us," he writes, "we can disengage ourselves, at least temporarily, in imagination, and enjoy the spectacle. Humor liberates us from practical and even theoretical concerns and lets us look at the world from a higher, less entangled perspective, as a kind of aesthetic field" (1989, 18). Moreover, he links

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humor and rationality, and goes so far as to contend,

> The humorous vision of the world is the rational perspective par excellence. Not only is the rational animal the laughing animal, but its laughter may be the highest form its rationality takes. (Morreall 1989, 18).[226]

When we try to find out whether, on Morreall's theory, it is possible to apply humor to the Great Incongruity involved in the human condition, a famous phrase of royalty comes to mind: "We are not amused!" Unfortunately, our reaction to the Great Incongruity is humiliation, which fits perfectly within Morreall's category of negative emotions, and thus excludes amusement. It appears, therefore, that we cannot meet the conditions set by Morreall for humor.

With this last failure in mind, we can reach some general conclusions about the theories we have examined. No attempt was made in this chapter to verify whether any theory of humor is right or wrong. The interest was rather in their potential to explain how humor may help us cope with the human condition. Unfortunately, we discovered that none of them can even give a positive answer to the simpler question, namely, whether, on their terms, humor can help us cope with human condition. Even if there is disagreement about the description of the human condition as humiliating, and a milder term is preferred—frustrating, for example—the outcome will be the same, so long as a "negative" feeling or emotion will be chosen. Therefore, either our theories are too narrow or humor cannot help when most needed. The question I would address now is, Why do our theories fall short of applying humor to the human condition? I will attempt to answer it with Morreall's theory, for my sympathy is with the incongruity theory, and I find it more likely than other theories to be someday extended to engage with the human condition.

Morreall gives humor a role that is, at the same time, both too extensive and too narrow. Humor's role is too extensive when Morreall depicts as a matter of fact what seems to be a remote ideal. He can give humor such a role because of his faith in the human being's rationality, in his ability to be amused rather than alarmed by incongruities, and, "when life is too much with him," in his ability to "enjoy the spectacle" as an aesthetic phenomenon.

This set of beliefs is not substantiated by facts; I am afraid that Morreall's demands may be too much for us. Something similar to what

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[226] For another relation between incongruity and rationality, see George Santayana (1986, 245-58).

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Morreall depicts as a fact was longed for, as an ideal, by Friedrich Nietzsche. We complain that reality is not to our taste, said Nietzsche, so let us develop a taste for reality. He longed for the laughter of the overman who would perhaps, someday, really enjoy life, in spite of its horrors, and overcome "the spirit of heaviness," which symbolizes for Nietzsche all the burdens of life. He sanctified laughter. He thought that life could be enjoyed (and justified) only as an aesthetic phenomenon. However, he was aware of the fact that, meanwhile, we are not ready for these tasks, for, to use his own words, we are all-too human.[227]

Morreall gives humor too narrow a role because he does not extend humor beyond self-directed humor, beyond our relationship with our fellowmen, beyond his concern for morality, and beyond mere amusement or enjoyment of life. I am not saying that Morreall fails to see the great qualities of humor—on the contrary—but he is silent about some of the most important characteristics of humor: as a means to promote truth, as a hindrance to truth, and as an aid to bear the human condition.

In this he echoes the way in which contemporary philosophers address a different, though no less important, problem, namely, the meaning of life: instead of looking for the meaning *of* life, some of these philosophers decided that we should abandon that ancient and difficult question and look for the meaning *in* life.[228] Morreall as a theoretician of humor is not alone in neglecting the potential humor *of* life and concentrating on humor *in* life—if one can express the parallel in somewhat awkward language. Humor in life is a wonderful thing, but treated as a means to amusement, it is lowered to the level of other pleasures. Music, for example, is no less a blessing than humor and shares with it many beneficial effects. However, in my view, we should not deprive humor of its unique characteristics, by ignoring them; and we should not oversimplify the problem of the human condition by assuming that if life will be more agreeable—by using humor, for instance—the human condition will change for the better. If we want humor to remain an instrument of survival, we would have to adapt it

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[227] Nietzsche 1954, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part IV, chapter 11; chapter 13, sections 14 and 20. However, he expresses these thoughts in most of his writings. See Nietzsche (1954). See also Amir's *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana* (work under contract). See also Morgan (1941, 311-13). More specific studies of Nietzsche and laughter are Lippitt (1999), Philonenko (1995), Higgins (2000), Cauchi (1998), and Gilman (1976); also innumerable articles, a list of which appear in any one of the books just mentioned, and among which I mention Hatab (1998) and Amir (2001; 2006).

[228] For example, Kurt Baier, Richard Taylor, and Elmer D. Klemke, in Klemke (1981).

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to the problem that stems from the human being's growing awareness of his condition. I am confident that eventually we will find a way to do so, for we are too proud to remain humiliated for long.[229]

Meanwhile, it seems that we have discovered a new source of humiliation: after two thousand and five hundred years of thought, such scrupulous and dedicated research, so many fruitful congresses and such a wonderful collective sense of humor, we still are incapable of making any humorous sense out of our human condition.

Thus, *hubris* or human pride is hurt once again. Divine comedy is for the Divine, laughter is for the overman, but what about us? We wait, more humiliated than ever, with a saxophone in our bathtub to amuse us.

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[229] I have since done that. See Chapter 3 of Amir, *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard* (2014).

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CHAPTER NINE

SPIRITUALITY AND SELF-INTEGRITY: EDUCATING THE WILL

Drawing on Western and Eastern traditions of perfection or self-education, I address the somewhat neglected yet significant subject of will as the instrument of the art of living. The issues involved in educating the will are on the boundaries of Western philosophy, as we know it. Nevertheless, a sufficient understanding of what it takes to educate the will as well as a practice of willing well marks the difference between philosophy's power and impotence. As willing well is living well, the education of the will is particularly relevant to philosophical practitioners, who may encounter the charge that philosophy is impotent in bringing about personal change.

In *Soldier, Sage, Saint* (1978), the famous philosopher of religion, Robert C. Neville, maintains that the responsibility of educating one's will is tantamount to attaining psychic integrity. A prerequisite of the philosophic life, psychic integrity is attained through self-image, action, consciousness, and commitment, according to Neville. In this chapter, I examine the avenues for personal change available through the practice of philosophy. I inquire into the relation of philosophy with spirituality and critically evaluate Westernized uses of Eastern philosophies, which were made popular through globalization and the New Age Movement. I then introduce Neville's program for educating the will in order to assess his contribution. I address its synthesis of Eastern and Western elements, its alleged religious overtones, and its viability. Finally, I propose a philosophic tool that makes Neville's program and other philosophical paths more palatable to persons who are not fully committed to ideals or well versed in Eastern practices, or interested in the use of psychoanalysis.

Introduction

The philosophic life is usually defined in terms of sagacity. The pursuit of wisdom requires considerable discipline of intellect as well as consistent activities of inquiry and attention. Without strength of will, however, sages

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are ineffective, and without desires consonant with what they know to be good, they are at risk of becoming overly proud of their own virtue. This chapter addresses the question: How can one get a strong will?

In the Western philosophic tradition, not much has been written on this subject. Indeed, the problems involved in educating the will take us to the frontiers of Western philosophy as we know it. The discussion is obscured by uncharted theoretical and experimental territories regarding the relations holding between unconscious and conscious desires, bodily and mental capacities, as well as relative and absolute intentions and goals.

In what follows (1) I problematize the issue of personal change in order to enlighten the significance of educating the will for philosophical practitioners.[230] (2) I differentiate between the New Age's interests in spiritual practices and the path presented here. (3) I locate the education of the will within the art of living as perfecting responsibility. (4) I highlight the relevance of psychic integrity for personal freedom or autonomy. Then, using Neville's integrative work on Eastern and Western spiritual traditions presented in *Soldier, Sage, Saint* (1978), I outline a program of developing the will through (5) self-image, (6) action, (7) consciousness, and (8) commitment. Finally, (9) I engage critically with Neville's thought and explain how the use of philosophic self-referential humor makes this program more palatable to persons who are not fully committed to ideals, or who are not steeped in Eastern spiritual practices, or who do not wish to use psychoanalysis.

In order to appreciate the significance of the education of will for practicing philosophers, let us first address the possibility of personal change through philosophic means.

1. Personal Change

It is important to clarify the processes through which philosophic theories are implemented as an art of living. Such a clarification may prove helpful for minimizing the gap between intellectual understanding and practical achievement. Because this gap casts a shadow on the potential effectiveness of the practice of philosophy, it may be a major impediment for the democratization of philosophy (Amir 2004). At the end of this section, the relation between the education of the will and philosophic effectiveness will become clear.

The question of the effectiveness of philosophical practice is usually

[230] In this section, I rely on Amir (2004), reprinted in Amir (2013), and revised as Chapter 16 below.

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answered in the affirmative in the literature on philosophical practice, although it is not always clear on what grounds.[231] It seems that the underlying assumption of most philosophical practitioners is that better understanding of oneself or one's predicament is helpful, because understanding enables change.[232]

However, self-understanding is not a sufficient nor a necessary condition for personal change. Thus, a more modest view concerning the effectiveness of philosophical practice may be formulated, namely, that better understanding of one's predicament is valuable in itself. Although this may be the case, we may doubt that relief from suffering is attained in this way. Moreover, getting a better understanding of one's predicament without having a means of resolving it may be a highly frustrating experience. Nor do I know whether more consolation can be found in the interpretation of the difficulty in terms of irrational beliefs or of a worldview that one cannot alter, than in terms of hidden forces one cannot control. The apparent accessibility of the former and the alleged responsibility one has for one's beliefs—when coupled with impotence in relation to personal change—may be quite a humiliating experience, and one whose benefit is unclear.

These considerations lead us to recognize the possible harmful consequences of philosophical practice in particular and of philosophy in general.[233] I introduced elsewhere a means of dealing theoretically and practically with the fact that "the desiderata of philosophy can diverge from the desiderata of counseling" (Pfeifer 1994, 30).[235] To sum up the argument, if philosophy addresses our thoughts yet aims for personal

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[231] Consider, for example, the following explanations: "Once you become more aware of your own basic views and realize that they can be corrected or changed by yourself, you will be able to begin making changes in yourself and your life" (Prins-Bakker 1995). Or, "Obviously, there is no magical formula to bring about . . . an extreme change, but I believe that even the mere understanding of patterns in one's attitude involves a powerful insight that is an important step towards real personal progress" (Lahav 1992). Although these are views from the beginning of the movement of philosophical counseling, I am not aware of different ones.

[232] Some philosophical counselors do not explicitly formulate this assumption, some acknowledge that it "need[s] to be made by philosophical individual counseling" (Schefczyk 1994), while others attempt to argue for the validity of the assumption, through theoretical considerations (e.g., Cohen 1995) or empirical support (e.g., Lahav 1995).

[233] I have written about the subject of expected personal change in philosophical practice at length, as part of a critical evaluation of the assumptions underlying this emerging field, in Amir (2004), revised as Chapter 16 below.

[235] See Amir (2004), and Chapter 16 below.

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transformation, we need to know whether, and if yes, how, our beliefs relate to emotions and behavior.[236]

As philosophical practitioners, we should be particularly interested in the beliefs of most persons, or "the many," as Aristotle would say. Is there a difference, then, between "the many" and "the few"? There may be. The underlying assumption of most philosophies, beginning with Socrates' view of the matter, is that rational persons can make the change required of them. This is so, I suggest, not because reason acts differently in relation to emotions within rational persons. Rather, rational persons are moved by different kinds of emotions. As Plato taught in the *Symposium*, because the philosopher is in love with wisdom or truth in a way that overpowers all other considerations, he can transform himself in accordance with truth. Even the rationalist Benedict Spinoza argues that personal change is the outcome of a battle of affects, the winning affect being the strongest, rather than the outcome of a struggle between reason and emotions. These examples suggest the conclusion that the philosopher is moved by a certain feeling that enables him to make the required changes in accordance with reason.

If love of wisdom is less strikingly characteristic of non-philosophers, can philosophy still further personal change without such love? If rationality and consistency are not valued more than anything else is, can mere thoughts change emotions and behavior? If not, how can we help counselees through mere philosophic tools?

Apart from the theoretical problem just described, there may be a more urgent problem for the philosophical practitioner. Counselees are usually not well versed in philosophy and even less so in the new discipline of philosophical practice; they often expect the resolution of some predicament. How should a practitioner react to the counselee's desire to solve his predicament? A first approach is to be candid about the inability of solving it through philosophical practice. Alternatively, to obviate, the way Gerd Achenbach does, the counselee's need to solve his predicament: Achenbach argues that rather than readily serving the needs that are directed to it, philosophical practice should be their most thorough critic, that is, it should put these needs in question. Thus, philosophical practice is the cultivation of needs, not just their satisfaction (Achenbach 1987, 51-

[236] This topic has been recently addressed in philosophy. With the exception of Elliot Cohen (2003), however, it has seldom been addressed in the literature on philosophical practice. For an extensive bibliography on the subject of emotion and cognition in philosophy, see Amir (2004, n31).

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56).[237]

What if the counselee's need is legitimate? What if he perfectly understands his plight but cannot do anything about it? There may be another option we should address now that the significance of the issue of personal change has been clarified, namely, that the education of the will can foster change. Thus, it is through the very practical perspective of personal change that the need for a philosophic discipline of will can be best appreciated.

Does philosophy offer us paths for disciplining the will? Should we turn to religion instead, or even to martial arts? Are spiritual paths better at this than philosophies? If they are, should we turn to the East or to the West to find them? In addition, in our globalized age, is there any

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[237] Achenbach repeats this view in more recent publications. The reader will be rewarded by comparing my argument with Peter B. Raabe's scattered remarks on the effectiveness of philosophical counseling (2001, 108n1, for example; see also 2002), in which he states that although philosophical counseling is not therapy, dialoguing with a philosopher may be therapeutic. Lou Marinoff's book (2003) can be helpful too, as well as Tim LeBon (2001a) and Elliot Cohen (2003). There may be publications relevant to the issue of which I am not aware, however. In the recent anthology of the state of the art of philosophical practice I edited with Aleksandar Fatic (2015), no one explicitly addressed this topic. I did address the topic of personal change there (Amir 2015c), as well as in "The Tragic Sense of the Good Life" (Amir 2015a), because the effectiveness of the practice of philosophy in relation to personal change has been my central concern these last few years. My proposal that humor can enable gradual change stems out of this growing concern. Chapter 15 below elaborates on this topic.

Of special relevance to the issue raised here is LeBon's essay (2001b, 5-9), which shows similar concerns with both theoretical and practical aspects of philosophical counseling. Though he proposes a list of theoretical assumptions which differ somewhat from what I offer (in Amir 2004; reproduced 2013), he begins by wondering about the fact that they are seldom discussed in the literature (2001b, 6). In affinity with my thoughts, he ends his article with the following remarks: "Philosophical counselling would benefit from more attention being paid to both to the theoretical assumptions of philosophical counselling . . . and detailed considerations of what actually takes place in the sessions, possibly through the publication of in-depth case studies. In this way both the benefits and the limitations of philosophical counseling could be better understood so that the discipline can progress even further" (2001b, 8). Finally, psychotherapist Chris Mace expresses similar concerns. In the concluding paragraphs of the anthology he edited in 1999, he writes: "Attempts to realize philosophy as practice, in the shape of philosophical counseling, are barely in their infancy . . . The experience of other practical disciplines is that its survival and growth will require more distinct values and vision than are currently evident" (Mace 1999, 277).

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difference between what the East and West have to offer on this matter? As a necessary introductory reflection to the discipline of will, I propose to explore these questions in the next section, which addresses the relation between Eastern and Western philosophies with spiritual practices.

2. Philosophy and Spirituality

Philosophy's beginning is replete with memorable examples of quasi-heroism. Socrates, the Cynics, and the Stoics are described as capable of enduring extreme hardship thanks to their strong wills. In Plato's *Republic*, the philosopher is first a guardian, i.e., a soldier. In Eastern traditions, the warrior is a worthy ideal epitomizing strength of will. How much should we know about these practices in order to revive the discipline of the will? In addition, how can this knowledge be congenial to us?

Within the Western world, at least, there seems to be a resurgence of interest in techniques of spiritual life. The New Age Movement has been defined by its interest in Asian religions, and in monastic, Pentecostal, and cabalistic traditions of the West.[238] The weakening of the institutional, ritualistic, and theological components of religion bear on the spiritual exercises that used to be an intrinsic part of them. Spiritual exercises have become techniques or methods of attaining spiritual ends. Enthusiasm for Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist teachers and writings, for "primitive" paths to salvation such as that of Don Juan in Castaneda's sage, and for the occult "sciences" rejected by the West, is, unfortunately, a fad, and is extremely problematic for the image of philosophical practice, which usually gets confused with these doctrines.[239]

In *Soldier, Sage, Saint* (1978), Neville pointedly argues that the shallowness of the faddish interest in non-Western spiritual traditions rests on three principal points. First, there is a desire to escape responsibility:

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[238] For the New Age Movement, see, for example, Melton (1992). This section is based on Amir (2009).

[239] I have written at length on the subject of the New Age Movement because it is often confused with practical philosophy or philosophy *tout court*. See Amir (2009) and Chapter 1 of my *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017). In Israel, philosophy books are displayed amid manuscripts pertaining to the New Age Movement, and most persons would not know the difference. Nor is this confined to Israel: The whole movement of philosophical practice took off in the United States also because Lou Marinoff's first book has been rewritten to be marketed within the variety of self-improvement books. At the beginning of his book, Marinoff acknowledges the help he got in the rewriting of his manuscript (1999).

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these spiritual traditions seem to promise rescuing Westerners from their problems without requiring them to face those problems. They seem to say that the problems are somehow either unreal or, in the case of occultism, in the control of forces other than human. Second, there is a desire for an easy technology to attain psychic integrity. Finally, the non-Western spiritual traditions simply are not present in the West in a congenial way. It is almost as if Westerners need to become something other than Western to employ those other spiritual resources. They must adopt Indian, Chinese, or Korean cultures to learn from their spiritual traditions. Because few can switch cultures in any but the most superficial way, the whole effort hardly leaves the faddish stage (Neville 1978, 11).

Another problem in finding philosophic sources for educating the will has been outlined by various prominent figures that helped create the New Age movement. Karl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) and Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), for example, were skeptical about the suitability of Eastern techniques for Westerners. Although Jung believed that esoteric traditions such as astrology, Gnosticism, alchemy, and the I Ching revealed the archetypes or patterns of human behavior that are engrained in humanity's collective unconscious, he was nevertheless convinced that there were insurmountable differences between "Eastern" and "Western" mentalities. So did Steiner, the leader of the German Theosophists, who broke from the Theosophical society in 1909, and later formed the Anthroposophical movement (see Hammer 2001, 69, 253).

Can we even talk about "East" and "West" in the globalized world we live in today? Globalization processes make the understanding of the world's major cultural traditions relevant to Western philosophers. Some of the most exciting and innovative work in contemporary philosophy is done by philosophers familiar with Eastern philosophies. Possible undesirable outcomes of globalization must be highlighted, however, if philosophers would like to avoid the pitfalls of the New Age movement's use of Eastern cultures.[240]

Misinterpretations of Eastern religions abound in New Age writings. To take an example, Andrea Grace Diem and James R. Lewis criticize Fritjof Capra's misrepresentations of Hinduism and over-idealization of Eastern religions in general (Diem and Lewis 1992, 49-51). Moreover, as part of the globalizing processes we undergo, various Eastern spiritual practices, such as Vipassena, Zen, and Sufi meditations are being torn from their religious, spiritual, and philosophic context, and made to

[240] For the impact of globalization on the New Age Movement, see Rothstein (2001), especially Wouter Hanegraaff's essay on "Prospects for the Globalization of New Age: Spiritual Imperialism versus Cultural Diversity," 15-30.

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coexist in the West as if there is as if there were no differences between them. Under a semblance of tolerance, globalization conflates divergent traditions. Concern about intolerance seems to preclude doing justice to these majestic traditions and impedes the restoration of practices to their original context. Thus, rather than promoting tolerance, globalization marginalizes the importance of facing contradictions, with the result that diversity become uniformity.[241]

When Western philosophers publish books that seem to answer the contemporary need for a synoptic worldview to live by, they often rely on Eastern wisdom. A good example is André Comte-Sponville's *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality* (2007), who uses the visions of Taoism, Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism to advance his thesis. One reason for that may be that current Western philosophy does not consider itself practical, or synoptic, or conducive to wisdom.[242] On the other side of the globe, Eastern philosophies seem to suffer from the Westernization (either chosen or imposed) that is needed for intercultural dialogue.[243]

Before the New Age movement, Genevieve Lafranchi suggested that we should not attempt to imitate methods that may be ill adapted to Western culture. Rather, we should develop the germs of inner experience and create paths that are adapted to the life conditions in the West (Lafranchi 1960, 105-6). Whilst it may be true that Eastern philosophies

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[241] John Drane has also advanced this important point in his lecture, "The Globalization of Spirituality" (2007).

[242] For example, it is difficult to publish, in a respectable academic press, manuscripts that emphasize the practical import of Western philosophers. The following story about the fate of Spinoza's philosophy is telling in that respect. In the "Forward" to Neal Grossman's *Healing the Mind: The Philosophy of Spinoza Adapted for a New Age*, Huston Smith writes about his former student at MIT: "It has taken the author a decade to get it published, for it falls between two schools, Academic presses won't touch it—even though Spinoza's scholars gave him flying colors for his understanding of Spinoza—because of its New Age mentality and the exercises Grossman includes to open readers to where Spinoza's ideas can enter the lives they are actually living, thus effecting the improvement that Spinoza hoped for" (Smith, in Grossman 2003, 8).

[243] For example, one of the trends in recent East-West philosophy has consisted in the reinterpretation by Oriental scholars of certain basic concepts and theories of Asian (chiefly Indian) philosophy. Such reinterpretation is suspect because of the specific way in which the change of view takes place. Usually, it indicates that the view that is rejected, when properly understood, is different from the view that the West rejects. In other words, as Charles Moore remarks, very seldom, if ever, is the Eastern philosopher willing to relate his modification of a traditional meaning to Western influence (Moore 1960, 123).

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excel in inner experiences while the Western metaphysical tradition focuses on dialectics, inner experience can be sensed at the core of the great Western philosophies, although not fully expressed and hidden behind speculation.

There are indeed methods of inner investigation in the West, such as meditation books, spiritual exercises, itineraries, etc., but they are related to well-defined religious beliefs. There are also "psychagogical" methods inspired by psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, which are independent of any metaphysical or religious doctrines. Their goal, though, is to adapt the client to her environment, rather than deepen within her the experience of being and value.

Philosophy used spiritual exercises in the past, as Pierre Hadot made clear in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Hadot 1995, 79-144). Apart from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the Hellenistic philosophers advanced practical philosophies. Medieval mystical practices can also be revived, as well as Modern philosophers' advice on liberation and self-perfection, such as found in the philosophies of Michel de Montaigne, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, and Jean-Paul Sartre. A current attempt to devise exercises for the implementation of philosophy can be found in Michael Weiss' anthology (Weiss 2015). This is an area where philosophical practitioners can make a difference.[244]

Through these considerations, I hope I have outlined the difference between the interest in spirituality as a New Age's fad and the kind of spirituality one can develop as the content of a philosophical life.

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[244]Although Yoga has become a globalized gymnastic, developing somatic exercises that are compatible with the philosophy one teaches is equally important. John Dewey practiced the somaticism he preached and became a devoted student and advocate of the Alexander technique. He wrote enthusiastic introductions to three of Alexander's major books. Since the work of Alexander, there have been Rolfing, Bioenergetics, Eutony, and Moshe Feldenkrais' Method, to name just a few Western somatic emancipatory techniques. Feldenkrais' Method seems to take seriously Spinoza's view that he who has a body capable of many things has a mind capable of many things (Spinoza, *Ethics*, part 2, proposition 14). See also *Ethics*, part 3, proposition 2, scholium, "For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do . . . For no one has yet come to know the structure of the body so accurately that he could explain all its functions . . . The Body itself, simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its Mind wonders about." Among others, philosopher Richard Shusterman became a teacher of Feldenkrais' method (Shusterman 1997, 175-76).

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However, what is the relation between philosophy and spirituality?[245] Philosophy began as a criticism of established religion, and evolved as an alternative to those religions, thus necessarily providing an alternative spirituality as well.[246] Love of the art of living may lead one to a careful study of spiritual paths, both Eastern and Western, as well as to devise one's own way toward personal growth or inner transformation.[247]

Unless we educate our will, however, the gap between understanding and implementation may not be minimized for most people. Thus, educating the will is part of the discipline that any philosophic diet represents. As such, it reflects on the important yet neglected concept of responsibility, to which we turn now.

3. Personal Responsibility

There is a continuous tradition from Plato through Alfred N. Whitehead down to Erich Fromm that identifies the art of living with reason.[248] Reason is here understood as the process by which one guides life, with will as its instrument and desires as its subject. Reason in that sense is a learned art of living as well as possible.

This is a comprehensive philosophical concept, whose features have

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[245] This topic been the object of recent interest amongst philosophers. Interestingly, some of the editors of anthologies devoted to this subject associate the revival of interest in philosophy's spiritual power with philosophy as "a way of life," as does David McPherson (McPherson 2017, 4-5), citing Hadot (1995, 2004). See also David Carr and John Haldane's "Introduction" to *Spirituality, Philosophy and Education* (2003). Of interest are also White (2013), Harris (2014) and Solomon (2002).

[246] This is not the view espoused by David McPherson, the editor of the recent anthology titled *Spirituality and the Good Life* (2017). He write, "The editor's general working definition of spirituality is that it is *a practical life-orientation that is shaped by what is taken to be a self-transcending source of meaning, which involves strong normative demands, including demands of the sacred or the reverence-worthy*" (2017, 1; italics in the original). Most of the essays are written with this view of spirituality in mind, also the essays on Confucianism (Sim 2017) and Agnosticism (Houston 2017).

[247] For an introduction to Eastern Philosophies, see, for example, Fields (2001) and Cooper (1996, 9-88, 106-225, 361-85).

[248] I am indebted here as well as in the remaining of the chapter to Neville's *Soldier, Sage, Saint* (1978). The reader will also benefit from George Santayana's view of the life of reason, described in Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana* (work under contract for State University of New York Press).

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been elaborated by Neville (1974). Using his knowledge of both Eastern and Western philosophies and religions, Neville synthesized a philosophic vision rich with details and practical pointers, which is in accord with what I have been researching and doing for many years both personally and professionally.

The comprehensiveness of this vision needs to be broken into discrete aspects. From the standpoint of the person practicing the art of living, reason means freedom. All the personal and social dimensions of freedom can be found in the art of living. From the standpoint of the environment affected by a person's practice, however, reason as the art of living means right action. In what follows, we will be more concerned with the form of action that makes it right than with its content. In addition, from the standpoint of the absolute existence of things, that is, independently from the use we can make of things, reason, as the art of living, is attunement with the world. The art of living is to accord with and enhance the harmony of the entire world. This means that the art of living is the cumulative perfection of responsibility: it is to do what is right, in an appropriate, free, and human way, that is, with responsibility.

I cannot be responsible for my will without discipline, however. This is so because I begin giving excuses to pass off responsibility when I arbitrarily stop short of perfect discipline. Rather, I should reject excuses, accept my failure and commit to perfecting myself. Neither should I excuse my limited enlightenment nor my passions, for responsibility requires one to work through these issues. This means that from the standpoint of responsibility I should strive for perfection because otherwise I cast responsibility arbitrarily onto something or someone else. Thus, the art of living is to take responsibility for my whole being in the world. The life of such responsibility is artful living itself, and it begins with psychic of self-integrity, as we shall soon see.

4. Self-Integrity

Psychic integrity is the root of freedom, and it begins in discipline, which aims to tie the self together. Psychic integrity thus depends on a highly developed will. However, what is will? This is a difficult question, as it is arduous to disengage will from desire and cognition. We may be better off if we conceived these concepts as various dimensions of a unitary process of life. Along these lines, consider Neville's description of will in *Soldier, Sage, Saint*:

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> Will may be conceived as that dimension of human life having to do with marshalling all the inherited and perceived components of experience, including bodily structures, into a unified, individual, public expression. The *resources* of will are all the components to be unified. The *effectiveness* of will consists in the fact that future events will have to take account of the way one comports oneself as a result of the unifying process. The *purposiveness* in will lies in the fact that the unifying process aims at some patterns which will in fact make the components compatible in a desired definite way relevant for the context of action. Of course, part of the process of will is arriving at such unifying pattern; that is to say, will is not merely action according to purpose but also the establishment of that purpose. Some aspects of will are conscious, particularly those depending on cognitive deliberations about purposes. But since Freud, indeed since Plato (*Republic*, bk VIII) we know that much of will is not conscious. (Neville 1978, 28) [250]

On the view offered here, the significance of will is an ontological matter. Self-integrity is not merely one among the many things I do; rather, my very existence is my continual self-integration. The process of integration itself, or the exercise of will, is nothing but my very act of existence.

Theories that represent the self as social, such as Plato or Whitehead's, have claimed that the process of integration is personal existence as such. The life of the self is seen as processive; it is defined by the components to be integrated no less than by the pattern of ideals pursued. There is an alternative theory, however. It claims that the self is a substance that is unified by a fixed inner core with only its aspects changing (see Aristotle or Spinoza). I believe that the social theory makes better sense of the tenuousness of experience.

On this view, everyone exercises will in this broad sense; otherwise, one would not exist. However, most of us use will to interpret only the situations in which we face problems. We are usually aware of willing at

[250] That much of the will is unconscious may seem problematic for philosophic counseling. Nevertheless, Peter Raabe and others who contributed to the anthology he edited on the subject (2006) have shown that philosophical practice should not be deterred by it. Moreover, various authors, notably Sartre, have criticized Sigmund Freud's view of the unconscious. For Freud's various views of the unconscious and their consequences for the issue of will, and Sartre's criticism of the very idea of the unconscious, see Amir (2006) and Chapter 11 below. Interestingly, cognitive studies have recently corroborated the existence of the unconscious, albeit of a somewhat different kind from the Freudian unconscious. If necessary, philosophers can work at this point in conjunction with psychologists or with Eastern disciplines attuned to the unconscious, or with the means that I propose at the end of this chapter, which are also introduced in Chapter 12 below.

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all, or of the difference between willing well and willing poorly, only in unordinary situations. Philosophers who wish to implement theories in life, however, single out for explicit attention and development the concerns of will, or explain how personal change can be attained without it. In the literature and experiences of both Eastern and Western traditions, Neville has found out that will is to be developed beyond the ordinary by self-image, action, consciousness, and commitment (Neville 1978).

In outlining the various steps of discipline, however, we will encounter what would seem as a contradiction. The paradoxical character of discipline is encapsulated in utterances found in as disperse sources as Nietzsche and Jesus. Nietzsche writes, "Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you" (Nietzsche 1979, Forward, section 4). Jesus says, "One who grasps at self will lose it, but one who rejects self on my account will gain it" (Matthew 10:39; see also 16:25). This principle is echoed in the Hindu emphasis on detachment, in Buddhism's denial of the substantiality of the self, and in Taoism's injunction to be one with the Tao.

Discipline requires a paradoxical movement that involves the abandonment and dissolution of the self. The latter seems to contradict its goal, which is the perfection of will or the integrating activity of the self. Thus, some steps in the program proposed require assertion of the self, whilst others require abandonment of the self. The steps of discipline that Neville proposes for psychic integrity are self-image, action, consciousness, and commitment. In developing one's self-image, psychic integrity seems mostly to be assertion of the self, while in commitment it seems mostly to be abandonment of the self. Let us begin with self-image.

5. Self-Image

My self-image lies at the basis of the development of my will. Unless I become aware of who I believe myself to be, I cannot hope to attain psychic integrity. Regardless of help sought or received, I further need to acquire a self-image of someone who is capable of developing responsibility. Thus, I should become aware of the self-image I have *de facto*, then correct it to be one of which I approve, and assert it as the guiding principle of my development.

The beginning of this process calls Socrates to mind, but its fruitful continuation requires existential awakening, or *prise de conscience* of one's freedom. This is so because, despite the fact that higher stages of psychic integrity require the elimination of narcissism and even of any sense of ego, the process of development may be corrupted from the

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beginning. Corruption occurs if I lack confidence in my own ability, feeling instead determined and restricted by parents or other significant figures. Thus, I tend to excuse my main actions as someone else's responsibility or the result of environment, heredity, or age. Sartre has been a thorough critic of such consciousness, and his philosophy enlightens Neville's program at this stage.

A significant starting point of psychic integrity is getting in touch, and coming to terms, with basic self-images. This is not the same as discovering my true desires and fears, although these processes are related; rather, it is discovering how I feel myself to be defined by desires and fears. The major spiritual traditions have developed introspective techniques for calling forth and coming to terms with the unconscious components of self-image. The tantric elements of Eastern traditions may be the most obvious, and psychoanalysis is perhaps the most efficient for Westerners. An alternative way, which renders the philosophical practitioner independent from Eastern traditions as well as from psychoanalysis, is presented at the end of the chapter.

The most important question for the possibility of psychic integrity with regard to my self-image is whether I feel myself to be free. Of all the kinds of bondage, the most terrible is to see myself as incompetent, dependent, and irresponsible. The first step is, then, to get a self-image as an independent agent capable of responsible will.

This has to do with the confidence that I can in fact exert will, with feeling myself to be capable of will generally. I may feel that my will is merely an extension of the wills of others or the principles according to which I will are not expressive of my own personality. The result is not only that I am in fact bound to others or to chaos, but that I do not exist at the human level of being my own person; rather, I exist only as a human organism organized according to principles other than fully personal ones.

How can I acquire an image of myself as capable of willing? The paradoxical answer is, by the assertion of my will! Self-assertion is self-creation, as Nietzsche has shown, for one gives oneself a self-image of competence at willing by exerting the will that makes the image true. To exercise will is, then, to create: to cause a reality to exist that was not necessitated by antecedent conditions. The necessity of self-assertion lies at the bottom of the question of psychic integrity. I cannot will myself to feel capable of willing in general, but I will myself to be capable of willing specific significant things.

I have to assert independence in order to correct the self-image of dependence. In addition, I have to make it a part of a new self-image. Independence is the capacity of distinguishing one's own desires from

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those of the parental figures or from the influences of controlling conditions, and the capacity of asserting these desires. The distinction is in the way I have the desires; if I have them as an expression of my personality or I have them for their intrinsic attractiveness, they are my own. They are not my own desires, however, if I desire things that I believe my parents to desire, with fear or guilt operating as sanctions. The self-image of independence requires both the discerning of a set or area of desires as belonging genuinely to oneself, and the conceiving of oneself as resting in those desires.

The basis of responsibility is that I can understand as well as approve of the desires on which I act. Until I take responsibility for a desire, it is not mine in a mature way. This is how reason contributes to the purification of a person's self-image as free. To have a desire is one thing; but to be approved by principles definitive of myself is to take possession of that desire in a way that creates a new dimension of personality, as Neville explains (Neville 1978, 30). This process defines my character as being freely constituted by the choice of those approved desires.

I can choose some desires to act upon; I can reject others or inhibit their action. I should choose with care, as the desires that I pick as well as their consequences become definitive of my personality. This means that these desires are more myself than other desires because I have chosen them to be expressed in my character and in the historical events that I determine. The next step is educating the will in action, or learning to decide and to act with a mature, strong will.

6. Action

Action is any human movement related to desires or intentions, conscious or unconscious. The form of the action is the way in which it expresses psychic integrity, whether with style and harmony or with graceless incoherence. The question of form is whether or to what degree I am "present" in the activity in a rich human way, Neville explains (Neville 1978, 30). Good form in action involves disciplining the implication of reason in the action dimension of the will.

Incoherencies in the form of action may manifest as physical awkwardness, a lack of graceful and efficient movement, or may manifest in the inner and mental processes of the activity as well. These incoherencies are not so much having mistaken cognitions or unkempt appetites as having an uneducated will. I have to learn to inhibit impulses well, to deliberate consistently, to appreciate motives, or to marshal various psychic and physical forces in order to make a concerted, unified move.

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The distinction between soul and body to which most of us are socialized has been disastrous to education. On the contrary, the firmness of a disciplined psyche manifests itself in a tautness of physical life. Many Westerners testify to that evince that in the interest they take in various forms of breathing and posture yoga, in the ability of Zen meditation to focus and purify the senses, in exercise forms such as T'ai Chi Ch'uan and other kinds of Eastern martial arts. Even the somatically oriented forms of psychotherapy, such as bioenergetics, and some kinds of encounter groups are responsive to this need, however much they ignore the complexities of much else in psychic life.[251]

The form of an action is also influenced by the intentions and desires that guide them. Those desires have to be purified. The yoga of action focuses attention exclusively and completely in the action itself.[252] For example, the external results of the action are to be put out of the mind. Ulterior motives regarding consequences either for the actor himself or for others distract his effort. As the only legitimate motive is to perform the action well, the actor should be present in his action. This means that his ego has no place, only the action.

Eliminating the ego enables one to relinquish the fruits of actions, no matter how paradoxical it may seem in connection with the need for an assertive self-image. Any action is what it is in its own context, accomplishes its end with a certain form, and has objective consequences. But the important consequences are only those that are objective, whilst the consequences that one superimposes on one's action to give it meaning in relation to one's self are, according to Neville, illusory.

This may be clearer if I understand that I have an ego by virtue of the fact that the pattern making sense of my actions reflects my own career through time. The actions are meaningful also in the various senses in which they play back upon them, which in turn affect their identity. The reason that we should not superimpose meaning on the intrinsic meaning of actions is that it taints those actions with selfishness. That means that one attends no longer to the clean lines of the action and its objective consequences but only to its fruits for their ego.

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[251] See also Shusterman's proposal of somaesthetics (Shusterman 1997, chap. 6): through a variety of somatic practices, we can pursue our quest for self-knowledge and self-creation. This means that we should practice philosophy as a discipline of embodied life. One's philosophical work, one's search for truth and wisdom, should not be pursued only through texts but also through somatic explorations and experiments. For further elaboration on this topic, see Chapter 10 below.

[252] For the yoga of action, see Eliade (1958).

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However objective the action's consequences are for my ego, they are disastrous for the integrity of my psyche. Instead of being able to put myself fully into action, I partially withdraw from that objective investment in the world into the imaginative construction of my ego. In extreme cases, this may lead to a plain inability to get moving.

The elimination of ego is a prior condition for all the higher senses of psychic integrity and moral behavior. I will offer at the end of the chapter a means to make this step more gradual and thus palatable. The next step Neville proposes, however, is the purifying of consciousness.

7. Consciousness

Psychic integrity requires a kind of control over consciousness. The purification of consciousness with respect to desire is detachment. Its purification with respect to reason is distinguishing between the objects of consciousness and the acts of consciousness. Its purification with respect to spirit itself is control.

Whether or not I am on a spiritual path of some sort, I can see that some objects of thought or perception tempt me to disaster, either through universal seductions or idiosyncratic weaknesses. I spend time in the pursuit of, or resistance to, those desires, instead of being able to respond objectively to the values of my life's situations.

Two common responses are made to control corrupting desires. One is the rejection of all desires, through severe asceticism, the renunciation of all passion, and the retreat to pure passivity. Historically, severe asceticism has always been an attraction, but it is practically impossible and, when achieved in a high degree, does not seem like liberation. The other response has been inspired by the belief that incorporating the desires is an alternative way to conquer them. It involves embracing all desires, pushing them to extreme expressions, as in the tantric tradition, but also in various forms of antinomianism. The difficulty is, Neville explains, that "hardly anyone can ride the horse to the finish without getting thrown" (Neville 1978, 40).

The middle way lies between these extremes, discriminating between good and bad desires, between too much and just enough. In contradistinction to the ascetic's empty life and the formless life of the erotophage, the middle way endeavors through reason to find the desires that can make life meaningful. A matter of public as well as private responsibility, the propriety of desires varies also from context to context. I will not pursue this function of reason here, for it involves a change in

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desires, which will eventually lead to another ideal, that of the saint.[253] Instead, I will propose a way to detach from the desires I happen to have.

We can infer from various spiritual traditions that a change in my ordinary relation to the desires themselves is required. As my desires represent the content of my affective life, the change is to be detached from them, which means neither accepting nor rejecting but objectifying them. A subjective quality of an act of consciousness itself, detachment consists in having the affective elements of the act contrasted with the elements of their being observed. Neville identifies detachment as “an extremely complex form of consciousness which maximizes both passionate affect and dispassionate observation” (Neville 1978, 41).

Perfecting the ability to see straight, detachment remedies our ordinary narcissism. By having to combine the objects that are perceived with other factors that make them congenial to one’s ego, narcissism distorts perceptions. Detachment neither denies nor distorts, but enables without repression the accurate perception of our feelings as well as objective facts. Thus, “detachment allows for a maximization of objective perception and affective experience” (Neville 1978, 41).

Detachment enables the individual, moreover, to perfect the awareness of detail and the discrimination of variations in importance. Individuals with disciplined detachment hold together both pure awareness and the experiences of which they are aware. Neither unemotional nor passive, the emotions that they adopt are definitive of themselves. A higher psychic faculty than that to which they immediately appeal approve of their actions. This explains how they can be present in them: because they put themselves into actions from a state of detachment. Their choice is made because of the merits discerned, and, if the deliberation is accurate, their actions follows the objective merits of the case rather than the distortions of ego or the impulses of desires. We can say in Freudian terms that detachment frees one from both ego and id.

With detachment and pure awareness, the spirit can control consciousness. This means not being coerced by desires, but choosing voluntarily among the objects of my conscious analysis. However, this also means, in a step beyond detachment, selecting which objects of consciousness to focus on.

Detachment itself is usually practiced by meditative methods of observation and awareness: breathing exercises, developing awareness of bodily functions, passive observation of the flow of thoughts, and techniques practiced and perfected, in particular, in the Buddhist spiritual

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[253] Thus, a higher level is the rectification of the content of desires, which is beyond the scope of this paper. See Neville (1978, chap. 4).

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traditions. At the end of the chapter, I propose an alternative way of reaching similar results, as long as the life of reason is concerned, rather than the more ambitious release aimed at by Buddhism.

We should first address the notion of commitment. This is so because success in the steps described so far will be gravely impaired by a lack of ability to organize all the elements of one's personality as resources for the doing or serving of some one thing.

8. Commitment

To commit myself is to organize all the elements of my personality as resources for the doing or serving of some one thing. Most of us are incapable of serious commitment, because self-knowledge eludes us and our wills are too weak and unsteady; thus, we lack the sharpness of focus that is necessary for committing.

Commitment is the disciplining of one's life with the purpose of enjoying the contrast between the relative and absolute aspects of the world. Regarding the relative aspect, it is something one ordinarily does. One must learn through discipline to conceive of the absolute, that is, the world in itself and not as something I use, and then to hold the absolute and the relative aspects together. There are two ways in which an absolute regard for the world or for one of its constituents can be focused. The focus can be either on determinate things considered absolutely, or on the ontological ground by virtue of which things are.

The purification of will in commitment, like that in self-image, action, and consciousness, involves bringing discipline to the self's rational, appetitive, and spirited aspects, to use Plato's terms. The spirited aspect of commitment is concentration, or the ability of the will to hold a finite object steadily in view. It enables one to comprehend the definite character of an object. Concentration requires the organization of one's resources into a very sharp focus of consciousness, unencumbered by distractions and shades of feelings ordinarily associated with attentive focus.

The appetitive aspect of devotion is the coordination of all my desires to focus on the object of concentration. The proper desire for that object is to feel and identify with its determinate character. Rather than alienating it from its context by placing it within my own nature, we can enjoy the values contained in that character as they are. It is appreciating the character of the object just for what it is, that is, as considered absolutely. This involves a clarity of articulation of the object, and a subjective enjoyment of it without distortion.

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The organization for commitment is one of the highest tasks of discipline, if not the highest, for it assumes a self-possession sufficiently thorough and strong that one is capable of giving oneself completely to the object. "Few people, if any, attain this degree of discipline; even the greatest soldiers have cloudy vision, desires which do not reinforce the devotion, unsteadiness of will," Neville explains (Neville 1978, 40).

However, the ideal is a strong one. The object of commitment must be absolute, not relative. If a thing is made the object of commitment because of its meaning or worth for something else, particularly for the ego, no vision, desire, or will can be firmly set on it.[254] This does not necessarily mean living a religious life. Soldiers' devotion to duty is a model for spiritual devotion.[255] They aim to uphold duty, even when all the self's relative interests interfere. Their disciplined personality not merely wishes their duty to be done but in fact does it. This was Socrates' ability as well, if you remember that he was an excellent soldier; and, following Socrates' example, this was Plato's idea for the guardians of his *Republic*. Let me add that for philosophers, the object of commitment can be truth, or wisdom, or the life of reason, as it was for the Stoics. The point is that the entirety of one's life should be organized as a life of commitment.[256] This aspect of the life of reason, which enables everything else, is uncongenial to most people, however, and even as an ideal, commitment seems to have been devalued in contemporary society.

9. Assessing Neville's Program

Neville's program is quite impressive and rather unique in addressing the significant topic of disciplining the will in order to attain psychic integrity. I would like to evaluate it by addressing its synthesis of Eastern and Western elements, its alleged religious overtones, and finally, its viability.

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[254] This may explain theologian Paul Tillich's famous claim: only the unconditioned can be the object of ultimate concern. All other concerns or relative commitments lead beyond themselves to their own destruction, as Neville explains.
[255] See Nancy Sherman's essay, published in an anthology on spirituality, philosophy, and education (2003), "Stoic Meditations and the Shaping of Character: The Case of Educating the Military."
[256] Philosophical practitioner Elliot Cohen explains, "Willpower is a kind of internal muscle you can flex to overpower self-destructive bodily inclinations and irrational premises" (Cohen 2003, 50). For further advice from philosophical practitioners on the education of will, not necessarily along the lines developed in this chapter, see Cohen (2003, 66-67), and Santas (1988). For the psychology of the effort of will, see Campbell (1966).

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First, Neville's program is successful in coherently synthesizing various Western and Eastern traditions. Neville includes, among others, the traditions of Plato and Nietzsche, psychoanalysis, somatically oriented forms of psychotherapy, such as bioenergetics, Christianity, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, various forms of yoga, Zen meditation, Tantric elements of Eastern practices, T'ai Chi Ch'uan and other kinds of Oriental martial arts. Many other thinkers and traditions come to mind in relation to his program (some of which I mentioned above), such as Socrates, Henri Bergson, Sartre, St. Augustine as well as other Christian writers and mystics. Neville uses all of these sources because the education of the will was no less a matter of importance for soldiers and religious persons than for philosophers, and no less a matter of importance in the West than in the East.

Second, Neville seems to take for granted that the education of the will is related to spiritual discipline. What does "spiritual" mean? From an etymological point of view, the term "spiritual," or matters "concerning the spirit," is derived from Old French *spirituel* (twelfth century), which is derived from Latin *spiritualis*, which comes from *spiritus* (soul, courage, vigor, breath) or "spirit." The term spirit, in turn, means "animating or vital principle in man and animals." It is related to *spirare* (to breathe), and, in the Vulgate the Latin word *spiritus* is used to translate the Greek *pneuma* and Hebrew *ruah.*

Neville himself may be religious, but not too much should be inferred from his use of "spirituality" in the context of the program presented above. In particular, a dualism of body and mind does not necessarily follow, nor a special emphasis on religion. Indeed, when using "spirituality," the emphasis in modern times is on subjective experience incorporating personal growth or transformation, usually in a context separate from organized religious institutions. This perfectly coheres with a philosophic understanding of the transformation or personal change that most practical philosophies require.

Finally, Neville's program seems difficult to carry on. First, as already stated in the discussion of commitment, commitment is rarely achieved in contemporary society and may not be considered an ideal anymore. However, Neville's program is perfectionist and, as such, may appeal only to the few who are ready to commit to it. Second, it heavily relies on Eastern practices, which may not be easily available to Westerners, and sometimes on psychoanalysis, which, as an external resource for philosophers, is also less accessible.

I suggest that Neville's perfectionist ideal may be made more palatable by using self-reflective humor as a philosophic device. Moreover, this kind

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of humor is to be commended for affording at times much of the benefits of psychoanalysis as well as some benefits of Eastern practices. I offer self-reflective humor as a tool for ameliorating the self, which will prove helpful in most of the tasks described above, such as attaining psychic integrity through exchange of self-images, detaching oneself from one's desires, and committing through holding together absolute and relative concerns. Moreover, although the form of action needed in this program (to be present in the action) precludes humor, self-reflective humor facilitates attaining unalloyed action.[257]

What is humor, then? Humor is a complex inner process, a multi-dimensional construct involving simultaneous cognitive, emotive, and conative components. From a cognitive point of view, humor enables the perception of the comic, that is, of the simultaneous duality or multiplicity of points of view. It enables rapid cognitive-perceptual shifts between various conflicting points of view. These points of view may contradict each other as well as clash with the more serious aspects of the situation. Thus, the capacity to perceive a series of incongruities is party to the cognitive component of humor.

From a conative point of view, humor is indifferent to motivation, reducing desire and impeding action. Humor's basic evolutionary and adaptive function is disabling. A sense of humor is the safety valve preventing impulsive behavior that leads to counterproductive actions. It is instructive to look at the main physiological and psychological manifestations of humor in light of this disabling hypothesis: physiologically it incapacitates and psychologically, because it is pleasing, it diverts attention away from decisive action.

From an emotional point of view, humor offers several major benefits. First, it fosters tolerance of ambivalence by converting the pain of ambivalence into pleasure. Second, humor moderates extreme feelings, such as fear, anger, or sorrow. The activity it involves is less purposeful and more abstract. This contrasts with the emotions that are practically oriented. For, unlike reason, emotion usually employs a limited and partial perspective—the personal perspective of an interested agent. In contrast, humor links different, apparently unrelated elements within a broader perspective, thereby generating a disinterested experience. Humor's survival value consists, at least in part, in its functioning as a counterweight to the

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[257] I have described this kind of humor and the liberation it leads to in various publications. See Amir (2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2016a; 2016b), and Chapter 15 below, all of which are practical developments of the view introduced in Chapter 3 of Amir (2014). I restrict here my elaboration on this topic according to the relevance of my findings to the contents of this chapter.

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strong influence exerted by emotions and moods on our behavior. It draws attention away from the self and its desires, thereby enabling us to look at reality from a safe and somewhat different point of view than the emotional perspective. This makes it possible for us to relax and cope better with reality, paving the way to a third benefit: humor provides release from the pressure of frustration generated by the conflict at hand.

Humor facilitates a confrontation with difficult aspects of the self and enables us to contemplate them more calmly. This is done by reducing shame and disgust. Coping with shame essentially involves removing ourselves from the shaming situation, by confessing, denying (i.e., attributing the failure to an external source), and forgetting (reducing the weight of our flaw), as well as by using humor. Humor is helpful because it provides us with a new perspective that transcends the current uncomfortable perspective. Adopting another perspective is contrary to the partial nature of emotions and is thus incompatible with an intense emotional state. Consequently, laughing at ourselves serves to distance us from the shaming situation as we join others (imagined or real) in taking a fresh perspective on it. The new vantage point humor provides thus helps to reduce the significance of the shaming situation.

Humor can also reduce disgust. The move from shame to disgust tracks the move from public to private, from external to internal, as well as from child to adult, and from repulsive to repressive. The comic and the disgusting share significant points of contact, and there is an intimate connection between some styles of contempt, disgust, and the comic. Much of the comic depends upon a transgressive irreverence, a kind of feast of misrule in which, if not the violation, at least the mockery of certain norms is privileged. No sooner is an aspect of the disgust acquired than the very substance of that disgust becomes material for joking. Disgust can usually be indulged playfully for rather low scales.

The experience of disgust can be entertaining to us, as is commonly the case in comedy when it is elicited by another's shamelessness or ineptitude. Through the distancing from ourselves that humor affords, our own ineptitude should also be a source of pleasure. I suggest that if the comic and the disgusting share significant points of contact, the comic may be actively used in self-referential humor to discharge disgust.

By gradually replacing feelings of anger, fear, sorrow, shame, and disgust with sympathy and compassion, humor encourages self-acceptance, tolerance of self and others, and a sense of identification with humanity. Through our distancing from intense emotions like fear or anger, difficult feelings like shame and disgust, and irrationality in general, we experience these feelings as if they were someone else's, yet

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with sympathy. Instead of projecting onto others the rejected parts of the self—an impediment to compassion—this sympathetic distancing from self brings one closer to others.

In what follows I am interested in self-referential humor, that is, in the internal process in which a person smiles at herself. This kind of humor facilitates self-knowledge by creating the distance necessary to observe one's self with the calmness that characterizes aesthetic contemplation. Within this safe inward environment made so by suspending blinding emotions, silencing shame and disgust, and incapacitating rash action, hidden aspects of the self are encouraged to emerge under the impartiality of the humorous gaze. Especially important is the ambiguous relation with truth that humor entertains, which makes it an ideal tool for handling these hidden aspects of the self, as one does not have to embrace immediately them as one's own.

One notable outcome of this process is the acknowledgment of ambivalence. This is required for a better understanding of oneself, others, and human relations in general. Ambivalence is the state of simultaneous conflicting feelings. It is usually experienced when emotions and thoughts of both negative and positive valence toward something or someone arise. Intolerance for ambiguity, nuance, and paradox is usually considered its opposite. Feeling both love and hate for a person is a common example of ambivalence. Situations in which "mixed feelings" of a more general sort are experienced, or when a person experiences indecisiveness or uncertainty about something are also deemed ambivalent. The simultaneous presence of positive and negative aspects of a subject in a one's mind is believed to be unpleasant. The term also refers to situations in which "mixed feelings" of a more general sort are experienced, or when a person experiences uncertainty or indecisiveness concerning something, such as willing and not willing to do something, which may result in thinking that one would like to do something but is incapable of doing it.

Self-referential humor creates within the self a division between at least two parts that entertain "joking relations" with one another, that is, one part laughing at the other. This kind of humor thus enacts an intra-personal communication, which is particularly apt for an internal dialogue that is conducive to inward change. The division within the self that humor can enact is a dialogical relationship, best described as compassionate aggression, which immediately minimizes the tension between parts of the self and may further lead to inward change. Compassionate aggression is necessary both for the modicum of self-acceptance that is a prerequisite for self-change, as well as for change itself. In turn, inward change is necessary for fuller self-acceptance, which is the root of many more

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ethical and epistemological benefits.

Thus, self-referential humor is particularly apt for the philosophic (self)-education that lies at the heart of the practice of philosophy. How does this account of the benefits of self-referential humor relate to the program described above, of attaining psychic integrity through self-image, action, consciousness, and commitment?

First, humor helps one uncover the initial self-image described in the program above, the image one already holds of oneself. This image is only half-conscious. Thus, if its contents are encouraged to emerge to consciousness in a humorous way (as tentative, false and true at the same time, as objects of all forms of ambivalence, such as compassionate aggression, with habilitating and destructive tendencies, etc.), there are more chances that its content will pass the Freudian "censor" and be accepted as a tentative vision of oneself.[258]

Second, humor may be helpful when one attempts to bridge between incompatible schemes, such as disparate self-images. Kierkegaard advanced the idea that before making a change in one's inward position towards life, that is, when advancing in spiritual discipline, holding the next step humorously in mind without committing to it may be helpful in enabling the "leap" necessary for exchanging one's position with another. The same can be said with exchanging a self-image of impotence with one of independence.[259]

Third, willing when one is incapable of willing is itself a paradoxical situation, which, if it can first be entertained in a humorous way, has more chances of being understood without recoiling from the without being repressed due to the paradox involved in it. This holds true for other paradoxes described above, such as relinquishing one's ego for the sake of psychic integrity and holding a self-image in which one asserts one's will.[260]

Fourth, a humorous relation to one's ego is a good preparation for letting the ego go. Because of the vanity they contain, illusions should be entertained in a humorous way, instead of more directly fought against. This is so because vanity and illusions are vital to us and thus true from a certain angle and thus we are less likely to see past them. However, as Bergson has already noticed, laughter is a tool especially fit for reducing vanity.[261]

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[258] For a fuller development of this thought, see Amir (2015a).
[259] For Kierkegaard's view of humor, see Chapter 2 of Amir (2014).
[260] For a fuller account than given above of humor's power to handle conflicts and contradictions, see the third chapter of Amir (2014).
[261] On this topic, see Amir (2015a).

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Fifth, detachment from desires is a characteristic of the humorous disposition, and answers Neville's requirement, which he describes thus, "This is an extremely complex form of consciousness which maximizes both passionate affect and dispassionate observation" (Neville 1978, 41). Self-referential humor in itself detaches one from desires, neither relinquishing them nor indulging in them, but holding them in consciousness in a way that liberates one from their tyranny without having to give them up.[262]

Sixth, we do not know how to hold various values together, such as the relative and the absolute existence of things. However, commitment requires that we hold these two visions together. Kierkegaard explained how humor, which excels in holding together disparate ideas, is especially fit for entertaining a dual vision.[263]

Finally, both psychic integrity and personal change are facilitated through the relaxation that humor affords. Thus, humor enables one to tie together that which did not cohere beforehand as well as to depart gradually and less anxiously from cherished values, illusions and visions of oneself. This is exactly the process of personal change.[264] Moreover, if the gap between ideal and reality in matters of will remains, self-referential humor is especially helpful in handling unfulfilled expectations, as it is a means of transmuting tragic oppositions into comical incongruities, or suffering into joy (see Amir 2014).

To sum up, self-referential humor is a tool that enables integration and personal change, facilitates self-knowledge and the exchange of self-images. Humor is helpful in making light of the ego's illusions before eliminating the ego, and represents in itself a detachment from one's desires. This kind of humor is also uniquely fit for enabling the enjoyment of the contrast between the relative and absolute aspects of the world whilst simultaneously holding fast to both. Moreover, humor is helpful in minimizing one's frustration about the gap between the ideal and reality.

Humor seems to be counterproductive for one aspect of the program described above, however. If action has to be of one piece, with the person present in it, the multi-valence that humor expresses cannot be part of this kind of action. The non-ambivalent or univocal action is still served by holding beforehand in conjunction both the self's and others' regard as well as the "objective" consequences of the action. Because humor thrives on ambivalence and embraces the multi-aspects of a situation without residue, it prepares the way for univocal non-ambivalent action (see Amir

[262] A fuller explanation of this topic can be found in Amir (2016b).
[263] On this topic, see Amir (2015b).
[264] For a fuller account of how humor enables personal change, see Amir (2015).

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2016a).

The kind of self-referential humor I propose for enacting a fruitful philosophic internal dialogue is to be commended for affording much of the benefits of psychoanalysis Neville states (as a way to address non-conscious aspects of the self) as well as Eastern practices (such as detachment), without entangling the philosopher in extra-philosophic means. Moreover, it offers a way to make the program presented above more palatable for the many. As the discipline of the will is especially important for those who, not loving truth with all their hearts, need to struggle with their will in order to implement philosophic ideals, it is equally important that the program at hand will be made to their measure. This is exactly the aim of philosophical practice.

Conclusion

A sufficient understanding of what it takes to educate the will as well as a practice of willing well marks the difference between philosophy's power and impotence. In the history of philosophy, most philosophers who offered ambitious programs also presented their view of the will and argued for its significance in implementing the ideals they proposed, or alternatively for its inability to effect personal change. Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Sartre, to name a few, all provided us with practical advice concerning the will.

When a counselee is interested in the philosophical life, however, rather than in a specific historical answer to the question of what this life consists of, a synthesis of Western and Eastern accumulated knowledge about the will may prove helpful, or alternatively, the use of self-referential humor as a philosophic tool of liberation.

Few things are more frustrating than seeing the Promised Land while being unable to approach it. Philosophy is sometimes accused of impotence in promoting personal change, a charge that especially burdens its practitioners. Intellectual understanding, clarifications, and arguments do effect personal change in a philosopher who is completely dedicated to reason, truth and knowledge. For the rest of us, however, there is an extra effort involved in the implementation of theories and ideals in one's life, and it involves the education of will.

Educating the will is possible as well as necessary, for without it even the sage is impotent. However, the commitment necessary for perfecting one's responsibility through self-image, action, and consciousness, according to Neville's program, should not be understated. If willing well is living well, I believe it is worth the effort. The road may be softened by

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a skilled use of humor, and, though the education of will may prove to be a lifelong task, the rewards of this discipline are proportionate to the effort invested.

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CHAPTER TEN

SEXUALITY AND THE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY

What has the sexual act, so natural, so necessary, and so just, done to mankind, for us not to dare talk about it without shame and for us to exclude it from serious and decent conversation? . . . This is an action that we have placed in the sanctuary of silence, from which it is a crime to drag it out even to accuse and judge it.
Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*

Sexuality is intrinsically amoral. This leaves us with the responsibility of devising our own sexual ethics. As an ethical field, party to the good life, sexuality is the business of philosophers and especially of practical philosophers. However, sexuality has not been addressed in philosophical practice's literature or conferences.[265] This topic usually taint negatively those who discuss it, especially women. Nevertheless, this significant subject should be put on philosophical practitioners' agenda. I thus chose it as the topic of this chapter, hoping that my advanced age would shelter me from the consequences involved in doing so.

Philosophical practitioners cannot ignore sexuality for various reasons. First, sexuality is an ethical field; and philosophical practitioners should not ignore ethical concerns. By deeming sexuality an ethical field, I do not merely mean that it raises difficult ethical questions, such as related to adultery, fidelity, and jealousy, and, on another register, pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, pedophilia, sexual harassment, rape, perversion, etc. This view of sexuality unnecessarily restricts the quotidian role of philosophical practitioners in relation to it. I rather mean that everything that is related to sexuality is entangled with ethics. As we well

[265] I organized a panel on this topic for the 14th International Conference of Philosophical Practice in Bern, Switzerland, 2016, which included five short lectures followed by a discussion with the public. These lectures can be found in Amir et al. (2018); an elaboration of my own lecture has been published as Amir (2016a).

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know, sexuality sometimes involves at least one other person, usually in his utmost frailty and vulnerability, whom we encounter not only with our own nakedness and frailty, but also with what soon becomes a display of egoistical desires. This alone makes of sexuality a highly sensitive ethical topic. To make things worse, because the criterion of success here is measured by pleasure rather than by virtue, the ethical aspect of sexuality, even if resolved, is not a guarantee of good sexuality; it may even hinder it. As André Comte-Sponville rightly notes, reciprocity and equality are required from a moral point of view but are secondary from a sexual point of view (Comte-Sponville 2012, 253). As sex is amoral in itself, it is necessarily up to us to develop an ethic of sexual life.

Second, one's sexual relations involve philosophic views of oneself and one's body, of others, of one's relations to others and others' to oneself, of beauty, attractiveness, age, gender, and most importantly, of pleasure and entitlement, of the senses and their role in one's life, as well as of "giving" and "receiving," of generosity, acceptance, and tolerance. All these significant and value-ridden philosophic conceptions are bound up in our sexual behavior. Bringing them to consciousness and outlining the controversies they generate among different persons is illuminating and has far-reaching consequences for the way sexuality is experienced. Significant outcomes follow from thinking through different views of what sexuality is and how it is related to the good life and to various elements of it, such as love or friendship, authenticity and freedom.

Indeed, one could simplify the issue at stake by saying that because sexuality is commonly considered part of the good life,[267] it is yet another reason to make it our business as philosophical practitioners.

Third, sexuality has far-reaching consequences for one's life, as it may bring much misery as well as ecstatic happiness. However, it is a topic on which people are unusually shy and reserved, partly because of education, which makes it a shameful subject, partly because the grass being always greener on the other side, we assume that we give others a superior vantage-point to judge us. However, as with common human problems, it is so mainly because everyone falsely assumes that one's sexual problems are personal rather than representative of the human condition.

Fourth, the psychologist or the sexologist may be rarely useful when common sexual problems, interests, and reflections are at stake. This is so because most people would avoid consulting such professionals unless utterly convinced that they have a problem they cannot solve on their own

[267] As reported in various introductory anthologies of ethics. See, for example, Abelson and Friquegnon (1995, 419-20, 438-55).

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and that these professionals can resolve. In this area, however, we all have problems that cannot be solved, as our sexuality confronts us with contradictions, limitations, and frustrations that are ultimately rooted in the human condition,

Fifth, the unofficial position of liberal states towards sexual and ethical matters—that they should be left to personal preference—is not satisfactory. There is a need to bridge the gap between liberty and equality by creating equal capacity to fulfill one's liberty. This can be done by complementing people's education with philosophic capacities that facilitate becoming responsible and autonomous—a necessary condition for devising the kind of sexual ethics one needs. Bridging the gap between liberty and equality, especially when it is not sufficiently recognized, as in liberal states, seems to be the role of philosophical practitioners.

Thus, a philosophic and practical path has to be walked in order to incorporate harmoniously in one's life the power of sexuality, or alternatively, accept gracefully the tensions it continuously generates. A sexual authenticity has to be reached, renewed, and practiced within one's life amongst the political jargon and ideologies that mar our pleasures, now more than ever.[268] Between the extremes of libertinism and Spartanism, a specific virtue can to be practiced—eroticism—that involves leisurely enjoying that which is. A good sexuality is a path to wisdom, because plenitude teaches us to enjoy that which is, instead of that which is not (really) there. This makes of a happy sexuality an achievement, not a given. As with all achievements, it cannot be reached once and for all, but has to be renewed as life itself. As thus defined, sexuality is the business of philosophers of life, or, as they are more commonly called today, practical philosophers.

Let me elaborate on these themes.

Mapping the Conceptual Terrain

There are various ways in which a practical philosopher can contribute to the topic of sexuality. The first is mapping the conceptual terrain. This is a significant step as it may dispel much contemporary confusion. A good beginning consists in differentiating between the two great forces that love and sex represent. This is not an easy task, as the Romantic tradition of love has blurred the difference between them, and to make things worse, has linked them both with marriage and children. But as the founder of the

[268] It is possible to read tens of books on sexuality, without finding anything directly related to sex, as social and political discussions have taken over this field.

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Society for the Philosophy of Sex and Love, Alan Soble, says, children, marriage, love, and sex are four different things that can and do exist separately of each other (Soble and Halwani 2017, 11), each, of course, deserving its proper mapping.

While we understand that contemporary structures have made children and marriage independent of each other (having children today is also dissociated from sex and from love of one's partners), and we know that marriage can exist without love or sex or children, most of us still find it hard to accept that Romantic love and sex can be differentiated. This Romantic view has been recently under attack as well: Soble (and others)[269] insist that sex without love can be better as sex; and Romantic love's historic relation with sexual exclusiveness is revisited (in part thanks to generous Canadian grants)[270] with the aim of establishing a theory of polyamory that legitimizes the difference between sex and love (Jenkins 2016).

I introduced this topic at the 2nd International Conference on Philosophical Practice, and have written on it since (Amir 2000), as well as on the role philosophical practitioners can play in relation to this significant subject (2001; 2002; 2004; 2017). For a conceptual and historical analysis of the topic, as well as a good discussion of the relations of love and sexuality, I recommend Irving Singer's three volumes on the nature of love (Singer 1984-1987). Singer describes there the Western traditions of love, each claiming that its understanding of love is superior to the others. "What is the nature of love?" appears as a controversial question, with four main mutually exclusive answers (Platonic, Christian, Romantic, Realistic), each with its own view of sexuality and of how sexuality relates to love. As not all four answers can be true, I find this approach illuminating: it clarifies the options and makes us choose.

According to the Platonic tradition (Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and later Platonism and Neo-Platonism), love (*eros*) is the desire for the perpetual possession of the good. Sex, though not evil or forbidden, cannot provide what *eros* aims at. Its insufficiency is clear once the quest for love is clarified. Plato considers sexuality a powerful force on its own, the famous black horse that has to be tamed. However, the status of sexuality is less respectable in Aristotelianism, which exchanges *eros* for *philia* (friendship), and even less so in Neo-Platonism, given the negative attitude toward matter and the mystical goal of merging with the Alone.

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[269] See Vannoy (1980), Goldman (2002), and Promeratz's discussion of sex as pleasure (1999).

[270] See the Metaphysics of Love Project, and the first pages of Carrie Jenkins' book (2016).

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For the Christian tradition, love (*agape*) is a free bestowal, best exemplified by God's attitude toward us, and is thus unrelated to desire and most certainly unrelated to sexuality. The origin of sexuality is evil, part of original sin, according to a specific Christian reading of the Genesis story of Adam and Eve's fall. This negative view of sexuality is partly at the source of the ideal of abstinence that has been followed first by monks and nuns and later by priests in medieval Christianity and modern Catholicism. While this ideal was rejected as untenable and itself a source of much sin by Martin Luther and subsequent Protestants, in the Christian tradition, sexuality is governed by strict rules and confined to married couples.

The Romantic tradition has made love between two persons the sole redemptive force and has incorporated sexuality as a natural expression of this love. It is with marriage and children that this tradition is mostly at odds, more in practice than in theory. However, the very feasibility of the ideal of lasting sexual love has been debated among optimistic and pessimistic Romantics. Realist tradition (the Epicureans, Montaigne, Schopenhauer, and Freud, among others) considers sexuality to be the most fundamental drive, and reduces all love to thwarted attempts at it. This tradition antedates Sigmund Freud and finds a notable expression in Epicureanism, especially in Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*.

To sum up, the Platonic tradition maintains that we love best when we love the Good, the Christian tradition, when we love God, the Romantic tradition, when we love another human being, and the Realistic tradition, when we recognize that love is nothing but sex. According to the latter tradition, love is merely sexuality, for the Romantic tradition, however, sexuality and love are two different things which are meant to harmonize, for the Christian tradition, sex is a stranger in the picture, whilst for the Platonic tradition, it is a merely a confusion.

These traditions are very much alive today. Confusing the Realistic and the Romantic traditions may be at the root of many contemporary predicaments. It is thus important to clarify this issue. However, this does not mean that one should endorse a tradition of love once and for all. Life is long enough to allow for changes in one's perspective, according to one's needs as well as one's deepened understanding of love and human limitations.

Although examining the nature of love may be called for in a discussion of sexuality, we now understand why we cannot further clarify sexuality by explaining love. "What is sexuality?" however, turns out to be just as controversial as the nature of love. Igor Primoratz's analysis in *Ethics and Sex* (1999) shows that sexuality has been conceived as a means

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of reproduction (mainly by religious thinkers), as involving love and intimacy (Scruton 1986), as a form of body language (Solomon 2002), and as no more than pleasure (Vannoy 1980; Goldman 2002).

Sexologists have usually a tolerant vision of sexuality: they leave it to mutual agreement between consenting adults. However, I believe this assumes a degree of autonomy and authenticity that is rarely attained without effort. Autonomy is necessary to retain one's independence without being susceptible to pressure to conform or to please the other. Authenticity is the outcome of self-knowledge and self-acceptance. We can simplify the issue by saying that "I like it" and "I don't like it" are the sole relevant criterion for sexual practices. This may well be the last criterion but it cannot be the first, I believe. This means that contrary to common opinion sexuality is not an immediate experience. Rather, it is mediated by various values, beliefs, and customs, which call for a philosophic revision if authenticity and autonomy are to be attained.

If there is a field in which conceptual elucidation alone seems ridiculous (apart from humor), it is surely sexuality. Sexual self-knowledge involves a personal exploration whose purpose is mapping the field and finding out one's particular configuration in it. Very much like a scientific investigation, we should have hypotheses to refute and we should look for situations that would help us advance in self-knowledge. Progress is made not by confirming what we think we know, but by exploring uncharted territory in as safe an environment as possible, and by drawing sound conclusions from our experiences.

This is not as simple as it sounds, because there are many variables to take into account. Concern with one's reputation may get in the way, as well as other societal introjected norms, but one's level of anxiety when trying something new should be also taken into account. All these as well as other factors[271] influence one's arousal, which in turn affects our

[271] Shame at our vulnerability and disgust at our bodily functions and eventual decay may be projected by men onto women and interiorized by the latter. These are significant hurdles, whose effects I described and hopefully showed how to counter in Amir (2015). On quite another level of problematization, Luce Irigaray argues that the "imaginary" (or imagination) is lacking in women, due to their being objects of desire for men, used as commercial commodities and pitted against each other by competition, which creates jealousy amongst them. This makes women incapable of desiring. Unless they develop such a female imagination, authentic desire will not follow. However, such development is impossible in today's society, she believes. See Irigaray's "Female Desire" (1985, 23-33); and, for a feminine view of sexuality, which differs from contemporary

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capacity to change the initially disgusting or ridiculous into the sexual and pleasurable. William Ian Miller has noted in *The Anatomy of Disgust* that the sexual intersects with the disgusting, and rightly so (Miller 1997). However, this points to the possibility of being pressured into disregarding how one immediately feels, which should be avoided at all costs, if one's sexual authenticity is to be revealed. This means that while one's preconceptions should be systematically evaluated, some will still be held dearly while others will be abandoned, as one attempts to harmonize the human being and the woman or man one is.

Finally, one's views of one's relation to sexuality, its goals, and its place in one's life at this point should be made explicit and readily available if the aim of graceful action emanating from a harmonious self is to be attained. Following the Platonic model, in such a self, desires, emotions, and thoughts correspond to each other and work harmoniously together. However, if they do not (in principle or in practice), the elaborate epistemological tool that humor represents may prove necessary to hold one's contradictions together.

This is not a simple task for another reason as well: in this realm, we are not solo dancers. We are rather dancing tango with partners who not only have psychological make-ups and philosophical views of their own, but who were raised in particular societies, with specific gender preconceptions. Harmony here, as Plato already noted following Socrates' death, is not only an internal matter; it also involves the conditions to fit in society.

We can consider this further complication as proof that society will benefit from the philosophic discussion this field affords, especially since political and ideological overtones have monopolized this subject. Instead of saying that the private is the political, we could now say that the private is the philosophical, for the political has to be criticized as well. In particular, the new pressure to define oneself as homosexual or heterosexual, and various feminist critical views of heterosexuality—when they overstep their role as consciousness' awakeners and protectors of difference—should be criticized as standing in the way of autonomous and authentic searching, a search philosophers should endorse, if not assist.

Pessimistic Views of Sexuality

In most religions, sexuality is venerated as a divine power, is suppressed as the worst enemy, or regulated to an uncommon degree. As an aspect of

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accounts such as Thomas Nagel's and Robert Solomon's (Soble 2008), see Moulton (2002).

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human embodiment, sexuality was considered ancillary to the canonical concerns of Western philosophy due to its close affinity with animal pleasures. It was conceived as directly opposed to, and often capable of overpowering the supposedly uniquely human faculty of rationality (Pryba 2015, 192).

However, the philosophers who fought rationality's supremacy found a place for it. Exemplary here is Arthur Schopenhauer, who introduced the issue of sexuality into Western philosophy.

The Schopenhaurean will to life materializes more strongly in sexuality than any other desire or urge; this explains why sexuality is more than anything else is responsible for the misery of the human condition. The natural need for sex as well as the species' desire to maintain itself are at the root of everything, including the rationalization that is the most lofted form of romantic love. We are constantly deceived by the instinct of survival of the species, which makes us succumb to our sexual desires in order to procreate through us. Our sexual attraction to persons, who do not otherwise suit us, rather than being in our interest, follows the interest of the procreation of the species. "Love," whose purpose is to blind us, leaves us as soon as a child is born, but not without pain and far-reaching consequences.

Thus, the weakening of sexual desire that sometimes accompanies old age is a liberation, from the individual's perspective, that should be welcomed. From a philosophical perspective, however, Schopenhauer considers sexuality is a very significant topic. We can glimpse the will's workings through sexuality, because it is "the most complete manifestation of the will-to-live, its most distinctly expressed type" (Schopenhauer 1844, 2, 514). And provided we live as knowers more than as sufferers, as he recommends, reality itself is revealed to us through sexuality, for the sexual drive "springs from the depths of our nature" (1844, 2, 511). Indeed:

> Man is concrete sexual drive; for his origin is an act of copulation, and his desire of desires is an act of copulation, and this impulse alone perpetuates and holds together the whole of his phenomenal existence. (Schopenhauer 1844, 2, 514)

Schopenhauer's explanation enables to account for the political and religious interest in sexuality, and for its scarcely veiled significance in our lives:

> To all this corresponds the important role which the sex-relation plays in the world of mankind, where it is really the invisible central point of all

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> action and conduct, and peeps up everywhere in spite of all the veils thrown over it. It is the cause of war and the aim and object of peace, the basis of the serious and the aim of the joke, the inexhaustible source of wit, the key to all allusions, and the meaning of all mysterious hints, of all unspoken offers and all stolen glances; it is the daily meditation of the young and often the old as well, the hourly thought of the unchaste, and even against their will the constantly recurring imagination of the chaste, the ever ready material for a joke, just because the profoundest seriousness lies at its root. (Schopenhauer 1844, 2, 513; translation slightly modified)[272]

It is sometimes forgotten than Schopenhauer considers life not only as tragedy, but also as tragi-comedy. The futile attempts to subdue sexuality are a source of amusement for him:

> This . . . is the piquant element and the jest of the world, that the chief concern of all men is pursued secretly and ostensibly ignored as much as possible. But, in fact, at every moment we see it seat itself as the real and hereditary lord of the world, out of the fullness of its own strength, on the ancestral throne, and looking down from thence with scornful glances, laugh at the preparations which have been made to subdue it, to imprison it, or at least to limit it and if possible to keep it concealed, or indeed so to master it that it shall only appear as a subordinate, secondary concern of life. (Schopenhauer 1844, 2, 513)

As "it is evident that human consciousness and thinking are by their nature necessarily fragmentary" (Schopenhauer 1844, 2, 138), the unconscious processes that fill up the gaps and provide psychological continuity are expressions of the will. Moreover, as "the sexual impulse is the most vehement of all craving, the desire of desires, the concentration of all our willing" (1844, 2, 514), we gain through it and its workings an intimation of the human condition we could not have gained otherwise.

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[272] This passage is not unique. Here is another: "Next to the love of life, [sexual love] shows itself . . . as the strongest and most active of all motives, and incessantly lays claim to half the powers and thoughts of the younger portion of mankind. It is the ultimate goal of almost all human effort; it has an unfavorable influence on the most important affairs, interrupts every hour the most serious occupations, and sometimes perplexes for a while even the greatest minds. It does not hesitate to intrude with its trash, and to interfere with the negotiations of statesmen and the investigations of the learned. It knows how to slip its love-notes and ringlets even into ministerial portfolios and philosophical manuscripts" (1844, 2, 533).

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Whilst Schopenhauer follows Plato in making *eros* the most important force in the world, he gives sexuality a significant philosophic place that is denied in Plato's philosophy. Plato further elaborates on love rather than sex; yet by reducing love to sexuality, Schopenhauer endows sexuality with the most important role.

Freud has adopted this view of sexuality, along with various other Schopenhauerian ideas, as many commentators have shown and Freud himself has acknowledged.[273] The centrality of sexuality is commonly but unjustly considered the discovery of psychoanalysis. It may be thus significant to highlight philosophy's contribution to the matter.

Freud's own contribution is important as well, however, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains in his own discussion of sexuality:

> Whatever the theoretical declarations of Freud may have been, psychoanalytical research is in fact led to an explanation of man, not in terms of his sexual substructure, but to a discovery in sexuality of relations and attitudes which had previously been held to reside in *consciousness*. Thus the significance of psychoanalysis is less to make psychology biological than to discover a dialectical process in functions thought of as "purely bodily," and to reintegrate sexuality into the human beings. (Merleau-Ponty 1981, 138; quoted in Welton 1999, 158-59)

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[273] See, for example, the preface to the fourth edition of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), where Freud links his view(s) to Schopenhauer and Plato. He writes, "Some of what this book contains—its insistence on the importance of sexuality in all human achievements and the attempt that it makes at enlarging the concept of sexuality—has from the first provided the strongest motives for the resistance against psychoanalysis . . . . We might be astonished at this . . . . For it is some time since Arthur Schopenhauer . . . showed mankind the extent to which their activities are determined by sexual impulses – in the ordinary sense of the word . . . . And as for the 'stretching' of the concept of sexuality . . . anyone who looks down with contempt upon psychoanalysis from a superior vantage-point should remember how closely the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato" (Freud 1905, 134). "Divine Plato" was Schopenhauer's way of referring to Plato, too (Schopenhauer 1844, 1, xv). In a lecture at the Vienna Psychiatric Clinic Freud commented in 1917 on his Schopenhauerian tint: "You may perhaps shrug your shoulders and say: "This isn't natural science, that is Schopenhauer's philosophy!" But Ladies and Gentlemen, why should not a bold thinker have guessed something that is afterwards confirmed by sober and painstaking detailed research?" (Freud 1933, 107). There are various studies on Freud and Schopenhauer, see, e.g., Young and Brook (1994).

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It may be interesting to highlight here Freud's pessimism about sexuality. Freud presents sexual love as the model for all happiness, but argues that sexuality is entangled with the origin of our unhappiness in such a way that sex cannot resolve it. As the remarks at the end of the fourth chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents* make clear, something inherent in the sexual function itself thwarts complete sexual happiness: it is the aggression built into it. Indeed, an aggressive destructiveness, described by Freud as a libidinal destructive fury, is at the basis of human love. This leads to a heightened sense of guilt, which brings about the loss of happiness. Even if the guilt we feel about it is somehow taken away, that aggression cannot be quenched, as that would be tantamount to the successful breaking down of the world's resistance to, or, more fundamentally, difference with, the ego. Thus, Leo Bersani explains that for Freud, "we can adapt to that which makes us incapable of adaptation." However, "to go any further would be to cure ourselves of being human" (Bersani 2009, 132).

Freud's thoughts on aggression have been compared with those of Georges Bataille (Moore 2015, 70). When sexuality is concerned, however, Bataille considers aggression the only force at play.[274] The interest in Bataille's view of eroticism lies in his concept of non-knowledge or the impossible, to which eroticism necessarily leads. For Bataille, this is the Divine.[275] Bataille endows sexuality with a specific mysticism, in which the victim who is symbolically put to death fulfills a religious ideal. Bataillean mysticism may be erroneous; however, its concept of the impossible or non-knowledge that points to the boundaries of our understanding may explain the epistemological role sexuality is endowed with in many mystical paths and the predominant role it plays in sexuality either overtly or covertly.

Freud maintained that masochistic and sadistic perversions were so widespread between the two wars that they should not be called perversions anymore (Moore 2015, 72). This may partly account for Jean-Paul Sartre's view of sexuality as necessarily sado-masochistic, yet the influence of the Hegelian philosophy of master and slave relationship is also a good contender. For Sartre, each partner attempts to subjugate the other by denying his or her freedom or consciousness. However, this attempt is futile because not only subjectivity cannot be annihilated, but also because if it were possible, one would be left in the presence of an

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[274] For violence and aggression and its relation with sexuality, see Barak (2003, chap. 7).

[275] Bataille (2007, chap. IX, 119, 104; X, 122). On Bataille, see Amir (2016b).

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object rather than a subject, which is not what one initially desired. Both sadism and masochism are thus disclosed as defeated projects, but for Sartre, human sexuality necessarily hovers between these two poles.[276]

To this pessimistic trend within modern philosophy and psychology (Schopenhauer, Freud, Sartre) one could add various other views. For example, the Nietzschean view that love is nothing but war between the sexes, his misogyny as well as Schopenhauer's, and Immanuel Kant's view of sexuality as not respecting the other as an end, and of sexuality as morally faulty unless redeemed by consent of mutual sexual "use" which the marital contract represents.

Looking back at the history of philosophy and thus necessarily to ancient philosophy as well, we may note that, except for the Cyrenaics, no philosophical school advocated sexual pleasure. The Epicureans considered it a natural but unnecessary desire, and the Cynics emphasized in often shocking public demonstrations how easily the sexual drive can be satisfied. As mentioned above, by recommending *philia* instead of *eros* as the right attitude between lovers, Aristotle toned down Plato's recognition of the power of this "madness" (*Phaedrus*). Already Plato had divested sexuality of a significant role by denouncing it as an inauthentic means to the ends of love. Moreover, in Neo-Platonism's mystical reading of Plato, sexuality was tied up with matter, the lowest manifestation of the Divine, thus making overcoming it a condition for the mystical end of merging with the Divine. It remains to be asked, then, what can philosophy contribute to sexuality, if these cautious, maybe discerning, but surely pessimistic views are discarded?

A New Somaticism

Sexuality is considered a somatic activity. If "soma" is too narrowly defined, the somatic view of sex could be accused of disregarding the part that imagination and desire plays in it. As the first obvious example of mind-body dysfunction in the Cartesian famous distinction, it is odd that impotence and other disharmonies between mind and body are not discussed by René Descartes. Michel de Montaigne, whom Descartes

[276] For the impossible project sexuality carries see Sartre (1957, part III, chap. III, sections I-II), Bataille (2007), and Plato's *Symposium*, discussed in Amir (2001 and 2017). For Sartre, it is an impossible project because sexuality aims to annihilate the other's subjectivity; for Bataille, because it aims at reaching the divine; and for Plato, because it cannot provide that which loves aims at, the perpetual possession of the good.

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knew well, did address this topic, but more importantly, he commented on the soul-mind's association with the body in relation to pleasure and sexuality:

> Others feel the sweetness of some satisfaction and of prosperity; I feel them as they do, but it is not in passing and slipping by. Instead we must first study it, savor it, and ruminate it . . . . They enjoy the other pleasures as they do that of sleep, without being conscious of them . . . . I meditate on any satisfaction; I do not skim over it, I sound it, and bend my reason . . . to welcome it. Do I find myself in some tranquil state? Is there some voluptuous pleasure that tickles me? I do not let me senses pilfer it, I bring my soul into it, not to implicate herself, but to enjoy herself, not to loose herself, but to find herself. And, I set her, for her part, to admire herself in this prosperous estate, to weigh and appreciate and amplify the happiness of it. She measures the extent of her debt to God for being at peace with her conscience and free from other inner passions, for having her body in its natural condition, enjoying controlledly and adequately the agreeable and pleasant functions with which he is pleased to compensate by his grace for the pains with which his justice chastises us in its turn. (Montaigne 1967, III, chap. 13, 854)

In addition:

> Is it not an error to consider some actions less worthy because they are necessary? . . . To what purpose do we dismember by divorce a structure made up of such close and brotherly correspondence? On the contrary, let us bind it together again by mutual services. Let the mind arouse and quicken the heaviness of the body, and the body check and make fast the lightness of the mind. (Montaigne 1967, III, chap. 13, 855)

Not only is sexuality not merely somatic, and sometimes, with age and physical impairment, not somatic at all, it is an activity where the whole human being participates, making it a unique practical instrument for the unification of all faculties.

That sexuality is not only somatic strikes me as good news, because as Donn Welton makes clear in his introduction to one of the anthologies on the body that he edited, a unified theory of the body does not exist (Welton 1999; see also 1998). Whilst he deems this field "one of the most active areas of philosophic reflection at the present" (1999, 6), philosophical practitioners cannot wait for such a theory to exist.

Nor is glancing at the sophisticated continental theories especially helpful. As is well known, Descartes' treatment of the body as ultimately a machine, and his making the mind the real problem for philosophy, have been extended into analytic philosophy. This treatment has been challenged

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by continental theories, beginning with Edmund Husserl's (or Max Scheler's) differentiation between the lived-body (*Leib*) and the body under a strict physical description (*Körper*).[277] Husserl sought to problematize the body instead of the mind. Descartes' 17th century dissident follower, Benedict Spinoza, has already famously written that no one knows what a body can do. Notwithstanding forerunners in the 19th century (such as Georg W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche), who used concepts of the body to subvert Cartesian dualism, one had to wait until the 20th century for attempts for find an interest in unlocking the concept of the mind and of personhood through a new understanding of the body. Husserl's followers include those who mainly focused on human embodiment (such as Martin Heidegger and Sartre), and Merleau-Ponty's rich theory (1945; 1964) of the interrelationship among intentionality, the body, and the earth. A second cluster of theories use appropriations and insights from psychoanalysis, social history, literary theory and gender theory, and include the views of Lacan, Foucault, Julia Kristeva and Irigaray (see Welton 1999).

For a defense of sexuality, we have to go back to Montaigne. Apart from a vision which reduces love to sex, we find in Montaigne, in contradistinction to others in the Realist tradition, who by lowering love do not elevate sexuality (such as the Epicureans), a defense of sexuality which is shared by Freud, but associated with an optimism regarding sexual happiness and happiness *tout court*. Beginning with a criticism of religious attitudes that condemn the sexual act, he follows with criticizing those philosophers who dismiss it by stressing the angelic in the human being, and who recommend transcending human materiality and its pleasures.

Montaigne's criticism could be applied to his dissident readers, such as Descartes and Blaise Pascal, but especially to his most faithful yet aspiring follower, Friedrich Nietzsche. It can be read in his chapter, "On Some Verses of Virgil" (Montaigne 1967, III, chap. 5), among other places. As I will continue to refer to Montaigne below, his criticism can be summed up for the moment with the following quotation, "What a monstrous animal to be a horror to himself, to be burdened by his pleasures, to regard himself as a misfortune" (III, chap. 5, 670).[278] His more positive account of sexuality is predicated on the significance of experience, pleasure, and the acceptance of humanity as it is, without magnifying its flaws, thus leading to a unified vision of the human being as a condition of happiness and

[277] On this issue, see Welton (1999, 7n5).

[278] See the list of references for my work on Montaigne and Nietzsche.

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sexual happiness.

The unification of the human being and the emphasis on the whole of human experience as relevant to human life found expression, after Montaigne, and arguably, after Spinoza,[279] oddly enough in a 18th century religious thinker, Johann Georg Hamann. Because of his attack on rationality in the midst of the Enlightenment movement that venerated it, this friend and neighbor of Kant rehabilitated sexuality, and did so on unexpectedly religious grounds. His conversion to the religion of his youth, Lutheranism, led him to argue that the religious significance of human life is the total human being in its materiality, nutrition, excrements, and sexuality. Self-knowledge meant, after a descent to hell, a joyful embrace of our materiality (see Amir 2014).

The view that calls for cultivation of the total human being has often been repeated since Hamann. A common view of Romanticism, Existentialism, and Pragmatism, it has recently been at the center of Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics.

Before engaging with Shusterman's view, sexuality's fate in Western philosophy is worth recalling. An aspect of human embodiment, sexuality has been viewed as ancillary to the canonical concerns of philosophy due to its close affinity with merely animal pleasures. It was conceived as directly opposed to, and often capable of overpowering, the supposedly uniquely human faculty of rationality. As a result, at least in the Western

---

[279] Though Spinoza does not address sexuality particularly in this passage, he is renowned for the following emphasis on pleasure's role in the good life:

> To use things, therefore, and take pleasure in them as far as possible – not, of course, to the point where we are disgusted with them, for there is no pleasure in that – this is the part of a wise man.
>
> It is the part of a wise man, I say, to refresh and restore himself in moderation with pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theatre, and other things of this kind, which anyone can use without injury to another. For the human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things.
>
> This plan of living, then agrees best with our principles and with common practice. So, if any other way of living [is to be commended], this one is best, and to be commended in every way. (Spinoza, *Ethics*, part 4, Proposition 45, Corollary 2, Scholium)

For Spinoza on pleasure, see Amir, *Philosophy as Redemption*: *Spinoza* versus *Nietzsche* (work under contract).

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tradition, Russel Pryba notes that if sexuality was addressed by philosophy at all, it was addressed “as instances of irrational appetites that could be properly controlled by the pursuit of a philosophical life, rather than as subjects for philosophical reflection which could deepen and enliven the most basic aspects of human experience” (Pryba 2015, 192).

This means that, in the West, sexuality has not often been incorporated into the central philosophical projects of self-formation and self-knowledge. The conceptual resources for investigating sexual pleasures are much richer in non-Western traditions. However, a woman may be at a disadvantage here, as in many other places, as most texts and reflections do not make her the subject of investigation. At best, her pleasure is conducive to more masculine pleasure or other benefit (for example, *ars erotica* was recommended in Chinese philosophy because it was good for [the man’s] health).[281]

Pryba treats *ars erotica* and *ars gastronomica* on the same level and diagnoses the approach to both as similar. However, he does note the singular fate of eroticism in the reception of the new field of somaesthetics. Let me tell this story in order to relate, albeit somewhat anecdotally, somaesthetics to practical philosophy, and emphasize both the responsibility of practical philosophers and their solitude amidst philosophers.

Following his work on pragmatist aesthetics, Shusterman published *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (1996), the thesis of which he presented in a keynote lecture on the art of living in an international conference on philosophical practice (2004). As a certified teacher of the Feldenkrais method, Shusterman has been one of the few philosophers to insist on the need for somaticism (see Amir 2017). He followed through with *Body Consciousness* (2008) and *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (2012). However, Pryba explains, “The initial formulation of somaesthetics avoided directly treating the obvious topic of *ars erotica* . . . in favor of a less controversial theoretical approach.” In the former book, however, Shusterman began to treat in earnest the erotic arts with a discussion of Michel Foucault’s criticism of hetero-normative sexual practice. The latter book transcends the limitations of this approach by discussing *ars erotica* based on ancient Indian and Chinese texts (Pryba 2015, 193).

In a recent symposium on his work on somaesthetics, however, Shusterman confesses that he is “cautiously hesitant” about the “research” related to “dimensions of his work in somaesthetics that have so far received much less discussion.” He further explains, “My best friends in

[281] For ancient Chinese eroticism, see Goldin (2002).

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China specifically advised me not to publish a Chinese translation of my article of erotic aesthetics because it might be misunderstood and damage the very positive Chinese reception of my pragmatist and somaesthetic theories." Thus, he has developed since then another part of his research, "*ars gastronomica*" instead of "*ars erotica*."[282]

By treating *ars erotica* and *ars gastronomica* on the same level, Pryba ignores the fact that in contemporary culture eating is public and sexuality is not, and, to use a telling example, eating is the topic of many hours of television broadcasting and sexuality of none. The delicacy of the subject coupled with the reluctance to accept a public discussion of it, which Shusterman acknowledges, makes the concern with sexuality all the more significant. However, this also makes philosophical practitioners all the more solitary if they were to embark on the mission of incorporating sexuality within the good life.

Now, turning to somaesthetics, the following recommendations can be gathered from Shusterman's remarks on sexual somaestheticism. First, somaesthetics is a theoretical framework that takes the entirety of human bodily experience as a proper object for philosophical reflection, and which regards the sites of bodily experience as opportunities to engage in the ameliorative practice of creative self-fashioning. Following John Dewey, and illustrating the fact that somaesthetics at least partially emerged from the tradition of Pragmatist Aesthetics, Shusterman notes that instrumental value is not inconsistent with intrinsic value because "our intrinsic enjoyment of good sex is no less knowing that it is good to us." By rejecting the intrinsic/instrumental distinction as it pertains to aesthetic value, he opens up the possibility of somatic education and self-improvement. Thus, he writes,

> *Ars erotica* – with its cultivation of sensory perception, sensuous mastery, psychological insight, ethical sensibility, and artistic and cognitive skills – can surely be recommended somaesthetically for its wide-ranging values of edification. (Shusterman 2012, 287)

Additionally:

> When studied and practiced with careful mindfulness and sensitivity as part of one's project of melioristic self-cultivation, the art of lovemaking can bring rewarding cognitive, ethical and interpersonal improvements that

[282] See Pryba (2015). Shusterman went on to publish "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," in an anthology on *Body Aesthetics* (2015b; see Shusterman 2015a, 207).

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> transcend the limits of momentary sexual pleasure, thus promoting the somaesthetic projects of augmenting our perceptual and performative powers and enriching our work of self-creation. (Shusterman 2012, 21)

While all that Shusterman says is true, I believe sexuality is more than a ground for aesthetic self-creation and sensual self-perfection, as the authors discussed in the previous section rightly sensed. Sexuality is also an epistemological tool[283] that provides a unique insight into the other and ourselves, into our bodies, our animal-nature, as well as into our limitations in knowing, our finitude and mortality. Moreover, sexuality clarifies our vitality and facilitates through this clarification a direct intimation, call it metaphysical or spiritual, of life itself.

The plenitude good sexuality affords is not only a-political but also deeply irreligious, which may explain why it is never encouraged. Because plenitude desires nothing more, it frees us from transcendent aspirations, from notions of desire as lack and of wisdom as acceptance of misery. It is a practice of desiring that which is, of satisfying oneself with reality. In that sense, it is no less than an initiation to wisdom.[284]

These lofty considerations should not obscure the intrinsic relations of sexuality with humor. I began this chapter with a quote from Montaigne referring to the shame and honest shame ("modesty" in English, "pudeur" in French) that are attached to sexuality. Shame ensures that talking about it would be almost impossible and that she who does would be tainted. The reasons for shame are controversial: it may originate in our education, or stem from the habit of clothing ourselves, the necessary egoism sexuality involves, or the transgression, even the aggression, inherent in

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[283] Merleau-Ponty briefly commented on the kind of epistemology that eroticism involves, "Erotic perception is not a *cogitation* which aims at a *cogitatum*; through one body it aims at another body, and takes place in the world, not in a consciousness . . . . There is an 'erotic comprehension' not of the order of understanding, since understanding subsumes an experience, once perceived, under some idea, while desire comprehends blindly by linking body to body . . . . Thus sexuality is not an autonomous cycle. It has internal links with the whole active and cognitive being, these three sectors of behaviour displaying one typical structure, and standing in a relationship to each other of reciprocal expression." He added, however, that "here we concur with the most lasting discoveries of psychoanalysis" ("The Body in its Sexual Being," quoted in Welton 1999, 158).

[284] This kind of wisdom is defended by Montaigne, Spinoza, and by the disciple of both, the contemporary French philosopher Comte-Sponville (2012, 318). For these early modern philosophers, see my two monographs, *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana*, and *Philosophy as Redemption*: *Spinoza* versus *Nietzsche* (works under contract).

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it.[285] Whatever its origins are, however, shame calls for indirect ways of alluding to sexuality.

Apart from obscene jokes—despite the sexual revolution, still a very popular genre—gentle humor comes to mind when we consider talking about sexuality. The thesis of *Homo risibilis*, the ridiculous human being, on which I have elaborated elsewhere (Amir 2014; 2017), seems especially appropriate to conceive and experience sexuality. Because the appropriation of this thesis—which is predicated on unresolvable incongruities in human nature, among other incongruities—purports to unify the self by gradually accepting its rejected parts, *Homo risibilis* is relevant in more than one way to the topic of this chapter. For eroticism is impossible without (sexual) authenticity, and the latter is not immediately attainable. It is predicated on self-acceptance more than on self-knowledge, since much of sexuality stands in the way of knowledge, being opaque, to repeat Paul Ricoeur's observation (Ricoeur 2001, 225, 235) or senseless, to use Jacques Lacan and Bataille's expression (Lacan 1966, 451; Bataille 2007).

In order to enjoy our animal-nature, as well as our partners'—an experience that may be singularly human—or to accept our transient place within the human species, a threatening breach in our regular self-perception seems necessary. A gently humorous attitude cultivated beforehand would help this transformation by enabling the holding together of incongruous aspects of the self which otherwise threaten to tear us apart. It would soothe the transitions from the known to the unknown and back, and would transform the uncanny into a pleasurable voyage to the limits of human perception.

As one of *Homo risibilis*' precursors, Montaigne ends this chapter. The sole philosopher who wrote about sexuality with appropriate "alacrity, lightness, profundity, liberty, lucidity, and humor" (Comte-Sponville 2012, 195), Montaigne makes clear why authentic sexuality requires a sense of humor:

> And considering often the ridiculous titillation of this pleasure, the absurd, witless, and giddy motions with which it stirs up Zeno and Cratippus, that reckless frenzy, that face inflamed with fury and cruelty in the sweetest act of love, and then that grave, severe, and ecstatic countenance in so silly an action; and that our delights and our excrements have been lodged together pell-mell, and that the supreme sensual pleasure is attended, like pain, with

[285] Schopenhauer's view, oddly enough found already in Montaigne, is worth noting: we feel ashamed of creating life or acting as if we were, because we perpetuate suffering and death (Schopenhauer 1969, 1, IV, section 60; Montaigne 1967, III, chap. 5, 669).

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> faintness and moaning; I believe that what Plato says is true, that man is the plaything of the gods: What savage jest is this (Claudian), and that it was in mockery that nature left us the most confused of our actions to be the most common, in order thereby to make us all equal and to put on the same level the fools and the wise, and us and the beasts . . . . The most contemplative and wisest of men, when I imagine him in that position seems to me an impostor to put on wise and contemplative airs; here are the peacock's feet that humble his pride: Against truth said in laughing, is there a law? (Horace). (Montaigne 1967, III, chap. 5, 668-69)

Conclusion

Sexuality is a powerful and puzzling force to contend with in everyday life. Its opacity, its senselessness, its inherent incapacity of successfully completing the confused project it aims at (be it Sartrean, Bataillean, or Platonic), as well as its transgressive nature have been amply discussed in the philosophic and psychoanalytic literature.

Sexuality seems also to afford a unique opportunity to enjoy our animal-nature, an experience that may be singularly human. Doing sexuality full justice whilst incorporating it harmoniously among other forces that shape one's life seems to be a difficult project. Still, it is worth undertaking and may benefit from a humorous view of the human condition.

Eroticism seems to be the relevant virtue of sexuality. As with all virtues, it has to be learned and cultivated, but cannot be so unless founded on authenticity and autonomy. Whilst the philosopher can contribute to defining and exploring the significance of sexuality, her help in implementing eroticism may well bring to the practice of philosophy many disciples, but also various concerns regarding how to manage this without compromising the field's moral integrity.

We cannot be unprepared[286] or unnecessarily coy about this topic if we want to serve our clients well by remaining faithful to philosophy's empowering role. This role is all the more significant nowadays when the various narratives of liberation, by being entangled with social and political agendas, obscure the individual's duty to himself. Moreover, it is necessary in liberal states, where, without proper bridging between liberty and equality, that duty can scarcely be fulfilled. Thus, were we to embrace Montaigne's view, that "it is an absolute perfection and virtually divine to

[286] I have read quite a few texts while researching for this essay, not all of which I can mention here. The literature on the subject is immense. A good place to begin is Soble (2006), Soble and Power (2008), Soble and Halwani (2017), Primoratz (1999), and Solomon and Higgins (1991).

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know how to enjoy our being rightfully" (1967 III, chap. 13, 857), we would realize that this "know how" is no less than an initiation to wisdom.

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PART IV

RECONSIDERING PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE'S MEANS

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Why would philosophers assume that the self is coherent or "transparent" to itself? Indeed, the devoted practice of philosophy itself would seem to be a prime example of how one set of virtues can wreak havoc with another, more mundane set of virtues. (Philosophers who refuse to recognize the usual social reaction to the continuous skepticism, logic-chopping, and overly critical examination of every casual thesis, and the literal construal of even the most hackneyed idiom may miss this point). It is not only the familiar fact of self-deception that prompts us to think of the self as far more labyrinthine as the Cartesian cogito would suggest. It is also the familiar fact that we recognize in ourselves not just one identity but several, some of them conveniently sorted according to the circumstance and social surroundings and others, particularly in a time of crisis, in full-blown confrontation. One does not need to invoke "split brain" phenomena or other extreme psychiatric disorders in order to raise fascinating philosophical questions about the fragmented and partially hidden self (see, for example, Nagel, 1979; Graham, 1994).

Robert B. Solomon, *The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin versus the Passionate Life*

The unconscious' existence is considered a threat to the very possibility of self-knowledge. Jean-Paul Sartre's criticism of Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious is particularly significant in the history of philosophers' attitude toward this concept. For this reason, I have chosen the Freud-Sartre controversy as the topic of this chapter.

In the introduction, I address the reception of psychoanalysis by philosophers in order to appreciate the significance of Sartre's criticism within the philosophical tradition. I then introduce Freud's theory of the unconscious as continuous yet innovative in relation to previous views of the unconscious (section 1), followed by Sartre's criticism of the unconscious (section 2). Next, I present the Sartrean notion of self-deception, or bad faith, as an alternative explanation of the same facts that Freud explained with the help of the unconscious (section 3). The similarities and differences between these thinkers' views and within the practice of Freudian psychoanalysis and Sartrean existential psychoanalysis

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are presented in section 4. Then the price we have to pay for adhering to Sartre's view of irrationality is further assessed (section 5). According to Sebastian Gardner, for example, Sartre's view is to be rejected because it commits us to an "impossible" picture of the mind. Finally, I point out some implications of the Freud-Sartre controversy for the viability of self-knowledge, a goal of philosophical counseling (section 6). Let us begin, then, by considering Freud's position among the philosophers.

Introduction: Freud and the Philosophers

Jean-Paul Sartre's criticism of Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious is particularly significant in the history of philosophers' attitude toward this concept. In order to appreciate the significance of Sartre's criticism, I propose to review briefly the reception of psychoanalysis by philosophers.[307]

Psychoanalysis gained some support from within the philosophical community during Freud's lifetime—two examples are Hugo Friedman, a German philosopher who publicly defended Freud's view of the unconscious (Decker 1977), and Israel Levine, a British philosopher (1923). It seems, however, that these were exceptions, if we trust Donald Levy's first statement in *Freud among the Philosophers*: "For as long as psychoanalysis has existed, its central concept, that of unconscious mental activity, has been the object of hostile scrutiny by philosophers" (Levy 1996, 1).

In *Freud's Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1999), David L. Smith explains how a few philosophers addressed psychoanalytic topics in the 1920s.[308] However, serious philosophical attention to Freudian thought within the analytic tradition begun in the 1930s with Ludwig Wittgenstein's lectures at Cambridge. Levy considers that "Wittgenstein's criticism of psychoanalysis is in some ways the most complex," as it

[307] Excellent work has been recently done on Freud's views and his position among philosophers in the past and the present. In this chapter, I heavily rely on the following manuscripts, which I recommend for further reading. I also hope I have given their authors sufficient credit along the chapter. These include David L. Smith, *Freud's Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1999); Donald Levy, *Freud among the Philosophers: The Psychoanalytic Unconscious and Its Philosophical Critics* (1996); Sebastian Gardner, *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (1993); Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (1970); Lancelot L. Whyte, *The Unconscious before Freud* (1960); John O. Wisdom, "Psycho-analytic Technology" (1956).

[308] E.g. Russell (1921), Field (1922), Levine (1923), and Broad (1925).

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includes many criticisms that others had made only singly (Levy 1996, 3). Moreover,

> For Wittgenstein, psychoanalysis essentially *imposes* interpretations, rather than unfolding them as it claims. According to Wittgenstein, a psychoanalytic interpretation essentially involves a myth-like (that is, predetermined) explanation, imposed on a mental state that reduces it to something familiar and common where, nevertheless, the assent of the person involved is the criterion of correctness. There is a fundamental tension here, for once the mental state has been identified, its correct explanation would seem to be given by the mythology applied, yet the assent or non-assent of the patient is supposed to be dispositive. (Levy 1996, 3)

This is why Levy maintains that for Wittgenstein, "Psychoanalysis is a kind of crude religion, one that does not even realize that it is what it is" (Levy 1996, 3). It tries too hard to be scientific and so destroys what is individual in us in the process of seeking to reduce mental phenomena to mere law-governed data. In this process, according to Wittgenstein, what is essential about the mind eludes the psychoanalyst's awareness, as well as the patient's.[309]

A few philosophers followed Wittgenstein, and commented on the difference between causal and rational explanations of mental events that Freud conflated, among them, Alasdair MacIntyre (1958). The difference between Wittgenstein's view of psychoanalysis and his followers' views is significant, however. If Wittgenstein objects to psychoanalysis because he believes it reduces the meaning we can find within ourselves, the main criticism of Freud's central ideas aside from Wittgenstein's has been that those ideas are not reductive enough. What is wanted is real scientific knowledge, which, despite Freud's promise, psychoanalysis does not

[309] Wittgenstein's thoughts on psychoanalysis are mainly found in five places in material so far published. "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33," as reported by G. E. Moore, supplemented by remarks recorded by Alice Ambrose and Margaret MacDonald in *Wittgenstein's Lectures*, 39-40; *The Blue Book* (dictated 1933-34); "Lectures on Aesthetics" (1938) and "Conversations on Freud" (dating from the same period as Part I of *Philosophical Investigations*), both preserved in Rush Rhees' notes in *Lectures and Conversations* (1966); and notes written by Wittgenstein and collected under the title *Culture and Value*, edited by Georg H. von Wright and translated by Peter Winch. See, respectively, Wittgenstein (1979; 1958; 1966; 1980). For a comprehensive, critical overview of Wittgenstein's ideas on the subject of psychoanalysis, see Levy (1996, chap. 1). For a defense of Wittgenstein's views, see Bouveresse (1995).

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succeed in producing.[310]

William James and Adolph Grunbaum are among those who argue that psychoanalysis is not scientific enough. James criticizes all proofs of posthypnotic suggestion, one of Freud's main proofs for the existence of unconscious mental phenomena. James maintains that the very idea of unconscious mental activity is incoherent, that is, self-contradictory (James 1850). Grunbaum's critique of psychoanalysis is that the assent of the subject of the interpretation has no evidentiary status. Therefore, psychoanalytic interpretations are untestable within the confines of the therapeutic situation; only extra-clinical testing can determine their truth, and these tests, on the whole, have not been undertaken (Grunbaum 1984).

Levy examines the critical views mentioned so far only to conclude: "The critics I examine show basic misunderstandings—not at all obvious ones—of a few psychoanalytic ideas and when these are cleared up, their criticism is neutralized" (Levy 1996, 8).[311] Levy's enterprise may be better appreciated within a wider context, if we agree with Smith's statement that today, "the philosophical climate has never been more congenial the Freudian thinking" (Smith 1999, 6).

The beginning of the change in attitude toward psychoanalysis can be traced to the early 1960s. Donald Davidson's work begun to undermine the orthodoxy that causal and rational explanations should be sharply demarcated from one another. Smith explains what happened since:

> Simultaneously, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the groundwork for a new naturalistic consensus was laid by the work of Place (1956), Smart (1959), and others advocating the identity theory of the mind-brain relationship, aided and abetted by the rise of cognitive science and the work of Sellars (1956; 1963) and Feyerabend (1963) on the theoretical nature of folk-psychology. Putnam's (1960) functionalism and externalism

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[310] Levy notes that "it is remarkable that this vast difference of viewpoint between Wittgenstein and the other philosophical critics of psychoanalysis, many of whom were influenced by him, has taken so long to be perceived, and not only in regard to psychoanalysis" (Levy 1996, 4). For example, MacIntyre's *The Unconscious* follows in Wittgenstein's tradition, according to Smith (1999, 5). However, MacIntyre's argument is that the unconscious in psychoanalysis is unobservable in a way that separates it from legitimate unobservables in science; unlike them, he argues that the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious is dispensable in principle (MacIntyre 1958).

[311] For philosophical critics of psychoanalysis in the analytical tradition, see Levy (1996). For critics of both the analytical and the continental traditions, see Gardner (1993). For a valuable response to Freud's (mainly) non-philosophical critics see Robinson (1993), which also contains a chapter on Grunbaum.

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> (1975) completed the picture. By the early 1980s, materialism and anti-introspectionism were commonplace, while cognitive scientists such as Marr (1982) were unashamedly offering principled explanations of mental events relying on hypothetical unconscious processes. More recently, philosophers such as Dennett (1987; 1992), Dretske (1995), and Millikan (1984; 1993) have moved in the direction of neo-Darwinian accounts of mental phenomena. (Smith 1999, 5-6)

Only recently did Smith attempt "a comprehensive reassessment of Freudian thought in the light of the new philosophy of mind." Such a reassessment would, he writes, "At the very least, show Freud to have been a precursor of contemporary philosophical writers and also might reveal that he has something fresh to add to current debates" (Smith 1999, 6).

Sartre, who provides a figure of contrast for Freud, is rarely discussed within the analytic tradition. A notable exception is Sebastien Gardner's *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, where Sartre's view is deemed "the most serious line of objection which it [psychoanalysis] has to face" (Gardner 1993, 227). Sartre's critique of psychoanalytic theory—which highlights its relation to issues of personal identity and which concerns the logical shape of psychoanalytic explanations rather than its epistemology—represents, in my view, the most serious challenge to psychoanalytic claims, which needs to be met. I have chosen, therefore, the Freud-Sartre controversy as the topic of this chapter. I begin examining this controversy by introducing Freud's theory of the unconscious.

1. Freud and the Unconscious

Freud was not aware of the extensive and continuous attention the unconscious had enjoyed before his time (Whyte 1960; Ellenberger 1970). Presenting Freud's theory of the unconscious in historical perspective may help us understand how it innovates, in spite of being continuous with previous views. From Lancelot L. Whyte's detailed survey of Freud's precursors, *The Unconscious before Freud* (1960), it is clear that some conception or other of the unconscious has been known from the beginning of recorded thought. Some Eastern traditions and certain Greek and Christian writings took for granted the existence of unconscious mental drives. The Article "Unconscious," published in the Supplements to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy—Shaftesbury to Zubiri* (Borchert 2006) further explains that the West rediscovered at first philosophically but gradually more scientifically the unconscious around 1600 AD. The modern concept of the unconscious differs essentially from early concepts,

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however, because it had separated the conscious mind from material processes in his search for validity and precision after René Descartes. The role of unconscious mental processes was to connect, without losing the precision science required, conscious awareness and behavior with processes of which the individual was not immediately aware.

As a reaction to Descartes' definition of mind as awareness in *Discourse on Method* (1637), the West rediscovered unconscious mental processes. Many thinkers between Descartes and Freud recognized that without awareness various kinds of mental activity take place. The existence of the unconscious mind was a common assumption by the end of the 19th century, due to the contributions of Arthur Schopenhauer, Carl Gustav Carus, Gustav Fechner, Eduard von Hartmann, and Friedrich Nietzsche. However, its emotional and dynamic aspects have been noted earlier in Germany by Johann G. Herder, Johann W. von Goethe, Johann G. Fichte, Georg W. F. Hegel, and Friedrich W. J. von Schelling.

Schopenhauer made the unconscious will his central theme. A friend of Goethe presented his favorable views on the unconscious. This was the physician Carus, who wrote at the beginning of *Psyche* (1846), "The key to the understanding of the character of the conscious lies in the region of the unconscious." Fechner is to be credited with the view of the mind as an iceberg below the surface, which is moved by hidden currents—a debt that Freud recognized. He further used notions of mental energy, mind topography, as well as a principle of unpleasure-pleasure, and a universal tendency toward stability. Von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869), which was met with success in various European countries, surveyed a vast field of unconscious mental activities. No less than twenty-six aspects of the unconscious were noted and were used to create out of Goethe's ideas a grandiose metaphysical system. Nietzsche gave new intensity to the widespread reflections about the unconscious:

> The absurd overvaluation of consciousness . . . . Consciousness only touches the surface . . . . The great basic activity is unconscious . . . . Every sequence in consciousness is completely atomistic . . . . The real continuous process takes place below our consciousness; the series and sequence of feelings, thoughts, and so on, are symptoms of this underlying process . . . . All our conscious motives are superficial phenomena; behind them stands the conflict of our instincts and conditions. (Nietzsche 1974, section 354).

Whyte makes it clear that the conception of the unconscious was nearly always of a state that exists between conscious events, which is very remote from Freud's theory. He points out, moreover, that only in the

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twentieth century did a theory of unconscious structure arise. However, this comment does not bring out what is required to distinguish Freud's idea of the unconscious. What characterizes Freud's idea, John O. Wisdom explains, is that "in it the unconscious is dynamic and rooted in the emotions and that this gives rise to all the richness of life" (Wisdom 1967, 190-191). Wisdom considers that "there are scarcely any precursors," for this idea, but Whyte does mention Carus (1846), Schopenhauer (1875),[312] and Nietzsche.[313] While the insight shown by these thinkers into the nature of unconsciousness was impressive, they did not develop it into a scientific theory or even a system. Freud introduced a radically new theory of the unconscious. It was unanticipated by practically everyone who preceded him, largely due to two aspects of his theory—the strictly unconscious (as opposed to the preconscious) nature of the processes he discussed and the dynamic nature of this unconscious.

In order to appreciate Freud's theory of the unconscious, some introduction to his thought is required. I will address in the following account only those aspects of his ideas that are directly relevant to the theory of the unconscious. For this purpose, I quote at length the article "Unconscious" mentioned above (Borchert 2006):

> For Freud, all mental processes are determined by natural laws, ultimately by those governing chemical and physical phenomena. They are associated with quantities of psychic energy that strive towards release and equilibrium. The primary driving force is instinctual energy (libido, a concept that was first narrowly, then more widely, interpreted) expressing an often-unconscious wish and moving from unpleasure to physical pleasure (pleasure principle). The predominant energy is sexual. However, other forms are present, and Freud later posited two basic instincts: sexuality in a broad sense and aggression (Eros and Thanatos). (Borchert 2006, 572)

[312] For Freud's main acknowledgement of the affinity of his thought with Schopenhauer's, see *New Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Lecture 31 *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Lecture 31 (1933). A number of writers have noted Freud's affinity with and references to Schopenhauer's work (e.g., Young and Brooke 1994).

[313] For the influence of Nietzsche on Freud and, in general, for similarities in their thought, see Golomb (1989) and Golomb et al. (1999). See especially, in Golomb et al. (1999), Golomb, "Introductory Essay: Nietzsche's New Psychology"; Chapelle, "Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis: From Eternal Return to Compulsive Repetition and Beyond"; Blondel, "Nietzsche and Freud, or: How to Be within Philosophy While Criticizing It from without"; and Lehrer, "Freud and Nietzsche, 1892-1895."

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The establishment of civilized life involves restraints on sexual activity. Moreover, the unconscious proper (in Freudian theory the accessible unconscious is called the preconscious) consists of instinctual energies, either archaic or repressed during the life of the individual, particularly in childhood (universal incestuous desires of the earliest years, adolescent frustrated dreaming, aggressive impulses, etc.). These are accessible only with special techniques. A genetic or developmental approach to mental illness is therefore essential. Thus:

> Forgetting is an active process in which painful memories are repressed. The Freudian unconscious is a pool of many repressed energies, distorted by frustration and exerting a stress on conscious reason and its shaping of the patterns of daily life. The strain produced by this stress, present in some degrees in all civilized men and women, is manifested in neurosis. It is only by exceptional luck in heredity or experience that a civilized man can avoid this tragic and potentially universal feature of modern life, the major influence of reason and the unconscious being antagonistic forces. This doom and neurosis he can escape (wholly, Freud thought at first; later he had doubts) by becoming aware of his situation and gaining insight into the particular traumatic experiences which created his neurosis.
>
> Freud began with an unquestioning conviction that insight resulted in recovery. The interpretation of dreams (which are symptoms and expression of wish fulfilment) and the process of free association can render accessible the regions of the unconscious producing the neurosis and can make a cure possible. Myths do for communities what dreams do for the individual. Later, Freud developed his ego theory, dividing the mind into three areas: the id, or basic instincts; the ego, or rational part of the mind which deals with reality; and the superego, a differentiated part of the ego which results mainly from the child's self-identification with his parents. (Borchert 2006, 572)

This triple division (to which I refer below as the "structural" point of view) overlaps with the unconscious-conscious dichotomy (to which I to refer below as the "topical" point of view), and the theory becomes obscure. Dissatisfied with it, Freud reached the conclusion that understanding of the deepest levels of the mind was not possible during his lifetime.

The main ideas of Freud's theory of the unconscious served him to describe the pathology of the human being in his civilized state, from which we all suffer. The interest of the theory lies in Freud's many applications of it. Self-deception, losses of memory, formation of symptoms, missed acts, and dreams, on which the topical point of view is founded (Freud 1900; 1901; 1915), are part of the consultation room.

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Following Wisdom (1956), we can summarize its developed form[314] as follows:

1. There are networks of ideas—attitudes, thoughts, feelings, objects imagined inside a person, and so on—that he cannot realize he possesses, because of the influence of other networks, which he also cannot realize he possesses as long as he relies only on free association. (This is ordinarily described as "unconscious" conflict.)
2. These networks and their conflicts
   (a) influence the person's conscious ideas in all situations, reproducing the mutual relationships of the networks, however difficult it might be to recognize them; and
   (b) Influence him in particular at different times, so that childhood networks and conflicts influence adult ideas.
3. These networks are related in accordance with a large group of theoretical hypotheses, including the Oedipus complex.

In this summary, Wisdom explains that (1) might be called the hypothesis of the unconscious, (2a) the might be called the guise hypothesis and (2b) the genetic hypothesis; and (3) consists of component theories about

[314] Freud's theory of the unconscious underwent some changes, the various stages of which Wisdom later on (1967) describes as follows: The first phase involved the structure of preconscious motivation and preconscious distress, the combination of which constitutes a dynamism producing neurotic disorder. The second phase brought out an additional hypothesis of degree of repression. It would indeed characterize the first phase but would not very obviously be contained in it. The third phase introduced a distinction between the preconscious and the unconscious; the theory again remained the same, but it was stated not in terms of the preconscious but in terms of the unconscious. In order to differentiate between the unconscious and the preconscious, consider the following examples: Freud attempts to smash accidentally an inkstand on his desk so that his sister would give him a more desirable one. This is not a psychoanalytic irrational phenomenon (similarly, see 1901, 208-10). So it is accommodated as an instance of ordinary, self-deceptive irrationality within the operations of the preconscious (see 1900, 541; 1915, 173, 188-89; 1923b, 20-21; and 1925, 32). The preconscious is the site of all the hidden intentions that Freud diagnoses in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (e.g. 1901, 175-76, 191, 211). It can easily become conscious, as it is only momentarily unconscious. We should add that Freud divides the *unconscious* into two parts: the profound unconscious, the source of the instinctual drives and of the phylogenetic memories that can never become conscious, and the dynamic unconscious, where repressed desires and memories abide.

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specific structures and functions. Together these three hypotheses may be regarded as constituting the theory of the unconscious (Wisdom 1956, 20).

Although psychoanalysts still believe in the theory of the unconscious outlined above, some factors amplify the theory significantly. The theory of childhood sexuality, for example, is central to psychoanalysis but, strictly speaking, it is not relevant to the theory of the unconscious. There are, in Freud's view, other constituents of the unconscious worth mentioning—for example, libido and (at a further level of abstraction) instincts. Interpretation regarded first as an aid to free association and then as an independent tool, became operative through the phenomenon of transference.

The theory of transference (which is fundamental to the later development of psychoanalysis) did not affect the theory of the unconscious. For Freud, interpretation is simply an instrument for bringing about a change in the patient. However, there is an overtone of what might be called an object-relational structure in Freud's view of the unconscious, for he does attribute to the same cause the patient's inability to recall and to yield information to the analyst (1914, 145ff). The patient's inability to yield information to the analyst arises because of his object-relationship with the analyst, and Freud's hypothesis here implies that the patient's inability to face his own conflicts has an object-relational basis, although it was William Ronald D. Fairbairn (1952), not Freud, who first articulated this theory.

The theory of repression, however, is an integral part of the theory of the unconscious and deserves, therefore, some elaboration. Freud's original view was that an idea painful to consciousness is repressed, soon to develop into an unconscious resistance. The later theory of the superego, which is largely an unconscious agent, was the result of an investigation into the nature of the repressing factor (1923, 27ff). Freud's theory is not entirely consistent, since he developed different aspects at different times and never addressed the problem of unifying them.[315] What

[315] He held that the superego—an unconscious judge and controller—arose from the internalization of the *real* experience of fear of the father. However, the theory of the unconscious as opposed to the preconscious was a theory about fantasies that were never conscious in the first place, and it implied that a motive, the distress it causes, and the repressing factors have all been at all times unconscious. The discrepancy could prove fruitful, although it has never been exploited. Wisdom remarks: "The two obvious ways out of the contradiction would be either to hold the superego has unconscious roots and is not based primarily on the real experience of a real father or somehow work out a theory that an unconscious distress might be kept unconscious by an unconscious agency which had itself

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is the bearing of the unconscious superego on the theory of the unconscious? For Freud, the superego acts as both control and defense; it controls the child's oedipal desires and defends him from the anxiety caused by castration fears. It was conceived as operating by means of the mechanism of repression. Is repression a fact or a theory about the facts? To psychoanalysts it is as familiar as to be accepted as a fact. However, the facts are simply that people forget things and there is an ascertainable motive for forgetting them. The *theory* of repression postulates a mechanism by which a force is exerted to produce this result.

We can now take a further step in investigating the theory of the unconscious. To begin with, the term "unconscious" denoted the contents of what was repressed. However, as we have seen, it was not long before it was recognized that the repressing factor was also unconscious. At this point, the scope of the term "unconscious" was doubled.

Thus, the theory of repression is an integral part of the theory of the unconscious. This should be stressed, since the theory of the unconscious undergoes a modification because of subsequent development.[316]

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been at some time conscious" (Wisdom 1967, 191). We will see below how this second option is relevant to Sartre's criticism of the censor.

[316] Melanie Klein, Freud's follower within the psychoanalytic movement, drawing on his mechanisms of isolation, undoing, splitting and projection, changed his theory radically. She showed that a structure of the unconscious alternative to the one Freud proposed is possible (1952). She is responsible for the last phase of the unconscious theory in which the idea of resistance, which has always been included in the theory, became the explicit theory of the superego. The basic idea is defense; it may be divided into (a) the classical idea of repression, and (b) the latter idea of splitting, together with projective identification. Dissidents of the movement developed different theories of the unconscious for the following reason. Freud's attitude towards the unconscious has been regarded as biological. This was not genuinely so, however, because all viable organisms display an organizing principle, not yet understood, which ensures that everything occurs in support of the continuation of life. This coordinating and formative principle underlies all organic properties, including the processes of the human unconscious, such as the imaginative and inventive faculties without which civilization could not have been developed. It has been widely recognized that this factor—although it has been emphasized in earlier views of the unconscious, for example, by Cudworth, Goethe, Fichte, Schelling, Coleridge, and Carus—is not adequately represented in the Freudian theory, perhaps because it was neglected by the physio-chemical approach to organisms dominant when Freud was shaping his ideas. "His theory of mind is overly analytic or atomistic, writes Whyte, "and must be complemented by a general and powerful principle of coordination" (Whyte 1967, 187). Three of Freud's colleagues noticed the lack of a general principle of coordination—Alfred Adler, Carl Gustav Jung, and Otto Rank. They emphasized,

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Furthermore, the correlation of the concepts of resistance and repression is so central in Sartre's criticism that some further explanation of them is required. As we have seen, they are both essential concepts in psychoanalytic theory:

> The theory of repression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests . . . . It may thus be said that the theory of psycho-analysis is an attempt to account for two striking and unexpected facts of observation which emerge whenever an attempt is made to trace the symptoms of a neurotic back to their sources in his past life: the facts of transference and resistance. (Freud 1914, 16; see also 1933, 68)

Moreover, Freud viewed resistance as evidence for partitive theory, that is, a theory that divides persons in parts:

> His resistance was unconscious too, just as unconscious as the repressed . . . . We should long ago have asked the question: *from what part of his mind* does an unconscious resistance like this arise? (Freud 1933, 68; italics added)

Freud describes resistance and repression as distinct but correlative operations; the strength of resistance is a measure of the strength of repression (Freud 1926, 157-60). Furthermore, he suggests that resistance is an action, one that is motivated by, and undertaken with a view of protecting, repression: "this action ["a permanent expenditure of energy"] undertaken to protect repression is observable in analytic treatment as *resistance*" (Freud 1926, 157). Resistance and repression are thus interlocked to form a structure of motivated self-misrepresentation.

On Sartre's view, the particular kind of structure exemplified by resistance is self-deceptive. Two issues are now in focus, then. One concerns the object of psychoanalytic interpretation: if Sartre is right, then the immediate clinical datum for psychoanalytic interpretation—its explanandum—is nothing other than self-deception. The other issue concerns the nature of psychoanalytic theory: if Sartre is right, then the concept of the unconscious is, logically, a hypothesis advanced in order to

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from different points of view, the unconscious' or the whole mind's potential integration and self-organizing power. The following criticisms of Freud's early work in particular are common to the three of them: his neglect of the individual unconscious' historical background, his overemphasis of genital sexuality's role, and his failure to note the role of factors that coordinate between the various levels of the Freudian mind as well as within each level. They addressed the unconscious differently, however, I cannot elaborate on their views here.

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explain self-deception. Before shifting our attention to Sartre's view, an understanding of Freud's justification of the unconscious as partitive, or dividing persons in parts, is necessary.

Freud's argument in his "Justification for the concept of the unconscious" is that identifying the part of the person responsible for his irrationality is much like trying to work out what another person is thinking. For if I am irrational, then the cause of my deviation from the norm of rationality must lie—given that I am essentially rational—in some source other than myself. However, since this source of my irrationality cannot be external to me in any ordinary sense of "external," it must be "within" me, but only some part of me:

> The assumption of an unconscious is, moreover, a perfectly legitimate one, inasmuch as in postulating it we are not departing a single step from our customary and generally accepted mode of thinking . . . that other people, too, possess a consciousness is an inference which we draw by analogy from their observable utterances and actions, in order to make this behavior of theirs intelligible to us . . . . Psycho-analysis demands nothing more than we should apply this process of inference to ourselves also . . . . If we do this, we must say: all the acts and manifestations which I notice in myself and do not know how to link up with the rest of my mental life must be judged as if they belonged to someone else: they are to be explained by a mental life ascribed to this other person. (Freud 1915, 169; see 1925, 32 and 1933, 70)

The problem lies with what seems to be the unpalatable consequence that we bear within our bodies unmanifest pseudo-persons, essentially like us but lacking, for example, access to a voice:

> This process of inference . . . leads logically to the assumption of another, second consciousness which is united in one's self with the consciousness one knows. (Freud 1915, 170)

Presumably, things could have been like that—a second, conscious mind is a logical possibility. However, introducing a Second Mind into all irrational contexts is self-evidently unwelcome, as Freud recognizes. He therefore says:

> We have grounds for modifying our inference about ourselves and saying that what is proved is not the existence of a second consciousness in us, but the existence of psychical acts which lack consciousness. (Freud 1915, 170; see also 1925, 32)

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This interpretation of Freud's concept of the unconscious matches the way Sartre understands psychoanalysis. It implies that psychoanalytic theory is committed to dividing the person into parts in a very serious way, which goes well beyond the aspectual sense of part involved in Sartre's account of the subject in bad faith as having a "doubling property" (Sartre 1958, 57). He therefore goes on to accuse psychoanalysis of conceptual confusion, and he attacks the particular kind of structure exemplified by resistance as self-deceptive. Let us turn to Sartre, then.

2. Sartre and the Unconscious

What first strikes us in the Sartrean theory of human reality is that it denies the unconscious. This attitude toward the unconscious lies at the heart of Sartre's philosophy, as the whole of Sartre's ethics depends on the contrast between those who conceal their freedom and those who do not. Frederick Olafson explains this point:

> In the face of freedom, the experience of which is anguish, human beings can adopt either of two fundamentally different attitudes. They can attempt to conceal their freedom from themselves by a variety of devices, *the most typical of which is belief in some form of psychological determinism*. All of these efforts are doomed to failure, Sartre argues, because human beings can try to conceal their freedom only to the extent that they recognize it. The attempt succeeds only in producing a paradoxical internal duality of consciousness in which consciousness thinks of itself as a thing at the same time that it gives covert recognition to its freedom. This state, which has to be carefully distinguished both from lying to others and from the Freudian conception of a manipulation of consciousness by subconscious forces, is called "bad faith." Its antithesis is an acceptance of one's freedom and a recognition that human beings are the absolute origin of, and are solely responsible for, their own acts. On the contrast between these two life-attitudes is based the whole of Sartre's ethic. (Olafson 1967, 291; italics added)

This explains the interest Sartre had in psychology and particularly in psychoanalysis, which was unequalled by any other existentialist philosopher (except, maybe, Karl Jaspers, who was also a psychiatrist). His interest in Freud is pervasive, from his thesis of 1927 (incorporated in *L'imagination*) to a posthumous publication (1984) of two versions from 1958 and 1959 of his script for John Huston's biographical movie on Freud. This last text is very sympathetic to Freud; Sartre affirmed later, however, in an interview with Michel Rybalka that Huston made a mistake "because you do not choose someone who doesn't believe in the

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unconscious to make a film to glorify Freud" (Sartre, in Schilpp 1981, 12). He says there that though he had later the opportunity to study Freud's doctrine more profoundly, he was "always separated from him because of his idea of the unconscious." Elsewhere, he says about Freud:

> The language that he uses engenders a *mythology* of the unconscious, which I cannot accept. I agree completely on the *facts* of disguise and repression, as facts. But the *words* "repression," "censor," "drive"—which express at one moment some kind of finalism and at the next, some kind of mechanism—I reject. (Sartre, *Situations* 9, 105; my translation)[317]

Two points should be emphasized here. The first is that Sartre rejects the Freudian metatheory or metapsychology, though Freud confers great importance to metapsychology: in 1937, Freud remarks that one can do nothing without consulting "the sorceress metapsychology . . . . Without speculating or theorizing—almost fantasizing—metapsychologically, one cannot advance one step" (Freud 1937, 240). The second point is that, even if Freud referred sometimes to the instincts as "mythological entities" (Freud 1933, 95), he considered the existence of the unconscious to be a recognized fact and never considered it to be a "mythology," as Sartre called it. As we noticed earlier, the phenomena on which the topical point of view is founded (self-deception, losses of memory, formation of symptoms, missed acts and dreams) (Freud 1900; 1910; 1915) are part of the consultation room. By attributing to the drives the role of the motivating forces of unconscious mental life and its conflicts, Freud used his most suspect theory to explain his "admitted" concepts. As what first strikes us in the Sartrean theory of human reality is that it denies the unconscious, Sartre's principal challenge will be, first, to refute the unconscious, and second, to give another explanation of the phenomena that Freud used adduced in order to justify his hypothesis of the unconscious.

In his critique of the unconscious, Sartre does not distinguish the different forms that Freud's theories of the unconscious took. His critique of Freud is stated in such a way as to make the entity which Freud calls the censor mechanism an important part of the theory under attack, whereas

[317] "Le language qu'il utilise engendre une *mythologie* de l'inconscient que je ne peux pas accepter. Je suis entiérement d'accord sur les *faits* du déguisement et de la repression, en tant que faits. Mais les *mots* de "repression", "censure", "pulsion" —qui expriment à un moment une sorte de finalisme et, le moment suivant, une sorte de mécanisme—, je les rejette."

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this concept had in fact a relatively short life span in Freud's work.[318]

The challenge that Sartre presents to Freud's view of the unconscious in *Being and Nothingness* is articulated as a philosophical contradiction within Freudian thought (Sartre 1957, 57-58). What is the meaning of the concept of the censor, which is between consciousness and the unconscious in the topical point of view? Though Sartre does not mention it, there is also a second censor between the unconscious and the preconscious (Freud 1915). However, this proliferation of censors just strengthens Sartre's argument. Is the censor a viable concept? In order to accomplish its function of suppression, the censor must know the unconscious material to be suppressed: actually, it must know it in order not to know it. The censor reintroduces the paradox of the dual unity of the deceiver and the deceived. We are back to the initial problem of self-deception, which the Freudian concept of the censor should solve: how can a person (or a censor) deceive herself on the nature of her wishes and desires? It is better to get rid of the censor and to explain how *consciousness* can be divided.

In spite of later permutations of Freudian theory, which Sartre does not mention, this problem of the dual unity of the deceiver and the deceived is not resolved from a structural point of view. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud entrusts the superego with the function of censor instead of a censor located between consciousness and the unconscious. As we shall see later, this view is closer to Sartre's view of the mechanism of self-deception, in that the superego can be considered as a critical reflective voice, which judges spontaneous experience. However, since Freud considers the superego to be a discrete entity inside the psyche, it is not clear *how* the superego censor deceives itself on the unconscious material, which it recognizes. This objection is valid for Freud's later attribution (1940) of the function of the censor to the ego as the seat of the defenses. A psychological structure (the ego) must both know and not know itself in order to suppress some emotions, ideas, and impulses. One may wonder whether the revisions that Freud made to his theory of the censor, which he attributed successively to three different psychological structures, do not reflect the difficulties which he had in understanding this function.

Sartre holds furthermore that the "a-ha" of the patient casts doubt on Freudian theory of the unconscious. All the adepts of depth therapy know the phenomenon in which the patient or client is suddenly illuminated by the truth of a certain interpretation: "A-ha," says the patient, "this is what's

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[318] For an excellent account of Sartre's argument, see Gardner (1993, 43-52). In what follows, I rely on Gardner's account.

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going on all this time; I *see* it now." For Freud, this is the moment when the unconscious material becomes conscious. If the patient recognizes herself in the analyst's interpretation, however, Sartre argues that this information could not be previously unconscious. This feeling of illumination can be explained only if "the subject has never stopped being conscious of his deep tendencies, better yet, only if these drives are not distinguished from his conscious self" (Sartre 1957, 574). Otherwise, if the complex were unconscious, who would recognize it? The conscious subject will not be capable of that, for only the conscious is accessible to him. In addition, the complex could not recognize itself, for according to Freud, it lacks understanding. Only a subject who both knows and does not know these tendencies and desires could recognize what has been hidden hitherto. Only such a subject could "resist" the analyst's attempts to reveal this material, since only he could know what to resist, against what to defend himself.

Finally, when Freudian psychology refers to drives and to instinctual forces of the profound unconscious, Sartre thinks that it confuses the essential structure of reflective acts and non-reflective acts—that reflection refers to oneself or to another person. A reification of consciousness takes place when "every time that the observed consciousnesses appear non-reflective one superimposes on them a reflective structure while carelessly pretending that it remains unconscious."[319] Thus, Sartre believes that the patient does not become conscious of unconscious tendencies but is acquainted with his spontaneous experience. The problem is not that these tendencies are too obscure, because

> [spontaneous consciousness] is penetrated by a great light without being able to express what this light is illuminating. We are not dealing with an unsolved riddle as the Freudians believe; all is there, luminous . . . . But this "mystery in broad light" is due to the fact that this possession is deprived of the means which would ordinarily permit *analysis* and *conceptualization*. It grasps everything, all at once, without shading, without relief, without connections of grandeur—not that these shades, these values, these reliefs exist somewhere and are hidden from it, but rather because they must be established by another human attitude and because they can exist only by means *of* and *for* knowledge. (Sartre 1957, 571)

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[319] Sartre, *La transcendence de l'ego*, 39; my translation. "Chaque fois que les consciences observées se donnent pour irréflechies on leur superpose une structure réflexive dont on pretend étourdiment qu'elle reste inconsciente."

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Sartre is describing pre-reflective consciousness without reflective conceptualization. However, those two are not subdivisions of consciousness. Contrary to Freud, Sartre sees consciousness as one piece, without spheres or compartments. Reflective consciousness is but pre-reflective consciousness that turns away from the world and orients itself towards the self, taking for object taking its focus to be its own passed actions, emotions, and gestures. It is through that turn-around that self-deception becomes possible, for a gap opens between the reflecting consciousness and the reflected consciousness. In order to better understand that, we should examine the Sartrean notion of consciousness.

3. Sartre's View of Consciousness and Bad Faith

In contradistinction to Freudian psyche, Sartrean consciousness does not have a substance or structure. Human reality is not motivated by any underlying drive, which drives us to satisfy the instincts. Consciousness is transparent rather than opaque. It is an opening towards being; it is *desire* or lack of plenitude yet to come, rather than an intra-psychic, autonomous system. Since consciousness creates nothingness or a gap between itself and its objects, it can be conscious of objects in the world. Otherwise, as plenitude, it could not be a presence for the other objects. Far from being a bundle of drives, a person takes a stand on being. Consciousness implies its partner, the world. It is intentional in a Husserlean way, that is, it is always *conscious of* something.

Sartrean consciousness is also *consciousness for*. In other words, it temporizes. It is conscious of a movement out of a past that was its own reality towards a future that is not yet. On this subject, Sartre says that consciousness is doubly "negating," or doubly conscious of itself as *not being* its objects. Consciousness knows that it is *not* its objects, and knows that consciousness and its objects are *not* what they are going to be. This movement is perceived both in terms of objects in the world and in terms of a personal project of being, of a way to *pro-ject* itself in the future through those objects, (in French, "pro-jetter" means, literally, "pro-throwing").

Because consciousness inserts a lack at the heart of being, it can conceive of a future that is different from the present. We all perceive objects in the world according to our project of being. We do not create the world, but, to take an example, a mountain is not the same thing for a mountaineer and a geologist. My project includes also all my tastes, all the habits though which I define myself in the world. At the level of pre-reflective consciousness, one discovers a personality in the concrete

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choices that shed light on its fundamental project. The project is not *behind* this concrete richness but *in* it:

> The value of things, their instrumental role, their proximity and their real distance (which have no relation to their spatial proximity and distance) do nothing more than to outline my image—that is, my choice. My clothing . . . whether neglected or cared for, carefully chosen or arbitrary, my furniture, the street in which I live, the city in which I reside, the books with which I surround myself, the recreation which I enjoy, everything which is mine (that is, finally, the world of which I am perpetually conscious, at least by way of a meaning implied by the object which I look at or use): all this informs me of my choice—that is, of my being. (Sartre 1957, 463)

These pre-reflective choices, which include my culinary and clothing tastes as well as my attitude toward the other, may never have been conceived reflectively. It is possible that I do not know, to take an example, why I prefer my steak well done rather than rare or why I prefer to suffer from heat than from the cold. According to Sartre, however, all my concrete choices, all my ways of being, doing, and having, are indices for my fundamental project, for the meaning of my being in the world.

The pre-reflective choices might not be better known reflectively than they are in Freudian psychoanalysis. In effect, it is easy to err regarding the meaning of my various manners of doing, being, and having, especially if they are part of the project of deceiving myself. For example, I may think that I am a generous and warm person, while in fact, this warmth is hypocritical and this generosity is a way of controlling others by making myself likable. However, Sartre affirms that my aggressive underlying intentions are not unconscious. One can find them in the manner in which I do the warm and generous acts, and probably also in the way in which I complain when I do not receive the anticipated reactions. According to Sartre, however, to be is to act, and to act is to have the intention of acting. In fact, there is no difference between the act and the intention to act, for "our acts . . . inform us of our intentions" (1957, 484). If I could study myself while I accomplish those acts that I reflectively designated as "warm and generous," I would discover their true nature. The problem is that I do not want to see this truth, as I prefer to maintain the myth of my generosity. If others would doubt my intentions, I will defend myself vehemently, demonstrating thereby that I recognize in a way the truth of their affirmations.

How is self-deception possible, therefore, according to Sartrean concepts? Self-deception is made possible by the gap that exists between

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pre-reflective consciousness and reflective consciousness. Even if the same person acts spontaneously and conceives of her actions reflectively, these two acts of consciousness are separated by the same nothingness that separates consciousness of its objects in the world. In other words, it is only by not being my spontaneous past self that I can conceive this self reflectively. I am not it, of course, when I reflectively designate it. Bad faith, or the reflective lie to oneself about the nature of reality, is possible essentially because: "The reflective attitude . . . involves a thousand possibilities of error . . . in so far that it aims at constituting across that consciousness reflected-on veritable psychic objects which are only probable objects . . . and which can even be false objects" (1957, 471). Happily, the basic motivation, in contradistinction to reflective consciousness, "can never be deceived about itself" (471). It is therefore always possible to liberate oneself by coming back to the pre-reflective level and renaming those objects.

What is the purpose of consciousness when it conceives itself, rightly or falsely, reflectively? In order to answer this question, we have to take into consideration the Sartrean idea of the aim of consciousness in its reflective and pre-reflective modes. In contradistinction to Freudian reductionism of meaning to psycho-physiological drives, Sartre affirms that the creation of value is the prime human goal. We try to use the world in order to extract from it our sense of self. Sartre labels this attempt to create a self through objects in the world a "circuit of selfness" (140). Consciousness perceives its "possibilities" in this particular world: for example, consciousness perceives its thirst concretely as this glass-of-water-to-drink or its writing project as this-paper-to-write. While Freud reduces human significance to neuro-physiological forces and evolutionary goals, Sartre attaches an inherent meaning to each concrete human act or movement. It is a teleological signification, which finds interest in the ends to come rather than in past causes, though the past can figure in its designation of ends to come.

Thus, without denying the physiological data of the human condition, one can never say that there is first a drive that strives to satisfaction through an object. Consciousness is desire or lack of a plenitude, but this desire is discovered in the world and not in the recesses of the self. This desire is not primarily sexual in nature, even if it can include sexuality among its modes of expression. It is rather a desire *to be* more than a desire for pleasure or for cessation of tension. This is an ontological desire: consciousness does not *have* it, rather, it *is* it.

However, if consciousness is desire, which desire is it? In its concrete mode, the answer varies with every living human being, as each

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fundamental project is different. Ontologically speaking, however, it is a desire to be a substantial self and nevertheless to remain a free consciousness. This is the meaning of Sartre's phrase, "man is the being whose project is to be God" (566). God, the *ens causa sui* of Aristotelian or Thomist philosophy, is precisely this combination of a substantial being and a transcendent consciousness. Sartre calls this desire which human beings have to become the missing God "In-itself-For-itself," because it would combine the substantiality of an object ("in-itself," the material world) and human liberty ("for-itself"). Unfortunately, "man is a useless passion" (615): a human being cannot reach his goal because consciousness projects itself always forward towards the future, it never stops and thus, cannot become a static datum.

Reflectivity is responsible for numerous distortions, whose ontological aim is to create the illusion of a substantive liberty, the In-itself-For-itself. These distortions enable us to avoid liberty and responsibility. Sartre names this escape from reality "bad faith." Although bad faith is *stricto sensu* an ontological category, it is also charged with ethical connotations. For example, Sartre accuses anti-Semites and Colonialists of bad faith. A notable exception is the bad faith that manifests itself in mental illnesses: discovering the structures of bad faith in the client's fundamental project does not mean that one judges the client, which would clearly be inadequate. In other words, even if it is always possible to choose the manner in which one lives through a given situation, it is not always possible to have a viable choice (Laing and Cooper 1971, 5).

The bad faith to which we all succumb at one moment or the other can take two forms, which correspond to the two aspects of human reality. On one side, one finds facticity, the contingent world which I did not create but which I choose to live in one way or the other. Facticity includes my own past as much as external circumstances. On the other side, one finds liberty, my choice of objects in the world as a way of realizing my own fundamental project of being. The full acknowledgement of my liberty includes the recognition that nothing, not me, nor traditional values, nor God, have *a priori* status as value: I create value by bestowing it. I am in bad faith when I adopt a dishonest attitude regarding reality: if I pretend that I am free in a world without facts or, alternatively, that I am a fact in a world without liberty.

If I wish for whatever reason to escape my facticity, I risk being dishonest in proclaiming myself completely free to do or to be whatever I want, free from all connection to my past. The dreamer who always awaits "another day" and the schizophrenic who completely ignores reality are examples of this form of bad faith. The client who refuses to see her past

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acts as choices or who refuses to accept real present circumstances tries to negate facticity. We can say that the "defense" through denial is exactly the attempt to escape facticity.

The other form of bad faith, escape from freedom, implies a desire to make the world and my past or my character determinant factors for my life. The client who sees the past as caused rather than chosen adopts this form of bad faith, as well as the person who is afraid of change because it implies breaking with their past.

This idea that the human being is essentially free within a situation does not imply, nonetheless, a rationalist voluntarism. First, I can chose myself on choose myself to be in an emotional, imaginative, or sexual, rational, or irrational mode. Second, choice does not mean "will." Pre-reflective consciousness is the basic motivation. According to Sartre, this motivation cannot in any case be assimilated to the will, which is reflective. Even language can mislead for it originates "for the other" and is more often reflective rather than pre-reflective. Sartre affirms that "voluntary deliberation is always a deception" (450). "When I deliberate, the chips are down," because I have already chosen the values on which I will found my deliberation (451).

Thus Sartre and Freud agree in viewing what is going on when one makes a decision as the superficial manifestation of a deeper intention. The difference is that for Freud, this deep intention is unconscious, whilst for Sartre, the basic intention is conscious even if it has never been expressed, even when the expression (which is reflective) appears to contradict the basic choice. Finally, I did what I wanted to do. It was a conscious choice, but one that eluded the control of reflective will.

Sartre, no more than Freud, believes that a fundamental change is easy. It is difficult not because of the tenacity of the libidinal attachments or of the presence of unconscious conflicts. Rather, because every change of a detail in an individual's life is a challenge for the fundamental project: what appears to be the least significant change implies a disruption of being-in-the-world. To change the way in which I walk is to change my orientation towards life. We are radically free, writes Betty Cannon, we are not capriciously free (Cannon 1993, 61).

Now that the each thinker has been understood apart, I propose to focus on both thinkers' affinities and differences.

4. Sartre *versus* Freud

There are, however, similarities between Sartre and Freud. Robert C. Solomon notes:

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> The ongoing battle between Freud and Sartre and their followers often fails to take note of the similar complexity of these two great thinkers. Their opposing languages of "mechanism" and "bad faith," and their supposedly antagonistic views on the existence of "the Unconscious," tend to distract from their mutual concern, undercutting the "transparency" of Cartesian self-reflection. (Solomon 1999, 256n32)

Sartre himself points to some more specific similarities between his view and Freud's (1957, 569-71). These include the idea that the personality is unified, that division can occur within this unity, and that this division implies the need for analysis, because once the problem is known a solution becomes possible. Both find a meaning in the symptoms of mental illness, and both interpret the surface psychic manifestations (gestures, isolated acts, symptoms, tastes, all constitutive elements of concrete lived experience) in terms of a profound purpose. According to Sartre, "a gesture refers to a *Weltanschauung* and we *sense* it" (457). However, in Sartre's metapsychology the profound goal manifests itself in concrete choices, whereas for Freud one has to discover it *behind* those choices, in the instinctual life and the unconscious.

Neither Sartre nor Freud gives the subject of the analysis a privileged position regarding his subjective material, but for different reasons. For Freud, the analyst must fight the resistance of the patient in order to make conscious the unconscious material. For Sartre, an abyss separates spontaneous experience from reflective consciousness, but as the same person can know both these states, the final intuition of the subject of the analysis can be considered definitive. The therapist or counselor can take her client as a partner in the common project of exploration of what Sartre calls the "fundamental project of being."

Both Freudian and Sartrean psychoanalysts agree that the individual is a non-fragmented whole. The "fundamental project" has the same importance for the latter as the "complex" has for the former. As the Freudian psychoanalyst looks in childhood for events, which lead to this organized group of ideas and memories that constitutes the complex, the existentialist psychoanalyst wants to discover "the original choice" through which the client adopted his own vision of the world. The fundamental project and the complex both refer to the interpersonal world of childhood. Moreover, the two forms of psychoanalysis attempt to discover, according to Sartre's terms, "the crucial event of childhood and the psychic crystallization around this event" (569). Nevertheless, the original other, as libidinal object in Freudian psychoanalysis is very different from the original other as the first person who sees me and calls my name in existential psychoanalysis. The fundamental project is

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distinguished from the complex: the latter is unconscious and subject to the laws of nature, the former is conscious and subject to a permanent revision or even to a radical transformation. It is a *project*, a self-projection forward, from the past to the future.

The division within the unity is not the same for existential psychoanalysis and for Freud, for reflective consciousness and pre-reflective consciousness refer to the same conscious subject. Freud compares the psyche to a group of principalities at war—consciousness and the unconscious, from the "topical" point of view, the ego, superego and id, from the "structural" point of view. Finally, access to the knowledge that enables one to find a solution implies the submission of pre-reflective consciousness to the reflective consciousness, according to Sartre, whereas it implies the transformation of the unconscious into conscious for Freud. Even if a therapeutic practice based on Sartre's metatheory will integrate some useful aspects of Freudian theory, it will adopt a resolutely contrary approach in the treatment of clients, whom it considers as conscious of the experiences that they will have to confront reflectively in order to revise their fundamental project of being.

Despite similarities, radical differences separate the two approaches, as Sartre notes in his criticism of the Freudian "empirical" psychoanalysis in *L'être et le néant* (616-635). Sartre rejects Freud's determinism, his insistence on the unconscious locus of psychic life, his mechanical-biological explanations. He rejects the idea that nature and education, more than the original choice of a mode of being in the world, enable one to explain human behavior. He rejects the resort to a psychobiological residue (the libido) in order to justify human motivations. Finally, he severely criticizes the notion of universal symbols (for example, snakes or water), and the nosology or classification of illnesses of Freudian psychoanalysis. As a perspective for psychoanalysis, Sartre proposes to reveal an individual's original choice of being in all its concrete richness, for this choice, though rooted in the concrete world, cannot be reduced to it. Due to the changing, even transformable, nature of this choice, existential psychoanalysis must be flexible in its interpretation of symbols and symptoms, not only for different individuals, but also for a particular individual at various stages of the therapy.

Though psychosexuality has a capital place in human development, it does not constitute for Sartre its motivating force. For pleasure as the organism's purpose, Sartre substitutes consciousness' tentative desire to establish itself as a value within concrete situations in the world. This is the "circuit of selfness," in which one uses a relation to objects and the other in order to create for oneself a solid sense of self. Existential

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psychoanalysis, nevertheless, aims at grasping the meaning of an individual's concrete choices as elements of the project of creation of value. In this system, general nosology is inefficient. According to Sartre, existential psychoanalysis should attempt to understand not the general structure of illusions or other symptoms, but rather the particular structure of each case, for example, why this particular individual thinks he is Napoleon, and not Christ or Einstein.

All these elements indicate a difference at root between Sartrean and Freudian metatheories. As Gerald N. Izenberg remarks (1976), all of Freud and Sartre's divergences stem from their respective conceptions of meaning. For Freud, meaning is evolutionary and neuro-physiological. For Freud, meaning is reduced to the game of physical forces inside the human organism, combined with biological tendencies and laws. Behind the conscious life the unconscious phantasm is hiding, which is hiding the primary process, which finally is hiding the instinct considered by Freud to be "a border-concept between the animic and the somatic" (Freud 1915, 167).

For Sartre, the pleasure principle and the death instinct are both replaced by the human desire to create values, which do not provide *a priori* pleasure or pain, and which can be aggressive or pacific. For Freud's evolutionary neuro-physiological paradigm, Sartre substitutes an investigation of the intentional consciousness that creates meaning. Existential psychoanalysis, according to which the laws of scientific materialism do not apply to the world of consciousness and motives should not be reduced to scientific causality, liberates itself completely from these ideas. It opposes to the Freudian conception of the past as a determinant force an understanding of the past and of the future as meaningful in terms of choices and values. To the drive as a biological instinct, Sartre prefers the *desire*, later the *need*, as lack(ing), which is found not in the biological withdrawal of the self, but on the face of the world when it fits incarnated consciousness. Sartre replaces the mechanistic universe of the sciences of nature with the human universe of phenomenological investigation and ontological categories discovered within the concrete existence. Hence, when Freud and Sartre qualify the symptom as "meaningful," they do not mean the same thing.

The relationships that Sartrean consciousness has with its objects and the other are evidently not similar to those the Freudian psyche has. The psyche is opaque while consciousness is transparent. Freud imagines a third substance, a psychic glue that links the psyche with its objects: the libido, or general sexual libido, which emanates from a realm of instinctual life outside the reach of consciousness. In Freud's system, the

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other is not a subject, but rather an object for the satisfaction of my needs. In the relationship between persons, as in everything else, the motivation comes from the obscure realm of the unconscious, from unconscious drives and desires, conflicts, and complexes. At the end of the psychosexual development, the individual appears as an autonomous intra-psychic system. Without the intervention of psychoanalysis, the structural game between the ego, the superego and the id might stay essentially the same, like those infantile experiences, which Freud calls "transferences."

When he describes the ontological structures of being, Sartre presents consciousness as open to its objects. Even if it can divide itself into reflective and pre-reflective modes, it remains in one piece, since it is the same consciousness, which acts spontaneously and conceives reflectively its actions. Through an effort of attention, therefore, it is possible to decrypt my project of being and change. Consciousness is consciousness *of* and *for* a particular future, which I attempt to bring into existence. Contrary to the Freudian psyche, Sartrean consciousness is not delimited and determined by the past. It becomes, therefore, crucially important for existential psychoanalysis to understand in an individual's project the future, which is its meaning, no less than its past, which is its background. Moreover, relationships with the other are not simply external and contingent. The other affects me in my being, and I have with him an internal and reciprocal relation of being to being. There can be at that point reason for conflict, especially if I try to use the other in my inauthentic desire for substantive liberty, but one can also witness the birth of a real intimacy and true reciprocity. (The early Sartre insists on the negative aspects of the ego, but Hazel Barnes remarks that there is a positive side to the Sartrean ego [Barnes 1991], and in his biography of Gustave Flaubert [1971], Sartre recognizes the existence of positive possibilities for the development of the ego.)

We can say that the main difference between Freud's psychobiological metatheory and Sartre's ontological metatheory is the following: although both rely originally on phenomenological analysis and description, Sartre aims at discovering the ontological structures of human existence that manifest themselves in experience, whereas Freud attempts to discover the metabiological forces that lie behind human experience. As a theory that is "close to experience," Sartre's analysis fits better with various recent psychoanalytical approaches.[320] However, in contradistinction to many of these thinkers, Sartre proposes a metatheory, a philosophical investigation

[320] Harry Guntrip (1969); Donald W. Winnicott (1965a; 1965b; 1971); W. R. D. Fairbain (1952); Michael Balint (1969); Harry Stack Sullivan (1940; 1953); Heinz Kohut (1977; 1984); see Cannon (1993, chap. 4).

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that goes past phenomenological analysis in order to elucidate the general structures of human reality. This enables one to understand psychological troubles as variations on the human problem, as manifestations of the various ways in which consciousness encounters the material world, the other and the self of reflective analysis, and in which it confronts or tries to avoid the anguish of responsible freedom.

Cannon (1991) summarizes the differences that a Sartrean perspective could introduce in the practice of psychotherapy. Her work is nearly unique within the literature on existential psychoanalysis. Existential psychoanalysis is an example of a metapsychology that recasts psychoanalytic theory in terms of essentially philosophical concepts, which are taken to be psychologically explanatory. Since its introduction to the English speaking world in the fifties by Rollo May, however, it has been dominated by a Heideggerian perspective (Binswanger 1963; Boss 1963, especially part 2), a Husserlean perspective (the phenomenological psychologists of the University of Duquesne; Kockelman 1967), or by an eclectic perspective.[321]

A form of psychotherapy based uniquely on Sartre's ideas seems to be rare. It is true that Sartre writes:

> This psychoanalysis has not yet found its Freud. At most we can find the foreshadowing of it in certain particularly successful biographies . . . . But it matters little to us whether it now exists; the important thing is that it is possible. (Sartre 1957, 575).

However, Cannon contends that we have waited too long for "a systematic application of Sartre's ideas to clinical theory and practice" (Canon 1993, 14). Thus, filling the gap with her book, she summarizes the differences that a Sartrean perspective could introduce in the practice of psychotherapy (Cannon 1993, 62-69).

Out of the seven she lists, one is especially relevant to the controversy over the unconscious. A therapist who adopts the Sartrean vision of consciousness instead of the Freudian psyche does not consider therapy a technique intended to make the unconscious conscious, but as a means of bringing a beneficial reflection on the pre-reflective experience of the patient, till then deformed or non-identified. Regarding the phenomena of self-deception, where Freud sees the indication of unconscious forces and processes, the existential therapist interprets them in the light of the gap

[321] Berg (1955), Kaam (1969), Bugental (1965), Keen (1970), Yalom (1980), who uses the ideas of Husserl (1931), Heidegger (1962), Jaspers (1963, especially part 4) and Sartre (1957, part 4, chap. 2, and 568-69).

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between reflective and pre-reflective consciousnesses and of the structures of bad faith.

The structures of bad faith—to lie to oneself by saying that one is free in a world without facts or by saying that one is a fact within a world without liberty—can lead to a false conception of reality, which makes me resist consciousness in certain areas. From an existential point of view, this resistance is not tantamount to suppression or repression in the unconscious. It is possible that a person suffering from the first kind of bad faith would seem to have a suppressed knowledge of passed wounds. Whereas a person who suffers from the second kind of bad faith would seem to have suppressed her capacity to act in an autonomous and efficient manner. In fact, there is no suppression in the sense of "rejecting in the unconscious." It is rather a selective attention-inattention regarding the past or the future, founded on a particular fundamental choice of being. It is a reflective distortion, not an unconscious process.

The existential therapist does not look for an unconscious complex in order to explain the "pathology" of the client. She explores the ontological structures of this client's project of being; a project that she assumes is transparent and free. Its goal is not pleasure (even if pleasure can be included as a subsidiary goal), but the creation of sense, of a "self" as value. Because the fundamental project is known consciously, but not necessarily reflectively and even less precisely, the therapist refuses to consider the subject as privileged in his *knowledge* of the fundamental project at the beginning of the therapy, and at the same time respects "the final intuition of the subject as decisive" (Cannon 1993, 574). Since reflective and reflected consciousness are the same consciousness, there is no reason to suppose that the client can understand the strategies of bad faith and of reflective distortion which obscure the present reflective process, and can see what is really going on. This is, of course, the view of therapists, such as Cannon. It is worth mentioning, though, that Sartre never said that self-knowledge was impossible without the help of another, as testifies his own existential psychotherapy, which is none other than his autobiographical novel, *The Words.*

To the best of my knowledge, Shlomit C. Schuster undertook the most extensive work of applying Sartre to philosophical counseling.[322] She thinks that Sartre's legacy lies elsewhere, however:

> At present, most applications of Sartre's philosophy to psychotherapy and counseling do not practice positive reciprocal relations and anti-psychiatric understandings as proposed in Sartre's work. However, Betty Cannon, an

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[322] Schuster (1995; 1997; 1998a; 1998b; 1999; 2003, chap. 6).

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> extraordinary Sartrean psychotherapist, considers that in Existentialist psychotherapy the therapist *may* abandon the neutral position of witness "when what the client needs is not neutrality but rather an experience of positive reciprocity" (1991, 116). In the new profession of philosophical practice and counseling, the dialectical relation between the counselee and counselor is equivalent to the relation of positive reciprocity Sartre proposes as the ideal relation between people (Achenbach 1984; 1985; 1992; Schuster 1991; 1996). The future of Sartrean psychoanalysis depends not so much on people occupying themselves with intellectual existential analysis of human behavior in various practices, as it does on a mutual, reciprocal relation with the subjects involved. (Schuster 1998a, 28)

In a previous paper (1995), Schuster explains that she has combined existential psychoanalysis with Sartre's existential philosophy and thus brought about "philosophical psychoanalysis."[323] The counselors who are interested in implementing Sartre's philosophy *à la lettre* should be aware of the following problem that may arise from his view of irrationality.

[323] See Schuster (1999, 101-7, especially 107, and 139-44, chap. 7; 2003, chap. 6) and Raabe (2001, 63). In *The Philosopher's Autobiography: A Qualitative Study* (2003), Schuster describes several instances of philosophical psychoanalysis. Her own psychoanalytic method for discussing the autobiographies of eminent philosophers originates in the psychoanalytic understandings of Sartre, Gerd B. Achenbach, Marcia Cavell, and narrative and qualitative theories. Unlike Cannon's interpretation and use of Sartre's existential psychoanalytic method in psychotherapy practice, Schuster finds it unnecessary to preserve much of Freudian or Neo-Freudian psychoanalytic methods, techniques, terminology, and labeling lingo. Schuster practices in private philosophical counseling sessions a similar approach, though not methodologically bound as in the abovementioned autobiographical study. Sessions in which the use of Sartre's thought is evident she described in the chapter called "Yoni," one of the eight case studies found in *Philosophy Practice: An Alternative to Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1999). See also Howard (2000, 341-55) for a possible use of Sartre within philosophical counseling. "There is a striking similarity between philosophical counseling and the general psychotherapeutic model known as existential therapy," writes Peter Raabe. As to the question of whether existential psychotherapy or philosophical counseling make better use of philosophy, Raabe refers to two sources. Tim LeBon, an existentialist therapist, who writes that existential psychotherapy "is perhaps the most advanced and well-worked out form of philosophical counseling," and Ran Lahav, who suggests that "only in philosophical counseling is the dialogue of a philosophical nature" (Raabe 2001, 85).

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5. Sebastian Gardner's Criticism of Sartre's View

Sebastian Gardner's *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* is a defense of psychoanalysis against Sartre's criticisms, which "represents the most serious line of objection which it has to face" (Gardner 1993, 227). It defends the view that "psychoanalytic theory provides the most penetrating and satisfying explanation of irrationality," with an "existential" point of departure, which is that "irrationality exists at the level of personal experience, where it is directly recognized." It is unnecessary as well as difficult to reconstruct here Gardner's arguments, though his major points are worth mentioning.

Part one shows that "if the unconscious being is conceived as a Second Mind, it makes the Censor Criticism irrelevant to psychoanalytic theory" (Gardner 1993, 87). Part 2 demonstrates that Sartre's construction of psychoanalysis, as a response to self-deception, is a mistake. Gardner quotes Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire:

> In Sartre, for instance, the critique of the psychoanalytic unconscious misconstrues the latter's radical heterogeneity by reducing unconscious contents to the misunderstood fringes and implications of present intention . . . the questions thus posed (bad faith, conscious reticence, misunderstanding, pathology of the field of consciousness, etc.) . . . we characterize as marginal in relation to a domain which is properly psychoanalytic. (Laplanche and Leclaire 1972, 129)

He adds that to say that the properly psychoanalytic domain possesses a "radical heterogeneity" is to reject Sartre's assumption that psychoanalytic theory is a theory of self-deception. Sartre's basic error is to have supposed, in taking Freudian explanation to rival explanation of bad faith, that there is *but one* range of irrational phenomena to be accounted for; in fact, self-deception and psychoanalytic pathology are very different and cannot both be accounted for by one theory. This may be expressed by saying that the phenomenologist's layer of implicit meaning does not comprehend the unconscious proper.[324] To establish this, however, it must be shown that psychoanalytic explananda and explanations are at a significant remove from self-deception. For Gardner believes that Sartre is at least correct in thinking that the combination of ignorance and motivation uncovered in psychoanalytic interpretation has the outward appearance of self-deception. For among Freud's earliest psychoanalytic

[324] On the relation of psychoanalysis to phenomenology, see Ricoeur (1970, 390-418).

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conceptualizations is the characterization of the hysteric as one who lies also to herself (Freud 1895, 61). Moreover, many writers are quick to identify unconscious motivation and self-deception, if only implicitly. For example, Hartmann writes, "A great part of psychoanalysis can be described as a theory of self-deceptions" (Hartmann 1975, 64). Finally, Freud does not employ the concept of self-deception, although he confronts the concept of contradictory beliefs in some places (1909, 194n1; 1916-1917, 101; 1895, 117n1).

Without assessing Gardner's opinion of Sartre's criticism, one illuminating point is worth elaborating on. Briefly stated, Sartre's view is to be rejected, according to Gardner, because it leads us to an "impossible" picture of the mind, of the sort that Sartre is committed to (Gardner 1993, 2). He labels this the "metaphysical" strategy exemplified by Sartre's account of bad faith, and finds it elsewhere in Continental philosophy (Gardner 1993, 6). Generalizing from Sartre's views of irrationality to neighboring views, and calling them "metaphysical accounts of motivation," he thinks that there is undoubtedly something compelling about the underlying conception of irrationality to which they give expression. It is both "a *romantic* and a *tragic* perspective": it suggests that irrationality is so deeply bound up with what it is to be a person that irrationality is a necessary, legitimate way of pursuing one's destiny as a human being. Metaphysical accounts of motivation have other, more logical attractions. However, for obvious reasons, "unless one accepts in full the metaphysics behind such stories, not much can be taken from them" (Gardner 1993, 39).

I would like to elaborate on this point because I believe it should not be taken lightly. It is so often assumed that psychoanalysis commits us to undesirable metaphysical views, whereas it is often overlooked that Sartre's alternative philosophy does so too, and sometimes without the same benefits.

Highly schematically, Gardner reconstructs Sartre's concept of bad faith as follows. We begin with the assumption that there are two modes of being: that of consciousness, for-itself, and of the physical world, in-itself. Persons possess both. The distinction between for-itself and in-itself cuts across persons, and supplies them with two sets of properties: persons as for-itself are transcendent (they are free, spontaneous, active, engaged with possibility, lack enduring properties), and as in-itself they have facticity (they are also objective, embodied, public, situated, open to characterization). The basic human motivational story, or "fundamental project," arises from the necessity of persons' reconciling these two radically different modes of being. This necessity comes about because consciousness, which is for-

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itself, experiences itself as "lack(ing)," as "insufficiency" of being, relative to in-itself, and is compelled to try to rectify this deficiency. The fundamental human project, undertaken in response to the initial condition of ontological inequality, has as its goal overcoming the disparity of modes of being. Such a resolution is however a metaphysical impossibility, which means that the project is strictly futile, and its manifestations necessarily irrational (see Baldwin 1979-80). Sartre maintains nevertheless that to a limited extent the two modes of being of persons, transcendence and facticity, "are and ought to be capable of a valid coordination." Bad faith is distinguished by the fact that the individual in bad faith "does not wish either to coordinate them or to surmount them in a higher synthesis"; contradictorily, they "affirm facticity as being transcendence and transcendence as being facticity" (Sartre 1958, 56).

Consider the waiter in Sartre's famous passage from *Being and Nothingness*, who is "playing at *being* a waiter," and "plays with his condition in order to *realize* it." He seeks to "be immediately a café waiter in the sense that this inkwell *is* an inkwell," to realize "a being-in-itself of the café waiter" (Sartre 1958, 59-60). The properties of his behavior "jar" with those of consciousness; consciousness is ill expressed in his behavior. The kernel of bad faith consists then in representing oneself in thing-like terms, i.e., representing the relation between oneself and one's states and actions as if it were the same sort of relation as holds between a physical object and its properties. Forms of behavior manifesting bad faith mimic thinghood because they misexpress one's nature as a conscious being. Bad faith is therefore a structure of motivated self-misrepresentation defined not by a configuration of propositional attitudes, as is strong self-deception, as Gardner defines it,[325] but by a certain species of motive (the

[325] Gardner differentiates between strong self-deception and weak self-deception (Gardner 1993, 18-19). He thinks that the basic feature of all cases covered by the ordinary use of the term "self-deception" is motivated self-misrepresentation. More precisely, all self-deception involves what can be called a structure of motivated self-misrepresentation, which he defines as follows: A structure in which a psychological state S prevents the formation of another state S', where (i) S involves a misrepresentation of the subject, (ii) this feature is necessary for S to prevent the formation of S', and (iii) this structure answers to the subject's motivation. In this definition, it is left open how such a structure may operate. A subject is self-deceived when he *believes one thing in order not to believe another*. Therefore, we seem to have: Self-deception is a structure of motivated self-misrepresentation in which S and S' are *beliefs* and the process occurs through an intention of the subject. This identifies what Gardner called *strong* self-deception.

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fundamental project) and means (the refusal to effect a coordination of modes of being; self-thingification). Its connection with self-deception is consequently contingent: bad faith, as in the case of the waiter, is fundamentally a form of self-misexpression.

Gardner's strategy is to evaluate Sartre's account in relation to ordinary, common sense, or folk-psychology, as this is also the parameter according to which he assesses psychoanalysis. He believes that the differences between Sartre's account and ordinary psychology are deep and evident. First, Sartre's is a view of human irrationality as motivated by *metaphysics* rather than psychology. Put another way: psychology is for Sartre the *vehicle* of metaphysics. Whereas the metaphysical characterizations of persons typically considered in analytical philosophy (such as those of Descartes and John Locke) do no more than set the scene for psychology, and leave questions of motivation open, Sartre's wholly determines motivation. It does this because specific motivational axioms follow directly from Sartre's metaphysics of persons. Sartre's vision can therefore soak up, explanatorily, any given instance of human behavior; particularly, of course, irrational phenomena, since these, involving as they do self-contradiction, stand as emblems of the contradiction that is constitutive of human existence (and thereby, for Sartre, serve to confirm his metaphysic of persons).[326]

Second, whereas in ordinary psychology the origin of rationality is located in the *conative* powers of the mind, for Sartre it is located in the mind's *representational* powers: specifically, in persons' representation of themselves. All that is needed for Sartre's account is bare self-consciousness, which implies that even if persons had neither infancy nor biological identity—that is, neither an opaque past nor needs—they would still be irrational.

Third, Sartre's explanation posits *irrational desire*, in the sense of desire whose *content* is irrational, in the form of desire for the metaphysically

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Weak self-deception, by contrast, is any structure of motivated self-misrepresentation that does not involve an intention.

[326] Gardner uses this as an argument against Sartre. In fact, he directs toward Sartre the argument Karl Popper used against Freud (Popper 1963) without mentioning Popper (Gardner 1993, 236-38). Gardner believes that metaphysical motivational stories such as Sartre's may consequently seem to have the advantage over empirically constructed stories, such as psychoanalytic theory's, that they never risk running out of explanation; whereas empirical theories may well have to adduce contingent constitutional factors at the end of the day. However, the "explanatory totalitarianism of metaphysical stories" may equally be a reason for viewing them with suspicion (Gardner 1993, 253n45).

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impossible transformation of for-itself into in-itself. Ordinary psychology, by contrast, assumes for the greater part only desires whose content is roughly rational, and explains irrationality by assigning *deviant causal histories* to such desires.

In the first two respects, psychoanalytic theory is aligned with ordinary psychology: its motivational assumptions do not derive from metaphysical commitments, and it explains irrationality by referring primarily to conation rather than cognition. However, psychoanalytic explanation shares the third feature of Sartrean explanation: at least in its full Kleinian form, psychoanalytic theory posits irrational desires, under the name of fantasies.

Sartre's account of bad faith can be read as exemplifying a general method of metaphysical explanation of irrationality. On such accounts, the origin of irrationality is something like a *contradiction in reality*, in the following sense: irrationality is explained by the incapacity of persons' powers of representation to provide a consistent representation of reality, the inconsistent representation that produces irrational phenomena being germane to, and systematically caused by, the very attempt to represent. On such a view, inconsistent representation is not optional for the mind, but forced upon it: persons are brought viciously into contradiction with themselves and made to be irrational through being made to represent reality. In Sartre's account, the relevant bit of representation-recalcitrant reality is one's own nature as a person.

Gardner finds other instances of the same strategy in various thinkers. In Hegel (1977, sec. 78-84, 166-75), "from whom Sartre takes much of his conception of the fundamental project." In Friedrich Nietzsche (1967, especially sec. 7): "At the time of *The Birth of Tragedy* the world's own irrationality feeds directly the irrational Dionysian 'art-states' of the human subject." Nietzsche's vision of the Greeks is substantially borne out by Eric Dodds' account, in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, of the Homeric concept of fate, "a direct injection, originating in supernatural agency, of irrationality into the mind of the individual." In Martin Heidegger (1977, 135-37), "who suggests that, because Being is 'concealed,' Dasein is especially subjected to the rule of mystery and the oppression of errancy." In Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 168-9, 377-83): "There is in human existence a principle of indeterminacy." Arguably, also in Jacques Lacan (Gardner 1993, 39). [328]

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[328] Gardner thinks that in these terms Lacan's "decentered subject" is not a psychoanalytic concept: it is due to the concepts under which human beings fall *qua* language-users being *unaufgehoben*, and has more to do with Hegel's notion of alienation than psychological non-integration or conflict (Gardner 1993, 278).

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Gardner asserts that, speculatively, one might trace these metaphysics of irrationality back to Immanuel Kant's bifurcation of human personality into phenomenal and noumenal aspects: "Kant was arguably the first to insist on, not human duality (a much older thought), but the impossibility of fully coherent self-representation" (Gardner 1993, 253). He concludes:

> Whatever one may think of such accounts, there is undoubtedly something compelling about the underlying conception of irrationality to which they give expression. It is both a *romantic* and a *tragic* perspective: it suggests that irrationality is so deeply bound up with what it is to be a person that irrationality is a necessary, legitimate way of pursuing one's destiny as a human being. Metaphysical accounts of motivation have other, more logical attractions: they solve the Special Problem of irrationality;[329] provide determinate explanations of all human desires; and with their addition, ordinary psychology is guaranteed to be Complete [to give full explanations] rather than limited. But, for obvious reasons, unless one accepts in full the metaphysics behind such stories, not much can be taken from them. (Gardner 1993, 39)

Gardner's conclusion is that if we do not accept psychoanalytic explanation of irrationality, then we are left with ordinary, common sense, or folk-psychology. This kind of psychology does not explain the three obvious cases of irrationality which common sense acknowledges, that is, wishful thinking, self-deception, and *akrasia*, or weakness of will. With regard to these,

> We have no difficulty in saying, in broad terms, what each of them consists in. Wishful thinking is a matter of believing something simply because you desire it to be so. Self-deception consists in getting yourself to believe one thing in order to avoid facing what you know to be the truth. *Akrasia* consists in failing to do what you know is the best thing to do. (Gardner 1993, 16)

Gardner maintains that ordinary psychology treats these cases as rational: "Irrationality is off limits to ordinary psychology, or . . . ordinary psychology deals only with rationality" (Gardner 1993, 16).

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[329] According to Gardner, the real problem in understanding self-deception through ordinary psychology is what he deems "the Special Problem of irrationality," which makes sense only when we expect ordinary psychology to supply us with full explanations. It is, "what is left over from ordinary psychology's explanation of self-deception is the fact of irrationality itself: the fact that the subject's mental life takes an irrational rather than a rational course, that self-deceptive intent is truth violating" (Gardner 1993, 32).

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His central argument in favor of psychoanalysis is that “some irrational phenomena—the recognition of which is inevitable for participants in ordinary psychology—cannot be explained by ordinary psychology, yet require explanation in terms congruent with the ordinary conception of persons; which is what psychoanalytic theory supplies” (1993, 227). He believes that the ways of thinking of ordinary psychology are naturally extended into psychoanalytic concepts. He gives as examples mental conflict and the capacity of desire to malform belief as the basic notions on which ordinary psychology relies to explain irrationality, and notes that these are used, albeit with more intensity, by psychoanalytic theory. However, he emphasizes that much more is at stake than a mere reformulation of the terms used by ordinary psychology. This is so, for two reasons: psychoanalysis’ explanation covers more phenomena than ordinary psychology does, and its form is foreign to ordinary psychology. Finally, he sums up his position thus:

> Psychoanalytic theory should not be made to seem to appear out of nowhere; as if it had evolved autonomously in response to problems of psychopathology whose existence can only be witnessed in the seclusion of the clinical hour. Looked at in that hermetic way, psychoanalytic theory is bound to seem forever strange, arbitrary and unpersuasive. A fundamental and central contention of this book is that, on the contrary, psychoanalytic theory lies in a direct line of descent from problems and strategies of explanation encountered and deployed in ordinary psychology—the form of explanation to which our everyday talk of people as believing, remembering, feeling and wanting commits us—and that it is with reference to these that its concepts should be understood and its claims to explanation measured. (Gardner 1993, 15)

I believe that Gardner’s emphasis on the price we have to pay when using Sartre’s view of irrationality is important. This claim might be generalized to many views of irrationality, and not only those listed above. The strength of the Stoics’ view of irrationality, to take an example, stems directly from a metaphysics in which the rational equates the divine and the natural (Nussbaum 1994). Any use of Stoics’ tactics regarding the irrational loses most of its power when disentangled from their metaphysics. It seems that the Freudian view of irrationality, though it might offend cherished opinions about our freedom, may not be the worst choice when endorsing a metaphysical view. The extent to which an ethics embedded in a larger metaphysical picture can be useful when separated from that picture is an important question, especially for practical

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philosophers. I have dealt with it elsewhere, both generally and specifically, using Benedict Spinoza's ethics as an example.[330] Though this general question is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is time to address the more modest one, regarding philosophical counselors' possible attitudes toward the unconscious.

6. Philosophical Counseling and the Unconscious

Even if Sartre's views are to be rejected (Gardner 1993), along with various other philosophic criticisms of psychoanalysis (Levy 1996), and even if today's climate has never been so hospitable to Freud's theory of mind (Smith 1999), philosophical counseling is still a valuable enterprise. Before probing the extreme possibility of Freud being right, let us consider the possibilities of the philosophical counselor regarding the unconscious.

1. As Peter Raabe rightly notices (2000), the line between Freudian or classical psychoanalysis and psychotherapy is becoming quite blurred. He quotes psychoanalysts Morton Aronson and Melvin Scharfman regarding the fact that with the passing of Freud and the generation of his immediate successors there is no longer a uniformity of viewpoints on what constitutes psychoanalysis (Raabe 2000, 81). Even Gardner's defense of psychoanalysis, which was used here as a criticism of Sartre, is more a defense of its Kleinian development than its classical Freudian formulation. This situation defies a direct controversy between psychoanalysis and philosophical counseling, and certainly a controversy of the kind I have created here.

2. Many psychotherapies reject the unconscious or do not deal with it (Adlerian therapy, Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy [1970], Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy [1979] and Existential and Humanistic therapies, to name a few).

a. In this, these psychotherapies follow philosophy's traditional view of the matter. Looking back at the history of philosophy, one can see that most philosophies that proposed fundamental change while recognizing the irrational (Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Pyrrhonists, Spinoza) also gave explanations of how thought or rationality can affect feelings and desires, how reason can work with or against the emotions, thereby bringing about a change in the way we feel. Most contemporary works on the emotions, moreover, maintain some version of the Stoic view, viewing emotion as a belief or as involving belief (Nussbaum 2001; Solomon 1993; Ben-Ze'ev 2000). Thus, many philosophical counselors

[330] Amir (2010); see also Chapter 7 below, and Amir (2012; 2017).

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feel entitled to disregard the unconscious,[331] while some maintain that it is important to gain freedom from it (Schuster 1993).

b. Following Ellis' example, however, some philosophical counselors choose not to dismiss the unconscious, but to deal with it indirectly (Cohen 1995). This option is well explained in Raabe's excellent chapter on the difference between philosophical counseling and psychotherapy:

> But it might still be argued that despite all this talk about our emotions being connected to our beliefs there are nevertheless deeply unconscious forces that must be dealt with. An examination of the emotions around an issue often reveals that they are in fact based on certain beliefs about this issue of which the client is not consciously aware. The philosopher can be a very capable assistant to the person wishing to come to a conscious realization and articulation of such "unconscious" beliefs. I have put quotation marks around the word "unconscious" because I'm not convinced that it is accurate to characterize a belief as being unconscious simply because it has not been recognized by the believer as a belief he has. In other words, I think a person can live and act according to an unreflective belief—perhaps one that is unnoticed as unjustified, such as racism—that is not necessarily an unconscious belief. The point is that once the person has been helped to become aware of these beliefs—whether they are termed unconscious or unreflective—they can be scrutinized and evaluated. And once they have been evaluated as the cause of troublesome emotions they can be either altered or discarded. *In this way the philosophical counselor is in fact dealing with what a psychotherapist might call the unconscious* but in a different manner, and with more client involvement, than in *the approach advocated by classical psychoanalysis.* (Raabe 2001, 175; italics added).

It seems to me, however, that according to the terminology used in this chapter, the right term should be the "preconscious." For according to Freudian theory, the "part" which can be accessible to argument would not be the unconscious but the preconscious. This applies also to Elliot Cohen's statement that he deals with the unconscious indirectly, that the "unconscious" is merely the unexamined or forgotten, or that the unconscious is investigated with more client involvement than it is in the approach followed in psychoanalysis (Cohen 1995; Raabe 2001, 96). I have explained above the difference between the unconscious and the preconscious. If my account of psychoanalysis is correct, philosophical counseling is no substitute for psychoanalysis.

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[331] Lahav (1994; 1995; 1996), Blass (1996). Rachel Blass is a trained psychoanalyst.

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3. Some philosophical counselors do deal with the unconscious in the Freudian sense, using the *I Ching,* for example (Fleming 1996). Moreover, a few Western philosophers (e.g. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche), whose texts could be useful in philosophical counseling, embrace the unconscious yet urge us to self-change. According to Nietzsche, for example, self-change is possible, but it is mainly unconscious and does not require self-knowledge, but rather a strong will to truth (or power).[332] According to Schopenhauer, one can know oneself only "retroactively," by looking back at one's actions towards the end of one's life. Self-change is possible but it is not voluntary. It comes from the "outside," very much like God's grace, though God does not exist in Schopenhauer's philosophy (Schopenhauer 1958). These ways of accepting or even "working" with the unconscious within a philosophical context should be further investigated and developed.

4. Finally, I would like to emphasize a last point regarding the relationship between thought and emotion, and its relationship to the viability of philosophical counseling. I agree with Raabe's statement that "it seems uncontroversial to conclude that if emotions are not simply irrational and causal but rather the different ways people conceive of themselves and their situations, then they can be changed by influence, argument and evidence" (Raabe 2001, 176). But I do not think it is necessary to conclude that "this is the view a philosophical counselor *must* take regarding the relationship between thinking and the emotions if they want to practice legitimate philosophical counseling and not some thinly veiled form of psychology" (Raabe 2001, 176; italics added). I believe that philosophical counselors, depending on the goals of their philosophical counseling, can hold different views regarding thought and the emotions. I would like to elaborate on this point.

The philosophical counselor need not aim to provide complete self-knowledge, nor to realize a fundamental change in the counselee. As I explained elsewhere,[333] to my mind the important thing is that the philosophical counselor clarifies her mind about her own beliefs or suspension of belief about irrationality, the possibility of change, and the

[332] For Nietzsche's conception of self-change without self-knowledge, see May (1999, especially 20-23, 115-17); for a valuable discussion of the subconscious nature of drives in Nietzsche, see Parkes (1994, especially 293-99); for a good discussion of Nietzsche's determinism and how it relates to his individualism, see Schacht (1983, especially 304-12 and 335-38). For a discussion of the applicability of Nietzsche's conception of self-change, see Amir, *Philosophy as Redemption: Spinoza versus Nietzsche* (work under contract for de Gruyter).

[333] Amir (2004); see also Chapter 7 above.

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role of self-knowledge in that process. It is no less important to share these views with the counselee, so that the measure in which philosophical counseling can accommodate these goals could be clarified and explicitly stated. Even if the philosophical counselor is pessimistic regarding the possibilities of fundamental change through discussion; even if she believes that change presupposes self-knowledge but that philosophical counseling cannot provide it; even if she thinks that no one knows how change occurs; even if she thinks, finally, that Freud's view of change is the right one, many avenues are still possible.

First, philosophical counseling can be a good detector of irrationality, even if it might not be able to reveal the cause of irrationality nor change the irrational into the rational. The way of detecting irrationality might be the same for the philosophical counselor, the non-psychoanalytic therapist, and the psychoanalyst, if the following quotation correctly describes the psychoanalyst's procedure:

> It is instructive at this point to note that *one* criterion by means of which the psychoanalyst identifies behavior as irrational and unconsciously motivated is the *degree* of the agent's *inability either to bring rational criticism to bear on his own actions or to respond to rational criticism of them*. (MacIntyre 1967, 252; italics added)

Alternatively, as Joseph Agassi puts it: "As Freud was first to notice, self-deception usually rests on the stubborn *reluctance to consider alternatives* when these are *suggested by others*" (Agassi 1997, 24; italics added).

Second, having detected an instance of irrationality, the philosophical counselor might attempt to change it through a change of belief, that is, through evidence, argument, and influence. If she fails, *one* possible conclusion is that this may be a case that would be diagnosed as "repression" by Freudians:

> Certain features in contexts of failures of self-knowledge provide criteria to distinguish repression from other conditions. They revolve around the person's inability *to come to a realization*, i.e., to form a self-ascribing belief that is effective in correcting their behavior. (Gardner 1993, 103)

Third, the counselor might suggest at this point that psychoanalysis might be more helpful. She might even refer the client to a psychoanalyst, as there is no reason for non-cooperation between psychoanalysts and philosophers. The psychoanalyst can send the client back to her, after the repression "has been removed," allowing thus the continuation of philosophic discussion. Anticipating a possible misunderstanding, I would

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like to clarify that I do not *advise* one to send a client to a psychoanalyst. My point is just that a philosophical counselor can even be a believer in Freudian psychoanalysis, provided that she adapts the counselee's expectation to what she can offer provided that she makes sure the counselee's expectations align with what she can offer.

Generalizing from many years of experience in practicing philosophy, however, I would say that counselees usually do not get in touch with the psychoanalysts or psychiatrists to whom they are referred, even if these kinds of therapies are better for them in the long run (that is, even if they can better meet their demands). Most of the time, I learned through experience, philosophical counselors are the last resorts, as counselees seem to be much more opposed to psychologists, psychoanalysts, or psychiatrists than are most counselors.

Fourth, in that case, or even one step before that (step two above)—provided that the counselor is reluctant to diagnose something as "repression" or that she does not believe in psychoanalysis—she can simply say that she does not know how to change the irrational behavior or feeling. Counselee and counselor can continue the sessions both bearing in mind that specific area of irrationality. Of course, if the counselee came just to solve that problem sought out the counselor solely to solve that problem, then the counseling sessions could be over. As there are degrees of irrationality (Agassi and Jarvie 1987), the counselor might be helpful in many ways though conceivably completely helpless in one specific area, where irrationality is deep.

It seems, therefore, that the capacity of philosophical counseling to handle the possibility of the unconscious depends on its goals. One goal could be the enhancement of self-knowledge. I think that the philosophical counselor who does not adhere to a *theory* of irrationality can point to the counselor *when* he is being irrational, but not *why*. This statement does not even assume that anyone can actually answer the *why* question.[334] In the paper referred to above (Amir 2003), I have argued that just knowing that you are being irrational, though certainly an advance in self-knowledge, can make you feel worse, if it creates a feeling of frustrating impotence regarding change. This leads us to the second possible goal of philosophical counseling, namely, fundamental change.

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[334] It is noteworthy that even Immanuel Kant doubted whether we could disentangle the causes of our actions and thus whether we could know that we had done the right thing out of the right motive (i.e., out of our duty to the moral law). He wrote, "We can never, even by the most strenuous self-examination, get to the bottom of our secret impulsions [*Triebfedern*]" (Kant 1964, chap. 2, 75).

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The whole body of philosophical theories is meant to bring fundamental change through learning and practice. Any philosophical theory concerned with fundamental psychological change believes it is brought about by learning and practice. However, it is directed towards the truth-seeking and rationality-expanding person. Philosophy changes those who can be changed by reflection, those who value thought so much that it transforms their whole being. A philosopher *wants* to be less irrational. Most people, generally, do not want to pay the price, as being irrational is very convenient and being consistent is difficult.

If you count on influence, argument, and evidence to convince your client to change his irrational beliefs, you still assume a basic choice of rationality. To reiterate the example I used at the end of last section, if you use Stoic tactics you can bring about change. However, that involves a whole metaphysics, one which explains why being rational is better than being irrational. Without this frame of mind, the counselee does not have a strong impetus for leaving the irrational for the rational. How can you defend consistency and logical thought to someone who wants to stay irrational in some area of thought? Who, except the philosopher, has a passion for rationality? Since when has consistency been a goal for most human beings? As Gershon Weiler puts it: "Whoever is *knowingly* inconsistent is irrational but there is, of course, more to rationality than mere consistency" (Weiler 1987, 303).

One might argue that the counselee's suffering is his impetus for self-change. Moreover, if you can convince him that being rational would remove the painful emotion, rationality would not have to be wholly endorsed by the client, but only used as a tool for feeling better. This strategy, however, assumes another form of rationality, the capacity to relate means to ends. Furthermore, the counselee may be afflicted with *akrasia* and be unable to change even though he knows what is best.

I therefore do not believe that philosophical counselors should *guarantee* fundamental change, although this is what philosophy is all about. Nobody *knows* how change occurs and there are many controversial views about ways in which we can prompt it (Kanfer and Goldstein 1982). One thing we know is that when a person is ripe for change, anything works. Freud said that every neurotic (that is, all of us) wants change and does not want change at the same time. Even pinpointing that during philosophical counseling is illuminating, for it enhances self-knowledge and calls for reflection. Mapping our irrational zones might seem like a minimalist goal. It is still a valuable goal because knowing that I am being irrational is not just a prerequisite for enhancing my rationality, it already enhances my rationality. This does not betray philosophy's goals, though

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much more can be achieved depending on the counselor's beliefs, the counselee's capacity, and the power of philosophy. Although we are, as Nietzsche memorably puts it, "in the phase of modesty of consciousness" (Nietzsche, 1968, section 676; see 1977, sections 344-45), the remarkable ideals of philosophy still have a strong appeal. Brought to counselees through the counselor's knowledge and personality, they can create a thirst for self-change that would result in a conversion to philosophy, exchanging the narrow unconscious-conscious controversy for new horizons.[335]

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[335] I have proposed a way for dealing effectively with the muted voices that constitute the allegedly unconscious part of the mind through the conceptual tool of self-referential humor. See Chapter 12 below.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

INTRA-PERSONAL DIALOGUE

Self-referential humor enacts an intra-personal communication. This form of communication is particularly apt for an internal dialogue that is conducive to self-knowledge, deliberation, inward change, and living with unresolved conflict or resolving that conflict on a higher level of understanding. The division within the self that humor enacts is a dialogical relationship, best described as compassionate aggression, which immediately minimizes the tension among parts of the self and may further lead to inward change. Compassionate aggression is necessary both for the modicum of self-acceptance that is a prerequisite for self-change, as well as for self-change itself. In turn, inward change is necessary for fuller self-acceptance, which is at the root of many further ethical and epistemological benefits.

Introduction

Self-referential humor enacts an intra-personal communication, which is particularly apt for the (self-) education that lies at the heart of the practice of philosophy.[336] This kind of humor creates within the self a division between two parts at least, which entertain "joking relations" with one another. The latter term was coined by anthropologist Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown to denote the relations existing between members of the same family, whose roles involve potential strife. The purpose of "joking relations" communication is to vent the aggression embedded in these relations (Radcliffe-Brown [1924] 1952, 90-116).

Similarly, I suggest that a person who takes philosophy seriously necessarily entertains conflictual relations with herself. This is so because she is engaged in a life-long process of self-education whose purpose is to mold a stable character fit for a philosophic life. However, this character is mostly at odds with societal values, and therefore with the part of the self that has been socialized. Thus, the proto-philosopher is necessarily divided

[336] In this chapter, I rely on Amir (2014a) and (2012).

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between a better self (more philosophical, rational, objective, ethical, consistent, mature, and sober) and a "challenged" or "slower" part of himself, which resists the change (a societal self, emotional, self-focused, erratic, and immature).

The division humor enacts between a "better self" and a "worse self" may recall the traditional division between ideal and reality, with one significant difference. The traditional division lacks the power to minimize the gap between the ideal and the real The traditional division does not contain within itself the power to conceptually minimize the gap between the ideal and the real; thus, its painful outcome is the emphasis on the gap coupled with one's impotence. The division within the self that humor enacts, however, is a dialogical relationship, best described as compassionate aggression, which immediately minimizes the tension between parts of the self and may further lead to inward change. Compassionate aggression is necessary both for the modicum of self-acceptance that is a prerequisite for self-change, as well as for self-change itself. In turn, inward change is necessary for fuller self-acceptance, which is at the root of many further ethical and epistemological benefits.

The contradiction involved in "compassion" and "aggression," or uniting and distancing, or again close and distant, is just one of the contradictions that together form the concept of humor. This is so because humor holds together disjointed ideas or emotions, and entertains ambiguous relations with the truth. The contradictions involved in humor mirror the contradictory viewpoints that form the ambivalence we all experience as part of our psychological make-up and the ambiguous position truth holds among cherished illusions and extreme perspectives that lack proportion.[337]

We need a conceptual tool to maintain the contradictions that constitute the experiences we have of ourselves, of others, and of the world. Paradoxically, until we make use of this tool we cannot fully acknowledge these contradictions. Likewise, we need a tool to handle reason and emotions together, and until we possess it, we do not fully experience the personal point of view that emotions embody, or the more objective point of view that reason represents, and certainly not both points of view together. Finally, we need a tool for handling suffering, and the tragic sense of our life, without losing the zest for life that enables our survival. Self-referential laughter, or humor, is such a tool.

Moreover, we are used to experiencing contradiction as conflictual and conflict as violent, frustrating, and unfruitful. As a maddening experience

[337] For humor's relation with human truth, see Amir (2015c).

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of our impotence, conflict is better avoided at all costs. In contradistinction to external conflicts, which can be sometimes solved by sheer power, internal conflicts cannot be "solved" without loss. Internal bullying, or oppressing one part of the self through sheer willpower, may be productive in an isolated instance but will prove counter-effective in promoting long-standing change.

Were we fully rational, we would not have use for humor. Were we capable of radical and instantaneous change, we would not need humor. Finally, were we living without conflict with others, that is, without the simultaneous need for others and for independence, we would not require humor. Because we are made of contradictions, humor is a survival tool for the human species. This insight lies at the mistaken yet pregnant characterization of the human being as the sole animal that laughs, *homo ridens*.[338]

However, in its self-referential form—the most potent form for self-education—humor is rare. This has already been noted by Democritus, the fifth century BC Laughing Philosopher, who singles out the lack of awareness of one's ridiculousness as his main reason for laughing at humankind: "You people do not laugh at your own stupidity but each laughs at another's" (Hippocrates 1990, Letter 17, line 5). Since Democritus' admonition, self-laughter is expected from followers in the Laughing Philosopher tradition (Amir 2013). It is also characteristic of the emblematic teacher of philosophy, Socrates (Halliwell 2008, 291-92).

Self-referential laughter is possibly constitutive of philosophic consciousness, as Avital Ronell, following Charles Baudelaire (1968), argues (Ronell 2003, 298-99). Self-referential laughter thus enacts an intra-personal communication which sets one part of the self against the other, like the butt and the joker that together constitute a comic couple (Beltrametti 2000), like the *eirôn* and *alazon* of Greek Comedy that Aristotle describes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1973).

Who laughs at whom, within the self? For Arthur Schopenhauer, the irrational part in us (the will) finally has an opportunity to put down reason. For other thinkers, it is reason that laughs at the remaining of the self. In any case, laughter is impossible unless the laugher feels herself superior to, or out of reach of, the situation she is laughing at. Thus, in order to be able to laugh at another part of the self, the first part needs a vantage point, a thought to align itself with, and a relative secure vision from whose perspective the other part seems erroneous, inadequate, or immature.

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[338] For the philosophic tradition of *homo ridens*, see Amir (2013).

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Philosophical theories easily provide the ideals that can be used as vantage points from which one's self is examined humorously. For self-referential laughter to be effective as an agent of change, however, one has to align oneself successively, so to speak, with various parts of the conflicted self.[339] Indeed, this exemplifies the seemingly paradoxical capacity of humor to simultaneously unite and separate: has not humor been eulogized as the shortest distance between two human beings and ridicule proven a killing device? It is sometimes suggested that the resolution of this riddle lies in the form of humor one is using. Indeed, the formula of successful humor changes according to the ratio of aggression versus compassion: minimum compassion separates the interlocutors whilst minimum aggression draws them closer.

Through humorous internal relations, co-operation between various factions of the self can be secured after processes of introduction, mutual recognition, and closeness have been facilitated (through humor's ambivalent relations with the truth, association with incongruity, and compassionate nature, respectively) with the aim of integrating the personality. A humorous mood fosters awareness of conflict, facilitates deliberation, and later, helps one live with unresolved conflict, or resolves the conflict on a higher level of understanding. This in turn is instrumental in furthering important philosophic goals, such as self-knowledge, truth, rationality and virtue, and later on, joy, peace, and happiness, if the conflict that constitutes the human being is resolved. A fuller explanation of this last thesis, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.[340]

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[339] For humor as an agent of change, see Amir (2015a).

[340] For a fuller exposition of this thesis, see Chapter 15 below, as well as Amir (2014b, chap. 3, 219-86) and Amir (2015b). See also Amir, *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017).

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

INTER-PERSONAL DIALOGUE

Dans la mesure ou je comprends, je ne sais plus si c'est moi qui parle ou qui écoute.
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Sur la phénoménologie du langage," in *Signes*

A counselee comes to counseling to break the vicious circle of his monologue and the solitude it entails. If the counselor responds in return with another monologue, the counseling session may seem to be a dialogue yet it is comprised of two intertwined monologues. The counselor's ability to enter into a dialogue with the counselee determines the value of the discussions they may have.

In this chapter, I clarify this claim by answering preliminary yet significant questions: is dialogue ever possible? If yes, how do we recognize it? If not, what are we doing when we think we are having a dialogue? After clarifying the significance of dialogue for philosophy, I distinguish among various kinds of dialogue. One form of dialogue is the monologue, whose discursive structure I analyze. Finally, I attempt to answer the question: How can we alleviate the difficulties of furthering thinking through dialogue in the philosophical counseling setting?

1. The Significance of Dialogue

Since Plato, dialogue has played a dominant role in the philosophical method. The practice of philosophy in Ancient Greece was first characterized by the possibility of deciding matters and solving conflicts by means of an argued dialogue, by a rational discussion in which arguments are advanced with the aim of reaching an agreement. Nowadays, linguistic philosophy has paid a great deal of attention to the use of language in communication, and recently, to dialogue. The so-called "sciences of man" have only recently tackled the complex phenomenon of dialogue. From Søren Kierkegaard to Emmanuel Levinas via Martin Buber, "dialogical philosophy" played an important role in emphasizing the significance of dialogue in human experience.

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Dialogue is predominant from a philosophical point of view. It is significant for philosophy in two respects: first, as the very tool of philosophy—that is, philosophical reflection and enquiry have a dialogical form. Philosophical theses are put forward as assertions to be justified, contradicted, developed and abandoned in an open discussion leading to improving the understanding we have of social life, reality, and ourselves. Second, as the use of language in communication is the subject of investigation of linguistic philosophy itself, philosophical analysis can be defined as an account and an interpretation of what goes on when a linguistic exchange, a dialogue, takes place. This is presupposed in the conceptual analyses performed by linguistic philosophers in the tradition of the later Ludwig Wittgenstein—John L. Austin, Gilbert Ryle, and others. Furthermore, as Jürgen Habermas pointed out (1970), dialogue is the paradigmatic case of a possible speech situation. It has a normative role in the use of language, as its cooperative nature is the defining characteristic of language (see Grice 1975; Lewis 1969).

2. What Is a Dialogue?

The term "dialogue" is used in a formal sense (participation by at least two speakers) as well as in a content-oriented sense. "Dialogue," "talk," and "conversation" denote spoken language, that is, a linguistic practice, in the formal sense. Ethnomethodologists, among others, adopt this observational definition of dialogue. Thus, dialogue or their preferred term for it, "conversational interaction," refers to a sequence of oral utterances in which, regardless of purpose, multiple speakers successively engage with one another. This sense of dialogue corresponds to *The Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary*'s first definition: "a conversation between two or more persons" (1993).

Dialogue, in the content-oriented sense, means "colloquy." Very early on, it won a significant status as a joint communicative activity whose goal was discovering the truth. Konrad Ehlich explains its significance for philosophy:

> At various times, dialogue has been singled out as a means to fulfil the philosophical imperative "Know thyself." This sense of dialogue began with the rhetorically determined beginnings of philosophy, before and during the time of Socrates, as the pursuit of truth was considered the purpose of the philosophers' dialogical encounters… (Ehlich 1985, 384)

In the introduction to *Dialogue: An Inter-disciplinary Approach* (1985), Marcelo Dascal explains that whether they are called "emphatic" (Ehlich

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1985), "referential," or "Fregean" (Petit 1985), "dialogues of this kind are verbal (presumably oral) exchanges of informative utterances, whereby both speakers engage in a common search for information (or truth)" (Dascal 1985, 3). *Webster*'s second definition of "dialogue" does not mention explicitly truth or information as the successful outcome of the exchange, but states: "an exchange of ideas and opinions."

The emphatic use of dialogue survived the disappearance of Ancient Greece. The eristic of the "sic and non" of Abelard makes emphatic use of being engaged in colloquy. This emphatic use of "dialogue" belongs to, and in an elaborated form survives in, the dialectics of Georg W. Hegel. When Charles S. Peirce defines science as a community of discourse, faith in dialogue's power to further truth lives on. The same faith in the power of dialogue surfaces when "discourse" appears as a process of reconciliation and freedom (Habermas). Similarly, the dialogical practice of conversational group therapy is contingent on the same relationship: it is hoped that the dialogues between patient and therapist and among the patients would have the power to heal.

Does the dialogue that takes place in philosophical counseling further the pursuit of truth? Is it—to use the terminology proposed—an emphatic dialogue? I believe it is. Philosophical counseling strives toward a modern, and modest, version of self-knowledge. I believe that Karl Popper's critical rationalism (1972) helps us to redefine the goals that are accessible for us, namely, to find out our errors through critical thinking and dialogue. This represents a valuable advancement toward truth, even if we will never know if or when we reach it. Since this is not the subject of this chapter, it is not necessary to elaborate further on the significant relationship between truth and philosophical counseling, and its fate in a relativistic age.

It seems that "dialogue" cannot be satisfactorily defined in terms of a single informative purpose, nor in terms of a set of observational properties (Dascal 1985, 4-5). Why? Because an attempt at such a definition is premature, or because we may be dealing with one of those "family resemblance" terms cherished by Wittgenstein's followers. If the latter is the case, the term "dialogue" could apply to a great number of apparently dissimilar cases. For example, we could depict "implicit" dialogues in monological texts, or discuss what "talking to oneself" means as well as other *prima facie* purely mental phenomena in terms of their dialogical and linguistic features. These less obvious cases of dialogue, which I address in the following section, are my main interest in this chapter.

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3. What Is a Monologue?

We call a "monologue" the discourse that a subject holds with himself, he being his own respondent, that is, when the subject acts as both speaker and respondent. The monologue may be spoken aloud, in the presence or in the absence of another, or it may be silent and remain an inner discourse.

Plato points out in *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* the dialogical or discursive character of thinking. For example, the Stranger in the *Sophist* (263 e), says:

> Well, thinking and discourse are the same, except that what we call thinking is, precisely, the inward dialogue carried on by the mind without a spoken sound.

This definition of thinking explains why Plato uses dialogues for presenting philosophical thought. The dialogue corresponds to the discursive character of this sort of thinking, which progresses through a question and answer process, the process of the mind "talking to itself."

Plato did not draw the conclusion that "the act of thinking considered as a dialogue of the soul with itself implies a certain dependence on language," as noticed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1973, 385). Only much later, when a philosophy of consciousness made it possible to envisage a solipsistic hypothesis, did an interrogation of the presuppositions of Plato's insight appear. I am not interested here in elaborating on this question—how language solves the problem of solipsism—which numbers amongst those most frequently dealt with in modern philosophy, both Analytic and Continental. Nor would I like to dwell on the issue of the anteriority of the other's speech,[341] whether structural (Heidegger 1976) or genetic. I would like, nonetheless, to draw attention to the view, endorsed by Maria Villela-Petit (1985), Émile Benveniste (1966), and many contemporary philosophers that, contrary to René Descartes' analysis, it is by using language that humans constitute themselves as subjects. Moreover, it is done in speech situations that are directed toward the other, both originally and structurally.

Maria Villela-Petit explains that if the subject becomes a subject only in and through language, he must be able to refer to himself, in and through language, as one who feels such and such a mood, is willing to do such and such, regrets such and such, etc. Thus, in and through the linguistic expressions of his own feelings, emotions, and will (all of these

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[341] See Bakhtin (1929), quoted in Todorov (1981, 77), and Villela-Petit (1985).

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inseparably connected with those expressions), the subject talks to himself. In other words, the need to speak to oneself is inscribed in the constitution of the subject through language. Moreover, the inner discourse allows the human being to uphold himself and to refer to himself as a subject, by attributing to himself intentions, beliefs, plans, memories, and motives for his actions. Therefore, "talking to oneself" is, according to this view, the inner face of the constitution of the subject through language (Villela-Petit 1985).

I do not know if the view presented above is true. I nevertheless believe that it may throw some light on the complex issue of thinking through dialogue. Especially, it may help us disclose the essential features of the inner discourse that attest to our intrinsic association with others. In other words, it could help us understand the dialogical features of the monologue, to which I turn now.

4. The Dialogical Nature of Monologue

The structure of discourse relates to the other in two ways, at least, which are expressed by the prepositions *about* and *to*—to speak is to speak *to* someone *about* (or *of*) something. This structure has now to be made more complex. In speaking *to*, the other to whom I speak is already double: he is the other insofar as he is distinct from me, the person to whom the discourse refers as "you," with whom I speak actually or potentially; however, he is also the other "me," who is my double and plays the role of an inner listener. This inner listener may be explicitly assumed, as is the case when we speak to ourselves, or remain in the background, as is the case in a dialogue, in which the fact that I am talking to someone else does not mean that I stopped talking to myself.

How can we confirm this structure in a conversation that the subject holds with himself? St. Augustine is here a precious guide. He writes to his friend Nebridius:

> I read your letter beside the lamp, after supper: it was time for bed but not for sleep; in fact, I spent a long time thinking with myself in bed and had the following discussions, Augustine with Augustine: could what Nebridius thinks be true, that we are happy? (Augustine, Epistle 3, 1; my translation).

In spite of his absence, Augustine's friend remains present as the virtual listener to the reflections which Augustine, in his solitude, addresses to Augustine, that is, to himself in his role of inner listener. Augustine's dialogue with himself pervades his dialogue with Nebridius and

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interpenetrates it. The dialogue with Nebridius is deepened, because it has become the dialogue of Augustine with Augustine, as the letter sent to Nebridius reveals.

Another example is necessary to illustrate my point. Augustine relates the encounter with Ponticianus just before the crucial moment of Augustine's conversion:

> This was the story Ponticianus related. But You, Lord, while he was speaking, turned me back toward myself, taking me from behind my own back where I had put myself in order not to see myself. (Augustine, *Confessions*, bk VIII, section 7, 16; my translation)

One of the features of the story above is that it accentuates the orientation of the inner discourse towards a "you." In this case, "you" is the divine You, to whom all the *Confessions* are addressed. Augustine talks to himself in the presence of the divine You, that is, he talks to Him.

Hermeneutic philosophy stresses the "you" in the dialogue one has with oneself. Does all inner discourse, whatever its contents, include an orientation toward, or imply, a "you"? Mikhail Bakhtin and his circle[342] prefer to speak of a "virtual listener" rather than a "you":

> Well, we have no hesitation in affirming categorically that the most intimate discourses are also dialogical in character throughout: they are shot through with the assessments of a virtual listener, a potential audience, even if such an audience is not clearly represented in the mind of the speaker. (Todorov 1981, 294; my translation)

The orientation toward a "you" indicates that I take into account the other as a speaking and listening subject in "my" inner discourse. The inner discourse sets up the other between "me" and "myself."

Considering the other, either in communication or in inner discourse, does not exhaust the question of the "otherness" in discourse. There is another decisive relational component to otherness implied in talking and *a fortiori* in talking to oneself. It is one's relation to one's own otherness. By talking to himself, a person can place himself at a distance from himself by opening up a personal past and future and, through this, discover otherness as a dimension of his own self.

This otherness of the self finds its privileged expression in certain forms of the discourse about oneself. Such is the case of the discourse of regret—in this instance the person speaks to himself, alone or in front of

[342] See Voloshinov (1930), Todorov (1981, 294).

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another, explicitly about himself. Such is also the case in the discourse of self-disparaging humor—from the vantage point of a yet-to-come future, I smile at my past or present actions. Moreover, such is the case in the discourse of philosophical understanding. One creates distance from oneself by opening up an impersonal past and future, which is exactly the generalization and the abstraction to which we refer as the human condition, yet it is discovered as a dimension of one's own self. One discovers and develops, so to speak, an "impersonal" otherness as a dimension of one's own self. The full impact of this remark will be appreciated later, when discussing the role of the counselor in furthering thought through philosophical dialogue.

It is again in Augustine's *Confessions* that we find the most impressive examples of how "talking to oneself" combines the two dimensions of the relation to otherness: the relation to the other's otherness as a second person, and the relation to the otherness intrinsic to the self. For instance:

> Thus I was inwardly gnawed at. And I was in the grip of the most horrible and confounding shame, while Ponticianus was telling his story. When he finished his tale and the business for which he had come, he returned to his home and I returned to myself. What did I not say against myself? (*Confessions*, bk VIII, section 7, 18; my translation)

The formal design of this text condenses the relations that structure the inner discourse. These relations are not always as obvious as the relation that holds when one speaks *of* or *about*. They include, first, the relation to the words of another (Ponticianus' narrative); second, the relation to the other as a second person (which, in Augustine's case, is, above all, the divine "You," but which, rhetorically speaking, is also the human reader's "you"; and third, the relation to oneself as the other in oneself (Augustine's shame for what he has been).

The disclosure of such structural relations reveals how, by the very fact of speaking—which implies "talking to oneself" or conducting an inward monologue—a human being is interconnected with others in his inner life and thought, so that the question of his interiority can no longer be posed in terms of an ego, substantially closed upon itself. Actually, interiority needs to be understood in terms of an openness, that is to say, in speaking, the human being opens up herself or himself to a dialogue with others and with the self. Through this doubly oriented openness, which characterizes human temporality, human beings have access to a personal history and a philosophical understanding.

Now let us return to the situation exemplified by the excerpt from Augustine's *Confessions.* Let us imagine how complicated the situation

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gets if Augustine answers Ponticianus, and, especially, if the second person to whom he implicitly relates in his monologue does not keep quiet, as God does, and as the reader does, for more obvious reasons. This leads us to the intricacies of the actual dialogue.

5. On What Grounds Is a Dialogue between Two People Possible?

One could have hoped that if monologues were dialogical, actual dialogues would be easier. While the previous analysis of what is supposedly going on when I am talking to myself, if proven right, might explain how dialogue is possible at all, it undoubtedly shows why genuine dialogues are so rare and so difficult. For if “me,” “myself,” and “you,” all busy in an inner discourse, encounter another “me,” “myself,” and “you,” no less preoccupied by another inner discourse, no wonder there is little understanding in the world.

One possible danger is that two intertwined monologues will take the place of a genuine dialogue. For instance, we could alternate monological segments, while being politely silent when the other utters his text. My segment may be a direct continuation of my previous segment, as if my interlocutor had never spoken. Alternatively, it may be influenced by what she said, but usually only in an associative manner, that is, I choose a segment that is incidentally and loosely associated with something I think she said.

Another possible danger is that I incorporate her monologue into my own. The familiar concepts of transference and projection may explain this, if interpreted according to the analysis of monologue presented above (Jacques 1985, 45-46):

1. The uttered discourse prejudges the heard discourse: the speaker hears only with his own ear. He remains the inner listener and does not consider the other as the real listener. It is as if he did not want to be really heard, but merely continues the inner discourse out loud.
2. A variant: the speaker prejudges the listening of the message. He assimilates the actual listener with whom he speaks to some anterior listener with whom he acquired some communicative habits. This process of “transference,” if not done “consciously,” can be reformulated in an absolutely practical manner: the speaker supposes that his words will be heard by the ear of an absent, fictitious, or past listener.

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3. The contrary may occur: the discourse heard annexes itself to the uttered discourse. The listener postulates that the words uttered by the speaker should be interpreted as she herself would have done, were she to utter them. This time, the listener "projects" onto the speaker. This is the most common misunderstanding: it is an often unconscious failure of communicative competence; an inaptitude to use the other's ear in order to hear his discourse as she herself utters and understands it.

In order to avoid these pitfalls of understanding, a real effort is required from both interlocutors and especially from the counselor if the setting is a philosophical counseling session. The next section outlines some guidelines for this effort to be successful.

6. Breaking the Vicious Circle of Monologue

Though the inner dialogue described above may seem rich and complex, it is limited to inward resources. Moreover, it is subjected to an imaginary you, who can be complacent at will—that is, uncritical—or unnecessarily harsh or narrow-minded—that is, oppressive. Finally, the internal listener, if not distanced enough from the speaker, not only may exhibit all the deficiencies of the imaginary you, but might also enclose the self in a very restricted and repetitive circle.

I believe that we all want to break through our internal discourses, and some of us actually go to counseling precisely for that (even if that wish is unacknowledged or only confusingly recognized). The counselor would poorly repay the counselee by offering segments of her own monologue—sophisticated or elaborated as it may be. Worse, indeed, is the incorporation of the counselee in the counselor's own monologue. How, then, does the counselor break into the counselee's monologue and instigate the beginning of a dialogue?

The counselor breaks in through empathy. *Empathy* is to be differentiated from *identification*.[343] In empathy *I am the other,* in identification, *the other is I*. Through empathy, I am the "you" of your inner speech. I am that imaginary, or absent, or utterly-not-me "you" of your inner speech. I am listening to you as if I were your inner listener, your other self: I am listening through your ear, so to speak.

From that vantage point, I do two things: I slowly redirect your speech toward me; and I encourage you to listen to your speech through a more

[343] I am grateful to Joseph Agassi for this distinction.

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distanced—and informed—inner listener. That is, I encourage you to listen through my ear, first, in order to make you understand better, and I encourage you to listen through your ear, yet in a different way than the initial inner listener did. In this way, I ensure that even in my absence, your inner monologue would be richer, your boundaries more open and the internal distance between you and yourself would be wider. To recall, in this distance lies the capacity for philosophical understanding: if the inner listener is no more than a duplicate of myself, no self-education, no self-growth, no critical—therefore, no creative—reflectivity, is possible. The incorporation of an impersonal otherness within the self, which is none other than the generalization and the abstraction of our humanity, to which we refer regularly as the human condition, is essential.

Finally, progress is made by becoming more impersonal about the issues discussed, i.e., less hindered by fears, needs, and all that constitutes one's ego. In other words, progress in thinking through dialogue is dependent on advancing our rational capacity. How rationality may be furthered and irrationality recognized and tamed is a very important subject, and one for another chapter.

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PART V

RETHINKING PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE'S TOOLS

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A METHOD: MORE PHILOSOPHY, LESS COUNSELING

We need only grant that that there can be advances in philosophical understanding, in the sense of philosophers coming to see more clearly what their problems are, why certain seemingly promising solutions will not suffice, and how such problems are affected by new developments.
John Passmore,
"Philosophy, Historiography" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

In this chapter, I present three cases that exemplify the method I am using in my counseling and the goals I try to reach in the discussions I conduct with clients. The chapter begins with a presentation of the method I have implemented and the goals I am pursuing. Three cases follow, each ending with an assessment of my relative success or failure in achieving these goals. In the last part of the chapter, "Implementing the Method: Less Counseling, More Philosophy," I add further insights I gathered from introducing the method to various audiences. In particular, I urge philosophical practitioners to take philosophy seriously by engaging more in philosophical dialogue and less in other forms of counseling.

1. A Method

One answer to the question of whether philosophy makes progress is given in the quotation from John Passmore that serves as an epigraph for this chapter. When I reflected on a possible method for philosophical counseling, I wanted a path that would parallel the progress of philosophy, if only in order to have a "feeling of progress." As the main goal of philosophical counseling, in my view, is to dissipate confusion (granted that false clarity or erroneous evidence also counts as confusion), I wanted a method that would incorporate milestones in an elegant way. I felt that elegance was needed for the following reason: I was seeing myself more as a tutor in philosophy than anything else, whether I was teaching philosophy to large classes or counseling on a private basis. When done on

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a private basis, however, I thought that tutoring should be less didactic but no less clear in its outcomes than teaching big audiences. Elegance was needed, therefore, in order to follow the argument, so to speak, without a blackboard.

The method I found is the method I use in many texts I write and in everything I read that is written for my eyes (seminar papers, for example). First, one formulates the problem at hand as *a question*, preferably one with multiple answers. Second, one presents the *alternative answers* to the question. Third, one assesses each answer *critically*. One is ready, then, to formulate a second question, which has usually some connection (logical or other) to the first. And so on.[344]

The questions and alternative answers determine very clearly what we are doing at each moment of the counseling, and allow the counselee to evaluate what we have done till now. Although the client can leave the counseling sessions at any time, the method of questions and alternative answers allow for easily detectable exits, whose use is usually accompanied by a feeling of satisfaction because one recognizes what has been a*chieved*.

How does one advance from one question to another? Sometimes the relationship is logical, one question presupposing an answer to the previous one (Belnap and Steel 1976). As an example, take the question: does God exist? The question, how do we know that God exists, presupposes a positive answer to it. The second question has alternative answers (a. through revelation; b. through mystical experience; c. by logical proofs; d. other), which serve to open up the discussion. In that sense, the second question is "better" than the first one, which, having only two answers, allows for too narrow a discussion, with one answer directly contradicting the other.

Sometimes the relationship between the two questions is not logical. There can be a leap, for example, from an epistemological question to an ethical one.[345] Most counselees' primordial interest lies, in my experience, in the ethical and the personal. In the example above, to recall, the second question was, how do we know that God exists? After critically assessing

[344] When I was writing my doctoral dissertation, I learned a somewhat similar method from my adviser, Prof. Joseph Agassi, Karl Popper's follower. The difference between my proposal and Joseph Agassi's requirements is the following: Agassi further demands that the answers should be *controversial*. When I asked for a reference, however, he told me that he did not publish anything about this method.

[345] In the general sense of ethics, that is, regarding values, the quality of life, and so on.

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the various answers, a possible third question may be, how does the existence of God affect the quality of life? The alternative answers could be the following: a. it does not; b. it makes for an excellent life; c. life loses all meaning without it; etc.

Sometimes the relation between the two questions is not logical, nor is it relating the epistemological with the ethical; rather, it relates the abstract with the personal. After being asked, does God exist? You may ask why it is important or interesting. A possible answer is “my sister believes in God and I think that she is mistaken.” Thus, the discussion might focus on ethical questions of tolerance, acceptance, and differences, rather than on epistemological questions. That is, the discussion can concentrate on key concepts that pertain to the good life, values, and meaning.

After the counselee explains why he came to see me, I ask him to formulate a question. If he cannot, or if the question is not a “good” one (it is too narrow, or too big, or unclear), I may take one of its assumptions and question it (Popper 1963), that is, formulate a question about it, if possible, with multiple answers. Alternatively, I may ask the counselee, why does he consider the question interesting or significant? If he cannot find a reason, we replace the question. If he gives me reasons, I get a better understanding of what interests him. (There is one assumption, though: we do not discuss questions that the counselee deems unimportant or uninteresting.)

A last point regarding questions is worth mentioning. Some questions are more abstract, some more personal. The right succession of questions according to their level of abstraction might be decisive for the success of philosophical counseling. For example, when the initial question is formulated in personal terms, taking the next question to a more abstract level may sometimes prove beneficial. By disconnecting the client momentarily from his more personal concerns, the abstract allows for a space (sometimes a necessary hiding space) for understanding and maybe self-change to take place. To take an example that moves in the opposite direction, when the initial question is abstract (non-personal) and non-ethical, it nevertheless has ethical and personal implications that usually are of the utmost importance and of the greatest interest for the counselee. The counselee does not differ in this respect from most people who are interested in philosophy (Scharfstein 1980).

The abstract as an inward space where thought can be expanded and freedom may be gained without the tyranny of personal fear is one of the great therapeutic inventions of philosophy. However, any solution to any problem that would remain at the abstract level is useless. Self-philosophical counseling as well as philosophical counseling for others

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presuppose some knowledge of the art of shades and light. Some people will perish from too much light, according to Plato (Plato 1948; Amir 2001); all neurotics, that is, all of us, need the shade, according to Freud (Amir 2006); and the value of an individual might well be the quantity of truth (light) she can bear, according to Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1974).

In order to appreciate the following cases, in which the method I use is exemplified some last remarks are needed regarding the goals of philosophical counseling, as I see them. The following list of goals will help me assess in the cases below to what extent I have failed or succeeded. In my practice, I attempt:

1. Not only to clarify reflection or minimize confusion (by detecting presuppositions, correcting faulty inferences, etc.);
2. But also to expand options and broaden perspectives (through alternative answers, references to books and to philosophical systems of thought);
3. To enable the client to gain inward space (using the abstract temporarily as a means);
4. To emphasize autonomy and responsibility (but adapting its degree to the client's capacity) (see Amir 2004);
5. To enable the client to learn the trade, the art. To give tools for a future independent access to philosophy.

I propose now to share some cases that exemplify this method and in which these goals are at least partly achieved.

2. Three Cases

The following cases exemplify the method I use. In order to follow the succession of questions more easily, I have italicized the questions. After presenting each case, I attempt to assess which of the goals (from the list above) were achieved. The cases I chose respect the anonymity of the clients, as their titles testify: "the lonely high-ranked merchant marine officer," "the jealous lover," and "the unsatisfied worker."

A. The Lonely High-Ranked Merchant Marine Officer

A high-ranked merchant marine officer spends long times at sea in painful isolation. He does not want to associate with other persons of the crew because they do not respect the law.

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I asked him to formulate a question but he could not. I suggested the following question that was formulated about the most significant notion in our conversations thus far (the law) and that challenged his presupposition ("one has to respect the law"). *The first question* was, therefore, *should one always respect the law (any law, at all costs)?* Alternatively, what should be the right attitude towards the law? Various answers were presented and examined, including one that reconstructed his colleagues' view. It amounted to this: "There is a difference between various kinds of law. Respecting criminal law, but not custom laws, does not make you a criminal." When the time came to explain this view, understand it, and even defend it as an exercise, he refused. His own view he described as follows: "one should always follow the law (any law), because it is good, right, and fulfilling." Instead, this was an exercise he did at home, and he thanked me for it, saying that it allowed him to be acquainted with his thought in a way unknown to him before. Though he was satisfied, we reached a dead end in our search for a solution to his solitude.

As he refused to discuss tolerance towards digressions or flexibility toward the law tolerance towards selective violations of the law, as well as the possible benefits of solitude (from which he suffered enormously), I asked a *second question*, namely, *why is it important not to associate with some people?* (Alternatively, why does it bother him so much to associate with his colleagues?). The first answer he proposed was that associating with people means that one shares their values. As he could not identify with his colleagues' values, he did not like the kind of persons they were. He thought that his associating with them would mean that he would necessarily adopt their values. I noticed the confusion, and after clarifying it, I mentioned Aristotle's classification of three levels of friendship in the eighth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle differentiates there between friendship based on utility, pleasure, and sharing of values. Incidentally, the example he gives for the lower kind (utility) is that of persons at sea, whose friendship lasts only as long as does the trip.

My client was immediately relieved. Disentangling his view of the meaning of association from his opinion of the values people hold, he believed that from now on he could associate with these people for his and their benefit during the trip without necessarily endorsing their values. He bought a copy of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and took it with him to sea, determined to learn more about philosophy.

I use this as an example in every interview, as I never had a more "successful" case in my life. All the goals of my counseling (see the list above) were achieved in three sessions, to my satisfaction as well as the client's.

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B. The Jealous Lover

A somewhat renowned female writer complains about her jealousy. She has recently separated from her husband, her friend is still married and will stay so till his children grow up or forever (whichever comes first) replace "forever" with "until he dies" since forever will never come first, but her jealousy is not provoked by his wife but she is not jealous of his wife. Rather, she is jealous of other women whom he invites to his office (which is not very far from hers) and with whom he apparently has sex. She does not want to confront him; she would rather get rid of her jealousy because she cannot write and she is damaging their relationship. She believes that her friend, who comes from a different culture (he is a Catholic Arab) than hers (she is a Jewish Israeli) will never renounce the other women and might deny the facts. All she would like is to learn how to accept that. At my request, she formulated her *initial question, how could I overcome my jealousy?*

All this was against my better judgement. I questioned the assumption that "jealousy is bad" and should, therefore, be overcome, through the *second question*, *is jealousy only (and always) bad (for you, for your friend, for the relationship)?* We discussed several answers to this question, including one according to which there is some good in jealousy, because it may lead to a change in her friend's behavior. Her definite answer, however, was that there is nothing good in jealousy in her case. For her friend will not change his behavior, nor would she want him to do so for her. The jealousy she feels—not his actions (!)—is the only thing that is destroying her (she cannot write) and their relationship (he does not like her being jealous).

At this point, I could either ask her to leave or choose her initial question as *my second question*. *How could you counter your jealousy?* I asked. We discussed a few answers until we came to the Stoics' radical solution for the passions. We analyzed the content of her evaluative belief that his being with other women is bad, instead of indifferent, as the Stoics would deem it. In order to see that, however, the counselee would have to adopt a Stoic view of the bad, the good, and the indifferent. That is, she would have to embrace their purpose, which is virtue or peace of mind (Nussbaum 1994). This she could not do, of course, for she was a passionate woman who wanted to stay that way. She wanted to extirpate one passion, not all.

I therefore adapted the Stoics' view for her, as follows. Her primordial goal was the flourishing of the relationship she had with that man. From now on, anything that fosters the relationship will be deemed "good," anything that hinders it will be deemed "bad," and anything that does not

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foster nor hinder it will be deemed indifferent. Given her goal, she recognized her jealousy as “bad.” “Bad” was a thing to avoid at all costs. Therefore, she did. Unbelievably, it worked. Later on, she told me that she never had to fight jealousy again.

I now have a recipe for diets (cakes are “bad,” salads are “good” and movies are indifferent) which, if rightly sold, could bring me millions. I will not forget those counseling sessions, however, for never before nor after was I asked to do something that was so incongruent with my personal convictions. I failed in my first goal (I did not manage to clarify her thought nor minimize what seems to me her confusion through correcting her faulty inferences). I believe, however, that I succeeded in the remaining goals (expanding options, gaining inward space, emphasizing autonomy and responsibility, having independent access to some tools). Although I must admit that, there is something weird about the way these goals were (mis-)used by my client.

C. The Unsatisfied Worker

A woman about fifty years old came to see me with the following problem. She had to work many hours because she had a private business of public relations. She was tired of this job and not interested in it anymore. She had no time for social life but felt obligated to continue working at this rhythm for the financial sake of her (grown-up) children and the financial security of her older days. She asked me if I could help her find some solution to this problem.

I asked her to formulate a question. Her *first question* was, *What can I do about my situation? What are my options?* As she insisted that she had no idea what could be her options, I proposed various possibilities, or answers to the question at hand, which we successively evaluated. Some of them I list here: Reducing the hours, hiring an assistant, working as an employee in someone else’s business, changing her profession, studying something else while working in order to change her profession in the future, changing her profession now, accepting that she would have less money in the future, organizing her future accordingly, re-evaluating her obligations to her children, rethinking her priorities, etc.—these are some of the answers I proposed.

She rejected all the proposals, deeming them unrealistic. She said that more or less each year she goes to another expert to see if something can be done about her impossible situation and she always comes out with the same results: the *inescapable necessity* of her situation. At that point, she was very angry with me because I could not “solve” the “unsolvable,” but

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was satisfied with being reinforced in her conviction that her situation was inevitable. Since she managed to convince herself of the "necessity" of her situation, and it seemed as if convincing me was no less important for her, I thought that maybe it would be more helpful to stop "fighting" her assumption. I decided to take "nothing can be done regarding my situation: it's inescapable" as her final answer to her first question, i.e., what can be done in my situation? I suggested therefore the following (*second and third) questions*: *are there various ways of bearing the necessary? If yes, which ways?*

She found this approach more "worthy of her money," because she felt she was getting something out of the discussion. Obviously, she had already analyzed all the "practical" solutions to her problem that we discussed in the answers to the first question, and was not ready to re-evaluate the importance of money or security nor her preferring the future to the present. The answers to the second question were innovative for her, as they involved a kind of reflection unknown to her. We discussed several answers. One of them was that accepting the necessary can be liberating.[346] She liked the answer, and she learned to "love" the "fate" that she had decided (long ago) was hers.

This case illustrates how one can work with a client who is not interested in change. When I attempt to evaluate the goals I achieved in this particular case, I realize that I failed in the first goal (clarifying thought or minimizing confusion—detecting presuppositions, correcting faulty inferences). I did not succeed in convincing the counselee that she should revise her thinking through detecting her presuppositions. I succeeded in some sense with the second goal (expanding options). I could not expand her options regarding the actual situation, but I expanded them regarding the way in which she felt about the situation. I succeeded only partly in furthering goal three (gaining inward space) for the same reasons. I succeeded only partially in goal four (emphasizing autonomy and responsibility): she would not take responsibility for the situation but she took responsibility for the way she felt about the situation. Finally, regarding the fifth goal, she learned how to use a powerful tool, namely, seeing that one's attitude towards a situation need not be determined by the situation.

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[346] According to Spinoza (1985). See also Nietzsche (1968), Amir (2010) and Amir, *Philosophy as Redemption: Spinoza versus Nietzsche* (work under contract for De Gruyter).

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3. Implementing the Method: Less Counseling, More Philosophy

Each of the above cases could have been addressed in different ways than the one I used. The necessary creativity involved in philosophical counseling rarely achieves similar results, nor should it aim at uniformity. In the discussion following a presentation of an earlier draft of this chapter to Italian philosophical counselors, I was impressed by the variety of approaches to the problems these cases represent. The remainder of the chapter analyzes the outcomes of a workshop through which I introduce this method to a public of philosophical practitioners, and the lessons I learned from it.

The idea for this workshop came out from supervising cases for the American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA). Reading those cases, my impression was that some practical philosophers were relying more on good advice, psychological insights, and inspirational devices, in order to compete effectively with psychotherapy and New Age techniques. This is not what counselees come for, however, nor what we are trained for. Following my keynote lecture in a conference (reproduced in the first chapter of this book), I wished to emphasize that one of the ways of not taking philosophy seriously is to turn to other disciplines as if philosophy were not enough.

I never imagined I would teach practical philosophers a method, especially not experienced practitioners like the persons who did me the honor to attend the workshop. I always assumed that, practical philosophy being a creative discipline, each of us had developed his or her method, that is, a structured and transparent way, of conducting the discussions. But after supervising the cases and reflecting about the papers presented in the conferences of practical philosophy, I thought that I should perhaps share the method I published some years ago (Amir 2003), in order to propose that we engage in "less counseling and more philosophy."

The workshop was conducted in two languages simultaneously. Beginning with some introductory remarks, it was followed by a first exercise in which the participants were free to practice the kind of counseling they were accustomed to, and a discussion assessing the efficacy of these practices. I then sketched the method I am using, tested it in a second exercise, compared the results obtained with the results of the first exercise, and finished the workshop by a fuller explanation of the main steps of the method I am was proposing, its rationale, and its goals.

First exercise: The group divided into triads, comprised of a counselee, a counselor, and an observer. I asked each counselee to present a problem

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to the counselor, each counselor to address this problem as he or she is accustomed to, and each observer to watch without interfering.

We then discussed the results by asking the participants different questions according to the role they had: I asked the counselee whether the process was helpful; I asked the counselor how much he succeeded in conducting the discussion; and I asked the observer what he thought of what he had witnessed.

Before engaging in the second exercise, I proposed a method, based on the following steps: first, one formulates the problem at hand in *a question*, preferably a question with multiple answers. Second, one presents the *alternative answers* to the question. Third, one assesses each answer *critically*. One is ready, then, to formulate a *second question*, which has usually some connection (logical or other) to the first one. And so on.

The main steps were sketched as follows:

I. *Question*

Counselee: background, problem(s), etc.

Counselor: "formulate a question."

Counselee: "…?"

Counselor: if the question is not acceptable as formulated, help the counselee in one of the following ways:

First way - a "better" philosophic question related to your problem/interest would be, "…?" By "better" I understand a manageable question (not too extensive, not to narrow, not too speculative), preferably with more than two alternative answers.

Second way - your question assumes that "….." I propose to formulate a first question about this assumption. Therefore, the first question should be, "…?"

If the initial question is accepted, make sure it is understood by pointing out its presuppositions and questioning them. If the presuppositions are acceptable to the counselee, you may proceed to step two.

II. *Alternative answers and critical evaluation*

Counselor: formulate your answer to the question.

Then,

Counselor: formulate alternative answers.

The counselee attempts to find alternative answers on his own, the

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counselor helps only if necessary, becoming more active in refining and making each answer precise, relating it to a philosopher and, if necessary, referring the counselee to bibliography.

Counselor: Formulate pros and cons for each answer.

The counselee attempts to do it on his own, and the counselor should pitch in ideas only if the counselee has none. The counselor is active in the critical process, through which he teaches good reasoning and other processes of philosophizing.

III. *Implementation*

Discussion: Do you understand the presuppositions and consequences of the preferred answer? Is there a better understanding of other possible views? Is there a change of attitude?

Go back to personal problem/interest. Was the process helpful?

Appropriate understanding and implement change: in feeling, in will, in action. Follow up the process of appropriation and implementation, help with its difficulties.

IV. *End of discussion and possible beginning of a new one*

Counselor: Good bye/Formulate new question.

Counselee: "….?"

Counselor: How is it related to your previous question?

The question need not be related to the first one. However, if it is, the relation should be made explicit.

Then back to step one.

Second exercise: We practiced the method proposed in the same triads, followed by a discussion. Most triads did not complete step two (critical assessments of alternative answers), but all completed step one (formulation of a question, assessing its viability, and discussing its presuppositions). Counselees were asked: did it help you? If yes, in what way? Was it more helpful than the first exercise? Counselors were asked the same questions, whilst observers were asked to compare the proceedings of the two exercises.

The results were astonishing: all groups (12 or 13 groups) related that using the method I proposed made the discussion clearer, easier, and more effective, *for both counselee and counselor*. This was true of the English-speaking teams as well as the Spanish-speaking teams.

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Let me therefore elaborate on the rationale that led me to that method, its main steps, and its goals. The goals, which are fully explained at the beginning of the chapter, are briefly recalled here:

The first goal is to enhance abstract thinking, by the movement from the concrete to the abstract and back. By appropriating the insights gained in the abstract, I am faithful to philosophy's means (abstract thought) as well as to practical philosophy's goals (the concrete).

The second goal is to promote intellectual virtues with the ultimate goal of furthering intellectual courage and autonomy, for I believe intellectual virtues are what philosophy is about. The relation of intellectual virtues to the question and alternative answers method is clarified both by Jean Piaget's account of the development of thought (1932) and by Richard Holmes' account of the history of sciences (Holmes 1976): knowledge, as "intelligent development" is linked to the capacity of adopting additional points of view. Thus, adopting different points of view furthers such epistemic virtues as impartiality, or openness to the ideas of others. Assessing different answers critically furthers intellectual sobriety, or the virtue of the careful inquirer who accepts only what is warranted by evidence. In addition, the whole process of philosophical practice that is faithful to philosophy furthers the virtue of intellectual courage, which includes perseverance and determination.

The third goal is to further moral virtues with the ultimate objective of enhancing solidarity, for impartial thoughts are not sufficient for wisdom—broad feelings are needed too. Indeed, promoting moral virtues is not a separate endeavor from furthering intellectual virtues; for feelings are involved in intellectual virtues, and intellectual virtues are involved in handling feelings, but the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue is confused. Benedict Spinoza considered the intellectual virtue of understanding the key to all the virtues (*Ethics*, part 4, prop. 26). Indeed, understanding different points of view brings forth pluralism, tolerance, acceptance, which further increase our solidarity with other human beings.

John Benson sums up my main goal by defining autonomy in a way that makes it both a moral and an intellectual virtue: "The virtue of autonomy is a mean state of character with regard to reliance on one's own powers in acting, choosing, and forming opinions" (Benson 1987, 205). He argues, "Autonomous moral thinking is closely parallel to autonomous theoretical thinking, the one being concerned with what should be done, the other with what is the case" (208). The virtue of autonomy is closely allied to courage, as well as to humility, and it shows the connection between cognitive and volitional processes, for, as Benson argues, "to be autonomous in one's thinking calls for intellectual skills, including the

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ability to judge when someone else knows better than you do. But it calls also for the ability to control the emotions that prevent those skills from being properly exercised" (213).

Together these goals share in the following hope: facilitating the counselee's autonomy in order to contribute to minimizing the tension between freedom and equality in liberal states. This I consider the ultimate objective of a democratically oriented philosophical practice.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ATTAINING THE GOOD LIFE: SELF-CHANGE

I engage in a critical revision of several topics that are inherent to a vision of the good life. These involve the relation between the tragic and the comic, the conditions of self-knowledge, the ability to acknowledge one's ambivalence and to better deliberate. Additionally, I address the relation between reason and emotions, between joy and suffering, and the capacity for endowing one's life with meaning and grounding compassion in it. Finally, I clarify the possibility of living with unsolvable conflict and of eventually resolving the conflict that characterizes the human condition.

I further advance humor as a potent tool for living well and introduce a new vision of the good life, *Homo risibilis*, as well as exercises for implementing it.

The views this chapter introduces answer the requirement the practice of philosophy may have to enable moderate self-change or full-fledged self-transformation for those who seek it. Moreover, given that we are not fully rational, the tool proposed below affords a more efficient implementation of any philosophic ideal, including those that are not endorsed in this chapter.

Introduction

This chapter proposes humor as a potent tool for living the good life, yet begins paradoxically with the tragic sense of life. I suggest that an important reason that we do not want to deepen our vision of the tragic sense of life is that we do not know a way out of it. We are afraid that we will be caught in melancholic thoughts, from which we will not be able to escape. It is important to live as lucidly as we can, however, if we want to achieve happiness, because no happiness abides on unstable grounds. In this chapter, I propose humor as a tool that enables us to deepen tragic knowledge whilst offering a way out of it.

Humor is no stranger to philosophy. Indeed, the comical entertains an important relation with philosophy dating back to its beginning in the sixth

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century BC.[347] This surprising fact is explained by the necessary role humor plays in effective philosophic education and the even more crucial function it performs in personal philosophic transformation. When used correctly, humor is one of the most useful tools available to philosophers for furthering philosophic ideals, both ambitious (such as happiness, joy, and peace of mind) and more modest yet central to philosophy (such as self-knowledge, truth, rationality, and virtue). A systematic use of humor is helpful for becoming aware of intra-personal conflicts, deliberating over them, strengthening both our acknowledgement and tolerance of the ambivalence that characterizes human relations, and successfully living with unsolvable conflicts that make up the human condition. Further steps in the path of philosophic humor lead to a vision I call *Homo risibilis* (the ridiculous human being), which resolves the basic conflict that inheres in the human condition and opens up new possibilities for the liberated self.

The kind of philosophic humor introduced here can be compared to the Buddhist's raft, the Taoist's fisher net, and Wittgenstein's ladder—all metaphors for theories, whose ultimate role is practical and may be thus discarded when their goal, the good life, has been reached. As an alternative to these worldviews as well as to the majority of Eastern and Western philosophic and religious theories of peace of mind, happiness, and redemption, I propose the *Homo risibilis* vision. This worldview has the advantage of requiring no metaphysical assumptions, in sharp contradistinction to most theories, whilst at the same time yielding no lesser benefits than the most ambitious philosophies and religions.

As humor is sometimes related to a "sense" and considered to be innate, let me begin by emphasizing that humor can be successfully taught and learned.[348] In what follows, however, I can only hint at the method for developing one's sense of humor I have devised and repeatedly used. Moreover, as exemplified in the method for the practice of philosophy that I have offered some years ago, a non-humorous practice can be successful as well (Amir 2003). Thus, this chapter's focus is on none of those methods, but rather on learning through exercises how a systematic use of humor can serve both established philosophic ideals as well as a new worldview, *Homo risibilis*, which I describe shortly here and at length elsewhere.[349] The exercises inserted throughout the following theoretical approach can be practiced alone if accompanied by relevant readings, but

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347 See Amir (2013) and Amir (2014b).
348 See Ruch (2008, 69-71).
349 See Amir (2014a, chap. 3; 2012; 2014c). For the theoretical part of the chapter, I rely heavily on these texts. The exercises and the information accompanying them had been written especially for the essay that is at the origin of this chapter.

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may confer greater benefits when accompanied by group discussions with fellow-practitioners. They may take a lifetime to be completed, if at all, but their gradual benefits are commensurate with the effort invested. Let me indicate briefly how you can begin developing your sense of humor independently of its use for philosophic purposes.

Exercise: Developing Your Sense of Humor

A. Begin by enhancing your creativity. For example, write down as quickly as you can 25 uses for scissors or eyeglasses. Your answers should not be good or funny, but numerous and without inhibition. You can use Edward De Bono's books and practice in groups the exercises he recommends.

B. Notice and recall later all the (more or less) funny things you encounter in the news, newspapers, and everyday life. Write them down in a diary specially reserved for humor.

C. Familiarize yourself at the same time with comical incongruities by watching all good situation comedies on TV, attending comedies on both stage and screen, and reading good humorous books.

D. Read a few good jokes every day.

E. Find some caricatures, erase the caption at the bottom of the picture, and write three alternative captions. If done in groups, ask which of your answers is the best and check if this is your opinion.

F. Take away a joke's punchline, try to forget it, and write down 25 alternative sentences that "solve" the problem the joke presents. As it is difficult to forget a punchline, invite me to a workshop for this and many more exercises that further develop your sense of humor.

Developing a sense of humor is important for the philosophical practitioner, as both a philosopher and a consultant, because philosophical reflection is sensitive to the tension between ideals and reality, between society and philosophy, between good and evil, and between good and good. Especially important is the ambiguous relation with truth that humor entertains, which makes it an ideal tool for handling and communicating the delicate balance among illusions that truth is. For the counselee, however, the benefits of a good sense of humor may be lifesaving, as the alchemy of humor is known to transform suffering into joy. At the very least, then, a more powerful, creative, and subtle sense of humor, which is also educated to tackle philosophic issues, is a boon for all of us.

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Exercise: Challenging the Goal of Transforming Suffering into Joy
A. Do you think suffering is good?
B. Why is joy important?

A humorous mood fosters awareness of conflict, facilitates deliberation, and helps one live with unresolved conflict. This in turn is instrumental in furthering important philosophic goals, such as self-knowledge, truth, rationality, and virtue. Ultimately, a humorous mood leads to a higher level of understanding, which helps resolve the conflict that characterizes the human condition. This in turn is instrumental in furthering ambitious goals such as happiness, joy, and peace of mind. In order to see how humor can accomplish either the first task or the second, we need a better knowledge of its constitution.

1. Humor

Humor is a complex inner process or multidimensional construct involving simultaneous cognitive, emotive, and conative components. From a cognitive point of view, humor enables the perception of the comic, that is, the simultaneous duality or multiplicity of points of view. It enables rapid cognitive-perceptual shifts between various conflicting points of view. These points of view may contradict each other, and clash with serious aspects of the situation. Thus, the capacity to perceive a series of incongruities is party to the cognitive component of humor.

Exercise: Simultaneous Multiplicity of Points of View
A. Discern at least two points of view that a joke simultaneously creates.
B. Notice how an amusing comment clashes with the seriousness of a situation.
C. Pay attention to how the tension that is created by conflicting points of view is exchanged with the pleasure derived from rapid cognitive shifts between them.

From a conative point of view, humor is indifferent with respect to motivation, as it reduces desire and impedes action. However, as Wallace Chafe hypothesizes, humor's basic evolutionary and adaptive function is disabling (Chafe 2007, 23). A sense of humor is the safety valve preventing impulsive behavior that leads to counterproductive actions (Fry 1987). Chafe suggests that it is instructive to look at the main physiological and psychological manifestations of humor in light of his

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disabling hypothesis: physiologically, it incapacitates and psychologically, because it is pleasing, it diverts attention away from decisive action.

Exercise: Laughter and Humor as Disabling

A. Notice your muscle tone whilst laughing: Can you defend yourself against tickling?

B. Pay attention to your motivation to act whilst humorously enjoying yourself.

From an emotional point of view, humor offers several major benefits. First, humor increases tolerance to ambivalence by converting the pain of ambivalence into pleasure. Due to the importance of conflict and ambivalence to human emotional life, I further explain this point below as part of the discussion of conflict awareness. Moreover, humor moderates extreme feelings such as fear, anger, and sorrow. Various philosophers have noted this fact. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev explains, "In contrast to the practical orientation of emotions, humor involves a more abstract and less purposeful activity" (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 63). Unlike reason, emotion usually employs a limited and partial perspective—the personal perspective of an interested agent. John Morreall notes that contrary to emotion, humor links different, apparently unrelated elements within a more general and broader perspective, thereby generating a disinterested experience (Morreall 1983).

Exercise: Emotions

A. Pay attention to the personal point of view that an emotion represents: what is its cognitive content?

B. Notice and articulate the comparison that is inherent in the emotion (between past, present, and future personal situations; between others and me). This will also be helpful for further exercises.

Humor's survival value consists, at least in part, in its functioning as a counterweight to the strong influence exerted by emotions and moods on our behavior. It draws attention away from the self and its desires, thereby enabling us to look at reality from a safe and somewhat different point of view than the emotional perspective (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 364-65). This makes it possible for us to relax and cope better with reality, paving the way to a third benefit: humor provides release from the pressure of frustration generated by the conflict at hand.

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Exercise: Humor and Emotions

*A. Humor and anger: "Step back and laugh," said the Stoic Seneca in "*On Anger*" (1995). Laughing is the stepping back. Try this with an event that angers you. From which point of view can you belittle the anger?*

B. Repeat the exercise with an incident involving fear.

C. Repeat the exercise with an incident involving sorrow.

Furthermore, humor notably reduces shame and disgust.[350] It facilitates a confrontation with difficult aspects of the self and enables us to contemplate them more calmly. Michael Lewis explains that coping with shame essentially involves removing ourselves from the shaming situation, by confessing, denying (attributing the failure to an external source), or forgetting (reducing the weight of our flaw), as well as by using humor (Lewis 1992, 127-37). Humor is helpful because it provides us with a new perspective that transcends the current uncomfortable perspective. Adopting another perspective is contrary to the partial nature of emotions and is thus incompatible with an intense emotional state. Consequently, laughing at ourselves serves to distance us from the shaming situation as we join others (imagined or real) in taking a fresh perspective on it. The new vantage point humor provides helps reduce the significance of the shaming situation (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 515).

Exercise: Shame

"What is the seal of liberation?—No longer being ashamed in front of oneself," Nietzsche wrote famously in the Gay Science *(section 274; see also 107).*

A. Remember an occasion in which you felt shame.

B. What is the cognitive content of the emotion you felt?

C. Is this content true? Kind? Necessary? Is it human?

D. Do you want to reduce the shame?

E. Simultaneously feel shame and do not feel shame by feeling shame and smiling at it.

F. From which vantage point can you best do that?

Humor can also reduce disgust. The move from shame to disgust tracks the move from public to private, from external to internal, as well as from child to adult and from repulsive to repressive. In *The Anatomy of Disgust*, William Ian Miller argues, "the comic and the disgusting share significant

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[350] For a more thorough explanation of the workings of humor with shame and disgust, see Amir (2005a).

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points of contact, and that there is an intimate connection between some styles of contempt, disgust, and the comic" (Miller 1997, ix). [*Exercise: Give examples*]. He explains: "Much of the comic depends upon a transgressive irreverence, a kind of feast of misrule in which, if not the violation, at least the mockery of certain norms is privileged. No sooner is an aspect of the disgust acquired than the very substance of that disgust becomes material for joking. Disgust can usually be indulged playfully for rather low scales" (Miller 1997, 116). [*Exercise: Give examples of bad jokes that reveal disgust*].

The experience of disgust can be more entertaining to us, as is commonly the case in comedy, when another's shamelessness or ineptitude elicits it. [*Exercise: Give examples*]. Through the distancing from ourselves that humor affords, our own inaptitude should also be a source of pleasure. I suggest that if the comic and the disgusting share significant points of contact, as James Beattie has already pointed out (Beattie 1776), self-referential humor can actively use the comic to discharge disgust.

Exercise: Disgust and Contempt

"Of all our infirmities, the most savage is to despise our being," said Michel de Montaigne famously (1965). For Nietzsche, too, disgust is the greatest danger (1979, VI, 8), and laughter helps us to overcome it by distancing us from it (1954, IV, 17, 1). Zarathustra's "great disgust of man" is obliterated by laughter (1979, I, 8).

A. Recall an occasion in which you felt disgusted with yourself.
B. Repeat the steps of the previous exercise on shame.
C. From which vantage point can you minimize disgust?
D. Do you find that humor has been helpful? How so?

By gradually replacing feelings of anger, fear, sorrow, shame, and disgust with sympathy (Freud 1960; 1928) and compassion (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987), humor encourages self-acceptance, tolerance "of self and others," and "a sense of identification with humanity" (Martin 1998, 99). Through our distancing from intense emotions like fear or anger and difficult feelings like shame and disgust, we experience these feelings as if they were someone else's, yet with sympathy. Instead of projecting onto others the rejected parts of the self, which is an impediment to compassion (Kramer 1990, 292), this sympathetic distancing from the self brings one closer to others.

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Exercise: Self-Acceptance, Tolerance, Identification
A. Is it true that repeated self-humor brings about self-acceptance, tolerance, identification with humanity, and more compassion? Try it over a period, pay attention to yourself and ask others about your behavior.
B. Do you think that philosophy's goal is to bring about a sense of identification with humanity?

The cognitive, emotive, and motivational components of humor work in conjunction. In what follows, I recommend self-directed and intra-personal humor, which need *not* be communicated in order to be enjoyed.

2. The Tragic and the Comic

A theory of philosophic humor begins paradoxically with the tragic sense of life.

Exercise: The Tragic Sense of Life
A. What is the tragic?
B. Read, if necessary, theories of tragedy, such as those of Aristotle, Hegel, and Nietzsche, and answer the following question: Is the tragic different from theatrical tragedies?
C. Do we have to live through a great catastrophe to talk about the tragic?
D. Is life tragic?
E. If yes, what is tragic in life? (Read, if necessary, philosophers on the tragic sense of life).[351]

Oscar Mandel maintains in "Tragic Reality" that failure lies implicit in the effort. Not only death with its inevitable victory over effort makes birth tragic, but also the need to live among one's kind is tragic because of the "misalliance between human beings, which fastens on the child the inevitability of suffering among his own species" (Mandel 1963, 60-61).

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[351] Such as Michel de Montaigne, Blaise Pascal, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Lev Shestov, Miguel de Unamuno, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Bataille, Clément Rosset and Cioran. You may want to read literature as well, as tragic philosophers are not only rare but some of them use other genres than philosophic treatises to advance their theses. The tragic sense of life has been portrayed in Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, Eugene O' Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Camus' *The Stranger*, and Sartre's *Nausea* and *No Exit*, to name a fraction.

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Mandel notes the intricacy of folly in wisdom, doom in success, and flaw in every social reform. Attraction and repulsion, love and hate, illusion and disillusion, reform and reaction, utopian hope and end-of-an-age despair; these are the well-known materials of modern tragedies, he argues, which must, if the artist fails to see the justice in "the two sides of everything," end on a note of futility and hopelessness (1963, 101).

Many more thinkers depict the tragic sense of life: though the terms are different, the feeling is the same.[352] Conrad Hyers (1996) sums up "the tragic paradigm" as a view of life that sees existence individually or collectively as structured in terms of polarities, oppositions, contradictions, and their collisions. We can notice the tragic opposition within the individual, among persons or groups, and in the very nature of things. At the individual level, we have a predilection for reading the psyche as an internal struggle between contending forces. The heart of the tragic is the divided personality, and the theme of the inner torment of the tragic psyche has had a long history, from Sophocles' King Oedipus, through Plato, St. Paul, medieval thinkers, Shakespeare, the Romantics, Fyodor Dostoevsky, up through Sigmund Freud.

I suggest that the basic human predicament the tragic sense of life attempts to capture is defined by the discrepancy between our desires on the instinctual, emotional, and intellectual levels, and our awareness of the impossibility of fulfilling them for practical as well as principled reasons.[353] The discrepancies within myself, between myself and the other, and between myself and the world that make up our everyday experience can be considered intra-psychic conflicts and are usually conceived and felt as tragic.

Exercise: The Tragic and Your Life

A. *Do you encounter the tragic within yourself? Give examples of concrete cases.*

B. Do you encounter the tragic in your relationships with others? Please give examples.

C. Do you encounter the tragic in your relations with the world?

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[352] For a discussion of the tragic sense of life, see Amir (2014a, chap. 3).

[353] The validity of this description of the human predicament can also be assessed through three well-known philosophic theories of the relations we entertain with the world, with others, and with ourselves. See Camus on the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus* ([1942] 1959), Sartre's description of the clash between me and the other, between the individual and the group (Sartre [1943] 1957), and Immanuel Kant's view of metaphysical questions as necessarily arising from the nature of reason, yet transcending reason's power of answering them (Kant 1929, xviii).

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Please explain.

D. Can you find something in common to all instances we consider tragic? Does this change your initial thought about the tragic you formulated in part A of the last exercise?

Tragic intra-psychic conflicts, however, can be construed as comical incongruities, as evidenced by the history of the genres of tragedy and comedy (Cornford 1961; Kerr 1967), humor theories, and the relation of humor with melancholy and suffering.[354]

Exercise: How Lighthearted Is the Comical?

A. Think about comedies: Is there anything tragic in them?

B. Are persons who use humor in abundance necessarily lighthearted?

C. Do you know about the lives of any stand-up comedians? What do they reveal about their temperaments?

Theories of humor that help construe tragic intra-psychic conflicts as comical incongruities include, first, the incongruity theory, which sees humor as incongruity alone, or it together with its resolution. There are various theories of incongruity, but they all present cognitions involving disjointed ideas, ill-suited pairings of ideas or situations, and/or their presentations in ways that diverge from habitual or expected customs. Second, ambivalence theories of humor see humor as made produced by oscillation, conflict-mixture, and simultaneously experienced incompatible emotions or feelings. The difference between the incongruity and the ambivalence theories of humor lies in their emphasis: the former emphasize cognition and the latter emphasize feelings. Finally, the release and relief theories see humor as providing relief or release from too much tension.

The notion of incongruity explains the relevance of humor to conflict. We can consider incongruity to be a conflict or clash among ideas, emotions, and desires. Conversely, we can also consider conflict an incongruity, and by using the incongruity and ambivalence theories, we can construe this conflict as comical. The humor thus created enables us to tolerate the tension generated by this opposition. This last point is clarified

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[354] Famous sufferers, such as Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche have noted the relation of the comic with melancholy and suffering. Kierkegaard maintains, "The melancholy have the best sense of humor," and Nietzsche asserts, "The deeply wounded have Olympian laughter; one has only what one needs to have," and, "the most suffering animal on earth invented for itself—laughter" (Kierkegaard 1987, 20; also 1967-1978, I, 700; Nietzsche 1968, sec. 1040; 990).

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by the third group of theories, which view humor as a relief or release of too much tension. Within the framework of these theories, it is possible to assume that tragic situations may also be experienced as comical, thereby making the situation bearable.

Exercise: The Tragic and the Comic

A. Recall an incident that you experienced as tragic.

B. Can you see how it can be comical? Move imaginatively in space and time: can it be comical from an outside (someone else's) perspective––perhaps if it happens to someone else? Can it be comical from your own, but future, perspective—perhaps when you will tell the story to your grandchildren?

C. "When it happens to me, it is Tragedy, when it happens to somebody else, it is Comedy." Can you see why this attitude is not rational?

D. "I may laugh at it later, but not now." Can you see why this attitude is not rational?

E. Can you simultaneously "feel the tragic and see the comical," as Søren Kierkegaard suggests?

Not every tragic incongruity can be perceived as comical by the person who is in the midst of experiencing it, however [*Exercise: Give examples*]; and some comical situations are independent of any underlying tragic incongruity [*Exercise: Give examples*]. However, most intrapersonal tragic conflicts, I believe, have the potential to transform themselves into comical incongruities, as theories of humor imply, histories of the dramatic genres and relations between the tragic and the comic indicate, and humor's relations with melancholy and suffering exemplify.

Exercise: Is This True?

Once we also perceive intrapersonal tragic conflicts as comical incongruities, we can describe humor's work on these conflicts so that we may fully appreciate the significance of the transposition from the tragic to the comic. Construing tragic oppositions as comical generally results in a humorous mood or state of mind that retains both the tragic and the comical aspects of a conflict. The benefits of this kind of self-directed humor are fourfold. Humor may facilitate awareness of conflict, enable deliberation, and help cope with irresolvable conflict, or, alternatively, advance the resolution of the conflict. Let us begin by explaining how humor may facilitate conflict awareness.

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3. Conflict Awareness

An important element of self-knowledge is awareness of internal conflict as well as familiarity with the conflict's components. Self-knowledge is a prerequisite of effective deliberation, which, in turn, is imperative for deciding whether and how to solve a conflict. Humor facilitates conflict awareness by creating the distance necessary to observe it with the calmness that characterizes aesthetic contemplation. Within this safe inward environment, made so by suspending blinding emotions, silencing shame and disgust, and incapacitating rash action, hidden aspects of the conflict are encouraged to emerge under the impartiality of the humorous gaze.

Exercise: Try it. Is it true?

One important outcome of this process is the acknowledgment of ambivalence, which is necessary for understanding oneself, others, and human relations in general. Ambivalence is the state of simultaneous conflicting feelings. It is usually experienced when emotions and thoughts of both negative and positive valence toward something or someone arise. Intolerance for ambiguity, nuance, and paradox is considered its opposite. Feeling both love and hate for a person is a common example of ambivalence. Situations in which "mixed feelings" of a more general sort are experienced, or when a person experiences indecisiveness or uncertainty about something are also deemed ambivalent. It is usually held that the simultaneous presence of positive and negative aspects of a subject in one's mind is unpleasant. Thus, it may lead to avoidance and procrastination, or to deliberate attempts to resolve the ambivalence. Ever since the Swiss psychiatrist, Eugen Bleuler, introduced the term in the early twentieth century (Bleuler 1911), the ambivalence of human attitudes has been continually investigated, especially by psychologists.

Long before the term was coined, the experience of ambivalence—being pulled in psychologically opposed directions—had been noted. No observer of the human condition could fail to note the existence of mixed feelings, mingled beliefs, and contradictory actions.[355] [*Exercise: Give examples*]. Psychoanalysis has made ambivalence famous, as most of us

[355] In seventeenth-century France, the writings of Michel de Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and Blaise Pascal were the source for many *pensées* and maxims dealing with a wide range of ambivalent experiences. In his treatment of the emotions (in part 3 of the *Ethics*), Spinoza made much of ambivalence, which he termed "fluctuation" or "vacillation."

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think of ambivalence in connection with some complex and debatable claims of psychoanalytic theory; but psychoanalysis has also associated the awareness of ambivalence mainly with pathology. Ambivalence has been recognized before and after psychoanalysis, however, as descriptive of our normal emotional make-up, indeed, as the mark of our emotions and attachments. A key concept in normal psychology, ambivalence is also embedded in social functions and professions. [*Exercise: Give examples*]. Ambivalence has been identified as a characteristic of modern societies, which, through internalization, has become a personal problem that threatens our sense of identity.

If the ambivalence theory of humor—which states that humor is created by ambivalent feelings—is true, one of its possible consequences is that it increases tolerance to ambivalence by converting pain into pleasure. Rod Martin explains that humor brings forth ambivalence, according to sociologist Michael Mulkay (1988), "because in the humorous mode of thinking, contrary to rational thinking, a thing can be both X and not-X at the same time" (Martin 2007, 63). [*Exercise: Look for examples in humorous instances*]. Martin further explains: "Some variation of Arthur Koestler's idea that humor involves the activation of two normally incompatible frames of reference continues to form the basis of most humor theories today… In Koestler's original view, the 'bisociation' or ongoing incongruity is that which creates the humorous effect, rather than its removal," as in the incongruity resolution model (Martin 2007, 63, 72; see also Koestler 1964). Michael Apter (1982) uses "the notion of synergy to describe this cognitive process, in which two contradictory images or conceptions of the same object are held in one's mind at the same time." This produces "the pleasurable sensation of having one's thoughts oscillate back and forth between two incompatible interpretations of a concept. Thus, in humor, we playfully manipulate ideas and activities so that they are simultaneously perceived in opposite ways, such as real and not real, important and trivial, threatening and safe" (Martin 2007, 7).

Exercise: Identifying Ongoing Incongruity

A. Take a joke and its punchline: What are the incompatible frames of reference that create the mind's oscillation?

B. Identify which of these simultaneous perceptions are real and unreal, important and trivial, threatening and safe.

The pleasure we derive from ambivalence through humor enables us to acquire the ability to feel simultaneous contradictory emotions about the

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same idea, event, or person. It is the most fundamental skill required for handling both internal and interpersonal conflict. Unfortunately, throughout history we have tended to interpret conflict as traumatic, as something that cannot be tolerated and must be avoided or stopped, rather than a challenge with which one must cope. Likewise, we regard those who in any way contribute to conflict, even when they are non-violent, as villains deserving censure, punishment, or even retaliation. However, ambiguity and ambivalence exist in everything human, because we are capable of perceiving things in contradictory and multiple dimensions. We can simultaneously hold in the mind's eye several layers of possibility. The simplest way of expressing it is that we can simultaneously do things, watch ourselves do them, comment upon what we are doing, even criticize what we are doing, and at the same time imagine doing it in other ways. That complexity of perception is the principle trait that makes us what and who we are; and tolerating ambivalence is the key skill necessary for the creative management of this remarkable gift of multilayered comprehension.

Exercise: Humor and Ambivalence

A. Recall a situation when you felt simultaneous contradictory emotions about the same idea, event, or person.

B. Articulate the contradiction and hold it in mind by keeping at a distance, as if on a long rope, one of the emotions.

C. Let the two opinions represented by the emotions get closer by using the compassionate aggression that is humor: smile at your having these emotions.

D. Feel the ambivalence toward the less acceptable feeling: it is true and not true, descriptive of, but not fully, you, descriptive of others as well, that is, human, but not philosophical, etc...

E. Accept this less acceptable aspect of you as if it is on trial and slowly embrace it: welcome yourself to the human condition, hold tight to the ambivalence by enjoying this insertion in something that is universal and outside the scope of your responsibility, (you did not create the world nor human nature).

Enjoying ambivalence is also a pre-requisite of ethical behavior. By allowing the conflict between the awareness of my needs and the perception of others' needs, while controlling the conflict's behavioral effect, humor enables a strong commitment to someone else's interests without losing sight of my own.

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Exercise: Ethics and Ambivalence

A. Take an encounter with another person's will. Remember or imagine a case in which you came into conflict with another's will. Feel your reluctance to give, to yield.

B. Think about another person's right to his will.

C. Feel the "incongruity between man and man," as Johann Georg Hamann says. Isn't it incongruous (funny, infuriating, and wondrous at the same time) that someone else claims the same rights as you? That you reached the limits of your freedom so promptly?

D. How can you reconcile your absolute demands and those of the other?

E. Can you give or give up more easily after fully owning your desire to keep, staying firm, or not yielding?

4. Deliberation

After acknowledging the existence of conflict and encouraging the emergence of the conflict's components, humor may also help in deliberating towards a solution by siding with the intellect and mediating between the various components of the conflict. By keeping desire in check and reducing sadness, fear, anger, shame, and disgust, humor effects "a momentarily anesthesia of the heart" (Bergson 1999, 11) that is conducive to calm deliberation. Humor induces pleasurable rapid cognitive-perceptual shifts between various conflicting points of views, and, governed by an impartiality that is sympathetic to all points of view, encourages diverse points of view to engage in dialogue.

***Exercise**: Try using humor (keeping yourself at a distance through compassionate aggression and ambivalent acceptance) in inner dialogue whilst deliberating in the way described above. Is it helpful? In what way?*

5. Living with Conflict

After deliberation, the reduction of tension involved in a humorous state of mind enables us to live with an unresolved and perhaps irresolvable conflict, because it makes life a jot less unbearable (Agassi and Jarvie 2008, 57).

Exercise: Unresolved Conflict

Hamann emphasizes the significance of the "infinite incongruity between man and God" and the "similar incongruity between man and man" (1949-1957, III, 312-13).

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A. Do you have an unresolved conflict in your life?
B. After construing the conflict as an incongruity, do you feel less tense about it?
C. Can you begin enjoying the very fact of being in an incongruous situation?

The reduction of tension may also enable us to leave deliberately the conflict unresolved. This option may be less viable for those who do not use humor to relieve the tension created by the conflict. We may want to leave the conflict unresolved when the price of resolving it requires relinquishing either our rational or cognitive powers, or renouncing the desires we identify as characterizing us no less than our reason. However, most religious and philosophical solutions to the basic human predicament require renouncing one or more aspects of our humanity, as we know it. Theories of redemption, or peace of mind, either Eastern or Western, religious or non-religious, can be divided into general types, the first type negating desire,[356] the second making light of reason's limitations,[357] and the third denigrating both desire and reason.[358] These solutions come at a cost, which we should take into consideration when evaluating them.

Humor enables us to live with the basic human predicament—the discrepancy between our desires on the instinctual, emotional, and intellectual levels, and our awareness of the impossibility of fulfilling them, for practical as well as principled reasons—without solving it because it provides relief from its tension. It enables us to maintain an open consciousness receptive to life's ambiguities and congenial to the doubts plaguing any realistic vision.

The ambivalence we experience and the ambiguity we encounter are best explored, encouraged, thought out, and communicated with humor.

[356] The first type of theory encompasses worldviews that urge us to renounce our desires. Among others, it includes the Buddhist and Hindu views of release, Schopenhauer's theory of redemption, which is influenced by the former, the Hellenistic schools of Epicureanism and Pyrrhonism, and even the view on emancipation of such a balanced philosopher as Bertrand Russell.

[357] The second type of theory promises a partial or full satisfaction of desires while disparaging reason's limits. It includes all answers to metaphysical questions, religious theories, and various philosophies that encourage the satisfaction of our desires at the expense of other human beings, whose similar right is brought is made apparent to us by reason.

[358] The third type of theory denigrates both desire and reason. Taoism and some forms of Western mysticism exemplify it, as well as the philosophies that overstep reason's power while denigrating desires, such as Stoicism and Kant's view of the good life as a life lived according to the categorical imperative.

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Inasmuch as ambiguous means "open to more than one interpretation," thus, "doubtful or uncertain," humorous communication is inherently ambiguous; this is why humor is the best tool to convey ambivalence and ambiguity, and to testify to the elusiveness of truth in human affairs.

Exercise: Truth and Humor

Aristotle famously said that accuracy depends on the field: ethics cannot be as accurate as mathematics. We can say something similar about human truth: it is a balance between two extremes (between tragedy and comedy, eirôn *and* alazon*, seriousness and foolishness, pride and meekness, absolute truth and lies, etc.) that cannot be precisely and definitely shown. One has to oscillate imaginatively between two extremes to find this middle road. In humor, we look on truth from both sides, and by spanning the distance between defect and excess, we manage to take in the mean. This is why humor is the only systematic tool for teaching proportion that we know of; and human truth is depends on proportion.*

A. Is this true?

Humor provides an effective alternative to the urge for radical change, which usually involves giving up important aspects of our personality and our human experience. It can do so by providing relief from the basic human tension between our desires on the instinctual, emotional, and intellectual levels, and between our awareness of the impossibility of fulfilling them, for practical as well as principled reasons. The special capacity of humor is its ability to help us reduce the tension created by this clash between expectations and reality because it can construe the clash as an incongruity. Enjoyment of the incongruous in a tragic situation amounts to transmuting, through humor, suffering into joy.

Exercise: Expectations and Reality

A. Describe a case when your expectations were not met.

B. Can you see the situation as incongruous?

C. Can you mitigate the tension (frustration, sadness, anger) through noticing the incongruent?

D. Do you need anything supplementary to accept the situation?

E. What would that be?

6. Resolving the Conflict: *Homo Risibilis*

If we accept that humans are doomed to an everlasting clash between desires and their satisfaction, the human condition lends itself to a double

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and contradictory evaluation as both comic and tragic. The possibility of characterizing the human condition as both tragic and comic is insufficient for favoring the comic interpretation over the tragic. An additional argument is required. I suggest that something that is both tragic and comic, or that has the potential to be either tragic or comic, cannot be subsumed solely under the tragic. The tragic lacks the comic's capacity to unite contradictions. This is referred to as "comic inclusivism, in contrast to the exclusivism of the tragic view" (Hyers 1996, 40). Similarly, "tragedy is swallowed up in comedy," John Crossan maintains, because the fact that "the same world can be interpreted in these opposite ways is itself comical" (Crossan 1976, 21). In *Loopholes: Reading Comically,* John Bruns has recently attempted to characterize "comedy" as "outside the alternatives of tragic and comic" (Bruns 2014, xiv). Thus, a comical vision of sorts is the sole vision, I suggest, that enables us to view the human condition simultaneously as comic and tragic. If Walter Kerr is right in asserting that "there is no act in life that is not, when seen as a whole, both tragic and comic at once" (Kerr 1967, 28), the vision that obtains by incorporating the comic and the tragic aspects of life is desirable because it is richer as well as more faithful to life's manifold aspects.

Exercise: An Encompassing Vision of Life

A. Is the complex vision of life you finally attain tragic or comic?

B. Do you see the benefits of such an encompassing vision? If yes, what are they?

How can we characterize the new level of comic awareness that incorporates both the comic and the tragic in a steady vision? This is important because the humorous mood brought about by transposing tragic oppositions into comical incongruities is transitory. When it dissolves, the individual finds himself emotionally humiliated and conceptually amused by the awareness of repeatedly transmuting tragic oppositions into comical incongruities, with an ever-new capacity for suffering the former and no steady results from the latter. The awareness that takes place, I suggest, is ridiculousness, the view of human beings as ridiculous or *Homo risibilis*.[359]

[359] I have argued elsewhere (Amir 2002) that humor, as defined in theories of humor, is unable to cope with the human condition. Something more complex is needed, which I attempt to encapsulate in the awareness of human ridiculousness. "Ridicule" is a harsher word in English than in French, and may be considered

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Exercise: Repetition

In Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, Henri Bergson analyzes repetition as one of the comic devices ([1911] 1999). Karl Marx famously said that history repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce (1852). In* Difference and Repetition *(1994), Gilles Deleuze considers repetition comical.*

A. Is repetition comical?

B. Are we ridiculous because we repeatedly fail?

Exercise: Emotionally Humiliated and Conceptually Amused

Read recent brain research about self-deception, illusions, and lies, and their role in survival and success (e.g. Leslie 2011; Bok 2010, 157-72). Brain research shows that authenticity reveals self-deception. Let me add that this may be Kierkegaard's most significant finding. Not only is each of us made of several individuals attempting to maintain an illusion of unity, as Nietzsche and, before him, David Hume intimated, but we also maintain illusions of self-knowledge and knowledge, of freedom, deliberation and control, of beneficence, self-importance, and slight superiority in relation to others. Benedict Spinoza, Arthur Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud have intimated some of these findings. Bertrand Russell famously said, "Every man, wherever he goes, is encompassed by a cloud of comforting convictions which move with him like flies on a summer day" (Russell 2004, 16). Social psychologist Roy F. Baumeister maintains that we should have an "optimal margin of illusions," because optimal psychological functioning is associated with a slight to moderate degree of distortion in one's perception of self and world (Baumeister 1989).

A. Can we definitely discard our illusions of self-importance?

B. Can we definitely discard our illusions of being aware, in control, beneficent, and superior?

C. Are illusions bound to be disclosed as illusions?

D. Is there a tension between the role of philosophy as pursuing truth and its role as pursuing wisdom?

I suggest that *Homo risibilis* is a fitting description of humankind because of the following tension: on the one hand, the necessary seriousness with which we take ourselves and our endeavors along with

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offensive in the former language. However, it is a common term in French philosophy, which is often used by contemporary Continental philosophers.

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the suffering these brings about; on the other hand, the view that in the large scale of things our endeavors and we are futile. For lack of proof of the contrary, we rightly assume the latter view. This is tantamount to experiencing reality first as tragic (reality is serious and brings suffering) and then construing it as comical (reality is futile).

Exercise: Seriousness and Suffering

Plato famously said in Laws, *"Human affairs are not worth taking very seriously, but, unfortunately we are forced to take them seriously."*

A. How are seriousness and suffering related in your experience?

B. Should we take our endeavors seriously? Why?

C. Should we take ourselves seriously? Why?

D. Does life have a/any meaning? If you know the answer to this question, how do you know it?

E. How does life's meaning relate to actual reality, as we know it?

Exercise: Ridicule

A. What is risible about others?

B. What is risible about you?

C. Generalizing the answers you gave to questions a and b, attempt to answer the following question: What is risible in the human being in general?

Philosophers who explain why ridicule applies to others or the comical to past events may be right, I suggest, when spontaneous laughter is involved. Indeed, these provisos are mostly advanced as part of the explanation of what (spontaneous) laughter is about. However, finding oneself ridiculous in the present while looking at others may involve no spontaneous laughter; one does not have to find it funny nor particularly enjoyable. To recognize one's ridiculousness and to acknowledge it is sufficient. If the other is ridiculous, so am I, and if I will recognize it in the future, I can recognize it now—otherwise, I am being ridiculous in my insistence that only the others are ridiculous, never myself, and that only in the future I can laugh about this experience, but not at present. Laughter can and should be learned, as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche have suggested, and the discipline of laughter is important because through laughter, new norms can be adopted and one's attitude towards oneself, others, and the world can be changed.

Accepting human ridicule is made easier by the love of truth, unpleasant as truth may be, a love exemplified ideally by philosophers. However, this view is worthless without appropriating it as a vision of

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oneself. Understanding the ridiculous condition of humankind should lead to accepting one's own ridiculousness and finding comfort in it: the more ridiculous I am, the more I exemplify the human condition, the better I am as a human being.

Exercise: Appropriating Ridiculousness

In her study of comedy, Susanne Langer points to the "acceptance of mischance," which she deems "philosophical or comic" (Langer 1953, 330). Both Giacomo Leopardi and Montaigne emphasize the importance of generalizing one's mischance and foolishness to the necessary failure that inheres, respectively, in one's love of life and in human judgment. Both recommend self-laughter as a way of getting to this sober realization (Leopardi 1982; Montaigne 1965). Along the same lines, in her attempt to devise an ethics out of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy, Simone de Beauvoir points to the possibility of assuming the failure that is the human being: "Man makes himself a lack, but he can deny the lack as lack and affirm himself as a positive existence. He then assumes the failure . . . . To attain his truth man must not attempt to dispel the ambiguity of his being but, on the contrary, accept the task of realizing it. He rejoins himself only to the extent that he agrees to remain at a distance from himself" (de Beauvoir 1970, 13).

A. How can you appropriate human ridiculousness?

Ridiculousness dissolves, however, if we adhere to the view that we are ridiculous only to the extent that we ignore ourselves. This latter view has been intimated by Plato, when he identifies the inverted injunction "know not thyself" as the source of ridicule in *Philebus* (48), an opinion he shares with Charles Baudelaire (1968, 378) and Bergson (1999, 9). According to this view, the comic presupposes the butt's self-ignorance; inadvertently comical, the butt ceases to be so when he realizes his ridiculousness.

Exercise: Ridicule Awareness

A. Is there a difference between a ridiculous person who does not know it and one who is aware of his or her ridiculousness? How so?

B. Do you remember an episode in your life when knowledge of your mistake or insufficiency changed the way you felt about it?

C. Are you more comfortable in society knowing that you have a stain on your shirt that you cannot immediately remove, or not knowing it?

D. Imagine yourself being judged by your peers. Now imagine yourself acknowledging the fault you are being judged for. Is there a difference in

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your feeling towards yourself and towards your peers?

The resolution that is obtained through awareness of ridiculousness follows both the resolution of the comedy plot, where the true identity of the hero changes everything (Booker 2004, 107-52), and the process of two-staged theories of humor, which requires a higher level of resolution of the initial incongruity in order for a situation to be humorous (Berlyne 1972; Koestler 1964).

In contradistinction to the humorous mood's unresolved attitude toward the tragic and the comic, or seriousness and levity, the attitude that results from accepting one's ridiculousness differs from previous experience. The view proposed here suggests that fully accepting our ridiculousness amounts to a complete liberation from it. Acknowledging ourselves as ridiculous and accepting ourselves without shame or self-blame enables us to transcend our ridiculous humanity. We regain our dignity and have no need of the hermeneutics of the tragic or of the kind of comic that is parasitic on the tragic because the pain of the initial contradiction between our desires and the possibility of fulfilling them is eased. By accepting our ridiculousness, we have accepted this contradiction and have no more need of interpretations that attempt to make sense of it or alleviate its sting.

Thus, *Homo risibilis* not only refuses to reject the tragic sense of life, but also fully accepts it; and the last step of embracing one's ridiculousness disengages the individual from both the tragic *and* the comic. Having transcended the comic (we stop being comical at the moment in which we acknowledge ourselves as such, and by gaining lucidity we become soberer), we transcend the tragic that inheres in ridiculousness (it is tragic to be ridiculous, but we have ceased to be ridiculous; hence we are tragic no more). A full acknowledgement of the comic that lies in the tragic liberates us from the tragic, but also enables us to transcend the comic. Like the Buddhist's raft used for crossing the river, or the Wittgensteinian ladder, or again the Taoist's fish trap dispensed with when unnecessary, the comic disappears as soon as the tragic disappears.

Insofar as one is defined by ridiculousness, acknowledging oneself as ridiculous may resolve the basic human conflict. This follows resolutions in the comic plot when the revelation of the hero's hidden identity changes everything. Embracing our ridiculousness saves us from ridiculousness, for one can be ridiculous only if one is unaware of being ridiculous. By acknowledging our ridiculousness, we transcend the tragic as well, because our ridiculousness now determines our tragedy. By accepting the

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human condition as ridiculous and embracing ridiculousness as the defining characteristic of humanity at its best, we transcend ourselves because full self-acceptance is alien to human beings, as Nietzsche and Freud have explained (Nietzsche 1954; Freud 1926). Thus, humor, which is called upon to renounce the urge to redemption, reveals itself as redemptive in bringing about a liberated state capable of rivaling the highest ideals of religion and philosophy.

Exercise: Ridiculousness and Liberation

Read some Theatre of the Absurd, such as Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett's work. Read philosophers and novelists of the absurd, such as Albert Camus and Sartre. Playwrights of the Absurd consider us more tragic because *we are ridiculous. This is also the view of most philosophers on the subject. To the contrary, I believe that acknowledging our* ridiculousness *gives us our dignity back and thus liberates us from the comic. This liberates us from the tragic as well, because we stop being so disproportionately serious about our fate.*

A. Do we think the tragic may be a perspective we can disown?
B. Do you think we should disown it?
C. Can we reach joy, happiness, and peace by our own means?
D. What is the relation between lucidity and happiness?
E. Are we well adapted to reality?
F. Do you think that reality can adapt to our taste, or, as Nietzsche proposed, that we should "develop a taste for reality"?
H. How can we develop a taste for reality?

Joy is the outcome of accepting one's ridiculousness because of the newfound harmony with oneself, others, and the world. Even in a disharmonious world, a newfound harmony is joyful for the tragic philosophers Nietzsche and his follower Clément Rosset.

Exercise: What Is Joy?

In *The Story of Joy*, Adam Potkay describes joy as "the mind's delight"; it is "the experience of reunion or fulfillment, of desire at least temporarily laid to rest. Joy is what we feel, and as self-reflective beings know we feel, in situations, real or imaginary, in which what was lost is found; what was missed restored; what constrained is lifted; what we desire arrives; or what arrives satisfies a desire we hadn't known we'd had" (Potkay 2007, vii). Joy's paradox involves the nexus of loss and restoration, self-dispersion and perfect concentration. It is a passion for

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primacy, for recurrence; it arrives with restored life or with access to more life and is the point and proof of one's insertion into a unified order of nature (Potkay 2007, 16, 96, 235).

Heinz Kohut observes that "joy relates to experiences of the total self"; it is both "cause" and "effect" of a process of self-development and is related, in particular, to the self's journey towards an openness that would make it whole (Kohut 1977, 45). This joy arises from the whole human being, according to Benedict Spinoza, who deems it *hilaritas*, "cheerfulness" or "gaiety" in English (*Ethics*, part 3, proposition 11, scholium). The joy that follows from embracing one's ridiculousness is a serene joy, heir to the Stoic and Spinozistic joy.

Once joy is attained as a permanent state one's relation to life changes, for joy enables the affirmation of everything—an attitude recommended by proponents of tragic philosophies such as Nietzsche and Rosset (i.e., Nietzsche 1974, sec. 276; Rosset 1993). However, if indeed a clear path to joyfulness is indicated through a systematic use of humor, it also answers the following paradox of tragic philosophies. That which is most needed, joy, does not lie within the scope of our will (Rosset); alternatively, while the will is the only way to attain what is most needed, there is no ascertained path leading to it (Nietzsche).[360]

A serene joyfulness may be good in itself, but may also have beneficial consequences if we believe Spinoza, Nietzsche, and contemporary research regarding the impact of well-being and induced positive moods on altruism (Argyle 1987, 216-17). Because we are in a state of constant joy (happiness), we can be virtuous, Spinoza maintains, in contrast to most moralists. Virtue and blessedness are equally valuable and fundamental for Spinoza, for they prove in the end to be identical. Similarly, Nietzsche affirms that because we are joyful we can be generous. Nietzsche maintains that the happiness of the individual with strong, healthy instincts brings benefits for his neighbors as well. His love of self translates into an affirmation of the world. His sense of freedom and power allows magnanimity towards others. On the other hand, the unordered soul is spiteful and dangerous. Its viciousness amounts to a discontentedness with itself and a condemnation of life. For virtue, generally beneficial to one's neighbors, is that which follows happiness: it is a byproduct of a fulfilled life.

Other paths that lead to joyfulness may achieve as much. However,

[360] For a better understanding of Nietzsche's views, as well as those of Montaigne, who is often quoted in this chapter, and of George Santayana, see Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana* (work under contract for State University of New York Press).

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there is a special characteristic of the life lived in full acknowledgment of one's ridiculousness: one's personal dignity and self-esteem do not arise out of comparison with others. The ridiculous human being finds no use for envy, jealousy, anger, or other comparative emotions. I base this on Robert Solomon's assertion that "every emotion is a subjective strategy for the maximization of personal dignity and self-esteem," more concerned with our own security and esteem than they are with accuracy or fairness (Solomon 1976, 209, 222) and on Ben-Ze'ev's argument that every emotion is based on comparison (Ben-Ze'ev 2000, 18). There is no comparison, as ridiculousness equalizes, and the only self-esteem available to us stems from our sense of truthfulness, which, if made our supreme maxim, is, at least according to Kant, "the maximum of inner worth (of human dignity)" (Kant 2006, 195).

Because of its egalitarianism, moreover, the view I propose is conducive to an ethics of compassion, similar to the Christian and Buddhist ethics, but without the need for their metaphysical presuppositions.

Exercise: Buddhist and Christian Ethics

A. Articulate the presuppositions of the Buddhist worldview, in which the ethics of Karuna, or loving kindness, is to operate. Can you live with the presuppositions (suffering comes from ignorance of no-self reality and other Buddhist doctrines)?

B. Do the same for Christian compassion. Can you live with the presuppositions (common sin, the trinity, etc.)?

C. Do you think compassion is good ethics?

D. Compassion need not be religious (Schopenhauer, for example, has devised a non-religious metaphysics of compassion). What could be its basis?

Joy grants the capacity to withstand the truth about the human condition. A right attitude to the human condition, one that involves no "disengagement, denial, romanticism, or resignation" offers greater realism (Kekes 1995, 180). As John Kekes says, "It leads to the acknowledgment of the pervasive forces of contingency, conflict, and evil, and it motivates us to mitigate their destructive consequences undaunted by the knowledge of possible failure" (1995, 180). This greater realism is acquired after having chastened, reduced, purified, and strengthened hope by resisting the temptation to pursue facile solace: by distancing ourselves from our condition, by denying the facts, by romantic self-aggrandizement or world-weariness, or by succumbing to resignation. It is a life lived without expectation of cosmic justice, but also without bitterness in the knowledge

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that the world is not more hospitable to us.

Exercise:* Homo Risibilis*' Benefits

A. Do you see moral benefits in an egalitarian view of human beings?

B. Do you see epistemological benefits in a worldview that does not require unnecessary assumptions about the world, human nature, and the relation between them?

C. Do you recognize a contemporary need for a philosophy of vulnerability, fallibility, and finitude?[361]

Serenity or tranquility is a goal of Eastern philosophies and religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, as well as Western philosophies and religions such as all Hellenistic philosophies, Neo-Platonism, and the philosophies of Spinoza and Santayana. I have criticized above these philosophies and religions for the means they employ to reach that goal but I nonetheless believe that goal is both worthy and within reach.

Exercise: Serenity

A. Is serenity a worthy ideal?

B. Is it within reach?

Skeptical Pyrrhonists graphically declared that peace of mind follows the suspension of judgment like a shadow following the body. We suspend all judgments because of the skeptical doubts that undermine all dogmatic claims to knowledge, and tranquility follows the suspension of judgment—in technical terms *ataraxía* follows *epochē*—like a "shadow following the body" (Laertius 1925, 9.107; see Sextus Empiricus 2000, 1.29). This means that we achieve tranquility as a result of suspending judgment without intending to do so (Sextus Empiricus 2000, 1.25-30). Apart from this Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, the proposal outlined here is the only skeptical worldview I know of that aims at such an ideal and the only one to use humor to reach it.

The sort of humor described in this chapter can be developed without requiring special comedic skills. Its benefits are proportionate to its use, and the serenity it offers may be gradually achieved. The tragic sense of life that it assumes is common enough to make it serviceable to most, if not all, who wish to use it. Through a four-stage process involving a

[361] For an articulation of *Homo risibilis* as a philosophy of vulnerability and fallibility, see "A Practical Philosophy of Vulnerability, Fallibility, and Finitude" (Amir 2015).

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systematic use of humor to discipline our taste to find pleasure in incongruities that are not immediately funny to us, a ladder of perfection can be climbed that leads to a state rivaling the highest philosophic and religious ideals. This gradual achievement is based on changing visions according to one's capacity to transmute suffering into joy through the alchemy of humor. The lucidity we gain frees us from the comic as well as the tragic, at least from that part of the tragic that has been transmuted into the comic and has thus become constitutive of the tragi-comic protagonist that describes each of us. The freedom that results is characterized by joy, happiness, and peace.

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PART VI

PROBLEMS AND BENEFITS

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

QUESTIONABLE ASSUMPTIONS

Philosophical practice or counseling has been described as a cluster of methods for addressing everyday problems and predicaments through philosophical means. Notwithstanding the variety of methods, philosophical counselors seem to share the following tenets: first, the counselee is autonomous; second, philosophical counseling differs from psychological counseling; and, third, philosophical counseling is effective in solving predicaments. A critical examination shows these tenets to be problematic at both theoretical and practical levels. As I believe that philosophical practice is a valuable contribution both to philosophy and to psychology, though not devoid of potential dangers and misuses, I suggest that philosophical counselors reconsider the theoretical and empirical validity of their tenets. Using my experience as a philosophical counselor, I attempt in this chapter to contribute to this task while introducing the reader to what I consider to be the main problems in the field.

Introduction

Three related tenets, which are considered vital to the very existence of philosophical practice, seem to be widely held by philosophical counselors, though not unanimously. They are, first, the counselee is autonomous; second, philosophical counseling differs from psychological counseling, and, third, philosophical counseling is helpful in solving predicaments. While it is understandable why philosophical counselors hold these views, the critical examination which follows will shows that they are problematic at both theoretical and practical levels. To put it bluntly, the view that the counselee is autonomous serves the purpose of liberating counselors from too heavy a responsibility toward their counselees. The tenet that philosophical counseling is different from psychological counseling serves to establish the legitimacy of the profession. Finally, the tenet that philosophical counseling is effective serves the same purpose as the latter and attracts counselees who actually want to *solve* their personal predicament.

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Most counselees do not come to philosophers leisurely to uncover their philosophical biographies or to understand better their worldview as a means for a richer life. Indeed, these may be worthy and legitimate goals of philosophical counseling. However, I do not know if someone investigated whether any counselees have had these goals in coming to the counselor. According to my experience, most people come to philosophical counseling in order to solve some predicament, mostly with regard to a predicament they attempted previously to resolve through psychological counseling.

Philosophical counselors do comply with counselees' needs in the present social context in which they operate, for the obvious yet decisive reason that they cannot counsel without counselees. At the same time, they attempt to establish philosophical counseling as a legitimate and honorable profession, taking into consideration the prevailing psychological hegemony over personal predicaments and paying allegiance to their diverse philosophical inheritance. These constraints have created a variety of views, which, nonetheless, have the three aforementioned tenets in common. These tenets engender theoretical and practical confusions.

Because I believe that philosophical practice can make a valuable contribution both to philosophy and to psychology, I suggest that philosophical counselors try to be more critical about their tenets. In this chapter, I will make a modest attempt to contribute to this task. I will, therefore, address the three tenets mentioned above and examine their reliability on both theoretical and practical levels.[362]

1. The Counselee's Autonomy

There is a strong emphasis in the philosophical counseling movement on respecting the counselee's autonomy, though we should clarify what is meant by that. Consider the following views:

> Philosophical counselors should avoid as much as possible imposing their own views on their counselees. They should put aside any personal or preconceived opinion, and empower counselees to make their own free decisions, even if these contradict their own. (Lahav 1995)

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[362] The references in this chapter date back to the beginning of the philosophical practice movement. However, I did not find much variety since. Take as examples the views advanced in recent anthologies, such as Fatic and Amir (2015) and Amir (2017), and in the relatively recent *Journal of Humanities Therapy*, edited by Young E. Rhee.

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Also:

> Much emphasis is placed on the counselee's autonomy in interpreting and evaluating themselves to themselves. In this sense, I suggest that philosophical counseling can be characterized as helping the person to autonomously clarify and develop his or her worldview. (Lahav 1992)[363]

Following the same line of thought, another philosophical counselor writes, "Someone who wants to make a dogmatic use of philosophy and says: 'I would like to open a Schopenhauer-practice' would be an embarrassment to himself" (Schefczyk 1994). Nevertheless, a small number of counselors feel entitled to advocate certain views in counseling. Barbara Norman, for example, believes in developing with her counselees more holistic and relational, as opposed to cognitivist and alienated, ways of understanding (Normann 1995). To take another example, Leks Tijsse Klassen uses Emmanuel Levinas' conceptual scheme, based on the notion of guilt, as a tool for understanding his counselees' personal problems (Klassen 1996).

Philosophers are likely to be suspicious of the dogmatic counselor, because he partakes in a paternalistic attitude, which they reject. Such an attitude is expressed in the following assumptions: I know—while you don't—what is wrong with you (I have a diagnosis), who you should be and how you should feel and act (I hold a view of normality), and the way to get there (I have a therapy). Trust me, and I will cure you. Better: if you trust me, maybe I can cure you; without your trust, I cannot even try.

Though psychoanalysis is traditionally associated with paternalism, this is not true of all psychological therapies or therapists. Some are influenced by classical, individualistic ethics. Originally formulated by Immanuel Kant, such an ethics states that the individual is autonomous, i.e., free, and therefore exclusively responsible for his or her actions. Extensive literature concerning the individual's autonomy abounds in the medical, psychiatric, and psychological disciplines. Indeed, the issue of autonomy has been characterized as one of the most critical problems in the history of psychiatric ethics (Laor 1981, 7).

However, I find most of this discussion irrelevant in the present context, as it concerns the mentally ill. To the best of my knowledge, most counselors do not consider them as potential philosophical counselees, if only because of the impairment of rational faculties that some illnesses

[363] See also Tuedio (1996, 184-94).

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engender.[364] Hence, it is up to us to interpret classical individualistic ethics, i.e., the view that the individual is free and therefore responsible for her actions, in a manner appropriate to our context. As a descriptive statement, it can be trivial in this context. Insofar as the mentally ill are excluded from philosophical counseling, the counselee is *a priori* free and responsible for his or her actions. As a prescriptive statement, it tells people to become aware of their freedom and take full responsibility for their actions. It is none other than the existentialist view of autonomy.

In the philosophical counseling context, however, the issue of autonomy may be linked with various issues of rationality.[365] For example, the tenet of the counselee's autonomy can be understood in Socratic terms, that is, everyone can (descriptive) and should (prescriptive) think for himself or herself and strive to be more rational. Whether interpreted in the existentialist or the Socratic prescriptive senses, or in the sense advocated by other traditional philosophical systems, such as Spinoza or Nietzsche's,[366] individual autonomy is a highly praised and rarely attained philosophical goal.

In practice, most counselees are likely to be heteronomous, for fully autonomous people are not likely to come to counseling, philosophical or otherwise. Moreover, most counselees are not likely to state their counseling goal as that of becoming autonomous. Rather, they usually come to solve a specific problem as quickly as possible. There are times, however, when counselees—usually refugees from psychological therapy––insist on their autonomy. In my experience, this explicit emphasis sometimes turns out in subsequent sessions to be something quite different: the counselee is in fact stating his or her unwillingness to change the relevant behavior or view, while insisting on getting the counselor's help in solving the predicament in question. At other times, however,

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[364] A more elaborate discussion of the varieties of mental illnesses should follow. It may be found in the work of Peter Raabe and Schlomit Schuster, who do not draw a line between the mentally ill and the sane as potential clients for philosophical consultation. As far as I understand, however, they also take rationality as a minimal criterion for dialogue to take place.

[365] See Agassi and Jarvie (1987). The philosophical practitioner who wrote most systematically on rationality is, to the best of my knowledge, Elliot D. Cohen. See Cohen (1990; 1994; 1995a; 1995b; 2000; 2003).

[366] For Spinoza and Nietzsche's ideals of autonomy, see Amir, *Philosophy as Redemption: Spinoza versus Nietzsche* (work under contract for de Gruyter). For an assessment of Spinoza's relevance for everyday life, see Amir (2010; 2012). For an ideal of autonomy based on the Hellenistic philosophers' teachings, see Nussbaum (1994), and for a critique of its feasibility within the philosophical counseling framework, see Jenkins (2001).

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heteronomous counselees try to learn the counselor's views or explicitly ask for advice. It seems, then, that autonomy is a philosopher's goal, not shared by most counselees. In practice, the philosophical counselor should therefore distinguish between her own expectations and those of the counselee.

2. Philosophical Counseling Differs from Psychological Counseling

In an era in which psychological therapies have dominion over counseling, philosophical counselors are motivated to hold the view that what they offer is at least different from psychological counseling, if not better. Theoretically speaking, this distinction is not easily made. The easiest way is to differentiate philosophical counseling from psychoanalysis, as done by Ran Lahav.[367] Psychoanalysis is also the best target for accusations of paternalism, as mentioned above. However, to reduce psychology or psychological therapies to psychoanalysis (though Lahav does not suggest doing so) is to ignore the evolution that took place in the former discipline in the last decades. Ethical or philosophical views were at the root of this evolution, confirming once again the continuous influence of philosophy upon psychology. Elliot Cohen rightly emphasizes the philosophical foundations of the counseling theories that undergird practice. I will mention only the most recent ones: the roots of existential therapy in existential philosophy, the Stoic basis of Rational-Emotive Therapy, and the humanistic philosophical assumptions underlying Person-Centered Therapy (Cohen 1995). These therapies are also kindred in practice to what philosophical counseling tries to do. It is obvious, then, that some psychological practices make use of philosophy.

Philosophical counselors rightly emphasize psychologists' incompetence in dealing with philosophical issues that are incorporated in psychological therapies. The need to remedy this incompetence is at the basis of the suggestion that philosophical counseling might be a legitimate alternative to psychological counseling. Formal psychological education and training, however, is not a prerequisite for philosophical counseling. Thus,

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[367] Lahav (1995). See also Lahav (1993), for a valuable discussion of the difference between philosophy and psychology. It seems that his thought has undergone an evolution with regard to this issue, for in a more recent paper he suggests, "The attempt to make a clear-cut distinction between philosophical practice and existing psychotherapies is questionable if not hopeless" (Lahav 1994).

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philosophical counseling must claim complete independence from psychology, echoing a similar claim made by psychologists with regard to philosophy at the beginning of the last century.

Not all philosophical counselors adhere to this claim. A notable exception is Elliot Cohen, who developed a hybrid approach incorporating some Rational-Emotive Therapy techniques and even non-cognitive therapeutic modalities, such as behavioral ones, within the corpus of philosophical counseling (Cohen 1992). Some philosophical counselors meet the problem of psychological incompetence by excluding emotions as a legitimate subject matter of philosophical counseling.

I am afraid, however, that this solution will not do, for several reasons. From a theoretical point of view, philosophical systems do include psychologies and indeed, it is hard to see how philosophy would be of any relevance to life if it did not deal also with emotions. Philosophy owes most of its practical import to this important fact. Theoretically, then, the demarcation between psychological and philosophical counseling is untenable.[368]

[368] This view of the inseparability of philosophy and psychology is similar to the view advocated by Michael Schefczyk. He writes, "One would therefore . . . make a mistake if one were to try to draw a clear line between philosophy and psychology. All attempts in this regard, in my opinion, are in vain. Philosophical practitioners use therapeutic techniques; Psychotherapists use philosophical thoughts in their counseling . . . psychologists and philosophers should learn to put up with the situation in which they are mutually dependent upon one another and should help each other in turn" (unpublished manuscript). Some philosophical counselors hold that the main goal of philosophical practice is to educate people about the emotions (e.g., Shibles 1998; 2001). Others, following Bertrand Russell's view that "one could stretch the comprehensiveness that constitutes wisdom to include not only intellect but also feeling" (1956, 174), believe that developing better feelings is a worthy philosophical goal (e.g., Amir 2002; 2004). Various counselors have dealt with the subject of philosophy versus psychology. Among others, Schuster (1999, chapter 3) argues for a "sincere communication in philosophical practice, based on a free, spontaneous developing conversation for which no method can exist" (96), a point she summarizes as "beyond-method method" (2003; see the bibliography at the beginning of her book for more of Schuster's bibliography). Emmy van Deurzen, who is educated both as a psychologist and as a philosopher, contributed especially to the elucidation of the relationship of philosophy with existential psychology (see, for example, van Deurzen [2002; 2001; 1999]). Other contributions to the debate on the difference between philosophy and existential psychotherapy include Ran Lahav (1997) and Simon du Plock (1999). Psychoanalyst Rachel Blass contributed, *inter alia*, her (1996a) and (1996b). Psychotherapist Chris Mace contributed the introduction and

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Moreover, the sociological context, i.e., the fact that most counselees come to solve a personal predicament and not to broaden their philosophical horizons nor discover their philosophical biography, does not enable the philosophical counselor to exclude systematically any discussion of emotions.

It seems, then, that from a theoretical point of view, there is no need to exclude discussion of emotions from philosophical counseling and that, from a practical point of view, it is vital to the profession to include it. However, the issue of the emotions, though important, is just one aspect of the problem of incorporating psychology into philosophy, and thus into philosophical practice.

The problem of demarcating between psychological and philosophical counseling on the theoretical level is reflected in practice. There, I believe, psychological knowledge and experience are used as a determinant part of philosophical counseling, lighting the philosophical counselor's way through the labyrinth of her philosophical knowledge and assisting her in the choices she makes. I would like to demonstrate this point with examples from the literature and from my own experience as a philosophical counselor.

I refused to accept for counseling a woman who gave me enough details about her psychological condition that I could diagnose her as depressive. She had been in psychological therapy and on medication for fifteen years and claimed it did not help her. Although I thought that philosophical counseling might be helpful in this case, I did not accept her as my counselee because I was afraid that she would commit suicide. My decision was made solely on psychological grounds.

Published reports of case studies bear the mark of psychological skills used during philosophical counseling. The marriage philosophical counselor, Anette Prins-Bakker, "senses" that something is too much for the still unstable marriage. One of the most important insights her counselees can gain through counseling is clearly psychological, namely, that "mutual understanding and acceptance must take place in a dialogue" (Prins-Bakker 1995). In a case study labeled "the phenomenology of a child," Lahav chose to interpret his counselee's worldview as that of an adult believing he is still a child. He relied solely on an insight based on Freudian slips of the tongue, namely, his 35 year old counselee's tendency to use expressions, such as "when I grow up," and "the adults out there are

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final chapter of his edited volume (1999). Other contributions by practical philosophers include Boele (1999) and Raabe (2003).

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doing such and such" (Lahav 1992).[369]

3. The Effectiveness of Philosophical Counseling

The third tenet common to philosophical counselors is the effectiveness of philosophical counseling in solving predicaments. Although most philosophical counselors maintain that they do not offer a diagnosis or a therapy (Schuster 1991), the tenet of effectiveness must be at least the honest counselor's implicit assumption when working with counselees who come to resolve a personal predicament. There are, however, other alternatives for the counselor, which will be discussed below when addressing the practical import of the tenet of effectiveness.

At the theoretical level, the question of the effectiveness of philosophical counseling is raised, and answered mostly in the affirmative, though it is not clear on what grounds. Consider, for example, the following explanations:

> Once you become more aware of your own basic views and realize that they can be corrected or changed by yourself, you will be able to begin making changes in yourself and your life. (Prins-Bakker 1995).

Or,

> Obviously, there is no magical formula to bring about . . . an extreme change, but I believe that even the mere understanding of patterns in one's attitude involves a powerful insight that is an important step towards real personal progress. (Lahav 1992)

It seems that the underlying assumption of most philosophical practitioners is that a better understanding of oneself or one's predicament is helpful, for understanding enables change. Some philosophical counselors do not explicitly formulate this assumption, some acknowledge that it "need[s] to be made by philosophical individual counseling" (Schefczyk 1994), while others try to argue for the validity of the assumption, using theoretical considerations (Cohen 1995), or empirical support (Lahav 1995). My own

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[369] More recent examples can be found in *Practical Philosophy: Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice* 6 (1, Spring), 2003, which is dedicated to case studies. These cases illustrate my claim that, in practice, philosophers also use psychology in their counseling. See also Raabe (2001, part 3: "Practice"), Schuster (1999, chaps. 6-12), and Marinoff (2003) for more cases, in which this claim can be substantiated.

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view is that, until further empirical data is supplied or more convincing theoretical arguments are proposed, understanding is not a sufficient condition for change, nor a necessary one (as is made clear by successful therapies which are not based on understanding, such as behavior therapy).

A more moderate view concerning the effectiveness of philosophical practice may be formulated, namely, that a better understanding of one's predicament is valuable in itself. Although this might be the case, I doubt that psychological relief of one's suffering can be attained in this way. Getting a better understanding of one's predicament without a means to resolve it may be very frustrating. Nor do I know whether more consolation can be found in the interpretation of the hindrance in terms of irrational beliefs that one cannot annul, or in terms of a worldview one cannot alter, rather than in terms of hidden forces one cannot control. This is so because the apparent accessibility of the former and the alleged responsibility one has for one's beliefs—when coupled with inability to change—might be a humiliating experience.

These considerations lead us to consider the possible harmful consequences of philosophical practice in particular and of philosophy in general. Evidence of harmful effects of philosophical practice has already been recorded in the literature. Consider, for example, Shlomit Schuster's description of Ad Hoogendijk's practice: "In thematizing, thinking becomes clearer, but situations can become more problematic, which could upset the visitor" (Schuster 1991, 222). To take another example, the marital philosophical counselor mentioned above writes about "new and more profound doubts" that come out about the counselees' marriage through the use of philosophy (Prins-Bakker 1995, 137). There is, of course, ample evidence of allegedly necessary, though temporary, harmful effects of psychological therapies in the literature,[370] but this could hardly count as an argument in favor of necessary evils in philosophical counseling.

Although a detailed discussion of them lies beyond the scope of this paper, the potentially harmful effects of philosophy should be

[370] See, for example, Ellis (1971). In the introduction, he writes, "When I practiced psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy . . . I warned my clients that before they improved as a result of seeing me, they might well get worse. And I was frequently right! Many of them ultimately got better—but only after they had undergone considerable suffering concomitantly with, and quite probably as a direct result of, treatment. For revealing to an individual some of his hidden traits and motivations may finally do him some good, but in the short run it aggravates his suffering. This can happen in rational-emotive therapy, too" (Ellis 1971, 1).

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taken into consideration: we know from personal experience that philosophy can confuse, bewilder, frighten, and discourage. Perhaps the main advantage of philosophical counseling over unmediated and unguided access to philosophy lies in the possibility of supervising and thus minimizing those harmful effects. This latter consideration bears on the questions of the counselee's autonomy and of the counselor's paternalism discussed above.

At the theoretical level, then, both potentially beneficial and harmful effects of philosophical counseling should be made explicit. Emphasis should be laid, in my opinion, on the theoretical grounds of philosophical effectiveness no less than on the description of empirical effects: as philosophers, we want to know whether—and if yes, how—our beliefs relate to our emotions and behavior.[371] Philosophical counselors' views on the relationships among beliefs, emotions, and behavior should be exposed to public debate, in order to be critically examined, if not empirically refuted, by philosophers, psychologists, and fellow-counselors.

At the practical level, I believe that the counselor should not ignore the counselee's expectation that his or her predicament will be solved. One way of dealing with this expectation is to make the problematic tenet of philosophical effectiveness explicit, as well as the potential harmful effects of philosophical counseling. At least two other alternative ways, however, are open for the counselor confronted with counselees' expectations to resolve a personal predicament, namely:

1. To say right away that the counselor cannot solve it;
2. To undermine, à la Achenbach, the counselee's need to solve his or her predicament. In his words:

> Rather than readily serving the needs that are directed to it, philosophical practice should be their most thorough critic, in the sense that it should put these needs in question. Instead of accepting the need as it is, it is its goal to examine it in order to develop it further. Philosophical practice is the cultivation of needs, not just their satisfaction. (Achenbach 1987, 51-56)[372]

[371] Philosophers have recently contributed to our understanding of the emotions. See, for example, the now classical accounts of Nussbaum (2001), Solomon (1993), and Ben-Ze'ev (2000), as well as more recent work I cannot mention here. See also some practical philosophers' work on the emotions, such as Shibles (1978), Raabe (2000), and Cohen (1988; 1990; 1998).

[372] Gerd B. Achenbach expresses similar opinions in various writings, such as (2002, 7-16; 2001; 2003).

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If, however, the counselor does believe that philosophy is effective to some extent in solving personal predicaments, she should share both her convictions and doubts with the counselee. This is a concrete way to combat the paternalistic attitude, which seems to bother the philosophical counselor, as we saw above.

Conclusion

Three kindred tenets, which together form the allegedly necessary basis of philosophical practice, were found to be problematic both theoretically and practically.[373] The critical evaluation this chapter undertook targeted the counselee's autonomy, the difference between philosophical counseling and psychological counseling, and the ability of philosophical counseling to be helpful in solving predicaments.

Using philosophy autonomously as an effective tool to facilitate change is a very noble ideal attained by few philosophers; it may also be a goal for many of us.[374] Helping others achieve positive change can be very rewarding, yet philosophical counseling brings novelty which is not without risks. To minimize those risks, I suggest that philosophical counselors submit themselves to strict discipline: public

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[373] Peter B. Raabe made recently a much more comprehensive attempt to clarify and criticize the various methods of philosophical counseling, and to offer a model of his own. However, most of his remarks are very valuable and the scope of his work impressive, my goal has been different: to uncover the basic tenets of philosophical counseling and to show both their (at least *prima facie*) necessity and the problems they create theoretically and practically. Still, the reader will be rewarded by complementing my paper with Raabe's critical synthesis of various views on the client's autonomy (Chapters 2 and 5), on the relationship of philosophical counselling and psychology (Chapter 3) and on the effectiveness of philosophical counseling (scattered remarks, 108n1, for example). See Raabe (2001) and its sequel (2002), in which he states that though philosophical counselling is not therapy, dialoguing with a philosopher may be therapeutic. Lou Marinoff's recent book (2003) can be helpful too, as well as Tim LeBon (2001). Especially relevant is Elliot Cohen's book (2003). Finally, I apologize for my incapacity in such a limited space to cite or refer to many good and interesting philosophical counselors' ideas on the subject I have been addressing.

[374] I advanced "meliorism" in this book in view of addressing these concerns. Especially relevant to the issues discussed here are Chapter 1, and Parts IV and V above. *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017a) addresses these issues as well, by further elaborating of the complex relations philosophy entertains with psychology (Part I), and more positively, by finding unique ways in which philosophy can contribute to all.

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debate and criticism of beliefs, on the theoretical level, and complete sincerity vis-à-vis the counselee, on the practical level.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PHILOSOPHY'S GAIN

Ordinary experience has long been the object of derision and suspicion in philosophy. "But isn't that an empirical question?" This is often followed by (or at least implies) "That's not philosophy!" And so the subject gets thinner and thinner until it loses so much mass that it has virtually no weight at all.
Robert C. Solomon,
The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin versus *the Passionate Life*

A theory is exactly like a box of tools . . . It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself . . . then the theory is useless or the moment inappropriate.
Gilles Deleuze, quoted in Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," in Donald Bouchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*

When discussing the relationship between philosophy and philosophical practice, we often ask, how can philosophy contribute to philosophical practice and counseling? How can we use philosophy in consultation?[375] In this chapter, I suggest examining the other aspect of the relationship by asking, how can philosophy benefit from philosophical practice and counseling? The significance of this chapter lies in putting the question on the agenda. I invite fellow practitioners to join in the debate on the role the practice of philosophy may have in redefining the way philosophy is conceived in the academe, rather than how it is written or taught.

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[375] See, for example: Achenbach (1984; 1987), Cohen (1990; 1994), Lahav (1992; 1993), Lahav and Tillmanns (1995), Sautet (1995), Schuster (1995a; 1995b), most of the papers in Vlist (1996), various papers in the *International Journal of Philosophical Practice*, *Practical Philosophy*, *Philosophical Practice: Journal of the APPA*, and *Journal of Humanities Therapy*, as well as some books on philosophical counseling, such as Marinoff (1999), Howard (2000), LeBon (2001), and more.

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Introduction

In this chapter, "philosophy" refers both to the activity carried out in the academe and to the body of philosophical thought which constitutes the history of philosophy. "Philosophical practice and counseling" refer to an encounter with non-philosophers in which the practitioner participates as a professional philosopher. Various activities are subsumed under this label, notably teaching philosophy to students who are not registered in departments of philosophy, teaching adults who work in various professions, and practicing philosophy with groups, families, couples, and individuals, either in private or in organizations of various sorts.

Two assumptions underlie the question, how can philosophy benefit from philosophical practice and counseling? First, philosophy can and should be improved, and second, philosophical practice may prove useful for that purpose. The first assumption states that philosophy should be improved in order to survive its contemporary crisis. The crisis is partly due to the postmodern criticism of reason and its consequent relativism, partly to the divide between Analytical philosophy and Continental philosophy, but it is also due to the powerful rivals that aspire to replace philosophy.[377] Remaining solely theoretical would endanger its very being. To ensure its place, I believe it should emphasize, develop, and privilege those aspects of its theories that are adaptable to contemporary problems and applicable to everyday life, that is, those that are practical. Moreover, new philosophical theories hopefully devised in this century should correspond to non-philosophers' capacities and needs in order to be accepted and implemented by them.

The second assumption states that philosophical practice may be useful in improving philosophy. Although everybody may criticize philosophy, the philosophical practitioner occupies a privileged place in assessing its relevance to non-philosophers. Other philosophers may generalize from their personal experience as human beings and accidental encounters with non-philosophers. Academic philosophers usually reserve philosophical discussions for their peers and for advanced students of philosophy. The philosophical practitioner, however, may complement these experiences with reflection on her systematic attempts to acquaint non-philosophers with philosophy. Through these attempts, she accumulates information on

[377] I refer to the human sciences, especially sociology, but also linguistics, psychoanalysis, and logical analysis; more recently, computer science, marketing, design, and advertising are rivals philosophy has encountered. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari make this latter point in *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, 10).

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the way non-philosophers react to philosophy's main tenets, presuppositions, ideals, and values, which are more easily embraced and implemented in the lives of philosophers and which are often rejected by non-philosophers.

Having clarified both assumptions, we may address the question, how can philosophy benefit from philosophical practice? I propose that, first, practitioners gather information on non-philosophers' capacity to implement philosophical ideals and theories; second, practitioners confront philosophy with their findings in order to assess the usefulness of past philosophy and provide the creative philosopher (who may be the same practitioner) with up-to-date information about non-philosophers' presuppositions, limitations, needs, and expectations. I foresee two outcomes: first, previous philosophy may be reevaluated according to a criterion of practicability or relevance to everyday life; second, the philosophy-to-come will better fulfill its task by answering the needs of its epoch. I clarify these proposals in the remainder of the chapter.

1. A Criterion of Practicability

I propose that practitioners gather information and share their experience of non-philosophers' capacity to implement philosophical ideals and theories. The investigation cannot be strictly empirical, since I wonder whether philosophers, who are usually not trained in data gathering, in data analysis, and specifically in outcome studies, are sufficiently equipped for an empirical investigation.[378] Nor *should* it be strictly empirical. Philosophical practitioners experiment with philosophical theories, providing to students of various disciplines and to adults working

[378] If philosophers wish to be equipped for an empirical investigation, it would be good for them to acquaint themselves with the basics of this field. The field of Therapy Outcome Studies in psychology deals precisely with how to evaluate various elements of counseling and therapy. This is a huge field with many theoretical and practical issues, as well as many shortcomings (see Hunt 1993, chap. 17). One shortcoming of many earlier outcome studies, which is particularly relevant to philosophical counseling, is that they look at results at the end or at the midpoint of the treatment. A new practice in research, however, is to look more closely at what happens in therapy: how effectively different forms of intervention, at particular moments in a session, promote the healing process (Hunt 1993, 598). However, philosophical practitioners do not need a strictly empirical investigation to uncover ideas in philosophy that rub counselees the wrong way. Recently, the idea that philosophy should also be experimental has gained supporters. Some studies, such as Sytsma and Livengood (2016), have aimed to enlighten philosophers on the theory and practice of experiential philosophy.

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in various professions, and sometimes with various predicaments and interests, a wealth of ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical concepts and precepts. With experience, they get an idea of what is "in" and what is "out," what seems workable to unconverted hearers and what seems lunatic, what seems pertinent to life as most people live it and what seems to require a philosophical monastery.

By examining philosophy's relevance to everyday life, I pay attention to which philosophers and which aspects of a philosophical theory contribute to life as most people live it and to the activities most people undertake. My proposal is different from the Logical Positivist criterion of verifiability and from the Pragmatist criterion of truth. I do not contend that a philosophical theory that is irrelevant to everyday life has no meaning. Nor do I maintain that the truth of a philosophical theory is tantamount to its practical applications. I merely suggest that we add another perspective to the truth and meaning of a philosophical theory by asking: is it relevant to our life, does it contribute to it, is it workable, practical, can I use it somehow?

Let me give an example. Metaphysics, whose assertions I believe cannot be proven true or false, does supply a theoretical support for ethics. It is therefore highly relevant to our lives, since the choice of a specific metaphysics may determine the endorsement of an ethics. Stoic metaphysics may be endorsed if their ethics is appealing, for the latter depends on the former; the same is true for Epicurean ethics and metaphysics, for Spinoza's philosophy, and for most ethical theories. Metaphysics may also be pertinent to our lives by providing an integrated worldview that answers our need for comprehension. Some persons' need for holistic interpretation of the universe would be better served by philosophical metaphysics than by New Age theories.[379]

Should we ask different questions regarding the relevance of philosophy to everyday life? Should we challenge the very notion of relevance? Isn't it part of the innovation that philosophical practice represents to challenge the very dichotomy between theory and practice? If applied to the narrower setting of philosophical counseling, a serious discussion may be needed about what exactly "relevance" consists of. Alternatively, if we cannot provide a final answer, we may discuss the options. Does the relevance of a theory mean that counselees agree with it or like it? That these ideas inspire counselees in their lives—and notice that very abstract theories too are capable of inspiring? That they promote

[379] For further elaboration of this point, see Amir (2009) and Chapter 1 of *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (Amir 2017).

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wisdom? That they answer counselees' questions about their life? It seems that these different criteria may lead to radically different evaluations.

A crucial question about relevance or pertinence to non-philosophers' lives is, whose relevance? Who should determine if an idea is pertinent? Should it be the sole decision of the non-philosopher, or does the philosopher have a say even if her student or counselee does not see it? Can you educate for relevance? Should you? I will address this question at the end of the chapter. For the moment, instead of being intimidated by the various questions that relevance raise, I propose finding out what parts of philosophy are at odds with non-philosophers. Later we may address the question of whether they are, or should be considered, relevant to their lives.

2. Philosophy as Counselee

One way of getting information on how non-philosophers respond to philosophy is to formulate a hypothesis on the presuppositions, ideals, and values that prevail in philosophy and that might be at odds with non-philosophers. Then, while teaching a course of the history of ideas, or lecturing on the Stoics, or while counseling, the philosophical practitioner would pay attention to the reactions of the participants to those presuppositions, ideals, and values. Later, she could report her impressions to her fellow practitioners. Enriched by others' experiences as well as by her own, she would have a better idea of what would be helpful to, interesting for, and possibly acceptable by, say, young people today. With time, maps of new sensibilities, aspirations, limitations, needs, and indifferences would be created by joint effort. New philosophies could be tailored to problematize our times as reflected in these maps. In addition, those aspects of the history of philosophy that challenge the new generation without being rejected out of hand would be put to the fore.

For the sake of amusement, the first step of the investigation I propose may take the form of an imaginary conversation between the counselor and philosophy. "I am losing my touch," she would complain, "I am out of tune with the world and I do not manage to produce anything that would reach people." I believe that the outcome of such a discussion would be a long, yet not exhaustive, list of the tenets, beliefs, and ideals that are characteristic of philosophy and are at odds with non-philosophers. This list would undoubtedly reflect the counselor's personal philosophical education as well as her experience with philosophical practice. Keeping the inevitable subjectivity of such a list in mind, I would like to begin the dialogue with my fellow counselors by presenting such a list, inviting

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philosophical practitioners to make their own list, and, kindly, to comment on mine.

I propose to divide the list into epistemological and ethical values. The portrait that embodies the epistemological values seems to be the rational person, using logical thought as her most natural tool, entirely dedicated to knowledge, capable of undergoing profound emotional and behavioral change through cognitive understanding, searching relentlessly for truth, and bearing it, when believed to be found, regardless of its consequences.

The ethical values extol very high ideals: the search is for happiness, peace of mind, meaningfulness; the emphasis is on self-sufficiency, authenticity, and autonomy while wealth, honors, and lust are denigrated; passions are denounced as the enemy from within, followed naturally by skepticism that human love can secure happiness. Love of wisdom or Plato's philo-sophia, love of virtue or Aristotelian friendship (*philia*), love of mankind or Stoic love (philanthropy), the Spinozistic intellectual love of God, and the Nietzschean love of fate not only seem very difficult to achieve but are hardly recognized as worthy substitutes for human love by most non-philosophers. Last but not least, a depreciation of women and therefore of the relationship with them prevails, making it hard for women and for some men to identify with these views.[380]

This list is neither exhaustive nor evident. Nor was it meant to be. It represents my analysis of philosophy's main characteristics that are in my experience at odds with non-philosophers. It is an invitation to my fellow counselors to join in the debate about which philosophical presuppositions, ideals, and values are in their experience most often rejected.

3. Academic Criticism of Philosophy

Postmodern academic philosophers have denounced some of the values I have listed. This should not undermine philosophical practitioners' criticisms. First, postmodernists' conclusions are not accepted by all philosophers, let alone by all people. They are contested on theoretical

[380] For ethical ideals in philosophy, see any monograph on the history of philosophy or the history of ethics. To take a famous example, see Bertrand Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy* (1946). Specifically on ethics, see Passmore (1970) or Arrington (1998). Solomon (1993, 1999) and Nussbaum (2001) testify, among others, to the devaluation of emotions in philosophy. For philosophical conceptions of love, see, e.g., Singer (1984-1987), Amir (2001; 2002; 2004a) and *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (Amir 2017). For the prevalent attitude towards women among philosophers, see, e.g. Mary Briody Mahowald (1978).

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grounds—they can also be contested on practical grounds. An example may prove helpful at this point. My (postmodernist) assistant teaches a course. He complains that he cannot do much with the type of students he has. To exemplify this, he tells me of an incident he had. He was explaining the problem of the subject, when one student commented: "I do not have such a problem," while the rest agreed. My assistant is convinced that he should find another audience. I believe he should find another theory. The point is that non-philosophers will not recognize as real all philosophers' problems, especially those couched in philosophical jargon. Doesn't this problematize the "problem of the subject"? Can we trust postmodernists to criticize philosophy in a manner that is relevant to non-philosophers? Shouldn't we, at least at times, find out problems people have, and turn to academic philosophy for theories that would address them?

Moreover, postmodernist academic philosophers denounce some of these values for reasons that are very different from the reasons those values are on my list. Recall, for example, the epistemological values: the ideal of the rational person, using logical thought as her most natural tool, entirely dedicated to knowledge, capable of undergoing profound emotional and behavioral change through cognitive understanding, searching relentlessly for truth, and bearing it, when believed to be found, regardless of its consequences. I may describe this ideal as being at odds with most people's views and capacities without thereby criticizing it, nor believing that it is outmoded. It might have always been an ideal for the few. I may still believe that genuine philosophical change will take place only when these ideal conditions obtain. Taking the use of logic as an example, all I may do is notice that many persons do not mind contradicting themselves, not because the law of contradiction is no longer valid, as a postmodernist would say, but because they do not entertain an ideal of cognitive coherence. The fact that some philosophers have re-evaluated past academic philosophy does not entail that the outcome of their re-evaluation is relevant to non-philosophers, or that it necessarily is pertinent to philosophers. The practice of philosophy is a better guide to what needs reevaluation than, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche's writings.

Furthermore, granting postmodernists the importance of their criticism, their strength lies not in providing elements for a regeneration of philosophy. One way of viewing postmodern thought is as a skeptical crisis within modernity. As most skeptical phases in the history of philosophy were followed by the creation of new ideas and bold systems, this may happen now. Once the crisis is over and its lesson learned, philosophy would still have to correct its Enlightenment excesses and

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define its post-romantic and post-postmodern ideals.[381]

4. Future Philosophies

One promising way of creating new ideals is by studying the relationship between non-philosophers and philosophy. Philosophical practitioners partake of the two worlds. A regular professor of philosophy does not engage in philosophical discussions with non-philosophers in a systematic way and on a professional basis. If, however, we include in the practice of philosophy teaching philosophy to non-philosophers, the philosophical

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[381] I have recently come across Gilles Deleuze's writings as part of writings in the course of researching a monograph I am writing (*The Legacy of Nietzschean Laughter: Bataille, Deleuze, Rosset*). This French academic philosopher exemplifies the influence of practice on theory. Heavily indebted to Benedict Spinoza and Nietzsche's practical philosophies, Deleuze's teaching experience, as related in "How Philosophy is Useful to Mathematicians or Musicians," seems to be a practice of philosophy. Commenting on "a very particular aspect of university teaching" in Vincennes, "where a professor, e.g., one who works in philosophy, lectures to a public that includes to varying degrees mathematicians, musicians . . . psychologists, historians, etc.," he explains that "the students . . . expect philosophy, for example, to be useful to them in some way, to intersect with their other activities. Philosophy will matter to them . . . in terms of their immediate concerns, in other words, the other subjects or materials that they already possess to whatever degrees. Students attend a lecture looking for something they can use for themselves. In this way, what directly orients the teaching of philosophy is the question of how useful it is to mathematicians, or to musicians, etc., even and especially if this philosophy does not discuss mathematics or music. *This kind of teaching* has nothing to do with general culture; it *is practical and experimental, always outside itself, precisely because the students are led to participate in terms of their own needs and competences*" (Deleuze 2006, 166-67; italics added). Although Deleuze maintains that philosophy gains nothing from the non-philosopher and owes nothing to conversation (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 6), the practical bent of his view of philosophy is unmistakable: "Philosophy must constitute itself as a theory of what we are doing, not of what there is," he writes (Deleuze 1991, 133). Reiterating the motto epigraph of this chapter, we read, "A theory is exactly like a box of tools . . . It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself . . . then the theory is useless or the moment inappropriate. We don't revise a theory, but construct new ones: we have no choice but to make others" (Deleuze, quoted in Bouchard 1977, 208). Deleuze's project is ultimately concerned with the effects that philosophy is able to produce. "Philosophy has an essential and positive relation to non-philosophy: it speaks directly to non-philosophers," he says (Deleuze 1990, 139-40).

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practitioner is particularly well situated to evaluate the needs and interests of non-philosophers. She can also be painfully aware of the gap between those needs and that which philosophy can offer. She might nurture an idea of what would be helpful to, compatible with and interesting for young people today.

To take another example, the Catalonian philosophical practitioner Xavier Carbonell recognized in counseling a recurrent problem for aging ladies, who are used to being on their own most of the day, and are now alarmed at the thought of spending the rest of their lives at home with their retired husbands. He conceptualized it as an identity problem and now develops this theme in an academic setting by writing a master's thesis on this subject. Maps of new sensibilities, aspirations, limitations, needs, and indifferences could trigger the creation of new philosophical theories, which would be tailored to problematize our times.

Rejected philosophical tenets, ideals and values by students and counselees should not be considered necessarily irrelevant to their lives. I have found the consultation room to be sometimes more like a battlefield than a laboratory. Especially the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and autonomy, which, I believe, most philosophical counselors attempt to implement, were challenged more by the counselees' behavior than by philosophical discussion.[382] Is it sufficient that ideals are challenged in order to reject them? Should future philosophical theories reject autonomy and rationality because they are hard to implement? Inability to implement a philosophical ideal triggers a question mark, a suspicion. The reception of the ideal by other students or counselees should be followed up. However, even if almost everybody rejects a certain ideal, an important decision awaits the philosopher: should this ideal be rejected, qualified, or accepted without change? The Stoics of the middle period, Posedonius and Panaetius, softened Stoic ethics to accommodate Roman taste. It seems that the debate on philosophy's relevance to non-philosophers is not value-free. Some philosophical ideas may be considered significant even if at odds with many people. Philosophers may insist that relevance to one's life is not always to be perceived in the moment nor determined by popularity contests. For example, Søren Kierkegaard might claim that God is the most relevant concept to our lives whether we recognize this or not.

My personal opinion is that philosophical practice's most important role is to combat the dangers of a populist nihilism related to postmodernism. It combats these dangers by implementing the ideals of

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[382] See my account of some counselees' capacity for rationality in Amir (2003), and their capacity for autonomy in Amir (2004b).

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the Enlightenment in practice, whilst revising and refining them using the experience gathered through practice. Philosophical practice thus helps philosophy in its most important contemporary task: defining its post-romantic and post-postmodern ideals.

I invite fellow-practitioners to join in the debate on the role the practice of philosophy can have in redefining philosophy's task and in problematizing how philosophy is thought about in the academe, rather than how it is written or taught.

Conclusion

When discussing the relationship between philosophy and philosophical practice we usually ask, how can philosophy contribute to philosophical practice and counseling? How can we use philosophy in consultation? I suggest examining the other aspect of the relationship by asking: how can philosophy benefit from philosophical practice and counseling? The significance of this chapter mainly lies in putting this question on the agenda.

I proposed to use practitioners' experience with the capacity of non-philosophers for implementing philosophical ideals and theories. Then, to confront philosophers with the findings, in order to assess the usefulness of past philosophy and provide the creative philosopher with up-to-date information about non-philosophers' presuppositions, limitations, needs, and expectations. Past philosophy could then be reevaluated according to a criterion of practicability or relevance to our life, and future philosophy could better fulfill its task by answering the needs of our times.

I then listed tenets, beliefs and ideals that characterize philosophy, and are at odds with many non-philosophers. This list undoubtedly reflects my personal philosophical education, as well as my own experience with philosophical practice. I proposed, therefore, to begin the dialogue with my fellow counselors by inviting them to make their lists, and, kindly, to comment on mine.

I argued that the debate over philosophy's relevance to non-philosophers is not value-free. I stated my personal opinion on philosophical practice's most important role: to combat the dangers of a populist nihilism related to postmodernism. It combats these dangers by implementing the ideals of the Enlightenment in practice, whilst revising and refining them using the experience gathered through practice. Philosophical practice thus helps philosophy in its most significant contemporary task: defining its post-romantic and post-postmodern ideals.

Throughout its history, philosophy had to redefine the problems it

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addresses, to revise its objectives, to amend its relations with other disciplines, and to question its role within society. Our epoch needs such a re-evaluation. Philosophical practitioners can play an important part in this contemporary venture. I invite fellow practitioners to join in the debate on the role the practice of philosophy can have in redefining philosophy's task, in problematizing how philosophy is conceived in the academe, rather than how it is written or taught.

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Concluding Remarks

Philosophical practice is often the result of a unique encounter with philosophy. Thus, the following conclusion necessarily reflects my personal experience. It also sums up the main themes of this volume[383], however, and expand on them to include the views advanced in *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility* (2017a). Finally, it refers the reader to a thematic list of publications. It is based on two written interviews about my approach to the practice of philosophy.[384]

1. ***Why were you initially drawn to philosophical practice?***

I have always considered philosophy the most practical of disciplines: sustained and educated reflection about one's life was helpful as nothing else was. Together with the world religions, philosophy was to me the deposit of wisdom of people of previous generations, who had struggled with similar problems we necessarily face today. As early in my career as the work on my PhD dissertation, *Personal Redemption According to Spinoza and Nietzsche*, I added a chapter that detailed the path leading to the realization in one's life of the redemptions Spinoza and Nietzsche proposed. I shared the vision of philosophy as a discipline that is practical when taken seriously with my dissertation supervisor, Professor Joseph Agassi. He insisted that I should personalize Spinoza and Nietzsche's philosophies and make them more palatable for readers by shunning jargon and illustrating their doctrines with everyday life problems. He assured me early on that philosophy could fulfil not only my intellectual needs but my existential and emotional desires as well.

Equipped with this vision of philosophy and a native propensity for sharing everything I know, I was driven by circumstances to find for a

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[383] Except for the unduly neglected topics discussed in Part 3 above, (unduly neglected here as well…).

[384] "Lydia Amir," in *Philosophical Practice: 5Questions*, edited by Jeanette Bresson Ladegaard Knox and Jan Kyrre Berg Friis, 1-14. Birkerød, Denmark: Automatic Press, 2013c, and "Lydia Amir," in *The Philosophy Clinic: Practical Wisdom at Work*, edited by Stephen Costello, 105-18. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016f.

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while additional work on the verge of academe. Thus, I introduced the first Israeli course of philosophy for non-philosophers (most of them retired professionals) at the Popular University in Tel-Aviv, and fulfilled a friend's desire to learn about Spinoza by giving ten lectures about his philosophy in an apartment in Tel-Aviv. This was soon followed by ten lectures on Nietzsche, and on Hellenistic philosophers, and as the course on philosophy at the Popular University, for which I had to fight initially, turned out to be a success, I was swamped with offers of this kind.

When students attending these courses approached me to discuss personal matters triggered by the lectures, I suggested meeting privately because after the lecture I had no free time. Once, a friend of mine told me that what I was doing was called "philosophical practice." When a journalist approached me to write about my private philosophic meetings with people, I presented my activity in the article as "philosophical practice." Other philosophical practitioners, such as Ran Lahav, learned about me by reading the article and contacted me. Ran offered me to join him in the first international conference on philosophical practice he was organizing with Lou Marinoff in Vancouver. I became part of the movement since its inception and never missed a conference.

Twelve years before the publication of the newspaper article on philosophical practice, I proposed teaching philosophy to gifted children, to Erika Landau, an Israeli expert on giftedness, but my offer was rejected.

I have always taken philosophy seriously and believed in the importance of befriending it at all ages. However, were it not for circumstances that led me to seek work outside departments of philosophy for a while, I may not have had the opportunity of implementing these ideas in practice. Once I put these views into practice, however, I considered it my duty to continue sharing philosophy's benefits with the public by using ever-new forms of communication, such as the radio program I used to air weekly in a popular radio station in Israel (106fm).

2. ***What does your work reveal about philosophical practice that other related academic fields typically fail to appreciate?***

There is no discontinuity between academic philosophy and philosophical practice. Taking philosophy seriously means valuing the transformative power of its theories instead of reducing them to a barren academicism. The difference between academic philosophy and philosophical practice is a difference in degree of abstraction and generalization, leading from a condensed thought in academic philosophy to an implementation of its contents in practical matters in philosophical practice. The academic

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lecturer of philosophy is already a practitioner because he has to appropriate the theory, that is, to understand it thoroughly in order to teach it effectively (Amir 2006a). On the other end of the spectrum, the philosophical practitioner is just a good teacher of philosophy. He is able to tailor for the client or student a private tutorial that fits her interests or needs as well as her level of understanding; this is done with the explicit purpose of imparting to her the knowledge and dexterity needed for further use of philosophic tools in order to continue her philosophic education (Amir 2006b; 2003).

Second, philosophy has always been a discipline oriented toward practice as well as theory, mostly for the few and sometimes for the many. I refer to philosophy in its former capacity as "perfectionist" and in its later capacity as "meliorist." The Greek philosophers provided both paths––a good example is Aristotle's two ways of reaching happiness, one for the many (expounded in most of the chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics*), and the other for the rare few (Chapter 10)—the Hellenistic philosophers addressed the many, especially in Roman times. However, the role of philosophy as a source of worldviews representing the good life has been taken over by Christianity at the end of Antiquity and jealously held onto for a millennium. By this token, Christianity has reduced philosophy to the role of a servant of faith and disqualified it as a path leading to truth, happiness, and wisdom. Slowly, however, modern philosophy disengaged itself from this influence through the work of Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Santayana, the Existentialist philosophers, and recently through the movement of philosophical practice (Amir 2006d; 2009b; 2006a).

Third, philosophical practice does not provide a therapy. As a perfectionist endeavor, it aims higher than therapy, at ideals such as freedom, happiness, peace of mind, and wisdom. As a melioristic endeavor, it aims lower than therapy, at the virtues and skills needed for better citizenship. It might prove beneficial to differentiate between these two traditions within philosophy: one tradition might be called perfectionism or radical philosophy, the other, meliorism or democratized philosophy. Both traditions live or relive today in academic philosophy, and are practiced in the variety of forms of philosophical counseling. Both are valid and important, yet ignorance of the differences between them results in tension among practitioners and between practitioners and academics. Those who are familiar with Eastern philosophy will recognize in this the Western analogue to Buddhist schools, the Hinayana school or small vehicle leading to liberation, on the one hand, the Mahayana school or large vehicle, on the other. Other descriptive terms could be "radical"

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versus "piecemeal" philosophy, "elitist" versus "democratic," or philosophy oriented more towards liberty than towards equality versus its contrary.

The perfectionist tradition represents the revolutionary face of philosophy, in the following ways. Philosophy presents itself as an alternative to established religion and any other establishments. It is highly critical of society's values—it dismisses the common sense, non-critical views of people, urging them to question their lives and not take appearances at their face value; it presents itself as an alternative to the common views of happiness: riches, pleasure, and power or fame. It requires a conversion to forms of thought and allegiances foreign to most men. It assumes that radical change is possible through sole understanding and practice. It is total, keeping touch with other disciplines but in a supervising and critical capacity, perfectionist and ambitious in answering all worthy needs, including spiritual ones. It prescribes the highest ideals, in morality and in ethics: it aims at nothing less than liberty, happiness or peace of mind, and even at philosophical redemption. It is for the few. Rare are those who live according to its requirements and even fewer dare claim that they do.

By "meliorism," I refer to those philosophies that are less ambitious, more in conformity with common sense, with regular persons' psychological needs and social goals, more skeptical of perfectionist ends and means. For example, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* might qualify as meliorist, if we exclude its tenth chapter; other philosophers in this tradition, to mention a few, would be Hume, Locke, Russell, and Popper. This is the tradition that requires further development in philosophical practice. If meliorism and perfectionism are both loyal to philosophy's aims and methods, the same virtues championed in perfectionism will also predominate in meliorism. The difference will be that the very high ethical ideals of perfectionist philosophy, as well as its demand of a radical break with society's presuppositions, would be avoided.

Whether under its perfectionist or its melioristic guise, philosophical practice does not offer therapy, as it aims either higher or lower than that. It addresses the human being who is plagued by problems related to the human condition, or who is attracted to philosophic issues for other reasons. Moreover, there is no diagnostic in philosophical practice, as it leaves to health professionals the care of acute anxiety, deep depression, and mental illnesses. It can successfully work in conjunction with psychologists, however, either before or after the treatment and in coordination with psychiatrists as well.

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Fourth, philosophy and psychology are both necessary for human well-being, because psychologists are trained in emotional education, yet emotional education needs a frame of values to evaluate emotions, which only philosophers can provide. Psychology has taken over moral questions in the last century. From a theoretical point of view, psychology has incorporated moral views into its various theories; from a practical point of view, psychotherapists use moral discourse in their practice even when not substantiated by theory, as there seems to be a gap between what the theory can offer and the clients' need. The theories of morality that form part of psychological theories are lacking in depth and width.

However, therapists are now asked to serve as moral authorities, filling the vacuum left by the loss of older sources of guidance. Because of this demand placed on therapists, a central part of what goes on in helping people in the modern world consists in addressing questions about what constitutes the good life and how we can be at home in the world. These are clearly moral questions in the broad sense, where "morality" includes not just questions about right action, but also questions that touch on the issue of what kind of life is worth living, or of what constitutes a rich, meaningful life, as against one concerned with secondary matters or trivia. Therapists are ill equipped for this task. The practice of psychotherapy necessarily makes use of moral discussions, and as the theory is insufficient, these discussions are in most cases unsubstantiated by theory. Examining the historical and social reasons for the situation that led psychologists into doing what they have not been trained to do, the conclusion is that the role of discussing moral questions should be taken over by philosophical counselors.

However, effective moral education involves emotional education. Philosophers' views of emotions tend to be reductive, however, and when they are not, they point to an irreducibility of affectivity that is not amenable to philosophical investigation. While emotional and moral education should go hand in hand, philosophers seem poorly equipped for the former. Psychotherapists are trained in educating emotions and in attending to the irreducible affectivity of individual emotions. Interested as we might be in psychotherapists' specialization in emotional education, we cannot dissociate it from moral education, as emotional education is not value-free. Recalling that psychological theories involve views of morality that do not withstand critical examination, we are reluctant to entrust psychotherapists with moral education. Turning once again to psychology, we realize that we have added a new complexity to the initial problematic status of psychological moral education. While emotional and moral education should go hand in hand, the untenable situation that obtains is

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that philosophers educate us morally while psychologists educate us emotionally. Moral education is impaired whether it is left to psychotherapists or to philosophers.

Moral education, successful living, and happiness include a normative component, which makes philosophy indispensable for the good life; however, without addressing the affectivity that determines our emotional lives, all philosophical theories are fruitless, and the normative aspect determining the values and ends of our lives is impotent. Thus, philosophy and psychology are both necessary for human well-being, and should find a way of cooperating to further that worthy goal (Amir 2005b; 2009d; 2006c).

3. ***What, if any, practical and/or social-political obligations follow from understanding philosophy from the point of view of philosophical practice?***

Philosophical practice is the offspring of the Enlightenment, an epoch in which practical philosophies as represented by Socrates and Hellenistic philosophers were predominant. Philosophical practice expresses a belief in human rationality, in the importance of critical thinking, and in the autonomy of each individual to think for himself (2015a). These tenets are the Enlightenment's principles, which are still relevant today for implementing the ideal of living autonomously in liberal democracies. Philosophical practice should provide the necessary tools to fulfill this ideal in order to help minimize the tension between equality (everyone can) and liberty (you are on your own, we cannot help lest we impinge on your liberty), which plagues every democratic and liberal society (Amir 2009b; 2006a). Let me explain.

To begin with, legal rights are insufficient without the means to exercise those rights. The right to the "pursuit of happiness" is an empty one, for example, if we lack the tools to develop and harmonize our intellectual and moral capacities. In attaining intellectual and moral integrity, we become autonomous not only *de jure* but also *de facto*. Philosophical practitioners should assist their clients in becoming more autonomous.

Second, only the philosopher can provide the non-authoritarian, pluralistic, and critical moral education which is necessary for young adults in liberal democratic societies, but which is left unattended. In contradistinction both to scholarly and religious education, the moral education provided by philosophers is non-authoritarian. It is necessarily pluralistic, moreover, because it involves the acquaintance and even-handed assessment of a variety of moral theories. Finally, it is critical,

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because choosing a morality and abiding by it necessitates the capacity to reflect critically on one's values, and to sustain one's choice by arguments and reasoning (Amir 2009d; 2005a; 2005b; 2004b; 2002a).

Third, critical thinking is at the very heart of philosophical practice and is a key to our freedom in any society, provided we understand that intellectual lives are not devoted exclusively to acquiring beliefs, but also to maintaining, communicating, and applying our beliefs to practical affairs. Critical thinking provides us with the means of defending ourselves against manipulation and control by others. When we become self-critical in this way, we are no longer simply at the mercy of whatever others tell us to believe and we no longer take things at face value. We can critically weigh up the positions being presented to us to see whether there are good reasons for believing them. Given that we continue to be subject to various social and cultural influences, critical reflection continues to have a role to play in adult life. We are easily influenced by advertising, the mass media, cultural pressures, and political propaganda, along with the seductive messages coming from all manner of experts, gurus, and demagogues. Thus, a capacity to discriminate, to weigh up critically the claims and arguments we are presented with, remains vital if we are to maintain a degree of independence (Amir 2011a; 2009a; 2006a).

Fourth, philosophy should once again fulfill its role as teacher of wisdom in order to fight complacent New Age mysticism. I suggest that the New Age movement is not primarily the new locus of mystics who have always accompanied the growth in rationality; rather, the eclipse of philosophy on matters of wisdom, happiness, meaning, and alternative spirituality has led many rational persons to New Age theories for lack of an accessible alternative (Amir 2009a). The New Age movement is relevant for philosophers because of its popularity, the possibility of confusing it with philosophy, and the dangers for adequate thinking that the movement's views represent—almost the sole danger this otherwise peaceful and love-oriented movement represents. It is important for practical philosophers, then, to present clients with comprehensive, rational, and viable worldviews that provide meaning, even alternative rational spiritualities, and especially paths leading to wisdom and happiness, as philosophy has always done (Amir 2009a).

4. ***What do you see as the most interesting criticism against your own position in philosophical practice?***

I never heard of any sustained criticism of my views, unfortunately, but I assume that from the point of view of potential critics my position's

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strengths are also its weaknesses.

First, my take on the necessary relation between academic philosophy and practical philosophy, which I consider crucial for philosophical practice and potentially revolutionizing for academic philosophy (Amir 2004a), may be perceived as not adequately aggressive toward academic philosophy and certainly at odds with those practitioners who wish to establish philosophical practice as a new profession.

Second, the respect I have for psychology and psychiatry, and the emphasis I put on the necessity of philosophical practice to be philosophical instead of (pseudo-)psychological, may not appeal to philosophical practitioners who conceive of philosophical practice as a substitute to psychology or psychiatry or both (see Amir 2004b). Psychiatry and psychology have been pioneers in studying and sometimes helping abnormal psychological states, including anxiety and depression. They should be applauded for that and encouraged to pursue their research. There is no need for philosophers to compete with their work, as philosophy has always addressed the "normal," more or less rational, person, who struggles with the ordinary problems of the human condition rather than an individual's extreme psychological disorder. Philosophical practitioners should take philosophy seriously and avoid selling philosophy short, misrepresenting it, or passing it for what it is not. To take philosophy seriously is to be loyal to its objectives. The philosophical counselor who thinks that philosophical theory is not important does not trust his own discipline, *philo-sophia*, to display a love of wisdom or be a fruitful reflection on life. He might emulate forms of counseling taken from other disciplines, such as psychology or New Age theories, believing that his being a philosopher brings something new to the discussion.

However, not every conversation with a philosopher is philosophical. Reflecting adequately is the seal that differentiates philosophy from psychology and New Ages theories. The difference with psychology lies in the emphasis on reflection: philosophical reflection is abstract and derives its power from that. The difference between philosophy and New Age thought lies in the emphasis on adequacy: adequacy stems from rigor of thought and from arguments that establish the reliability of conclusions. This locates epistemology and logic at the heart of philosophical practice, with moral and ethical education as the professed goal that directs the enterprise of thinking well, for intellectual virtues as well as moral virtues.

Various philosophical practitioners believe that the birth or re-birth of philosophical practice is an opportunity for rethinking the value of psychological counseling, and re-evaluating the help psychologists and psychiatrists bring to patients suffering from abnormal psychological

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states. Moreover, some philosophical practitioners oppose psychiatry and psychology altogether. I imagine that they might not like my lenient view of both disciplines and practices.

Third, my emphasis on rationality, with the aim of distinguishing between mysticism and religion, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other, may not appeal to mystical or religious philosophical practitioners. I conceive of philosophy as a rational enterprise that represents an alternative to organized religions. Some philosophies are also spiritual endeavors, but they offer rational spiritualities rather than mystical practices such as those that accompany the major religions.

Fourth, my call to revive Western philosophies' practical aspects and create Western conceptual frames and somatic practices is at odds with the current importation of Eastern philosophies and practices to the West with alterations to fit Westerners. Emphasizing differences between Western and Eastern philosophies and persons seems at variance with the contemporary *bon ton*. It is not popular today to criticize how yoga and Buddhist meditation are practiced in the West, as exercises torn from their spiritual aims and metaphysical frames of thought (Amir 2009a). Urging Westerners to develop their own contemporary somatic practices, as the Feldenkrais or Alexander methods, to fit philosophical theories, may not be a commonplace thought.

Finally, the significant role I allot the philosopher and the philosophical practitioner as teachers of skills and virtues necessary for bridging the gulf between the ideal citizen of democratic liberal societies and the *de facto* tension between equality and liberty may be at odds with relativistic views of morality, laissez-faire visions of happiness, and views of education as necessarily authoritarian.

5. ***With respect to present and future inquiry, how can the most important problems concerning philosophical practice be identified and explored?***

It is important that philosophical practitioners be philosophers. The status of philosophical practice has undergone a change in the past twenty years: from an estranged practice, philosophical practice has become so appealing that many non-philosophers call themselves philosophers and write and counsel as if they were professional philosophers. As a provider of wisdom, philosophy has relinquished its role to the New Age movement. As the locus of theories of happiness, philosophy is forgotten, leaving happiness without a normative component in the hands of researchers of the social sciences, such as political scientists and positive

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psychologists. Professionals that are more down-to-earth have eclipsed philosophers as counselors to other disciplines, such as bio-ethics, business ethics and other professional ethics. Philosophical practitioners should be set apart from other practitioners by their status as professional philosophers. They should be informed by a thorough knowledge both of the history of philosophy and of its methods. They should use in their practice a method, a systematization that mirrors philosophy's techniques. Most importantly, they should have a pluralistic attitude, a non-dogmatic approach to problems, and an even-handedness in handling various theories that allows the client to find her own way in the maze of theories and practices (Amir 2001a; 2003; 2006b; 2006d). Allow me to explain.

To deserve the title "philosophical" and thereby differentiate itself from psychology and New Age theories and practices, a philosophical practice should be faithful to philosophy's objectives and methods. This means that philosophical practice should take philosophy seriously. The forms of teaching or tutoring may be different among the consultancy, the groups outside the academe, and classes at the university, but the objectives have to be similar, otherwise the endeavor cannot deserve to be qualified as philosophical.

The way I see it, philosophy has three interrelated objectives. The first objective is truth, at least by *via negativa*, that is, by eradicating our errors, as taught by Karl's Popper's critical rationalism; this further involves choosing truth over happiness, if they do not coincide, because truth is the philosopher's happiness. The second objective is liberation, even if partial, from illusions, preconceptions, and self-centered intelligence; and the third objective is wisdom, even if negative, in the humble sense of realizing my ignorance and finding out that which I cannot know, which results in better understanding or comprehension. The relation that holds among these objectives seems to be the following: liberation from untruth is the path to wisdom.

These inter-related objectives—truth, liberation, and wisdom—should be approached through adequate reflection on experience, which is ensured by using philosophical methods, such as abstract thought, logic, and epistemology. To fit non-philosophers' needs and capacities, however, logic and epistemology should be constructed as applied disciplines and taught in that way, and abstract thought should be supplemented by a movement from the concrete to the abstract and back.

In order to ensure transparency *vis-à-vis* the client and loyalty to philosophical goals and means, first, a view of philosophic advancement should be transposed into a method of work to be adopted and followed in the practice. The method I have found, to take an example, is the method I

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use in writing and in reading, whenever the text is written according to my requirements. First, one formulates the problem at hand in a question, preferably one with multiple answers. Second, one presents the alternative answers to the question. Third, one assesses each answer critically. One is ready, then, to formulate a second question, which has usually some connection (logical or other) to the first one. And so on. The questions and alternative answers determine clearly what we are doing at each moment of the counseling and enable the counselee to evaluate what we have done until that moment. Though the client can leave the counseling sessions at any time, the method of questions and alternative answers allows for easily detectable exits, usually accompanied by a feeling of satisfaction because one recognizes what has been achieved (Amir 2003; 2006b).

In order to ensure transparency *vis-à-vis* the client and loyalty to philosophical goals and means, the goals one attempts to reach in the practice should be clarified as well. For example, my goals in philosophical practice are the following. First, I attempt to further thought by the movement from the concrete to the abstract and back. Philosophy is an abstract discipline; rather than being a hindrance, the abstract or general, as an inward space where thought can be expanded and freedom gained without the tyranny of personal fear, is one of the great therapeutic inventions of philosophy. However, any solution to a problem that would remain at the abstract level is useless. Hence the necessity of approaching the abstract out of the concrete, and coming back to the concrete after incorporating the abstract's general knowledge. By subjectively appropriating the insights gained in the abstract, I am faithful to philosophy's means (abstract thought) as well as to practical philosophy's goals (the concrete) (Amir 2006d).

Second, I attempt to promote intellectual virtues with the ultimate goal of furthering intellectual courage and autonomy. I believe intellectual virtues are what philosophy is about, and I relate them to the "questions and alternative answers" method by the following argument: knowledge, as "intelligent development," is associated with the capacity to adopt additional and differing points of view both in Jean Piaget's psychology, and the history of sciences. Adopting different points of view further such epistemic virtues as impartiality, or openness to the ideas of others. Critically assessing different answers furthers intellectual sobriety, or the virtue of the careful inquirer who accepts only what the evidence warrants. Moreover, the whole process of philosophical practice that is faithful to philosophy furthers the virtue of intellectual courage, which include perseverance and determination (Amir 2011a).

Third, I attempt to promote moral virtues with the ultimate goal of

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furthering one's solidarity with others, for deep thoughts are not sufficient for wisdom—broad feelings are needed too. The development of moral virtues is not an endeavor separate from the development of intellectual virtues: feelings are involved in intellectual virtues, and intellectual virtues are involved in handling feelings. Spinoza made understanding, which is an intellectual virtue, the key to all the virtues, and understanding different points of view brings forth pluralism, tolerance, and acceptance, which increase solidarity with our fellow human beings (Amir 2004c).

These three goals serve the major goal of philosophy and its practice, which is autonomy, as both a moral and an intellectual virtue. The virtue of autonomy is a mean state of character with regard to reliance on one's own powers in acting, choosing, and forming opinions. Autonomous moral thinking (what should be done) and autonomous theoretical thinking (what is the case) are parallel. Autonomy is associated with humility and courage. It exemplifies the connection between cognitive and volitional processes. Intellectual skills are needed to be autonomous in one's thinking. These include the ability to judge when someone else knows better than you do. However, the ability to control the emotions that prevent those skills from being exercised is also required

The three goals proposed above together with their resulting in a greater autonomy for the counselee help minimize the tension between freedom and equality, which is the ultimate objective of a democratically oriented philosophical practice (Amir 2006a).

Another significant problem regarding philosophical practice that we should identify and explore concerns the relations between philosophy and psychology. I suggest these relations should be clarified through the relations between philosophical practice and psychological therapies (Amir 2005b; 2009d; 2006c). An individual should not have to choose one discipline to the exclusion of the other. Philosophers should use psychologists as highly trained technicians who can work locally on an irrational matter. Psychologists should be acclaimed for their work in abnormal psychology. For normal psychology, however, psychologists need philosophers, as both the dependence of positive psychology on philosophical theories and therapists' use of Eastern and New Age visions of life testify.

Last, but not least, philosophers should diffuse their power, and shun guru-ism as anti-philosophical. True, philosophy has had its share of gurus (Amir 2009b), and the relationship between teachers and apprentices in philosophy is plagued with problems and potentially dangerous (Amir 2009c); yet philosophers have devised means to avoid or reduce these dangers (Amir 2011b). In addition to these means, I suggest that humor

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and especially the counselor's self-referential humor can help diffuse power and minimize self-importance in philosophical practice, as well as prove helpful in other ways in philosophic education and philosophic transformations (Amir 2012b; 2015a). When used correctly, humor is one of the most useful tools available to a philosopher for furthering philosophic ideals, such as self-knowledge, truth, rationality, freedom, virtue, happiness, and wisdom. It is helpful both for furthering the awareness of intra-personal conflicts, deliberating over them, living with unsolvable conflicts, and for strengthening our acknowledgement and tolerance of ambivalence and ambiguity that characterize life and human relationships (Amir 2014b; 2012b; 2010b).[385]

6. ***Finally, what has the study and practice of philosophy done for you personally?***[386]

My task was to create a life on the solid base of systematic thought. This involved thinking through all problems, examining alternative answers, and choosing or creating a path that would lead to a stable and harmonious character, an understanding of my surroundings, and a viable way to live with others. It was my responsibility to address the human condition for my sake as well as that of others. I woke up with the sufferings of humanity and went to sleep with its cries. I have found a way to help, I have used it, made it public, and am teaching it when invited to do so. I have created an original worldview, *Homo risibilis*, as a viable answer to the perennial as well as timely problems of humanity. All the promises of philosophy were kept for me; it has been the love of my life. I followed it wherever it led; it clarified my path, and eventually illuminated me.

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[385] For somatic devices, such as using music to implement abstract philosophic ideas, hear my weekly radio program at 106fm or on the internet, "Diotima: Thought in Practice," which uses music to help clarify philosophic concepts that are relevant for everyday life. For my theoretical innovations, see the third chapter of my monograph, *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy*, which proposes the view of *Homo risibilis* (ridiculous human being) as a means for living a good life (Amir 2014b), and also Amir (2014c; 2014d; 2014f; 2012b; 2010b; 2002b). Many of these publications can be found in Amir (2017a) and in various chapters in this book.

[386] This last question and its answer are taken from Stephen Costello's anthology (Amir 2016f).

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