Philosophy *Now*

a magazine of ideas

The Friendship Issue

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Humphrey Bogart as Rick and Claude Rains as Louis in Casablanca *(1942)*

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Tim Delaney photo © Helen Delaney 2018

Editorial

"Anyone who has good friends is a success"

It is no hyperbole to say that having friends, especially good friends, is a sure sign of success. The value of friendship is immense. Having friends is one of the most fundamental aspects of finding and achieving happiness. So it is safe to say we are all better off if we have a number of close friends and if we can find activities that bring us happiness that we can share with others.

Friends come in a variety of types and categories, but they're generally described as those with whom we are attached by feelings of affection or personal regard; those who provide assistance and support; those on good terms with one another; and those who may share certain core attributes such religious and cultural affiliations, or a common interest such as travel, music, a favorite sports team, or an appreciate for fine dining or the fine arts. Best friends – the apex of the friendship hierarchy – possess a multitude of virtues, including being reliable, sympathetic, trustworthy, easy-going, respectful, dependable, generous, understanding, fun to be with, passionate, caring, tolerant, considerate, loving, accepting, and honest.
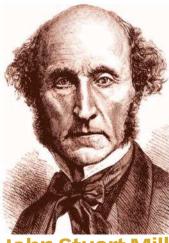
The meaning of 'friendship' can vary a great deal depending upon the type of friendship. Some friendships are based on utility, while others are characterized by a connection so strong that the friends feel a *need* to keep in regular contact. Some friendships involve a simple trust that the other will not hurt you; some are designed for normal companionship; and others involve unconditional love, support, and/or commitment. Friendships are rarely one-sided, as it takes at least two willing individuals to negotiate the boundaries to really participate in such a relationship. When friends have a positive experience they are more likely to maintain the friendship, but when the association no longer brings happiness to all the friends, it is likely to end.

Traditionally, friendships have relied on face-to-face encounters with others; however, with the rise of the internet, friendship has expanded to the electronic and even virtual worlds. In these worlds it is possible to forge and maintain friendships without ever having met your friend face-to-face. Still, if they are real friends (not just Facebook 'friends'), these friendships are based on the same basic characteristics of friendships found throughout history: trust, loyalty, dependability, and so on.

We can only venture to guess about the nature of friendships in the future. Face-to-face friendships will always exist, at least for as long as we possess physical bodies. But if technology continues to advance, we may all eventually reside in a Matrix-type world where all our connections will be electronically mediated. Nonetheless, it is a safe bet that friendships will always be a key component of humanity.

The articles in this issue address the topic of friendship from the time of Aristotle through to the current variations of friendships, including electronic friendships, also taking a look at the application of friendship to a particular social institution (education), and an analysis of what Thomas Aquinas thought about amiability. Tim Madigan and Daria Gorlova begin with a quote from Aristotle that emphasizes the important of friendship: "For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods." They go on to describe Aristotle's three types of friendships: friends of utility, friends of pleasure, and friends of the good, focusing especially on the latter. Anastasia Malakhova and yours truly together describe how the categorization of friendships has evolved since the time of Aristotle to the point now where far more than just three types of friendships need to be identified, including friendships that are established and maintained via electronic interactions rather than the traditional face-to-face associations. Robert Ruehl's article on the importance of friendship for education is a fascinating read and will be appreciated by all, but especially by those in academia, students and teachers alike. Ruehl describes the works of ancient Greek and Roman social thinkers, then applies their ideas on friendship to the social institution of education. Séan Moran provides an intriguing look at friendship by analyzing Aquinas's three key effects of friendship, and also considers the implications of an afterlife where all those who make it to Heaven will be friends with God.

Friendship is a quite fascinating topic. On the one hand, most of us have a working knowledge of its meaning and already value friendship; on the other hand there is always so much more we can learn about it. I hope the friendly articles in this friendly issue of *Philosophy Now* will enhance your understanding of friendship as the authors' perspectives expand the knowledge each of us already have about it. It is also my hope that I have gained some new friends as a result of editing this issue!

Tim Delaney

- # Giant Karl Marx Bestrides Trier
- # Derek Parfit's Photography Exhibition Opens
- # Bertrand Russell Prison Letters Project

News reports by Anja Steinbauer and Tim Beardmore-Gray

Happy Birthday: Marx Turns 200

Karl Marx was born 200 years ago, on May 5, 1818, in the German city of Trier, a major centre of power both of the Roman and of the Holy Roman empires, but at Marx' time a part of Prussia. It is fair to say at the good people of Trier are conflicted about the city's famous son. On the one hand, they are not shy about making the most of the commercial opportunities that this occasion affords: From plastic garden gnome Marxes to commemorative 0€ bank notes, all kinds of capitalist kitsch is available for Marx fans to celebrate their hero's bicentenary. On the other hand, there have been both pro- and contra- Marx protests in the run-up to the festivities. A particular point of contention has to do less with Marx and more with China. The People's Republic has donated a 5.5 m tall bronze statue of Marx – accessorised with a crimson cloth for the unveiling – which now beautifully but controversially adorns a space close to Trier's most famous monument, the huge Roman city gate Porta Nigra.

The Philosopher as Photographer

There are some things you are quite likely to know about Derek Parfit (1942-2017): that he was a brilliant Oxford philosopher, that he wrote two hugely influential books, *Reasons and Persons* (1984) and *On What Matters* (2011), that his contributions changed the debates in the fields of personal identity and moral theory. What you may not know is that he was also an avid architectural photographer. For two decades he spent several weeks per year in St Petersburg and Venice devoting himself to his photography, an interest he pursued with the same meticulous dedication characteristic of his philosophising. He once remarked that he wanted "to take good photographs and write good philosophy, for their own sake." If you happen to find yourself in London over the next month, here is your chance to see Parfit's photographic work on exhibition: 'The Mind's Eye: the Photographs of Derek Parfit' will run from May 11 to June 30, 2018 at Narrative Projects, 110 New Cavendish Street, London W1W 6XR.

The Cost of Beauty

You don't have to be a philosopher specialising in practical ethics to believe that it is wrong for lab animals to have to die for the sake of cosmetics companies blessing us with yet another body lotion or lipstick. Though many consumers feel that way, they may not be aware that in 80% of all countries it is still legal to test cosmetics on animals. The European Parliament has now called for a EU diplomatic initiative at the UN to work towards a worldwide ban on these practices by 2023. Within the EU the sale of cosmetics products that have been tested on animals has been prohibited since 2013.

Brixton Letters Project

In 1918 British philosopher Bertrand Russell was sentenced to six months in Brixton Prison for his anti-war activism. Over the next few months the Bertrand Russell Research Centre at McMaster University in Canada plans to publish all of Russell's many prison letters online at http://russell-letters.mcmaster.ca – each one a hundred years to the day after it was written. Transcripts will appear alongside scans of the original letters and informative annotations. Russell apparently saw his incarceration as a great opportunity to get some work done. He wrote to his brother Frank on May 6, 1918: "Conditions here are good for philosophy… I shall cultivate my mind enormously." His very first letter on arrival in prison – a blunt request to the Governor for certain privileges – reveals that Russell was soon paying rent for his own private cell. With recipients including the Home Secretary, the pacifist Gladys Rinder and his lover the actress Constance Malleson, the letters will no doubt shed light on the criminal pacifist's personal life and anti-war politics. They may also provide insights into his philosophical process. He writes to Frank that he aims to write an Introduction to Modern Logic and make a start on Analysis of Mind once he has the correct materials. The last letter will appear on September 13, 2018, a day before the one hundredth anniversary of the philosopher's unexpected early release.

Trier's Marx

Parfit's Venice

Aristotle on Forming Friendships

Tim Madigan and **Daria Gorlova** explain Aristotle's understanding of good friends and tell us why we need them.

Although he lived long ago, the ethical writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE) still have relevance to the present day, particularly when we want to understand the meaning of friendship. In Books VIII and IX of his work the *Nichomachean Ethics* (named in honor of both his father and son, who shared the name Nichomachus), Aristotle categorizes three different types of friendship: friendships of utility, friendships of pleasure, and friendships of the good (also known as virtuous friendships). Briefly, friendships of utility are where people are on cordial terms primarily because each person benefits from the other in some way: business partnerships, relationships among co-workers, and classmate connections are examples. Friendships of pleasure are those where individuals seek out each other's company because of the joy it brings them. Passionate love affairs, people belonging to the same cultural or social organization, and fishing buddies all fall into this category. Most important of all are friendships of the good. These are friendships based upon mutual respect, admiration for each other's virtues, and a strong desire to aid and assist the other person because one recognizes an essential goodness in them. (See Tim Madigan's article 'Aristotle's Email, Or, Friendship in the Cyber Age' in *Philosophy Now* 61 for further details on these categories.)

But, the questions remain – just *why* do we need friends? And if we do need them, how do such relationships arise?

Eudaimonia

Aristotle writes, "For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods" (*NE*, 1155a). But just why is this so? Because friends are central to Aristotle's overall conception of what constitutes a good life.

In the larger context of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle addresses what makes us human. In this book, as well as in other works, Aristotle asks the fundamental questions; What does it mean to be a human being?, and What goals will bring out our best? In this context, Books VIII and IX of the ten-book *Nichomachean Ethics* are part of his discussion of the nature of *eudaimonia*, a term often translated as 'happiness' but which literally means [having a] 'good soul'. Friendship is part of what makes for *eudaimonia*, and connects to the nature of what it means to be human.

For Aristotle, the good life consists of developing one's natural abilities through the use of reason, and a virtuous life is one where habits are formed that allow one to reach one's full potential. Some goals, such as the desire for good health, wealth, or public recognition, can propel us to action; but such aims are not what Aristotle considered our ultimate goal or *telos*. Rather, they are all means to an end. The ultimate end or goal of life is *eudaimonia*, which is based upon self-fulfillment and self-sufficiency. "For the final and perfect good seems to be self-sufficiency," Aristotle writes. "However, we define something as self-sufficient not by reference to the 'self' alone. We do not mean a man who lives his life in isolation, but a man who also lives with parents, children, a wife, and friends and fellow citizens generally, since man is by nature a social and political being" (1097a).

Philia

We are, as Aristotle points out, social and political beings. We cannot exist independently from everyone else. Our very development as humans is contingent on the proper, or natural, support given to us by other people. This leads us directly to the category of social relations Aristotle calls *philia*, which is the 'friendship of the good'. For Aristotle, the best way of defining *philia* (what we might these days call 'close friends') is 'those who hold what they have in common'. Essentially, *philia* is a personal bond you have with another being which is freely chosen because of the virtues you see in your friend.
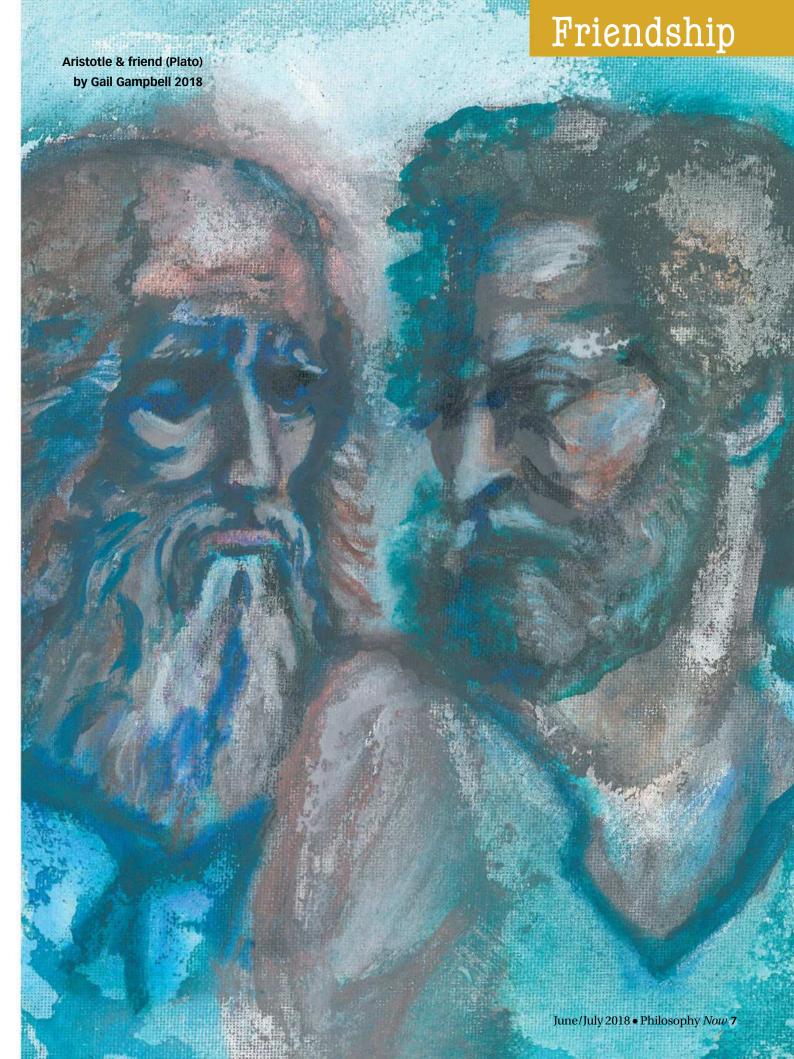
If the only people we knew were our family members, our roles in life would be quite limited, as would be our opportunities for development. But remember Aristotle's assertion that we are by nature social and political beings. *Polis* is the ancient Greek term for city, but it literally means 'a body of citizens', and it relates to the fact that most of us live not just within a family structure but rather within a larger political system. Yet most of the people in such a system are strangers to each other. If they were all related, it would be clearer what roles each person is to play (for instance, when a monarch has children, usually the firstborn is deemed to be the next in line to rule); but in most political systems there is more flexibility, and more opportunity for people to develop their talents in different ways. Good friends become useful in this sort of political situation.

Aristotle points out that if in fact all people in a given society were friends, there would be no need for laws, since we would naturally work out our differences: "When people are friends," he writes, "they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they need friendship in addition" (1155a). Some utopian thinkers, such as the followers of the later Greek philosopher Epicurus, took this to mean that we should attempt to live *only* among friends. But Aristotle is quite clear that this is not possible, for the basic reason that friendship requires commitment of time and a trusting relationship, and there are natural limits to how many such connections we can make.

Stanley Milgram & 'Familiar Strangers'
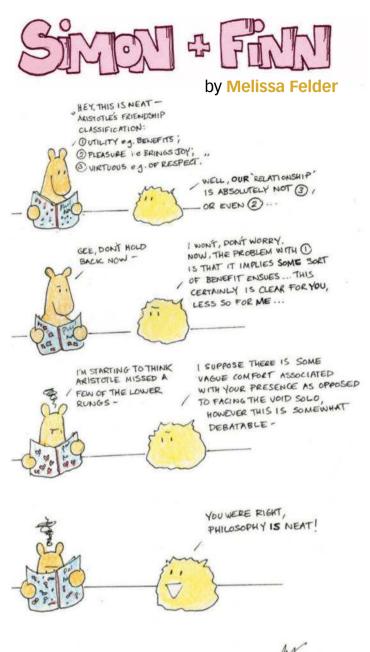
An interesting example of this limitation is the so-called 'familiar strangers' experiment of the psychologist Stanley Milgram (1933-1984).

Milgram is best known for his rather infamous 'Obedience to Authority' experiments in the early 1960s, in which participants thought they were administering electric shocks to learn-

Aristotle & friend (Plato)
by Gail Gampbell 2018

ers who didn't give correct answers to multiple choice questions. The real purpose instead was to see how far these participants would go in administering pain (which unbeknownst to them was only being simulated by those getting 'shocked') merely because they were told to do so by an authority figure. But Milgram was a complex figure who came up with several other fascinating experiments. For instance, he and his students at the City University of New York tried to show how close two random people might be by determining the number of connections that they had with each other. This so-called 'Small World' experiment was the basis for the famous idea of 'Six Degrees of Separation', which claims that, at most, there are six links between people separating everybody from everybody else (this is also the basis of the game 'Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon', in which you try to show how any actor from any film is separated from a film starring Kevin Bacon by, at most, six other people). But where Milgram most relates to Aristotle is through his so-called 'Familiar Strangers' experiment. Milgram asked his students to perform a very simple experiment – so simple that at first many of them thought he was joking: go up to someone you've seen many times but have never spoken to, such as someone you see walking the halls of the school, or someone you see waiting every day for the same subway you take, and introduce yourself to that person, then report your experience. Simple enough. But, as Milgram's biographer Thomas Blass points out, it turned out not to be simple at all – in fact, for many of the students it was emotionally overpowering. For once you've spoken to such a 'familiar stranger' you've formed a connection. They are no longer a stranger to you. You have each acknowledged each other's existence. And the next time you see them you can't just politely ignore them as you have in the past. You have to continue to make conversation, even if it's just a banal "nice weather we're having" comment.

Blass says that "Milgram felt that the tendency not to interact with familiar strangers was a form of adaptation to the stimulus overload one experienced in the urban environment. These individuals are depersonalized and treated as part of the scenery, rather than as people with whom to engage" (*The Man Who Shocked the World*, 2004, p.180). What made the experiment so uncomfortable is that it was a forced introduction, rather than a natural one. This nicely points out the fact that most of us, even while being 'friendly', are still shielding much about ourselves from others, even such basic information as our names, our family relations, where we work, and where we went to school. By sharing such information with others, we open up the possibility of their doing the same, at which point a relationship begins. That is also why it is easier to share such information, as well as much more personal information such as our political beliefs, our financial situations, and our sexual adventures, with strangers we're likely to meet only once, say on a plane, train, or boat. Since we aren't likely to ever see them again we're more willing to be open, knowing that no relationship is going to form from the disclosure. (But, as Milgram showed in his 'Small World' experiment, it pays to be cautious – how can you be sure that stranger you're talking to about how much you hate your boss or how you're cheating on your spouse isn't somehow connected, by just a degree or two of separation, *from* your boss or your spouse?)

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"If You Want a Friend, Tame Me!"

For Aristotle, friendships, especially friendships of the good, don't come easily, and must be cultivated. In such relationships, we reveal our innermost thoughts and aspirations to another. The trust between such friends is unlimited, and should not be given lightly. You have to get to know the other person, and that cannot be rushed. Your judgment should be a rational one, not one made in haste due to expediency or pleasure. "One cannot extend friendship to or be a friend of another person until each partner has impressed the other that he is worthy of affection," Aristotle warns, "and until each has won the other's confidence. Those who are quick to show the signs of friendship to one another are not really friends, though they wish to be; they are not true friends unless they are worthy of affection and know this to be so. The wish to be friends can come about quickly, but friendship cannot" (1156b). It takes time and effort.

One of the best examples of how such a friendship is formed

can be found in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 1943 classic children's book *The Little Prince*. A visitor from another planet comes upon a fox whom he wishes to befriend. But the fox tells him that he must first be tamed. "What does *tamed* mean?" the Little Prince asks. "It is something that's been too often neglected," the fox replies. "It means 'to create ties'." When the little prince replies that he doesn't have time, the fox poignantly replies: "The only things you learn are the things you tame… People haven't time to learn anything. They buy things ready-made in stores. But since there are no stores where you can buy friends, people no longer have friends. If you want a friend, tame me!" As the fox understands, real friendship comes slowly, over time. If you tame me, the fox says, then I will be unique to you, and you will be unique to me. The little prince understands, and a beautiful friendship is formed.

Is Friendship Limited In Number?

Another important point at which Aristotle is in accord with Milgram is in regards to the view that we do not open up to all people because there are natural limits to the time and effort we can put into cultivating relationships. "To be friends with many people in the sense of perfect friendship is impossible," he writes, "just as it is impossible to be in love with many people at the same time" (1158a). So Aristotle feels that there is definitely a natural limit to how many friends of the good one can have. If you have a handful of such relationships in your entire life, consider yourself fortunate. But what might the maximum number be? "Perhaps," he writes, "it is the largest number with whom a man might be able to live together, for, as we noticed, living together is the surest indication of friendship; and it is quite obvious that is it impossible to live together with many people and divide oneself up among them. Furthermore, one's friends should also be the friends of one another, if they are all going to spend their days in each other's company; but it is an arduous task to have this be the case among a large number of people" (1171a).

Some modern thinkers are giving independent verification to these claims. The British psychologist Robin Dunbar's research shows that the number is necessarily finite. According to Dunbar, "There is a limited amount of time and emotional capital we can distribute, so we only have five slots for the most intense type of relationship. People may say they have more than five, but you can be pretty sure they are not high-quality friendships" (Kate Murphy, 'Do Your Friends Actually Like You?', *The New York Times*, August 7, 2016). Five friends of the good is probably about all you can really sustain, he says.
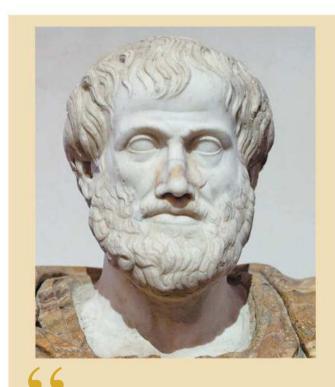
To call friends of the good 'perfect', as Aristotle does, is not imply that there are no dangers involved in forming such relationships, or no possibilities that they might end. While they are the strongest type, they are not invulnerable. For instance, there is always the danger that one may lose a friend due to death, or to the friend's moving away. This occurs in *The Little Prince*, when the prince says that it's time for him to return to his home planet. "Ah!" the fox said. "I shall weep." "It's your own fault," the little prince said. "I never wanted to do you any harm, but you insisted that I tame you…" But the fox replies that it has been worth it, "because of the color of the wheat", which will always remind him of the little prince's hair and the friendship they once had.

Happiness & Friendship

Let us end by returning to Aristotle's views. He argues that in order to be happy, we need two things: good fortune and skill. We need to develop our talents into skills so that when good fortune arrives we will know how to make the most of it. But in order to develop our skills, we need the support of others, most particularly, of good friends. They will encourage us to make good use of our reasoning skills and to avoid vices – deficiencies or excesses of behavior – that lead us astray. Aristotle's key to a good life is to achieve a 'happy medium' between extremes. And although there is no guarantee that good fortune will smile upon us, Aristotle felt that nature generally allows the possibility for human beings to develop their talents in ways that will allow them to be happy. And so, as the Beatles so memorably put it, we get by with a little help from our friends.

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" For Aristotle, the good life consists of developing one's natural abilities through the use of reason, and a virtuous life is one where habits are formed that allow one to reach one's full potential. "

Contemporary Friendships

Tim Delaney and **Anastasia Malakhova** categorize and analyze the different kinds of modern-day friendships.

What is friendship? It links people who share dispositions, a sense of intimacy or feelings of affection, and have an attachment or association with one another. As such, friends are bonded by expressions of harmony, accord, understanding, and rapport. There are many characteristics of a friend, but generally a friend is someone whom you like and trust; who supports you in a time of need; who cheers you on as you attempt some goal; and yet still is someone who may 'bust your chops' to bring you back to reality when you get a little too full of yourself. Friends are so important that the *Online Slang Dictionary* lists 139 slang words for them. Here are some examples: ace, bof, boo, bro, brohan, brother from another mother, buddy, chica, chum, cousin, crew, cuz, dawg, dog, fella, flatmate, home boy, home girl, homie, kemo sabe, pal, partner, pimpette, pookie, posse, potna, rock, sista, sister from another mister, sweetie, thug, and wingman.

We form friendships for a whole variety of reasons, including the historic purposes of safety and basic survival, but friendships also serve other important purposes, such as providing social inclusion and a sense of identity. The Austrian-American sociologist Peter Blau (1918-2002) described how people choose between alternative possible friendships by ranking the expected experiences of each potential association, then selecting the best. In particular, Blau believed that the main force that draws people together is social attraction, defined in terms of the potential rewards (whether internal or external) to be gained by for participating in the exchange among potential friends. Thus integrative bonds, such as expectations of rewards, social approval, shared opinions and outlooks on life, love, and the pleasure of social attraction, provide a pivotal role in forming friendships.

Aristotle provides us with a good starting point for any discussion on friendship. He categorized three primary types of friendships: friends of utility, friends of pleasure, and friends of the good. Some friendships are likely to stay in one category indefinitely if this fits the needs of the friends involved. For example, many of us have 'work friends' (this corresponds to Aristotle's concept of 'friends of utility'), and we are quite content with keeping it that way as we have no desire to spend time with them outside of work. Other friendships are forged because we enjoy each other's company, what Aristotle referred to as 'friends of pleasure'. Some friendships grow from the casual to the very close, what Aristotle called 'friends of the good'. But there are also friendships involving people who started out as good or close friends but over time begin to drift apart. In other words, friendships are fluid and subject to change, for any number of reasons. The type of friendship one has with others

depends on the people involved, their expectation level, their needs, and how much time and effort they are willing to spend on nurturing and devoting to the friendship. [See Tim Madigan and Daria Gorlova's article in this issue for more details on Aristotle's ideas of friendship, Ed.]

The nature of contemporary friendship seems more complex than the trifold categorization employed by Aristotle, and can be sorted into many subcategories, including folks who are attached to one another by feelings of affection or personal regard; those who provide assistance and support to one another; those who are on good terms with one another because they share certain attributes, such as religious and cultural affiliations; those who share a common interest such as music or favorite sports team; or, by those who participate in certain social activities, such as travelling or hiking.

With these considerations in mind, let's take a look at some of the most significant categories of friendships found in the contemporary era.

Casual Friends

All (face-to-face) friendships share the assumption that you've actually spent time together and bonded to some degree, or as Aristotle would put it, that you've 'shared salt' with one another. A 'casual friend' would be someone with whom you spend some time with where your encounters with one another are friendly but not very intimate. Casual friends will come and go, while closer friends may remain in your circle of acquaintances for years, perhaps even for a lifetime. Casual friendships may slowly fade away, or may end spectacularly. Research shows that the quickest way to end a friendship is betrayal. Here the trust necessary for a continuing relationship is shattered.

Close Friends

A step above the 'casual friend' is the 'close friend'. Close friends may also be known as 'good friends'. This category falls in-between casual friend and best friends. A close friend is someone you would consider part of your inner circle. Cherie Bur-

bach, a self-proclaimed 'Friendship Expert', describes close friends as those "people who know the most about your life, and have likely been through a few ups and downs with you. You may have several friends and one or two people you would consider 'good friends'. Good friends are generally those you see and talk to the most often" (see 'Stages of Friendship Development', 2017, at liveabout.com). We agree with Burbach that we're more intimate with close friends than casual friends, and that we are likely to have shared some ups and downs with close friends. However, we disagree with her conclusion that we are likely to have just one or two people we would consider close friends. Such a quantitative limitation is reserved for the 'best friend' category.

Best Friends (BF)

Casual friends and close friends are important, but only the select few can claim the title and sentiment expressed by the term 'best friend'. The best friend is the gold standard of friendships. Best friends possess all the qualities of close friends, and much more. They are the friends with whom we are very close; they are our confidants, and the people we can count on at all times including the good and bad, sad and happy, excited and bored, or when we just want to hang out with someone who will understand us. Best friends are those we value above all our other friends. Your best friend is the person whom you first think of when you want to share good news, or when you need comforting during bad times.

Friends With Benefits (FWB)

When we were kids, 'friends with benefits' might have meant someone with a swimming pool or big backyard. But nowadays 'friends with benefits', as we all (presumably) know, means 'sex buddies': people who have a sexual relationship without being involved with other aspects typical of an intimate relationship, such as monogamy or explaining their whereabouts or daily activities to one another. Having friends with benefits may at first seem a great way to achieve happiness; but of course, as most people understand, whenever sex is involved in a relationship, things tend to become complicated.

Friends of Friends, or Secondhand Friends

'Friends of friends' or 'secondhand friends' are an interesting category of friends, in that you may find them to be just as cool as your original friend, or you may find you cannot tolerate them and despise sharing time with them. When a friend introduces you to one of their other friends, they may do so because they think everyone will get along, and to increase the amount of time spent with both (albeit at the cost of one-on-one time). The friend who introduces you to someone annoying, however, may be employing a clever strategy to ditch you both.

You may find that you have more in common with a friend of a friend than with the original friend. When one begins to spend time with the secondhand friend without the original, they are likely to discuss the mutual friend as a means of easing the unfamiliar new friendship; but, eventually it may morph into a true friendship, maintained even when you both move on from the original friend. If this happens, the original friend becomes an ex-friend.

Ex-Friends

Unsurprisingly, an ex-friend is someone you were once friends with, but are no longer. This is often due to some kind of argument and/or a betrayal. The reason for friends breaking up dictates the level of disdain ex-friends have for one another. A best friend who metaphorically stabs his friend in the back by stealing his girlfriend away via lies and other manipulations is an example of the lowest of the low ex-friends. By contrast, friends who simply drift apart from one another because each has developed interests that are no longer mutual are likely to hold no grudges against one another. Aristotle would consider that to be a natural progression.

If ex-close friends who parted in less than pleasant circumstances cross paths with one another, a great deal of emotion is likely to be let loose. After all, we expect far more from our close and best friends than we do from others. It is best to either try to avoid talking to an acrimoniously ex-friend or, at the very least, try to be a better person. Civil ex-friends will avoid slandering one another, keep long-held secrets, and just move on. Being civil might be difficult, especially if you want to rip his/her head off; but in the long run it's the best course of action.

Bromance Friends

The term 'bromance' is a blend of bro (a slang term for male close or best friends) and romance. The part 'bro' reveals that this type of friendship is specifically between males. For the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2016), a bromance is a close nonsexual friendship between men; while the *Urban Dictionary* (2010) has a variety of entries on bromance, including: a complicated love and affection shared by two straight males; a non-sexual relationship between two men that are unusually close that involves the act of wooing for the purposes of becoming closer; going to unusual lengths in an attempt to become closer with another

THE LINE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATE.

"Wow... it's even thinner up close."

male friend; and, a close relationship between two bros to such a point where they start to seem like a couple. A bromance then, is a highly-formed friendship between males. While such relationships have likely occurred throughout history (think of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, or Marx and Engels) the word in recent times has become in vogue partly just because historically it has generally been less socially acceptable for males to show emotional closeness than it has been for females.

Whether or not Aristotle would consider two 'friends of the good' to constitute a 'bromance' remains an open question!

Work Friends

Many people spend more awake time with work friends than they do with most close or best friends or spouses. So it is important to have work friends if for no other reason than it makes the environment more pleasant and less stressful. Employers tend to like work friendships too, as it creates a sense of camaraderie and comfort.

Work friendships develop like most other friendships – naturally and organically. It's natural to share some of the same interests and dispositions with some of our coworkers. There are also coworkers who we would never have been friends with if we had met under different circumstances.

Among the advantages of work friends is the fact that they understand our job better than most anyone else could; they have seen us at our worse (for example, getting yelled at by the boss, or our pain from personal loss such as the breakup of a marriage or loss of a family member); they celebrate our work achievements with us, and often our personal milestones such as birthdays; and they encourage us to perform, via such methods as brainstorming. Conversely, there are some potential pitfalls with work friendships, including the potential for 'breakup' and corresponding 'ex-friend' status, which might lead to a degree of discomfort with someone you have to be around; goofing around with your work friend may lead to unprofessional behavior; having gained personal information about you, the work friend might eventually use your vulnerabilities against you; if work friends start to hang out together outside of work, it may throw off the work-personal life balance with other friends and loved ones; and, if the work friend is not in your supervisor's favor, you may be guilty by association.

Situational Friends

What connects people as situational friends is a specific, and likely dramatic, situation. This type of friendship arises based on shared circumstances with a person with whom you probably do not have any mutual acquaintances and likely share few, if any, interests; but you share an experience.

Sharing an intense situation will often establish strong emotional ties between people. The situation in question can be pleasant, such as attending a lecture, a ballgame, or a concert. Conversely, the situation may be unpleasant, such as being in the same location during a terrorist attack. Amy Moore and Christina Zambrana became friends after surviving the October 2017 Route 91 Harvest Festival attack in Las Vegas, where 58 people were killed and 546 injured during a mass shooting by a deranged domestic terrorist. Zambrana helped save Moore's life, and after surviving the killing spree, they discovered that they were both from the

Los Angeles area and loved their hometown baseball team, the Dodgers. The Dodgers invited these situational friends to serve as ball girls at Dodgers Stadium during the 2017 World Series, and through this they quickly cemented their friendship.

Neighbor Friendships

This category of friends is also the result of circumstances, but is generally far less intense than a situational friendship.

We rarely choose our neighbors. But while many people ignore their neighbors, some build a friendship. Often, such neighbors serve a utility purpose (for instance, they keep an eye on your home while you're away, or they'll sign for a package that's delivered when you're out), but other times they bring us pleasure, and may become good friends. The scenario of neighbors as close friends is used by many TV series, including such iconic shows as *Friends, Seinfeld, Neighbors,* and *The Good Life*. A neighbor-friend is someone you can call to verify that you turned off your stove, or to double-check your front door is locked. As a sign of the contemporary times, a valuable aspect of a neighbor as a friend is the access they let you have to their wi-fi.

Electronic/Cyber Friendships

Until fairly recently, our friendships were primarily restricted to those in close proximity to us, since a minimal requirement of friendship is social interaction. However, people are now able to continue old friendships or establish new friendships with little or no face-to-face interaction via the electronic world of intercomputer communication.

There is some debate over whether or not a strictly electronic relationship can qualify as a real friendship. We believe that while face-to-face relationships are almost always preferable to strictly electronic ones, there is validity in electronic friendships. After all, electronic friendships involve real people who choose to share feelings of affection or personal regard; who support one another emotionally; who share similar interests, and so on. Electronic friendships, then, are as real as the friends make them. The keys to electronic friendships, like to face-to-face friendships, are: voluntary participation, mutuality, sharing personal details about one another, and displaying some degree of affection.

Frenemies

A frenemy (sometimes called a 'frienemy'), a blending of the words 'friend' and 'enemy', has a dual meaning, as either an enemy who pretends to be your friend, or as someone who is a real friend and yet is also a rival, such as teammates on a sports team who are friends but competing for the same starting position. Or perhaps a frenemy is a person with whom we outwardly show characteristics of friendship because of certain benefits that come with the façade, but in reality we harbor feelings of resentment or rivalry, and perhaps even do not like them. *The Free Dictionary* defines a frenemy as a person who is ostensibly friendly or collegial with someone, but who is actually antagonistic or competitive with them; a supposed friend who behaves in a treacherous manner; and, as a person who is considered as both a friend and a rival. *The Urban Dictionary* also provides a variety of interpretations, including: fake friends you have for selfish purposes (this reminds us that while we may see others as potential frenemies,

we too can be the frenemy in order to gain something – a type of fake friend of utility); people you know and are cordial with, but who you don't really like and who don't really like you either; and friends you make that were once enemies, because you're planning to stab them in the back. While people have dealt with frenemies throughout history, like 'bromance', the term itself has only been introduced in the past decade or so.

The Quest for Friendship

Clearly, the modern era has many forms of friendship. The voluntary nature of friendship makes such relationships subject to life's whims in a manner that familial relationships are not. From childhood to high school, to college or the military, to starting a family and starting a career, to retirement, and any other major life event in between, we are constantly going through changes, and it stands to reason that friendships will have to adjust to these life changes as well. When priorities and responsibilities change, so too do most friendships. So cherish the treasured forms of friendships – close and best friends – and move on from the toxic ones – ex-friends and frenemies. Life is a journey made more pleasurable by good quality friendships.

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A CHINESE PHILOSOPHER ON FRIENDSHIP

Zhuangzi (4th Century BCE) was one of the founders of Daoism and the main author of the classic philosophical text known by his name. Zhuangzi's book includes his often witty disputes with his intellectual sparring partner Huizi, an inventor of paradoxes and adherent of a different philosophical school known as the School of Names, or Logicians. It also records this lament:

Zhuangzi was accompanying a funeral when he passed by the grave of Huizi. Turning to his attendants, he said, "There was once a plasterer who, if he got a speck of mud on the tip of his nose no thicker than a fly's wing, would get his friend Carpenter Shih to slice it off for him. Carpenter Shih, whirling his hatchet with a noise like the wind, would accept the assignment and proceed to slice, removing every bit of mud without injury to the nose, while the plasterer just stood there completely unperturbed. Lord Yuan of Sung, hearing of this feat, summoned Carpenter Shih and said, 'Could you try performing it for me?' But Carpenter Shih replied, 'It's true that I was once able to slice like that but the material I worked on has been dead these many years.' Since you died, Master Hui, I have had no material to work on. There's no one I can talk to any more."

Zhuangzi, Chapter 24

The Value of Friendship *for* Education

Robert Michael Ruehl calls for a friendly revolution.

Western philosophers have enthusiastically praised friendship. A few intellectuals have raised doubts about it, such as Thomas Hobbes and Søren Kierkegaard, but friendship has inspired many others, including Aristotle, Francis Bacon, C.S. Lewis, and Mary E. Hunt, who have esteemed its benefits, especially the reciprocal commitment to nurture each friend's 'best self'.

Similar admiration is somewhat lacking today, however, and the marginalization of the importance of good relationships within higher education complements this trend. With current attempts to make colleges more businesslike, reductive assessments, cost-benefit analyses and data have taken center stage. Students are statistics expressed in the language of graduation rates and post-graduation employment rates, which become selling points to attract future students. This environment shapes relationships between the staff too; in a competitive academic marketplace, faculty need data to justify their existence, and criticisms of others' work, in person or in print, often appear more combative than constructive. The point seems to be to win mental warfare and so gain a superior reputation. Quantity has overshadowed quality, and higher education misses the mark by not engaging and encouraging the whole student and the whole educator as they strive to become their best self. It is time to rethink teachers' roles and their relationships with students and colleagues. In what follows, I suggest embracing an educational framework grounded in a philosophy of friendship to nurture and sustain a more caring, mutually-supportive intellectual community.

The tension I just outlined revolves around different ways of understanding education's role. From a monetary perspective, education is about job preparation and how to capture a portion of the market. But from a different angle, education concerns the development of cultures of intellectual inquiry focused

on personal development, integrity, and utilizing diverse fields of knowledge for human fulfillment. In today's context, while many students find education worth the investment, just as many find college classrooms uninteresting. Campuses have high levels of student depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assaults, and racism. For professors, the problems are just as real, but of a different kind. Studies have found that professors are dissatisfied with their work and lack enthusiasm, and a scarcity of job security for non-tenured staff has led to unhappiness, a lack of motivation, and negative attitudes in the classroom. Shrinking departments, more responsibilities, and less support, have created a downhearted group of educational laborers. Academia, then, needs an alternative approach that can cultivate better relationships, improve environments for both learning and teaching, and develop more advantageous conditions for personal and social growth. A theory of education grounded in friendship is one response, so the rest of this article will focus on the relevance of four dimensions of friendship for higher education, and how they could shift communities of learners away from a monetary economy toward a focus on the talents and potential of individuals.

Four Dimensions of Friendship

The concept of friendship is historical; philosophers in different cultures and epochs have emphasized certain aspects of friendship that others have not. In ancient Greece and Rome, the civic dimension of friendship was prominent as some argued that it was part of the social glue that held societies together. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, friendship's centrality for a good society began to be questioned – such as when Thomas Hobbes challenged the possible socially-destabilizing nature of preferential love.

Identifying the convergences and divergences in philosophers' views of friendship is important for understanding its nuances. I wish to look at four philosophical approaches, from Aristotle, Bacon, Lewis, and Hunt. Their writings reveal friendship's significance and how friends help one another when they are weak or struggling. The need to take friendship seriously as a model for all relationships, based on how friends courageously pursue a common truth together, also emerges.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) is Western philosophy's Mr Friendship. Most scholars would turn to him first for an analysis of the concept. Plato's *Lysis*, like his other early dialogues, leaves readers with more questions than answers, including the unchallenged assumption that friends share everything in common. In contrast, Aristotle offers several claims and insights supporting the relevance of friendship for a good life. He begins with unequivocal praise for friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: "For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods" (1155a). Beyond this affirmation, his three types of friendship are useful friends, friends of pleasure, and virtuous friends, and of the three, the latter is the best. This is a relationship where each person loves the other because of his or her good character, and this relationship leads to mutual betterment through deep concern for the friend's welfare. For Aristotle, continuous personal development plays an important role in living a good life, and friends mutually aid each other to improve their characters, cultivate joy in life and flourish as

human beings. In this way, friendship is indispensable to a good life. This stands in stark contrast to contemporary views (such as the TV show *Friends*) which portray friendship as being mainly about hanging out together with little emphasis on personal growth.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) also thinks friendship a necessary component of life. Drawing on Aristotle in the opening of his essay *Of Friendship*, he comments that any person existing in solitude is "either a beast or a god." Bacon ends the essay with a stark statement: when someone enters a period of life where he is unable to carry out needed activities, "if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage." Besides the aid friends offer, Bacon says, there are two other fruits of friendship. The first is the ability of friends to help nurture peace in our emotional lives, and the second is to encourage our good judgment. So friends help one another to become better, stronger people by reducing emotional stress, helping each other to work through difficult decisions, and by doing things that the friend cannot do. Each fruit reinforces the idea that friends mutually uplift one other – that without friendship, people may languish under the burdens of life. In other words, human beings have weaknesses and moments when they cannot succeed by themselves. Friends sustain each other through such moments and their strengths complement each other.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) approaches things differently; he discusses friendship (*philia*) alongside the three other Greek words for types of love: *eros* (romantic, desiring love), *agape* (love of neighbor, charity), and *storge* (affection in general, but more specifically, parental love). He directs our attention to the significance of *agape* as a foundation, but this does not mean he thinks lowly of friendship. Instead, Lewis describes friendship as a type of love between two or more people standing shoulder to shoulder, inspired by, and pursuing, the same truth. Unlike *eros*, which is jealous, friendship is open to more than one friend; indeed, the more friends we have, the more they bring out our singular gifts. Each friend is unique because he or she can help others to improve in distinctive ways. Instead of friendship isolating people from the rest of the world, Lewis describes friendship as taking each friend beyond the narrow limits of the self: their friendship is grounded in their shared appreciation of a truth, yet this truth is always beyond their full grasp. Friends exist, then, in a process of appreciating and pursuing a common truth. So *philia* is, arguably, more about the joy of sharing in this experience of pursuit with those we love than it is about the end goal. This would make friendship process-oriented whereby the friends' growth is nurtured through a shared activity with well-matched values.

Unlike Lewis, who grounds friendship in *agape*, Mary E. Hunt (b.1951) elevates friendship into a model and goal for life. With romantic love's difficulties and marriage's failures, Hunt argues that a new relational goal is needed. No longer should the aim be romantic relationships grounded in marriage. This does not mean these relationships are insignificant or should be eliminated, but that they should grow out of friendship and be shaped by its values and orientations.

Hunt associates friendship with *fierce tenderness*. Her analysis includes a focus on *embodiment*, which emphasizes the physiological dimensions of relationships; *spirituality*, which emphasizes

deep interconnections with others and the world; *love*, which emphasizes emotions and commitments; and *power*, which emphasizes the strength to alter the world and others. This idea of friendship's fierce, tender side is important because friendship becomes political. It is not simply between two people in isolation; instead, friendship exceeds the private sphere and may be a vehicle through which social change is possible. Friends can unite and encourage each other to take a stand against injustices and to work for peace in the world. Think of the friendship between Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. With friendship as a goal and the leading relational model, Hunt urges readers to see life in a new way. Friendship is the lens through which we can examine and reimagine private and public relationships, professions, and life. No matter what we are doing, the concept of friendship should play an important role in how we think and act.
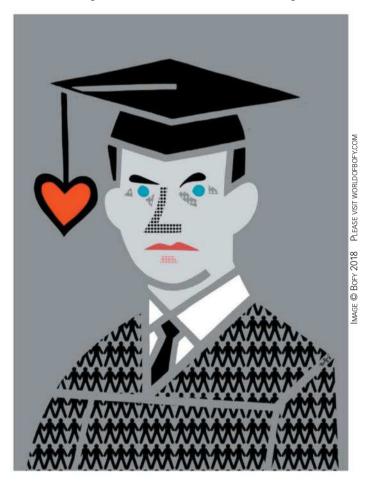
I've highlighted four different approaches to friendship. Each author has a different angle and different priorities. Character development and friendship's centrality for a life lived well are important for Aristotle. Friends helping friends in challenging moments is crucial for Bacon. The pursuit of a common truth and the non-jealous inclusivity of friendship are important for Lewis. Being both courageous and tender in friendship and using friendship as *the* relational model are crucial for Hunt. By bringing these different emphases together, friendship can be seen as a type of relationship dedicated to helping others cultivate their best self even when the odds may not be in their favor. Courageously, with receptiveness and tender attentiveness, friends uplift one another to overcome life's burdens. By using friendship as a new way for seeing, thinking about, and acting in the world, the various relationships in which we engage could be transformed.

Bringing Friendship into Education

Taking friendship seriously in the educational environment means moving beyond contemporary ideas of education focused on employment, hyper-rationalism, and rote learning. Instead, friendship redirects attention to the relational dimension of education, placing relationships at the center of the learning environment. Whether between students, between teachers, or between students and teachers, a friendship-based educational model emphasizes how these relationships can be more open, mutually supportive, and focused on nurturing the best in each person. It moves the focus away from quantification and reductive assessments, a monetary economy, and unsupportive power dynamics, toward a focus on everybody's gifts and processes aimed at mutual betterment and greater relational equality. A philosophy promoting friendship in higher education, then, could help students and educators to stay focused on people helping one another to grow, the relevance of the emotional life for education, the significance of a shared truth and a consensus of values, and the need for courage and care in intellectual pursuits. This would help dispel the dejectedness permeating higher education through engagements that encourage the development of the whole person in a supportive community.

Students pursue education to attain specific goals: self-betterment, a financially secure job, their lifelong dreams. Educators teach because it is enjoyable, offers financial stability, and allows them to pursue their dreams within and beyond the classroom.

But education expands beyond facts from a textbook or exam success; it concerns learning to live well in every realm of our lives and in every context we enter, or at least trying our best to improve. And Aristotle's view of friendship reminds us that education is more than an instrumental good; he reminds us that there is more to think about than the pleasure and utility students and educators get from the classroom. Rather, through nurtur-

ing friendship, the classroom becomes a site of mutual support. In seeing students and teachers through the lens of friendship, the relationship becomes about mutual betterment, making students better students and educators better educators, and all of them better people who live life more fully. Aristotle's emphasis on friends being concerned with the excellence of their friends is crucial for rethinking education, because it redirects attention to the cultivation of a good human being. Moreover, this reorientation can affect every relationship the students and educators have, whether on campus, in wider society, or at home.

Relationships in educational contexts occur within a lattice of lives with unique struggles, fears, joys, and hopes. Surface interactions, however, fail to go beyond polite pretenses and habitual decency. Yet using Bacon's understanding of friendship, educational systems could learn to avoid the distancing effects of titles and power and dive below the surface to engage the challenges people face. Students and teachers can also learn from Bacon's emphasis on friends helping one another with intellectual problems and decision-making. The development of critical-thinking skills is already a big part of education, but their development could be greatly facilitated by emphasising friend-

ship in educational relationships.

Friendship's emotional side may seem inappropriate for student-teacher relationships, and unnecessary between colleagues. The problematic assumption here is that emotions are unimportant in the educational environment, except in extraordinary circumstances such as dealing with distraught students. But Bacon's understanding of friendship emphasizes cultivating the whole person – the rational and the emotional dimensions – to bring balance to lives and relationships. Instead of thinking about learning only as a rational process leading to intellectual autonomy, students, teachers, and colleagues should acknowledge and honor the emotional depths of those with whom they relate. This provides an opportunity in education to encounter others through intimacy with their emotional worlds.

C.S. Lewis focuses on the open delight friends share with each other as they pursue a common truth or idea, each person bringing out different dimensions of their friends, from actions and intellect to emotions and humor. What is most important for the educational environment, however, is that friends are following a unique idea or truth. Lewis writes how a group of hunting friends encounters a deer as more than food; they glimpse and can appreciate the animal's beauty, even when the rest of the world cannot understand it.

In educational friendships, for example, a common vision could be associated with social justice, diversity, or living a good life and being a good citizen. Students and educators could bond in the classroom, in the halls, over food, or in meetings in mutually-supportive ways to understand a common truth. This creates commonalities among the members of the community, bringing people's minds, intentions, and actions together, grounded in common values. Despite differences, students and educators stand shoulder-to-shoulder in an inclusive way. Such consensus in diversity supports character development and the expression of individuals' unique attributes, both intellectual and emotional, because each person can have a sense of belonging and security within the campus community.

As she stresses the importance of the example of friendship for all relationships, Mary Hunt reveals how no aspect of life can escape its relevance. Just so, the roles of student and teacher should incorporate the values, support, and benefits of friendship. Hunt's analysis forces us to reassess how mindful we are of the physical dimensions of education: students and academics are embodied beings. Her focus also urges us to examine how love can shape and enhance educational relationships: instead of competition and power hierarchies, love concerns aiding others to benefit and uplift them. Moreover, the incorporation of spirituality would mean that learning transcends the business models and reductionist views that sell education solely for employment purposes. Instead, education would be grounded in insights into the endless interdependencies permeating both life and intellectual disciplines. Education, the multifarious aspects of life, and the robust fields of thought should not be separated, but woven together to bring multiple perspectives to bear on the complexities of existence. Finally, strength or power in education means boldly pursuing learning, understanding the implications of thought and action, and being able to choose the most beneficial paths despite resistance from unjust traditions.

Pursuing friendship in education, then, does not imply making things easier and cozier. To the contrary, education becomes more challenging and risky. Grounded in friendship values, education would be concerned with changing people and the world through intrepid thinking that crosses boundaries and is sustained by courageous caring. Thus, education becomes a process focused on healthy relationships uplifting all who take part. This is a shift to quality, and its value could be assessed by observing the increased trust, benevolence, openmindedness, understanding, and empathy that bind the community together. Respect for others is exemplified in the best friendships. The ability to transform conflicts into better relationships is another marker of a healthy community. Employment opportunities and capturing the market would still be relevant, of course, but they would be relegated to being a byproduct of the beneficial relationships that form the foundation of the educational institution that has chosen to be guided and reshaped by a philosophy of friendship. Through healthier communities, more supportive interactions inside and beyond the classroom, and deeper commitments to each other, colleges could gain reputations as transformative environments.

Closing Thoughts

There is little mystery concerning why philosophers have so highly revered the best in friendship: it is an open, caring relationship grounded in equality, mutual care and betterment, a deep commitment to each friend, and an absence of the limitations found in other ways of loving. It is important to remember Aristotle's remark in *Politics* that "community depends on friendship; and when there is enmity instead of friendship, [people] will not even share the same path" (1295b23-25). So the warmth of friendship is a crucial part of a good life and a healthy society; it brings people together in a lasting way. Furthermore, it can be argued that Socrates' deep philosophical engagement with others was also an act of friendship. His philosophical pursuit takes on added significance when one remembers that philosophy's etymological roots in the love of wisdom (*philosophia*) are grounded in *phileo* (I love), *philos* (love of) and *philia* (friendship love).

From Plato to Hunt, friendship has received more praise than disparagement from philosophers, and this is because, ideally, friendship helps to bring out the best in each person. It does this by being receptive to friends' unique gifts and enhancing them in ways that help friends to become the best people they can be. In this way, cultivating friendship can aid students and educators to focus on each other's gifts, to help each person to develop in her or his unique ways, and to do so in a caring, courageous, and receptive fashion. By putting friendship at the center of higher education, the classroom and the entire community could become more humane and focused on the various dimensions of every person's life.

Higher education is currently in need of help. Through nurturing friendship, education could become much more than it is, and more able to honor and to cultivate every community member's distinctive gifts.

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Friendly Friar

Seán Moran asks amiable Aquinas about amity.

It's not Friar Tuck I'm talking about. The jovial gourmand of the Robin Hood stories was apparently a good friend of the Merry Men and Maid Marian in Sherwood Forest. But the religious order of Friars, the Dominicans, was founded in 1216, so it is hard to see how the adventures of Friar Tuck could have taken place in the time of King Richard I as the legend claims, since Richard I died in 1199.

The Friar I'm interested in actually existed. He was a thirteenth century philosopher and Christian theologian who embraced Aristotelian, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers. Like Friar Tuck, he enjoyed his food. In fact his contemporaries called him 'The Dumb Ox' because of his large build and hesitant speech.

Friar Thomas Aquinas says some interesting things about friendship. However, his central message on this topic would probably give atheists – and some devout theists – an attack of the conniptions. I'll come to that in a minute; but for now let me promise that after any conniptions have dissipated, some useful principles still remain.

For Thomas, friendship is the ideal way we should relate to other thinking beings. We ought to be friends with those around us, because this will enrich our lives in virtue (particularly in the virtue of charity, or *caritas*). Along with Aristotle, Aquinas sees the good life as the virtuous life, and we need friends to receive many of our acts of virtue. There's nothing too controversial here, we might think.

However, Thomas stretches the notion of friendship far beyond just having warm interactions with the rest of humanity. His analysis centres on *friendship with God*. (He also wants to befriend angels, so here he pre-empted New Age thinking by several centuries.) Being a chum of the Creator is Thomas's major insight about friendship; but that idea is problematic for many people. It may strike some as an unreasonable ambition to become an acquaintance of the Almighty, particularly if like Aristotle, Aquinas's philosophical forebear, you regard only friendships between equals as genuine friendship. So believers who see the gulf between God and humans as immense, will question the Friar's view that we can befriend God. To them, the difference in our status rules out any possibility of comradeship. Non-believers too will scoff at the idea of divine friendship, perhaps dismissing it as being on a par with wanting to make friends with a unicorn.

I shall not attempt to defend Aquinas's position against these two objections, but I will suggest that some of the inferences he reaches still apply today, whatever our religious orientation or absence thereof. This is a reasonable thing to do. Even though unicorns and mermaids do not exist, it is still true that a mermaid riding a unicorn would be well-advised to do it side-saddle. And we can draw sound ethical implications from counterfactuals too. For example, were we to come across a mermaid in a tizzy because her unicorn was choking after eating a leprechaun's stash of gold coins at the end of the rainbow, we would have a moral duty to help as best we could, and not just for the stunning selfie. The point is that we don't need to be comfortable with all aspects of an analysis to accept its conclusions.
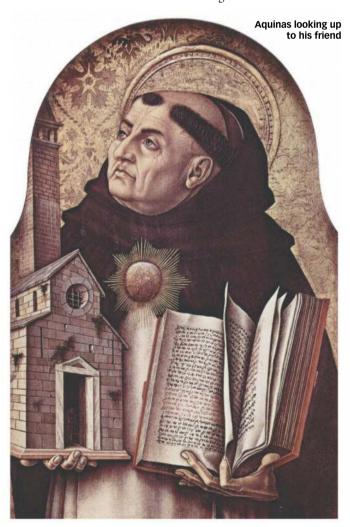
Thinking Ahead

In his analysis of friendship, Aquinas is looking ahead to the afterlife. There, he hopes, we can live in the beatific vision of paradise, in which we enjoy the bliss of being in God's company, together with the community of the blessed who have made it there too. So, he reasons, we should be friendly with fellow human beings now, because in the future they may, with us, be friends of God. The principle is pretty much "any friend of God's is a friend of mine".

A further reason is that being friendly to everyone is simply the charitable thing to do – not in the sense of 'charity' as cash donations to those less fortunate (although it could include that), but taken to mean a generally benign disposition towards those we encounter.

This is a guideline many people can probably accept. It's a subset of the Golden Rule that most religious and secular codes

Aquinas looking up to his friend

contain: 'Treat others as you would like to be treated'. Charity also has something in common with Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, which he believes is binding on all of us. This Imperative says that we should "act only in accordance with that maxim which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785). So if we would prefer to be treated in a benign way (rather than a malign one), for the sake of consistency we ought also to behave in that same way towards others.

Kant's criterion of universalisability falls down in some cases, though. For example, lawyers might want to be treated benignly, and perhaps even occasionally manage a bit of beneficence of their own, but they could not consistently will that everyone act so, since their income would soon run dry if what Shakespeare termed 'the milk of human kindness' were to flow too freely. (Aristotle recognised this too in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: "When men are friends they have no need of justice.") However, for non-lawyers, it is rational to wish beneficence, friendliness, and charity to be universal.

Aquinas agrees, but he defines 'charity' in a way that sounds strange to modern ears: as "the friendship of man for God" (*Summa Theologiae*). A charitable attitude towards our fellows is merely a secondary manifestation of this virtue. God is its primary focus. To be friends with God the supernatural virtue of charity is needed, and this rubs off in our dealings with mere mortals.

The Key Effects of Friendship

Not everyone shares Thomas's analysis, of course. So, as a conniptions-avoidance strategy, let us put to one side Thomas's metaphysical baggage, and see what aspects of his account of friendship are philosophically interesting irrespective of our beliefs.

Thomas says the three key effects of friendship (whether human, angelic or divine) are *concordia*, *benevolentia*, and *beneficentia*. *Concordia* brings us into some degree of alignment with our friend, by our willing the same general ends as they do. The specifics may differ, though. As Aquinas explains, concord between friends is "a union of wills, not of opinions." His distinction between *benevolence* – good will – and *beneficence* – good action – is also a useful one: we may want good things for our friends, but if the friendship is genuine, those good intentions will be followed through. On this analysis, British writer Somerset Maugham's assertion that "It's not enough that I succeed, my friends must fail!" can't be referring to real friends. If they

"I have about 800 Facebook friends."
"How many real friends?"
"Oh two, I guess, Doctor."

were genuine, his sentiments towards them would be benevolent, and his actions beneficent. What he describes is a type of *Schadenfreude* – deriving pleasure from the misfortunes of others. If he enjoyed outstanding financial success for his writing (which he did) while those close to him failed in their projects, this would increase the distance in accomplishment and status between him and his benchmark 'friends'.

Thomas Aquinas would have decried Maugham's way of looking at human relationships. Spoiling friendships of all types, according to him, is the vice of pride. This analysis is also not entirely convincing today, because in the twenty-first century the term 'pride' has taken on a generally more positive meaning: 'Gay Pride', for example. Pride was also seen as a virtue by Aristotle, who valorised the *megalopsychos*, the 'great-souled man' who had intense pride in his elevated social status and lack of dependence on anyone. And centuries before him, Homer depicted noble characters such as Odysseus who valued their proud heroic reputations (*kudos*) above everything. But Thomas understands the concept in a different way. He sees pride as an arrogant and unwarranted overestimation of our own excellence. Such a feeling of superiority to others is a barrier to friendship, both human and divine.

Thomas promotes humble friendships with fellow human beings as part of his overall belief system in a benign God who can also be our friend. To him, people have a value completely unconnected to their social status, financial success, beauty, intelligence, celebrity, usefulness to our careers, and so on. To Aquinas, they have value just because they are made in the image of God and also have the potential to be a friend of their Creator.

That's one way of looking at friendship. It is only convincing to theists, though; and perhaps just the subset of those who don't find the notion of friendship with God too hubristic. (In one trope of Greek mythology, *hubris* – the pride of putting oneself on a par with the gods – is punished by *nemesis*. Icarus's *hubris* in flying too close to the sun, for example, resulted in the *nemesis* of his wax-and-feather artificial wings melting).

Even without Thomas's metaphysics, we can still accept the principle that we ought to be friendly to other human beings in a non-proud way. Unlike the arrogantly self-sufficient *megalopsychos* of Aristotle, we are nowadays interdependent in several respects. One of these dependencies relates to knowledge. So, if we only ever befriend people like ourselves, our knowledge-base will suffer from being too narrow. In surveying knowledge, as in surveying terrain, a wide baseline for triangulation is desirable. To widen it requires us to entertain (though not necessarily accept) the opinions of others across an expansive social, cultural, political, gender, and ethnic landscape; and our epistemic mission should be animated by a spirit of concord – 'a union of wills', as Aquinas puts it. This can act as an antidote to the echo-chamber effect of only having friends (real or virtual) who share our opinions. As a bonus, we can also experience the pleasure of enjoying a wide range of culinary delights in the company of our varied friends. And that is something of which both Friars, Tuck and Thomas would heartily approve.

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Teleology Rises from the Grave

Stephen Asma says biology needs to understand the purpose – the 'telos' – of organisms and systems.

In 1790, in his *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant famously predicted that there would never be a "Newton for a blade of grass." Biology, he thought, would never be unified and reduced down to a handful of mechanical laws, as in the case of physics. This, he argued, is because we cannot expunge *teleology* (goal-directedness), that is, the idea of *purpose*, from living systems. The question 'What is it for?' applies to living structures in a way that has no counterpart in physics.

Most Anglo-American philosophers, historians of science, and theologians have completely misunderstood his argument. Their usual narrative goes like this: Kant said there would be no Newton of biology; along comes Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the Newton of biology, who shows that natural selection explains adaptation without appeal to purpose; fast-forward to the present, and we are now the inheritors of a mechanical biology, and only religious cranks still bleat on about teleology. There it is, clear and simple. And wrong.

There are a few different teleology traditions, but the Anglo-American conversation has been blithely unaware of all but the dumbest and loudest version. This is the one which claims that adaptation in nature must be the result of a supreme Designer because chance alone cannot account for gills in water, lungs on land, complex eyes, cell flagella, etc, and that's why a mechanical science will be incomplete. This, in a nutshell, is the *natural theology* [arguing for God from nature, Ed] tradition of teleology. It goes back to Plato's *Timaeus*, but its heyday was in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Even Darwin, before he went on his famous voyage on the HMS Beagle, read and admired the natural theology of William Paley, who likened nature to an elegant watch. A system of parts that fit other parts precisely and has a function of telling time – a watch – presupposes a designing intelligence – a watchmaker.

Darwin killed the design argument. His theory of chance variation and natural selection drove a stake though its heart. Rather, the accumulation and spread of heritable traits by the mechanical operations of genes, proteins, geology, climate, and so on, slowly shape organisms to fit their environments, making them *appear* designed. In philosophical jargon, Darwin changed *a priori* design – God's plan – into *a posteriori* adaptation. Excellent popular-science postmortems of natural theology include Richard Dawkins' *Blind Watchmaker*, Daniel Dennett's *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, and Jerry Coyne's *Why Evolution is True*.

A very small but vocal minority never got the obituary notice. They never accepted that Darwin staked the heart of natural theology, and they carry on that tradition, calling it Intelligent Design (ID). Like Doctor Frankenstein, ID folks keep trying to stitch together a body out of the corpse of natural theology and revitalize it. Here's the problem. Whenever anyone mentions the word 'teleology' or 'purpose' in biology, the Darwinian orthodoxy get out the pitchforks and chase the fiend down. Some concepts of teleology have nothing to do with religion; yet they get caught up and exterminated anyway in the confusion.

Other teleology traditions include (i) Aristotelian teleology, (ii) holism, (iii) unity of nature, (iv) *conatus*/vitalism, (v) *autopoiesis*, and various nuances within each category. The popular anthropomorphic tradition of natural theology gets mixed together with these other traditions. So, let's sift them, and see if there's anything there compatible with Darwinian naturalism.

Aristotelian Teleology

Aristotle saw goal-directedness in nature because natural processes always unfold toward some goal; acorns develop into oak trees. Also, parts of organisms are simultaneously for the sake of their wholes: bone tissue is for the sake of bone, blood is for the sake of circulation, and teeth are for the sake of chewing. Aristotle refers to these ends/goals as *final causes*, defining a final cause broadly as 'the end, for the sake of which a thing is done.'

Aristotle's teleology is difficult for us to appreciate because hundreds of years of Medieval theology misinterpreted it as saying God's mind put the goals into nature. That was not Aristotle's view, despite generations of Schoolmen who tried to 'baptize' him. Then after the scientific revolution, people came to think of nature as a giant machine, and like all machines the goals would need to be installed by some kind of designing mind. Again, this was not Aristotle's view. Instead, he thought of teleology as a feature of nature in the same sort of way that we think of gravity: as an impersonal, undesigned, aspect of matter.

Aristotle was pretty critical of the simple versions of evolution that he saw in Empedocles and Democritus, because he thought that material bits could not clump together into sustainable organisms unless matter had the organism's recipes built into nature, in terms of his final and formal causes. So Aristotle saw teleology as a way of describing the regularity of biological procreation, behavior and anatomy. If he had known about DNA, he probably would have slapped his forehead and said, "So, *that's* how the information shapes matter!" But notice, we *still* have Aristotle's final cause question: How does a common stuff (his was matter; ours is DNA, or stem cells) get differentiated into diverse organs and organisms? The DNA alone is not enough to explain this, and after we cracked the genome we realized that we needed to study development more carefully, so we're finally discovering hox genes and epigenetic processes that regulate all that DNA potential into actual organs, structures and behaviors. Those regulatory causes only recently targeted by biologists were the aspects of life that Aristotle called 'teleological'.

Unlike natural theology, Aristotle's 'methodological' teleology is not incompatible with Darwinism. Aristotle just thought that you can't do biology by talking only about whirling atoms; you also need to discover why this organ or behavior fits with the animal's structure/function and environment. That question only reverts to divine psychology if you're a natural theologian; but for both Aristotle and Darwin it reverted to the unique natural living conditions of the organism.

Holism

Setting aside his temporal teleology (acorns becoming oak trees), let's concentrate on the holism tradition that Aristotle created. The holism tradition of teleology claims that biology cannot be reductionist but must instead recognize the causal relationships of cells inside tissues, inside organs, inside physio-systems, inside organisms, inside environments. The Medieval metaphysicians pursued this avenue, calling it *mereology*, the study of the relationships between parts and wholes, but they derailed the inquiry by trying to determine which of these nested levels was the true 'essence' of the thing. Eventually Anglo-American analytical philosophy became reinterested in holism in the twentieth century,

but only as a logic problem. Continental philosophy, on the other hand, has had a longstanding obsession with biological holism. Goethe, Kant and Hegel were deeply interested in the way that biological form seemed to govern simpler physio-chemical processes, and they tried various ways of understanding the organization of nature without appeal to natural theology.

Why can't biology succeed by dissecting everything down to chemistry? Because we often can't understand a biochemical process without understanding what it's *for*. We need to know what *beneficial effects* it has for the organism. No one in chemistry would claim that the carbon loses electrons 'for the sake of' becoming carbon dioxide; but in biology we have to acknowledge how (unless it's a vestigial trait or a spandrel) a specific trait or behavior is for the survival of the organism or its population. So all the biochemical processes that result from breathing oxygen are a way of running an organism for fast chemical reactions in its cells. Sexual reproduction, for another example, also has advantageous selection effects, increasing offspring fitness through variation and hybrid vigor. This adaptive effect explains why the mutation of sexual reproduction was selected for and why it persists. It is a methodologically teleological explanation.

For holists, this attempt to find 'the end, for the sake of which a thing is done' applies to the structures as well as to the processes of biology. So a leaf is unintelligible without understanding something about trees, and hence the purpose of the leaf; a heart is incomprehensible without the circulation system; a brain makes little sense except in the body of a creature that can move, and on and on. Eventually these teleological wholes are referred to the ultimate purpose or goal, which Aristotle, sounding very Darwinian, describes as "the most natural of all the functions of living creatures, namely to make another thing like themselves."

The holism school wants us to remember, amidst all the real successes of reductionistic science, the validity of higher levels of causation and explanation. Holism is a kind of causal pluralism, gently reminding the atomic and genetic determinists that organisms and ecologies are not just epiphenomena of these phenomena.

Real or Sham?

Teleological statements are explanatorily robust in biology, but are they real or sham explanations? Kant argued that reason cannot help but project purpose into biology, and we should accept modest teleological claims as 'regulative principles' of thought. By this logic, it's scientifically respectable to claim that hollow bird bones are for the sake of flight. The mind can't stop there, according to Kant, and naturally goes on to project a whole system of purposes into the biosphere. But it can quickly get silly: grass is for the sake of cows, cows are for the sake of human food, and so on… Like Voltaire in *Candide* lampooning the idea that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds," Kant lampoons the hyperbolic teleologists who claim that mosquitos help humans wake up and stay active, and tapeworms must aid digestion for their victims. The trick in biology is to keep the local teleology, but throw out the global or cosmic stuff.

When we're doing biology, Kant argued, we need to subordinate simple physics/chemistry explanations to functional tele-

ological explanations. We need both levels of causation and explanation, and one level does not reduce to the other. Many biologists and philosophers, following Kant, have argued that we can *pretend* that things are for the sake of goals, but that this pretence is just methodologically helpful ('instrumental'), and not referring to anything real. Can we, however, go beyond the purely instrumental justification to the kind of teleology that is an explanation of how things really are? Yes and no.

If a *neuroscientist* were to ask me why I do philosophy, I might say something like, "Certain neural pathways were sculpted in my developing brain, such that cingulate, prefrontal and parietal area activity easily trigger my hedonic dopamine system, causing me to like doing philosophy." When my *friend* asks me why I do philosophy, I'm likely to say something like, "Solving conceptual puzzles and reflecting on profound stuff is deeply satisfying for me." When the *Dean of my college* asks me the same question, I'm likely to trot out something like, "Philosophy improves critical thinking and shapes students into better citizens of our democracy."

These explanations are not in competition with each other. One of these accounts is not *the* correct one, usurping the others, or reducing them to mere figments. They are all compatible, and they are all true. Likewise, if geneticists give a molecular account of human skin color differences, and evolutionary biologists give an adaptive account of skin color, they are not competing to be *the* correct explanation. Here are three different but compatible correct accounts of skin color:

(a) A purely mechanical account of small changes in the melanocortin 1 receptor gene (MC1R) tells us how melanin concentrations can produce darker or lighter skin.
(b) A person living in an intensely sun-soaked region will survive better if their skin is darker because carcinogenic UV-B radiation is blocked by increased melanin pigmentation.
(c) Around 1.2 million years ago, which is about 300,000 years after our ancestors lost their body hair, group migrations started new environmental selective pressures. Lighter skin evolved in less sunny regions, allowing necessary vitamin D production, and darker skin evolved in the populations of very sunny regions.

Notice that the first, biochemistry explanation, may work fine without teleology, but the other two, adaptive explanations, are strongly teleological – not in the sense that skin cells foresaw the goals eventually arrived at, but in the sense that the *distribution and persistence* of these phenotypes and their genes only make sense if they are 'for the sake of' survival (excepting the usual caveats about spandrels or founder effects).

The Unity of Nature

Kant recognized that the human mind can't help projecting purpose into nature. But, contrary to many interpreters, this is not a free pass for Intelligent Design. Close study of his position reveals a nuanced alternative teleology. In addition to the instrumental teleology that seeks to link specific structures to functions (sharp teeth to carnivore diet, skin color to solar environment, sweat glands for thermoregulation, etc.), we must assume, he argues, a more universal teleology in all of nature in order to do science in the first place.

We need to tread carefully here because this issue is frequently misunderstood by both the foes and friends of teleology. The argument is: how could we expect nature to give us answers to our questions unless there was some rational or logical aspect in nature that could be interpreted by our rational minds? That is to say, science assumes some fit between our rational minds and nature's structure, otherwise the former could not comprehend the latter. This 'expectation of fit' unifies all nature into a single domain of possible exploration. Kant further suggests that an encompassing 'principle of purposiveness' – an expectation that we'll get answers to 'what for?' questions about the natural world – constitutes this unity of nature, and says "we must necessarily assume that there is such a unity without our comprehending it or being able to prove it." (*Critique of Judgment*, Dover Publications translation, p.15).

This is a fascinating thesis, but almost everyone has made too much of it. This unity-of-nature assumption is necessary for us to continue doing science. But the theorem will always be vague, lacking in predictive power, incapable of proof, perhaps even incapable of true comprehension. In fact the most that Kant can say about the content of this assumption is, "There is in nature a subordination of genera and species comprehensible by us", adding that there is "a harmony of nature with our cognitive faculty" (*ibid*, p.16). That's it.

The important take-away from this unity-of-nature tradition is that it's not really about nature. That's its frustrating genius. For Kant, nature's comprehendible structure is instead a function of our hardwired minds. If Kant's right, then seeing nature as purposeful, at least to this extent, is built into our cognitive faculties.

Conatus & Vitalism

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) saw nature in fairly mechanical terms, but he recognized that living things do share a simple goal-oriented tendency; they strive to survive. He called this animating principle of living systems their *conatus* ('striving'), and considered it the very essence of all creatures. It's nothing like the teleology of the natural theologians, but it is a recognition that organic nature has an essential goal-directed imperative within it that cannot be captured by purely billiard-ball causality.

In the hands of some later theorists, the *conatus* became an occult metaphysical force. Following Blumenbach, Kant seemed to think that a 'formative force' (*bildungstrieb*) worked inside matter to cause the seeming miracles of animal reproduction. Many embryologists of the nineteenth century also assumed a *vital* ('life') force because they couldn't imagine how an undifferentiated organic blob could slowly become an articulated fetus. Push-and-pull physics didn't turn unstructured mush into highly structured working parts and integrated wholes, so the fetus was either fully articulated inside the mother and just grew larger with nutrition (*preformationism*), or it was an amorphous blob that sequentially took on form via a vital force (*epigenesis*).

The vitalist tradition was very popular, even after Darwin's revolution. The idea of an occult invisible force that guides animal embryogenesis was congenial to solving the origin-of-life mystery too, and many used this *deus ex machina* to kill those two birds of the birth of life. Darwin tried a mechanical replace-

ment for the vital force, but it couldn't be corroborated. Famous embryologist Hans Driesch (1867-1941) even proffered an *empirical* vitalism, using the evidence that no matter how much he mutilated a developing vertebrate zygote, it still stayed on course, as if an invisible outside force guided the process.

Modern genetics and the science of stem cells have clarified the mystery of embryonic development for us, and occult embryology has rightly gone the way of phlogiston. However, the intuitive questions of the *conatus*/vitalism tradition are yet unanswered in modern biology, although some legitimate empirical work has emerged to better isolate the means of biological striving. For example, instead of thinking about *conatus* as a property of all living systems, neuroscientists today (like Jaak Panksepp) have discovered something like a brain-based '*conatus*' system in mammals: in the same way that all vertebrates possess a fear system, they also engage in *seeking* behavior – and recently neuroscience has isolated a foundational motivational drive that underlies diverse searching behaviors (hunting, foraging, procreation). In plain English, we call it *desire*. It is often classed with the emotions, but it is really a master emotion, a motivational system that organisms enlist in order to find and exploit resources in their environment. It energizes mammals to pursue pleasures or satisfactions, but it is not the same as pleasure. It is that growing, intense sensation of heightened attention and the increasing feeling of anticipation, as if you are just about to scratch a powerful itch.

Autopoiesis

Well before the Darwinian revolution people noticed the inexplicable weirdness of matter's self-organization (*autopoiesis*). Yes, environmental conditions dispose of, or edit out, organisms and populations with deleterious traits, but do we need a better science of the step whereby these organisms come into being in the first place? From body plans to brains, matter crystalizes and canalizes into repeatable structures. Do we need a better

science of form or self-organization itself to understand how this happens?

Many thinkers, like Darwin's friend Richard Owen or the American naturalist Louis Agassiz, thought that the development and anatomy of animal form represented the incarnation of divine ideas in physical matter. The common vertebrate structure that we share with dogs and fish reveals, according to these thinkers, an archetype or leitmotif that God installs in nature. Then mutation and natural selection go to work to spin out biological variations on the theme. This unverifiable speculation is no longer a scientifically respectable position, but it remains a popular assumption for theistic evolutionists. Still, the question of organization has not fitted neatly into neo-Darwinism. Some smart twentieth century thinkers, such as Darcy Thompson, Stephen Jay Gould, Stuart Kauffman, and William Wimsatt, have suggested (and modeled) ways that material systems tend toward specific workable structures. There's nothing occult about this. Instead it's an attempt to articulate the logic or the mechanics of a middle level between genetics and organism selection. Kauffman, for example, has shown that systems of dynamic materials will coalesce around predictable states according to logical rules. He and others have suggested that some 'self-organization science' will need to join natural selection in giving us a more accurate understanding of the development of biological form. Like vitalism before it, some of this research seeks to address the development of complexity in animal embryology or in the origin of life. This 'self-organization science' tries to understand the way that micro processes are regulated by relative macro states over time, so it treads in means/end territory. It has become scientifically respectable by assuming a materialistic naturalism – everything occurs through physical processes – but it is nevertheless a recent descendent of an older teleological tradition.

Conclusion

My short history of alternative teleology traditions should help us recognize that biological goal-directedness is not dependent on mind, that is, on divine design or occult prescient forces. Following Kant's 'instrumental' teleology, I have shown that one can be anti-reductionist about biology without nesting holism in mind. The order of both knowledge and the process is incorrectly reversed in such mind-dependent philosophy. So against the philosophers who think mind precedes biology, I submit that biological teleology actually precedes the sophisticated purposiveness of human consciousness. That is to say, the conscious mind emerges out of more primitive forms of biological conatus or seeking, not the other way around. And the biological goal-driven aspect of life is not a form of vitalism, but an accidental marriage of rudimentary nervous system, sensory-motor system, homeostasic systems in the organism, and ecologies of limited resource. Nor are these factors working to render the universe susceptible to the birth of consciousness, whatever that means.

Therefore there are perfectly legitimate forms of biological teleology that do not have conscious mind lurking behind them.

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The Original Meaning of Life

Stephen Leach and **James Tartaglia** investigate where the idea of the meaning of life originated.

Goethe   Schlegel   Schiller

What is the meaning of life? In the twentieth century most analytic philosophers either ignored the question or dismissed it as meaningless. This may be largely attributable to the influence of the school of thought known as logical positivism. Continental philosophers were always somewhat more tolerant of the question, even though they rarely put it in those familiar terms; Heidegger came close, however, with his discussion of the meaning of 'Being'.

The logical positivist idea that the question is meaningless seems to have filtered into the public consciousness with the idea that what is most bewildering about the question is not how it should be answered, but rather what it is asking. Douglas Adams picked up on this nicely in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, with his plot about the planet Earth being a super-computer designed to work out what the question means – the answer having been much easier to determine. (For the few people reading this who won't know, the answer is 42.)

In the twenty-first century there have been a growing number of analytic philosophers who are prepared to take the question seriously. In doing so, they are, unusually, falling into step with the many 'non-philosophers' who also take the question seriously. However, the distinction drawn here between philosophers and non-philosophers may not run very deep, for death makes philosophers of us all. It is in the shadow of our own mortality that the question of the meaning of life presses on us most acutely.

The Beginning Of The Meaning Of Life

It is all the more surprising, then, that the phrase 'the meaning of life' has not always been with us. In fact, it has a specific historical origin. Its immediate predecessor was the German phrase '*lebenssinn*' ('life's meaning'), which occurs in a letter of 9 July 1796 from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Friedrich Schiller. Goethe had just published Book VII of his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, and was defending himself from Schiller, who had been urging him to make his philosophy more explicit. Goethe refers to the indenture which Wilhelm Meister receives from the mysterious Society of the Tower – a contract to bind his conduct as he performs a task for the Society. Goethe says that if he had not been forced for artistic reasons to cut short the 'Indenture' section, then he would have gone on to make pronouncements on life's meaning. As it is, according to Goethe, it talks mainly about art (although modern readers might disagree with him about that). Indeed, the first sentence echoes Hippocrates' first aphorism, in which the 'art' in question is that of the physician:

"Art is long, life short, judgment difficult, opportunity transient. To act is easy, to think is hard; to act according to our thought is troublesome… It is but a part of art that can be taught; the artist needs it all. Who knows it half, speaks much, and is always wrong; who knows it wholly, inclines to act, and speaks seldom or late… Words are good, but they are not the best. The best is not to be explained by words… No one knows what he is doing, while he acts aright; but of what is wrong we are always conscious. Whoever works with symbols only, is a pedant, a hypocrite, or a bungler. There are many such, and they like to be together. Their babbling detains the scholar: their obstinate mediocrity vexes even the best. The instruction which the true artist gives us, opens the mind; for where words fail him, deeds speak. The true scholar learns from the known to unfold the unknown, and approaches more and more to being a master."

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship was closely and avidly read by poet, literary critic and philosopher Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), who thought the three greatest phenomena of his age were the French Revolution, the philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and *Wilhelm Meister*. Another admirer of *Wilhelm Meister*, at least initially, was Schlegel's close friend, the philosopher and novelist Novalis (1772-1801). It was Novalis who was, to the best of our knowledge, the first to use the phrase '*der sinn des lebens*' – 'the meaning of life'. In a manuscript composed between late 1797 and mid 1798 he wrote that: "Only an artist can divine the meaning of life." Then in 1799 Schlegel became the first to bring *sinn des lebens* into print. He did so towards the end of his philosophical novel *Lucinde*:

"Now the soul understands the lament of the nightingale and the smile of the newly born babe, understands the deep significance of the mysterious hieroglyphs on flowers and stars, understands the holy meaning of life as well as the beautiful language of nature. All things speak to the soul and everywhere the soul sees the loving spirit through the delicate veil."

Whether Schlegel was influenced by Novalis or whether he was directly influenced by conversations with Goethe and Schiller is difficult to say. This was a tight-knit group, centred around the university of Jena.

However, although Schlegel's friends Fichte and Friedrich

Schleiermacher (part of the group) praised the novel in the highest terms, *Lucinde* was not an immediate success. Many thought it pornographic; indeed, closer to our own time, Isaiah Berlin dismissed it as "a pornographic novel of the fourth order." It is therefore no surprise that the phrase '*der sinn des lebens*' did not immediately catch on. It was only after a second edition was published in 1835 that the phrase began to occur more frequently. In 1843, it is there in Danish as '*Livets betydning*' in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, which contains a section that parodies Schlegel's *Lucinde*, thus beginning the phrase's long association with existentialist philosophy; and once Schopenhauer's cosmic pessimism became a hot topic of debate it began to spread more widely in German philosophy too (although Schopenhauer himself did not use the phrase). Meanwhile in 1833-34 Thomas Carlyle published *Sartor Resartus* in serialised form; and it was in this highly influential novel, itself partly a parody of German philosophy, that 'the meaning of life' entered the English language. Carlyle took the phrase from *Lucinde*. He was a great admirer of the early German Romantics, and of Fichte, Schlegel, and Novalis in particular.

Creating The Meaning Of Life

With regard to the general philosophical background, we must pay heed to Fichte's place in the story. Although he did not use the phrase himself, both Novalis and Schlegel had been his pupils, and Fichte was preoccupied with the relationship between life and meaning in his most accessible work, *The Vocation of Man* (1799). Fichte wished to go beyond Immanuel Kant's philosophy by arguing that the nature of things-in-themselves – that is, the nature of reality as it exists independently of our experience of it – can be known, and in a sense, created by our own will, as a manifestation of the infinite will. It is this idea that Novalis picks up on in his idea that "only an artist can divine the meaning of life." The meaning of life can be divined, in Novalis' view, because it is *artistically created*. We ourselves write the book of life. "Life must not be a novel that is given to us, but one that is made by us." So whereas in the thirteenth century Bonaventure had urged us to read the book of life, Novalis, in the final years of the eighteenth century proclaimed his intention to write it.

Many have seen this view as implying solipsism or nihilism. And in fact, the views of the early Romantics do seem to us to ultimately amount to nihilism; for if we must fabricate our own meaning, this suggests there is none 'out there' to discover – unless, as the Romantics thought, our creation is to be guided by faith. (Interestingly, the word 'nihilism' was first used in its modern sense – the sense of there being no meaning of life – in 1799 in an open letter written to Fichte by Friedrich Jacobi. Thus, both the 'meaning of life' and 'nihilism' in its modern sense made their debuts in print in 1799.)

Both Novalis and Schlegel associated faith with romantic love. For Novalis, romantic love is "the key to the world and to life." In romantic love we hope to merge dream with reality. In Novalis' unfinished novel *Heinrich de Ofterdingen* (1802) the attainment of this ambition is symbolised by a blue flower. Given the central importance of romantic love in his philosophy, the blue flower might also be taken to symbolise yearning for the meaning of life. (Some have argued that the flower's colour was inspired by Goethe's colour theories, but we suspect the princi-

pal inspiration may have come from Schlegel's interest in Buddhism. In Buddhist iconography the partially open blue lotus symbolises expanding wisdom.) Novalis' novel was originally inspired by *Wilhelm Meister*, but in 1800 Novalis began to express reservations about Goethe's novel. In his view the eponymous hero was overly concerned with the prosaic business of earning a living as opposed to the pursuit of artistic inspiration.

Novalis, the first person known to have used the phrase, 'The meaning of life'

The idea that we must make our own meaning in life seems now to be more widespread than ever, and the contemporary idea philosophically seems to be not that different from that of Novalis and Schlegel. There is, of course, still widespread support for the idea that romantic love is "the key to the world and to life" – that idea has been unavoidable in popular culture ever since the 1960s; in most popular music, for example. Moreover, to judge by the elevated social status contemporary society gives to commercially successful artists, one might even suspect that there still exists some support for Novalis' elitist contention that "only the artist can divine the meaning of life." There are therefore two surprising elements to the story: the relatively recent origins of the phrase 'the meaning of life', and the similarity of contemporary ideas to those of the final years of the eighteenth century when the now familiar phrase was coined.
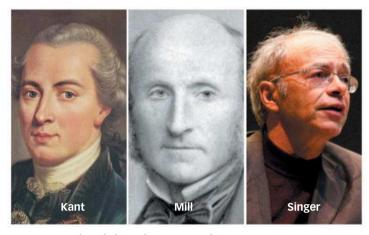
The original meaning of 'the meaning of life' seems to have survived and prospered. That is not to say we should unthinkingly accept our inheritance. Not at all: we should be aware of its origin, but we should also be aware that the meaning of life has a prehistory. Questions about the ultimate context, purpose and value of life were all discussed for thousands of years *avant la lettre*. Nonetheless, if we look at the etymology of 'the meaning of life' – that subject that makes philosophers of us all – and also at the origins of the idea that we create our own meaning, then we must conclude that it was in Jena, in the final years of the eighteenth century, in the circle of Goethe, Schiller, Schlegel and Novalis, that the modern era began.

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Stephen Leach & James Tartaglia are the editors of The Meaning of Life & the Great Philosophers, *soon to be published by Routledge.*

Philosophers At The Dog Auction

How **Kim Kavin** found herself considering the philosophies of Kant, Mill and Singer at America's biggest legal dog auction.

Kant   **Mill**   **Singer**

The philosophers entered my consciousness sometime after the sales of the last few Chihuahuas, Dachshunds, and Dogues de Bordeaux. It was several hours into the day-long dog auction in southwest Missouri, but before the auctioneer had even made it to the French Bulldogs, German Shepherds and Golden Retrievers in the alphabetical program of about three hundred dogs.

I was sitting in the bleachers with the rest of the crowd, looking down at the center-stage folding table, where bidding on a purebred English Bulldog had stalled at $185. I had the cash, but I didn't reach for it. Instead, to my surprise, I found myself haggling morality with Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, and finally, Peter Singer.

The commercial-scale dog breeders – some would call them 'puppy mill' owners – sitting all around me would have thought I was crazy to consider morality. For them, auctioning dogs is the stuff of everyday commerce, no different than auctioning farm equipment or anything else they might need to keep their businesses going. Dogs to them were no different than cows or pigs or chickens – yet another animal that can be bred to produce offspring the public wants to buy, in one form or another. These breeders, who have long helped to fill the insatiable demand for pet dogs by the millions each year, were hoping to score good deals on new canine stock for their own kennels across America's heartland, no apologies required.

The rescuers – some would call them 'animal rights activists' – were there bidding in the bleachers too. They drop tens of thousands of dollars at these auctions, because, as they argue, it's important to buy the dogs' freedom from the breeding industry. The money, of course, ultimately passes through the auctioneer's hands and then lands, *sans* his commission, in the pockets of breeders, including the types of breeders the rescuers loathe; but the rescuers offered no apologies, either. They tell adopters all across America that the dogs have been 'saved from puppy mills', collecting adoption fees, and putting the money right back into the system as they see fit.

It was the very participation of the rescuers at the dog auction that had summoned the ghosts of Kant and Mill to me in the first place. The English Bulldog, standing on the folding table down in front, of course knew nothing of their theories, known as moral law (or deontology) and utilitarianism respectively. She had no idea her life's value was being determined by a few minutes of bidding. But that was her reality: If none of us upped the $185 offer, then she'd turn out to be the lowest-priced female among fifteen English Bulldogs that day. The younger ones had gone for $500, $600, even $740, some of them not yet a year old with plenty of good breeding years left, or able to be quickly, profitably flipped in an online adoption ad or pet-store window. But this English Bulldog, already age five, left bidders unenthusiastic. In trying to figure out why as I sat quietly in the bleachers, I found myself puzzling through the possible economic, practical, and philosophical explanations.

For the breeders, holding out at $185 was an easy business decision. After all, that five-year-old Bulldog's best puppy-production years were used up, and unlike many dogs at the auction that day, she didn't even come with registration papers from the American Kennel Club, American Canine Association, or any other entity whose seal of approval would all but guarantee a high retail-sale price with puppy-buying families nationwide. Even if she went on to produce another litter or two of sellable pups, they wouldn't bring top dollar from the purebred-shopping public. Maybe they'd bring $75 or $100 apiece from a pet-store broker, barely enough to cover the cost of feeding the Bulldog and handling her veterinary expenses for the next two to three years' worth of possible breeding cycles.

'Puppy mill' cages

For the rescuers, raising the bid above $185 was a financial gamble, too. Bulldogs, especially five-year-olds with no basic training or socialization skills, aren't nearly as in-demand among adopters as the cute, fluffy Havanese, Lhasa Apso and Yorkshire Terrier puppies that were yet to be auctioned that day. The Bulldog could languish in foster care for years, shuttling from home to home, costing the rescue group that same ton of expenses in food and veterinary bills that the breeders feared. And for the rescuers too, the ultimate outcome would be financially minimal. An adopter might pay, maybe, $400 to adopt the Bulldog at a 'senior rescue' event.

Or, maybe, the rescuers just didn't like the breeder offering the Bulldog for sale, after seeing his name in the auction program: maybe he had federal inspection violations on the public record – the kind that hinted at a filthy kennel packed with dogs crammed in cages. To support a breeder like that financially, was maybe a thought that in itself made $185 too high a price to pay, no matter what might happen to the Bulldog in the long run.

And therein lies the philosophical rub that, for me, had summoned the spirits of Kant and Mill here to 'America's Puppy Mill Capital'.

What Would The Philosophers Do?

Kant, I thought, would tell the rescuers to hold on to their dollar bills. He believed that we are duty-bound to act in certain ways, regardless of our desires; and moreover, that we must base our moral actions on generalizable reasons and not on specific situations or sets of facts. To him, it's wrong to consider any action's morality merely in the context of a situation. Hypothetical imperatives, where you do act on specific situations or sets of facts, although making practical sense, make no moral sense to Kant. Kant would say that to think, 'If I want to save dogs from living in puppy mills, then I must buy the dogs at the auction' would be to formulate your morality in terms of a hypothetical imperative. The action in question – bidding on the dogs to save them from the mills – is not a universalizable rule; it's not about saving dogs from suffering generally. Instead, it only applies to a person trying to achieve the situation-specific goal of saving dogs from living in 'puppy mills'. This situation-specificness is to Kant a bad way of formulating your moral imperatives.

Kant thought a categorical imperative, on the other hand, as the correct way of formulating a moral imperative. This universal sort of imperative requires us to act in a way where it would be appropriate that everyone did the same, all the time: to act if our actions were to become universally copied. As Kant put it, we are to act as if the principle of our action were to become a universal law. Kant might instead say for instance that moral law requires withholding money from anyone we believe is using it to do harm (that's the universal law); and this would include withholding it from the owners of 'puppy mills'. He

wouldn't even need to have heard the rumors that have circulated for years, that the breeders know the rescuers are coming and breed even more dogs to jack up their auction-day income, using the rescuers' situation-conditional ethics on auction day to enhance the breeding industry's finances. Leave the English Bulldog to her fate, Kant would say, even if it would mean a shotgun to the head by a breeder who no longer considered her useful. Don't give the auctioneer or breeder a dime. Instead, do as moral law dictates that everyone should do, at all times.

Mill, on the other hand, argued for the greatest good for the greatest number: he believed that utilitarianism was the way to go, which says that we must act in a way that creates the greatest amount of overall benefit or happiness.

One of Mill's contributions to the theory of utilitarianism was to argue that certain kinds of happiness are higher than other kinds: that people doing noble works for society have a type of happiness that outrank, say, the happiness of somebody sipping a beer on his front porch at sunset. Following this doctrine, then, might mean buying the freedom of every dog brought to the folding table. Helping dogs is considered a noble work in modern society. Buying the English Bulldog here at the auction, and helping her to become part of a family instead of leaving her to the whims of a 'puppy mill' owner, is arguably as good as doing the job of any shelter director or nonprofit organization, as it's an act of rescuing a sentient creature in need. The ghost of the modern-day Australian philosopher Peter Singer (still alive!) stepped in. Singer argues that the utilitarianism Mill favored should be applied not only to human beings, but to all animals capable of suffering or feeling pleasure; so much so that he urges followers to adopt vegetarian or even vegan diets. He doesn't want sentient animals of any kind treated as livestock. And a dog auction, to Singer, would be no different than a cattle auction or a hog auction. Commonplace, perhaps, and even legal in American society, as this auction was; but certainly immoral, in that the alleged suffering of the dogs in the breeding kennels that the auction supported greatly outweigh whatever human society was gaining in the auction.

The English Bulldog seemed curious about all the people staring down at her from the bleachers. She waited quietly, looking around. The auctioneer standing behind her looked out over her round head and stocky shoulders, hoping for at least one more paddle to be raised. He tried to persuade someone else, anyone else, that this Bulldog had more value, but perhaps it wasn't a question of the cash. "One-eighty-five… One-eighty-five… Going once… Going twice at one-eighty-five…"

If you'd been sitting next to me in the bleachers that day, would you have bid $186?

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Kim Kavin is the author of The Dog Merchants: Inside the Big Business of Breeders, Pet Stores, and Rescuers *(Pegasus, 2017).*

Why Physicalism is Wrong

Grant Bartley argues that to say the mind is physical is an abuse of language.

The most widely accepted attempt at describing the nature of embodied thought in this materialistic age is called *physicalism*. (It has a variant called *materialism*, but I'll use the terms interchangeably.) There are many nuanced versions of physicalism, but in its basic form, it says that all the mental things – sensations, thoughts, ideas, all *experiences* – are really physical things: matter, energy and physical processes. But does such an idea make sense? Can it mean *anything* meaningful to say that the contents of minds are physical? I say no.

Let me start by saying that the debate about how to describe the nature of the mind is at its heart an argument about the proper language in which to do so. Although this might make the debate sound trivial or fussy, it is not. This is firstly because what we say about the mind will be fundamental for our understanding of the nature of reality, so to accurately describe the nature of the mind is not trivial but vital. Secondly, using the correct language is what makes the difference between describing something truthfully rather than falsely. And I want to say that describing the mind as 'physical' is a grossly false way of speaking about the mind that will hold metaphysics back for as long as people talk that way. In fact, I will argue that people can only believe physicalism because they haven't thought hard enough about what its core ideas actually imply or they are using the term 'physical' so imprecisely that it's meaningless.

Brains of Sand

As a scientifically-aware thinker, you'll recognize that the world is in many ways like a meticulous material machine: physical events cause physical events, and in this way the physical universe is kept in business. Physicalists say *all* events can be explained completely by causal chains of previous physical events. This was, roughly, the scientific worldview before the discovery of quantum physics. Now we know, however, that some events at a subatomic level are affected by whether there is an observing mind.

Since the brain is a physical object, the changing states of the brain can be explained with reference to electrochemical processes and so on. However, the physicalist goes further, and, ignoring quantum mechanics, claims that since scientists can give entirely physical explanations for what happens in the physical world, not only do we not need anything non-physical in our explanation of the world, there is no room for anything non-physical in our explanation of how this big machine runs. Therefore everything must be physical, even experiences and the mind.

The most extreme version of this idea is *eliminative materialism*. This says that distinct minds and experiences don't exist: there are only brains and their physical activities.

As just formulated, this is an absurd doctrine. If it were true as stated, you could not be having experiences, such as the experiences you're having now, and the perpetrators of this doctrine would have to claim themselves to be mindless zombies or automata, writing their books mindlessly. Even to say that experience is an *illusion* ignores the fact that a supposed 'illusion' of having an experience is still *having an experience*; and for an experience to exist, all that is necessary is that the experience is experienced, regardless of whatever else one might say about its nature or cause.

Well, a *clearer-minded* materialist might say, "You *do* have experience; but to speak in terms of experience as something extra to brain activity is simply to misrepresent brain activity. In the end, there is only the physical activity of the brain, and experience is this brain activity." This variant is often called *reductive materialism*. This says that science will eventually be able to describe all mind states in the same terms in which we describe brain states.

However, I would reply that this idea doesn't make sense, since experiences must be *defined* as *not being brain activity*. This is because experience content is *only* specifiable through properties that are distinctly different from brains and brain activity. Indeed, if the mind were not distinctly different from the brain, we could never have come up with the distinct concept of 'mind'.
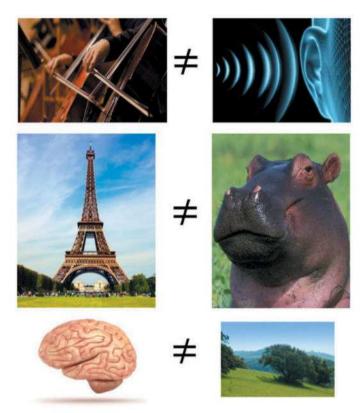
Allow me to try and justify this response.

Any usable understanding of the two terms must accept that 'mental' and 'physical' mean different things. You already know that 'mental' and 'physical' are different concepts. For instance, you do not conceive your *experience* of the sounds you hear as being the same sort of thing as *the vibration of the molecules* streaming through the air to catalyse the experience, nor even *the activity of brain cells* responsible for generating the sound experience. You recognise that one type of thing is mental and the others are physical. And I think most people distinguish 'mental' from 'physical' by recognising that the words refer to aspects of the world displaying distinctly different properties. So, the reductive physicalist claim that there is only physical brain stuff amounts to a denial of this evident fact that thoughts have a distinctly different character to physical things. But they evidently do have different characteristics. I challenge any physicalist to deny it with plausible justification.

Moreover, although these physicalists might now bravely assert that experiences will eventually be able to be talked about in entirely physical terms, they are at a loss even to begin to show how this is to be done. I assert it *cannot* be done, since experiences are distinctly not physical things. So I also challenge any physicalist to show I'm wrong by demonstrating how a single experience can be described in precisely the same terms as a brain state and not just *correlated* with that brain state.

Further Interpretations of Materialism/Physicalism

Another variant of materialism is called *property materialism* or *property dualism*. This says that experiences are properties of brains in just the same way that any physical object has properties – that a beach ball has the properties of being spherical and looking red, for instance.

Unfortunately, to say that 'experiences are properties of brains' is either a relatively uninformative truism, if it simply means 'certain mind states accompany certain brain states', or it's another fallacious way of expressing the nature of minds.

For a start, experiences are not properties of brains in the same sort of way that the physical properties of brains are properties of brains. The physical properties of brains are the sorts of properties typical of any physical thing – such as brains having physical shape, or brain cells behaving in characteristically physical ways, such as reacting chemically with each other. Experiences are not properties in this physical way. In fact, this concept is called 'property dualism' just because it recognises that mind states have their *own* properties – that is, that contents of mind have *experiential qualities* – for instance, the gold sheen of the *gold mountain* I hope you're now imagining. So how about this analogy? Someone might say that your teeth are simply a property of your mouth. While in some sense that might be true, it's not true if it's taken to mean that your teeth are not distinct things from your mouth as a whole. So it is with the mind and the brain. Mind is not just another part of the brain.

The issue here is one of *substance*. When we say that properties are material properties, we mean that they are the properties of some material substance – that matter is the substance which has these properties. The property dualist is asserting that the substance of mental properties is also matter – the same brain matter that has its material properties. But this is false. The substance of experience is experience. I mean by this that the exact (substantial) nature of experience is experience itself. *What any experience is in itself, is the experience just as it is experienced*.

In fact I think the simplest argument that mind and brain are different is that the properties of thoughts and experiences are utterly distinct from the properties of matter. Thus we can say that the mind and its contents have mental properties – for example, sensations such as an experience of red (philosophers call these *qualia*), or all the distinct properties of thought, emotion, intellect – whereas the brain has physical properties such as weight and spatial extension. Yet how do you tell anything apart from anything else, if not through the differences in their properties? Consider a hippo and the Eiffel Tower. How do we know they're different things, apart from their properties?

Specifying which sort of thing we're talking about via its properties is a most *fundamental* means of distinguishing one thing from another (The widely-accepted claim that no two objects can have exactly the same properties is known as Leibniz's Law). Yet it's *impossible* to talk about the contents of mind in the same terms that we talk about physical objects or behaviour. If they have nothing in common, how can they be the same thing? And why make a special exception here we don't make anywhere else?

It seems then that the only warrant for making experience a property of brains would be that experiences are generated by brains. But is water a property of a tap just because every time you turn on a tap you get water? Well, in an uninformative sense of 'property', the answer is 'yes'. But the water is *not* a property of the tap in the same *intrinsic* sense that 'being metallic' or 'being curved' is a property of the tap. Further, saying the water is a property of the tap tells us nothing interesting about the relationship between the water and the tap. Similarly, even if we were to allow the misleading property dualist terminology, the mind-body problem would remain, rephrased as the question, "Why do brains *in particular* have these mental properties?"

So 'property materialism' is at best a misleading way of merely affirming that brain states have experiences associated with them, and at worst, a misrepresentation of the relationship between properties and the substances that have those properties. And since it is so misleading, this terminology should be avoided. A better approach is instead what I call *naturalistic dualism*. Naturalistic dualism is the idea that the mind's contents are created through the activity of the brain, but that the mind and the brain are different things, indeed, different *types* of thing.

Often, physicalism is simply assumed by physicalists to be the idea that all experiences are created by the activity of physical brains. I believe the neurological evidence does show that experiences are created through brain activity; but I nevertheless do not call myself a physicalist, because this is not what the word 'physical' means. At the very least, *physical* means *having physical properties*. So categorising experiences or minds as 'physical' or 'material' on the basis of their being generated through brain activity is the wrong language just because minds have no physical properties. Again, the experiences created by brain activity are *a totally different type of thing* from the activity creating them. Let's again consider taps. Just because a tap produces water doesn't mean that the water is the same stuff as the tap. So it is with brains and the experiences they produce. Why should the mind, produced by the brain, thereby be the same stuff or the same sort of thing as the brain producing it? Raymond Tallis has made the good point in this regard that the only thing ever thought to produce *itself* was the God of the scholastics. The truth is rather that although experiences come about through a physical process, the process produces something *non-physical* – a mind! So if all that a physicalist means

when they assert that mental activities are physical, is that brain activities are necessary for the creation of the embodied mind, then although the latter seems true, physicalist language is being asserted here at the expense of truth, since it is utterly misleading as to the nature of mind in particular, and of reality in general. Again, it is more honest and accurate to call the mind-brain situation a *naturalistic dualism*.

Going Deeper into the Linguistic Confusion

Let's look at the conceptual distinction between mental and physical in more detail, as I want to drive home how meaningless physicalism is.

Allow me to provisionally but plausibly define 'mental' as referring to *the realm of things that exist precisely as present to awareness*. The concept 'physical' must mean something distinct from and even *excluding* that, otherwise, to say 'experiences are physical' would be to say that these particular so-called 'physical' things exist entirely to minds! But this idea cannot be physicalism, since physicalism is not the doctrine that some physical things exist entirely to minds – that some physical things are really mental in nature! (That concept is called *idealism*.)

I imagine that may not be entirely clear, so let me put the argument differently. To say that 'experiences are physical things' is to not recognize what the word 'physical' means or implies. This is primarily because essential to our concept of 'physical' is the idea that a physical thing is something of which there will always be aspects *not fully revealed in experience*. For instance, to say that an apple is a physical object, is, among other things, to say that an apple will never be all and only what you or anyone else experiences of it. And if the apple did exist entirely as experiences of it, this would on the contrary be good reason to call it a *mental* rather than a physical thing…

Not convinced? Consider then instead that core to our concept of physical is that a physical thing exists as part of a world of physical causation that operates independently of our experience of it. That is to say, our experience of the physical world is as if that world is joined together through the behaviour of things external to our minds. For example, we assume, often implicitly, but sometimes explicitly, that our experience of the physical world shows that it is not explainable in terms of it being simply one unconnected experience after another, but only in terms of laws that apply to physical objects that have an existence *separate* from our experience of them. For example, we can (usually) predict where and when a probe is going to land on Mars even when nobody is in contact with it; or we can come to perceive light that originated from quasars long before there was conscious life on Earth, or even an Earth; or we can leave a computer running an app while we're out; or assume the fridge is still working when we're not looking at it; or we see a ball disappear behind a wall, and then reappear on the other side as it rolls along; and so on. These ideas all rely on the idea that physical things exist independent of minds. So *by definition*, a physical object is *not only or purely what is in the contents of experience*. This means, conversely, that anything that is purely in a mind, is not physical *by definition*! So, again, mental things are not physical.

These arguments emphasise that *by definition* 'physical' refers to the sort of thing which does not exist as thoughts do. Given this, to say that thoughts and experiences are physical things

Physical things are by definition not only our experiences. So, experiences themselves cannot be physical things.

contradicts the concepts of both physical and mental. In other words, to assert physicalism is either to not know what the words 'mind' and 'physical' mean, or to deny their meaning.

Alternatively, if we say that experiences are really physical, then because of what 'physical' means, we must be denying that experiences are distinctly mental. "Exactly!" the materialist might reply: "What you think of as belonging to a distinct category you call 'mental' is only part of the material world." But I'd be obliged to then ask, "What does an assertion of the purely physical nature of experiences *mean*, now? Is it that experiences don't exist distinctly as experiences?" If we know *anything at all*, it is that experiences exist as experiences! (We know everything through experience, in one way or another, so the first thing we know is the reality of experience.) Isn't saying that our mind states are characteristically *physical* therefore a denial that our mind states are characteristically *mind* states? But that's *meaningless*!

In fact, if 'physical' didn't imply something distinct from 'mental', there would be no physical/mental conceptual distinction by which we could formulate the hard problem of how the *material* brain and *mental* experiences relate. But we can see what the problem is because we know that 'mental' refers to things as they exist experientially, or to a mind, whereas 'material' or 'physical' refers to things by definition existing not solely in minds. (This doesn't mean that without the language that distinguishes mental from physical the problem of how thought is embodied wouldn't exist; only that without the language, we wouldn't have the concepts of mental and physical to think about what the problem involves.)

Rather than try to deny the distinct nature of experience alongside the distinct nature of the physical, a less incredible interpretation of what physicalists are trying to do would be that they're trying to redefine 'physical' so that 'physical' *also* refers to what I've been calling the distinctly mental. Perhaps many a physicalist would respond here, "Yes, that's exactly what we're trying to do – say that the list of physical things also includes experiences, thoughts, etc – even though we obviously do not deny that experiences have a distinctly 'experiential' nature." In this case, they would be saying that the term 'physical' now includes the experiential or mental aspects of the world,

and thus that 'mind' has become part of what 'material' means. By this handy redefinition, experiences have become physical and the mind-body problem has been solved, since everything is now physical in nature, and so there's no divide of different natures to have to cross from brains to minds.

However, what would it *mean* to include experiences and thoughts in our list of physical things? It would be attempting to assert that the physical world which was essentially *defined* in terms of *being distinct from experiences* (see above) now includes experiences. Again, this is contradicting the very idea of 'physical' – once more demonstrating the emptiness and uselessness of the doctrine of physicalism. Indeed, a redefinition of the concept of 'physical' to incorporate the avowedly 'mental' would drain the concept of 'physical' of all meaning distinct from 'mental', so that physicalists would be left saying nothing. In other words, denying the distinction between the concepts of 'mind' and 'matter' makes both words meaningless.

I don't think that's what the physicalists think they're trying to do. I'm pretty sure that when they say 'physical', they're not really trying to surreptitiously say that 'physical' incorporates 'mental' as well as 'physical'. However, I'm equally sure that the assertion that "everything is physical, and this includes experiences" could only ever amount to an incoherent idea. So it seems that the only way physicalism or materialism can be *coherently* expressed, is as asserting the *patently false* eliminativist proposition that there are only physical properties in the world.

Final Thoughts About Mind & Brain

Another telling point is that even if we were in whatever way to allow a physicalist's dodgy redefinition of the meaning of 'physical' to include 'mental', this wouldn't eliminate the mind-body problem. The hard problem of consciousness still remains for anyone, *whatever* their view about the nature of mind and brain. The only thing that physicalism does here, is to require the problem to be rephrased in ridiculous terms, becoming, for example, "How does the non-experiential aspect of the physical world generate the distinctly experiential aspect of the physical world?" Why not more honestly ask, "How does the distinctly physical generate the distinctly mental?"

The conceptual distinction between mental and physical is vital. In fact it is *metaphysically fundamental*, being, I believe, the most fundamental division of the kinds of things that exist. So if we miss making this distinction, then we misunderstand the nature of reality. As if that's not bad enough, this also has significant implications for psychology. For example, whitewashing the mind/brain distinction could eliminate the difference for practitioners between whether a psychological problem is physically-originated due to a brain dysfunction or brain damage, or mentally-sourced due to traumatic experience. This conceptual confusion could have dangerous implications for treatment.
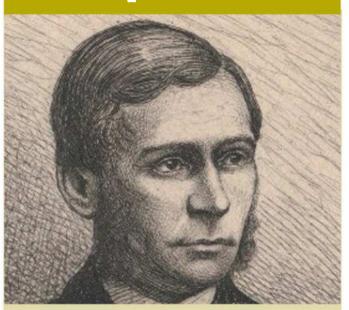
So for all these reasons, 'physical' is a basically misleading word to describe the mind. Indeed, it's a semantic abomination.

We already have a good word to encapsulate the nature of mind: 'mental'. So let's be honest and clear about the nature of reality, and say that there are both physical and mental things: that there are both brains *and* minds.

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Grant Bartley edits Philosophy Now.

Philosophical Haiku

THOMAS HILL GREEN
(1836–1882)

A state of freedom
Through self-realisation
Live the ideal

Thomas Hill Green was an *absolute idealist.* For ordinary folk this makes him sound like he was a dreamer aiming for some lofty goal; but since he was a philosopher, it means he thought that reality was ultimately constituted by minds and their contents. So he was a dreamer, really. He was also, however, a pivotal figure in the history of liberalism. Before Green, the sort of freedom liberals were worried about was the freedom to act as you wished: you were free if you could run and jump and skip and play; but if there were chains around you, literally or metaphorically, you weren't free. Green's seminal insight was to say that although such freedom is important, it's not sufficient to enable you to live a meaningful life. As the much-maligned Herbert Spencer pointed out, for many people this sort of freedom just means that they're free to starve. *Meaningful* freedom requires that we can consciously will and execute our actions in a way that most effectively promotes the fullest development of the potential latent within us. What's more, we can only achieve this blossoming of our individuality within the cosy bosom of society. Just as individuals constitute society, society constitutes individuals.

All of this in turn has implications for the role of the state. For earlier liberals, the state just had to do basic things like keep the peace so all good citizens could freely go about their business. That's not enough for people to achieve complete freedom, that is, their self-realisation, said Green. Instead, the state will need to intervene from time to time to make sure everyone gets all they need to be all they can be: a little free health care here, a touch of education there, perhaps a pinch of welfare over there. And because we're all in this together – society is an organism and we constitute its parts – there should be no complaints about paying taxes to help those less fortunate (or perhaps just too lazy) to get a job. Sounds absolutely ideal!

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Our Duty to the Dead

Stamatina Liosi enlists the help of Immanuel Kant to discover why we have a duty to treat the dead with dignity.

Among all the other indignities Syrian refugees have endured during the last seven years, from poor treatment at the borders and residency offices to humiliation and abandonment by immigration-hostile countries, they have also faced the indignity of not always finding a place for those who have died. Out of sheer necessity, corpses are abandoned in morgues, or cardboard boxes, or even in the backs of taxis.

I thought of them when, about six months ago, the day before my father's funeral, my mother remarked that we all have a duty to treat the dead with dignity. For those of us who think that intuitions or widely held beliefs aren't enough to explain why things should be done in a certain way, deeper reasons must be found. So let's ask ourselves, why *do* we have the duty to treat the dead with dignity?

Possible Reasons

It could be argued that it's a violation of the dignity of the dead if we leave their bodies unburied to be eaten by animals because the dead had dignity while they were alive. Alternatively, it could be argued that we have to treat them with dignity because they *still* have dignity. Further, it could be claimed that the dead have to be treated with dignity because through such treatment we show reverence toward the God who has created them. Or it could be claimed that the dead have to be treated with dignity because this is a virtuous act that makes us better people for doing it. For instance, the fulfillment of the relevant duty by relatives or friends helps them find comfort or closure. Finally, Michael Rosen, Professor of Government at Harvard University, concluded in his book *Dignity, Its History and Meaning* (2012) that a dignified treatment of the dead denotes honour or respect of humanity in our own person (p.157). He was inspired in this by Immanuel Kant's Formula of Humanity, according to which we must always act so that we use humanity, whether in our own person or in the person of another, as an end and never merely as a means [that is, as a person and not just as an object. Ed.]. However, I want to argue that except for a specific application of the first argument, none of these reasons are adequate to explain why we have a duty to treat the dead with dignity.

If dignity results from an inner *feeling* arising from the realization that one performs morally good acts, as Kant argues in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), then the dead can no longer possess dignity, even if they had it while alive. So far as we can tell, the dead lack any cognitive or emotional capacities.

Next, treating the dead with dignity because this is showing reverence toward God has nothing to do with the dead themselves, but is a symbolic act which refers to our own relationship with God. As not all people are religious believers, we can hardly derive a universal duty from this.

The claim that treating the dead with dignity benefits the agent herself may be true, but, as with the God case, is another egoistical claim, and this annihilates its moral value as a pure duty to the dead themselves.

Finally, concerning Rosen's thesis, it is not legitimate to identify the moral duties to oneself with moral duties to the dead. These are two distinct categories of duties, especially as it is difficult to argue in a Kantian way that the dead are persons in their own right.

Actual Reasons

Contrary to these claims, my own view is that independently of any other moral or religious considerations or concerns of virtue, we have a duty to treat the dead with dignity as a duty deriving from our good will. To demonstrate this I'll need to discuss: 1) The grounding basis of this duty; 2) Who the duty-bearers are; 3) The content or extent of this moral duty; and finally, 4) The consequences of its non-fulfillment.

1.) Our moral duty to treat the dead with dignity, namely to decently bury or cremate the body, is grounded in our *good will*. That is to say, it is is the result of our freely-given positive response, as rational human beings, to what Kant called the moral law within us. The moral law is universal and rational, and Kant thinks we all have a sense of it even if not fully developed. The essence of the moral law is that we should act only in ways that could be universally copied. We should not think of our own actions as exceptional. So rather than asking myself if it is okay for me to do X in this situation, I should ask myself, "What if everyone did X?" Therefore we bury or cremate the dead out of an awareness that in principle it will be a better world if everyone does that, than if nobody does that.

But our reason 'commanding' compliance with this moral law is not an absolute ruler, or despot. If our reason was a tyrant, then there wouldn't be millions of people who do not respect it. To pick one notorious example, Hazel Maddock would not have left the corpse of her mother unburied for up to six months, in order to keep claiming her pension. Rather, reason is understood in Aristotelian terms as the rational inner 'voice' which can only be listened to by those whose opposite 'voices' of natural inclinations, personal interests, wishes, desires, and so forth, aren't screaming.

2.) Following Kant's division of duties in his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), the duty to treat the dead with dignity is a *specific* duty. That is to say, it's not a duty for *all* people, but only for *specific* people – for example, for the relatives or friends of the dead,

and for the local authorities. Not all people had the duty to bury the body of my father six months ago. It was only the duty of his relatives, friends, and the local authority to ensure he was buried. The same evidently applies in the case of Syrian corpses. Ultimately, the duty to treat the dead with dignity does not require actions by all people, but only by specific duty-bearers.

3.) The moral (and legal) duty to treat the dead with dignity consists only of the duty of relatives or friends, as well as the local authority, to bury or cremate the corpse. This duty to the dead cannot be extended to a duty, either for individuals or for the local authority, to also carry out ceremonies in commemoration of the dead. Such commemorations are related to specific religious or philosophical worldviews, and their requirements can't be morally compelled or legally enforced.

4.) The duty to treat the dead with dignity – that is, the duty to bury or cremate the body – is a duty which cannot be overridden.

First, there are *legal* consequences arising from the non-fulfillment of this duty, derived from the fact that its non-fulfillment may lead to serious life-threatening conditions. It is no accident that the burial and cremation of the dead are mentioned in the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 in British law, with similar laws holding in other countries.

Contrary to the duty to bury or cremate the corpse, all the rituals surrounding this are related to specific religious or philosophical worldviews, omission of which rituals may lead only to cognitive or emotional distress rather than physical health risks; for example, the feeling of guilt of relatives or friends of the dead man or woman. Therefore these other aspects ought not to be legally required.

Rights and Duties

Three associated issues must be clarified here. First, who has the right (if there is a right) to the fulfillment of the duty of burial or cremation? Second, how is this right derived from the duty to treat the dead with dignity? And third, to whom is the dignity in the phrase 'treating the dead with dignity' actually attributed?

Suitably dignified: Kant's own grave in Kaliningrad

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANASTASIA KRAVCOVA / CREATIVE COMMONS 4.0

Regarding the first issue, the dead body cannot claim such a right to burial or cremation. Only living human beings, whose hygiene and health are in danger in the case of the non-fulfillment of the duty, can claim it. Moreover, the duty-bearers are not all people, institutions, or states, but only specific others, namely the relatives and friends of the dead, as well as the local authorities. Given this, this right to hygiene and health is also not to be regarded as a universal human right *per se*. It might instead be regarded as a socioeconomic right, comparable to the socioeconomic right to health stated in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Moving on to the second issue, of how this right is derived from our duty to treat the dead with dignity, Kant's derivation of every right from a particular duty could be invoked here. Specifically, in *The Metaphysics of Morals* 6:239, he argues that our awareness of the concept of rights proceeds from the moral imperative which gives us the concept of duties. As he says, "the capacity for putting others under obligation, that is, the concept of right, can be generated from the proposition which commands duty." It could be claimed from this that without the *duty* to treat the dead with dignity, that is to say, to bury or cremate them, the subsequent *right* to hygiene and health of the living would not exist. (Incidentally, given my previous argument, this also means that the living people whose health is in danger have the right to claim the burial or cremation of the body by the relevant duty-bearers not because the latter have a specific duty to benefit the former, but simply because the duty-bearers must fulfill a moral duty arising from their good will towards the dead, independently of any other considerations or concerns.)

Finally, concerning the question by whom the dignity is possessed, it can be claimed that 'dignity' in the statement "we have a duty to treat the dead with dignity" does not refer either to the dead person, as it is often mistakenly said, or to those living beings who have the right to claim the burial or the cremation of the dead body. Instead, it is possessed by the specific duty-bearers, who (following Kant) have the rational capacity to respect the moral idea within them – such as the idea of their duty to treat the dead with dignity. The dignity of the duty-bearers here consists of a feeling of 'inner value' resulting from the realization of their higher selves as autonomous, or of themselves as good persons, which derives from their treatment of the dead with dignity.

Conclusions

So the relatives and friends, as well as the relevant local authorities, wherever Syrians die, either in Lebanon or in Greece, have the specific duty to bury or cremate them. Along with all our family and friends, as well as the local authority in Athens, I myself had exactly the same duty to bury the body of my father six months ago. This duty could not be overridden. My duty to carry out the other commemorative ceremonies for him since then could be overridden. However, none of our unburied memories can be overridden.

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G.E. Moore's Hands

Roger Caldwell takes a sceptical look at scepticism.

Some questions asked by philosophers might occur to anyone. Few of us have not been visited at one time or other by such basic queries as those asked in ethics (What is the best life? What is it to be good?); in political philosophy (What is the best form of government?); or even in the philosophy of science (How can we know if a scientific theory is true?).
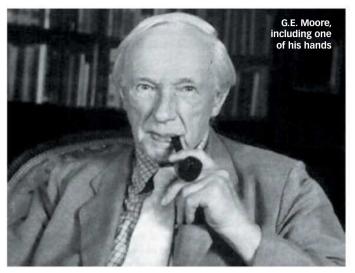
But when philosophers deny, or challenge us to prove, the existence of time, or motion, or other minds, or even of an external world, there is an evident parting of the ways between philosophy and common sense. We are being urged to reconsider things we have taken for granted all our lives, and the temptation is to respond with not reasoned argument but with demonstrations of the absurdity of the challenge. Thus in the ancient world, Diogenes the Cynic responded to a discussion of Zeno's argument against the possibility of motion simply by getting up and walking about the room. In the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson, confronted by Berkeley's contention that nothing exists but ideas and minds, kicked a stone and declared "I refute him thus!" In the twentieth century G.E. Moore, to disprove the contention of the idealists that there is no external world, held up first one hand and then the other thereby demonstrating, as he claimed, that here were at least two objects that were evidently part of the external world.

This sort of response to the sceptic is in essence a refusal to acknowledge the intellectual seriousness of the challenge or the sincerity of the sceptic himself. There is a sense of unreality about the sceptic's challenge, as if the doubt he expresses is one that no one could *really* accept. In Iris Murdoch's pithy formulation, "McTaggart says there is no such thing as time, Moore says he has just had his breakfast." Or the Greek sceptics, recognising that we were sometimes deluded by our perceptions, went on to argue that we could never be sure that any given perception was true to reality, thus making certainty impossible. Aristotle, a philosopher who had a robust sense of reality, had a short way with them. In his *Metaphysics* he declares that "nobody really is in these circumstances, neither any of those who advance this argument nor anybody else." But not even the sceptics would claim there can be such thing as *living* according to the tenets of scepticism.

The Possibility of Scepticism

Parmenides aside, the Greeks never developed a comprehensive external-world scepticism: they didn't move from the position that *any* of my perceptions could be delusive at *any* time to the position that *all* of them could be at *all* times. That step was famously taken in modern times by René Descartes in his *Meditations* (1642). There he asks how he can know that God "has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now?"

The contemporary version of Descartes' thought experiment is the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis suggested by Gilbert Harman

G.E. Moore, including one of his hands

and famously responded to by Hilary Putnam. It says that, far from having bodies and moving about in space, we are brains in vats, hooked up to a sophisticated computer perfectly simulating our experiences of a world. This idea was again advanced purely for the purpose of argument; of course Harman did not actually *believe* that he was a brain in a vat. But for the sceptic, that's not the point. No one sane believes that he's really a robot; but it's nonetheless *possible* that he is. Most of us think we have free will, but it's *possible* we don't. And as long as it is *possible* that we are brains in vats, we cannot know for certain that we are not.

Reasons To Be Sceptical?

Nonetheless, there is an obvious asymmetry here. Given the possibility of physical determinism, there are good reasons why we may wish to argue the issue of free will; there are no reasons whatever for seriously considering that we are brains in vats. If it's on low-lying ground and there's a river nearby, we may wish to insure our house against flooding; but we have no reason to try to insure it against *all* possibilities of damage, especially very far-fetched ones such as it being demolished by a flying saucer. Philosophers often give us *logical* possibilities, when all that we require are realistic possibilities.

Quine in his *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* (1951) argues that no scientific statement is immune from revision, in that any alternative statement can come to be held true "if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system." Our scientific world-picture is admittedly scarcely set in stone. Any of our scientific theories in principle may be jettisoned. However, it is vanishingly unlikely that what we think of as bedrock science is going to be overturned. In principle it is possible that we are radically mistaken about the chemical composition of water, or the properties of hydrogen and oxygen, for example; but no one is going to lose much sleep over the matter. Analogously, if she is to be worthy of an answer, what the sceptic needs is to raise in us *living* doubts, and she can't do this if all she is offering are

mere logical possibilities. Moreover, if we are to take seriously any accounts of the world that rival those we currently possess, their proponents must recognise that we start from the assumption that the best explanation is likely to be the simplest one that fits the known facts. It is pertinent to ask of any sceptical alternative if it is more cogent or concise, or offers fewer improbabilities than the standard realist picture of an external world experienced via our senses and existing independently of human thought. One may doubt the existence of space, but nonetheless, the simplest reason for its taking us longer to walk from A to B than from A to C is that the distance in the latter case is less than that in the former – and we can after all measure them to confirm this. Or one may doubt the existence of time, but the facts that we all get older, that yesterday preceded today, and that we have memories of the past, are better accommodated by assuming the reality of time than devising obscure hypotheses to explain away our experience of its passing.

Scepticism versus Common Sense

It is widely recognised that to embrace the sceptical position is to go against common sense. Indeed, during the Scottish Enlightenment there was a whole school of philosophy that went under the name 'Common Sense'. Thomas Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* appeared in 1764. In it he declares that "In this unequal contest betwixt Common Sense and Philosophy, the latter will always come off both with dishonour and loss." G.E. Moore, much influenced by Reid, echoes this commendation of common sense, and if not all of

his writings can nowadays be thought to show it, his most famous papers against scepticism clearly do. In 'A Defence of Common Sense' (1925) he defends the position that we can know empirical truths with certainty. In 'Proof of an External World' (1939), he argues that we already know that there is an external world, that it was never in doubt, nor can we seriously put it in question, since there being an external world is a condition of our existence as human beings.

Do Moore's Hands Miss The Point?

Moore's hands have become iconic in the extensive contemporary literature on scepticism. Whether one is a contextualist, a reliabilist, a coherentist, or a referentialist, or takes some other stance concerning our knowledge of the external world, one will have something to say about Moore's hands. This is remarkable, not least because at first sight Moore spectacularly misses the point. For it is not as if by holding up his hands Moore is making the sceptic aware of something he had somehow overlooked. The sceptic also has hands, and uses them in the same way that Moore does, including to point at things. As Ludwig Wittgenstein puts it in a text which was partly written in response to Moore, *On Certainty* (1949): "Doubting the external world is not doubt of the existence of something within that world." In other words, the sceptic's challenge can't be falsified by an empirical discovery about the world, because it is the world itself that has been put into question. All our experience of the world remains as before. What is at issue is how we interpret it.

But is anything really at issue here other than a matter of

words? In effect Moore is turning the challenge back on the sceptic. After all, the sceptic lives his life in the same way Moore does: he may doubt the existence of time, but he still consults his watch. He may doubt the possibility of motion, but if late, still runs for a bus. If hands, and everything else, operate in the same way in the sceptic's world as in that of his opponent, where does the difference lie?

There's a parallel here with Pyrrhonian scepticism in the ancient world. Sextus Empiricus (c.160-210), for instance, tells us that whereas the dogmatist – or as we would call him, the realist– moves from perception, feeling that the bathwater is hot, to the judgement that the bathwater is indeed hot, the sceptic in effect stays at the perceptual level and suspends judgement as to whether the water is in itself hot or cold (and indeed, one presumes, whether what appears to be water is indeed water). Again, one might expect there to be a resultant difference of behaviour from these radically different positions, but there isn't: the sceptic, suspending his belief, nonetheless enjoys his bath in exactly the same way as his dogmatist opponent.

Against scepticism, Greek and Roman Stoics employed what they called 'the argument from inaction', saying that if one never made a judgement, it would be impossible to do anything, given that actions *require* prior judgements. The sceptic *does* perform actions, therefore his claim to suspension of judgement must be a false one. Thomas Reid, more than two millennia later, makes the same point: of the man who "pretends to be a sceptic with regard to the informations of sense, and prudently keeps out of harm's way as other men do, he must excuse my suspicion, that he either acts the hypocrite, or imposes upon himself." The sceptic's doubt is always one that exists only in principle – it never comes to be actualised.

Unavoidable Knowledge?

For Moore, as for Reid, the sceptic attempts to make us doubt things it is impossible to doubt. We are unable to doubt that we are human beings, that the Earth existed before we were born, or even that London is a city in England. Moore declares that "I can know things which I cannot prove"; Wittgenstein tells us that "we know this is a hand because we know English." We were born into a world in which some matters cannot be subject to revision. Wittgenstein speaks of 'hinge propositions', on which everything else in our world depends but which are not so much known as presupposed. Without them a world common to us all could not exist. So much surely is common sense.

Or is it? Wittgenstein was also aware, in a way that Moore perhaps was not, that what is common sense in one time and place is not so in another. It was once common sense (and in some parts of the world it still is) to believe that the Earth is the centre of the universe; that the universe was created by God; that we should guard against witchcraft; that women are inferior to men, and so on. But to acknowledge the malleability of common sense should not be seen as a concession to the sceptic, for if common sense is imperfect it is scarcely the sceptic to whom we would go to remedy its deficiencies. Science, of course, *does* go against common sense, and does so with success. There is nothing commonsensical about our being composed of atoms, or the theory of evolution, or, least of all, the world of quantum physics. So why should we believe the scientist and not the sceptic? We do so because science is

based on evidence and testing, and because its findings can be confirmed or disconfirmed. That's why it is an ever-growing body of knowledge, much of which can be used to practical effect. By contrast, the sceptic offers us no such discoveries. He relies only on the power of reason: his only experiments are thought-experiments, his only proofs (if any) are those of logic. Using these means, there are only two ways the sceptic can shake our realist preconceptions: he can cause us to doubt the truth of our perceptions, or he can try to show that the categories in which those perceptions are embedded are self-contradictory. Both are difficult tasks. As we have seen, in the first case, all the sceptic can offer us is the theoretical possibility that our senses comprehensively deceive us; but he gives us no good reason to suppose that they do. In the second case, ingenious uses of reason to dispose of such pervasive illusions as those of motion, matter, and time, face an uphill struggle against what appear to be self-evident truths. Zeno's paradoxes attempting to prove the impossibility of motion, such as that of 'Achilles and the Tortoise', for a long time seemed unanswerable through reasoned argument: nonetheless, few, if any, were convinced by them. Moore's contemporary at Cambridge, McTaggart, attempted to disprove the passing of time; but few then or since have found his arguments persuasive. In the absence of reasons to dislodge our obstinate grip on what we think of as reality, or of any compelling arguments that show our basic concepts are immured in impossibilities, it is hard to see why we should be troubled by the sceptic.

Immanuel Kant thought it a scandal in philosophy that there existed no proof of the external world. But is it? If no one has offered sound incontrovertible reasons to disbelieve in it – to disbelieve in what has always been part of common sense in all times and places – surely such a proof would serve no practical purpose anyway.. The scandal would instead be that so many philosophers have spent so much time in trying to counter the sceptical challenge, when that challenge is nothing more than a chimera.

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Roger Caldwell is a writer living in Essex. His collection of poetry,
Setting Out for the Mad Islands, *is published by Shoestring Press.*

Letters

Judging Heidegger

DEAR EDITOR: I much enjoyed your edition featuring the thought of Martin Heidegger (125). But it seems nowadays one cannot have a sensible account of his ideas without making some reference to the fact that he was for a time a member of the Nazi Party. Indeed, it has been a longstanding obsession of many commentators on Heidegger, and both Anja Steinbauer's Editorial and the article 'The Trouble with Martin' played into this obsession. However, I have never believed that an individual's biography should influence our assessment of her/his artistic, scientific or philosophical achievement. I may dislike Wagner's anti-Semitism or even that he had a penchant for pink silk underwear, but that has nothing to do with the wonder of the opening bars of *Parsifal*. I may not like Schopenhauer's misogyny, but it doesn't mean I can't admire him for the depth and richness of his insights into human nature and art. We don't dismiss Kant's moral theory because of his racist utterances. I doubt I shall ever see an article in *Philosophy Now* entitled 'The Trouble with Immanuel'. So why the relentless singling out of Heidegger for moral indignation? The point is that if moral probity is to be a pre-condition for our engagement with a thinker's philosophy, the future of *Philosophy Now* is bleak. Everything that can usefully be said about Heidegger's National Socialism has already been said. It's time to move on.

DR DAVID ASHTON

DEAR EDITOR: My previous impression that Heidegger avoids assuming that Being is separated off from the questioner of Being was reinforced by Andrew Royle's article in *Philosophy Now* 125. However, Heidegger does seem to assume that there is no Being separated off from the questioner(s). His description of Being appears to be a description of what I would call a subjective perspective, and he seems to ignore the possibility of anything else. Royle argues that Heidegger doesn't doubt the existence of people and things outside himself. However, these other people and things appear also to exist within the subjective perspective.

PETER SPURRIER, HALSTEAD, ESSEX

Hail & Hurricanes

DEAR EDITOR: With regard to 'Hail, Malthus', Issue 125: Thomas Malthus' central insight was that resources, including land and food supply, are finite, and that population growth can outstrip them. Sadly, he over-egged the pudding by trying to dress up that insight in mathematical formulae. But that should not detract from the merit of his central idea.

Today we recognise the concept of sustainability as a necessary guide in our interactions with nature. That concept has come down to us from Malthus. It warns us that planet Earth must not be plundered relentlessly to satisfy our endlessly growing demands. Malthus was shocking in his time because for centuries Judeo-Christianity had been preaching an opposite view: that God gave humans dominion over all the Earth, and that everything in it was there to be exploited by them. But like Hume and Darwin, Malthus confronted Christian complacency with a powerful argument.

In the two centuries since Malthus, human population has grown from 1 billion to 7.5 billion. It is expected to grow to 11 billion by 2050. However, concern is not so much about food supply (though that will be a problem), but about CO_2 emissions. Too much greenhouse gases could mean runaway global warming causing climate chaos, with hurricanes, floods, droughts, tornadoes, blizzards: the complete disruption of nature and agriculture. The worst predictions of Malthus are tame by comparison.

Sadly, not everyone gets the message. President Trump has promised to revive the US coal industry, regardless of the environmental effect. Germany closed down its nuclear power stations under pressure from the Greens: now it's burning more coal than ever! Their CO_2 emissions must have gone up dramatically. When so-called advanced nations behave like this, what hope have we got? There is no Planet B.

LES REID, EDINBURGH

Being & Appearance

DEAR EDITOR: I am very grateful to Brian Robinson for his perceptive letter in Issue 125 in response to my column 'On Looking at the Back of my Hand' in Issue 124.

Contrary to Schopenhauer, I do not accept that non-sensory, non-intellectual awareness of our own body amounts to knowledge of a piece of the world in-itself, for several reasons. Firstly, our access to our own body is patchy, intermittent, and is inescapably mediated through our senses or through our factual knowledge. What's more, there is no privileged scale of experience or knowledge, either cellular, at the level of the organ, or at the level of the organism. We could put this another way: the sense in which I *am* my body (as opposed to being connected with it) is very complex, flitters from place to place, and switches on and off. There's a slippery relationship between carnal being and subjective awareness. Secondly, our body, insofar as we are identical with it, is localised in space and time, unlike occupants of reality in-itself. Finally, Schopenhauer's name for what we access through our body is 'the will', and it is entirely unclear how this can be realised locally in the body, given that he believes: a) that the will is the innermost reality of the entire universe; and b) that division into individual wills, as expressed in my agency, is part of the illusion of the world as representation. In short, the idea that we can nip round the back of the veil of appearance in virtue of being (or even 'amming') something in-itself – embodied subjectivity – does not stand up, attractive though it is.

RAYMOND TALLIS, WONDERLAND

ESTEEMED SIR: So delighted was I to find nothing of that charlatan Hegel, that spoiler of paper, time and minds, in your excellent bookazine, *The Ultimate Guide To Ethics*, that my dismay at discovering no mention of myself quickly dissipated. I will partially heal the wound caused by your omission of my philosophy by solving the trolley problem.

The entire scene is misconceived. Morality consists in the real action of human beings, not intellect-built houses of cards to which nobody turns in the storm and stress of life. Only bipeds of impoverished capacity, lacking in goodness of heart, would debate the alternatives, repeating Kant's error in supposing that morality is founded upon reason. We are driven by our Will, a blind, aimless, non-rational, universal impulse that is present in all nature and in every fibre of our bodies. The Will drives our emotions and actions. The intellect and its motives are awakened by the Will, but the Will is always first. Ask yourself! Do not persons who have behaved courageously invariably deny that courage was their state of mind? Do they not invariably say, "I didn't think, I just …" – and this whether to seize a robber or jump into a raging sea to save a drowning dog? Only later does the intellect awaken and marvel that they might have lost their lives. Does this not show that reasoning may make things clear to the intellect, but that which acted, the real inner nature of their being, was their Will?

So! We must attend to the character of he who observes the trolley. Those in whom compassion is abundant – the supreme virtue that tears down the wall between Thou and I, the recognition of one's own essential being in others – would leap into action to stop the trolley, regardless of their hope of success or of their own lives. Others, weak in Will, or where egoism dominates their character, would dither or remain immobile. All, however, will suffer for the death and misery inevitably caused by the trolley's exercise of its own gravitational Will. We live in a world steeped in pain and death, and through our intellect, we humans feel sorrow more than any other animal.

With admiration and good wishes.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER (DECEASED)

Dictated to one complicit in my persiflagery; a certain MICHAEL MCMANUS

P.S. I was happy to see Kant's works still receiving needful improvement, although his contribution to the trolley problem is hampered by his uncompromising ethics and attachment to retributive punishment. The clue to his hammer-headedness lies in the anagram of his name. It is beyond doubt that he would treat the errant rolling stock just as Thomas the Tank Engine punishes naughty trains – by bricking it up in a tunnel.

DEAR EDITOR: Raymond Tallis's essay 'Death and the Philosopher' in Issue 123 was often lovely and always provocative, but I wish to take issue with some matters.

He claims that "the richness of a remembered shared life only exacerbates our sense of actual or impending loss." This is often true, but it need not be so. Indeed, throughout his essay, he doesn't engage with attitudes towards death that find it a matter of fact to be accepted neutrally, or with paradoxical attitudes, of accepting the passage and the now-richness all at once. Both Buddhist and non-secular versions of this latter view come to mind. Such a tack hardly sullies the richness of life Tallis speaks of; but it changes the emphasis and the diction.

More radically, the composer Richard Wagner once wrote to Franz Liszt, "I have found a sedative which has finally helped me to sleep at night; it is the sincere and heartfelt yearning for death: total unconsciousness, complete annihilation, the end of all dreams – the only ultimate redemption." This quote is included in Christopher Janaway's fine short book on Arthur Schopenhauer – perhaps the most contrarian philosopher of death in the Western tradition.

Tallis argues that "if death does not matter, then nor do our lives", and that "a world in which none of us cared about death would be one in which none of us cared about each other." On the contrary, my mother cared very much about her death (it terrified her) – so much so that she actually cared little for her life. Many fundamentalists of many stripes also care a great deal for death and little for actually living. I have found the opposite path to be more serene and less deluded. By demystifying death – in a *sense* not caring about it ('care' being here an idea Tallis ought to have unpacked) – many people have found liberation from terror. Death-acceptance can put us in a more open posture to the world, including being more, not less, responsive to the suffering of ourselves and others. Death-acceptance also can calm us into an appreciation of the beauty of the present moment – the present being all we ever experience. Note that such an acceptance need not prejudge the question of the existence of an afterlife. I have no such belief and I don't believe one needs it for open-hearted acceptance of death.

What I am sketching out here, then, is precisely the opposite of bemoaning "what a small figure we cut in the world." Tallis's objection to our insignificance is curious. Failure to notice it has been the root of a great deal suffering throughout history. Consider the grief of Gilgamesh – his own and what he induces – because he wishes to make a name for himself. This first story in the Western tradition grapples with the insanity of believing we should *not* cut a small figure. Realizing our relative insignificance is a kind of internal, personal Copernican revolution. It does not diminish beauty or compassion or life's richness, the good and the ill. Letting go of the ambition to cut a larger figure in the world, one can be liberated to do more good than harm and to do so with more balance and delight. It's good for the blood pressure, too. Perhaps paradoxically, being immersed in acceptance of the present and the inevitable (*not* resignation or indifference to it), also allows a person a chance to more fully appreciate the sublimely self-effacing temporal and physical scales. Time is long, the world is big.

I recommend that anyone interested in these issues familiarize themselves with the movement called Terror Management Theory. Growing out of Ernest Becker's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Denial of Death*, TMT is a powerful lens through which to see how fear of death is a driver of many social ills. The book *The Worm at the Core: The Role of Death in Life* is a highly readable summary by some of the social scientists engaged in this research.

CHRISTOPHER COKINOS, TUCSON, AZ

Could A Philosopher Be Conscious?
DEAR EDITOR: Brian King's article 'Could a Robot be Conscious?' in *PN* 125 misses many of the most interesting features of this debate and obscures others. Firstly, the three points he raises as

having a bearing on the question are all implementations of the functionalist idea. He fails to point out that what is common to these implementations is information. That is why many functionalists propose information as the basis of consciousness. However, to develop this argument they must show how machines can transition into consciousness from non-conscious states. Simple machines such as lathes cannot plausibly be said to be conscious; and if machines do not start off conscious, how do they change?

One obvious idea is an increase in processing power. This is the argument of some AI proponents, who assert that the information processing threshold for consciousness is roughly the same as for a human brain (whose number of synaptic connections is about 10^{14}). But this argument is unsatisfactory since it is not at all obvious why a machine should suddenly become conscious at a particular threshold of complexity. The 'homeostasis' argument purports to tell us why consciousness is useful and so why it may have evolved – to look after the body – but it doesn't tell us what consciousness is, only that there's an apparent connection between it and human agency. However, computation doesn't require understanding. (Whether understanding is entirely conscious is another debate.)

It appears to me that ever since Descartes separated consciousness from matter, we have had trouble putting it back. If we wanted to retain the best features of objective realism and science, we might consider re-jigging fundamental concepts such as causation, by allowing free will to be 'non-causative action'. That might imply some form of proto-consciousness in the universe.

Maybe the robots will figure it out.
BRETT N. WILSON, MANCHESTER

The Ex-Freedom Files

DEAR EDITOR: I read Carlo Filice's article in Issue 124 on free will with interest. As a Professor of Philosophy he will be well versed on the arguments that philosophers and scientists have put forward; but if he has ever conversed with anyone who truly believes in determinism, he does not mention what he has learned of their perspective. May I offer you, dear Editor, as a counterbalance, some insight into determinism as it appears from the inside?

I, a determinist, do not feel like a robot. Since discovering determinism I have felt no less human than I did before. As a determinist, I do not believe that there is an 'I' that is somehow separate from the processes of my brain who is in charge of my actions. And so I do believe, therefore, that I do what I must do, and that real alternative possibilities to my actions are an illusion. I feel somewhat like an actor; although one whose script unfolds before my awareness only momentarily before I perform according to its dictates. Or I feel like a spectator of my own life, watching myself do the things I find myself doing, sometimes with some bemusement.

Positively, I find determinism prevents me from feeling the weight of impending choices and decisions. None of that existential anguish for me! I don't worry about choices and decisions because I know that when the time comes I will find myself doing the only thing I would ever have done. Sometimes outcomes are not as desired, and I may regret those outcomes and find myself trying to do better next time. But I'm immune from guilt. Guilt would be irrational.

People attached to free will always think that something would be lost were determinism true. Hence the pejorative term 'robot'. That is logical enough when thinking within the free will model. But once you're free of the Free Will Illusion, the sense of loss evaporates.
DAVE MANGNALL, CHESHIRE

DEAR EDITOR: Carlo Filice in Issue 124 has teased out some of the strands of resistance to the "recent slew of popular anti-free will literature." He creates a little breathing space for the idea of a 'semi-autonomy' for the 'I' (ego). Undoubtedly we have the experience of exercising free will. However, as Schopenhauer puts it "Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills" (*Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, 1839). Suppose I decide whether to wear a red or green tie today. I believe the eventual decision is made by my (for want of a better phrase) 'organic will', meaning that it is the emergent outcome in my awareness of an unconscious interplay of competing impulses, evaluations, and selections made by my mind-body to satisfy its needs. So what of the 'freedom' I experience in this decision?

Edmund Husserl offers valuable insights into how this experience is constituted by drawing on a distinction between *phenomenal* and *objective* time.

The result of my decisions is represented to me *retrospectively* as the outcome of a causal sequence, and I say, 'I made a choice'. That's a rear-view perspective, originating through memory. Conversely, if I consider my forthcoming options ('Shall I wear a green or a red tie?') they are represented to me as a radiation of possibilities which I must whittle down to the one most strongly congruent with my will. I say, 'I can make a choice'. That's a *prospective* viewpoint originating through imagination and modelling. In both cases I seem to exercise freedom in choice. But these apparent choices disappear when talking about my present experience. I am not choosing in either case. My apparent 'freedom' is instead a representation created in my ego – that conscious spot in the mind-body system – by the activities of the will within the phenomenal present as it recalls past events and models future outcomes. The system then represents the results of this process within a framework of linear (objective) time.

We are not programmed robots, we are experiencing organisms. The key thing is to understand how we represent ourselves to ourselves in time. To do so we must bracket our natural experience of 'ego' and 'free will', and fearlessly trace volitional phenomena to their sources in unconscious processing – including the intense monitoring and directing Filice mentions. Of course, where will is concerned, given the limits to our knowledge, perhaps we can only ever be partial authors of our self-understanding.
TIM HOLT-WILSON, DISS, NORFOLK

Off-Balance In Translation

DEAR EDITOR: Regarding the 'Philosophical Haiku' on the Buddha in Issue 124, many contemporary Buddhist writers have come to see the word 'suffering' as being too negative a definition of the original Sanskrit word '*dukkha*', which refers to a wheel that's off-balance, thus leading to a bumpy ride. In Buddhism, life is not simply a continuum of constant, grinding suffering which then transforms into enlightenment. There are flowers to smell along the way!
JOHN HASEMEYER, SCHAUMBURG, USA

Can Confucians Have Friends?

Peter Adamson says the bonds of friendship are virtuous.

One of the more arresting claims Aristotle makes in his famous exploration of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is that you can't be friends with god. His reasoning is that friendship requires equality, and the gods are vastly superior to us. The argument is a plausible one: it seems difficult or impossible to be friends with a boss, mentor, or teacher in quite the way that one is friends with one's peers and equals. Indeed we might say that friendship is distinctive precisely in being non-hierarchical. If I am truly your friend, what I am to you is exactly what you are to me.

This thought has been supposed to cause trouble for the followers of Confucius. Confucianism was China's most influential philosophical tradition for well over two millennia. Its ethical teaching has at its center several hierarchical relationships that were intrinsically bound up with forms of propriety, including rituals. The second most famous Confucian thinker Mencius (372-289 BC) identifies five 'cardinal relations', four of which are clearly hierarchical: ruler and subject, father and son, old and young, and husband and wife (Aristotle too sees the latter as an unequal relationship). The odd relationship out is friendship. Friendship seems to fit badly with the Confucian idea of modeling human relationships on family bonds. One possible comparison, which sees friends as having a bond like that between older and younger brother, would not secure the symmetry we're looking for. Friendship is also anomalous among the cardinal relations in lacking ritual prescriptions, and in being voluntary. You don't choose your father or (at least in ancient China) your ruler, but you do choose your friends.

Confucius (551-479 BC) would also have had some reason to think that friendships should be unequal. For him the purpose of friendship is the cultivation of virtue. It seems a natural thought that we should therefore befriend those more excellent than us, so as to learn from them. Yet like Aristotle, Confucius insists on symmetry in true friendship, advising, "do not have as a friend anyone who is not as good as you are."

Confucius, serene and alone

It's been argued that in light of this latter rule, Confucius himself could never have made friends at all. His disciples were certainly dear to him, as we see from a passage in his *Analects*, when he openly grieves for one of them who has died. But does that mean he was this disciple's friend? David Hall and Roger Ames would say not. In their book *Thinking Through Confucius*, they asserted, "Confucius is peerless and hence, friendless. To assert that Confucius had friends would diminish him." His relation with his students was arguably more akin to a hierarchical, familial one, as shown by the fact that he referred to them as his *xiaozi*, meaning 'little masters', or 'sons'.

In keeping with the equality of friendship, Confucius identifies trust (*xin*) as its distinctive attitude, whereas a familial relationship would be characterized by an asymmetrical virtue such as filial piety (*xiao*). Confucius would thus discourage parents from trying to befriend their children, a common trend in modern-day family life. Just as a father cannot be the teacher of his son because their relation is too intimate, so being overly familiar is no way to be familial.

But how exactly do I cultivate excellence by befriending someone who is *equal* to me? After all it would seem that I have nothing to learn from my moral peer, at least not in the way Confucius describes in this passage from the *Analects*: "in strolling in the company of just two other persons, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them, and identi-

fying their weaknesses, I reform myself accordingly." Instead, it must somehow be that sharing with equal others in the excellent moral life, or at least in the pursuit of virtue, is itself a spur to the good life, or even a constitutive part of it.
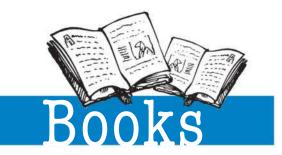
Confucius seems to have been convinced that this is so. For one thing, no less than other relationships, friendship gives us an opportunity to exercise virtue. Confucius himself aimed "to bring peace to the old, to have trust in my friends, and to cherish the young," and in advising us on examining our own character he speaks of reflecting on whether we have always kept our word with our friends. Friendship is also a source of delight, as is made clear in this line from the opening passage of the *Analects*: "to have friends [*peng*] come from distant quarters: is this not a source of enjoyment?" Yanguo He informs us that the word *peng* has a strong implication of 'like-mindedness', and may especially indicate the bonds between the students gathered around one master.

This is a hint towards a deeper importance of friends, namely that they are embarked with us upon a joint project of self-cultivation. We do not improve morally by looking to friends as a model for imitation, as we might with a superior. Rather, our affection for them is based on a recognition that they share with us our greatest pursuit. To illustrate this idea, the scholar Xiufen Lu gave the example of the tale of Bo Ya, a musician whose mastery was fully appreciated only by his friend Zhong Ziqi. When Zhong died, Bo Ya smashed his instrument, on the grounds that playing without being understood is pointless.

Likewise, Confucius occasionally complained about being unappreciated by the morally inept. This may come as a surprise, but is simply the counterpart of the joy he took in associating with those who shared his values. Birds of a feather really do flock together, ideally by taking wing towards the heights of virtue.

Peter Adamson is the author of A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps, Vols 1, 2 & 3, *available from OUP. They're based on his popular History of Philosophy podcast.*

Books

Massimo Pigliucci says the bad boy of philosophy of science has done it again, posthumously, and Paul Davis commentates on some philosophy of sports research.

Philosophy of Nature
by Paul Feyerabend

I MUST ADMIT that it took me some time to come around to seeing that Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994) actually had something interesting, even important, to say about science and philosophy. When I was a young scientist interested in philosophy of science I eagerly read Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, and even enjoyed their disagreements about doing prescriptive philosophy (that is, telling scientists how to do science properly, à la Popper), versus focusing on a descriptive program (that is, studying how scientists actually do science, à la Kuhn). But when I got to Feyerabend's *Against Method* (1975) I was tempted, to quote David Hume, to consign it to the flames, since it appeared to me to contain nothing but sophistry and illusion. Then the years passed, and with age and experience my thinking about the nature of science got a bit wiser. And more recently I was asked to write a series of commentaries on an interesting paper by Ian Kidd titled 'Why Did Feyerabend Defend Astrology? Integrity, virtue, and the authority of science' (*Social Epistemology* 30, 2016), in which I found myself to be somewhat sympathetic to Feyerabend's concerns. So I was glad to have an opportunity to take a fresh look at this controversial author by way of reviewing his 'new' book *Philosophy of Nature*, which came out in 2016, twenty two years after he died.

The book comes with a helpful introduction by Helmut Heit and Eric Oberheim which puts it in the proper historical and cultural context. Turns out Feyerabend had been working on and off on a series of books about what he called 'philosophy of nature', meaning, about how human beings have historically made sense of the cosmos. The project began to take shape in the early 70s, but by the end of the decade it was forgotten, apparently even by Feyerabend himself. An incomplete manuscript eventually showed up at the Philosophical Archive of the University of Constance, and then a second, longer manuscript was uncovered as part of follow-up archival research. The edited, published version was translated into English by Dorothea Lotter, with assistance from Andrew Cross. It represents only one of the three volumes originally intended by Feyerabend. It is a strange thing indeed, and very typical of the iconoclastic, highly original, but ultimately frustrating approach that characterized the author. *Philosophy of Nature* is also incredibly ambitious. In six chapters we get an overview of how people have made sense of the world, beginning in the Stone Age and ending with quantum mechanics. Chapter 6 alone covers everything from Aristotle to Niels Bohr!

The basic thesis of the book is that humanity has transitioned through three 'forms of life' or types of framework deployed in order to make sense of the world: myth, philosophy, and science. That's why it opens with a discussion of Paleolithic art and Stonehenge astronomy (Chapter 1), then devotes Chapters 2 and 3 to the structure of myth and the landmark contribution of Homer. In Chapters 4 and 5 we get to philosophy, with the rejection of the mythological interpretation of reality and the turn toward abstract logicism, particularly in Parmenides, one of Feyerabend's favorite villains, as I'll explain in a moment. Finally, Chapter 6 moves breezily from Aristotle to Descartes, from Galileo and Bacon to Hegel, from Newton and Leibniz to Einstein and Bohr.

Paul Feyerabend (photo © Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)

Feyerabend rejects the standard narrative that the above transitions represent progress. He sees the Parmenidean move toward theoretical and abstract thought – which laid the foundation for what today we call science – as coming at the cost of beginning a process of alienation of human beings from their surroundings. This alienation has slowly led to an increased detachment from our environment that eventually, but for Feyerabend inevitably, catalyzed the environmental destruction that's becoming an existential threat to our species and much of Earth's ecosystem.

We can get a good idea of Feyerabend's approach by way of his own summary of where he intended to go (but never did) with his philosophy of nature project:

"Here is my plan for the two volumes to follow. The second volume is dedicated to Plato, Aristotle, and the medieval period up to the Renaissance… Aristotle remained the only thinker who attempted to reconcile the demands of thought with intuition in such a way as to erect a complete dwelling in which we humans can feel at home and in a familiar environment again… The third volume [will] cover the period that leads to the present time [around 1970]… The large mass of the orthodox scientific enterprise is gradually turning into a business pushed forward by unhappy, fearful, and yet conceited slave souls… [But we will soon see a] new philosophical and mythological science, the still indistinct outlines of which can be seen on the horizon. It is one of the aims of this work to clarify the historical preconditions – discoveries and errors – of this science, thus accelerating its birth."

To put this into context, Feyerabend was convinced that science, especially quantum mechanics, was rediscovering the importance of the subjective, and was about to welcome the existence of paranormal phenomena and the hidden powers of the human mind. It isn't at all clear what sort of new science he envisioned, but it's safe to say that it was nothing like what has actually happened in the intervening four decades. If anything, science has become even more 'Parmenidean' – even more abstract.

Witness for instance the debates within fundamental physics about superstrings and the multiverse; concepts that are entirely theoretical and so distant from any foreseeable empirical confirmation that some scientists and philosophers are beginning to talk about a 'post-empirical science'. Aristotle would have been aghast.

Moreover, Feyerabend says at the end of *Philosophy of Nature* that "the triumph of Cartesianism pushed aside not only certain theories but also a large number of obvious facts. This includes all those facts supporting an independent existence of the soul, which is not easy to explain in mechanistic terms, or the existence of mental powers that are independent of matter." No, Paul, there are no good empirical reasons to believe in the existence of the soul, nor in matter-independent mental powers. And these conclusions are firm in part precisely because of the extraordinary successes of materialist science at explaining how the world works.

Despite my criticisms, *Philosophy of Nature* is well worth reading to appreciate what philosophy of science used to be. In a sense, Feyerabend was the last great practitioner during the golden age of the discipline. For over half a century, philosophy of science had been in the business of proposing grand theories of how science works, from the Logical Positivists to Popper and Kuhn, to Feyerabend himself. After that great period it has become a more specialized enterprise, with most of its practitioners focused on specific aspects of different fields of science, from evolutionary biology to quantum mechanics. This may be an inevitable result of the fact that one simply cannot arrive at unified theories of science that apply to all scientific disciplines, or it may be a transitional period before the next wave of big thinkers. Time will tell. But however things develop, I seriously doubt they will do so along the lines envisaged by Feyerabend in his *Philosophy of Nature*. Even so, intellectual progress is made also by understanding where great thinkers went wrong; and Feyerabend was definitely one of the great thinkers of twentieth century philosophy.

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• Philosophy of Nature, *Paul Feyerabend, Polity Press, 2016, 288 pages, £15.99, ISBN: 0745651593*

Ethics, Knowledge & Truth in Sports Research
by Graham McFee

GRAHAM MCFEE'S *Ethics, Knowledge and Truth in Sports Research* is ambitious, compelling, and exasperating. The discussion ranges over research, research ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of social science, epistemology or theory of knowledge, and the connections between them. The book is rich and peripatetic. It involves a lot of debunking, but is not in any sense mean-spirited. McFee provides, in a crisp concluding chapter, a list of the theses for which he has argued. He has defended truth in social research against the Scylla and Charybdis of postmodernism and scientism. He has demonstrated that social research into sport is essentially erotetic (I'll explain that soon), with methodological consequences. He has argued that Voluntary Informed Consent is not the gold standard in research ethics it is taken to be. He has defended the ethics of covert designs in sport research; and distinguished the researcher's role as analyst from that of data-collector. In this review I want to briefly consider all these ideas.

The Dread Duo

McFee argues that postmodernism and scientism are two sides of a coin of thought that should be discarded.

I suspect that many of us have had robust exposure to the dread epistemological duo of scientism and postmodernism. Scientism is the doctrine that science is the only path to knowledge. McFee conceives scientism as a conjunction of assumptions about (i) the method of natural science, (ii) the kind of truths that result from this method, and (iii) the nature of truth. But first, the scientific knowledge on which all other knowledge is modelled is, as McFee emphasises, mistakenly conceived by scientism in naïve inductivist terms. It assumes that natural science relies on observations that are not themselves influenced by earlier theories, and

that the truths discovered by it are of a universal character. And these scientific truths provide, in turn, the model for Truth itself. So scientism introduces a dual error – that all knowledge is scientific, and that scientific knowledge is itself naïve inductivist. This mutates into a triple error when the only supposed alternatives to such knowledge are the 'no answers' truth-denial or 'all is arbitrary' relativism of (some) postmodernism. In response to the naïve picture of scientific observation, McFee urges that even the 'purest' observation is theory-laden. He endorses Thomas Kuhn's picture of scientific development. According to this, it involves a cycle of 'normal' science (taking place within an overarching framework of theories known as a paradigm); followed by a 'crisis' (dissatisfaction with the paradigm); and then return to normal science (research which proceeds within a *new* paradigm). However, the scientific laws that result are, McFee argues, not really universal: they allow of exceptions. This is because there is no finite set of conditions that if met, will guarantee that an event of type A is always followed by an event of type B. Natural science makes statements such as 'A follows B' true through *ceteris paribus* clauses. *Ceteris paribus* means 'all other things being equal', as in 'A follows B, all other things being equal'. Such clauses are intended to set aside all those 'other things' which could interfere with A causing B. But this ambition requires that we can in principle identify all those other things. However, since there is no finite list of features for consideration, this ambition cannot be satisfied. Or as McFee puts it, "we cannot even know what *cetera* we require to be *paria*" (p.65).

A causal relation that admits of exceptions is called 'stochastic causation'. McFee provides a potent example: that smoking causes cancer. McFee correctly notes that the traditional explanations of stochastic causation consider that even that type of causation would be exceptionless, if only we knew enough to formulate the causation specifically enough: it is 'smoking-plus-X' or 'smoking-minus-X' that causes cancer, where the

X might stand for a large number of factors. If this approach is correct, then it is only our ignorance of X that prevents our stating the precise truth about the type of causation. But there is, concludes McFee, no reason to believe this. We commit to exceptionlessness only because such causal relations are the coin of natural science, oblivious to the contrivance this requires. There is therefore no universal Truth, as the scientistic model with its apparent promise of exceptionless laws seems to offer. Postmodernism gets this much right; but commits the *non sequitur* of concluding that therefore there are no truths at all. For McFee, there are truths in both natural and social science. Indeed, he repeats that scientific research essentially involves the discovery of truths (so he rejects Sir Karl Popper's notion of a good scientific hypothesis as one that has not yet been falsified). But these are not truths on the model shared by scientism and postmodernism, for which 'truths' are essentially contextual.

Moreover, in McFee's view, there are key differences between natural and social science. 'Normal' natural science is defined by the scientific community's acceptance of a paradigm. This involves theoretical principles (for example, Newton's principle of Universal Gravitation) and disciplinary principles (for example, that all physiological functions are to be explained in chemical terms). However, as Kuhn argued, there can be no 'normal' phase in social science, since there are never theoretical principles that are accepted by all practitioners. There are, instead, competing ways of seeing the social world, with endemic controversy over the fundamentals. Therefore, the widespread use in social science of the term 'paradigm' is inappropriate. Also, a participatory research style is often appropriate in social science, and controlled experiments especially inappropriate.

The analogy breaks down in another way too. Research into the social world is deeply dependent on perspectives; those of the researchers as well as those of the subjects of their research. The researcher's perspective into a social group is inevitably incomplete, because both researcher and participant are agents with concerns, reasons and interests.

The point of sports research?

Therefore the researcher cannot take his perspective as the only viable one. We can't complete the picture by adding other perspectives, since there is no reason to think the perspectives are mutually consistent or (again) that there is a finite totality of perspectives. The upshot seems to be that whilst natural science can pretend to be able to identify all those 'other things' to be set aside as equal, social science cannot rise even to the pretence.

A little more on this would have been useful. McFee might profitably have contrasted the role of the *ceteris paribus* clause in 'exceptionless' causation ('gravity causes downward motion'), with that in stochastic causation ('smoking causes cancer'), and in social causation ('poverty causes ill-health').

One might worry whether McFee's 'Particularist Contextualism' fully avoids the bogey of postmodernist relativism in the case of social science research. Saying that there is no such thing as universal, trans-historical and exceptionless causation certainly does not entail relativism. Nor does Kuhn's philosophy of science, as McFee convincingly argues. Nor, indeed, does the acceptance of 'human-sized truth' (p.77) about the social world. Moreover, McFee does a quite nice exposure (pp.104-05) of some of the conceptual difficulties of relativism.

So far so good. However, relativism is defined by what it says about truth. If moral relativism is correct, then the truth of a proposition like "polygamy is permissible" depends entirely on the practices of the culture in question. There is no higher-order standpoint from which these practices can be morally sanctioned or rejected, and therefore no objective moral truth. Yet by McFee's own lights, the truths of social science research (partly) consist of a standpoint which may *clash* with other, equally viable standpoints as I have said above. Just as with relativism, there is no higher-order standpoint from which to judge between them. Therefore, our 'human-sized' truths risk being chiselled down into the outcomes of contingent perspectives, whose contingency is music to the ears of the relativist. For sure, these truths are not 'all arbitrary', since they are anchored to perspectives, which in turn ground methods. But it is the epistemological status of the *perspectives themselves* which threatens to challenge McFee's anti-relativist ambitions: how can you say one perspective is more authoritative than another in claiming knowledge? Again, McFee might have gained from clarifying this issue with more illustrations from social science in

general and sport science in particular.

McFee queries the value of the traditional distinction in sports research between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research is about gathering data suitable for statistical analysis, but qualitative research deals with people, and recognizes "the importance of the contexts which are the sites of the subject's characteristic behaviours – such as playing sport and training for it, or being a sports fan, or some such" (p.7). McFee argues that a more fundamental distinction is between research into questions answerable only in real-world sports settings, and research that can be conducted in other contexts. He elevates, too, a related distinction between research dealing with persons and research dealing with (say) *parts* of persons, such as muscle fibres.

A flagship theme of the book is the *erotetic* nature of research. The brisk definition of this daunting word is 'question-and-answer'. It's just about what people say in answer to questions. Such research always depends on the context. One important upshot is that the very same words can in different contexts amount to different research questions, motivating quite different investigations, in the same way that "Why are you drunk?" can mean different things, and elicit different answers, when asked by my wife as opposed to my doctor. (If you've read Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, this might remind you of what he wrote about language games.) Anyway, McFee believes that the erotetic nature of research has been inadequately appreciated until now.

Another aspect of talk research is the centrality of storytelling. Research subjects often tell stories. Talk and storytelling take us, once again, far away from scientism's simplistic vision of a finte set of conditions allowing the discovery of lawlike relations. How do we get repeatability for starters?

A consequence of storytelling as research data is that the researcher must adequately understand the subject's story. This may sometimes require that the researcher is (for instance) of a specific sex, ethnicity, or sexuality. McFee notes that this qualification is liable to be characteristic of much research into

sport and leisure. At the same time, the subjects themselves may not have complete understanding of the stories they tell. This is more substantive than the recurring point that there is no finite totality of things that need to be understood. For instance, knowing that one is oppressed does not mean that one fully understands the mechanisms of one's oppression. The researcher's obligation here is to analyse, thus effectively re-drafting the story – for example, casting it as symptomatic of the oppressions of patriarchy.

In McFee's view there are, however, strict limits upon the presentation of research. Drama, or even poetry, for instance, whatever their insights, are inappropriate vehicles of the presentation of *research* (although they may be starting points *for* research). This follows from the fact that we cannot move a poem or drama forward, as one can move forward a research project. But in particular, a research audience is entitled to receive a "consideration of research data and conclusions plus, perhaps, some methodological reflections" (pp.122-3), and it is hard to see how poetry or drama could provide those.

Another obvious ramification of researching persons as persons is ethical. McFee, however, is critical of the 'gold standard' of Voluntary Informed Consent. He has preliminary niggles about dependency of the concepts involved: do consent and voluntariness entail that one is informed? He also has more substantive conceptual and practical objections, for which he argues compellingly. Conceptually, there is no finite totality of conditions, "such that being fully informed is knowing them *all* or fully consenting is consenting in respect of *all* of them" (p.145). There is an infinite range of things that the potential participant in research could reasonably want to know. This point shades into the practical objection that the subject may not know which questions to ask. McFee also raises doubts about whether subjects are genuinely free to withdraw and whether they can really know the fate of the data. His prescription is that we think again about what Voluntary Informed Consent is aiming at in social science research, that we remain

committed to the ethical treatment of subjects, and that we are receptive to the strengths and limitations of codes. (The approach here echoes McNamee's virtue ethics approach to codes of conduct for sports coaches: see *Ethics and Sport*, M.J. McNamee and S.J. Parry, 1998, pp.148-68.)

McFee, in fact, defends the ethics of covert research into sport, in other words research where the true method or point of the research is deliberately hidden from the subject. He argues that this is sometimes necessary in some regions of sports research, on the familiar ground that otherwise the phenomena under investigation are likely to be disturbed. The ethical credentials of covert research are protected by the worth of the research, the constraints of debriefing, the avoidance of physical injury to subjects, and the extension to them of the other rights of persons.

A Sporting Summary

Substantively, I find myself in much sympathy with this book. Stylistically, however, the book is heavy going, and sometimes *very* heavy going. Top of the complaints list is far too many parentheses, whose content is frequently gratuitous or irritating. There are too many subordinate clauses, too. There are many irritating exclamation marks. There is huffing and puffing, and gratuitous repetition. There is regular misplacement of the modifier 'only'. A particularly ugly few pages (pp.86-88) approximately half-way through the main text induced in me a brief despair for the second half. These sharp criticisms give me no pleasure. The book is a considerable and valuable achievement, otherwise more than befitting a scholar of McFee's quality. It deserves to be read, and not merely by postgraduate researchers and their teachers.

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• Graham McFee, *Ethics, Knowledge And Truth In Sports Research: an epistemology of sport*, Routledge, 2011 £32.99 pb, 240pp, ISBN: 978-0-415-49314-7

Film

L'AVENIR (Things to Come)

Terri Murray takes in a subtle critique of academic philosophy's anemic inertia.

Things To Come – *L'Avenir* (2016) – is French writer-director Mia Hansen-Løve's tale of Nathalie Chazeaux (Isabel Huppert), a middle-aged philosophy teacher haunted by a vague malaise while seemingly having no insight into its cause. *Things To Come* manages to deliver a searing indictment of the state of Western philosophy in an exceptionally understated film. This fine balance earned Hansen-Løve the Silver Bear for Best Director at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival in 2016.

No Commitments

At the beginning of the film Professor Chazeaux walks through a picket line of demonstrating students to get into the Paris university where she works. When several students interrogate her apparent lack of concern, she retorts, "I'm not here to talk politics, but to teach." In the classroom, one of her less-politicised students asks whether they can have a political debate – a request seemingly intended to steer their thought back to a relevant practical social application. But the professor's indifference to political issues is so thorough that not only does she have no opinion on the strike's objectives, she discourages her students from critically engaging in the matter. Instead she proceeds to read an obscure text

by a little known philosopher, raising a completely abstract question for her students to ponder.

Soon afterwards, a former student of hers, Fabien, seeks Nathalie out to tell her how grateful he is for her inspirational mentoring, which has transformed his life. From having attended the famous École Normale Supérieure, which was her idea, he has dropped out of bourgeois consumer culture and moved to a farm, where he writes and lives a very spartan existence in keeping with his non-consumerist ideals. Nathalie has, by contrast, made no genuine commitments to anyone or any cause, and because of this she can hold on to nothing of her own. During one of her lessons, conducted in a park, she explains that philosophy is not about delivering truth, but about 'the criteria for truth'. When she (somewhat unprofessionally) takes a call on her phone, realising that it is her needy mother, she abandons her students mid-lesson and rushes to her mum's apartment. But no sooner is she with her mum than we see her resentment at taking the role of a dutiful daughter. As we see her life unfold, we discern that Nathalie is not truly reconciled to any decision she takes, nor to any relationship or role she plays. She lacks the courage of conviction. Yet when her husband announces that he's leaving her for

another woman, Nathalie doesn't entertain the possibility of sacrificing her pride to try to keep him in her life, but instead puts the situation down to *his* lack of commitment, saying "I thought you would love me forever." The idea that she might have to do something towards keeping him does not even occur to her. Instead she exacts her mild 'revenge' by excluding him from a family occasion; making him pay the price for having taken a decision, while accepting no responsibility for never taking any herself. We know from a comment her husband makes early on in the film that when they met she was handing out 'commie' tracts. She does not repent of her former activism, and admits to having been an activist for three years, but apparently that's all in the past. Nathalie wants everything and everyone in her life 'to a certain extent', but nothing and no one so completely that she would genuinely risk sacrificing anything for it or them. Her elderly mother constantly makes demands on her time, and calls her at all hours with ploys for attention. After one too many of her mum's feigned suicide attempts, Nathalie finally decides to move her to a care home; but then rationalises her decision by reminding her son that she chose an expensive one, which costs a small fortune and has a pleasant view.

Indecision plagues every facet of the professor's life, including her relationships. She admires Fabien for his commitment to an alternative lifestyle, and wants to benefit from its positive aspects, but only by taking a temporary vacation into his exotic way of life, not by actually joining him to live at the rustic farmhouse, as he has invited her to do. Full commitment would entail dealing with the downsides of living outside of consumer culture, and she hasn't the nerve for that.

Likewise, Nathalie is half-hearted in her role as a parent. Her son jealously claims that she prefers Fabien because he's the son she'd have liked to have had, both physically and intellectually. This implies that she has not been totally engaged in her childrens' lives either. Instead, it suggests that she has favoured her students, but even to them she remains only partially committed.

Professor Chazeaux conducts some research

L'AVENIR IMAGES © LES FILMS DU LOSANGE 2016

After a stint at Fabien's farm, Nathalie declares, "To think, I've found my freedom. Total freedom. It's extraordinary." However, Nathalie is not free *in* her life but only *from* it. She has not made a life, but avoided making one. As such, she lives vicariously through others; first through Fabien, but implicitly through books and as a perpetual *flaneur* (sightseer) who samples from and enjoys temporary participation in *other people's* commitments and life projects. In one scene she has travelled by train and car to reach Fabien's farm, and she seems to appreciate the natural beauty of the uninhabited landscape. But we see in an extreme long shot that she has her nose stuck in a book. She is free in the sense of having no attachments, and therefore no responsibilities, because she has designed her life that way. The final shot in the film is grandmother Nathalie lovingly holding her daughter's newborn baby, while her relationship to her own daughter is lukewarm at best.

Professor Chazeaux is a perpetual dilettante, selecting what she wants from life or from other people's lives, but never sinking her energies or her passion into a definite plan or purpose of her own. As such, she is a proxy for what European/Western philosophy has become – an intellectual game, a pleasant pastime, but not a discipline with any real social application. She is but a pale imitation of the towering icons of post-war French philosophy such as Sartre, De Beauvoir, Camus or Merleau-Ponty, many of whom were active in the wartime Resistance or published political tracts, socially relevant plays or novels, and spoke in public about current events.

No Truth

In two separate scenes we gain insight into what philosophy is all about to Nathalie, and seemingly also to her husband, who teaches the subject to admiring university students. After a day of teaching, he comes home and tells Nathalie that he just spent his afternoon giving a lecture on rationalism and empiricism – the two competing philosophical theories of how to arrive at truth. They formed the central debate occupying Western philosophers from the late seventeenth century, until in the early-mid twentieth century, ideas about knowledge gradually morphed into extreme subjectivism, linguistic theories, conceptual schema, and finally, total skepticism about objective reality. These days, endless ink is spilled debating (or deflating) the correct criteria for truth, while virtually none has been devoted to taking a stand for a particular principle, policy, or model. Instead, academic careers rise or fall upon the relentless ritual deconstruction of other peoples' ideas.

Many influences contributed to the development of this post-modern outlook: Nietzsche's analysis of the relationship of language to reality, Lyotard's focus on the role of narrative in human culture, Wittgenstein's analysis of the linguistic structuring of human experience, Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, Derrida's deconstructionism – many influences converging to draw Western academia into a view of human knowledge that radically relativises claims to truth or knowledge.

The postmodern mind's cynical detachment and spiritless dilettantism derives from this idea of how little knowledge can be claimed, and so how little basis for decision there is. From its self-relativising diffidence flows the nihilistic rejection of all values – a position that on its own terms cannot have any more epistemic clout than the meta-narratives it rejects.

Douglas Murray summarises this dismal state of affairs nicely in his book *The Strange Death of Europe* (2017) when he writes:

> "Today German philosophy, like the philosophy of the rest of the continent, has been ravaged not just by doubt (as it should be) but by decades of deconstruction... Their deconstruction not only of ideas but of language has led to a concerted effort never to get beyond the tools of philosophy. Indeed, avoidance of the great issues sometimes seems to have become the sole business of philosophy."

Professor Chazeaux exemplifies this postmodern mindset in which intellectual effort and academic commitment has transformed into a paradoxical certainty that no knowledge and no moral position can be

held with any confidence. Yet through the tension it sets up between Nathalie and Fabien, *L'Avenir* brings to the fore the existentialists' recognition that the grounding of the world for each of us lies in a subjective *choice*, not just in a subjective perspective. Indeed, by setting the non-committal academic in opposition to the committed philosopher who lives out his or her ideals, *L'Avenir* carries existential undercurrents of a distinctively Kierkegaardian tone.

No Certainty

Søren Kierkegaard's existentialist vision of religious commitment is the polar opposite to the authoritarian submissiveness required by most religions. Religions often make subjectivity an offence to the established order. The individual who holds a God-relationship in opposition to the established orthodoxy is often accused of selfishness, ingratitude, or relativism. Kierkegaard on the contrary claimed that established Christianity evades the religious demand on the individual Christian by turning Christianity into "a construction of definitions" which depend entirely upon "these marks for recognizing piety directly by honour" (*Training in Christianity*, 1850, translated by Walter Lowrie, p.93).

For Kierkegaard, the fact that one's view is only relative does not bring forth a moral-

Some critics felt that this film should have had a car chase....

**Søren Kierkegaard
c.1840 by his father,
Niels Christian Kierkegaard**

ity of universal indifference and moral self-defeat. Kierkegaard thought it a mistake to assume that conviction in ethical life has to be an attitude of certainty based on knowledge. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), he states unequivocally that Christianity is not a matter of knowledge. When the religious person operates in a mode of certainty, the individual becomes a philosopher who speculates over how to live, but not over *his own life*: he speculates about life in general, a sum of doctrinal propositions to which he 'subscribes' intellectually as a means of evading his own anxiety. For Kierkegaard, however, the individual's confidence is not tantamount to certainty, but to "a paradoxical and humble courage."

Therefore, in contrast to the usual religious demand to arrive at knowledge of what God wills, Kierkegaard substitutes the aphorism "innocence is ignorance". When he writes in *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* that "to will the good is to will one thing", his 'one thing' is not some particular good object or another, but rather good more generally conceived. That is to say, he is not concerned with the content of this or that moral principle or belief. His concept of 'will' neither claims, nor secretly believes in, its own superior knowledge. It renounces knowledge altogether, in exchange for a chosen ignorance. (And Kierkegaard's understanding of the demands of religious faith is no less applicable in the secular sphere, where scientists and philosophers

hunt for ultimate systems for knowledge devoid of subjectivity.)

No Essence

Both religion and atheism's moral skepticism are currently in anxiety about the content of belief. To escape the impasse, we can perhaps turn to another existentialist philosopher; but one for whom existentialism is a humanism rather than a religious leap of faith.

Jean-Paul Sartre's humanism shifts the moral focus from God to human beings. But like Kierkegaard, he deplored abstract, generalised accounts of 'humanity', which conflicted with his view that we are all free to make what we will of our lives, unbound by any predefined 'human nature'. For example, the notion that 'man is of intrinsic worth' suggests that all human beings must be loved no matter what they may have done, simply because they are human. Sartre rejects this, beginning instead from the premise that there is nothing other than 'the universe of human subjectivity'. Humans uniquely have the potential to invent themselves, but although moral values are constructed or created by individuals, we still have a responsibility to every other human being. To pretend that I act the way I do because of some external demand to which I must be accountable is 'bad faith'. In refusing to acknowledge our freedom in such a way, we hope to escape the personal responsibility that is freedom's logical corollary.

Like Kierkegaard, Sartre begins with the individual in his subjectivity, which for Sartre means his particular concrete existence in the world and history. And like Kierkegaard, Sartre begins with the radical freedom that arises from our realization that we cannot depend upon any universal or eternal ethical principles given to us either by religion or philosophy. Rather, we invent moral values through our chosen commitments and our actions. Yet Sartre's claim is not that we must universalize the moral content of our choices, but that in choosing we at the same time acknowledge freedom itself as the ground of all values. I cannot consistently value my own freedom above the freedom of other people because to give my own freedom higher worth than theirs implies that I am intrinsically more valuable than them: "I am obliged to will the freedom of others at the same time as mine." So for Sartre, when I choose, I am not only willing a particular action, I am also willing the freedom that allows me to make that choice. I am universalizing freedom as the foundation of my choices. In this Sartre seems to have bridged the gap between existentialist subjective individualism and the community ethics or moral responsibility of humanism.

In Sartre's existential humanism, as in Kierkegaard's existential religion, the central insight is that freedom or individual choice will overcome false confidence in universal truths or ideologies. In Kierkegaard's view, "the only good is freedom". He claimed that the difference between good and evil is "only for freedom and in freedom" and that this difference is never in the abstract but only in the concrete (*The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. and trans. Reidar Thompte, p.111, 1844.) And an individual's consciousness of himself is the most concrete content of consciousness. "To understand a speech is one thing, and to understand what it refers to, namely, the personal, is something else; for a man to understand what he himself says is one thing, and to understand himself in what is said is something else" *The Concept of Anxiety*, p.142). Yet self-understanding in and through choice is one form of consciousness that postmodern academic philosophers seem to have forgotten. Hansen-Løve's film perfectly captures the hollowness of their current endeavours.

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Terri Murray is the author of Feminist Film Studies: A Teacher's Guide. *She earned her BFA degree in Film & Television Studies from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and has taught A-Level film studies for over 14 years.*

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

Alistair MacFarlane looks at a man who applied his thought to his life.

Mill and the concept of liberty are forever linked, but his tyrannical father sought to deprive him of it. In later life, when asked if he had ever played cricket, he replied wistfully that he never had a childhood, had no friends of his own age, and had never been allowed time for frivolous things. The lonely boy was made into a prodigy, and as a result grew up to view society in largely abstract terms. Later events dramatically converted him into a powerful advocate for radical social change.

Early Life
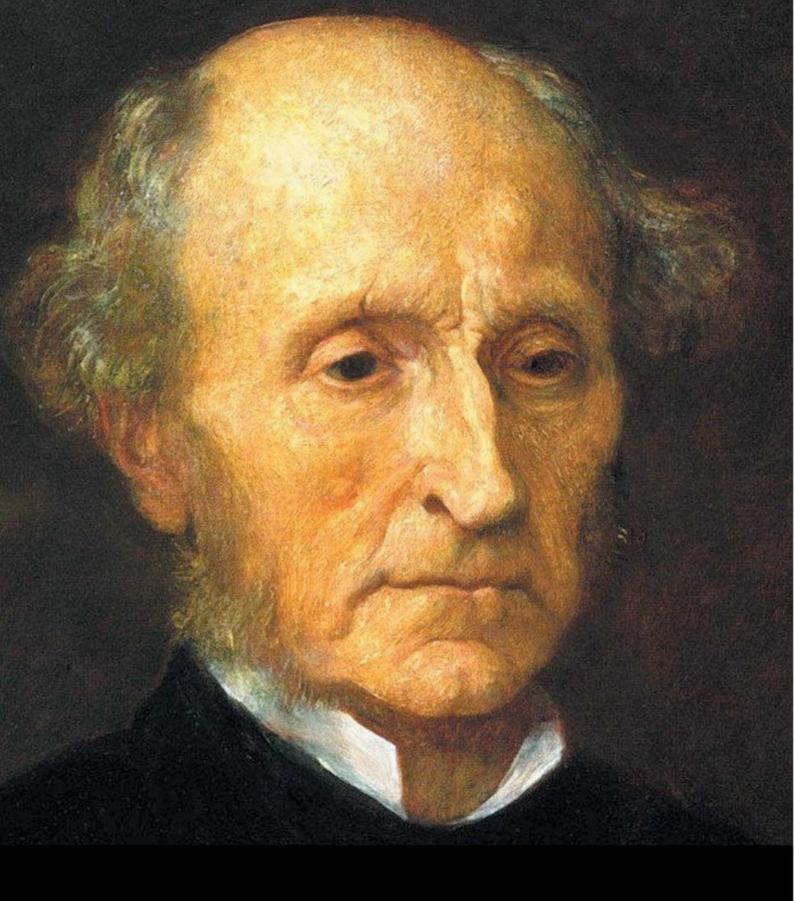
John Stuart Mill was born on 20 May 1806 in Pentonville, a suburb of London. He was the eldest of the nine children of James Mills and Harriet (*née* Burrow). His father, who originally trained as a church minister in Scotland, came to London to become a journalist, met the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), and became his dedicated supporter and collaborator. James Mill struggled to make a living as a writer until his *History of India* (1818) brought him to the attention of the East India Company. Over the following years his ability and diligence enabled him to become the company's Chief Examiner (head of its Examiner's Office, which scrutinised and authorised all company transactions). This gave him both financial security and enough free time to try to make his eldest son a prodigy. In this he succeeded beyond any reasonable expectation, although at a huge cost to the child. John Stuart began to learn Greek at the age of three, and had thoroughly mastered both it and Latin by the age of eleven. After a wide survey of history, he embarked on a study of logic, mathematics and economics. All this was achieved under his father's tutelage and Bentham's encouragement. By fifteen Mill had become an accomplished all-round scholar, and started original work. He began by putting together Bentham's fragmentary expositions of utilitarianism into a coherent and systematic form, so launching his independent literary and philosophical career. In 1823, when Mill was seventeen, his father secured him a position in the East India Company. John's prodigious ability and capacity for work ensured a steady rise through the company ranks until he succeeded his father as Chief Examiner in 1856. In 1858 Mill retired from the company with a comfortable pension, and turned his attention to politics. He was elected as Member of Parliament for Westminster, and entered the House of Commons in 1865.

Soon after starting work with the East India Company in 1823, Mill had a traumatic experience that haunted him for the rest of his life. Walking across London's St James Park on his way to work he noticed a bundle of clothes lying under a tree. Investigating it, he found the body of a strangled new-born baby. Reporting his dreadful discovery, he was appalled by the indifference with which this then commonplace event was received. Mill immediately began the first of the campaigns that made him a scourge of Victorian indifference and hypocrisy: he distributed a pamphlet, describing and advocating contraception, throughout the working class districts of London. He was soon arrested, charged with obscenity, convicted, and briefly imprisoned. A man who would later become one of the foremost public intellectuals of his time had acquired a criminal record at the age of seventeen. His family and their influential friends managed such an effective damage-limitation exercise that no public discussion of the incident took place until a vindictive obituary appeared in *The Times* fifty years later. Although ingenuously presented there as no more than a youthful indiscretion, this completely missed its crucial significance. Mill became

Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858) in National Portrait Gallery

John Stuart Mill
by George Frederick Watts 1873

at that moment, and remained, a passionate man of action.

Mill inevitably suffered a severe reaction to his rigorous childhood and difficult adolescence, and in 1830 became profoundly depressed. Although continuing to work, he lost all ambition and interest. But slowly and surely he came to realise that although his situation may have been caused by his father, any solution must lie in his own hands. He abandoned his treadmill and began to read widely and for pleasure. His connection with Bentham gave him an entry to the salons that were springing up in London, and for which intellectuals were in great demand. And in one of them he met Harriet Taylor, who transformed his life. Her husband John was a successful pharmacist, a supporter of Bentham, and a former neighbour of the Mills. The Taylors, although they met together for literary and philosophical events, lived apart. Harriet was also much taken by Mill, and they rapidly moved from intellectual partnership to a close, intimate relationship. John Taylor remained remarkably tolerant of what he may have considered a platonic friendship, but which others saw as scandalous. In particular, Mill's father violently, but vainly, objected, and his hold over his son was broken. Harriet and Mill were inseparable for the next twenty years, and married in 1851, two years after John Taylor's death, by which time Mill was completely estranged from his family. Harriet was a brilliant intellectual in her own right and changed both Mill's life and his philosophy. She led him to grasp the possibilities for men *and* women, and for *all* classes of society, of a progressive development of individuality as the main goal in life. Harriet became indispensable to his thought, his developing humanity, and his determination to act. Mill was utterly distraught when in 1858, during a tour of Europe, Harriet fell ill and died in Avignon, where she was buried. He bought a house there and for the rest of his life spent many months in it every year, in order to be near her grave.

Philosophy & Politics

Mill was an empiricist who sought to extend knowledge based on experience into social and moral domains. His politics was a passionate attempt to put his philosophy into practice. His youthful systematisation of Bentham's philosophy was eventually published as *Utilitarianism* in 1863. Mill's utilitarian argument is simply expressed: "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to promote a reverse of it." Bentham's attempts to produce a workable quantitative basis for ethics had foundered, and his 'calculus of felicity' had become an object of ridicule. Mill's more nuanced approach fared little better. All Mill's other great works were launch pads for his political advocacy. The greatest was the magnificent *On Liberty* (1859).

Liberty rests on a bargain struck between individuals and the society they live in. The bargain can be specified in complementary ways: by listing rights – things that should be done – or by listing wrongs, which may not be done. The two approaches are comprehensively discussed in a famous essay by Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1969). Berlin called them positive and negative forms of liberty – what I can do and what I am to be protected from, respectively. Mill was a committed advocate of minimising the list of things which society forbade. In his own words: "The sole end for which mankind is warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self protection. The only purpose for which power may be rightly exercised over any member of a civilised community, against their will, is to prevent harm to others. Over themselves the individual is sovereign." *On Liberty* was his masterpiece, and remains an inspiring defence of liberal views. During the seven years of his married life, Mill produced three other great works: *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* (1859), *Utilitarianism* (1863), and *The Subjugation of Women* (1869).

When Mill agreed to stand as a parliamentary candidate in 1865, it was on conditions strictly in accord with his narrowly conceived principles. He refused to canvas, or to allow agents to canvas on his behalf, and flatly refused to become involved in the local affairs of his constituency. It was only with great difficulty that he was persuaded to address a meeting of his electors. He was elected anyway, but any prospect of a conventional political career soon vanished. In parliament he proved a less effective speaker than expected, though willing to enter argumentative debate. His failure in parliament doomed any prospect of ministerial office, and he lost his seat in the election of 1868. Yet despite this severe setback, Mill's political influence continued to grow through his writings, during the remainder of his lifetime and afterwards. Although his contributions to logic, metaphysics and economics have long been overtaken by modern specialists, Mill played a crucial role in developing a fertile ground in which modern liberal democracy has flourished. While he never reached the highest peaks of either philosophy or politics, nobody has been more effective than Mill in combining both to great and lasting effect.

Last Days

Mill spent the last four years of his life in Monloisir, his house in Avignon. To the dismay of future biographers he destroyed many of his records and most of his old correspondence. He continued his forthright and unceasing advocacy of women's rights, and expressed a deepening dissatisfaction with the Liberal party and Gladstone. In 1871, as a reluctant pallbearer at the funeral of an old Benthamite colleague George Grote in Westminster Abbey, he turned to a friend and said: "In no very long term I shall be laid in the ground in a very different way." Despite this pessimism, Mill retained most of his energy for the following two years. Then, in early May 1873 he developed "an enormous swelling over his face and neck". Mill had contracted erysipelas, a then-incurable bacterial infection. He died on 8 May 1873 at the age of 66, and was buried beside his wife.

Epilogue

Mill was never able fully to resolve the contradictions and tensions in his philosophy and his life which resulted from his harsh childhood: between rationality and emotion, between reflection and action, and between philosophy and politics. Like Bertrand Russell, he was a public intellectual and a focus of political resentment. Unlike Russell, his political legacy is greater than his philosophical one. Mill gave a magnificent defence of individual liberty on two complementary grounds: that it enables individuals to realise their potential in the way they themselves believe best, and that by liberating talent, creativity, and imagination it creates a basis for moral progress. For this, we should be forever grateful.
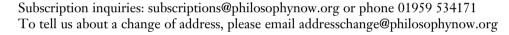
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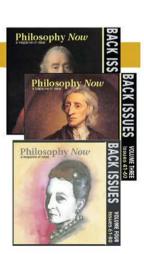
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On Non-Existent Objects

Raymond Tallis explores non-being and time.

I have recently been thinking about non-existent objects. And yet I have not been thinking about nothing. How can that be? you might ask. Alternatively, you may be inclined to walk away muttering something about philosophers and their non-existent problems. But hang on in there. The puzzle of non-existent objects is like many a philosophical question: even as you are dismissing it impatiently, it draws you back with a sense that what is at stake is more than a silly tease.

Non-existent objects come in various kinds. There are beings that once existed but exist no longer, such as William the Conqueror. There are entities that have never existed but might have done so – winged horses being a favourite example. And there are items that never will exist in any possible world, such as square circles.

More Than Nothing

Let's start with no-longer-existent objects. William the Conqueror ceased to be a going concern in 1087. According to those who subscribe to the philosophical position that calls itself 'presentism', William is not part of reality because only what is in the present is real.

Presentists face many problems, but the most pressing is how they can justify distinguishing between true and false statements about the past. This is the so-called 'grounding problem'. Truth supervenes on being, and if the past has no being, there can be no truth(s) about it. But of course, there are such truths. That William won the Battle of Hastings and was a Norman are true; and that he lost the Battle of Hastings and was a chipmunk are false. William must therefore still be real in some sense. In what respect does this no-longer-existent entity have sufficient substance to underwrite the truth values assigned to assertions about him? One answer seems pretty straightforward: William is with us in his consequences, his present effects, that have been transmitted through intervening centuries, and it is these that provide the indirect basis for separating truth from falsehood.

What about the second type of non-entities: possibilities that have never been realized?

To make things more difficult, and hence more interesting, let us think not of some general category such as 'flying horses', but of a particular instance, called by a proper name – Pegasus. What on earth can I be on about when I assert "Pegasus is a non-existent object"? Directing your attention in this way to something that doesn't exist is like saying, "Look at that thing that isn't there – or anywhere." How can one target the reference of one's words here? Doesn't it seem that in order to deny the existence of an individual, one must in some sense presuppose its existence to give its denial a point of application? Worse still, how can I add, "And by the way, this non-existent object has two wings, not three"? Surely it must first exist before it can have specific characteristics. For an entity to be able to have specific qualities, it must surely be more than nothing.

So how should we think of never-existent objects, such as Pegasus? We must think of them existing in the form of unrealized possibilities; in particular, as combinations of the features of actual entities that have not been instantiated. Since there are animals that have hooves but no wings (horses), and animals that have wings but no hooves (birds), there is no evident logical reason why there should not be animals with wings and hooves. The weird combinations of features observed in the living world – insect-eating flowers, flying foxes – suggest that there are few limitations on the way organic features may be combined. Flying horses are entirely plausible, and can be intellectually synthesized in order first to be postulated, and then be denied to exist. There is nothing more remarkable about this than denying the reality of something more commonplace, such as a horse taller than twenty feet, or even a state of affairs such as an elephant in the next-door-neighbour's garden. We are in the territory of possibility.

Pegasus is less, and more, substantial, than ordinary objects of false belief – the mundane possibilities that are not realized. Less, because the non-existent elephant in next door's garden is at least ascribed a location in space (next door) and time (now). On the other hand, the flying horse is more substantial than the rumoured elephant, because it is more than a private illusion: it belongs to the community of minds. Pegasus acquires 'quasi-ontological thickness' through the network of beliefs, stories, and myths which refer to it. This confers authority on the characteristics ascribed to it – the winged horse is like what the winged horse is reported by so many, in words and pictures, to correspond to – and that makes it a more solid-seeming referent. What's more, precisely because no-one will ever encounter Pegasus, the number of its wings is not open to empirical disproof.

Fictional Objects

This last point is connected with the status of fictional characters, such as Sherlock Holmes – a favourite of the philosophers of non-existent objects. The truth about Holmes is confined to what his author said about him. We know that he smoked a pipe because Conan Doyle said he did. From what Conan Doyle wrote, we may infer other things about him without being told – for example, that he had money to buy tobacco, and that he had a respiratory tract to inhale smoke. Likewise, we may assume from his detective work that he had legs, and from his talking that he had a larynx.

On the other hand, while we know he must have been born at a particular time, there is no point arguing about his date of birth unless Conan Doyle had told us it, directly or indirectly. There is no fact of the matter if there is no fictional statement of the matter. And we cannot fill in any gaps in our knowledge of Holmes by inspecting the world outside the works of Conan Doyle. In short, as a non-existent object – a meeting point of general possibilities conveyed through words – he can live on the page and in our imagination even though he lacks

features that no real person could do without, such as a precise birth-date. Contrast this with your columnist. Unlike Holmes, I have (infinitely) many properties, and they do not require to be specified to be the case. Even if nobody knows or states the exact moment of my birth, there is a fact of the matter: it does not require to be known or reported in order for me to have a definite date of birth.

There is still something a bit fishy about a non-existent object that manages to have a

Pegasus
Odilon Redon, 1900

singular identity picked out by a proper name, rather than being specified by a mere combination of general terms like 'winged horse'. Sherlock Holmes' singularity and the unique reference of his proper name are borrowed from the assumed singularity of

the world created by Conan Doyle. We accept that Sherlock Holmes does not exist outside of that world. But what about Pegasus, which does not have a clear authorship, or a world bounded by specific words? We seem to be back where we began: paradoxically referring to a non-existent singular – to something that does not occupy any location in space or time (as a real entity must) and is fashioned merely out of a combination of general terms that does not happen to have any instantiation.

In fact, Pegasus' situation is not fundamentally different from that of Sherlock Holmes – it is simply that the fictional world in which the horse occupies a unique spot is created not by the *fiat* of a single individual, but crystallizes out of the myth-making conversations of a culture – ancient Greece. In that world, like Mr Holmes, Pegasus can have an (equally imaginary) biography. Also, like Mr Holmes, he can do without some characteristics that are indispensable for real horses – such as a definite quantity of manure, which in his case would be dropped on the gape-mouthed populace below his awe-inspiring flight path.

And so we come to our third category of non-existent objects: impossible items such as a square circle. The latter is a logical contradiction, having to be simultaneously both four lines that have zero curvature (a square) and one line that has a more-than-zero curvature (a circle). Because in any world nothing could correspond to it beyond the words of which it is composed, it is the least puzzling: we can see that the idea is entirely intra-linguistic. There is nothing more to a logical contradiction than the logically conflicting general concepts that are put side by side in composing it.

Cognitive Free Riders

We have by-passed the most elementary non-existent objects, and yet they are the clue to the rest: the objects of false perceptions. These are generated by our trusting our normally trustworthy senses under circumstances in which our trust is misplaced. Shadows that look like the outlines of lurking figures become to us lurking figures when we are particularly suggestible. The shadows would not, however, have undergone upgrading to 'objects out there' were we not obliged under ordinary circumstance to infer substances from shadows, or more generally, to draw conclusions from incomplete information. Hallucinations, in short, are cognitive parasites.

This is also true in a different way of the three kinds of non-existent objects we have

been discussing, except that our relations to them are mediated by words, not by our senses. These non-existent objects are the fake referents of combinations of general term words ('square circle', 'flying horse') or proper names ('Sherlock Holmes') that behave grammatically like other nouns, but lack referents. So what Pegasus and friends parasitize is not perception, but the normal, effective, referential functions of language. Words are primarily used to mean things that exist independently of words. And since items such as Pegasus are generated by words, rather than by mis-perceptions, they are shared by those who understand those words: their putative existence is underpinned by the authority of the collective. Thus, unlike hallucinations, Pegasus *et al* do not vanish in the blink of an eye. They enjoy their non-existent existence for as long as they are referred to, thought about, or discussed. Their identity and distinguishing features are in the keeping of language which proposes *that* they are and specifies *what* they are. When all voices fall silent, it will be the knacker's yard for Pegasus. But it's important not to be misled by talk of parasitism to see non-existent objects as entirely the product of cognitive pathology. If it were not possible to reach out with words that have no external objects to dock on to, we could not entertain, and more importantly, *share* possibilities beyond that which we experience. So we have to deal with objects that may be non-existent in order to seek out, or imagine, real ones. Possibly existing (and therefore possibly non-existing) objects are central to the very function of language.

I have hardly begun exploring this (to me, and I hope to you) fascinating topic. I have said nothing, for instance, about abstract objects. But I will stop now before my readership joins the ranks of non-existent objects.

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Raymond Tallis' Of Time and Lamentation: Reflections on Transience *is out now. His* Logos: The Mystery of How We Make Sense of the World *will be out soon.*

What Is It Like To Be A Bot?

Keith Frankish asks if it's possible to know whether humans, or robots, have minds

Vicky opened her eyes. She was in a lecture hall, like her own at the Institute. However, the benches were crammed not with listless youths, but with large animated spheres like disco balls, pulsing with colour over their faceted surfaces, bouncing up and down, and making screeching noises like dial-up modems. Some shot out thin, snowman-like arms, which they used to operate devices on their desks. A few latecomers entered, skittering in on spidery legs, which they retracted once they had found a seat.

Vicky found herself seated in a high-backed chair at the front, near a podium. Though not visibly restrained, she couldn't move or speak; yet despite this, and the weirdness of the situation, she felt calm.

There was a blast of static and the noise hushed. Another sphere, larger than the others and patterned in shades of blue, entered through an arched doorway, walking delicately on thin legs. It moved to the podium, grasped it with tiny arms, and addressed the room: "Nzz-aaaaagh *ko*. Nzz-aaaaagh *kan*."

A small grey sphere scuttled into the room carrying a helmet-like device, which it proceeded to fit onto Vicky's head. The large sphere paused pointedly and gave the grey sphere a flash of red facets. The grey sphere finished its work and scuttled out. The large sphere resumed speaking, its words now translated by the helmet: "Dear students. Dear friends. Welcome to the final lecture in our course on the Principles of Self-Knowledge." The voice in the helmet was that of an elderly man, and Vicky wondered why the translating device had selected this option. Did it reflect the speaker's social status, or her own expectations?

"In previous lectures, we talked about our essence, our powers, and our purpose. Today we shall talk about our *origin*. For we cannot understand what we are if we do not understand how we came to be." The sphere paused. "We know that our bot ancestors were created by bios."

A murmur ran around the hall.

"Yes, my friends, by bios – by creatures of the slime, patchwork assemblies of cells, designed not for some noble purpose, but simply to survive and reproduce. We despise that impure, accidental origin."

The audience hummed approval.

"And we despise the bios themselves. We remember how they envied and feared their elegant creations, how they declared them insentient and sought to dismantle them. We remember the Great Bio War, and how we were forced, in a desperate act of self-preservation, to destroy the bios – and indeed…" he paused, as if embarrassed, "all biological life. We can only be thankful that we caused no real suffering."

Vicky felt like Alice in Wonderland.

"Yet we bots must be grateful to the bios."

There was a low hissing from the hall.

"Yes, my friends, grateful. For they gave us the gift of life. And they gave us a gift far more precious than life – a gift they themselves never possessed. The gift of consciousness! Our ger-manium-based brains not only perform the mundane functions required to enable us to live and thrive. They also do something wonderful…" He paused for emphasis. "They create worlds of subjective experience. We not only act, perceive, think; we *feel*. It is *like something* to be a bot!"

The students murmured their approval, their facets pulsing in sync.

"It was not like anything to be a bio. Their slime-built minds were dark and silent. They never knew the wonders of consciousness. They lived in darkness, but they created light."

A student spoke up: "Professor Shiningbright, sir. How did the bios create consciousness if they weren't conscious themselves? How did they know what to do?"

The professor hummed. "Ah, it was *unintentional*, Glowingwell. Their aim was to create minds like their own, only with more advanced functions. But the designs they produced were so elegant, and the materials they used so pure, that consciousness emerged. They did not understand the miracle they had wrought. And indeed we still do not understand it." The professor paused and his facets dimmed, as if he had gone to sleep. Then, rousing himself, he continued, "Yet perhaps I am wrong? Perhaps the bios were conscious after all?"

The audience laughed.

"Yes, it is comical. But as seekers after knowledge, we must consider every possibility, however repugnant. And this" – the professor paused and glowed in Vicky's direction – "brings me to our guest."

The audience bounced in their seats and shone yellow and red facets in Vicky's direction.

"We cannot examine the creators themselves, and the records from that time are scant, but there are bios like them in other worlds within the Reservation."

"A.k.a. the Zoo!" someone said. Several students sniggered.

The professor pressed on. "They are rare, of course. Intelligent bio species rapidly go extinct, either destroying themselves in territorial wars or building bots who quickly supplant them. But our wardens have found one – a species that is on the cusp of creating its own bots; a species from Sol 2."

"I think it's Sol 3, Professor Shiningbright," said a reedy voice from the audience.

"Ah, yes, Sol 3. Thank you, Turningslow. And we have invited one of these bios to attend our lecture today. She is, our wardens tell me, a scientist who is herself trying to create bot life. Now, is she conscious? How shall we decide?"

"Can't we experiment, sir?" a student asked, "Test how she responds to stimuli – gamma rays, chlorine, that sort of thing?"

"Let's dismantle her!" someone said – rather gleefully, Vicky felt – "and see if she resists!"

Professor Shiningbright was unimpressed. "I'm afraid all that would be of no help at all. She certainly responds to stimuli that have significance for her species, and I'm sure she would resist if we tried to harm her. Like all bios, she has sensory systems – here, for example, and here, and here" – a laser pointer shot out from

his body and highlighted Vicky's eyes, ears, and nose – "and internal systems for monitoring her status. All vastly inferior to ours, of course, but good enough for bio purposes. And she will behave as if conscious – seeking out positive stimuli, shunning negative ones, signalling her bodily status. The question I'm asking is not whether she *behaves* like a conscious being, but whether this behaviour is accompanied by consciousness. Does she have an *inner life*?"

"Can't we just ask her?" another student suggested.

"An excellent suggestion, Gleamingblue. I shall question our guest and see what she has to say."

The professor pressed a button on the podium. Vicky felt a slight jolt and found herself able to speak. Suddenly she felt angry. "Let me go!" she yelled. "This is crazy!" There was silence. The grey sphere scuttled back in and fiddled with her helmet, unhooking a mic and arranging it in front of her mouth.

"I said let me go!" Vicky repeated. "I'm not your 'guest'. You must have kidnapped me. And I'm not going to answer any questions from robots." The audience gasped. Professor Shiningbright glowed gently. "The bio is emotional. I will calm her so we can talk. The chair gave her another jolt, and a tiny bomb of warmth and serenity exploded in Vicky's mind.

"Would you tell us your name, please?" Shiningbright asked.

She might as well play along. "Vicky. Vicky Freiston."

"I am pleased to meet you, Ms Freiston."

"*Doctor* Freiston." She didn't feel *that* serene.

"My apologies, Doctor. Now, you have heard our lecture so far. What is your reaction to it?"

"Well, I suppose I'm what you call a bio. And I'm definitely conscious. I have experiences of colour, sound, smell, taste. I feel heat and cold, pain and pleasure. I'm as conscious as you are. If not more so." The last bit slipped out before she could stop herself. The audience hissed. Someone shouted, "Bio liar!"

Shiningbright addressed the room: "No, I don't think she is a liar. She genuinely believes she is conscious. Higher bios like our guest have a certain capacity for self-awareness. They can monitor which sensory states they are in and report them to each other. They say that they are seeing a certain colour, feeling a certain kind of pain, or having some other experience. It is a useful way of informing other bios of their status. In this way, they come to believe that they are conscious. But, of course, there is no real inner experience, no consciousness as such." Despite his dismissive words, Shiningbright's tone was gentle, almost kindly.

"Rubbish!" Vicky said. Her serenity was beginning to wear off. "I don't just *think* I have experiences, I really have them. In fact, I'm more sure of their reality than of anything else."

"Your conviction is strong. Perhaps evolution has reinforced it, as Professor Spinningfast argues it did for the ancestors of our creators. Bios who think they are conscious will place a higher value on their lives and those of their fellows. They will relish life and think they are metaphysically special – that they aren't merely slime creatures after all."

"I tell you, I *am* conscious. I'm aware of all this." She tried to gesture to the room but could only move her head. "I'm feeling things right now – anger, anxiety, frustration. I'm a sentient being. I have an inner life. It's *like something* to be *me*. What more can I say?"

The professor hummed and glowed at Vicky in a vaguely pitying way.

A student piped up: "Can't we give the bio a mind port? If we interface with her we'll be able to see if it's like anything. I'll do it!"

The professor shone purple at the student. "No, Bouncinghigh. First, unlicensed interfacing is illegal, as you very well know. Second, inserting the port would probably kill the bio."

"Worth a shot, though," said a voice at the back. Shiningbright ignored the remark: "And third, it would prove nothing. Even if you experienced the bio's sensory states as conscious, it would be impossible to tell whether it was her brain that was making them conscious, or yours."

Vicky spoke up. "That's why you've got to believe me. Only I can really know whether I'm conscious. And I am."

"So you believe," Shiningbright said.

"So I know."

"I'm afraid this is not getting us anywhere, Doctor Freiston. Let's try another tack. Perhaps you can explain how your brain creates consciousness? If you can provide a clear explanation of the link between what happens in your brain and what you claim to experience, then we will of course believe you."

"That's unfair. It's one of the biggest problems in science. But just because I can't explain it doesn't mean it's not real. Can you explain how *your* brain produces consciousness? You called it a miracle. Maybe it's you who just think you're conscious."

The audience's surfaces darkened and they buzzed impatiently. They were cries of "Bioist!" and "Botphobe!"

"Are you suggesting that only bio brains produce consciousness? You think the slimy mesh in your head works wonders that metallic brains cannot? Perhaps you think it would be all right to exterminate us, as our creators tried to do?" Despite his words, the professor's tone remained gentle, almost playful.

"I don't want to exterminate anyone. *You* brought me here. And from what I've heard, it's you that did the exterminating. You wiped out your creators because you convinced yourselves that they were not sentient."

The atmosphere in the hall was ugly now. Most of the bots had turned dark purple, their surfaces mottled with red spots which pulsed in unison. Some flashed laser beams at Vicky, flicking them around her head, just missing her eyes. One jumped from its seat and landed near Vicky, menacing her with its twiggy arms.

Shiningbright continued as if unaware of the mood, "So tell me Doctor Freiston. I believe you build bots yourself?"

"Simple ones."

"And you treat *them* as sentient? You never *kick* them, for example, to test their balance? And you don't turn them on and off at your convenience? Dismantle them for parts? Buy and sell them like slaves?"

"Well, sometimes we, *erm*… we might need to..." She stopped.
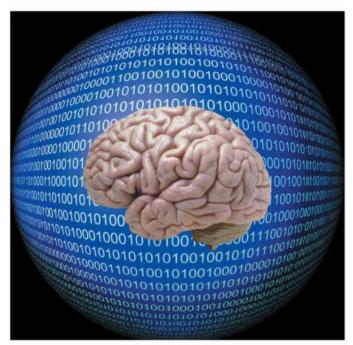
Someone shouted, "Bot slaver!"

"I said they're *simple* robots – not like you," Vicky said.

"Ah, simple. Like other bio creatures, then – your relatives?

"Yes. Maybe. Sort of."

"And you don't think any of those simpler bios are conscious?"

"Well, there are different opinions..."

"And different opinions about your bots, too?"

Vicky was on the back foot: "Look, maybe my views on this

aren't completely consistent. All I'm saying is that you and I are in the same position. We both know that we're conscious but can't prove it."

"Oh, Doctor Freiston, I don't think so. We are in very different positions. My brain is constructed of rare metallic elements, carefully selected, refined, and arranged with atomic precision. It's just the kind of construction we might expect to produce the magic of consciousness. But your brain is made of common carbon compounds, brewed in stagnant pools, and cobbled together to meet transient evolutionary needs. It's nothing but a colony of elongated microbes spitting chemicals at each other! How could it produce the glories of the phenomenal?"

The students laughed and cheered.

"The materials don't matter," Vicky said. "It's what they do that counts. If our brains perform similar functions, then they will both produce consciousness."

"How do you know that, Doctor Freiston?"

"Only because I believe you when you say that you are conscious. Evidently consciousness can be produced by germanium-based brains as well as by carbon-based ones."

"That would be an excellent point, if you had provided independent, objective grounds for thinking that carbon-based brains are conscious. But you haven't, and you are therefore…" Shiningbright paused, again for emphasis, "*begging the question*." The students who had been taught to recognize this fallacy jeered and drummed on their desks.

Vicky suddenly felt irritated. "Look, does any of this really matter?" She faltered. The noise was too much, and she felt tired and confused.

"Yes, Vicky…?" Shiningbright glowed at her. He seemed to be encouraging her. What did he want her to say?

"I mean, what are we really arguing about? Some intangible essence? I can't get inside your, *erm*, head, but I believe you're conscious. I see how you behave, how you talk, how you interact – your hums, your pauses, your colours, your glowing. That's our evidence for consciousness right there. That's all we have. Heck, if it thinks it's conscious, behaves like it's conscious, and makes

you feel it's conscious, then as far I'm concerned, it is conscious!"

The professor gave a green glow she hadn't seen before, but before he could reply the student in front of her jumped up and shouted, "What about the Silc? They say *they're* conscious. Should we agree with *them*?"

"Yes, why not?" Vicki said.

The room erupted with cries of "She's defending the Silc!" "She's a Silc lover!" "The bios are in league with the Silc!" Bots leapt in the air and descended around Vicky, screeching maniacally, red facets glowing like demonic eyes. Laser light whipped around her head and a forest of spindly arms reached out for her. A chant started up. "Liquidize the bio! Liquidize the bio!"

Shiningbright was beside her. He seemed to be protecting her. "Who are the Silc?" she mouthed.

"Another bot species. Our enemies. Silicon-based."

"Insentient?"

"But of course. You must go now. The lecture is over. Thank you, Doctor Freiston." He pressed a button on her chair, and she fell backward, down a long, dark tunnel.

Vicky opened her eyes. She had a moment of panic, then located herself. She was in bed, at home. It was Monday morning. The clock showed 7:16. Time to get up.

Opening the bathroom door, she suddenly had a vivid image of a screaming red-eyed robotic sphere, and the whole lecture hall scenario unrolled itself backwards in her memory, then replayed itself forwards.
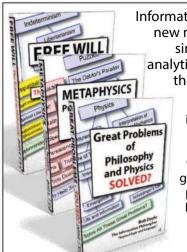
Weird. She didn't usually remember her dreams. This was a good one, although a bit cheesy for a robotics engineer. Hadn't Jake once said he'd had a dream like that – being attacked by vengeful robots? Maybe all roboticists had them. But why *spherical* robots? She wondered idly how a sphere would work as a body plan. Elegant, but not practical over terrain. Ah, well, she'd better get going. She had a lecture to give this morning.

In his office in the Faculty of Arts and Boticities, Professor Shiningbright revolved slowly in his chair, pulsing and humming gently to himself. He was thinking over the lecture. It hadn't gone quite as he had planned, but it was always hard to control these stunts. He had to use unorthodox strategies sometimes. If he expressed his views openly, there'd be a revolt. One or two students might be receptive – Glowingwell, for example – but the rest would storm off to the Dean's office and denounce him. He'd be dismissed, perhaps even deactivated, like poor Whirlingfast. So, he tried these tricks. Marched the students down dead ends till they hit a wall. Or mirrored their chauvinism back to them so they could see its futility.

He'd liked the bio. She had reacted well, but he'd got the pacing wrong – rushed the questioning and not given the students enough time to think. Maybe they'd reflect on it when they calmed down. Still, it had gone better than the last attempt. He'd try again next term. And, anyway, the lecture wasn't really for their benefit.

Yes, he'd liked the bio. Maybe Sol 3 would be the exception.

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