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Γενέσθω θεοειδής πᾶς: Likeness to God in Plotinus and Plato

In his final moments of life, Plotinus was filled with a deep and earnest longing. No sooner had his friend Eustochius arrived at his deathbed than he spoke his last words: "I have been waiting a long time for you; I am striving to give back the Divine in myself to the Divine in the All."[1] This brief remark encompasses what Plotinus understood to be the principal goal of the Platonic philosophy: "To approach and be united to the God over all" (ἐνθῆναι καὶ πελάσαι τῷ πᾶσι ἐπί θέῳ).[2] In the First Ennead, this goal manifests as the ethical ideal of Likeness to God (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ). As Plotinus would insist, however, his ideas are by no means pure innovation: his reliance on Plato is evident throughout the *Enneads*. One cannot fully apprehend Plotinus' conception of Likeness to God until it is illuminated by the Platonic dialogues from which it is derived.

Only recently have some contemporary scholars begun to recognize that Likeness to God is vital for understanding Platonism. It is, however, still greatly underappreciated compared to the preeminent position it held for ancient Platonists.[3] David Sedley surmises that if you were to

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[1] Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Work," in *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1992), §2. The question of how best to translate and interpret Porphyry's rendering of his teacher's dying words has long been the subject of scholarly debate, the last clause being considered one of the most controversial in later Greek literature. Despite the controversy, no translation undermines the view that Plotinus' goal is to return to the Divine, whether in that instance he was expressing the goal for himself (Harder, Pépin), Eustochius specifically (Igal), his disciples (Henry), or people in general (Schwyzer). See Glenn Most, "Plotinus' Last Words," *Classical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 576-587.

[2] Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books," in *Plotinus*, trans. A.H. Armstrong, vol. 440 of *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, (Cambridge, MA: Loeb – Harvard University Press, 1966), §23. My translation. All Greek of Porphyry and Plotinus comes from this volume. For Plotinus' articulation of this goal, see especially *Enneads* I.6.7-9, II.3.9, III.4.2, V.8.11, VI.5.7, and VI.9.8-9.

[3] Among the few studies that take Likeness to God seriously, and which I make use of here, are Mark Anderson, "Purification," in *Pure: Modernity, Philosophy, and the One* (San Rafael, CA: Sophia Perennis, 2009), esp. §5; Julia Annas, "Becoming Like God: Ethics, Human Nature, and the Divine," in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52-

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ask "any moderately well-educated citizen of the Roman empire to name the official moral goal, or *telos*,"[4] of Plato's philosophy, he would respond with Plato's own words: "Becoming like god as much as possible" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν).[5] You will not often hear this response today.[6] There are those, however, who have argued convincingly that Likeness to God is an important feature of Plato's thought, and that its presence in the dialogues cannot simply be written off as idle metaphor.[7] But even they have tended to either limit or dismiss completely one of the most prolific exponents of this idea, Plotinus.[8] This paper is my attempt to promote a richer understanding of Likeness to God by revealing the comprehensiveness of Plotinus' treatment of the doctrine. I will elucidate four aspects of Likeness to God as found in Plotinus' treatises on virtue, dialectic, happiness, and beauty, and will further connect Plotinus' views to the Platonic dialogues from which they seem to derive. In this way, I hope to show that Plotinus offers a much greater contribution to an understanding of Likeness to God, the *telos* of the Platonic philosophy, than is often recognized.

71; Daniel C. Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44 (2004): 241-60; David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," in *Oxford Readings in Philosophy, Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, ed. Gail Fine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 309-328. Sedley cites only three more that he is aware of, bringing the count of recent studies dedicated to the theme of Likeness to God to only seven.

[4] Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 309.

[5] *Theaetetus* 176b. My translation. All Greek of Plato comes from Perseus Digital Library Project, ed. Gregory R. Crane, last updated January 12, 2011 (updated daily)*, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.

[6] Annas lists studies on Plato's general ethical philosophy in which Likeness to God is ignored completely. See footnote 7 in Annas, "Becoming Like God," 53.

[7] For the argument see especially Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 309-328.

[8][8] See Anderson, "Purification," 79-81; Annas, "Becoming Like God," 67-71; Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca," 241; Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 322-324. Only Anderson and Sedley seem to read Plotinus' interpretation favorably, but Anderson gives only a short and broad overview of Plotinus' thought in relation to unification and likeness to the divine, while Sedley limits Plotinus' treatment of the idea to *Enneads* 1.2.

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Plotinus is commonly characterized as a mystic, often more religious than philosophical.[9] Indeed, Porphyry tells us in his short biography of Plotinus that he lived and taught under divine direction and supervision, and achieved a mystical state of union with God four times during the period of their acquaintance.[10] Even so, it would be a mistake to think this lofty mysticism, this "intoxication" of Divine Union,[11] the extent of Plotinus' commitment to divinization (θέωσις). We see throughout the *Enneads* that to become like God, one must first learn how to be human. And to be properly human, of course, one must display the virtues.

In his treatise on virtue, Plotinus presents an account of the virtues that are specific to human beings. Nevertheless, the *goal* of human virtue is to become immortal and divine. "Our concern," he says, "is not merely to be sinless, but to be God (θέον εἶναι)."[12] What, then, as an ethical enterprise, does it mean to become God? Or in Plato's phrasing, how does one become as God-like as possible for a human being? Answering this query is Plotinus' primary task in "The Virtues." But what has prompted the question in the first place?

As is proper for a good Platonist, Plotinus takes his cue from the Master himself, drawing directly from the *Theaetetus*. He begins the treatise with quotations from Plato's dialogue:

> Since Evil is here, 'haunting this world by necessary law', and it is the Soul's design to escape from Evil, we must escape hence. But what is this escape? 'In attaining likeness to God,' we read. And this is explained as 'becoming just and holy, living by wisdom', the entire nature grounded in virtue.[13]

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[9] For a particularly elaborate example of this characterization, see Lloyd P. Gerson, "Philosophy of Religion" in *Plotinus* (New York, NY: Rutledge, 1994), 203-224.

[10] Porphyry, "Life of Plotinus," §23.

[11] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1992), VI.7.35. All citations of Plotinus' *Enneads* refer to this volume, except where otherwise noted.

[12] *Enneads*, I.2.6.

[13] *Enneads*, I.2.1.

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First and foremost, then, Likeness to God consists of an escape from evil (τὰ κακά), which

Plotinus defines as vicious attachment to the crude material world.[14] In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates

exhorts his interlocutor to such an escape in response to his expressed wish that there would be

less evil in the world:

> But it is not possible, Theodorus, that evil should be destroyed—for there must
> always be something opposed to the good; nor is it possible that it should have its
> seat in heaven. But it must inevitably haunt human life, and prowl about the earth.
> That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and
> escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God
> when he becomes just and pure, with understanding.[15]

What could this flight from earthly life have to do with virtue, by which one learns to live as a

man among men? How can one become like God while bound to human nature?

In response to these questions Plotinus distinguishes between two types of virtue, which

correspond to the two distinct components or aspects of human nature. First, there are the civic

virtues (πολιτικὰς ἀρέτας), which "are a principle of order and beauty in us as long as we remain

passing our life here."[16] These social virtues regulate and maintain the composite body-soul that

lives and acts in the physical world, to which belong passions, pleasures, and pains. But the civic

virtues do not suffice for Likeness, for even the man who has perfected them essentially remains

within "this world's ways and things."[17] Rather, one is truly brought to Likeness by the

purificatory virtues (καθάρσεις). These superior virtues are attributed to the higher soul, which

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[14] See especially *Enneads* I.8.6, in which Plotinus explains evil in the context of *Theaetetus* 176a-b.

[15] Plato, "Theaetetus," in *Complete Works*, trans. M.J. Levitt, rev. Myles Burnyeat, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 1997), 176a-b. All citations of Plato's dialogues refer to this volume, except where otherwise noted.

[16] *Enneads*, I.2.2.

[17] *Enneads*, I.2.3.

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has "thrown off" the body's passions.[18] Plotinus identifies this pure intellectual soul as the veritable self, one's true identity:

> The true man is the other, going pure of body, natively endowed with the virtues which belong to the Intellectual-Activity, virtues whose seat is the Separate Soul, the Soul which even in its dwelling here may be kept apart.[19]

According to Plotinian psychology, above or within the physical body, the *apparent* man, "there is the pure soul: the inner, spiritual man, whose proper activity is thinking, or more precisely contemplating God."[20] It is this true man, identified with the soul, who becomes like God by the process of purification.

Purification (κάθαρσις) is an indispensable component of Platonic ethics, which Plotinus affirms often in the *Enneads*. The most candid source of the doctrine is the *Phaedo*, in which we find the original distinction between civic and purificatory virtues, and Socrates' insistence that purification is essential to proper philosophy:

> While we live, we shall be closest to knowledge if we refrain as much as possible from association with the body and do not join with it more than we must, if we are not infected with its nature but purify ourselves from it until the god frees us…It is only those who practice philosophy in the right way who want to free the soul.[21]

This "freeing from the foolishness of the body" (ἀπαλλαττόμενοι τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἀφροσύνης)[22] is the project of purification, and the basis for Socrates' famous characterization of philosophy as training for death.[23] Understanding the *Phaedo* in this context, it is apparent that purification just is the process of becoming like God. Julia Annas notes that in the *Phaedo* we

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[18] Ibid.
[19] *Enneads*, I.1.10.
[20] Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (Chicago, Il: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 69.
[21] *Phaedo* 67a (trans. G.M.A. Grube).
[22] *Phaedo* 67a. My translation.
[23] *Phaedo* 67e.

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find "a real similarity with the idea in the *Theaetetus* digression, that true virtue is a flight from, and a getting-rid of, the mix of good and evil in the world, toward another kind of state."[24] Also in the *Phaedo* Plotinus seems to find support for the ancient view that Likeness to God and purification are the *telos* of proper philosophy: Socrates goes so far as to say that the old Bacchants, whose religion was generally considered to be inferior to philosophy, are actually the ones "who have practiced philosophy correctly" (πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς),[25] for they understood, he says, that "whoever arrives in the underworld uninitiated and unsanctified will wallow in the mire, whereas he who arrives there purified and initiated will dwell with the gods."[26] According to Socrates, what ultimately matters, what has been the purpose of his entire life and the only true goal of philosophy, is to be counted among those who identify with the divine.[27]

Generally, studies of Plotinus' Likeness to God doctrine have been limited to his treatise on virtue, in which, admittedly, the phrase is most often, and perhaps most intentionally used. Plotinus' use of direct quotations from the well-known *Theaetetus* digression has likely contributed to this restricted understanding of Plotinus' treatment of the concept. As I will go on now to show, Likeness to God is for Plotinus the principle not only of virtue, but also of dialectic, happiness, and beauty. It seems likely too that this was not his innovation—Plotinus extended Likeness to God beyond virtue because he found it so extended in Plato's dialogues. Before moving on to dialectic, however, it is necessary to show the sort of misinterpretation and

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[24] Annas, *"*Becoming Like God," 62.
[25] *Phaedo* 69d. My translation.
[26] *Phaedo* 69c-d.
[27] "And I, to the best of my ability, left nothing undone in my life, but was eager in every way to become one of those [who dwell with the gods]." (ὧν δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ κατά γε τὸ δυνατὸν οὐδὲν ἀπέλιπον ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἀλλὰ παντὶ τρόπῳ προυθυμήθην γενέσθαι). *Phaedo* 69d. My translation.

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misrepresentation that takes place when Plotinus' account of Likeness and purification is limited only to virtue.

In a recent essay, Daniel C. Russell defends Likeness to God as a legitimate ethical concept in Plato's dialogues against those who have ignored or dismissed it in order to pursue more "down-to-earth" ideas about virtue.[28] Drawing from the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*, Russell argues that Plato's Likeness to God is not an escapist ideal, as the *Theaetetus* passage makes it seem, but primarily promotes rational activity in the world—Likeness to God, too, is down-to-earth. Russell briefly contrasts his rationalistic conception with Plotinus' overtly spiritual perspective on the idea, which has made Plato's Likeness to God seem "too otherworldly to be of much relevance to us."[29] Thus, Russell blames Plotinus for causing us rational and forward-thinking moderns to dismiss Likeness to God as a component of Plato's ethics.

I have two objections to Russell. First, his dismissal of Plotinus, and indeed his entire argument, rests on the assumption that the "rational-ethical" and the "spiritual" are essentially opposed to one another. Russell attempts to demonstrate the legitimacy of Likeness to God while maintaining Plato's respectability among contemporary scholars by arguing that it is a rational-ethical concept, and not a spiritual or mystical one, which, he says, "cannot even get on the table for our serious consideration."[30] Russell does not attempt to justify this opposition or his dismissal of anything he deems too spiritual, nor does he hint that these assumptions can be found in Plato's dialogues. As a starting point for interpretation, therefore, it is entirely

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[28] Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca," 242.
[29] Ibid, 241.
[30] Ibid, 260. Also: "Our greatest obstacle to understanding likeness to God is the natural assumption that we already know what it means—that it is a spiritual ideal, *rather than* an ethical one," and, "[T]he moral force of becoming like God is not so much that doing so is a way of preparing for an afterlife as it is that doing so constitutes the fulfillment of our nature and our full maturity as rational agents" (246, 260). My emphasis.

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unfounded. Second, Russell has clearly made the same mistake that he is defending Plato

against: he has presumed that Plotinus' concept of Likeness to God neglects the rational aspect

before really understanding it. Throughout the *Enneads*, Plotinus refers to reason as a divine

principle in man, which guides the philosopher toward the good and true. Even in his treatise on

virtue, the main text in which Plotinus explicates Likeness to God, he clearly asserts that the

soul's proper function is to rule over the body with reason, keeping the passions and affections in

check. The soul, purified and thoroughly disengaged, reaches a state of *rational* tranquility:

> There will be no battling in the Soul: the mere intervention of Reason is enough:
> the lower nature will stand in such awe of Reason that for any slightest movement
> it has made it will grieve, and censure its own weakness, in not having kept low
> and still in the presence of its lord.[31]

Interestingly enough, the political language that Plotinus uses here to describe reason as an

authority in the soul is directly reminiscent of the Platonic dialogues to which Russell refers

when attempting to remove the taint of hyper-spirituality from Plato's Likeness to God doctrine:

in the *Philebus*, Socrates says that reason "is forever the ruler over the universe;"[32] in the

Timaeus, reason is called the most sovereign part of our soul, and is made to rule over man's

mortal aspect.[33] No doubt, Plotinus' conception of Likeness to God is spiritual, but he also

emphasizes its rational aspect whenever necessary. For Plotinus, man's good is found in God,

but it is also "the activity of life according to his nature."[34] The opposition between the spiritual

and rational-ethical was clearly not one that Plotinus recognized, probably because he did not

find it in the Platonic dialogues from which he worked. Contra Russell, Plotinus' account

considers reason preeminent in man's efforts towards the realization of his end, which will

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[31] *Enneads* I.2.5.
[32] *Philebus* 30d (trans. Dorothea Frede).
[33] *Timaeus* 47b-c, 90a (trans. Donald J. Zeyl).
[34] See *Enneads* I.7.1. My translation.

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become even more evident as we gain a more comprehensive understanding of Plotinus'

conception of Likeness to God.

Reason plays its most important role in the third tractate of the First Ennead, entitled

"Dialectic," which, in MacKenna's first edition, is supplemented by a second title: "The Upward

Way."[35] On the surface, dialectic is the sort of logical investigation that we find employed in

most of Plato's dialogues. True dialectic, however, goes deeper: it is the intellectual journey by

which one is led up into the intelligible realm, and ultimately to the Primal-Principle, the One,

God.[36] Proper reason, Plotinus explains, acts as a sort of initiation for dialectic, leading the lover

of wisdom to recognize his true end; he must commit this rational act before he is worthy to

begin the journey. Along the way, reason provides "the power of pronouncing with final truth

upon the nature and relation of things"—the ability to distinguish Being from non-Being, Good

from not-Good.[37] Eventually, the philosopher's intellect reaches the sublime height of the

upward way: contemplation of the First Principle:

> Now it rests: caught up in the tranquility of that sphere, it is no longer busy about
> many things: it has arrived at Unity and it contemplates: it leaves to another
> science all that coil of premises and conclusions called the art of reasoning.[38]

Logical systems, which deal with words and propositions, are mere preliminaries to true

dialectic, and are left behind when one comes to contemplation of universals:

> Dialectic does not consist of bare theories and rules: it deals with
> verities…Dialectic, that is to say, has no knowledge of propositions—collections
> of words—but it knows the truth.[39]

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[35] Throughout the treatise, Plotinus describes dialectic as a kind of "leading up" (ἀναγωγή).
[36] *Enneads* I.3.1.
[37] *Enneads* I.3.4.
[38] Ibid.
[39] *Enneads* I.3.5.

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So far Plotinus has only described dialectic as the way to approach God intellectually, but in the last section of the treatise he connects dialectic to virtue, especially that virtue most closely associated with the divine: *sophia*. Wisdom, which the philosopher attains through dialectic, supplements the natural virtues and "perfects the character" (τελειοῖ τὰ ἤθη).[40] Dialectic, therefore, has a moral end as well as an intellectual one, and both consist of an approach and likeness to God.[41]

Throughout his treatise on dialectic, Plotinus draws from Plato's *Republic*. Here, Socrates describes dialectic as the journey out of the cave's obscurity and into the pure light of the intelligible realm. "Dialectic," says Socrates, "is the only inquiry that travels this road, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to the first principle itself," which is the divine form of the Good (αὐτή ἀρχή; τό ἴδεα ἀγαθοῦ).[42] At this point the philosopher reaches "a rest from the road, so to speak, and an end of journeying."[43] One need not, and indeed cannot go any further: the goal has been attained; the end and source of knowledge has been reached. It is not difficult to imagine dialectic as a sort of intellectual purification: the philosopher takes to the arduous road that leads up and out of the dark world of the senses, into the blinding light and pure air of the divine Intellectual Principle, "just as some are said to have gone up from Hades to the gods."[44] After the eye of the soul has shed its fondness for the shadows of the material realm and become accustomed to seeing things as they truly are, it strains to behold the source itself: the First

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[40] *Enneads* I.3.6. My translation.
[41] It is true that Plotinus does not use the phrase "likeness to God" in "Dialectic"(I.3). Nevertheless, there is a undeniable connection between what the philosopher becomes when he lives virtuously and what he achieves when he engages in dialectic, namely, a realization of the divine in himself, and therefore a likeness and approach to God.
[42] *Republic* VII 532a-533d (trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve).
[43] *Republic* VII 532e.
[44] *Republic* VII 521c.

Principle, the Good.[45] Plato too connects contemplation of the Good, achieved through dialectic, to virtuous action: "It is necessary for anyone who is going to act wisely either in public or in private to behold this [first principle, the Good]" (δεῖ ταύτην ἰδεῖν τὸν μέλλοντα ἐμφρόνως πράξειν ἢ ἰδίᾳ ἢ δημοσίᾳ).[46] In the *Sophist* too, the interlocutors agree that a genuine dialectician is "one who practices philosophy purely and justly" (τῷ καθαρῶς τε καὶ δικαίως φιλοσοφοῦντι).[47] This lover of wisdom draws so near the brightness of the divine that the eyes of most people's souls have difficulty distinguishing him.[48] We can see in all of this how and why Plotinus implemented Platonic dialectic into his Likeness to God doctrine: the philosopher comes to know divine truth, and thereby ascends (ἀναβαίνειν) toward the Good by both his intellect and his virtue.

Immediately following "Dialectic" is Plotinus' treatise on happiness (εὐδαιμονία),[49] in which we find another aspect of the Likeness to God doctrine. Naturally, Plotinus is working within the eudaimonist tradition of ethics, epitomized by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[50] Plotinus, however, is not without his peculiarities. He explicitly denies, for example, the Aristotelian notion that a man who suffers miseries too great cannot be considered happy.[51] In

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[45] *Republic* VII 517b-c.
[46] *Republic* VII 517c. My translation.
[47] *Sophist* 253e. My translation. See also 230b – 231b for dialectic of refutation as intellectual purification.
[48] *Sophist* 254a (trans. Nicholas P. White).
[49] While 'happiness' is a famously clumsy way to translate εὐδαιμονία, it is the most common, and the most convenient for my purposes. Readers should be aware that our conventional use of the word "happiness" does not capture the full sense of the Greek concept of εὐδαιμονία—a problem that Armstrong tries to alleviate by translating "well-being." For a concise account of the differences between happiness and εὐδαιμονία, see Mark Anderson, "Happiness and Eudaimonia," in *Pure: Modernity, Philosophy, and the One* (San Rafael, CA: Sophia Perennis, 2009), 5-10.
[50] See especially Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I – II.
[51] Plotinus, *The Enneads* I.4.5, 6. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 10, 1100a. We must be cautious, however, when considering Aristotle's relation to the Platonists; the contrasts may not

Plotinus' view, even the woeful King of Troy might have been εὐδαίμων, for man's happiness

does not consist merely of the "heaping together" (or in Priam's case the loss) of particular

goods, but the attainment of the one Supreme Good, God.[52] Everyone possesses happiness either

potentially or actually, but the latter, the man who is "in possession of this true reality, who is

this perfection realized, who has passed over into *actual identification with it*"[53] has attained

εὐδαιμονία. Here we begin to see the Likeness doctrine come into view:

> To the man in this [happy] state, what is the good? *He himself by what he is and has*. And the author and principle of what he is and holds is the Supreme (the One), which within Itself is the Good but manifests Itself within the human being…[54]

That Plotinus says anyone could be his own good seems strange, until he clarifies that it is the

divinity within man that is the principle of his happiness. Here too Plotinian psychology plays an

important role. The truly happy man identifies with his soul, and requires nothing outside of

himself: no material necessity or bodily ailment can tear him away from the Good that he has

attained.[55] His true self is complete and perfect inasmuch as it is God-like. Plotinus explicitly

connects the Likeness doctrine to the Platonic understanding of happiness: "Plato rightly taught

that he who is to be wise and to possess happiness draws his good from the Supreme, fixing his

gaze on That, becoming like to That, living by That."[56]

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be as stark as is often supposed. Aristotle too suggests something like Likeness to God: "But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in vol. 2 of *Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Burnet, Revised Oxford Translation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1861.

[52] *Enneads* I.4.6

[53] *Enneads* I.4.4. My emphasis.

[54] Ibid. My emphasis.

[55] *Enneads* I.4.4, 6, 12.

[56] *Enneads* I.4.16.

12

Although generally more known as its grand cosmological theorizing than its sparse ethical claims, Plato's *Timaeus* seems to inform much of what Plotinus says about happiness. In his speech, Timaeus describes the creator god (δημιουργός) fashioning man as a mixture of divine and mortal parts, but man's divine and rational soul is what really distinguishes him from the other mortal creatures.[57] This is perhaps why Plotinus claims that all men have at least the potential to attain the Good: the divine is within all; one need only actualize it. Timaeus claims that if man's divine nature governs well the turbulent passions of his irrational part, he will be just and good, and it will be his destiny to live a life of happiness.[58] Timaeus' account of the *kosmos* culminates in a grand declaration concerning man's moral *telos*:

> If a man has seriously devoted himself to the love of learning and to true wisdom, if he has exercised these aspects of himself above all, then there is absolutely no way that his thoughts can fail to become immortal and divine, should truth come within his grasp. And to the extent that human nature can partake of immortality, *he can in no way fail to achieve this*: constantly caring for his divine part as he does, keeping well-ordered the guiding spirit that lives within him [reason], *he must indeed be supremely happy*.[59]

In the *Timaeus*, as in the *Enneads*, man cannot fail to attain happiness as long as he lives according to the divine that is within him. Because the Demiurge "wanted everything to be as good and like himself as was possible,"[60] he gave man the ability to discern the supremely rational movements of the divine heavenly bodies, and by imitating them, "stabilize the straying revolutions" within himself.[61] Becoming like these visible gods and their creator, he will he

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[57] *Timaeus* 41d – 42c.
[58] Ibid.
[59] *Timaeus* 90b-c. My emphasis.
[60] *Timaeus* 30e.
[61] *Timaeus* 47c.

attain "that most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore."[62]

Only a divine life such as this is worthy to be called εὐδαιμονία.

The final aspect of Likeness to God is found in Plotinus' treatise on beauty (τό κάλος). For Plotinus, beauty is found in all things shaped and ordered by divine Reason (θεῖος λόγος).[63] Objects most worthy to be called beautiful are sights not for the eyes, but for the soul: "the splendour of virtue…the face of Justice and Moral-Wisdom beautiful beyond the beauty of Evening and Dawn."[64] However, it is not for the soul merely to behold beauty, but to *become* beautiful through virtue and intellection. For God, the Supreme Beauty, "fashions Its lovers to Beauty and makes them also worthy of love."[65] This soul-fashioning Plotinus likens to the art of sculpting:

> Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smoothes there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring to light all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty and never cease chiselling your statue, until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness surely established in the stainless shrine.[66]

In this passage, we once again encounter the doctrine of purification. If the soul's vision is dimmed by vice, if its impurity has obscured the brightness of truth and virtue, it will not see the Supreme Beauty. Only when the soul is rectified and all uncleanness removed will it attain the vision of Beauty:

> And it is just to say that in the Soul's becoming a good and beautiful thing is its becoming like to God, for from the Divine comes all the Beauty and all the Good

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[62] *Timaeus* 90d.
[63] *Enneads* I.6.2.
[64] *Enneads* I.6.4.
[65] *Enneads* I.6.7.
[66] *Enneads* I.6.9.

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in beings…Therefore, first let each become godlike and each beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty.[67]

Plotinus is explicit on this point: the highest form of beauty for man is Likeness to God; by Likeness he both beholds Beauty and becomes beautiful himself.

In the background of Plotinus' treatise on beauty is Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*. In the dialogue, Socrates delivers a speech about divine Love (ἔρως), in the course of which he recalls what he was taught by Diotima, a wise woman from Mantinea. Diotima claims that the purpose of love is to give birth to beauty, a principle that is most obvious in human love and the act of procreation. "The mortal nature," she says, "seeks as much as possible to live forever and be immortal" (ἡ θνητὴ φύσις ζητεῖ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀεί τε εἶναι καὶ ἀθάνατος),[68] and this drives us to procreate. But far more valuable than the love of the body is love of the soul, which gives birth to the soul's beauty: "wisdom and the rest of virtue."[69] The true lover of wisdom, beholding beautiful things in the correct order, is led from one beauty to another, always upwards until he comes to know the end and perfection of beauty itself (αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἔστι καλόν).[70] To the banquet guests, Socrates dispenses Diotima's wisdom:

> "But how would it be, in our view," she said, "if someone got to see the Beautiful itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality, but if he could see the divine Beauty itself in its one form? ...In that life alone, when he looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen—only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he's in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true Beauty)."[71]

We see here again that the beauty of the soul is none other than virtue, the instrument of purification. The philosopher's goal, according to both Diotima and Plotinus, is to attain the

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[67] *Enneads* I.6.6, I.6.9.
[68] *Symposium* 207d
[69] *Symposium* 209a.
[70] *Symposium* 211c-d.
[71] *Symposium* 211e-212a.

vision of the divine and supreme Beauty through a process of purification, by which he himself becomes a vision of beauty. Before loud applause, Socrates concludes Diotima's speech: "The love of the gods belongs to anyone who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it, and if any human being could become immortal (γενέσθαι…ἀθανάτῳ), it would be he."[72]

It should by now be obvious that Plotinus' conception of Likeness to God has considerable depth and dimension—much more than he is usually given credit for. It should also be clear that Plotinus has not simply abstracted a few of the more fantastic statements from Plato's dialogues and embellished them to the point of inventing a new hyper-spiritualized philosophy. No one doubts that virtue, dialectic, happiness, and beauty are among the most important ideas within the Platonic dialogues, and Plato, as we have seen, has described each as having its perfection and completion in the realm of the divine. These divine standards, too, are meant to act as guides for living a good life here on earth. Both Plotinus and Plato are explicit on this point: "becoming like God as much as possible" is a goal for this life, and has significance not merely for the sage or mystic, but for every ethical human being who seeks to live life to its greatest capacity. There are, no doubt, innumerable possibilities when it comes to interpreting Plato's dialogues, and it would be naïve for anyone to claim that a particular idea represents an unshakable doctrine of Plato's personal philosophy. What I do claim, though, is that Plotinus' understanding of the Platonic philosophy and its *telos*, besides being greatly attested in antiquity, embraces the ideas found in the dialogues in a perspicacious and insightful way, and absolutely deserves to be reckoned with.

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[72] *Symposium* 212a.

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17

Aristotle, Appropriateness and Appropriation: Getting the Foundations of Virtue Ethics Right

The last century has seen a revival of interest in virtue ethics, with it becoming a third major approach to contemporary ethics alongside consequentialism and deontology. While it is possible to construct a theory of virtue ethics without relying on historical texts, most virtue ethicists ground their work historically, and make particular use of Aristotle's account of virtue from the *Nichomachean Ethics*.

A very common charge against Aristotle's virtue ethics is that it is selfish or egoistic, and much work is done in contemporary philosophy to ameliorate Aristotle's theory on this basis. While, *prima facie*, the charge of egoism does not seem wholly untrue, upon closer examination these accusations are misplaced for two reasons. Firstly, because they are based on an interpretation of his claims which is isolated from the rest of his thought, and, secondly, because they are based on a modern notion of the self. Here I specifically challenge Thomas Hurka's well-known and oft-accepted criticisms of Aristotle and his framing of Aristotle's ethical theory as egoistic.

I.

There are at least three hallmark objections that are often cited against Aristotle's ethics, those of Immanuel Kant, Thomas Nagel and H.A. Prichard. Kant protested that "the principle of one's happiness is most objectionable," for making a man happy is much

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different than making him good and prudent.[1] Prichard claimed that Aristotle's system

gave the impression that "our only business in life was self-improvement."[2] Nagel

objected on the grounds that others in their own right (and not only as other selves) were

not given enough importance in Aristotle's theory.[3]

Three of Aristotle's passages in particular seem to excite the most frequent

criticism of the kind above. The first is the question Aristotle raises in Book VIII of

whether "friends really wish for their friends the greatest goods" (*NE* 1159a5-6).

Aristotle answers that we can wish for friends what is good for them only so long as they

stay themselves, for example, it makes no sense to wish them to be gods. He concludes,

however, by stating that although we wish goods for our friends we wish "perhaps not *all*

the greatest goods; for it is for himself most of all that each man wishes what is good"

(*NE* 1159a12).

The second is his claim that "a man should be a lover of self" (*NE* 1169b1) in the

best way, and, in being such, "awards himself what is finest and best of all, and gratifies

the most controlling part of himself, obeying it in everything" (*NE* 1168b29-31).

The third is the claim that it is also possible for one "to sacrifice actions to his

friend, since it may be finer to be responsible for his friend's doing the action than to do it

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1 Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, third edition, translated by
James Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 4:442, as cited in Christopher Toner's
"The Self-Centredness Objection to Virtue Ethics".

2 Prichard, H.A. "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" in *Twentieth Century
Ethical Theory*, Steven Cahn and Joram Haber (eds.), (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall,
1995), 37-47, at 45-46, as cited in Toner's "The Self-Centredness Objection to Virtue
Ethics".

3 Nagel, Thomas. *The View From Nowhere*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), as cited in Toner's
"The Self-Centredness Objection to Virtue Ethics".

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himself. In everything praise-worthy, then, the excellent person awards himself what is fine" (*NE* 1169a33-35).

It is the third that seems to provoke the most, and it is with it, and its development by Hurka, that I shall be primarily concerned. However, all three passages are important and, by conclusion, I hope the light in which they are commonly viewed will be readjusted.

In his book *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, Hurka suggests that Aristotle's virtuous person is primarily, or even wholly, concerned with his own virtuous activity (Hurka 2001, p. 139). He supports this by citing several examples in Aristotle concerning the pleasure a virtuous person gets from doing virtuous activity, and conversely finding no mention of the virtuous person being pleased by the consequences of their virtuous activity (Hurka 2001, p. 139). This tendency, that of a person being concerned only with whether he himself is acting virtuously, Hurka equates with self-indulgence (Hurka 2001, p. 139).

Developing this view, Hurka recounts for us Aristotle's *megalopsychos* or proud person. This *megalopsychos* holds all the virtues and is completely good, and so it is appropriate that he should feel the pleasure that comes with these states (Hurka 2001, p. 139). Hurka feels, however, that the type of pleasure the *megalopsychos* enjoys is objectionable. Hurka claims that the *megalopsychos* is competitive, and cares a great deal about being more virtuous than other people (Hurka 2001, p. 140). When done a favour, he does a greater favour in return, and likes to have people in his debt (Hurka 2001, p. 140). A sort of inverse Scrooge, he likes to confer benefits, but sees receiving them as a mark of inferiority (Hurka 2001, p. 140). The *megalopsychos* is extremely competitive -- competitive to the point of possibly being jealous of others' virtue (Hurka

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2001, p. 14). This excess of concern about one's moral virtue is in turn a vice (Hurka 2001, p. 140).

Hurka objects that this competitiveness and non-consequentialism leads to the agent caring more about the status of his own virtue than its effects (Hurka 2001, p. 140). He reasons that the *megalopsychos* will not do small virtuous acts, like "opening a door or helping start a car" even when there is need for them, because he is concerned only with great virtuous acts (Hurka 2001, p. 140). The *megalopsychos*'s principal concern is how his actions contribute to and reflect on his "standing" in moral virtue (Hurka 2001, p. 140). At closer examination we see Aristotle's *megalopsychos* is really a self-indulgent megalomaniac in disguise.

II.

Criticisms of Aristotelian ethics may thus be stated as follows: i) the goal of happiness is different than the goal of the good, ii) the virtuous person is highly competitive, iii) the virtuous person is not concerned with the consequences of his actions, iv) the virtuous person is primarily concerned with his own moral "standing," and v) the virtuous person becomes obsessed with his own virtue to the point of it becoming a vice.

Some of these objections are simpler to answer to than others, but I think it is possible to show that all the material necessary for a defence is already within Aristotle's system. I will try to sketch a more comprehensive picture of some of the essential features in Aristotle's theory that make it fundamentally incompatible with the type of

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picture Hurka draws. First, however, I shall begin by attempting to answer each objection individually with the support of textual evidence.

i)

The first point, that happiness is different from the good, is one that Kant takes seriously. Aristotle, however, does not make the distinction in the same way, and I think this is important to remember. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explicitly states that "happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue" (*NE* 1102a5). As such, happiness is identified with virtue and the good (Tessitore 1996, p. 102) -- it does not compete with them. Indeed, Aristotle claims that it is impossible for even an *akratic* (as opposed to a really wicked) soul to be truly happy exactly because it is not virtuous (*EE* 1240b23-24).

Secondly, the objection that the virtuous person is highly competitive is not entirely without warrant, for Aristotle does have several passages which refer to what seems like more than healthy sportsmanship, e.g. "if someone is always eager to excel everyone in doing just or temperate actions or any others expressing the virtues, and in general always gains for himself what is fine, no one will call him a self-lover or blame him for it" (*NE* 1168b25-28). However, Aristotle also feels that competition is an important way to inspire agents to greater virtue, and thus sees it as instrumental and good only so long as it is in the service of virtue. It is also worth remembering that this competition is virtuous. Even if we grant that virtuous competition entails one man seeking to be more virtuous than the next, the consequences of virtuous competition will necessarily be good, e.g. two good men competing to help the most will face the

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competition of one another, but regardless of who excels, their actions will both be helpful actions.

The third objection, that the virtuous person is not concerned with the consequences of his actions, could perhaps justifiably be taken to be a token of egoism. I think this particular objection of Hurka's must be seen in the light of his own ethical framework. Throughout his book, Hurka is concerned with describing and comparing the "mathematical structure" of virtue and other good things. One notion he frequently refers to and uses for equations is that of "units of pleasure"[4] or "units of value" (Hurka 2001, p. 126). It is with this in mind that Hurka criticises Aristotelian ethics for being concerned with x units of their own pleasure whilst disregarding how many units of pleasure might be created for someone else by the choice of a different action (Hurka 2008, Universtiy of Manitoba lecture).

Moreover, Aristotle claims that the unduly humble stand back from undertaking action precisely because they deem themselves less worthy than they really are (*NE* 1125a26-28). Vain people are unhelpful as well. They attempt to do what they are not worthy of and publicise their strokes of good fortune as if they were meritorious (*NE* 1125a29-32). Rather it is those who have accurate knowledge of their abilities who can pursue the right undertakings in an effective way, such as proud people. Indeed, proud people, being honourable on a "grand scale," are in fact the most effective when something practical needs to be accomplished. Perhaps they do not think in utilitarian

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4 "Units of pleasure" was the alternate term Hurka used in his talk at the University of Manitoba. 2008.

terms before acting, but it seems that they are in fact the ones who would effect the best consequences.

The fourth objection of the agent being primarily concerned with his moral "standing" is also, I think, an imported one. The closest Aristotle himself comes to speaking about morality in terms of a "standing" is when he discusses the formation of good and bad men. Aristotle believes that we can become the type of people we are going to be by checking ourselves with our reason, trying to reach a mean in our actions, and consistently doing so (*NE* 1103b14-17). Once we have done this over a period of time, however, our characters become, so to speak, solidified. Then, we can no longer mould ourselves as was once possible. At this point, we have formed a moral character from whence forth it will be easier or more difficult for us to continue being virtuous (*NE* 1104a33-35).

In this sense, we could perhaps be said to have a moral "standing", though it seems undesirable and awkward to put it so. Yet this is not the sense with which Hurka seems to employ it. Rather, his "standing" seems to imply something akin to a quantifiable level or rank in an objective measuring system, which is entirely in line with his notion of "units of value."

However, the notion of there being an objective "standing" quantifiable in terms of "units" is an absurd one in Aristotle. To begin with, there are virtues which not all agents even have access to attaining, such as magnificence, viz. well-transacted (giving and taking) money for those with large sums (*NE* 1107b17). If one cannot achieve magnificence only because they do not have large sums, perhaps they may not be able to fulfill this requirement of virtuosity, but, then again, the potentially magnificent man will

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not be able to accomplish the mean of liberality, viz. well-transacted money for those with small sums (*NE* 1107b17-18). Although by circumstance some might be barred from achieving certain virtues and thus be able to accumulate less overall gross virtue, neither the tools nor the spirit to calculate virtue in this way are present in Aristotle.

Rather, as I am about to discuss, the proud become proud by doing right action and judging it well, and, as I have already discussed, one effect of their being aware of their virtuosity is their appropriately and effectively undertaking good action.

The fifth objection, that the *megalopsychos* might become obsessed with his own virtue to the point of it becoming a vice, seems to imply that great virtue, Aristotelian style, is only a small step away from general vice.

Again, this makes little sense if we follow Aristotle closely. The process to becoming either virtuous or vicious is one of constant active habit. As previously discussed, it is only after repetition of a certain type of activity that a person's character will begin to take shape in an effective way, be it good or base. Therefore, it might be easier to do virtuous acts if you have already become generally virtuous, but this does not mean you are automatically virtuous. Just as events bringing good and bad fortune may occur at any stage, so is it possible for us to act virtuously or viciously at any stage. However, Aristotle also thinks that if one has had a relatively virtuous and good life, and is struck with bad fortune, it will not ruin their life, for they will know how to act in the face of misfortune, and they will have the sum of their virtuous life supportively behind them.

Similarly, a person who has practised virtuous activity to the extent that they have become a virtuous person in character, and is also a megalopsychos (in the sense that they

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practice all the virtues (Hurka 2001, p. 139) and seek excellence in their own behaviour) is a poor candidate for great vice. Virtuous actions, if truly virtuous, do not have the "flip side" of vice that Hurka seems to think they do. To me this seems like a more complex psychological account of motivation than Aristotle would endorse (for him, if the virtuous man was shown to really be vicious, he would not have been truly virtuous in the first place).

Lastly, Aristotle specifically defines the self-indulgent man as one who "craves for all pleasant things or those that are most pleasant, and is led by his appetite to choose these at the cost of everything else; hence he is pained both when he fails to get them, and when he is merely craving for them" (*NE* 119a1-4). If we recall two of his other claims, that pleasure is an effect of happiness which itself is "an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue" (*NE* 1102a5), and that a divided soul, e.g. one led by its appetite to pursue something at the cost of all else, will necessarily suffer (*EE* 1240b23-24), it seems a very strange thing to say that a truly virtuous man is self-indulgent. In fact, I think it is contradictory.

For all of these reasons, I think it is now clear why the *megalopsychos* is not conflatable with the self-indulgent man.

ii)

I think an even stronger case may be made, however, against the egoist objection by examining essential features of Aristotle's thought. I say stronger because I think that this defence not only applies to Hurka, but also responds more broadly to many if not most of the egoist objections Aristotle faces.

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Christopher Toner, in his article "The Self-Centredness Objection to Virtue Ethics," attempts to defend Aristotle in light of John Hare's criticism. I believe his defence to Hare is also a good starting point for a more comprehensive defence.

Toner believes that *eudaimonia* consists in "standing in the right relation to… objects according to their degrees and kinds of goodness" (Toner 2008, p. 609). This claim seems to cohere both with Aristotle's definition of happiness as an activity of the soul (*NE* 1102a5) – an activity that involves relations, and the right relations, between its parts – and his notion of the virtuous mean. Aristotle believes that for all qualities, there exists a mean between two extremes that is ideal to attain (*NE* 1106a28-30). Generally our nature inclines us to one more than the other, and so we struggle to find a balance in the middle (*NE* 1106a32). For example, if we are inclined to be vain, we must try to be less so, but not so much so that we end up unduly humble: after all, what we are aiming at is pride (*NE* 1125a16-17). Concepts like virtue and notions about what is best do not mean most or greatest in the qualitative sense that we often use them (e.g. think of contemporary colloquial phrases like "One can never have too much of a good thing!"). Rather what Aristotle intends when he employs the notions of virtue and the best is a mean which is appropriate relative to who we are and our situation (*NE* 1106b8).

Continuing to speak about relations, Toner states that not only the virtues and their vices, and the order of our soul, are based on relations, but that human beings are also essentially relational to each other (Toner 2008, p. 610). As he reminds us, Aristotle himself says that although the final good is self-sufficient, when we speak of a self-sufficiency "we do not mean that which is sufficient for man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and

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fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship" (*NE* 1097b8-12). It would seem to follow that virtue would not mean different things for different types of relations (though it would, of course, have different instantiations). Therefore if the mean and appropriateness are what it means to be virtuous, it would follow that to be virtuous in relation to others would be to exist in appropriate relation to them.

Toner applies the concept of virtue as a mean to the example of one friend giving up something to another friend because the giving up of *x* is actually more virtuous then doing *x* (*NE* 1169a33-34). The excellent person awards himself what is "finest" (*NE* 1169a35), viz. what is best. Again, doing what is finest is not getting the quantitative most out of something, but rather doing what is appropriate. Thus the passage could be interpreted thus: as relational beings, acting finely means "standing in the right relation" to an object or to the good; thus in certain circumstances, "standing in the right relation to the good means standing aside", not in a conniving, greedy way, but because it is the best, the most appropriate, thing to do given the situation (Toner 2008, p. 610).

I think it is notable that Aristotle does not say that we should always do this, but rather that it "*may* be finer" (*NE* 1169a33 [emphasis mine]). He thinks we should act virtuously, and acting virtuously includes a strong recognition of what is appropriate. As Toner says, "I sacrifice to you a noble action, and at the same time perform the finest action that I could in the circumstances" (Toner 2008, p. 611); here the agent rewards himself what was finest given his situation, whilst his friend performs the action which is finest given *his* situation. In this way, they both act as virtuously as they could have given their own peculiar situations, and without one diminishing the virtuous act of the other.

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Toner does not believe Aristotle's ethics is self-centred in an egoistic way, by which he means "a view counseling taking one's own welfare as one's primary and overriding goal in life" (Toner 2008, p. 596). However, he still thinks that formally the theory is self-centred, and that this could be improved. Responding to Hare's comment that "attachment to others is not secondary... but is of the essence of flourishing" (Toner 2008, p. 613), Toner looks to a model from Aquinas to rectify what he sees as structural self-centredness. For Aquinas, the self does not hold centre place but is rather "a node in a web of relationships" centred on God (Toner 2008, p. 613). Toner believes a similar system at which good is in the centre, and agents are the nodes around it, is superior (Toner 2008, p. 613). Therefore, Toner tries to shift the perspective from an agent having a web of persons about him, to a web in which the agent is one of many nodes.

None of this, in my opinion, sounds overtly objectionable. However, one main premise it relies on is that Aristotle did indeed have a conception of the self which was central in the way previously described, and I am not sure this is so.

Of course, as Bernard Williams said, each person must necessarily be "fundamentally concerned with his own activity, for whose else might he directly influence?"[5] I agree with this, and in this sense agents are necessarily self-centred. (That said, for the purpose of this paper, I will follow Toner's lead and call this "self-focus" to contrast it with self-centredness as Toner uses it.) However, even if this is so, and agents are necessarily *self-focused*, it is not as clear that Aristotle assumed a self-centred (in Toner's sense) schema in the first place.

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5 Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp.68-69, as cited in Toner's "The Self-Centredness Objection to Virtue Ethics".

As Suzanne Stern-Gillet aptly points out, post-Cartesians bring a "host of un-Aristotelian assumptions and notions" to exegesis which threatens to make the process of ascertaining the meaning impossible (Stern-Gillet 1995, p. 24). Aristotle did not face the same problems about selfhood as we do (Stern-Gillet 1995, p. 18). There is no evidence of the Greeks thinking of themselves in the same sharply differentiated ways as we do, either in the form of "other minds", dualistically fragmented, or as existentially separate from our fellow humans.[6]

The body of Aristotle's work, in fact, gives the opposite impression. In *De Anima*, he speaks of us not as separate or antagonistic to nature, but rather as part of it, as the highest tier of animal creatures, as it is the soul that "is in some sense the principle of animal life" (*De an.* 402a6-9). Some of our "affections" are born of reason, but others are from the animal part of us (*De an.* 402a6-9).

In *Politics*, Aristotle compares the family and the *individual's* relation to the state to a body part's relation to the whole body (*Pol.* 1253a19-21). He states that the whole is a necessity prior to the part (*Pol.* 1253a20); the whole can survive (albeit injured) without the part, but the part cannot survive without the whole (*Pol.* 1253a23-24).

As we have already discussed, Aristotle also sees the good life as consisting of good relations amongst family, friends and community. In short, Aristotle sees us as an organic part of nature, a part which will flourish according to its cycle, and a part which is an inseparable combination of matter and form.

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6 In fact, there is evidence to the contrary, and Stern-Gillet speaks about Homeric, albeit pre-Aristotelian, notions of "privacy, uniqueness, and reflexivity" (Stern-Gillet, 16).

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The system Toner offers us, with the agent as one node amongst many, seems reasonable. However, it also seems Aristotelian. Given what we know about notions of selfhood (as we define it) in antiquity, it seems rather more likely that Aristotle did not think it necessary to unpack and make explicit the notion of self which is already implicitly figured throughout his body of work.

I said this would be a stronger defence. Really, however, it is just a closer look at Aristotle *qua* Aristotle. Any of the objections stated at the fore of this paper, including but not limited to Hurka's, can be seen differently by looking more comprehensively at Aristotle's work.

III.

Extrapolating a work from its time and place and isolating it from the web of things it was written between is a common cause of myopia. Under such vision, it is not always surprising that Aristotle receives the criticisms he does. However, when we consider his ethics in light of the notion of appropriateness and with a more organic view of the self – notions central to Aristotelian thought -- most of the objections drop off.

What *is* clear is that Aristotle's ethics may be self-focused. This is not utilitarian, but nor is it unreasonable. Aristotle may put great importance on *eudaimonia*, contentment and happiness. He may tie pleasure and good action together. This is not Kantian, but nor is it bad. He may value friends unequally. This is not Christian, nor is it Kierkegaardian; but then, again, Aristotle is neither of these.

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Aristotle's ethics is based on people as they really are and his experience of things as they really happen. He acknowledges the tensions that can arise between oneself and others, but I do not think he gives into them. Indeed, by using a realistic account of our nature as the material for his theory -- including the inevitable selfish questions – Aristotle offers us a theory which we can take seriously, one which is more practical and better suited to our real ethical queries.

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Aquinas on Essence, Existence, and Divine Simplicity – Strange but Consistent

In the third question of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas is concerned with divine simplicity. This is important for him both theologically and philosophically. It is theologically important because of the perfection of God: if God were complex then he would be composed of other things, and would be dependent on other things for his being. Connected to this is why God's simplicity is philosophically important: Aquinas has just shown (*ST,* Question 2) that God is the first cause, and it would not make sense to say that the first cause is composed of other things, since these things would be ontologically prior to the first cause. In 3.4 of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas concludes that essence and existence are identical in God, which is one essential part of Aquinas' argument for divine simplicity. This article draws on metaphysical principles enumerated in *On Being and Essence*. First I will describe the metaphysical principles. Then I will show that Aquinas' response to the first objection in this article is insufficient on most interpretations. Finally, I will argue that, on one interpretation, his response is sufficient, and that his argument regarding divine simplicity, here at least, is internally consistent.

In *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas argues for the distinction between essence and existence in order to solve the problem of universals. According to Aquinas, 'essence' is "something common to all natures thanks to which beings are placed in the different genera and species."[1] In other words, the essence is the 'whatness' of the thing, i.e. "that through which and in which the thing has existence."[2] On the

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[1] McInerny, Ralph. *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. London: Penguin, 1998. p. 31
[2] *Ibid*, p. 32.

other hand, existence points to something being in reality. So, something has existence if "an affirmative proposition can be formed of it."[3] In other words, we can think about an essence (i.e. that which makes something what it is) without thinking of it actually existing. For example, we can describe a phoenix as a fiery bird with a lifespan of 600 years, at the end of which it turns into ashes and creates a new life cycle. However, none of this speaks to whether or not the being is in reality.[4]

In *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas also speaks of the essences and existences first of complex substances, then of simple substances. Here we will only be concerned with the latter, specifically God. However, a bit of background is required that will rely on an understanding of complex substances. In complex substances (i.e. hylomorphic composites), beings with a particular essence are individuated by their matter. For example, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all possess the essence "humanity," but each individual is different because they have different designated matter. However, simple substances are precisely those without individuating matter, and so Aquinas claims that, "there are as many species [of simple substances] as there are individuals."[5] So, each simple substance is its own essence. Therefore God, being a separate substance, is his own essence.

In Part 4 of *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas makes the argument that God is his existence. This claim is centered on the following argument:[6] Whatever can be said of a thing is caused either by the "principles of its nature" (i.e. some aspect of its essence) or something external. Something's existence cannot be caused (i.e.

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[3] *Ibid*, p. 31.
[4] Kenny, Anthony. *Aquinas On Being*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002. p. 35.
[5] *SW* p. 42.
[6] *Ibid*, p. 42.

efficiently caused) by the principles of its nature, because this would be to say that the being causes itself; this is impossible, since the efficient cause must ontologically precede the effect[7], and nothing can ontologically precede itself. Therefore, everything must get its existence from something other than itself. But, if this were to apply to everything, then we would get an infinite regress. Therefore, there must be something that is its existence, and which is the first cause.[8] And, Aquinas has shown elsewhere (*ST* 2.3) that God is the first cause. Therefore God is his existence.

Thus, everything whose existence is other than its nature gets its existence from something other than itself. But, if everything's existence were separate from its nature, then there would be an infinite regress. Therefore, there must be a thing whose existence just is its nature. This way it can be the cause for the existence of everything else without being its own cause. If we accept this, then we have neither the problem of infinite regress nor the problem of something ontologically preceding itself. And, this thing must be the first cause, since otherwise something before it would either be subject to another regress or would cause itself. Since God is the first cause, the being with existence as its essence is God.

The notion that God's essence is his existence is also found in *ST* 3.4, and is necessary if Aquinas wants to hold onto divine simplicity, the topic of Question 3. For, we have seen by two separate arguments in *On Being and Essence* that God is both his essence and his existence. This could be in two ways: First, God could be

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[7] I will not describe this claim in detail here, but a brief description is in order. In *On the Eternity of the World*, Aquinas claims both that God the efficient cause of the world and also that God is outside time. This means that it is wrong to say that God temporally precedes his effects. But, he is still ontologically prior. This is why we say that the cause must ontologically precede the effect. This is not to say that, among temporal beings, it is not necessary for the cause to also temporally precede the effect – however, this claim is not needed here by Aquinas.

[8] This argument is found in SW 42-3.

both, but they could be different. This possibility would not be acceptable for

Aquinas, for it would entail that God would be composed of both his essence and

existence (i.e. two different things) and would therefore have parts. Thus, God

would not be simple. The second possibility, that for which Aquinas argues, is that

God's essence and existence are identical. This way we can say that God is both his

essence and his existence, and also that God is simple.

The first objection in Article 4 poses a significant challenge to Aquinas'

argument that God's essence and existence are identical. The objection claims that,

"the existence to which nothing is added is the common existence that is predicated

of everything,"[9] which is also divine existence (divine existence is God's existence

and common existence is the existence of everything else). Therefore it would

follow that God is predicated of everything. In other words, some kind of pantheism

would follow. The objection in the text claims that this pantheism is impossible and

therefore that God's existence and essence are different; however, I will focus on the

meat of the objection, namely the idea that common and divine existence are the

same thing.

First, it is difficult to tell what exactly could be "added" to existence in order

for it to remain 'existence.' For, according to Aquinas, existence, along with essence,

is "what intellect first conceives."[10] Now, if something were added to either common

existence or divine existence, it would be strange to claim that the result is still what

the intellect first conceives, since the intellect would have to conceive whatever is

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[9] *ST* 3.4 in Aquinas, Thomas. *The Treatise on Divine Nature*. Trans. Brian Shanley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006. p. 81.
[10] *SW* p. 30.

added in addition to the prior notion of existence to which this other thing was added. So, in order for 'existence' to still be that which the intellect first conceives, it cannot have an element that would otherwise not be that which the intellect first conceives. The only other thing that the intellect first conceives is essence. But, essence cannot be the thing added to common existence in order to make divine existence because, for God, his existence is his essence; therefore, adding essence to common existence would be to add nothing at all. Conversely, essence cannot be added to divine existence to make common existence, since this would make common existence and the existence of common beings into one, which is precisely what Aquinas proves to be false in *On Being and Essence*. In any case, Aquinas maintains the use of 'addition' in his response to the objection, claiming that the difference between divine existence and common existence is that, while divine existence is that to which nothing can be added, common existence is not that to which something can be added. Whatever the reason for this strange use of the word, I will show that, on most interpretations of addition, with Aquinas' metaphysical principles, pantheism and divine complexity are necessary consequences. I will conclude, though, that if we take addition to refer to adding existence, pantheism and divine complexity do not have to follow.

Now, Aquinas' response to the objection is essentially to claim that common and divine existence are different from one another. For, if they were the same, then everything would have divine existence, and therefore God's essence, since according to the argument in *ST* 3.4, God's essence and existence are identical. Therefore, not only would God be in everything, but it is also difficult to say how he

might be simple, seeing as he is in everything. And, simplicity is ultimately what Aquinas is trying to defend in this question. There are four ways in which divine and common existence might be different: 1) they are completely different (i.e. have nothing in common), 2) common existence is divine existence with something else added to it, 3) divine existence is common existence with something else added to it, or 4) a combination of 2) and 3). I will systematically show that none of these will work with respect to Aquinas' views on essence, existence, and God, on most interpretations of what is added.

First, it is clear that 1) will not work, and it is equally clear that Aquinas does not hold it to be true. For, it is obviously inconsistent with the fourth way of proving the existence of God. In this proof, there are gradations in the world that point towards a maximum, and being (i.e. existence) is one of these gradations. Thus, God is "the greatest in being."[11] Now, if common existence and divine existence were to have nothing in common, then it would not make sense to claim, as Aquinas does, that God's being is that towards which all other being points. Therefore, for Aquinas, it cannot be the case that common existence and divine existence are completely different. Also, because Aquinas argues as he does in the fourth way, it is clear that Aquinas would not want to hold that they are completely different.

The second option, that common existence is divine existence with something else added to it, will also not work. Now, everything that exists, apart from God, has common existence. If common existence were divine existence plus something else, then it would follow that everything that has common existence also

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[11] *ST* 2.3 in Aquinas, p. 24.

has divine existence. And, if Aquinas is correct that God's existence is God's essence, then it would follow that everything that exists has God's essence. This leads to some kind of pantheism, and also questions divine simplicity, which is ultimately what Aquinas is trying to defend. For, it seems strange that God could at once be simple but also be in everything. Aquinas, were he to try to defend this position, would probably claim that this is possible in a way that we are incapable of comprehending. This kind of objection should be taken seriously insofar as it shows that my argument is not at the level of a demonstrable proof. While this might be satisfying for theologians, it is not philosophically compelling, as it does not give a positive account of how it would be possible for God to be in everything and yet be simple. So, in lieu of a better positive account, we can assume that my argument is plausible.

The third possibility, that divine existence is common existence with something else added, is more easily refuted: if divine existence were common existence with something else added, then divine existence would have parts. Now, as we have seen, Aquinas argues in *On Being an Essence* that God is his existence. Therefore, if divine existence were to have parts then so would God, since God just is his existence. Hence, this possibility contradicts exactly that which Aquinas is ultimately trying to prove: divine simplicity. Therefore, the third possibility should also be discarded.

The fourth possibility, the combination of the second and third possibilities, is wrong because it is susceptible to the objections that apply to the second and third possibilities. Thus, we should not accept it.

It seems, therefore, that on most interpretations of addition Aquinas' argument will not hold. For, the arguments that I have given against Aquinas' view have been non-specific with respect to what might be added to common or divine existence, and show Aquinas' response to the objection not to work. If, therefore, common existence and divine existence are not different then they must be the same, which leads to the problems regarding both pantheism and divine simplicity described above. However, there is one way Aquinas could argue, though he does not in his response, that saves his position in this case: the difference between common existence and divine existence is that common existence is a deficient version of divine existence. In other words, God is pure actuality whereas everything else has potentiality and actuality.

Arguing in this way circumvents the peculiarity I identified with respect to addition. For, I said that, if essence could not be added, then something that the intellect does not first conceive would have to be added. However, this leaves aside the possibility of adding existence. If we add existence to existence, then the result remains 'existence,' and therefore remains that which the intellect first conceives. Furthermore, existence as the object that could be added is completely consistent with Aquinas' response to the objection: God is that to which no existence could be added because he is already pure existence, whereas it is not in the nature of everything else to have existence added to it, though it might be possible for God to add existence to common beings if he so desired.

Moreover, this seems like the kind of answer Aquinas might give. Aquinas does hold that God is pure actuality whereas everything else – even the angels – has

potentiality.[12] In addition, Aquinas argues in *ST* 3.7 that God is pure actuality

because he is simple, and that in every composite being there is both actuality and

potentiality.[13] The reason God's simplicity entails his being pure actuality is that, if

God were not pure actuality, then part of him would be actual and the other would

be potential, which would entail that he has parts. So, being simple entails being

pure actuality, and being complex entails not being pure actuality. Therefore, we

can say, consistently with Aquinas' response to the objection, that the difference

between divine existence and common existence is that the former is pure actuality

whereas the second is actuality that is both not pure and mixed with potentiality in

the composite.

　　　We can quickly apply this result to the four possible ways I argued that the

two types of existence could be different. It is not the case that the two types of

existence are completely different, since both are defined in terms of actuality, and

common existence can be considered as a deficient form of divine existence because

it has less actuality; therefore they are clearly on the same scale. It is also not the

case that common existence is divine existence with something added to it, since

common existence just is less actuality than divine existence. This also precludes

the fourth possibility, since the second possibility not applying means that the

possibility in question cannot be a combination of the second and third possibilities.

　　　We are left with the third possibility, that divine existence is common

existence plus something else, i.e. 'existence.' Recall that the problem with this

possibility was the result that divine existence would have parts. For example, if we

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[12] *SW* p. 42.

[13] *ST* 3.7 in Aquinas, p. 35

were to add a property or a thing to common existence to make divine existence, then divine existence would be common existence plus that property or thing. However, this is not a problem if the thing to be added is existence, because we have seen that, according to Aquinas, a thing that is purely actual is simple, and therefore does not have parts. Note that addition here is only conceptual – it is not the case that, to create divine existence, we take an instance of common existence and add more existence. Rather, the concept of addition merely illustrates the difference between the two types of existence.

To conclude, we have seen how Aquinas can consistently maintain the difference between common and divine existence with divine simplicity: divine existence has more existence than common existence because it is pure actuality. We have also seen that Aquinas' response will not work for any object of addition other than existence, since the object added can be neither anything that the intellect does not first conceive, nor essence. While Aquinas does remain internally consistent, how exactly this all works remains mysterious, for we can still ask the question of how something purely simple is capable of bring everything else into existence. Aquinas' probable response – that we cannot know because we do not have the adequate intellectual capacities – seems like a cop-out, but I have not shown it to be false. Therefore, I have not shown Aquinas to be right or wrong, but I do believe I have shown him to be internally consistent on a particular interpretation.

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Aspect Perception and Understanding the Meaning of Words
in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*

In Part II Section XI of his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein asserts that a proper grasp of the concept of aspect perception can elucidate issues surrounding understanding the meaning of words. In this paper I will seek to defend Wittgenstein's view. I will do this by first briefly explaining the nature of aspect perception. Then, I will explain Wittgenstein's account of how we understand the meaning of words, and show why aspect perception can further our understanding of this process. Finally, I will address two objections to the view.

I.   Aspect Perception

Aspect perception, as presented by Wittgenstein, is primarily concerned with the visual experience of different aspects of a picture.[1,2] Aspects, here, should not be taken as characteristics of the image, instead they are different ways of perceiving (in the sense of visual experience) the same image without that image physically changing. That is, aspect perception is the experience of "seeing as."[3] To properly understand what this means, it is helpful to consider the example of the "Duck-Rabbit." Figure 1 (See Appendix), presented first by Joseph Jastrow in *Fact and Fable in Psychology* and popularized by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, can generally be held to demonstrate the aspect switch in aspect perception. As the title of the image suggests, the picture can be seen as either a duck, or a rabbit. Due to the fact that most people, though not all, see the picture alternatively — first, as one aspect then the other — it is correct for us to say "I now *see it as* a duck, *now as* a rabbit." If, however, a person were only able to see one of the aspects of the image, the duck for instance, then it is inappropriate

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall), 193.
[2] It is important to note, here, that Wittgenstein does not limit cases of aspect perception only to pictures; I begin with them, as they best lend themselves to a description of the phenomenon more generally.
[3] Ibid., 197.

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to say "now I see it as a duck."[4] This is because there would be no change to which the

"*now* I see it as" would refer; we would only say: "it is a duck."[5]

So, the expression of aspect perception requires an ambiguity in the perception of the image being considered. If a person does not notice the ambiguity in the picture of the duck-rabbit, then the expression "it is a duck" is one of ordinary perception. The ambiguity is important to the ways in which aspect perception elucidates the issues concerning understanding the meaning of words.

We can now understand Wittgenstein's saying that: "The expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a *new* perception and at the same time of the perception's being unchanged;"[6] while this phrase may appear contradictory, the discussion above illustrates that the two instances of perception, here, differ. The first use is that of aspect perception, while the second is of ordinary perception. So, aspect perception is the change in visual experience (caused by the "dawning" of a new aspect) of an unchanging perception. The criteria[7] for knowing that someone does in fact see the different aspects of an image are based on what Wittgenstein calls "fine shades of behaviour."[8] These subtleties (in intonation, phrasing, etc.) express a familiarity that comes from not just understanding that the image can be used as multiple things, but from actually seeing it as one thing and then another.[9,10]

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[4] Ibid.,195.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.,196.
[7] Criteria are public principles or standards to which we can appeal for justification; Wittgenstein feels that we need criteria to demonstrate any type of understanding, not just understanding words. This entails that we must always be able to publicly demonstrate our understanding if we are to say we understand at all.
[8] Ibid.,204.
[9] Ibid.,201.
[10] We can imagine the reactions of two different people both seeing the duck-rabbit for the first time; one is able to see the switch in aspects, while the other cannot but pretends to. Even if both say "It's a duck… now it's a rabbit!" we can imagine the tone of voice (expressing the level of surprise), for example, being

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II.   Understanding the Meaning of Words

The meaning of a word, for Wittgenstein, is governed by the set of practices for the use of that word in a language.[11] As understanding is a rule-governed process, to understand a word is to be able to use it properly, over an extended period of time, according to the rule or rules that govern it. A rule, for Wittgenstein, is a standard that governs a practice — where practice should not be taken as a single action, but rather as an institution.[12] Rules can take various forms; for example, in the case of games governed by rules, a rule can be "an aid in teaching the game," "an instrument of the game itself," or "neither in the teaching nor in the game."[13] This is due to this fact that, depending on the situation, any number of different rules may be needed to appropriately address the practice in question — here, it is helpful to consider the difference in rules of a game and rules of etiquette; we accurately describe both as rules, but they inform very different practices in different ways.

So, we can rightly say that we understand the meaning a word only when we have correctly used it (that is correctly followed the rule or rules that govern it) over a period of time. That is to say, the criteria for understanding a word is consistently correct application.[14] This does not mean that we need always apply the rule correctly; every attempt at use contains the possibility of misapplication.

Wittgenstein calls the aggregate of these different rule-governed practices language-games, which he feels constitute language. He says: "We see that what we call

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quite different. Considerations of this kind seem to demonstrate Wittgenstein's acute sensitivity to the ways in which we interact with others.

[11] Ibid., § 43.
[12] Ibid., § 54.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., § 146.

"sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another."[15] It is important that we are conscious of the fact that understanding the meaning of a word requires correctly following the rule of the appropriate language-game.

III.   Aspect Perception and Understanding the Meaning of Words

The connection between aspect perception and understanding the meaning of words for Wittgenstein comes from the fact that he believes that in certain cases we *experience* the meaning of words.[16,17] That is, there are ambiguous cases in which one word can mean several different things, and we, in understanding the word, "take its meaning *as* such and such" in a certain case. The similarity to aspect perception should already be apparent. In cases where a word has more than one meaning — Wittgenstein uses "till" as an example[18] — we can experience a change in the meaning of a word in the same way as we experience a change in aspect of an image. This connection can be seen more clearly, I believe, through a comparison of what Wittgenstein calls "aspect-blindness" and what I will call "meaning-blindness."[19]

In his discussion of aspect-blindness Wittgenstein begins with a question: "Could there be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something *as something* — and what would that be like?"[20] With respect to our example above, a person with aspect-blindness would not be able to see the duck-rabbit as either a duck or a rabbit, but only one of the

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[15] Ibid., § 108.

[16] Ibid., 214.

[17] We do not, however, experience the meaning of words as we say them (Ibid.,217); the type of experience spoken of here is connected with understanding what someone else is saying, writing, etc.

[18] This is not exactly true; the German word that Wittgenstein uses, *sondern,* does not mean 'till'— it means something equivalent to the English word "but". As the direct translation would not have worked, G.E.M Anscombe (the translator of the edition of *Philosophical Investigations* being used) substituted the German for an equally ambiguous English word.

[19] For the term "meaning blindness" I am indebted to Professor D. Waterfall.

[20] Ibid.,213. Emphasis is from the original.

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two. This would be the case even in different contexts; for example, it would entail that, even surrounded by pictures of rabbits, the aspect-blind person (who only sees the duck) would only be able to see the duck-rabbit as a duck *even in this context.* Otherwise "this could not very well be called a sort of blindness."[21,22]

So, aspect-blindness would be a condition characterized by a person's inability to see more than one of the different aspects of an ambiguous image. Similarly, meaning-blindness would be a condition in which a person would not be able to understand more than one of several possible meaning-aspects of a word. In the case of the word "till", we can — though perhaps with difficulty — imagine a person who could only understand it to mean "cash drawer," or something equivalent. In this case the ambiguity in the meaning of "till" would go unnoticed by the person with meaning-blindness — this, again, would be the case regardless of the context in which the word was uttered.

We are now in a position to see the ways in which aspect perception assists in our comprehension of understanding the meaning of words. Assuming that we do not have meaning-blindness, there are certain cases in which we experience the meaning of a word with the same ambiguity that we perceive images such as the duck-rabbit. That is, a word can cause the same type of alteration between meanings as some images cause in visual experience. It is only with the same familiarity, as mentioned above, with the word in question that a person will be able to understand what it means in the context. However,

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[21] Ibid.,214.

[22] There is a challenge to this description of aspect blindness that is worth considering (I am, again, grateful to Professor D. Waterfall for this insight). It can be said that aspect-blindness is the inability to see more than one of the aspects of a picture *in one instance of viewing it*. That is, aspect blindness could be represented by a person's inability to see the duck aspect of the duck-rabbit when they see that image out of context; but that does not mean according to this view that they will not be able to see the duck aspect when other pictures of ducks surround the duck-rabbit. However, I feel that this interpretation of aspect-blindness gives the reader apt reason, as I have quoted Wittgenstein saying above, to not call it a type of blindness at all. I feel that the thought experiment that Wittgenstein employs requires that aspect-blindness really be a type of blindness— rather than mere selective perception.

this is not the primary issue concerning the understanding of words that I would like to demonstrate can be explained by aspect perception. This is due to the fact that different language-games, and therefore different rules, can apply to different meanings of a word; understanding the meaning of the word, then, would have less to do with aspect perception, and more to do with correct application of the rule or rules.

We can see aspect perception as being more useful for explaining two more difficult to comprehend phenomena in language; namely, idiosyncratic uses of words, and construction of metaphor.[23] First, in the case of idiosyncratic uses of words, we must distinguish between primary and secondary senses of words. If I say, as Wittgenstein does, that "Tuesday is lean, and Wednesday is fat" then I have employed a secondary sense of the words "lean" and "fat." "Ought I really to have used different words? Certainly not that. — I want to use *these* words (with their familiar meanings) *here*… for I could not express what I want to say in any other way."[24] In this sense, the idiosyncratic uses of "fat" and "lean," here, are not metaphorical; however, we would be unable to even consider what Wittgenstein means by the phrase "Tuesday is lean, and Wednesday is fat" if we did not first know the common meanings of "fat" and "lean." Wittgenstein says that "it is only if the word has the primary sense for you that you use it in the secondary one."[25] Figure 2 (See Appendix) appears to us, unequivocally, as a triangle — we can take this as its primary aspect. It is possible, then, to also see it as "something that

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[23] Wittgenstein also feels that aspect perception is useful in explaining puns. Due to the fact that, in a pun, several meanings of a word are employed at once, we can see the meaning of the word change in a way that is strikingly similar to seeing a new aspect of an image. While this is interesting, and directly related to aspect perception, it is less controversial than the phenomena I will describe. As I am attempting to defend Wittgenstein's view, I feel it is worth engaging with uses of words that are more difficult to explain.
[24] Ibid.,216. Emphasis is from the original.
[25] Ibid.

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has fallen over"?[26] The answer to this, it would seem, is "yes." The difference, however, is that we have to *imagine* or *interpret* that it is something that has fallen over. We do not automatically see it in that way — we can, however, take this as one possible secondary aspect of the triangle. We can see that the "triangle" aspect is primary because we cannot fail, if we know the language, to see the triangle as "triangle." Seeing it as "something that has fallen over" is secondary because a person who knows the language could reasonably not be able to see it that way. That is, we must be able to see the triangle as "triangle" before we are able to interpret it as anything else.

While aspect perception generally does not require interpretation (as in the case of the duck-rabbit), in some cases it is required of us in order to see the aspect change.[27,28] The interpretive imagination required for seeing the triangle as something that has fallen over is the same type of imagination that is required for us to understand, even if only vaguely, what Wittgenstein means when he says, "Tuesday is lean." We can see that in the case of idiosyncratic uses of words, aspect perception clarifies two things; first, an idiosyncratic use of a word is a secondary use, which requires an antecedent familiarity with the primary use. Second, understanding the way in which an idiosyncratic use of a word is employed requires interpretation.

Second, the construction of metaphor operates in a similar way to idiosyncratic use of words. That is, we, in already understanding the primary meaning of the word, employ it in a different way. In this regard, we "see the meaning as such and such" in the

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[26] Ibid.,201.
[27] Ibid.,206.
[28] Wittgenstein uses the example of children who see a chest as a house. He says: "Here is a game played by children: they say that a chest, for example, is a house; and thereupon it is *interpreted* as a house in every detail. A piece of fancy is worked into it… If you knew how to play this game, and, given a particular situation, you exclaimed with special expression "Now it's a house!"— you would be giving expression to the dawning of an aspect". (Ibid. Emphasis added)

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specific case. To use an example, if we hear someone say: "We must stand shoulder to shoulder to overcome current hardships!" then we see the meaning of the phrase as something like: "We must work together!" or "We must promote solidarity!"[29] Here, as in the case of idiosyncratic uses of words, we need both to understand the primary meaning before understanding the secondary one, and an element of interpretation is required for us to understand. It is certainly not the case, in either metaphor or idiosyncratic uses of words, that everyone will be able to understand the secondary meaning. As there are different levels of familiarity with language, and varying levels of ability for interpretation, there may be many instances of metaphorical or idiosyncratic uses of a word whose meaning escapes many people.[30]

So, aspect perception elucidates issues concerning understanding idiosyncratic uses of words and the construction of metaphor. It does this by both: 1) demonstrating that we have both primary and secondary senses of words, and that we need to understand— that is, achieve a certain level of familiarity with— the primary sense before we can employ a word in a secondary sense; and, 2) shows that understanding the meaning of a word (especially in the case of secondary senses) sometimes requires interpretation. This, however, is not uncontroversial— I will now address two possible objections to Wittgenstein's view.

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[29] I say "see" rather than "understand" here because of the difference between the two concepts that Wittgenstein notes in his discussion of aspect perception. He says that we can understand that something has multiple aspects without seeing those aspects. (Ibid.,201) Similarly, in the case of metaphor, I would like to say that we could understand that a phrase is meant to be taken as meaning something else, while not understanding that meaning. I use "see" as the combination of both understanding that the phrase is meant to be taken as something else and an interpretation of what that other meaning is meant to be (even when, as in the case above, that meaning is ambiguous).

[30] While it may seem that idiosyncratic uses of words and metaphor are identical according to this discussion, there is at least one fundamental difference. In the case of idiosyncratic uses of words, such as "Tuesday is lean", we cannot express what we mean in any other way; this is not the case with metaphor. For example, if Wittgenstein meant "Tuesday is lean" metaphorically then it would seem as though "Tuesday is meagre" would serve equally well.

IV.   Objections, Replies

First, can Wittgenstein's view of idiosyncratic uses of language not be taken as a kind of private language?[31] That is, if the secondary, idiosyncratic use of the word is so distant from the standard use then can we ever be sure of its meaning in the context? If this were the case, then Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect perception as a tool for elucidating the way in which we understand idiosyncratic uses of words would be in direct contradiction to his view that there cannot be a private language. However, it is not the case that idiosyncratic uses of words depend on a private language. If we take the example of "Tuesday is lean, Wednesday is fat," then we can see that the meaning is not hidden from us in the way that it would be in a private language. That is, none of the meanings of the words depend on Wittgenstein's private sensations. He says: "Asked "What do you really mean here by 'fat' and 'lean'?" — I could only explain the meanings in the usual way."[32] We might not understand why Wittgenstein is inclined to describe Tuesday as lean and Wednesday as fat, but that does not stop us from understanding the meaning of the words themselves. This ability to understand the words is sufficient for our being able to say that idiosyncratic uses of words do not depend on a private language.

Second, and more pressingly, it seems as though Wittgenstein's view, that we only understand the meaning of a word through consistent correct application, does not account fully for our understanding of metaphor — even with the additional explanation given by the discussion of aspect perception. That is, if understanding the meaning of a

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[31] A private language, for Wittgenstein, would be one in which "the individual words…refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language". (Ibid., § 243)
[32] Ibid., 216.

word depends on being able to consistently use it according to the rule that it is governed by, and in metaphorical use of language we employ a secondary meaning of a word which requires that we both understand the primary meaning and interpret correctly in the context, then how can we be said to understand metaphorical uses of words at all? To strengthen this objection to Wittgenstein's view, I will employ a distinction made by George Orwell in his essay *Politics and the English Language*. Orwell outlines three different types of metaphor, only two of which are important here; the first is a newly invented metaphor, which "assists thought by evoking a visual image."[33] The second is a "technically 'dead'" metaphor, which "has in effect *reverted to being an ordinary word*"[34] and can be employed as such.[35] The second type of metaphor is uncontroversial here; if a metaphor is so familiar that we treat it as an ordinary word, then our understanding that metaphor will occur in the usual way — that is, through use. The first type of metaphor, however, is more difficult. If we, as Orwell suggests, should "never use a metaphor… which we are used to seeing in print,"[36] then how can we, on Wittgenstein's model, understand any metaphor of the first type? The problem here is not that we can never understand secondary uses of words, it is rather that it seems difficult to account for understanding completely novel secondary uses.

This problem, however, can be solved by analogy to seeing the possible secondary aspects of an image. If we turn again to the triangle, and try to see it as something that has fallen over, then I believe that we can understand how aspect

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[33] George Orwell, <u>Politics and the English Language</u> in *Why I Write* (London: Penguin Books), 105.
[34] Ibid.,106.
[35] The third type of metaphor Orwell describes is a dying metaphor. These are metaphors that have "lost their evocative power" but have not yet (and perhaps shall never be) reverted to the status of an ordinary word. (Ibid.)
[36] Ibid.,119.

perception does, in fact, explain our understanding metaphorical senses of words. If we admit that we can, though perhaps only with difficulty, view the triangle as something that has fallen over, then we are seeing an aspect of the image that we have (potentially) never seen before.[37] Do we want to say, in this case, that we cannot possibly see the image in the way we are now describing? That is, do we need to be able to consistently see the image as something that has fallen down to be able to say that we now see it in that way? I think that the answer to this question is, unequivocally, "No." If we have a strong enough familiarity with the primary aspect of the image and enough experience with interpretation *in general*, then we need not have ever interpreted the image as an object that has fallen down before. The same is the case with metaphor. We are able to understand completely new metaphors only if we have a strong grasp of the primary senses of the words employed and experience interpreting text. Recall that we need not always understand metaphor, and that we will not always understand the meaning immediately. The dawning of the meaning-aspect of the first type of metaphor does not happen without the use of imagination of some kind. So, we can see that understanding aspect perception is necessary to our understanding of metaphor.

V.   Conclusion

I have now demonstrated the importance of aspect perception to understanding the meaning of words in certain cases. This is due to the fact that, in cases of idiosyncratic uses of language and metaphor, we interpret the meaning of words in the same way as we interpret an image with multiple aspects. Important to this understanding is the knowledge that there are both primary and secondary uses of words, that the

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[37] I feel that seeing a scalene triangle as an object that has fallen over is sufficiently obscure that, without being directly provoked, we would not interpret the image in that way.

secondary uses are parasitic on the primary uses, and that we interpret meaning in some

cases. In addressing two objections to Wittgenstein, it is my hope that I have not only

given a clear exposition his view, but also strengthened it.

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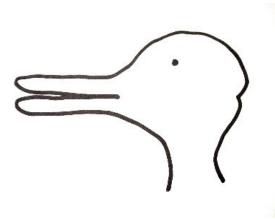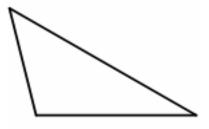
Appendix:

Figure 1: The Duck-Rabbit

Figure 2: A Scalene Triangle

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Abstract: This paper considers the problem of intensional contexts that Saul Kripke presents in "A Puzzle about Belief." In an effort to resolve this seeming paradox, I identify an assumption that underlies most analyses of intensional contexts: that the content of the subject's belief is simply the proposition, and that statements containing co-referential names must somehow have different propositions. I argue against this assumption and propose a different understanding of the content of the subject's belief that allows that the propositions of sentences may be the same while maintaining that the content of someone's belief when these statements are put in intensional contexts may be different.

Kripke on Propositions in Intensional Contexts

In "A Puzzle about Belief," Kripke gives a notoriously difficult riddle that semantic theory has yet to solve. A simple version could go like this: Pierre lives in France and speaks only French. He hears frequently of a distant city that he (using only French, of course) calls *Londres*. He also hears frequently that this city is pretty, which (of course) he hears as "*Londres est jolie*". Hearing this frequently enough, he begins to believe it, and eventually starts to say to his neighbors, "*Londres est jolie*." Though Pierre doesn't know it, English speakers would report this belief by saying, "Pierre believes that London is pretty," and most of us would agree that in doing so we have accurately reported his beliefs. Later, after years of living in France, holding this belief, Pierre begins to feel adventurous and impulsively moves away from France. Not knowing where he's going, he eventually ends up in England. He ends up in an ugly part of London. Once he has learned some basic English, he begins to hear people complain about the ugliness of their city, which they call London. Of course, he hears this as "London is not pretty." Having heard this many times, and seeing the ugly city around him, he comes to believe

it, and starts to say to his neighbors, "London is not pretty." We would report this by saying, 'Pierre believes that London is not pretty," and we would feel that we have accurately reported his beliefs by doing so. This, of course, leaves us with the contradiction that Pierre both does believe that London is pretty and does not believe that London is pretty, and he seems perfectly justified in having these beliefs. There is no logic that could tell him that one of these beliefs must be wrong; in fact, he would be committing a fallacy if he concluded that one of them must be wrong!

Pierre's error (if there is one) is that he drew conclusions using names, which metaphysically bring the object to which they refer into the proposition, without having complete knowledge of those objects. If I can believe one proposition containing a name, how can I not believe another proposition with a different name for the same object? In Pierre's case, what happened is clear: he did not know fully what either the name "*Londres*" or the name "London" referred to. But if the only linguistic function of a name is to bring its object into the proposition, then whether Pierre uses "*Londres*" or "London," he is, without knowing it, bringing the exact same object into the proposition. The question generally asked when dealing with puzzles about intensional contexts is, how can *"Londres est jolie"* and "London is pretty" be different propositions? It is assumed that, in an intensional context, the content of the subject's belief is simply the proposition, and that statements containing co-referential names must somehow have different propositions; how else could I believe the one and not the other? After considering more introductory matters, I will argue against this assumption and propose a way that these epistemological differences can be maintained while still conceding that the proposition of such sentences may be the same.

I. Theories of Reference and the Puzzle

At first glance, it seems that this puzzle would lend itself to a descriptivist theory of names. However, as Kripke points out, even a complete description of London in each language fails because it contains the same ambiguity. If Pierre defines "*Londres*" as "*la capitale de l'Angliterre*," he still may believe that England is a different country than "*l'Angliterre*." But really the point of Kripke's criticism of descriptivist name theory, and to some extent the puzzle itself, is just that a descriptivist theory of names is impossible because it requires some "absolute level" of specification, which uniquely identifies in all possible languages. But this is clearly impractical, perhaps impossible, and at any rate definitely not what we think of as the meaning of a name. In other words, reference requires some metaphysical component, contrary to Frege's and Russell's theory that reference could be reduced to a description, a purely epistemological component.

In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke proposes a new picture of reference often called the "causal theory of names." According to Kripke's general outline, when we use a name, we use it as we have heard it used, and we intend to refer to whatever the chain of reference leads to, whatever was named at the "initial baptism." In this essay I will not argue for this theory of naming, but I will nevertheless discuss issues in intensional contexts in terms of it. This theory is closer to that of John Stuart Mill and early Russell than to that of Frege and later Russell. The theory has many interesting implications, but the most important aspect for this paper is, as stated above, that the name literally brings the object named into the proposition. As Kripke says, "the linguistic function of a name is completely exhausted by the fact that it names its bearer" (434).

II. The Proposition of Sentences with Intensional Contexts

In "A Puzzle about Belief," Kripke states that the puzzle, and his discussion in general, deal only with *de dicto*, and not with *de re*, considerations (435). For example, Kripke states specifically that "A Puzzle about Belief" does not concern *de re* beliefs, such as "Jones believes, *of* Cicero, that he was bald." Rather, it concerns *de dicto* beliefs such as "Jones believes that: Cicero was bald," in which "the material after the colon expresses the *content* of Jones's belief" (435).

Let us look more closely at Kripke's formal recasting of a sentence with an intensional context: "the sentence 'Cicero was bald' gives the content of a belief of Jones." The problem of non-substitutability in intensional contexts is how such a statement, which is a *de dicto* summary of "Jones believes that Cicero was bald," is different from "the sentence 'Tully was bald' gives the content of a belief of Jones," which is a *de dicto* summary of "Jones believes that Tully was bald." However, if the sentence "gives" the content of a belief of Jones, this still leaves unanswered the question, of what *is* content of Jones's belief? Usually, the content of the belief is assumed to be the proposition of the sentence in question. Under this view, "Jones believes that Cicero was bald" can also be recast as "Jones believes the proposition of the sentence 'Cicero was bald,'" or "the proposition of the sentence 'Cicero was bald' is the content of a belief of Jones."

However, many of the problems perennially associated with intensional contexts disappear if we abandon this assumption that the content of the belief is simply the proposition of the statement in the intensional context. Consider the implications for the non-substitutability problem if we summarized "Jones believes Cicero was bald," instead of as shown above, rather as "Jones believes that the proposition of 'Cicero was bald' is true," or "the proposition of the sentence 'the proposition of the sentence 'Cicero was bald' is true' is the content of a belief of

Jones." Whereas the usual assumption is that the content of Jones's belief is the proposition of the sentence in question, here the assumption is that the content of Jones's belief is rather the proposition plus the predicate "is true." I will not now argue that this assumption is more justified than the usual assumption, but only that it has important and far-reaching implications for both Kripke's puzzle and the traditional problems of non-substitutability.

The first thing to note is that, unlike under the usual assumption, Cicero (the object, the actual person) appears nowhere in the proposition of "Jones believes that the proposition of the sentence 'Cicero was bald' is true," if this is interpreted *de dicto* and in secondary scope. A true Russellian paraphrase of such a sentence would be, "Jones believes that 'x is propositional and x is expressed by 'Cicero was bald' and x is true' is sometimes true". Paraphrasing this way retains "the proposition of 'Cicero was bald'" in secondary scope. If it were in primary scope, the summary would be "'x is propositional and 'Cicero was bald' expresses x' is sometimes true and Jones believes that x is true."

The difference here is crucial, and the problem of non-substitutability exists only in the latter (primary scope) paraphrase. In this summary, "x" is the proposition of "Cicero was bald," and therefore "x" contains the object, the person Cicero. To reiterate—if "Jones believes that the proposition of the sentence 'Cicero was bald' is true" is interpreted with "the proposition of the sentence 'Cicero was bald' in primary scope, then the proposition of "Cicero was bald," and therefore also Cicero himself, are *in the proposition of the entire sentence*. If, however, we take the former (secondary scope) paraphrase, there is no problem of non-substitutability. In such a summary, "x" is *not* the proposition of "Cicero was bald." "X" is rather *what Jones believes* is the proposition of "Cicero was bald." Therefore, the entire sentence contains only what Jones believes is the proposition, and not necessarily what the proposition in fact is.

In other words, Jones believes that the proposition of "Cicero was bald" is such that it is true, he does not believe, of the proposition of "Cicero was bald," that it is true. His belief about the proposition of "Cicero was bald" should be interpreted *de dicto*, and not *de re*. Interpreted this way, "Jones believes that Cicero was bald" and "Jones believes that Tully was bald" clearly have different propositions, even though "Cicero was bald" and "Tully was bald" share the same proposition. Cicero himself does not appear in intensional contexts, but rather the names "Cicero" and "Tully" are mentioned, not used.

III. Implications for the Puzzle

While this method does seem to work well in the usual cases of non-substitutability, its application to Kripke's puzzle is somewhat more complicated. Let us look at what this method would give us as the paraphrase of each of Pierre's beliefs. The first would be, "Pierre believes that the proposition of "*Londres est jolie*" is true." The second would be, "Pierre believes that the proposition of "London is not pretty" is true." In this method of paraphrase, what matters is not the proposition of "*Londres est jolie*," or "London is not pretty," but rather Pierre's belief about what the proposition is.

Before discussing the particular role of translation in this puzzle, it will be useful to consider the role of translation in general. Consider the sentence, "Julius Caesar said, 'the die is cast.'" Does such a report accurately reflect what Julius Caesar said? It is clear that Julius Caesar did not in fact say the words, "the die is cast." The words he said were, "alea jacta est." And yet most of us consider words even in translation to be an accurate report. However, there are circumstances in which translation cannot communicate all that we intend to communicate. Take, for example, the sentence "when Caesar said "*alea jacta est*," he pronounced the 'J' as we

today would pronounce an 'I.'" Does such a sentence survive translation? Could we say, "when Caesar said, 'the die is cast,' he pronounced the 'J' as we today would pronounce an 'I'? It seems reasonable that in such a circumstance, in which our interest is primarily in the words, translation is not possible. However, there are some circumstances where the words in question may survive translation. It is said that when the first Christian missionaries reached England, they were surprised at the gentleness of the Angles, and said "non sunt Anglia, sed sunt angelia," which means "they are not Angles, but angels." In this case it could be said that translation is acceptable, because it retains the joke, but it should be noted that it is only by coincidence. Such a sentence would obviously not survive translation into Chinese, for example, without significant loss.

Therefore, in considering the sentences "Pierre believes that the proposition of '*Londres est jolie*" is true," and "Pierre believes that the proposition of 'London is not pretty' is true," it is important to remember that the important thing is the *words*, particularly Pierre's beliefs about what proposition the words express. And Pierre clearly believes that "*Londres est jolie*" and "London is pretty" express two different propositions—if he did not, he would commit a logical fallacy by declaring a belief in both. And because the emphasis here is on the words, because the difference for Pierre lies in which words are used, in this case translation would be unacceptable.

If translation is unacceptable in this case, though, how is it that we believe that translation usually still gives a legitimate report of someone's beliefs? Whenever we translate a sentence containing an intensional context, we have to make a certain educated guess. If Pierre spoke no English at all, and his only belief was "the proposition of the sentence '*Londres est jolie*' is true," then it may be acceptable to translate "*Londres est jolie*" as "London is pretty." However, it should be kept in mind that this is only an educated guess as to what Pierre believes. We can

never be sure that Pierre believes that the proposition of "*Londres est jolie*" is the same as proposition as "London is pretty," because Pierre does not speak English, and there is a small chance that he will end up in some strange situation such as that proposed by Kripke, in which he will not believe that the propositions of these two sentences are identical. When we translate, we have to take a *de re* interpretation of "the proposition of '*Londres est jolie.*'" And so we have to guess what Pierre believes is the proposition, which is usually unproblematic. Only in extreme cases such as that given by Kripke does this become an issue, and the solution is simply to say that if we are truly on dealing with *de dicto* questions, we have to simply forbid translation.

This conclusion, that any question of translation necessarily entails a *de re* interpretation, is supported by what Kripke says about the puzzle. As he says, however we describe "what is really going on" in the puzzle, that still does not answer the question, what does Pierre really believe about London (446)? But Kripke already said that statements such as "Pierre believes, of London, X" are not what he is talking about in the puzzle. But if we stick with a strictly *de dicto* interpretation, translation is impossible, and the puzzle disappears.

IV. Conclusion

The method I have proposed requires abandoning the assumption that what is believed in intensional contexts is simply the proposition itself and adopting the assumption that what is believed is rather the proposition plus the predicate "is true," with the proposition in secondary position. Thus, though the proposition of "Cicero was bald" is the same as that of "Tully was bald," the proposition of "Jones believes Cicero was bald" is nevertheless different from that of "Jones believes Tully was bald." It may be objected that putting the proposition in secondary position begs the question, because the summary of the intensional context contains yet another intensional context. This objection may have merit. Unfortunately, there is not space in this

paper to consider the arguments for and against each assumption. It may be that the assumption I have outlined, that what is believed is the proposition in second position plus a truth value, is untenable. In this paper I have sought only to show that such an assumption, if it is possible, gives some key insights into and points toward a solution of Kripke's puzzle and also many of the problems of intensional contexts.

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The Eichmann Aporia: Derrida and Transitional Jurisprudence After Nuremberg

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a postmodernist critique of transitional justice in the post-World War II era. The author describes attempts at transitional justice in the wake of mass atrocity as an 'aporia' which encompasses broader debates about morality, power, and the nature of justice. In examining the case of *Attorney-General of the Government of Israel v. Adolf Eichmann*, the author problematizes the mechanisms through which tribunals mete out 'justice', and discusses the potential for alternative models of jurisprudence in the aftermath of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

> "If today there is no longer any one clear vision of sacred man, it is perhaps because we are all virtually *homines sacri*."
> - Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 115.

Introduction

On 11 May 1960, the Israeli Mossad kidnapped Adolf Eichmann - a Nazi SS bureaucrat who played a key role in orchestrating the transportation of Jews to concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Dachau - from his home in Buenos Aires, and brought him before an Israeli court on charges of "crimes against the Jewish people" (Benhabib 2000: 66). Hannah Arendt later described Eichmann's role in the Holocaust as "terrifyingly normal". For Arendt (1963: 129), Eichmann was "neither perverted nor sadistic"; rather, his crimes were horrifying precisely because he 'committed' them with a clear conscience. Indeed, when the Israeli police first interrogated Eichmann in Jerusalem, they were surprised by his repeated insistence that he "always carried out his duty to the letter", as if the Israelis would interpret such diligence as a testimony to his upstanding character (Swift 2009: 66). Neither was Eichmann 'banal' just because of his freedom from psychopathy - Arendt repeatedly observed that the man was of "mediocre" intelligence, and thus prone to uttering both contradictions and clichés (Arendt 1963: 27). Despite the apparent fact that he was outstanding only in the extent of his mediocrity, the Israelis found Adolf Eichmann guilty chiefly of "crimes against the Jewish people with intent to destroy the Jewish people", and finally executed him on 31 May 1962 (Benhabib 2000: 67).

For Arendt and many others, Eichmann's trial and execution highlighted not the horrors of the Holocaust, but the failure of the Israeli tribunal to produce anything other

than an exceptionally retroactive and selective version of "victor's justice" (Baade 1961: 410; Arendt 1963: 128; Minow 1998: 27; Turley 2000: 674; Bass 2002a: 1044). The tribunal attempted to mete out a symbolic punishment to Adolf Eichmann that would resonate on the international stage; instead, they created an enigma which I believe encompasses the insoluble problem or *aporia* of meting out true 'justice' in the wake of atrocities such as the Holocaust. This paper uses the 'Eichmann aporia' as a starting point from which to problematize attempts at transitional justice in the so-called "postmodern" or "late capitalist" era (Lyotard 1979; Mandel 1978). My thesis concerning the Eichmann aporia is two-pronged. First, I claim that the aporia's insolubility arises from the unprecedented nature of crimes such as those that comprised the Holocaust; and second from the visibility of "determinant judgment" (Kant 2000 [1790]) in attempts to mete out punishment for such crimes. I will expound upon this assertion in three sections: first, I offer a brief exegesis of the philosophical and sociological schema that is relevant to my argument. Second, I solidify these perspectives with reference to substantive problems within the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the possibilities for a postmodern model of "reflective" transitional justice (Kant 2000 [1790]; Lyotard 1979).

Derridean Deconstruction and Juridical Aporiae

Philosophers often invoke the concept of aporia to refer to a problem or paradox that is insoluble, but which does not involve irrationality or unreasonableness on the part of any of the actors involved. The philosopher Jacques Derrida was particularly interested in aporiae, as he believed an examination of the tensions involved in such

instances could yield a more sophisticated or de-naturalized understanding of the situation (Royle 2003: 92-93). In a famous essay entitled "Force of Law", Derrida (1990) identities three aporiae which he believes characterize the relationship between law and justice. In order of appearance in Derrida's (1990: 961-967) essay, the aporiae are: "the *epoche* of the rule", "the ghost of the undecideable", and "the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge".

Notwithstanding his convoluted prose style, Derrida's argument concerning each aporia is actually quite straightforward. The "*epoche* of the rule" (Derrida 1990: 961) concerns the commonsense observation that in order to "deliver justice" one must have free will; however, no judge ever freely delivers a ruling – each of her judgments are based upon an existing law.[1] In this sense, the law-abiding judge is always to some extent a "calculating machine", doomed to simply apply and legitimate pre-existing laws (Derrida 1990: 961). On the other hand, judgments that do not follow a set of predetermined rules are arbitrary and thus also unjust; as such, the application of the law is always violent, because in its effort to avoid arbitrariness it forces each unique individual case to conform to what one can ironically describe as the prejudice of the law (Lawlor 2010: para. 26).

In referring to the "ghost of the undecideable", Derrida (1990: 963) highlights the omnipresence of the insight extracted from the first aporia, which holds that true justice is in fact impossible. In one sense, this omnipresence is expressed in the metaphor of the 'ghost' that inevitably 'haunts' both judges and other subjects of justice; further, the undecideability of the aporia arises from the fact that it contains elements of justice and injustice, but cannot be 'fully' or 'truly' just as a result of the tension between the two.

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[1] In Derrida's usage, the word '*epoche*' is synonymous with 'suspension'. See Lawlor (2010).

Finally, Derrida's "urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge" refers to the situation in which justice is indeed impossible, but constantly makes obvious the urgent need for its own presence, as evidenced by the suffering of oppressed peoples all around the world (Lawlor 2010: para. 26). In Derrida's (1990: 967) words:

> "A just decision is always required immediately, 'right away' . . . [but] it cannot furnish itself with infinite information and the unlimited knowledge of conditions, rules, or hypothetical imperatives that could justify it".

As such, the moment of judgment in the face of the impossibility of justice is actually a moment of madness – it is doomed to never accomplish its own purpose.

In this binary juxtaposition of law and justice, Derrida accomplishes what he terms 'deconstruction'. Contradictory definitions of deconstruction abound in both philosophical and sociological literature, but Derrida (1985) does offer a fairly clear definition in his "Letter to a Japanese Friend". In the letter, Derrida first begins with a negative definition: he claims that deconstruction is not "destructive" (Derrida 1985: 2-3), neither is it "an analysis" nor "a critique" (Derrida 1985: 3). Similarly, deconstruction is not a "method", an "act", or an "operation" (Derrida 1985: 4). In this sense, the word 'deconstructionism' is an oxymoron. Indeed, Derrida purposely avoids the verb "to be" in his definition of deconstruction; however, he argues that deconstruction "takes place" when an observer can see "the blind spots within the dominant interpretation" (Critchley and Mooney 1994: 366). This is precisely what Derrida gathers from the deconstruction of the opposition between law and justice – from Derrida's account, it is clear that whatever we mean when we say 'transitional justice', we cannot mean 'justice' in its true sense. If we accept the above deconstruction, we know that true justice is in fact impossible, yet always urgently necessary.

Viewed in light of Derrida's deconstruction of the law-justice binary, transitional justice is thus a highly problematic exercise – one that is fraught with both political contestation and conflicting logics. Of all the attempts at international transitional justice since the Allied-backed trials of German WWI commanders at Leipzig in 1919 (Bass 2002b: 59), the state of Israel's prosecution of Adolf Eichmann in 1960 stands out as particularly controversial. I now turn to the specific details of Eichmann's case in order to illuminate the relevance of the above theoretical discussion.

Attorney-General of the Government of Israel v. Adolf Eichmann

The cynical historian will posit that Adolf Eichmann's fate was sealed the moment an Israeli Mossad agent knocked him unconscious and bundled into a getaway car near his home on the evening of 11 May 1960. The agents held Eichmann in a makeshift cell at an Israeli safehouse in Buenos Aires and 'interrogated' him for nine days before sneaking him aboard an El Al flight to Tel Aviv on 20 May 1960 (Cesarani 2007: 233). After Eichmann's arrival in Israel, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion[2] announced to the Knesset that:

> "One of the greatest Nazi war criminals, Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible together with the Nazi leaders for what they called 'the final solution to the Jewish question' . . . was found by the Israeli Security Services . . . [he] will shortly be put on trial under the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Act" (Lippman 1982: 1).

It appears that as far as Ben-Gurion was concerned, there was no doubt that Eichmann was personally "responsible" for the Final Solution. As noted by several legal historians, such prejudice overshadowed the lead-up to Eichmann's trial – which was broadcast internationally on television - and threatened to delegitimize the entire process in the eyes

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[2] David Ben-Gurion was Israel's first Prime Minister; he headed the Israeli government between 1948-1954 and 1955-1963. The Knesset is the Israeli legislature.

of international audiences (Baade 1961; Lasok 1962; Fawcett 1963; Lippman 1982; Turley 2000). Prejudice, however, would prove to be neither the only nor the most salient problem with Eichmann's trial.

Aside from the international tort that Israel inflicted on Argentina by violating its territorial sovereignty (UN Security Council 1960), the Eichmann trial violated two foundational principles of the Continental legal tradition, of which the Israeli juridical system is mostly a product: *nullum crimen sine lege*[3] and *nulla poena sine lege*[4] (Green 1962; Chao 2006: 47). Eichmann was charged under the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Act that the Knesset passed in 1950, even though neither the law nor the state of Israel were in existence at the time that Eichmann committed his crimes (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008). Most controversially, the Act retroactively classified Eichmann's membership in the SS as criminal, in accordance with Article Nine of the International Military Tribunal Charter, which was first applied at Nuremberg in 1945 (International Military Tribunal 1945: Article 9). Since the Israeli prosecution could easily prove that Eichmann was a member of the SS (he was head of the SS "Office for Jewish Questions" between 1938 and 1945), his complicity in the crimes committed by the SS was established by default (Arendt 1963: 115); however, the prosecution also wanted to prove that Eichmann was *personally* responsible for 'crimes against the Jewish people with intent to destroy the Jewish people', 'crimes against humanity' and other war crimes (Chao 2006: 48). Indeed, Eichmann's membership in the SS automatically guaranteed that he would receive a minimum seven year prison sentence, but it quickly became apparent that the prosecution's goal was to pursue a strong enough conviction to

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[3] No crime can be committed except in accordance with the law.
[4] No punishment can be imposed without having been prescribed by a previous penal law.

warrant the death penalty (Green 1962: 458).

Dr. Robert Servatius was Eichmann's sole defense counselor for the entire trial, and pursued what can broadly be described as a "rupture defense" (Christodoulidis 2009: 3). The goal of a rupture defense is to exploit the "collision of worlds" which results in cases of revolutionary struggle, regime change, or transitional justice; or in a Nietzschean lexicon, the revaluation of values which occurs in the genealogical transition between semantic generations of 'the just'. A rupture defense highlights the arbitrary nature of the relation between 'accused' and 'accuser', and seeks to portray any ruling other than an acquittal as an outpouring of victor's justice (Vergès 1968: 97). In his brilliant reading of Hannah Arendt's (1963) *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben notes how within the context of the Israeli courtroom, one can actually view Eichmann as the Nazi equivalent of the Israeli prosecutor (Agamben and Butler 2009). Indeed, Dr. Servatius repeatedly insisted that Eichmann was a 'man of the law' who simply carried out "acts of state", not unlike the prosecutor and jurists they were faced with (Arendt 1963: 115). Servatius also tried to make the case that Israel did not have the jurisdiction to try Eichmann, since he was not Israeli, did not commit any offences in Israel, and had allegedly harmed individuals who were not Israeli at the time of the commission of the offences (Baade 1961: 416).

Since it become obvious in the early stages of the trial that Eichmann did not commit a single count of murder or assault with his own hands (Arendt 1963: 115), the prosecution spent a considerable amount of time attempting to reveal that Eichmann actually experienced a moral conflict about his role in the SS, but instead chose to ignore his conscience in favor of pursuing upward mobility in the Nazi party hierarchy. This

became an increasingly problematic position for the prosecution to pursue, especially as

Eichmann's various statements and communications from the end of the war came to

light. In an address to the SS men under his command in 1944, Eichmann allegedly

stated that:

> "I will laugh when I leap into the grave because I have the feeling that I have killed 5,000,000 Jews. That gives me great satisfaction and gratification" (Cesarani 2007: 197).

Perversely, Eichmann's apparent delight in his role in the Nazi Final Solution was

perfectly legal under German law during World War II – in fact, Eichmann's superiors

almost certainly encouraged it, and such zeal doubtlessly helped to advance Eichmann's

career.

On 11 December 1961, the Israeli tribunal finally delivered its verdict. Eichmann

was found guilty of fifteen counts of "crimes against the Jewish people with intent to

destroy the Jewish people", crimes against humanity, war crimes, and membership in

three criminal organizations – the SS, SD, and the Gestapo (Arendt 1963: 114). It should

be noted that Eichmann was found *personally* responsible for these crimes, even though

he was not physically implicated in any of the acts themselves; as such, Dr. Servatius'

claim that Eichmann only "aided and abetted acts of state" which resulted in crimes was

dismissed in its entirety (Arendt 1963: 115). Instead, the court found that Eichmann had

actually "acted as his own superior" (Arendt 1963: 116) and that his actions eclipsed

those who were further up on the Nazi Party hierarchy – a claim that remains quite

controversial to this day. Despite an appeal and pleas for mercy from both Eichmann and

various Jewish and Gentile groups around the world, the tribunal sentenced Eichmann to

death on 29 May 1962, and had him executed two days later.

As Hannah Arendt (1963: 130) would later cynically suggest, a more honest verdict

for Eichmann might have read:

> "You told your story in terms of a hard-luck story, and, knowing the circumstances, we are, up to a point, willing to grant you that under more favorable circumstances it is highly unlikely that you would ever have come before us or before any other criminal court . . . [but] in politics obedience and support are the same. And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations - as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world - we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang."

As such, an alternative way to interpret the tribunal's ruling is that Eichmann's true crime

was not the autonomous commission of crimes against humanity, but the *failure* to resist

both the orders he received and the 'illegal' organization that he worked for. Indeed,

what is so chilling about the Eichmann case is that many (if not all) of us are implicated

in power structures that we have to come to view as natural and legitimate, but which

perpetuate oppression and inequality to some degree. However, it is only when these

structures crumble – or are reversed – that we begin to truly awaken to the implications of

our actions. To this day, I believe that much of the fascination with Adolf Eichmann's

trial in Jerusalem stems from the fact that – to their horror – many people are actually

able to see a brief reflection of themselves in Eichmann, the genocidal bureaucrat.

Recognizing the 'Differend': Kant, Lyotard, and Reflective Judgment

In the late eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant (2000 [1790]: 43) drew a distinction

between 'reflective' and 'determinant' judgment which still resonates in debates on

morality today. For Kant, a "determinant judgment" occurs when the outcome of

individual cases are predetermined by an existing theory or structure; for example, when

"the structure of arithmetic determines the result of its internally generated problems, such as those of addition or subtraction" (Docherty 1994: 409). By contrast, Kant developed the idea of the "reflective judgment" to describe appraisals of beauty or other highly subjective qualities which are not guided by an overarching theory or structure (Swift 2009: 62). In other words, while the individual may have a certain set of aesthetic tastes, these tastes do not automatically generate a standardized judgment when presented with a new *objet d'art.* It is precisely this tension between determinant and reflective judgment that Hannah Arendt highlights in her seminal report on Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem. As Arendt (1963:137) wrote:

> "There remains, however, one fundamental problem, which was implicitly present in all these postwar trials and which must be mentioned here because it touches upon one of the central moral questions of all time ... those [Germans] who were still able to tell right from wrong went really only by their own judgments, and they did so freely; there were no rules to be abided by, under which the particular cases with which they were confronted could be subsumed. They had to decide each instance as it arose, because no rules existed for the unprecedented".

In Arendt's view, Nazi war criminals were not the only actors that failed to make reflective judgments - the Israeli postwar tribunal arguably made exactly the same mistake (Swift 2009: 63). In this sense, Eichmann's trial was thus not about Eichmann at all - the latent function of the court was not only to judge Eichmann's actions, but also the legitimacy of the fascistic *ideology* which influenced him prior to- and during the Second World War. By ignoring Eichmann's banality, his normalcy, and his bourgeois predictability, the Israeli tribunal simply transformed him into a conduit through which they could retroactively channel a politico-moral appraisal of the insanity of the Holocaust. In doing so, the Israelis failed to take advantage of an opportunity to ask important 'reflective' questions about fascism and genocide *vis-à-vis* ideology and human

nature.

In reflecting upon the Holocaust, Jean François Lyotard (1988) advanced the notion of the "differend" to encompass the problem of passing determinant judgments in the postmodern age. In legal discourse, a 'differend' is a specific type of aporia which arises when two opposed parties in a dispute are in the right according to their own "terms of reference, but:

> "cannot accommodate, or refuse to accommodate, with the other party; and there is no common ground or third set of terms of reference which will allow an adjudication between the two parties while respecting their terms of reference (Docherty 1994: 408).

In other words, the differend exists wherever those who are in a position to pass judgment lack a neutral framework through which to effectively process radically different narratives. This acknowledgement of judicial inadequacy stands in direct opposition to modernist conceptions of justice. Historically speaking, "the just" is often associated with "the true" - justice often depends on a "revelation of truth" or an uncovering of fact (Malpas 2003: 53-54). Under modernism, the task of judgment is essentially an epistemological one - it involves a process of stripping away illusory layers of appearance to reveal the true nature of reality beneath (Docherty 1994: 409). Much of modern thought is concerned with this project - from the Marxist task of shedding 'false consciousness', to the Ferdinand de Saussure's semiological search for a 'signified' beneath each linguistic 'signifier', to Claude Lévi-Strauss' attempts to uncover a universal structure of kinship relations in anthropology (Silverman 1994: 323-325).

Lyotard's point is that such structuralism is no longer an adequate model for seeking justice in the postmodern present; after Auschwitz, the grand historical metanarratives of Enlightenment 'Reason' and 'Progress' are demystified as social

constructions, and history becomes a series of 'events' which are open to interpretation. Instead of the structuralist quest to distinguish between 'appearance and reality', Lyotard's imperative to develop the capacity for reflective judgment highlights history as a relation between the "appearance and disappearance" of different forms of 'the real' or 'the true' (Docherty 1994: 409). This style of analysis acknowledges that Nazism did indeed contain its own style of 'morality' which guided the actions of its adherents (Koonz 2003) - notwithstanding how twisted such morality appears to contemporary observers - but stops short of careless relativism or nihilism. It is precisely this capacity for reflective judgment that I believe needs to be cultivated in order to develop a more legitimate transitional jurisprudence for the coming decades.

Conclusion

In *Survival in Auschwitz,* Primo Levi (1986: 90) describes an identifiable category of concentration camp prisoners called the *Muselmänner* (Muslims):

> "One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand . . . if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose faces and in whose eyes not a trace of thought is to be seen".

The Auschwitz prisoners called these people Muslims because of the literal translation of the word 'Islam': peaceful submission to the will of God (Agamben 1999: 45). Above all, the *Muselmänner* were resigned to their fate – a condition that Giorgio Agamben (1995) refers to as "bare life" – both physically and psychologically, they were totally exposed to the power of the state. Tragically, even the most casual perusal of history shows that Auschwitz was not the sole domain of the *Muselmänner*; in actuality, they

dwell wherever exploitation reigns supreme. Perhaps even more tragically, exploitation

knows no ideological boundaries – neither capitalist, communist, nor fascist. It is not my

intent to conclude that Eichmann's willful adherence to Nazism absolves him of

responsibility for his actions; rather, my point is that we should not judge Eichmann

without simultaneously judging ourselves. A self-reflexive model of transitional

jurisprudence is thus based on a politics of anxiety; it notes the self-affirming tendencies

of all ideologies and constantly seeks to transcend its own descent into determinant

judgment through a hermeneutics of suspicion. Such an approach may in fact be the only

plausible way forward if transitional justice initiatives are to maintain their legitimacy

throughout the coming decades.

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1. To begin, I would like to start with a few questions regarding philosophy, broadly construed. I think the best way to start these questions off is to ask about a philosophical tool very close to the hearts of undergraduates everywhere, namely that of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. I understand you have a Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on scientific realism forthcoming. How did you become involved with the Stanford Encyclopedia? What types of considerations go into writing such an entry?

Anjan Chakravartty: Yes, all the carefully guarded secrets of how one can and cannot understand scientific theories and models as yielding knowledge of the world will be revealed in the *SEP* article, which should be out before this issue of *Sophia*. The editors of the *SEP* are very crafty; only they know what criteria they use to identify their victims, and they know just what to say to trick people into contributing. But seriously, I took the invitation as a challenge and an honour. It was a challenge because so much has been thought and written about scientific realism (in essence, the view that our best scientific theories yield truths, or something close by, regarding both observable and unobservable aspects of a mind-independent world, or that they correctly describe the ontology of such a world). It is, perhaps, the most central issue in the philosophy of science, and with that comes a voluminous literature. My initial search turned up more than a thousand articles and books of immediate relevance, and the idea of trying to do justice to that many ideas in the space of an article was daunting. It was gratifying, though, to shoulder the responsibility of attempting to do that well. Knowing that this would be the first place many people turn to understand what scientific realism is was a great motivator. The aim is to be accessible, so that those without a background in the area can learn, but also not to shirk the complexity of the issues involved, so that readers learn what's really at stake, as opposed to gliding over an oversimplified gloss. That's a lot to ask, but I enjoyed the exercise very much.

2. After finishing your PhD at Cambridge, you returned to the University of Toronto as an Assistant Professor. You seem to have spent a good portion of your academic career between Canada and Britain. What do you think are some notable differences between philosophy of science in Britain and in Canada? Are there different problems addressed, or different expectations in terms of publications?

AC: Along a number of dimensions relevant to philosophy, as in all things, Canada seems to occupy a position somewhere between Britain and the U.S. The differences I noticed were more pronounced, I think, even just a few years ago, and I see greater convergence today. But at the time I was a graduate student in Cambridge in the later 1990s and shortly thereafter, two things in particular struck me. One was that graduate students in Britain seemed to be significantly less "professionalized" than their counterparts in the U.S., which had both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, there seemed to be much less calculated structuring of one's work around the question of how to get a job, and as a result, a purer focus simply on the glorious pursuit of philosophical knowledge. On the negative side, there was less of the sort of training that's standardly part of U.S. graduate programs, designed to equip students with the skills they'll need to enter into and then thrive in the profession, such as teaching, publishing, interviewing, and yes, landing a job. The second thing that struck me was a very specific exemplification of this perceived difference: there was significantly less attention paid in Britain to philosophical "trends" – if you wanted to work on a topic that was genuinely philosophical, you would find support. I was shocked when I came to my first graduate student conference in the U.S. to hear all my trans-Atlantic peers saying things like '*x* is hot right now, so I'm shifting my focus to that', or '*y* is going to be the next big thing, so that's my project'.

Of course, it's silly to take these sorts of generalizations about departments and universities across entire countries too seriously, but as I say, my experience of Canadian institutions was somewhere in between. And as I say, I've seen a great deal of convergence since, so that the differences now are less striking. No doubt some laudable, Aristotelian-Canadian balance between the extremes is the right way to go! Students do need to be equipped with professional skills, because graduate schools must function not only as places of glorious higher learning in the narrow academic sense, but also as links to a life of professional scholarship (for those who wish to go that route) more broadly. The worry about trendiness provides an excellent illustration of the need for balance, I think. Unless you're entirely sure that you have a novel take on what is universally regarded to be a philosophical dead end, that will result in a stupendous rebirth of the subject matter, you might want to think carefully about pursuing it. But there's really no sense in obsessing about what's hot or likely to be by the time you graduate. Philosophical winds blow one way and then another, so my advice to students is always to work on what you're most passionate about. That's where you're likely to do your best work, and if you do your best work, then you're more likely to succeed professionally.

3. In 2009, you acquired the position of Director of the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IHPST) at the University of Toronto. How do you see the relationship between History of Science and Philosophy of Science, in general and in your own work? The IHPST seems to be a fairly unique department within the greater structure of the University of Toronto. In your opinion, what is special about its mandate and place within the university? Is there anything uniquely valuable about the IHPST?

AC: 'Acquiring' the position makes it sound suspiciously like I won it in a game of chance, or picked it up at an estate sale. Come to think of it, that's often how it happens (but luckily, not in my case!). Becoming the chair of an academic department certainly isn't something one agrees to do lightly, but I was attracted by the fantastic potential of the unit, and the thought of helping to facilitate its contributions to the wonderful area of scholarship that is the history and philosophy of science (HPS). As in any interdisciplinary field, there's no shortage of opinions regarding what is the right relationship between its components. The goal of fusing history and philosophy so as to understand the nature of the sciences was really the founding vision of most of the HPS departments that exist today (many founded in the 1960s, inspired in no small measure by influential work by Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, and others), but that vision has fallen on hard times since. Some people still do think that it's the "right" way to study the sciences from a humanistic perspective, but I suspect that most scholars in the area are less rigid about this prescription these days (though their own visions are sometimes equally rigid in other ways). There is very historical work that isn't noticeably inflected with a deep understanding of the philosophical ideas that were a formative part of the relevant historical context, or that could be used to think about it, and there is very philosophical work that betrays little understanding of the history or indeed the practice of the science that it aims to consider. There are obvious dangers here in too strong a separation.

That said, I myself hold very strongly to a particular brand of pluralism when it comes to HPS. Work that is simultaneously both deeply historical and deeply philosophical is simply marvelous to behold, but I don't think it's the *sine qua non* of good work in HPS. (Lucky thing, too, because it's very hard to do, and it would be asking too much to expect everyone in the field to be capable of it.) I think HPS is, in fact, and rightly, an extremely broad tent. There is integrated work of the sort originally envisioned, but there is also largely historical or philosophical work. There is work that has emerged from HPS that has embraced yet more diverse forms of scholarship (anthropological, ethnographic, sociological) and sometimes focuses on more contemporary science (often under the heading of 'Science and Technology Studies' or 'Science, Technology, and Society' – STS). There is room in HPS for all of these things. What unites us all is a fascination with and a commitment to

furthering the humanistic understanding of the practices we call science, in all of their dimensions. That's my own vision of HPS.

As for my own work, well, I'm very much a philosopher of science, though I hope to avoid the pitfalls associated with too narrow a view I mentioned above. I have aspirations to develop the historical dimensions of my personality – time will tell! The beauty of HPS as a discipline is that all of the kinds of work that fall under its broad tent are fair game. One might easily vary what one does considerably over the course of one's life and still call HPS home. This captures one of the respects in which the IHPST is, as you say, a fairly unique department at the University of Toronto. There is an incredible number of highly diverse things going on here, and yet we are all unified by this absorption with humanistic understandings of the sciences. And because of this, the IHPST functions as a hinge between the sciences and the humanities at the University, allowing students and faculty to reach across that barrier and ultimately equip themselves with skills with which to break the barrier down in all sorts of productive and stimulating ways. This, I think, is something that is absolutely crucial for us to do if we are to be literate and reflective citizens of the world in which we live.

4. After finishing your undergraduate degree in Biophysics, you then moved on to philosophy. What encouraged the transition from science to philosophy? Do you see it as necessary for philosophers of science to have a formal grounding in the sciences?

AC: I have a confession to make – something I've told almost no one (okay, okay, almost everyone I've ever met). While I was specializing in Biophysics, I secretly did a major in Philosophy on the side. A simple disguise and a few extra courses here and there, and I was able to do both. So in one sense, I didn't actually transition from science to philosophy; both were there at the outset. This was part of my master plan to try not to give up on either the sciences or the humanities, because I loved them both. But in another sense, there was indeed a transition, because my desire to do everything notwithstanding, there comes a point at which you really do have to choose a primary focus, and for me that meant becoming a philosopher of science, as opposed to someone who just wants to learn as much as possible about science and philosophy. I suppose the transition began when I had the revelation that most of the questions I'd been asking in my science courses were foundational in character: what is the epistemic significance of the fact that every year, we seemed to be told that what we learned last year was merely a primitive version of, or a limiting case of, the theory we were going to learn this year?; how should apparent inconsistencies in assumptions and ontology across some of our best theories be understood?; how strongly should the scientific evidence we have compel us to believe in various kinds of otherwise mysterious entities and processes? My science professors were very indulgent, but in the end they pointed me in the direction of where I needed to go to dig into these questions as deeply as I could: the philosophy of science.

Formal training in the sciences, or for that matter, formal training in a particular science or some particular theoretical domain, is clearly very useful if your aim is to reflect on these things philosophically: it can't help but be important to know something about what you're reflecting on, and formal training is a great way to acquire that knowledge. But is it necessary? I don't think so. There's no question that you need to acquire whatever knowledge of the relevant science is necessary in order to do good philosophical work concerning it, and I would never advise someone *not* to acquire some formal training if they can. By the same token, though, I would never discourage someone who hasn't had such training if they have the aptitude and the determination to acquire the relevant knowledge however they can. The fact of the matter is that people almost always come into an interdisciplinary field with only some of the pieces of the overall puzzle they

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will need in order to do what they aspire to do – it's rare that someone enters with prior training in all the component disciplines. So if you want to work on ancient science, you have to learn Latin, ancient Greek, and so on, and if you want to work on the interpretations of quantum mechanics or the modern synthesis in evolutionary biology, you'd better learn the relevant theories. Some people are extraordinarily gifted and are able to work up the missing pieces of their puzzle on their own, but most need help. I don't think there's any one correct answer to the question of how much help one might need, though, or how much of it should come in the form of training in a classroom setting. The level of detail one needs depends on the sort of work one hopes to do, and there's a vast range of aptitudes and ways in which people learn best.

5. How have you seen the scientific community respond to the work of philosophers of science such as yourself? How do you envision the proper role of philosophy in relation to the sciences?

AC: That's a terrific question, and answering it is tricky, in part because there are different ways in which we might want to think about what's meant by 'science' and 'philosophy of science' here. One way to distinguish the two would be in terms of some precise definitions that clarify the ways in which they're distinct, but that's easier said than done. For one thing, there's something of a consensus that the tidy caricature we all learn in high school regarding "the scientific method" is just that: a rather idealized representation of scientific practice. In reality, the sciences encompass a number of interestingly disparate forms of investigation, from the highly experimental and empirical to the highly theoretical and conceptual, employing a great diversity of methods. So it's hard to say what science is in a way that collects all of those things under one definition and excludes more putatively speculative activities like philosophy at the same time. On the flip side, a number of the ways in which one might define philosophy of science – for example, as an inquiry into the foundations of scientific knowledge and practice, including the epistemology and ontology suggested by scientific theorizing, explanation, prediction, and modeling – sound like ways of characterizing what scientists often do themselves.

Another way of distinguishing science and philosophy of science is in sociological terms: there are people we call scientists and people we call philosophers, each with identifiable communities, institutions of education and employment, and so on; whatever these respective communities are doing is what constitutes the difference between scientific and philosophical inquiry. This allows for the possibility that some scientists may engage in philosophical thinking (and *vice versa*, with respect to some philosophers and scientific thinking), because nothing here precludes some overlap in the relevant communities and job descriptions. In these terms, the answer to your question about how the scientific community has responded to the work of philosophers of science depends a lot on the details of what particular scientists happen to be interested in, and on historical contingencies concerning what sorts of thinking are regarded as "scientific" and "philosophical" at any given time. For instance, in the early stages of the development of the quantum theory (our best theory regarding the very small "particles" out of which everything else is composed), some of its originators were deeply engaged with questions surrounding how best to interpret the theory ontologically. Subsequently, for much of the twentieth century, these questions were ignored in scientific practice, and thus came to be regarded as more strictly philosophical. More recently, a significant number of physicists have again become interested in the foundations of quantum theory. So are these questions scientific (again)? Or are they philosophical questions that are of interest to scientists?

Perhaps you can see why I have such difficulty answering your question! But one thing I *can* say is that if philosophy of science can enhance our understanding of the sciences in any way, shape, or form, that's a good thing. I've been gratified by the interest I've witnessed, on the part of scientists,

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in the work that we do in our field (including my own, on occasion). Admittedly, though, for most, a benign neglect of philosophy is more often the rule, sometimes due to a lack of interest, and sometimes due to a genuine bemusement concerning what we're up to!

6. Three years after the publication of your CPA Book Prize winning work, *A Metaphysics for Scientific Realism: Knowing the Unobservable*, how have you found the response to this work in the wider academic community? Your critics have had a chance now to formulate responses to your work. Have there been any critiques you've found useful? Do you feel that there have been any serious misinterpretations?

AC: I've been extraordinarily lucky with the book. With almost complete uniformity, I've found the critical engagement with the ideas I put forward there eminently charitable, and the criticisms and responses more generally inspiringly constructive. It's an occupational hazard in academia that one can't always count on being lucky in these ways, so I'm grateful. The greatest challenge any philosopher faces is not in actually thinking the thoughts (though clearly that's no piece of cake either), but rather in making his or her ideas clear – clear enough to be understood by someone not inside one's own head. So some misinterpretation and confusion is inevitable, and critical engagement often presents a wonderful opportunity to think about how one might prevent such misinterpretation and allay such confusion in future. I've found some critiques especially useful in getting me to think about how the account of scientific realism I argue for might apply to particular cases, and others in forcing me to think in more detail about the relationships between realism, empiricism, and metaphysics. I often find that I understand better what *I* mean after I've read and thought about what other people think I mean. ☺

7. Conferences seem to play a special role in the philosophical community. How do you view this role?

AC: There are a number of roles that conferences fulfill. They introduce initiates, whether students or more senior scholars who are moving into (what is for them) a new area, to what people are saying about topics of contemporary interest. They allow us to put faces to names, to meet people working on similar issues, and to establish and extend fruitful exchanges and collaborations. One side benefit of all of this is that they can become quite fun after a while. There's something inevitably daunting about going to conferences the first few times you do it, especially the big ones. You may not know anyone, and there's no question that it can be downright awkward joining in – interjecting yourself into others peoples' conversations, and so on. But it gets better, and the longer you do it, the more fun it can become, not least catching up with old friends. One of the main reasons I enjoy the Canadian Philosophical Association (CPA) annual conference so much is that it gives me a chance to catch up with one of my best friends from grad school days; I might never see him otherwise! I suppose the most profound role that conferences play is in moving philosophy forward. Philosophers are often pictured (and we often picture ourselves) as highly individual seekers of truth and wisdom, ideally to be left alone in caves until we have something insightful to share with the world. But with some rare exceptions, that picture couldn't be more misleading. Philosophy is a group activity. We learn and make progress by presenting our ideas to others, by having those ideas shaped by rigorous consideration, and by helping our colleagues likewise. This doesn't always happen at conferences, and it often happens elsewhere, but it's the best role for conferences I know.

8. Now I would like to switch to some more theoretical questions about your work and thoughts on contemporary views in philosophy of science today. Because of the substantial role of value theory in the University of Victoria's philosophy department, I will start these more theoretical questions

by asking for your view on the role of ethics in philosophy of science. Do you see a strong link between the two? Is there a role for values, more broadly, in philosophy of science?

AC: Interestingly, the ethical dimensions of science and technology haven't traditionally figured as part of the core of philosophy of science, and this is certainly true of HPS as well, conceived as a professional discipline arising in the 1960s. The philosophy in philosophy of science has been dominated, traditionally, by the epistemology and metaphysics of the sciences. That isn't to say that moral philosophy was excluded entirely, but it certainly wasn't central. I think this is changing, for a number of reasons. For starters, one consequence of the "historical turn" in the philosophy of science in the 1960s was greater mainstream attention paid to the social contexts in which science is practiced and knowledge is generated. These include economic and political dimensions, and inevitably, often intertwined with those, ethical dimensions. A number of influential scholars have since taken up this banner in different ways, including sociologists of science and feminist critics, and many of their revelations have been internalized into the philosophy of science more generally (they certainly figure centrally in much STS). There are, perhaps, more opportunistic forces at work here too. For example, bioethics was never really part of mainstream philosophy of science, but in recent years, as more and more public and private funding has been offered to promote research in this area, some departments with strengths in philosophy of science or HPS have become more open to making it part of their mandate. More broadly, if one were to extend the remit of 'values' beyond strictly ethical values, and include things like pragmatic and epistemic values, there's no question that values have always been an inextricable part of the philosophy of science. But more narrowly, I think that interest in the ethical dimensions of science has never been greater, as philosophers increasingly ponder the social relevance and impact of the sciences, not to mention the social relevance and impact of their own work.

9. After the fall of logical empiricism, Bas van Fraassen is said to have made anti-realist empiricism viable again by formulating a position he called "constructive empiricism". Thirty years later, do you think that position is rationally tenable? If not, why not? If so, why do you nevertheless count yourself as a realist?

AC: Van Fraassen's accomplishment was really quite wonderful. There have always been other motivations for antirealism – essentially, the negation of realism, as I described it above – but when his book introducing constructive empiricism (*The Scientific Image*, 1980) was published, the idea of empiricism as a primary motivation had lost a lot of its luster. This was due in large part to the semantic theory associated with logical empiricism, to the effect that terms for unobservable things (things you can't detect using only your five senses, like an atom of gold, or DNA) are meaningful only in so far as they can be linked to or re-expressed by means of terms for observable things, or possible observations. For a number of reasons, this was ultimately judged to be an unworkable theory of meaning. But constructive empiricism cleverly escapes these worries by adopting a realist semantics; terms for unobservable things are interpreted here in just the way a realist would. The weight of its antirealism is borne instead by the epistemology of the position: constructive empiricists are agnostic about scientific claims regarding unobservable things, whereas realists generally are not.

I suppose that whether one thinks that either constructive empiricism or realism is rational will depend a great deal on what one thinks rationality is, exactly. Certainly, many have argued that if one is going to believe in various observable things, there is no good reason to stop there and not believe in some of the unobservable entities and processes of scientific interest as well. I'm sympathetic to this view, but that isn't quite the same thing as saying that it's irrational to believe otherwise. Van Fraassen himself has a very permissive understanding of rationality, according to

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which one is rational so long as one doesn't believe things and act in such a way as to sabotage one's own epistemic projects. To the extent that the constructive empiricist and the scientific realist might be viewed as thinking of science in terms of different epistemic projects (the former holding that science aims to tell us about observable things, and the latter that science aims to tell us about unobservable things too), they might reasonably have different views about what to believe, or so one might argue. I'm sympathetic to this too. So empiricism and realism might both furnish internally consistent and rational ways of interpreting scientific knowledge, though they disagree about what to believe. I'm a realist myself because I believe that, in certain cases, where the evidence is strong enough, we have good reason to think that we know things about unobservable entities. But I'm not sure I'd want to condemn those who are epistemically less adventurous than me as irrational. There are no certainties when it comes to inferring substantive things from the data of scientific observation and experiment, and different judgments as to how far we should go may well be rational.

10. In your book, *A Metaphysics for Scientific Realism* (2007), you noted "Some think there are as many versions of scientific realism as there are scientific realists. That is probably a conservative estimate! There are probably as many versions of realism as there are realists and antirealists." You call your brand "semirealism". What is that and how do you see your form of realism and approach to metaphysics relating to other forms and approaches? For example, following a 1989 paper by John Worrall ("Structural Realism: The Best of Both Worlds?"), there was a lot of interest generated about a position that he called "structural realism". What do you think about the viability of that position today, and how has it influenced your formulation of semirealism?

AC: Semirealism is an attempt to fuse together what I take to be the most compelling insights developed by realists over the years in response to various forms of antirealist scepticism. One thing that has become abundantly clear in the dialectic between these views is that it doesn't make sense to think of realism as some sort of totalizing, absolute position regarding all scientific claims. There is simply too much variation in the evidential support for different parts of our best scientific theories and models for it to be reasonable for anyone to be equally confident about all of them. Some unobservable entities and processes are better confirmed than others, so the trick to being a sophisticated realist is to identify criteria that allow one to identify which parts of theories are most likely to be true, and to make one's degrees of belief (that is, the confidence one has in various propositions) responsive to that sort of assessment. I think this more nuanced approach to realism deflates the most pressing antirealist objections, but of course, there are promissory notes here. What sorts of criteria are indicative of greater epistemic warrant? What sorts of things might one end up being a realist about as a result? These are the questions I tackle in the book. And given that some of the most convincing responses to antirealist scepticism to develop in the literature have come from advocates of particular versions of realism – like so-called entity realism and structural realism – I take semirealism to be closely related to these positions in a number of ways.

Another thing I attempt to do in the book is to give a coherent, unified proposal for what the ontology of the world could be, such that the picture of realism I've just described is tenable. To a large extent this metaphysical proposal is independent of the account of realism it underpins, in the sense that there may be other coherent and unified proposals that would do the same job. But merely to say that there may be others is easy; to demonstrate that there is even one such proposal is challenging. Part of the goal in providing my own demonstration was to show that it can be done – that when, in the defense of their view, realists appeal to things like causal processes, laws of nature, and natural kinds, this is not just a bunch of hot air. Ultimately, whether the metaphysical underpinning I provide is convincing should be judged according to the standards applicable to metaphysics, but as a conceptual resource, I think having it, or something like it, is indispensible to

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realism. In this I think my approach to the subject differs significantly from that of many others, who simply take it for granted that the primary concepts most often employed in defending realism are not a lot of hot air after all. But since this is precisely what some antirealists dispute, I don't think it's sufficient to be lackadaisical about this.

There has been an explosion of work on the subject of structural realism in the past ten years. In part this explosion has been fueled by a great deal of confusion about what structural realism is, and this isn't helped by the fact that it's main proponents actually intend a number of very different things. But that isn't necessarily a bad thing – it's evidence of a highly fertile area of philosophical inquiry, and I do think that semirealism can be viewed as a kind of structuralism. All of this work owes a debt to Worrall's resuscitation of the idea from the history of twentieth century philosophy, where it cropped up in different forms in the work of a number of important philosophers and scientists. Worrall's own mature explication of what *he* means by structural realism is a lot closer to empiricism and instrumentalism and further from what most people have in mind by realism than was obvious from his seminal 1989 paper (I elaborate this a bit in a recent paper: 'Scientific Realism and Ontological Relativity', *The Monist* 94: 157-180). His view and others in the same vein (including more robustly realist variants) are epistemic versions of structuralism, in that they claim that our best scientific theories tell us only about the structural features of unobservables, and nothing else. There are also a number of so-called ontic versions, which agree that we have only structural knowledge of the unobservable, and deny that there is anything other than structure in the world; that is, they deny that there are entities that stand in the relations that putatively constitute structures, or contend that if there are such entities, they're ontologically dependent on their relations in some way. Determining the viability of these positions is very much an ongoing research program, and I think that some are more promising than others! It's the parts I find most compelling that I've attempted to build into semirealism.

11. In *A Metaphysics for Scientific Realism*, you draw distinctions between detection properties and auxiliary properties, and between detectables and undetectables. What do you think the relevance of these distinctions is for our current epistemic attitudes towards science?

AC: I believe that these distinctions are at the heart of what it means to be a sophisticated realist – one who takes antirealist challenges seriously and aims to elaborate her epistemic commitments in a measured, non-totalizing, defensible sort of way. Much of the debate between realists and antirealists concerns the epistemic significance of the distinction between observables and unobservables (in the sense I mentioned above), but I think finer-grained distinctions are also epistemically relevant, and that's one reason I divide the category of unobservables into detectables (entities and processes that we've putatively detected using instruments) and undetectables (entities and processes that we haven't detected, but have posited for theoretical or explanatory reasons). I think we typically order our degrees of belief, going from stronger to weaker, as we move from claims about entities that are detected routinely and in a number of different ways, to ones that are detected with less ease or perhaps in only one way, to those that are merely posited but for extremely important theoretical or explanatory purposes, to those that are posited for less convincing reasons. There may be exceptions, but that's the general pattern. It's evidenced, for instance, in the greater confidence we typically have in the existence of an entity when it passes from the realm of the undetectable to the realm of the detectable. That sort of nuance should form part of any sophisticated realism.

The distinction between detection properties and auxiliary properties is likewise intended to capture something about our epistemic situation: indeed, one might think of it as a special case of the distinction between detectables and undetectables, in which the relevant entities are

properties. The idea is that our confidence in the reality of the properties of things should likewise vary in just the way I described confidence varying in the case of detectables and undetectables more generally – with our putative success in detecting them. Detection properties are those we have putatively detected, and auxiliary properties are any other properties described by our theories. A property that's auxiliary given our current scientific capabilities may become detectable over time, in which case it becomes a more defensible part of a realist interpretation of the theory. In the book, I recommend belief in detection properties and agnosticism about auxiliary properties, hence the term 'semirealism': a maximally defensible realism, I argue, is one that takes some parts of science more seriously, ontologically speaking, than others. Of course, there's much more to be said about how one should differentiate these parts, but in the end, determining how well detected a property is and what degree of belief should follow constitutes the hard work of realism, and inevitably, there's room here for some differences in assessment and opinion. Once we determine what scientific properties are good targets for realism, I argue that our conceptions of scientific objects, laws, and kinds can be built up from there, but that's a longer story!

12. You defend a metaphysical thesis called the "dispositional identity thesis". Can you tell me a bit about that position and why you favour it over alternatives?

AC: One of the questions I'm interested in is that of what these properties of scientific interest are, precisely. This is ultimately a question about the fundamental nature of properties, or their identity. What is it that makes electric charge the property that it is? One answer to this question, proposed by a number of philosophers (differing somewhat in the details), is that what makes a property the property that it is, are the dispositions it confers on things that have it. So if entities having negative charge are disposed to repel other entities with negative charge, and to attract entities with positive charge, these dispositions are part of the nature of charge – they constitute (in part, since negative charge is also associated with other dispositions) the identity of charge, hence the 'dispositional identity thesis'. There are reasons one might be concerned about this idea. For one thing, some empiricist-minded philosophers are suspicious of the notion of dispositions (and other notions that are often invoked more or less synonymously, like those of capacities, tendencies, and causal powers), which they hold to be insufficiently empirically grounded. Also, this dispositional identity thesis has the consequence that laws concerning these properties are strongly necessary, since if they were different, given the identity thesis, they would no longer concern the same properties. But some philosophers have a strong intuition that, for example, laws concerning the behaviours of objects with negative charge might have been different than what they are.

One important thing to keep in mind about these disputes is that at this level of fundamentality, we are reaching conceptual bedrock, so inevitably, primitive notions come into play. Some may be uncomfortable with the notion of dispositions as primitive elements of one's ontology, but I think the alternatives are even stranger. For example, on the rival, "categoricalist" theory of properties, what makes a property the property that it is, is itself something primitive, usually labeled with the term 'quiddity'. This may satisfy the intuition of some philosophers that one and the same property might have figured in different laws of nature, but it also has the consequence that *any* causal profile *at all* is compatible with the identity of a given property – in the lingo, for any given causal profile, there is a possible world in which that property has it. This seems to me a bizarre way to make sense of our ordinary talk of properties, let alone property talk in the scientific domain. The empiricist concern about the supposed spookiness of dispositions is strongly mitigated, I think, by the challenge of making sense of talk of modality (that is, necessity and possibility) in the sciences and more generally. The metaphysics of modality is notoriously difficult to elaborate, and dispositions yield a neat way of talking about what sorts of things are possible, must happen in certain circumstances, and so on. At the end of the day, I think metaphysical arguments of this sort

can only be so convincing, but recall my aim, which is to show that there is, in fact, a coherent understanding of properties that can be unified within a framework of likewise coherent accounts of the various other crucial concepts underpinning a defensible scientific realism. To that end, I argue that a number of interesting objections to the dispositional identity thesis can be dissolved.

13. *A Metaphysics for Scientific Realism* seems to be primarily aimed at furnishing a metaphysical picture for a plausible version of scientific realism. Does your current work share that aim, or have you moved on to new projects?

AC: Every time I think I've said what I want to say about realism and its metaphysical basis, and that it's time to move on, something comes up… So never say never, I suppose. (I mean that in a dignified Sean-Connery-as-James-Bond sort of way, not an I-just-changed-my-haircut-Justin-Bieber sort of way.) My current work has branched out from this foundation along several different paths. Some of it focuses on the constellation of issues surrounding scientific models, representation, and related topics like the nature of abstraction and idealization, and how these practices should influence our thinking about scientific knowledge. Another bundle of work focuses on some meta-philosophical issues concerning the relationship between science, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science. Although these new philosophical obsessions are clearly connected to the earlier projects, they've taken on a life of their own now, and though a number of apparently disparate papers have resulted, they're all connected in my mind, around the theme of how we should best think about the aims of these things we call science…which means that there's another book in the offing. So stay tuned! And thanks so much for your interest and these excellent questions.