

Sophia



SOPHIA

JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME IX

2006

Sophia is a non-profit journal, first published in 1998, intended to provide a forum for undergraduate students to exhibit the toils of their undergraduate years. Published by students at the University of Victoria, *Sophia* provides the opportunity for students from UVic, as well as universities and colleges around the world, to present philosophical thought, aiming at fostering an environment encouraging philosophical discourse, debate, and contemplation. Although content is principally oriented toward philosophy students, *Sophia* endeavours to be accessible to all disciplines; philosophy is, after all, not merely an activity for philosophy students alone.

All constructive criticism and comments concerning any of the published works are welcome, and encouraged.

Sophia is published annually by the Philosophy Students' Union at the University of Victoria. Information for students interested in submitting work for future volumes can be found on the inside back cover.

CHIEF EDITOR
SENIOR EDITOR
EDITORS

KYLE JACKSON
CHLOE ARMSTRONG
TIM HANSON
JORDANNA FREEMAN

GRADUATE READER
COVER DESIGN

MICHAEL JORDAN
CHLOE ARMSTRONG

Sophia is the result of the work of many others not listed in the above credits. The fundraising efforts from the members of the Philosophy Students' Union make this publication possible, as well as support from many faculty members and other students.

Online journals may be found at web.uvic.ca/philosophy.

Copyright of published work remains the sole property of the authors.

SOPHIA

JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME IX

2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PSYCHOLOGY AND VIRTUE IN AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICS.....	I
<i>MICHAEL SHINDLER</i>	
AN ANALYSIS OF FREEDOM AND RATIONAL EGOISM IN <i>NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND</i>	13
<i>MICHAEL HANNON</i>	
HOLISM IN ARISTOTLE'S METAPHYSICS.....	25
<i>DANIEL GLADSTONE</i>	
SOLA EXPERIENTIA: THE BAS VAN FRAASSEN INTERVIEW.....	39
ON PERCEPTION AND ATTENTION.....	49
<i>THOM CONSTABLE</i>	
MICHAEL DUMMETT AND THE PAST.....	59
<i>GRAHAM SULLIVAN</i>	
AUTHENTIC NIHILISM: CREDITING TO NIETZSCHE HEIDEGGER'S DEBT.....	71
<i>AMI HARBIN</i>	
THE GIFT OF THE CROW: RHETORIC AND DIALECTIC IN PLATO'S <i>PHAEDRUS</i>	81
<i>AMI JOSEPH BROSSÉAU</i>	

PSYCHOLOGY AND VIRTUE IN AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICS

MICHAEL SHINDLER
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

ABSTRACT

In a time where ignorance brings tension between cultures, and blindly justifies violence and hate, the need for knowledge, understanding and wisdom is urgent. In the West, most of us find ourselves mystified by a growing cultural force resistant to Western ideologies. Instead of seeing this as an inherent antagonism, we should foster understanding of other cultures and avoid hate, violence, fear and war. This paper will explore a complex ethical system based on Muslim orthodox theology and the mystical philosophy of the Sufis. Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 C.E.) is one of Islam's most prominent and profound figures. His ethical system reflects his deep commitment to reconciliation between orthodox theology and mystical practice. From al-Ghazali we will dive deep into the human psyche and find the origins of the ethical human. Through knowledge of this prolific figure, we can hope to gain some understanding of a rich and elegant religious culture.

An ethical theory is built on a substantive metaphysical and psychological foundation. Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) realizes this; much of his work concerning ethics explores the psychological depths of the human soul. Metaphysical and spiritual knowledge, according to al-Ghazali, originates in knowledge of self. Thus, one must first intimately know his or herself before understanding knowledge concerning God. This essay will explore the nature of the soul, as described by al-Ghazali, and will examine the role psychology plays in forming an ethical life. Finally, this essay will investigate the role psychology and ethics play preparing one for spiritual experience and knowledge.

Psychology, according to al-Ghazali—understood as the study of the nature of the mind and soul—originates in the self.¹ Indeed, the self is the spiritual essence which resides in and controls the physical and organic functions of humans.²

The first step to self-knowledge is to know that thou art composed of an outward shape, called the body, and an inward entity called the heart or soul. By “heart” I do not mean the piece of flesh situated in the left of our bodies, but that which uses all the other faculties as its instruments and servants. In truth it does not belong to the visible world, but is invisible, and has come to this world as a traveller visits a foreign country for the sake of merchandise, and it will presently return to its native land.

Alchemy of Happiness, 6-7

The origin of the soul is God. “In this text [the Qur’an] He states that the body is ascribed to clay, but that the spirit is ascribed to the Lord of the Worlds”³ It is common in al-Ghazali’s thought to find the heart or soul and body substantively distinguished.

Character is the inner aspect of the soul. “It is then a firmly established condition of the soul for which action proceeds easily

¹The terms self, heart and soul will all be used interchangeably for the purpose of this essay.

² Umar-Ud-Din, 71.

³ Disciplining the Soul, 17.

without any need for thinking or forethought”.⁴ Accordingly, al-Ghazali distinguishes between the deed, whether it is beautiful or ugly—that is, whether an action is ethically permissible or not—the ability to act, the cognition of acting, and the condition of the soul.⁵ Character is defined as an inherent condition of the soul which allows beautiful actions to come easily from one’s soul.⁶ “Character is not identified with action, a faculty, or knowledge; rather it is the disposition of the soul from which actions emerge”.⁷ Thus, it is not only the beauty of an action that we judge when judging one’s character, but the ease by which a beautiful deed comes from one’s soul.

From the soul come four main faculties. For one’s character to be beautiful, these four faculties must be balanced and harmonious. They are the rational faculty, the irascible faculty, the appetitive faculty and the faculty which keeps a just equilibrium between the three. Belonging to the four faculties are four traits that express the mean, or middle ground, between each faculty’s possible extremes.

The rational faculty uses the intellect; its mean is wisdom. When the rational faculty “exceeds its bounds in its regard by using it for corrupt ends [it] is called ‘swindling’ and ‘fraud’, while its insufficient application is termed ‘stupidity’”.⁸ An excessive use of the intellect can be used for such negative tasks as manipulation. Wisdom is defined by, and judged according to its ability to distinguish between truth and falsehoods, and beauty and ugliness.⁹ Wisdom is the chief of the good traits of character.¹⁰ The traits of the other faculties are ruled by the intellect and are deemed good in their ease at being regulated by the intellect. The irascible faculty is sound when it moves within the bounds of rationality; it is then called courage.¹¹ The appetitive faculty is sound when under the control of the intellect—it

4 Disciplining the Soul, 17.

5 Disciplining the Soul, 18.

6 Habituation is important because it allows actions coming from good character to flow from the soul with ease. Habituation will be discussed in greater detail below.

7 Sherif, 30.

8 Disciplining the Soul, 20.

9 Disciplining the Soul, 19.

10 Disciplining the Soul, 19.

11 Disciplining the Soul, 19.

is then called temperance.¹² The faculty which keeps a just equilibrium sets the appetitive and the irascible faculties under the command of the intellect. The faculty of just equilibrium is the actualizing power of the guiding intellect and carries out the intellect's orders.¹³ The faculty of providing a just equilibrium, when it is sound, accomplishes justice. Justice, in this sense, is best understood as an overall harmony within the soul. "When the latter two [the appetitive and irascible faculties], which are faculties of the animal soul, are trained and have been subordinated to the first, the virtue of justice is achieved".¹⁴

In sum, the soul is that which possesses character. The soul has four faculties. These faculties are the rational, the irascible, the appetitive, and the ability to execute a just equilibrium between anger and desire under the regulation of wisdom. These faculties are sound and good when they fall into their mean, that is, when they fall into a position of moderation between their extremes. "Therefore, the man in whom these characteristics are sound and balanced is possessed of a good character under all circumstances".¹⁵

The faculties of the soul are also important because they motivate and provide the body with certain practical functions. For example, the appetitive faculty, which when allowed too much freedom by the intellect will sway towards greed or gluttony, also has a more superficial function. It is useful to the body because it motivates the body to eat. Without this faculty the body would cease to eat and would perish. The body depends on the soul to stay alive. However, the soul, too, is dependent on the body to exist on Earth. Finally, the irascible faculty works in a similar way, ensuring the body's well-being and protection from that which may harm it. The interplay between the body and the soul is inherent in al-Ghazali's thought.¹⁶

¹² Disciplining the Soul, 19.

¹³ Disciplining the Soul, 19-20.

¹⁴ Sherif, 29.

¹⁵ Disciplining the Soul, 20.

¹⁶ This will come up in the discussion concerning the virtuous cycle. It is discussed here that the soul regulates the body. Later I will discuss a cycle where this regulation of the body acts to free up time for the soul to use for contemplation. The contemplation the mind engages in due to its new extra time in turn inspires the soul to perfect the body further. Thus a cycle of regulating the body and contemplating new ways to perfect the body and soul continues.

The soul has two perspectives; it perceives inwardly and outwardly. The soul which looks inward is of more worth spiritually, according to al-Ghazali, than the eyes which look outwards.¹⁷ It is this inward perception which allows the soul contemplation of the divine. However, without disciplining the external aspects of humans, internal contemplation is distracted by the external temptations and reactions of ordinary life. Introspective contemplation is not possible without balanced and harmonious faculties of the soul. Thus, the irascible and appetitive faculties must be disciplined before the soul is able to inwardly contemplate.

As described by Sherif, the intellect has two aspects analogous to the distinction between inward and outward perception of the soul. The practical or inward-looking faculty of the intellect controls the passions of the irascible and appetitive faculties, whereas the theoretical or outward-looking faculty of the intellect looks towards that which is divine.¹⁸

Therefore, the practical faculty is the one which determines ethical matters for man. The reason why ethics is attributed to this faculty is that the human soul is a single substance which is related to two planes—one higher and one lower than itself. It has special faculties which establish the relationship between itself and each plane: the practical faculty which the human soul possesses in relation to the lower plane, which is the body, and its control and management; and the theoretical faculty in relation to the higher plane, from which it passively receives and acquires intelligible [knowledge derived from higher principles and angels].¹⁹

These two aspects of the intellect work together. The practical aspect of the intellect manages the passionate faculties,²⁰ which serve

¹⁷ See *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 25.

¹⁸ Sherif, 27.

¹⁹ Sherif 27

²⁰ According to Sherif, the irascible and appetitive faculties are also called passions. The term “passions” is synonymous with “irascible and appetitive faculties”. See *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, p. 29.

to keep the body alive, but also may hinder the soul from having the tranquility and harmony to achieve a greater knowledge of divine wisdom. The intellect regulates the passionate faculties in a way which directs them towards the mean or middle course; it does not attempt to eradicate them: “what is required is not the total extirpation of these things, but rather the restoration of their balance and moderation, which is the middle point between excess and defect”²¹ When the faculties of anger and desire have been made moderate by the intellect, the soul is in turn affected.

This is one of the wonders of the relationship between the heart and the members, by which I mean the soul and the body: the effect of every attribute which appears in the heart must emanate onto the members, so that these move only in conformity to it; similarly, every act performed by the members has an effect which makes its way up to the heart, thereby constituting a form of circular movement.

Disciplining the Soul, 35

By disciplining the body’s passions through simulating the actions of a master or through other disciplining tactics employed by the intellect to the point of habituation, the soul itself becomes habituated towards good character. When the soul is habituated towards good character, it is able to realize those flaws in it which may still be regulated further towards good character. Al-Ghazali states: “when your soul is pure, clean and of good character you should strive to keep it in this way and strengthen and purify it yet further, and when it is not, you should struggle to make it so”²² As has been stated, there is a circular movement between the soul and its faculties. The soul, by disciplining each faculty into its mean, provides itself with an internal harmony and balance. This harmony allows the soul to find new ways of bettering itself because it is no longer distracted by the irascible and appetitive faculties. Thus, a person may begin a process of constantly bettering themselves, and from this betterment, realize new ways to better themselves.

²¹ *Disciplining the Soul*, 28.

²² *Disciplining the Soul*, 40.

The purpose of bettering oneself by reining in desire and anger under the regulation of the intellect “is to cut the love of this world away from the soul and to set firmly therein the love of God (Exalted is He!), so that one would love nothing so much as the meeting with Him”.²³

The contemplation of the self therefore may lead to knowledge specifically concerning God. Because self discipline allows for contemplation, through which knowledge of self is attained, knowledge of God may also be attained in stride: “by contemplation of his own being and attributes man arrives at some knowledge of God”.²⁴

In sum, the intellect must discipline the irascible and appetitive faculties so that actions of good character come from the soul with ease. Thus, the soul is no longer required to struggle with itself, and may have greater freedom to contemplate itself, making itself closer to a position from which it can come to have knowledge of God.

Children, it is said, are created with the same potential disposition; they are essentially born as clean slates. Al-Ghazali states that all children are born with a “sound innate disposition and an innate equilibrium”.²⁵ It is their upbringing that forms the soul into possessing good or bad character traits. For this reason it is important that the soul is disciplined according to that which will cause it to have good character traits. A child’s parents are responsible for forming the child’s particular spiritual disposition.²⁶ It is apparent that it is the practices of, and the influences on, a child that determine the character of its soul. By simulating the behaviour of one who is ethical, the soul may train its character towards good.²⁷ In the same way that the body requires nourishment and training to grow to its full strength, so too does the soul require nourishment and proper training.

There seems to be a problem of circularity apparent in al-Ghazali’s claim. When discussing the interplay between the soul and

²³ *Disciplining the Soul*, 33.

²⁴ *Alchemy of Happiness*, 15.

²⁵ *Disciplining the Soul*, 39.

²⁶ *Disciplining the Soul*, 39.

²⁷ *Disciplining the Soul*, 36.

its faculties, the question arises: where does the impetus of the intellect to discipline its passions come from? Moreover, how would a person know how to discipline the soul? It is through revelation and the teachings in the Qur'an that al-Ghazali solves the problem of circularity in his argument concerning the training and habituation of the soul. At first it may seem objectionable that the intellect disciplines the bodily passions, which in turn allow the soul more freedom to contemplate and further discipline itself. Verily, al-Ghazali cites the Qur'an, revelation or the imitation of a master as the paradigm for correct habituation. Once good behaviour comes from one's soul easily by imitating these, the soul can continue the virtuous cycle by itself.

A second worry comes up regarding how one should distinguish between behaviour motivated by reason or the passion faculties. Revelation also solves this problem for al-Ghazali. This, however, seems to bring up another problem in al-Ghazali's argument. According to Sherif,²⁸ al-Ghazali "introduces divine aid as the only sure means for the distinguishing between the motives of reason and of passion".²⁹ The problem is as follows: for a person to have any knowledge concerning the divine, they must start with knowledge of self.³⁰ From what Sherif reports, it appears that al-Ghazali is purporting to require knowledge of the divine in order to know certainly that one's actions come from good character; that is, to know that actions that come from a soul are regulated by the rational intellectual faculty and not from the passionate faculties like the appetitive. This is potentially inconsistent because, for one to have knowledge of self, in the form of knowledge of one's motivations, one first needs knowledge from the divine. (And wouldn't knowledge *from* the divine constitute knowledge *of* the divine?) Thus, when determining whether one's actions are motivated from the intellect rather than the passions, one needs knowledge of the divine before they can have conclusive knowledge of where their actions are motivated from.

The most obvious response to this objection is to take the words of the Qur'an as the divine aid Sherif alludes to, and take the Qur'an

²⁸Here Sherif is citing al-Ghazali, Criterion of Action. Cairo: Matba'at Kurdistan al-'Ilmiyyah, 1328/1910. p. 66.

²⁹ Sherif, 29.

³⁰ Alchemy of Happiness, 15.

as that which one may look to when distinguishing between actions motivated by the passions and actions motivated by the intellect. In other words, one may habituate their actions according to the words of the Qur'an in order to train the intellect. Once trained, actions motivated by the intellect will flow with ease out from the soul.

This response, however, may still not satisfy some critics. Following the Qur'an only allows one to train their actions, but does not necessarily train one's motivations. For example, one could pray five times a day according to recommendations from the Qur'an; however, this does not mean that one has virtuous motivations for doing so.³¹ It does not follow from this that the Qur'anic teachings provide the ability to distinguish between motivations. In fact, only the person to whom the motivations belong can know them. The most that the Qur'an can do is be a template which people may base their actions upon. Thus, it is only outward actions which can be judged as consistent with the recommendations of the Qur'an. In other words, one could model their actions on wisdom from the Qur'an without having necessarily virtuous motivations.

Another response to the problem of distinguishing motivations is to dismiss Sherif's assertions regarding the need for divine aid when distinguishing between motivations. This seems more palatable. When looking at one's own motivations, with some insight and contemplation he or she is easily able to distinguish between passionate motivations and ones which are well-reasoned and virtuous. Still, it is necessary to follow Qur'anic recommendations to discipline the passionate faculties so that one may have the peace of mind to execute this contemplation which distinguishes motivations.

In conclusion, the importance of a trained and sound character of the soul is twofold. First, a body can escape its diseases in death, however a diseased soul perseveres after death.³² It is during one's lifetime, therefore, that he or she is able to cure the soul of its ailments so that in death, and that which comes after, one's soul is pure. Second, the trained and pure soul is in a position to know or experience divine wisdom. Only through the habitual disciplining of the passions of the soul by the intellect into a just equilibrium of all

³¹ Virtuous motivations are ones which are regulated and decided by reason.

³² *Disciplining the Soul*, 40.

faculties can the soul be in a position to know God. One must first know oneself before any epistemic contact with the divine is possible. To experience the divine is the purpose of psychology and ethics.

WORKS CITED

- Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad. Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character, and Curing the Sickness of the Heart: Book XXII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences. Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 2001.
- Al-Ghazzali, Abu Hamid Muhammad. The Alchemy of Happiness. Trans. Claude Field. Rev. Elton L. Daniel. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1991.
- Sherif, Mohamed Ahmed. Ghazali's Theory of Virtue. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975.
- Umar-Ud-Din, Muhammad. The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzali. Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, 1991.

AN ANALYSIS OF FREEDOM AND RATIONAL EGOISM IN
NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

MICHAEL HANNON

YORK UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The following paper is an examination of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, with specific emphasis placed on the notion of freedom the Underground Man purports. I begin by outlining N.G. Chernyshevsky's rational egoism as maintained in, *What is to be Done*. I then use the themes set out in this text in order to clearly articulate the Underground Man's own conception of freedom. Some of the questions this paper explores are: how do we know freedom is the ultimate good, in what sort of world is this freedom possible, and what sort of world does such freedom entail?

“It seems to me that the whole of human life can be summed up in the one statement that man only exists for the purpose of proving to himself every minute that he is free”.¹

Descartes is noted for saying, “the will is so free in its nature that it can never be constrained”.² In *Notes from Underground*, Dostoyevsky’s Underground Man champions freedom³ as part of his attack on Chernyshevsky’s “rational egoism”. This paper intends to contrast these positions in order to elucidate Dostoyevsky’s own critique of rational egoism. I begin by highlighting the key elements of Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* I then sketch the Underground Man’s notion of freedom, which will serve as the basis to refute Chernyshevsky’s position. Once Dostoyevsky’s⁴ conception of freedom is outlined, I shall examine the type of world in which this freedom is possible. This paper also questions the sort of world such freedom would entail. I conclude with an analysis of whether freedom is the supreme good, supreme evil, or neither. However, in order to make such a judgement, I argue that one must first answer an overarching question the Underground Man grapples with, which is, What does it mean to be human? My position will illustrate that both Dostoyevsky and Chernyshevsky assert that freedom is a supreme good; however, each author differs in his conception of human freedom. I will show that this conflict arises because of their differing assumptions concerning human nature.

CHERNYSHEVSKY AND RATIONAL EGOISM

“Man is so obsessed with systems and rationality that he is ready to distort the truth so long as it satisfies logic”.⁵

Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* served as the catalyst for Dostoyevsky’s critique of rational egoism and enlightenment thinking.

¹ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground* Ed. Gordon Marino. “Basic Writings of Existentialism”. (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 220-1.

² Dilman, *FW*, 119.

³ Note that I shall use “freedom” and “free will” interchangeably throughout the course of the essay.

⁴ Note that in this paper I use “Dostoyevsky” and the “Underground Man” interchangeably, although this may not necessarily be the case.

⁵ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground* Ed. Gordon Marino. “Basic Writings of Existentialism”. (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 213.

The characters in Chernyshevsky's book are rational egoists, who are guided by informed calculations about their own best interests; at the same time, however, they bring about a great benefit to others in general.⁶ Dostoyevsky maintains that rational egoism is deterministic because it champions the idea that humans are necessitated by a fixed nature, which compels them to maximize their rational self-interests. Humans are causally determined in this way because, according to Chernyshevsky, we are incapable of acting against our perceived self-interests. It is on this basis that Dostoyevsky thinks Chernyshevsky rejects free will as the foundation of human action.⁷ Chernyshevsky and other rationalists believe that on the basis of science, one could construct a society where each individual would act in ways that would maximize the interest of themselves and the whole. Rational egoists held that human nature was fundamentally rational and that an ideal society must therefore be governed entirely by reason. Under this view, "there is really no such thing as free choice", says the Underground Man.⁸ In fact, free will is nothing but a pre-scientific dream from which we are now awakening. We never really had free will, and we never really could have it.⁹

FREEDOM AS A REJECTION OF RATIONAL EGOISM

"Who would want to desire according to a mathematical formula?"¹⁰

The Underground Man tells the reader of "something" which is more valuable to every person than his/her own rational interests. Humans will even challenge the advantages of utopianism, such as reason, peace and prosperity, provided they can attain this primary good. The unknown "something" is later identified as freedom. Dostoyevsky believes that rational egoism will fail because free will is excluded from the list of advantages offered in a rational utopia. He

⁶ James Scanlan, *The Case against Rational Egoism in Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground*. (Journal of the History of Ideas 1999 V.60 Issue: 3 pg: 549 – 567) 553.

⁷ Please note that later I shall prove that whether we view Chernyshevsky's position as deterministic depends on how we define freedom.

⁸ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Notes From Underground Ed. Gordon Marino. "Basic Writings of Existentialism". (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 216.

⁹ Daniel Dennett, Freedom Evolves. (London: Penguin Books, 2003) 11.

¹⁰ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground* Ed. Gordon Marino. "Basic Writings of Existentialism". (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 216.

contends that in a highly rational society, our freedom would become distorted and irrationality would be the only method to exercise free will.¹¹ People under Chernyshevsky's view would be no more than "piano keys", who are merely acted upon as part of the larger whole. Beyond the confines of the "piano", such devices are useless, since they only gain meaning within the context of a well-functioning system. For Dostoyevsky, human motivation consists of more than securing our own rational self-interests. The advantages presented by Chernyshevsky are unsuccessful because they fail to recognize that our greatest advantage is human freedom. The Underground Man suggests, "we are becoming obsessed with systems and abstract deductions";¹² and that our "most advantageous advantage"¹³ differs from the advantages of rational egoism, because it conflicts with the dream of building a well-ordered society. Humans will go against reason and common sense in order to exert their will.

"Freedom cannot be assigned a relative weight in a system of ranked advantages, because it will be pursued, if necessary, regardless of all other advantages. We will risk everything, face any danger, and knowingly damage ourselves in order to assert our freedom. Even if we were provided all other benefits with the exception of free choice, individuals would insist on expressing their freedom at the cost of destroying the system and its advantages".¹⁴

¹¹ Dostoyevsky is not claiming that we must be irrational *all* of the time; instead, it should be viewed as a constant tension between attempting to express our freedom through certain moments of irrational actions.

¹² Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground* Ed. Gordon Marino. "Basic Writings of Existentialism". (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 213.

¹³ One of the major difficulties with examining Dostoyevsky's *Underground* is the constant equivocation which takes place with the words "self-interest", "benefit" and "advantage". For example, both Chernyshevsky's rationalism and Dostoyevsky's freedom are referred to as "in our interest". In order to clarify this problem, I have made a distinction between our "most advantageous advantage" to signify freedom, and our "rational self-interest" when discussing rational egoism.

¹⁴ James Scanlan, *The Case against Rational Egoism in Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground*. (Journal of the History of Ideas 1999 V.60 Issue: 3 pg: 549 – 567) 563.

Robert Jackson states, “it is impossible to argue with the rationalists since reason is on their side”.¹⁵ Hence, Dostoyevsky must irrationally reject reason by way of negation. From the first lines of *Notes From Underground*, the Underground Man attempts to demonstrate that people are often irrational. It is within the context of irrationalism that the Underground Man believes he can exert his freedom. If we were primarily governed by reason, every situation would entail that only one possible choice is available: the most rational. If this were true, one could theoretically predict any future decision a person will make. When reason is the foundation for decision-making, one must merely uncover the most “reasonable” choices in order to predict human behaviour. With this in mind, I suggest that the Underground Man would define freedom as the ability to will to do otherwise, given multiple options. I think this definition would satisfy Dostoyevsky, since the rational egoist can only will to act in the way perceived to be most reasonable. If we negate Chernyshevsky’s position, we seem to be left with the conception of freedom as defined above. The Underground Man rejects reason because it imposes an evident limitation on this conception of human freedom. He believes there is no such “science of man” that can accurately predict human choice.

IRRATIONALISM AND THE REJECTION OF RATIONAL SELF-INTEREST

*“By all this I am only hurting myself and no one else. Well, let it damn well hurt — the more it hurts the better”.*¹⁶

Dostoyevsky furthers his argument by introducing the idea of self-interested suffering to destroy Chernyshevsky’s utopian project. The Underground Man asserts, “man can deliberately desire something that is stupid just because he wants to *have the right* to desire for himself and not be bound to desire what is sensible”.¹⁷ At one point, the Underground Man suggests that he is “convinced that man will never renounce real suffering since it is the sole cause of

¹⁵ Ibid., 549.

¹⁶ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes From Underground* Ed. Gordon Marino. “Basic Writings of Existentialism”. (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 194.

¹⁷ Ibid., 218.

consciousness”.¹⁸ Although suffering is in direct conflict with one’s “rational self-interests”, it works in favour of our “most advantageous advantage”. To emphasize his own point about free will, the Underground Man contradicts himself repeatedly. Throughout the novel he constantly affirms and denies his assertions only to illustrate his belief in human freedom. There are certain things reason will never know that lie in the unknown depths of human consciousness. For the Underground Man, free will allows him to enter the realm of possibility, unlike the rational egoist who can only act reasonably.

IN WHAT SORT OF WORLD IS THIS FREEDOM POSSIBLE?

*“Today, science has succeeded in so far dissecting man that at least we know that desire and the so-called free will are nothing but...”*¹⁹

A social utopia is Chernyshevsky’s ultimate goal. Such a society will subordinate everything in it in order to fulfill the self-interest of the individuals who seek it. The conception of freedom Dostoyevsky purports is a direct consequence of the society described in Chernyshevsky’s, *What is to be Done?* It is within the context of a rational utopia that the Underground Man’s freedom needs to exist. In fact, Dostoyevsky even goes as far as to claim that the *only* reason people like the Underground Man exist is in response to Chernyshevsky’s utopia. Dostoyevsky contends that in a wholly rational society, the only method by which we can secure human freedom is by denying reason itself. Outside of such rationalism, irrationality would not be required to express our free choice. Ironically, Chernyshevsky’s rational egoism has led to the creation of irrationalism as exemplified by the Underground Man. There is a constant tension between a rational utopia and the irrationality that Dostoyevsky believes is its inevitable result. There seems to be a continuous interdependence between these two positions. For this reason, Chernyshevsky can never achieve a wholly rational utopia. If people like the Underground Man must exist, then society cannot be wholly rational. If we agree with the Underground Man’s definition of freedom, then it seems people like him would rebel against rational egoism. However, Chernyshevsky would reject this claim in favour of a different conception of freedom, which I shall discuss later. We may note, however, that under Chernyshevsky’s conception of freedom,

¹⁸ Ibid., 224.

¹⁹ Ibid., 216.

Dostoyevsky would be mistaken in his belief that irrationality is an inevitable consequence of a fully rational utopia.

ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FREEDOM DESIRABLE?

“To be acutely conscious is a disease, a real, honest-to-goodness disease”²⁰

An important question to consider is whether the freedom the Underground Man claims to possess is desirable. In fact, several instances within the novel seem to suggest that the Underground Man himself detests his own position. For example, he states that he will “never be able to become an insect,” although he “wished to become an insect many times”. His desire to become an insect stems from his belief that “consciousness is a disease”.²¹ Although his “heightened consciousness” is meant to emphasize a freedom that Chernyshevsky specifically rejected,²² the lines above seem to question the desirability of such freedom. If the character that champions free will admits to loathing his position, one might question why we should strive for anything similar. Of course, if Dostoyevsky is correct about irrationalism being a direct consequence of social utopianism, we cannot merely “reject” the freedom the Underground Man claims to possess. If Chernyshevsky’s utopianism fosters irrationalism, then people like the Underground Man must exist. However, as above mentioned, Dostoyevsky may be incorrect about irrationalism being a direct consequence of Chernyshevsky’s utopia.

Another important issue to examine is the sort of world such unrestrained freedom entails. The Underground Man’s intense egoism (not to be confused with rational egoism)²³ seems to lead him into a world of isolation. Dostoyevsky’s world based on egoism is a world of conflict and power relations. In such a world, our interactions with other people would be continual power struggles and attempts to exert control over everyone else. The chief example would be the Underground Man’s repeated attempts to control and manipulate

²⁰ Ibid., 194.

²¹ Ibid., 197.

²² James Scanlan, *The Case against Rational Egoism in Dostoyevsky’s Notes from Underground*. (Journal of the History of Ideas 1999 V.60 Issue: 3 pg: 549 – 567) 560.

²³ To be a rational egoist entails a commitment to reason rather than to the emotionally driven whims and instincts of the egoist.

Liza. Even his memories of school display his attempts to exercise power over his fellow schoolmates. When we contrast this worldview with Chernyshevsky's rational utopia, where everyone acts for the greatest benefit of everyone else, one might conclude that Chernyshevsky's position is more appealing when compared to the Underground Man's own. Regardless of whether our freedom is limited, perhaps integration into a social utopia should be considered the supreme good when compared to the isolation and rejection of the underground.

FREEDOM AND HUMAN NATURE

"All man wants is an absolutely free choice".²⁴

Dostoyevsky's conception of freedom seems to entail some terrifying consequences. We must admit that living like the Underground Man seems far from desirable. Chernyshevsky's vision at least provides people with security, prosperity and comfort. The Underground Man, however, will reject such "advantages" and embrace the suffering that freedom demands. Although the Underground Man does not explicitly state freedom is "desirable", he maintains that it is necessary and that people like him will always exist. Hence, the reader is required to make a value judgement, whereby he/she must decide whether the advantages of utopianism should be sacrificed for the ultimate good—namely, freedom. If we grant that rational egoism inhibits free will, Dostoyevsky leaves his readers with the disconcerting task of evaluating whether freedom is actually desirable. Before we can answer this question, I believe that we must first address a more important concern; the question of what it means to be human.

Dostoyevsky believes that he has unearthed the "nature" of human beings, that is, our freedom. As the supreme good, expressing our freedom is paramount to any other advantage. Charles Taylor has called this *expressivism*, which is the view that in order to achieve fulfillment in life we need to express who and what we are.²⁵ Dostoyevsky thinks "the whole meaning of human life can be summed

²⁴ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Notes From Underground Ed. Gordon Marino. "Basic Writings of Existentialism". (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 215.

²⁵ Gordon Marino and Alastair Hannay. Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 6.

up in the statement that man exists only for the purpose of proving to himself every minute that he is free".²⁶ If humans are inherently free and expressivism is true, then Dostoyevsky's view must be correct, since Chernyshevsky seems to reject human freedom. However, many traditional claims regarding the essence of human existence assert that reason is our fundamental nature, and hence the ultimate good. If this view is correct, then Dostoyevsky must be wrong, since he clearly supports irrationalism in many instances. If humans are inherently rational creatures, then Chernyshevsky's view is correct, since our freedom would be obtained by expressing our essence through reason. My account of Chernyshevsky's sort of freedom is fundamentally compatibilistic. We are not free in the sense that we can do anything, since we must adhere to the motive of reason. However, if we are inherently rational and we must act in the way we perceive to be the most rational, we are free in this more limited sense.

The tension between Dostoyevsky and Chernyshevsky arises due to their differing assumptions concerning what it means to be a human. Although we can agree that freedom is the supreme good, I believe that these assumptions prevent us from adequately identifying *which* conception of freedom is the supreme good. If we accept that freedom is "the ability to choose between multiple options", then rational egoism and freedom appear irreconcilable. Rational egoism holds that people will always act in the way perceived to be most rational. If this is true, then the Underground Man's conception of human freedom is precluded. However, I argue that Chernyshevsky would reject the Underground Man's notion of freedom. As a rationalist, he asserts that one's freedom is inextricably linked with one's capacity to reason. Action, thought, and emotion may be nothing more than sensual responses to external stimuli and governed by natural law. Nonetheless, if we are inherently rational beings, then by acting rational we are asserting our freedom. Hence, both Chernyshevsky and Dostoyevsky seem to differ on the conception of freedom. It is because we are dealing with different notions of freedom that we cannot choose one conception over the other. The question is not whether freedom is the supreme good, but which freedom is the supreme good. The answer will therefore depend on which author you ask. Dostoyevsky seems to think freedom is

²⁶ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Notes From Underground Ed. Gordon Marino. "Basic Writings of Existentialism". (New York: The Modern Library, 2004) 221.

impossible in a rational utopia. I argue that Chernyshevsky, on the other hand, would endorse such a society as the pinnacle of human freedom—which is inherently connected with our capacity to reason. Each author, in his own context, agrees that freedom is the ultimate good. They differ, however, in explaining what exactly it means to be free.

I believe that Dostoyevsky has failed to convince the reader that his position is the correct one. We have not been provided a *reason* (as contradictory as it may sound) to accept his argument over Chernyshevsky's. Until this is done, there is no way to discern whose assumption concerning our human nature is accurate. Their differing views of human nature give rise to the competing interpretations of human freedom. These competing definitions, in turn, create the conflict between Dostoyevsky and Chernyshevsky. Although both authors believe human freedom is the supreme good, we cannot know whose conception of freedom (and consequently, whose view about human nature) is ultimately correct. Only when we identify the correct assumption concerning what it means to be human can we recognize whose definition of freedom is supreme.

WORKS CITED

- Dennett, Daniel. Freedom Evolves. (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
- Dilman, Ilham. Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction. (London: Routledge, 1999).
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. Notes From Underground. Ed. Gordon Marino. "Basic Writings of Existentialism". (New York: The Modern Library, 2004).
- Kaufmann, Walter. Existentialism From Dostoyevsky to Sartre. (England: Meridian Books, 1956).
- Marino, Gordon, and Alastair Hannay. Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- Scanlan, James. The Case against Rational Egoism in Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground. (Journal of the History of Ideas 1999 V. 60 Issue: 3 pg: 549 -567).

HOLISM IN ARISTOTLE'S METAPHYSICS

DANIEL GLADSTONE
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to find and utilize the principles that Aristotle presents in the *Metaphysics* to support the existence of unified substance. This aspect of substance I refer to as holistic. I will argue that, in the context of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, holism refers to substantial unities existing as absolute indivisibles. Aristotle's insistence that substance is only found in concretely individuated beings (i.e. mattered forms) poses serious problems for this position. I will thus focus much of my attention on this particular issue (i.e. how a plurality can be contained within an absolute unity), maintaining that Aristotle can consistently allow substance to exist in this way. I will look to two of Theodore Scaltsas' works for guidance in this endeavour. Accepting his position, I will look to *Metaphysics* books IV and X, the books that discuss being and contradiction, and unity and contrariety respectively. These books will illuminate the principles that I seek. Given my discoveries here, the casting of holism that I present relies upon a reading of Aristotle's metaphysical position regarding matter and form as strictly analytic concepts carrying no ontological weight. That is to say, they are products of conceptual analysis, performing an epistemological function, rather than pertaining to the thing under investigation as it actually is.

Nature also teaches that I am present in my body not merely in the way a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am most tightly joined and, so to speak, commingled with it, so much so that I and the body constitute *one single thing*.

Descartes, Meditation V, emphasis added

While Descartes clearly took a different tack than Aristotle in his philosophical meanderings, the unity that he is expressing here surely is stemming from the same intuitions that Aristotle exhibited in his metaphysics. While Descartes was articulate, I will show that Aristotle maintains a *consistent* philosophy of substantial unity.

That “there are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’” is one of Aristotle’s initial ontological observations.¹ It is this point that leads him to realize the metaphysical import of the distinction between primary and non-primary being, that is to say, substance and attribute. By making both substance and attribute subsets of being, Aristotle is taking a strong anti-Platonic stance. As non-primary being only exists in primary being, there cannot be the Platonic divide between formal, or substantial reality and the empirical, merely participatory world. Because of this, all of the qualities that were thought to pertain to the ideal forms *qua* substance were instead moved into sensible bodies. As such, Aristotle attributes eternal persistence to genus and species, finite persistence to sublunary individuals, full reality to empirical existence, and unity to those beings that make up existence. It is primarily the last of this list (unity) that I will be focusing on in this essay. Because of the metaphysical shift that Aristotle introduces (away from Platonic idealism), and the schism within being that he creates (i.e. between substance and attribute), we are left wondering how exactly to interpret the *unity* of beings.

We find the beginnings of an answer to this query in Theodore Scaltsas’ paper “Substantial Holism”. It is here that Scaltsas argues for the inexplicability of substantial unity. Through Scaltsas’ set of arguments, we will understand Aristotle’s complex conception of the holistic nature of substance. Scaltsas draws the reader towards his

¹ Aristotle, 1003a, 32.

conceptually difficult conclusion that substances are, in actuality, indivisible. While I shall argue in favour of this position, I do not think that Scaltsas takes his conclusions far enough. However, the limited scope that his paper encompasses provides a basis for further analysis of the concept of holism. I will utilize Scaltsas' basis and present a congruent macro-level Aristotelian conception of metaphysical holism. In order to do this I will have to explain the wider metaphysical context that we find in Aristotle's works. To this end, I will discuss the relationship that is found between "being" and "unity". This discussion will take us as far as a justification for Scaltsas' position. However, the principles involved in such an explanation will carry us farther to discover the extent to which Aristotle was a holist in a broader sense. They will allow me to argue that the relationship inherent within Aristotle's metaphysics between identity and function provide grounding for a more universal account of holism.

SUBSTANTIAL HOLISM

The conclusion that reality is made up of substantial wholes is essentially arrived at through the threat of an infinite regress. The idea that reality has no bottom line or, what Aristotle terms "first principles" was inconceivable; it was the task of philosophy to determine these first principles, for without them knowledge would be impossible.² Therefore, it was thought by Aristotle that there must be something that exists *propter se* (in virtue of itself). Thus, he introduced a formal divide, creating two forms of being: that which *is* in virtue of itself and that which *is* in virtue of another. This distinction has taken many names, for example, primary/non-primary being, subject/predicate, and substance/attribute. The fact that substance exists and persists of its own accord points to its completeness.³ If substances were not complete, or whole, it would necessarily require another for its existence, and because of this, exist in virtue of another, violating the definition of substance. In this sense, substantial holism is at the heart of Aristotle's ontology.

One might argue that this definition of substance excludes the substantial existence of all sensible things in the world. It is clear that all empirical reality is composed of objects that are continuous,⁴ and

² Aristotle, 994a, 1-18.

³ Here I am using "complete" as a particular kind of unity, i.e. *simple*.

⁴ I.e. composite.

because of this, not of unities in the strictest sense. Therefore, if one accepts this definition of substance, substance is either imperceptible or non-existent. This argument gets at the heart of the matter that I will be discussing. How is it that Aristotle can claim, and to what extent can he maintain, that continuous entities are units? To address this we would do well to determine how Aristotle applies the word “unity” in the context of substance.

In book X of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of unity. Aristotle captures the essence of unity, creating a contrary pair partitioned along the lines of indivisibility. One can understand indivisibility in either a qualitative or a quantitative sense. Unity is understood in its strictest sense in the quantitative form; it is *absolutely* or mathematically indivisible. On the other hand, qualitative unity is indivisible *qua one*.⁵ The question now is which of these Aristotle intended to apply to substance. In order to find the answer to this question we should look to Scaltsas’ work on this subject. In his book, *Substances and Universals in Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (SUAM), Scaltsas investigates Aristotle’s intended meaning of unity concerning substance. He explains the issue at hand, initially pointing to chapter 17 of book VII from the *Metaphysics*. Here Scaltsas finds what he terms *The Aggregate Argument*.⁶ To understand where Aristotle is coming from in presenting this argument we must return to the metaphysics of Plato. Plato maintained that the beings that are present to the senses are, as wholes, identical to their parts.⁷ Scaltsas takes Aristotle’s *aggregate argument* to be proving this view of reality problematic.

THE AGGREGATE ARGUMENT

Aristotle dedicates the final words of book VII to clarifying what is meant by the unity of substance. This explanation takes the form of the *aggregate argument*. The purpose of this argument is to show that there must be something over and above the elements that compose a substantial whole. It runs as follows:

⁵ See Aristotle 1053b, 6-8. I will detail this point later, in the section *Being and Unity*.

⁶ Scaltsas, *Substances and Universals in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 61-65.

⁷ Scaltsas, *Substances and Universals in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 60.

Consider a complex being (that is, composite/continuous). This being is composed in different ways, depending upon how one examines it. However, if this being is to be a substance it must be *a* being. The issue requiring scrutiny is how it is that a being can be *one* yet composed of *many*. In the case of an aggregate, the answer is simple. An aggregate is identical to its components. Therefore, regardless of whether the aggregate is composed or decomposed nothing is lost nor gained. If an aggregate can be considered a unity at all, it is so only minimally. Aristotle explains that the substance of the being is that which is lost when that being is dispersed:

...the syllable is not its elements, *ba* is not the same as *b* and *a*, nor is flesh fire and earth (for when these are separated the wholes, i.e. the flesh and the syllable, no longer exist, but the elements of the syllable exist, and so do the fire and earth)

1041b, 12-16

We now have a clear criterion of substantiality. Substance is that which perishes upon dismemberment. Therefore, substances are wholes to a higher degree than mere aggregation. So far, I have only provided negative characteristics of substantial unity. I must now move on to provide a positive account.

BEING AND UNITY

Scaltsas provides sufficient reason to believe in the inexplicability of substantial unity. He articulates very clearly that any attempt at an explanation inevitably leads either to an infinite regress or ends up violating the criterion of substance provided above.⁸ My interest does not lie in arguing over this point. Rather I intend to pick out the principles that Aristotle utilizes throughout the *Metaphysics* to sustain this position. While Scaltsas finds convincing textual and analytic reasons to believe that substantial unity is inexplicable, he does not situate this position in terms of overarching principles. These are the principles that I will now attempt to articulate. They will be shown to necessitate and contextualize Scaltsas' conclusion more broadly. Books IV and X will form the core of this investigation as they are the books that primarily deal with *being* and *unity*.

⁸ See Scaltsas, Unity, Identity and Explanation in Aristotle's Metaphysics.

Book IV of the *Metaphysics* is conceptually divided into two sections. First, Aristotle resolves the *aporia* surrounding the study of being *qua* being.⁹ Substance is introduced as that kind of being that exists in virtue of itself. The second section is on the topic of the principle of non-contradiction (or, the PNC). While this might initially appear to be an odd shift in discussion, the connection is not a difficult one to make, for he claims that, this “[truth holds] good for everything that is and not for some special genus apart from others”.¹⁰ That is, the principle of non-contradiction applies to all beings (both primary and non-primary). In this way, Book IV is not as disjointed as one might initially think.

There is more going on than this simple relation though. For Aristotle frames his introduction to the investigation into the PNC using mathematical axioms as one boundary and substance as its correlate. He states his intent thus, “[w]e must state whether it belongs to one or to different sciences to inquire into the truths which are in mathematics called axioms, and into substance”.¹¹ Substance and mathematics are taken to be a contrary pair and the PNC is found to be the commonality that relates them.¹² I should perhaps step back a moment and explain Aristotle’s notion of contrariety. In book X Aristotle describes contrariety as the greatest difference.¹³ However, this notion of “greatest difference” is tempered because difference is distinguished from “otherness”. That which is “other” is indistinct, as “other or the same’ can... be predicated of everything with regard to everything else”.¹⁴ Therefore, *difference* is a particular kind of otherness that picks out the common peculiarity

⁹ The science of being *qua* being is initially problematic because of the universality of *being* as a predicate. Knowledge is normally acquired by discovering a higher order science that provides a cause for the workings of the lower science. Being being the highest order of all sciences cannot be known of in this way. Therefore, Aristotle distinguishes two forms of being that reciprocally give meaning to one another. These are termed primary and non-primary being.

¹⁰ Aristotle, 1005a, 23-24.

¹¹ Aristotle, 1005a, 18-20.

¹² It should be pointed out that when read in this way this can also be seen as an anti-Platonic sentiment.

¹³ Aristotle, 1055a, 5.

¹⁴ Aristotle, 1054b, 18-20.

between a pair.¹⁵ Picking out contraries is the practice of bracketing off parts of reality and discovering their relative *qua* factor.¹⁶

This understood, we can go on to interpret Aristotle's intention regarding the move from being *qua* being to the PNC, now in the light of the transitional sentence quoted above. The fact that Aristotle relates mathematical *axioms* to substance appears to be shifting the focus from being in general to being a substance. While the PNC is of course true of all being, it is substance, rather than attribute, which is the greatest difference from mathematical axioms. What is the significance of this? Aristotle is clearly implying here that substance must be the contrary of mathematics because they are both quantitative. Attribute cannot be the contrary to mathematics because it is qualitative. The fact that Aristotle is correlating substance with mathematical axioms is telling of how we are to treat substance.

As I conveyed earlier, unity can be understood as either indivisible absolutely or *qua* one. In this context, I see these two cases of indivisibility as mapping onto quantity and quality respectively. Absolute indivisibility fits with the mathematical notion of a perfect unit, indivisible in all respects. Indivisible *qua* one, on the other hand, relays the notion of a conceptual unity; one might say that this property supervenes upon beings in possession of it. This sort of unity can be likened to species or genus in that there is some totality of experience that makes a group of things one.

We should now be able to see what I am getting at. Just as in mathematics, where axioms are basic and unanalyzable, the concept of a substantial unity is axiomatic in Aristotle's ontology. The unity of substance is absolute and simple.

¹⁵ There is a further limit on contrariety. Contraries can only be found within species. Neither genus nor individuals have contraries according to Aristotle, 1055a, 7.

¹⁶ It should be noted that contrariety plays a significant role in Aristotle's physics. Here he claims that change occurs through contraries, from one to another see 188a-b, 35-6. This point should be taken note of as it will play a significant role in later discussion.

UNITY AND BEING

What has been said so far may seem counterintuitive. However, only half of the picture has been explained thus far. It will be shown, going further into Aristotle's metaphysics, just how deep his notion of contrariety runs.

There is an interesting and significant parallel between books IV and X. Both books begin with a discussion of a universal predicate (being and unity respectively) and then go on to discuss principles. In the case of book X, Aristotle moves from his discussion of unity smoothly into what I will term the principle of contrariety.¹⁷ These similarities point to a tentative relationship between unity and contrariety that requires further determination.

Throughout the *Metaphysics* Aristotle explains that unity and being hold equal degrees of universality. As it turns out, this shared feature brings with it a family-pack of conceptual baggage. Primarily what I will be focusing on is Aristotle's claim that "all contraries are reducible to being and non-being, and to unity and plurality".¹⁸ What is to be noted here is that unity and being are not only the most universal of all predicates but that they also share this position relative to contrariety, as a reference point. Unity and being define the character of contrariety.

If all contraries reduce to being and non-being, it must be conceded that substance (primary being) and attribute (non-primary being) are to be correlated in the same way.¹⁹ Because of this, substance must be considered to be being, and attribute non-being. If we now apply substance and attribute to unity we find that substance corresponds to unity and attribute to plurality. To bring this back to a

¹⁷ While there clearly is no "principle of contrariety" in the formal sense, it is my intuition that the notion of contrariety in Aristotle's philosophy effectively works as a criterion through which the principle of sufficient reason functions. Movement or change is said to occur between contrary pairs. The fact that movement is regulated by the concept of "the greatest difference" allows contrariety to provide the grounds upon which sufficient reason, causation, occurs.

¹⁸ Aristotle, 1054b, 18-20.

¹⁹ As they stand in a relation of contrariety.

textual analysis “rest belongs to unity and movement to plurality”.²⁰ Therefore attribute, which had been associated with plurality, implies change.

In order to tie all of this together we must remember how I opened this paper. In his metaphysics, Aristotle attempted to move the real into what was deemed by Plato to be unreal. This realm was thought to be unreal *because* it changed. Given this context it strikes me as quite reasonable to conclude that Aristotle considered attributes less than real.²¹

In this light, I can now begin to work all of these threads together. The application of mathematics via the principle of non-contradiction to substance led to the conclusion that substance must be an *absolutely* indivisible unity (i.e. as opposed to being merely conceptually indivisible.) Attribute, on the other hand, is malleable, containing the capacity to change. I have led us to consider substance and attribute to differ along the lines of reality. While both are existential, substance is a unity and real while attribute is a plurality and unreal.²² However, attributes exist within substance, by definition. The tension within an absolutely indivisible unity containing a plurality is unbearable. Luckily, there is a “resolution [to this] dilemma...[that] rests on the introduction of the notion of *potentiality*, which allows for something to be present without being present!”²³

Potentiality is opposed to actuality; it is its contrary. Given the structure that I presented earlier it is a simple matter to apply this contrary pair to being and unity’s contraries respectively. Actuality relates to positive aspects and potentiality to the privative. This can then be run down and accumulated with all of our other acquired knowledge of substance and attribute. Substance would thus be *actually* unitary and attributes only *potentially* plural. That is, the

²⁰ Aristotle, 1004b, 29.

²¹ What I am suggesting here is that the difference between Aristotle and Plato is not so great as to preclude a similarity regarding the ontological contrast between that which changes and that which does not. What I am attempting to emphasize here is just this point.

²² This is in agreement with Aristotle when he writes that “we say even of non-being that it *is* non-being” 1003b, 11. That is, one can claim existence to something that not real.

²³ Scaltsas, Substantial Holism, 120.

multiplicity found within substances is only conceptual. There is no reality to the division, though the potential for division exists.

Thus far, I have presented what I believe to be the metaphysical relation between unity and being that Aristotle implies. While these thoughts take a different route than Scaltsas does, I believe that they are in support of his position. I will therefore present the way that Scaltsas describes this conception of substance, as it provides useful imagery that will lead to greater understanding.

POTENCY

A natural question to ask regarding the way that I have been presenting Aristotelian substantial holism is, “if a human is a substance and thus indivisible, how is it possible for us to lose predicates as we so clearly do?” I admit that simply claiming this is due to the *potentialities* of humanity is unsatisfying. Scaltsas helps by providing a more empirical conception. He argues that, “according to Aristotle, the components of a substance are unified into a whole by losing their distinctness as they are incorporated into the whole”.²⁴ Scaltsas asks us to imagine the merging of two bodies of water. Just as a drop of water will lose its boundaries as it merges with another, so too does substance re-identify what would otherwise be distinct. Thus, in the same fashion predicates can be lost through the same process of re-identification.

We now can see the practical significance of the principle of non-contradiction and its relation to substance. It functions as the mechanism of re-identification. The association of substance with the PNC necessitates re-identification. To be one and many at the same time would be admitting of a contradiction. Therefore, there must be a formal separation. This concept of *re-identification* requires further determination though. The PNC has been practically related to this process, but the process itself is still abstract.

This is where Aristotle’s functionalism becomes metaphysically significant. The identity of a thing is determined in part by its function. Aristotle’s intention in this regard is made clear when he writes “we shall define each part, if we define it well, not without

²⁴ Scaltsas, Substantial Holism, 119.

reference to its function... [the parts of the body] cannot even exist if severed from the whole...²⁵ Take the case of a re-identified limb.²⁶ The limb no longer functions as it did when it was previously identified. Instead, it serves a new function, likely nutritive in capacity. The matter retains its previous form and thus is still referred to by the same name. However, it is now a limb in name only. This is what Scaltsas terms the homonymous nature of potentiality. He codifies this nature as such: “[i]f x is potentially y then x is homonymously a y .”²⁷ When a limb is severed, its identity changes and thus so too does its potential.

Because a being’s form and matter can remain the same, and yet it can perform a different function, matter and form cannot be the sole cause of the functionality of a thing. This statement modifies the simple notion of form as “the reason [that] the matter is some definite thing”, a caveat is required.²⁸ This caveat will take us to what I will term “universal holism”. For the homonymy that potentiality brings into the picture requires that the context surrounding the entity under investigation be taken into account. Otherwise, the identity would not have changed and we would be left with a contradiction. What a thing is, i.e. its form, cannot be determined without reference to its function. However, a thing’s function cannot be determined without realizing how it interacts or identifies with the world around it. This position is far from atomistic, the “what it is” of a thing cannot *be* without there first being an holistic locale.

This way of interpreting Aristotle’s metaphysics is in line with his overall approach to philosophy. We require an empirical grounding to determine what a thing is. Taken from Aristotle’s conception of substance we have discovered the holistic nature of all that is. The limits of the completeness of a substantial whole have been discovered. What we first realized was that while substance proper must be understood as *absolutely* indivisible, there is a further sense in

²⁵ Scaltsas, Substantial Holism, 123. I ought to note that there is something interesting going on here. In order for Aristotle to maintain this position he must claim that the function determines the form, not the other way around. For otherwise the limb would still be able to function as it had before. It would thus not be *homonymously*, but equivalently an arm.

²⁶ That is, amputated.

²⁷ Scaltsas, Substantial Holism, 123.

²⁸ Aristotle, 1041b, 8.

which it can be considered divisible. This divisibility is only potential, never actual. Therefore, the completeness of substantial wholes was maintained to its fullest degree. For any individual of this sort requires no other for its existence, as it would violate the definition of substance. However, some leeway is required here. We are not simply a foundation (or purely formal, as substance has been shown to be) we are also *kinds* of beings. In this context, substantial wholes are not complete to the same extent as previously stated. For a being to be fully determinate, it requires more than itself, for the hylomorphism of a thing cannot determine a thing's identity without contextual information. Formally, absolute unities cannot be without each other, substantially they must be. Therefore what I have shown is that Aristotle has consistent, principled reasons for maintaining both substantial holism and universal holism.

WORKS CITED

- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy, Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2000.
- McKeon, Richard. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Random House, Inc., Modern Library Paperback Edition, 2001.
- Scaltsas, Theodore. *Substantial Holism, Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Ed. T. Scaltsas, D. Charles and M. L. Gill, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994.
- Scaltsas, Theodore. *Substance and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1994.

SOLA EXPERIENTIA:
THE BAS VAN FRAASSEN INTERVIEW

Bas van Fraassen is McCosh Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. His research interests straddle philosophical logic and philosophy of science, with special interests in empiricism, (anti-)realism, probability, foundations of relativity and quantum physics, religion, and philosophy of literature. His publications include *The Scientific Image* (Oxford 1980), *Laws and Symmetry* (Oxford 1989), *Quantum Mechanics: An Empiricist View* (Oxford 1991), and *The Empirical Stance* (Yale 2002). For CV, cat and climbing lore see his website:
<http://www.princeton.edu/~fraassen/>.

Interviewed by Kyle Jackson, Chief Editor.

Special thanks to Chloe Armstrong for her invaluable assistance in the formulation and editing of the interview questions.

SOPHIA: In your latest book *The Empirical Stance*, you discuss many historical issues in philosophy. For example, you draw a Sophoclean analogue to the schism between science (Oedipus) and religion (Tiresias), illustrating that our “modern” problems have ancient origins. Undergraduate philosophy students often wave their hands at the history of philosophy, lamenting that they want to study philosophy now, not as it was 2,400 years ago. However, many philosophical issues manage to surface throughout the history of philosophy and the world in various instantiations, interpretations, and perspectives. How important do you feel the study of the history of philosophy is for the undergraduate student and aspirant philosophers in general? Can we, using your language, “interpret ourselves anew”, without knowledge of the history of philosophy?

BAS VAN FRAASSEN: This touches on the very basic question of how we conceive of philosophy at all—the question of what philosophy is. I see it as an activity that is largely a historical dialogue with many people ranging across some twenty-five centuries in time and across the whole Earth in space. To say it is historical implies of course that it is evolving, that we can’t assume that the texts we have from the past are transparent. But it also implies that we are doing something else altogether if we only address what is being said just now. And it seems to me that as a matter of fact, problems being addressed in philosophy today already have a long history—that we can’t understand them thoroughly without seeing them in their own historical context.

S: In today’s academic society, it is often assumed that science, dealing with objective facts, cannot be reconciled with religion, art, music, and the like, i.e. believing in God, appreciating the Mona Lisa, and the music of Vivaldi—things that are difficult to explain empirically. How does your position deal with this issue? Is it reasonable to expect that science will someday be able to account for the seemingly non-objective nature of these things which we are only able to realise in some sort of visceral sense (i.e. we “feel” them), or are they the sort of things that simply fall outside of the scientific realm?

BVF: Well, I’ll interpret your question in terms of my own views on science and on explanation. The basic criterion of success for science is to furnish us with theories that “save the phenomena”, that

are empirically adequate, that is, that allot a place to all the observable things that happen. But the scientist who approaches a particular topic does so with his own range of questions, and these define his domain. It isn't accurate to say that the domain of a particular scientific study is, for example, the frog population in the Netherlands. You have to add just what questions the study addresses—the physiology or the courting behaviour or the prey-predator relations, or whatever. So in one sense there is literally no topic you could mention that doesn't fall in the domain of science as a whole, or that science could not "account for". But in another sense, it is not so, for you can bring up a topic in terms of a range of questions that are not addressed in science. If, for example, you want to know at first hand what it is like to see the Mona Lisa your desire won't be satisfied by anything short of the actual lived experience, not by a study of chemical or glandular changes in humans brought in to see the Mona Lisa.

S: Philosophical positions are often subtly changed and further developed to meet mounting criticisms and maintain adequacy; however, such changes may themselves lend favour to misinterpretations and misunderstandings, frustrating the philosophical process. Given your unusual approach to analytic philosophy and empiricism, what misconceptions, if any, have your positions faced?

BVF: Fortunately, I've had a lot of criticisms and critical reactions, but practically all of them right on target, so that I could either answer or start on improving or extending what I thought. Sometimes *The Scientific Image* was read as implying that it is a mistake, or even not rational, to believe that scientific theories are true, or that the only rational thing to do is to be agnostic about what they say about what is unobservable. But it makes it pretty clear that it argues only that it is rational, and scientific, and for an empiricist preferable, to be agnostic about that, even though it is not irrational to believe the whole thing, especially if you already subscribe to a rival philosophy. Of course I advocate empiricism across the board, and I think that there are many places in philosophy where non-empiricists paint themselves into a corner, or willingly go on a wild goose chase, but those things seem to create their own sort of excitement. Maybe I could add something about the criticisms that I accepted, and that made me change my position on some things. In *The Scientific Image* I

gave an account of what it is for a theory to be empirically adequate, with a special chapter on how to understand this for theories that involve probabilities at a fundamental level. Twentieth century physics makes that an important question. I think I got somewhere with it there, but I did not succeed, and some critical papers made me see that. I changed my views on probability, and gave a different account in *Laws and Symmetry*, and I think that does work. Another shortcoming I came to see in *The Scientific Image* was that the emphasis on pragmatic factors was not strong enough. Just like you can get true theories very cheaply, by just uttering tautologies, so you can also get empirically adequate theories by just being very uninformative. We value science largely for the way it can guide our expectations, so if we abstract from practice, our discussion can quickly become pretty irrelevant. In the quantum mechanics book I already addressed this briefly, in *The Empirical Stance* I took this up in the much broader context of general epistemology.

S: Fictionalist approaches in metaphysics have become increasingly popular in recent years and your account of (what some refer to as) theoretical entities is often included in discussions regarding fictionalism. To what extent does fictionalism succeed or fail as an approach to ontology, and is your account properly construed as fictionalist? Do you consider a fictionalist account to be pragmatically consistent?

BVF: I won't pronounce on all the fictionalisms that can crop up, but I think that there is a good strategy there, provided only the philosophical context allows for it. It seems to me that it does not help to say that mathematical entities, or entities theoretically postulated in physics, are fictions, if you then have to start working out an ontology of fictional entities to make sense of the assertion. In my own department I have seen a good deal of interest in fictionalist strategies both in philosophy of mathematics and on the subject of modality. It appeared that fictionalism could work for either, but not for both at once. But from my point of view, there was an underlying presupposition, that to make sense of mathematical or modal statements we have to find a way to interpret them so that they are used to tell a true story about what there is and what it is like. In other words, to construct an ontology. While I don't have a different account that I can offer as my own, there have after all been attempts in the traditions of pragmatism, transcendentalism, intuitionism,

constructivism, that took a different tack. It might be possible to make sense of mathematical activity, or of our modal discourse, without interpreting it as describing the existence and properties of a realm of metaphysical entities. You asked to what extent fictionalism succeeds or fails as an approach to ontology, and as you can see, I think it is better in philosophy to let go of ontology and metaphysics, at least in the traditional forms, altogether.

S: Speaking of new approaches in philosophy, you are well known for moving empiricism away from the flaws that ended the reign of logical empiricism—illustrating, in *The Scientific Image*, a new philosophy of science, viz. constructive empiricism. In *The Empirical Stance*, moving away from ontological and metaphysical commitments, you characterise empiricism as a stance, i.e. an attitude that acts as a vantage point, or policy in guiding behaviour, rather than a factual claim about the way the world is, allowing for a position which is not only open to evaluations of truth or falsity, but is also subject to pragmatic considerations. Through this approach, critical attacks on empiricist doctrines are insufficient to force the abdication of empiricism as a philosophical position—the force of empiricism as a stance remains intact. Is it possible for a notion of a stance, extended beyond the scope of merely an empirical stance, to provide insight into, and grounding for, other philosophical positions, e.g. positivism?

BVF: There can be philosophical positions that do consist in factual theses about what there is, what the world is like, as you might say. These are metaphysical systems in traditional form. In a class or textbook the main thing you will get as, say, Descartes' philosophy, or Leibniz', or Bertrand Russell's, or David Lewis', or David Armstrong's, will be presented that way. But in the case of any real philosopher I tend to think there is something more to the position, so I doubt that any of these are pure examples. In *The Empirical Stance* I gave a long argument to show that materialism or physicalism (I didn't distinguish sharply) is a stance and not a thesis. Given how it is usually presented, that implies that physicalists are in a state of false consciousness, of course, and that too I think is not at all rare in philosophy. The positivists actually provide good backing for my view of philosophies as stances, they describe themselves as eschewing metaphysics, and what others might bill as fundamental principles about what the world is like they typically advocate as methodological principles for how best to construct scientific theories, or tactics for doing so to the

extent possible. Reichenbach's "common cause principle" is a good example—his student Wesley Salmon saw it as basic to scientific realism, but when Reichenbach returned to topics in quantum mechanics at various points in his life he saw that this principle might not be satisfied there, or that a conventional choice might be involved if it was.

S: In *The Empirical Stance*, you claim that metaphysics is impotent, yet holding a position lacking any claim as to what the world is like seems itself to lack explanatory potency. Taking metaphysics out of the picture seems a bit like giving up the cause, leaving us wanting for the noumena. What is gained through the removal of metaphysics in favour of a purely epistemological tack?

BVF: What is gained is a loss: losing what Kant called the Illusions of Reason. You are right to point to explanation as key—"explanatory potency" is a good phrase that signals the status that explanation and demands for explanation have in some philosophical traditions. But a request for explanation, a "why" question, is defined by its presuppositions, which determine what counts as an answer at all. There is certainly a great deal to be known about what the world is like—and the empirical sciences are the avant-garde for this in one respect; novelists, poets, artists, religious are in another. But when a metaphysician comes with his or her typical questions, they are equipped with certain sorts of presuppositions that empirical, moral, aesthetic, or religious inquiries do not share.

S: This next question comes in parts. In *The Empirical Stance*, you confront the problem of revolutionary changes in science, and how they do not conform to a deterministic epistemology. Is it possible to arrive at a deterministic theory that allows for these seemingly inexplicable paradigm shifts, or must we simply accept a stance which allows for such change, but is incapable of predicting it? And, given that conceptual shifts, although perfectly reasonable in hindsight, seem completely irrational from the perspective of the prior theory, is it possible to give a rational account of the transition? Near the end of the third chapter of *The Empirical Stance*, illustrating the importance of the emotional factors in scientific revolution, you state that "sometimes nothing short of passion will do". There is little doubt that emotions affect the way we interpret the world, and you suggest, taking a cue from Sartre, that these emotional factors play a crucial

role in scientific revolution. Does this imply that there is something other than empirically observable factors determining changes in scientific theory? Is an account of emotion sufficient to explain the revolution? What else may be needed, and how are emotions accounted for from an empirical stance such as the one you articulate? Also, when looking at revolutionary changes in science it is hard not to think of such heavy-hitters as Kuhn and Feyerabend. What sort of influence have these thinkers had on the development of your philosophy?

BVF: These questions are closely related, so I'll answer them together. This is certainly a subject on which Kuhn and Feyerabend taught us a great deal. After their time, questions about change in science, and in our ways of seeing the world in general, could not be ignored, nor abstracted from contexts of actual practice and historical development. In *The Empirical Stance* I wanted to show that the revolutionary changes they made salient for us provide a strong challenge for contemporary epistemology. These changes we endorse as rational, not just as irrational lapses with fortunate consequences. But they were in principle unpredictable "within the space of reasons" because they were precisely changes of a sort that violate prior demarcations of what is rationally allowable. So they could not be the outcome of a process of deliberation of the sort we study in e.g. decision theory—for such a deliberation is made in a context whose defining parameters come up for grabs in the process. The way out is provided by a change in probabilities and utilities when deliberations on the basis of the probabilities and utilities you have leave you at an impasse. This is the sort of case that Sartre describes graphically in his writings on emotion, so the general structure he describes applies here, even if there are no emotions familiarly so called.

S: Is it possible to give an empirical account of such a shift?

BVF: Certainly, empirical accounts can be given of anything whatsoever. But recall how I answered your previous question! It seems to me that ideas about "limits of science" are usually confused. What about the "emergence of consciousness" for example? Whatever stage in the history of the earth is meant here, there is certainly an empirical, scientific account of that transition—as yet very uninformative. Maybe it is more informative than just a few tautologies, or than some information about how an ice age was

ending, but the less informative the more likely it is to be empirically adequate after all. The trouble with this is that we are puzzled in a way that the empirical sciences don't address. A more blatant example still is in discussions of miracles. Whatever events are meant, there can certainly be an account of precisely what physical changes took place. If they really took place, then science is not empirically adequate unless it has room in its models for those changes. I don't think that there are laws of nature (I think there is no coherent concept of such laws) but if there are, then miracles can't be violations of laws of nature, because anything that is violated is by definition not a law. Nor can miracles be violations of scientific laws or principles, except in the sense that they could violate scientific theories that are not empirically adequate, hence not successful, and I don't suppose that is what could be meant. No, everything admits of a description within the empirical sciences; but not everything we are interested in is answered there.

S: In *The Empirical Stance*, you are markedly critical of analytic ontology, saying that the ontologist's inference to the best explanation does not have the same strength as similar claims made by the scientist. There cannot be found any objective way of assigning probabilities of truth-value to one ontological theory over another for lack of empirical evidence—in ontology, unlike science, there is merely postulation. Some critics may argue that, when considering ontology, there is more than truth and falsity at stake (e.g. life values that are influenced by the implications of a metaphysical position), contrary to your claims. What is your response to this criticism?

BVF: I'll concede. The review by Alicia Finch made this clear, and I agree. My critique applies to ontology or metaphysics if it is meant in the narrow sense of developing a purportedly factual account and/or explanation of what there is and what it is like. I agree that much of what is done in actual philosophy in this area has more to it than that. But what I wrote about materialism in *The Empirical Stance* here seems to me to apply. As long as the work is presented as a pursuit of truth about what there is, and has more to it, we are faced with false consciousness. The position being developed is a stance. But in saying that, I do not deny the value of what is done. Something could be very valuable for us even if we are not clear on, or even mistaken about, what makes it valuable. The materialist stance endures and helps to make life meaningful for many people it seems—so may rival “world

views”, and so may an existentialist refusal to live by a world view of that sort. Yet, as a philosopher, I prize escape from false consciousness above all.

S: What’s next for Bas van Fraassen?

BVF: Oh, that is a big question. I would like to continue with some things that I just touched on in *The Empirical Stance* that I’ve taken up in courses and papers on philosophy of literature. Just this past year I wrote an article on the self, “Transcendence of the Ego: The Non-Existent Knight”, as one step along that line. Also, in Europe, especially Paris, and in some recent writings coming from Stanford and Vancouver, I’ve found myself faced with challenges from the side of the transcendentalist, neo-Kantian tradition that I really want to go into. But just for now, for this year, I’m trying to turn my Locke Lectures into a book about scientific representation and the role of perspective—more a continuation of my earlier philosophy of science books, but with a lot of attention to general questions about representation.

S: It certainly sounds like you are, and will continue to be, quite busy. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us.

BVF: I’ve enjoyed this interview very much—thank you for all these thoughtful questions!

ON PERCEPTION AND ATTENTION

THOM CONSTABLE
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that paying attention to an object is a necessary condition of being aware of that object. We can perceive all (or at least most) of the objects within a perceptual field, while only being aware of those objects that are essential to our navigation through the world. We need not only awareness for successful navigation through the world, but also a passive perception that allows us to automatically perceive seemingly unimportant stimuli. Thus, I argue that a successful theory of perception must include an account of perceptual attention.

We know the world around us by means of perception, and if we did not perceive, our existence would be empty and our minds void of any thoughts. One question that flows out of our ability to perceive is whether or not we need to pay attention to something in order to be aware of it. Within this idea of awareness, it will be necessary to distinguish between perception and awareness because although they are often used synonymously, this is a confusing and misleading way to speak. You can perceive something without being directly aware. Awareness involves a greater knowledge of details, as well as consciousness. You cannot actually be aware of something without paying attention to it as awareness entails attending to that which you perceive, but that does not entail that you will be unable to perceive something without paying attention to it. Depending on the system of analysis, there are various ways to explain the difference between awareness when one pays attention to, as opposed to perceiving something that one is not attending to. Presumably we would only call a theory of perception meaningful (or at least useful) if it can account for all of the possible avenues of human perception. In this analysis of perception we will be concerned exclusively with human perception. One of the undeniable aspects of human perception is our ability to attend to various stimuli in our perceptual field while ‘ignoring’ other stimuli within the same field. If a theory of perception is to adequately explain what is obvious to any perceiver with a fully functioning sense organ (and a fully functioning mind to interpret the sensation), then it would need to explain perceptual attention. Attention is a precondition for awareness, but not for perception, and in order to have a meaningful theory of perception, it must deal with perceptual attention.

It was stated above that we are not aware of anything without perceptual attention, while at the same time asserting that we can perceive things without necessarily paying attention to them. We will proceed along these lines in a series of baby steps, but we must first try to put together a sample notion of perception that we can use as a starting point. According to Ulric Neisser in the book *Cognition and Reality*, “all [perceptions] depend on pre-existing structures, here called schemata, which direct perceptual activity and are modified as it occurs”.¹ This idea of schemata gets further explained in Neisser’s account of how humans gain information about the world via

¹ Neisser, 14.

perception as Neisser believes that infants know “how to find out about their environment, and how to organize the information they obtain so it can help them obtain more”.² It is not clear how these schemata come about, but this need not be considered for the purposes of this investigation. We need at least some sort of filtering process for perception to occur as “[w]e could not possibly experience the world as it fully exists—we cut out an enormous amount before it even ‘reaches us’” as Robert Orstein asserts in *The Psychology of Consciousness*.³ What we now have as an account of perception is that there is some structuring process that makes perception possible and that the process of perception involves some sort of selection necessary to make the world intelligible as opposed to a confused bombardment of data. What this does not say is that perceptual attention must be focused on some stimuli in order to make anything intelligible. The filtering aspect necessary for perception to occur need not be described in relational terms where some things are attended to while others are not. They can be described as Robert McRae does when describing Leibniz “argument for the existence of insensible or unperceived perceptions” as Leibniz “describes them as ‘too slight, and too great in number, to too even’ to attract notice”.⁴ The part about attracting notice could be read as perceptual attention, but it need not. If we use the more charitable interpretation of this quote as indicating the aspects of reality that do not factor into human perception we can come to understand perception as the understanding of only those aspects of reality which can enter by means of sensation. Perception without awareness or perceptual attention is that which can enter into our perceptual field (regardless of which sensory modality) and contribute to our perception of the world without our direct awareness of them. Examples of perceiving that is *of* our perceptions but not immediately *of* our awareness are things such as scenery (if you were paying attention to a friend at the beach), or the clanking of dishes (if you were enjoying dinner at a restaurant). From this somewhat painful first step we can say that you can perceive something without paying attention to it, but you cannot be aware (as it is used in this paper) of something unless you pay attention to it. Now we can move on in an attempt to understand what is meant by perceptual attention,

² Ibid. 63.

³ Orstein, 25.

⁴ McRae, 35.

attention, and awareness in lieu of what we have said about perception.

Perceptual attention is when we attend to an object of perception, and as a result we become aware or conscious of this perception. We cannot ignore what is available to us to perceive, but we can focus our attention which can give us a greater detail of what we perceive, and as “[t]he critical determinant of whether irrelevant stimuli can be ignored is therefore the degree to which the task we are engaged in exhausts available capacity” as Rees and Frith report Lavie’s work in *Attention, Space, and Action*.⁵ Neisser explains perceptual attention in terms of an “anticipatory schemata that prepare[s] the perceiver to accept certain kinds of information rather than others and thus controls the activity of looking”.⁶ If we had perception of all stimuli equally, we could not be aware of it because it would be a sensation (visual or otherwise) alone, and we would not be able to distinguish one object from another or even one sense from another. Attention allows us to focus on one or more aspects of a given sensation and develop a system of relations in which to situate the various aspects. If we did not have this focusing power we would either view reality with every perceivable aspect (whether as a gestalt or as parts) as equal and would be unable to determine what is important for our navigation through reality, or we would simply be totally unable to distinguish anything at all and reality would ‘reach us’ as a perceptual blob with no discernible features. Neither of these methods would be effective, but we need not worry as we have the ability to exercise (whether free or determined) the power to perceptually attend.

The notion of perceptual attention as roughly outlined above will guarantee that we can only be truly aware of something when attending to it, but the way that it works could use some elucidation. Neisser claims that “we cannot perceive unless we anticipate, but we must not see only what we anticipate”.⁷ I am claiming that we cannot have awareness unless we anticipate, and I hope we do not see only that which we anticipate. The analysis of perception that we get through McRae’s work on Leibniz lends us a useful term for

⁵ Humphreys, Duncan, & Treisman, 83.

⁶ Neisser, 20.

⁷ Neisser, 43.

describing perceptual awareness, and this term is apperception. Although this term has certain implications that will lend itself only to an account of perception *a la* Leibniz, it has certain helpful features. McRae says that in order for a perception to become an apperception it needs to “not only [be] ... heightened and distinct by their relation to organs of sense if there is to be sensation, but they must also be recognized ... [and] this noticing is apperception”.⁸ The attention given to a perception is “the very notion of apperception or reflection or consciousness”.⁹ The essence of “the argument is that perception is directed by expectation but not controlled by them; it involves the pickup of real information”.¹⁰ Obviously Neisser’s account does not strictly match with that of Leibniz’s as we get it from McRae, but the language which Neisser uses to set it up is a lot easier for most people to accept. Regardless of your preferred set up as a reader, what we need to get out of this explanation of awareness, or perceptual attention, or apperception is the following: it allows us to focus on aspects of our perceptions and provides an awareness of the details involved in these perceptions so that we can respond to them in the most appropriate manner (this appropriateness can be explained in evolutionary terms or in any other non-teleological manner which would provide the most consistent overall analysis of reality). In terms of perception or apperception (in a non-Leibnizian sense), we need to remember that on this account, “[t]he interplay between schema and situation means that neither determines the course of perception alone”.¹¹ This is important because (if correct) it insures that it does not really matter if you are a materialist, or a phenomenalist, either way the whole interactive processes of perception and apperception must be taken into account.

Now we must return to the three initial questions that lay as the foundation for this inquiry. The first question that will be considered is “Can I be aware of a tree without paying attention to it?” The second will be “how does that differ from paying attention to the tree (to what I am aware of)? Finally, we will consider the question “can one construct a meaningful theory of perception without dealing with perceptual attention?” With what has already been explored in this

⁸ McRae, 30.

⁹ McRae, 34.

¹⁰ Neisser, 43.

¹¹ Neisser, 44.

paper, some of the answers that I will support should be obvious, but this will serve as a chance to clarify some aspects of my view.

To return again to the question of whether or not someone can be aware of something without paying attention to it, the answer should be clear. True awareness involves the process of attending (that is, to pay attention to), and without it, there can be no awareness. There can be what I will call passive perception. In passive perception, the various senses receive a perception of whatever there is that they can detect in their various modalities. These perceptions do have some restrictions on the content in accordance with the perceivers' perceptual schema, but it is not directed intentionally by the perceiver. This lack of intentionality in passive perception should be added to an idea of Neisser's that "selectivity is inherent in the very process of information pickup" in order to give us a full idea of how we perceive.¹² The word passive in passive perception is meant only to indicate a lack of intentional focus in perceiving, not that the process of perception involves no discrimination of the stimuli whatsoever, but that this discrimination is automatic. In *Attention, Space, and Action* Anne Treisman concludes that there are base conditions in which wholes are registered automatically, without attention or conscious awareness" focusing on objects.¹³ Treisman's work seems to indicate a gestalt type awareness that proceeds in a manner like that which has here been described as passive perception. In order for a perceiver to become aware of a tree, they need to pay attention to it. This paying attention takes an item already perceived, and focuses on it so as to make the perceiver consciously aware of the finer details of say a tree, so that decisions regarding the tree can be made.

We will get to the difference between being aware of a tree and not paying attention to it shortly, but for now we need to understand why we need attention as it will help clarify our answer to this second question. In cognitive neuroscience there is a difficulty known as the binding problem. Treisman tells us that the "binding problem in perception deals with the question of how we achieve the experience of a coherent world of integrated objects, and avoid seeing a world of

¹² Neisser, 178.

¹³ Treisman, 108.

“incoherent confusion void of consistency”.¹⁴ Attention, as Treisman refers to it, helps us to “select and integrate the separate features of objects in the correct combinations”.¹⁵ It must be said that Treisman’s work does not indicate that attention is needed in order for us to have perception as the quote already given, namely that “wholes are registered automatically, without attention or conscious awareness”, would indicate.¹⁶ This concept of attention can be consistently integrated into a system with passive perception as Treisman’s own work has indicated something similar, as it concludes that “without attention, the only information recorded is the presence of separate parts and properties”.¹⁷ This recorded information is like the background scenery when you are paying attention to your friend at the beach because although “attention is not required for the simple detection of separate features . . . it is often attracted by the prior detection of a unique feature”.¹⁸ The way in which attention works in the visual sense was the focus of Treisman’s work, and it proved fruitful. Visual attention works by “narrowing an attention window around the relevant object” and “us[ing] space to bind features to objects”.¹⁹ The primary goal of this paper has been to indicate that without a focused attention of this type, there cannot be any awareness of a perceptual object, and it could then only be perceived. The awareness gained by being able to designate various qualities as being of a certain tree would be very useful, but Treisman’s work only allows us to do this with visual qualities. Other sensory modalities must be capable of performing attention in the same way. We are all familiar with the party affect where you can attend to your friend’s voice alone among dozens of others, and it would be easy to explain this attention in terms of space as Treisman has done with sight. It would not be that difficult to imagine touch attention in these spatial terms as well, but the problem is that there are far more than three senses. It might be difficult to talk about olfactory space when trying to smell if your friend used cloves in their pumpkin pie recipe, but what is important about Treisman’s work is that it gives us an empirical model of attention that can at least begin to account for the necessity of paying attention in the act of awareness.

¹⁴ Treisman, 91.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 91.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 97.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 99, 101.

It is clear that we cannot be aware unless we pay attention to the object of our awareness, but we should make note of the differences between ordinary passive perception, and awareness. Many things have already been said about the differences between awareness and perception, but now we should say a little about why this difference exists. Perception and attention exist not because we need them to navigate through the world. Rather, they exist, and we use them to navigate through the world. This is not to say that perception and attention exists because of some telos inherent in them, but that the reality of perception and attention is that we do use them to navigate the world. They perform a function. We cannot use passive perception alone, as it would fail to provide us with enough detail to make crucial decisions about the world. We cannot use attention as our single navigational tool either, as it would provide us with too much information to analyze so that our navigation through the world would be slow and inefficient. We need to have this system with two aspects for practical reasons, as it would simply be too difficult a system if it was limited to either passive perception, or attention. This may sound like an appeal to the principle of parsimony (in that a theory of perception with only one method of perception would simply be too complicated, and as such must be rejected in favour of a simpler explanation), but it is not, because it would be a lot easier to *explain* perception through only one method. The single aspect systems must be rejected on pragmatic grounds. It is simply more practical to have one aspect of perception that can inform a perceiver of ones surroundings when no real response is necessary and another aspect when a reaction needs to be made to incoming stimuli. The passive perception is continually in effect, and when something enters into passive perception that needs the awareness of the perceiver, the perceiver then attends to the needy stimuli. When you are sleeping, your nose is still passively perceiving odours with each inhalation, and if one of these inhalations involves smoke, the perceiver will attend to this odour by waking up (hopefully) and attending to this stimuli with not only their olfactory sense, but with all other relevant senses as well. Unfortunately it does not *always* work effectively, as sadly people die in fires every year because they do not wake up, but often they do. Another example to this effect in terms of vision will help to further illustrate the point. Sometimes while walking through the park you will detect a object coming into your visual field, and respond correctly by moving out of the way, while at another time, you will realize that the object in your visual is a baseball, only after it has

made contact with your head. It is not a flawless system, but for the most part, it works. The switch from passive perception to attention can be explained by Neisser's description of the process of attending "to an event" as the "seek[ing] and accept[ing] [of] every sort of information about it, regardless of modality, and to integrate all the information as it becomes available".²⁰ The relationship between attention and passive perception is a pragmatic one where only that system which needs to be active at any one time will be active.

The final question was whether or not you could have a meaningful theory of perception that does not deal with perceptual attention. You certainly cannot have a theory of perception that does not attempt to address the binding problem as set out in Treisman's work. More importantly than that however, is that you simply cannot have a meaningful theory of perception that does not deal with clearly identifiable aspects of perception. It is a fact of reality that we can attend to some input while ignoring, or at least limiting, our perception of other input. If a theory cannot account for the most obvious aspects of perception that we know, then it has failed as a theory which attempts to explain perception as we know it.

The hope is that this paper has shown that attention is necessary for awareness of any perceptual object, and that any useful theory of perception must be able to account for perceptual attention. If McRae is correct to say that "whenever consciousness or apperception supervenes upon perception, the ego (read as conscious mind) is inseparably involved in what we are directly aware of" then whether or not we fully understand what we attend to, we are aware of it.²¹ If a perceptual object does not enter in our awareness, we may still perceive it, but it may be so unimportant as to not require our attention. As soon as our attention focuses on a perceptual object, we are aware of it, but if we do not attend to it then we cannot be aware of it. Perceptual attention is an integral aspect of the experience of perception, and it must be taken into account if we wish to explain its existence in the process of awareness.

²⁰ Neisser, 29.

²¹ McRae, 26.

WORKS CITED

Humphreys, G.W. Duncan, J. Treisman, A. Attention, Space, and Action. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

McRae, Robert. Leibniz: Perception, Apperception, & Thought. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.

Neisser, Ulric. Cognition and Reality. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1976.

Ornstein, Robert. The Psychology of Consciousness. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Rees, Geraint, and Christopher D. Frith. "How do we select perceptions and actions? Human brain imaging studies". Humphreys, Duncan, and Treisman Eds. 72-88.

Treisman, Anne. "Feature binding, attention and object perception". Humphreys, Duncan, and Treisman Eds. 91-111.

MICHAEL DUMMETT AND THE PAST

GRAHAM SULLIVAN
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examine Michael Dummett's attempt in his book *Truth and the Past* to reconcile justificationism with belief in the reality of the past. I conclude that Dummett succeeds in incorporating both positions into a single consistent account, but that his arguments in favour of this account are not compelling. I argue also that Dummett, in relaxing his justificationism enough to allow for a real past, denies himself the use of some of the arguments supposed to have established that justificationism in the first place.

Michael Dummett is well known for his advocacy of justificationism, the theory according to which the truth of a statement consists in or is related to our being justified in asserting it. Since it is rarely claimed that, for all possible statements, either the statement or its negation stands in the proper relation to this justified assertibility, justificationism tends to entail anti-realism about certain classes of statements—to entail, that is, that at least some statements of the classes in question are neither true nor false. Statements about the past are one such class. However, Dummett finds anti-realism about the past objectionable for several reasons, the most forceful of which is its implication that valid constructive arguments do not always imply their conclusions.¹ He therefore seeks, in his recent work *Truth and the Past*, to set out a justificationist account of truth compatible with realism about the past. He does, in fact, provide a coherent sketch of such an account, but he fails to provide any compelling demonstration of his doctrines, and the concessions he makes to realism in the course of the book undermine somewhat the original grounds of his justificationism.

Justificationism is a theory of meaning as well as a theory of truth; the meaning of a statement is, according to Dummett, given by the conditions under which its assertion is justified. This property of the theory accords with Dummett's view that neither truth nor meaning can be adequately explained apart from the other.² In arguing for a justificationist theory of meaning, Dummett asserts that a theory of meaning is satisfactory only if it "yields an account of use".³ Although there is something of Wittgenstein here, Dummett is far more sympathetic than was the late Wittgenstein to the idea of a comprehensive theory of meaning, and he insists that such a theory must be truth-conditional: "use cannot be described without appeal to the conditions for the truth of statements".⁴ In adopting justificationism, Dummett seeks to construct this truth-conditional theory in harmony with use by describing truth in a manner that relates it to the way we use language.⁵ He maintains that a concept of transcendent truth as entirely independent of our capacity for

¹ Michael Dummett, *Truth and the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 45-46.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

apprehending it is not thus in harmony. Following Wittgenstein, Dummett sets out two “fundamental features of use”: first, what is required for a statement to be justified and, second, how the utterance of or acceptance of a statement correlates with past or future behaviour.⁶ These two categories seem indeed to encompass all possible features of linguistic practice, and Dummett may also be correct in arguing that neither of the two allows us to manifest any non-justificationist understanding of any statements. It indeed seems impossible fully to describe truths that obtain independently of our being justified in asserting them in terms of the conditions under which we are justified in asserting them, and it is far from obvious how we might demonstrate in behaviour our belief in the existence of such truths.

In an earlier article, “The Reality of the Past”, Dummett set out what he took to be the essence of the dispute about the reality of the past. He there provided another argument in favour of anti-realism. The fundamental contention of this argument is that, for any statement, “we could not possibly have come to understand what it would be for the statement to be true independently of that which we have learned to treat as establishing its truth”.⁷ If meaning is taken as a private mental phenomenon, this argument is nonsensical; meaning is then nothing more than a certain sort of experience, and there is no *a priori* reason an entity might not have any mental experience whatsoever. If meaning is a linguistic phenomenon, on the other hand—as Dummett insists it must be—our understanding of the meanings of statements must be somehow communicable. It is indeed difficult to understand how, if one can observe only the conditions under which others take statements to be justified, one can reasonably ascribe to those others an understanding of truth as something independent of such conditions. Since Dummett takes meaning to consist entirely in what is publicly accessible in use, he is able to conclude that the meanings of our statements must conform wholly to justificationist principles.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 23-34.

⁷ Dummett, “The Reality of the Past”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n. s., 69(1969), 243-244.

⁸ Truth and the Past, 23-27.

The argument that it is impossible to acquire a realist concept of the meanings of past statements is, however, somewhat beside the point; it relies entirely on the argument that such a conception could never be manifested in use and adds no force to the justificationist position beyond what that other argument provides. Supposing that any possible use of language must indeed be, explicitly or tacitly, justificationist, it is indeed be impossible that we should ever learn from the speech of others that their language contained any sentence whose meaning involved truth-conditions that might obtain undetectably. Supposing, on the contrary, that it is possible to use language in a distinctively realist fashion, we might learn to ascribe non-justificationist meanings to sentences simply by observing that others did so use language. It is clear, then, that the argument from the impossibility of acquisition is simply a less direct statement of the argument from the impossibility of manifestation, and, if the latter is properly considered, the former can be ignored.

Despite all these justificationist arguments, *Truth and the Past* sets out a revised account of the status of the past in what Dummett admits is a move towards realism.⁹ In making this move, Dummett responds to a number of considerations that seem to him to argue against unreconstructed justificationism. Although he admits that the reality of the past can be consistently denied, he finds the consequences of such a denial “repugnant”.¹⁰ From these consequences, Dummett chooses the denial that the premisses of a constructive proof necessarily imply its conclusion as his chief argument for the adoption of some modified view.¹¹

A constructive proof works by setting out a procedure that must result in a proof of the conclusion if the premisses hold good. If such an argument concerns past events, it is entirely possible that the premisses may be verified and the conclusion, apart from the existence of the proof, unverifiable.¹² In this case, the only significant statement about the conclusion implied by the argument is that it could have been verified at some time.¹³ Dummett proposes that an

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

¹² *Ibid.*, 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*

expanded version of this property—the past, present, or future capacity to be verified—should be taken as the criterion of truth for statements in general.¹⁴ It is the admission of past verifiability to this list that gives Dummett’s philosophy its realist element.

If the above is to function as an argument against anti-realism about the past, it must show that statements about the past can be true even if it is not possible to be justified in asserting them. It fails to show this. In order for it to do so, it would have to demonstrate that the verification of the premisses of a valid constructive argument does not, under the anti-realist’s system, justify the assertion of the conclusion. If the anti-realist can expand his list of conditions justifying the assertion of a statement to include verification of the premisses of a valid constructive argument of which it is the conclusion—and there seems no reason why he could not—then the property communicated from the premisses to the conclusion of such an argument is simply that of being justified, not of having once been able to be justified, even where the argument concerns the past.

Dummett has other arguments against pure anti-realism. The assertion that the past tense refers only to present conditions seems to flout certain features of use.¹⁵ For instance, to keep up the “truth-value links”—principles stating that a proposition true at one time is true at all times—the partisan of this assertion “must relativize the truth of a statement, not only to the time of utterance but also to the time of evaluation”.¹⁶ He must, for instance, admit that, while a statement presently true will also be true in a century’s time, an observer living a century from now might correctly judge that very statement not to be true, either at our time or at his, if by his time all evidence for the statement has vanished. Since Dummett is convinced that the truth-value links “assuredly govern our use of tensed statements”, he considers any contravention of them to be a violation of the principle that a theory of meaning must explain use.¹⁷ The anti-realist who agrees with Dummett on this point is forced into the uncomfortable contention mentioned above. Against the anti-realist who is willing to make this contention, Dummett has no real

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷ Ibid., 75.

argument; he can only say that such an extreme position “goes very strongly against the grain”.¹⁸ This is a feeble retort, but not entirely without force; even where a position can be consistently maintained, it is extravagant actually to maintain it where it is contrary to common sense and where a less eccentric position is equally plausible. Dummett’s arguments give the justificationist some reason to prefer a less radical account of the past if a coherent one consistent with the principles of justificationism can be found.

It is just such an account that Dummett seeks. He counts a statement as true if there is a place and time such that an observer so spatially and temporally situated could verify it and false if there is an analogous possibility of its being falsified.¹⁹ We have direct evidence for a statement when we verify it in a way that “corresponds to the composition of the statement and the way the meanings of the words that make it up are given”.²⁰ In the case of a simple declarative statement about an observable state of affairs, which is normally the only case that Dummett considers, direct evidence will be obtainable only by direct observation of that state of affairs at some place and time proximate to or within that of its occurrence.²¹ Indirect evidence may take any form, so long as it justifies us in believing that direct evidence would have been, would be, or will be available to a correctly placed observer at some time.²² Indirect evidence is not in all cases weaker than direct evidence; either may be strong enough to count as verification of a statement, and provided such verification is available for a statement at some time—whether the verification proceeds from direct or indirect evidence—the statement counts as true.²³

Problems arise for Dummett when one considers whether his theory may be suspect on the same grounds on which he criticises realism. *Truth and the Past* contains a long discussion of how we might acquire the sort of understanding of statements about the past that Dummett requires us to have, but this discussion is somewhat vague, and the more important problem of how such an understanding might

¹⁸ Ibid., 76.

¹⁹ Ibid., 62.

²⁰ Ibid., 53-55.

²¹ Ibid., 61.

²² Ibid., 66.

²³ Ibid.

be manifested in use is scarcely addressed. There is some cause for doubting whether belief in a real past could be displayed through either of Wittgenstein's "two fundamental features of use". As stated above, it is hard to imagine how one might give an account of how we come to be justified in asserting statements we are never justified in asserting; and if we can never be justified in believing them, they are unlikely to have much effect on our behaviour. If the use of the ascription of truth to unverifiable past statements cannot be described in either of these ways, then, if the class of truth-bearing statements is circumscribed solely by use, such statements cannot be part of it.

These problems are not necessarily fatal to Dummett's theory. However, by accepting the possibility of meanings that, to some extent, transcend possible justification, Dummett has undermined somewhat the foundations of his justificationism and has created significant tensions within his position. In "The Reality of the Past", Dummett argues that, although our belief in truths that obtain unverifiably may be reflected in our use of language, this can only be because we mistake our own meaning and thus does not count as an adequate manifestation of this belief.²⁴ In *Truth and the Past*, he has clearly abandoned this view. In the course of describing our acquisition of the concept of unverifiable past truths, he makes some effort to explain what difference this concept makes for us and how this difference is reflected in our behaviour. His description here is somewhat vague and makes extensive reference to mental states without explaining, in most cases, how the differences alluded to will express themselves in behaviour. Nonetheless, it may be possible to construct a coherent position from it. The connexion between truths about other times and truths about other places is clearly meant to be very important; and it is true that one cannot occupy a place other than the one that one occupies except through a change in time.²⁵ Therefore, if one denies the reality of the past on justificationist grounds, it is natural also to deny the present reality of places outside one's own observational field, and, as Dummett notes, this further step seems dauntingly solipsistic.²⁶ It might be possible to do otherwise by taking such places as real insofar as they might appear a

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 52-55.

²⁶ Ibid., 52.

certain way if one went there; Dummett claims, however, that we show that we do not hold this view by our understanding of the possibility of a more direct knowledge of what is happening at a place than that that we would gain if we went there.²⁷ This more direct knowledge is that possessed by someone currently present at the place in question.²⁸

Exactly how our understanding of a difference between direct and indirect verification is to be manifested is not made clear, but language is the only plausible mechanism. Since direct verification is not necessarily more certain than indirect verification, we will not necessarily behave differently towards the world on the basis of something known directly than on the basis of something known indirectly. However, at some point in the process of incorporating the testimony of others into our picture of the world—a process Dummett mentions frequently—there may be some room for this difference to show itself. Our belief in the reality of the past will also, doubtless, show itself elsewhere in our use of language. For instance, it is likely to substantially change what we say when we are asked what sorts of statements we take as being capable of truth or falsity. This case is, of course, that at which Dummett's objection in "The Reality of the Past" is directed; but it is not clear that we must take this objection as compelling.

Dummett believes that only propositions susceptible of being known are true. If no-one is ever in a position to assert either a statement or its contrary, the statement will then be neither true or false. Thus, we are presented with the notion of "gaps in reality".²⁹ He argues that "to assume that there is a definite truth about what would be observed if there were an observer at a place where in fact there is not is to assume that the world is determinate independently of our experience; and this is a realist assumption, not readily defended from justificationist premises".³⁰ We are left with a picture of the world in which reality is constituted by the sum of subjects that exist, perceptions had by those subjects, and assertions those subjects are justified in making over all time. This is a realist picture only in

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

respect of other minds and other times; remote places have no reality apart from their being, directly or indirectly, perceived. Dummett, then, has succeeded in distinguishing his view both from realism and from unreformed justificationism.

It might be objected that objects must presently exist without the necessity of their ever being perceived so long as it is possible that they will be perceived in future. This objection is countered by Dummett's belief that the future is already fixed—that is, that all statements in the future tense are already true or false if they will ever be so.³¹ Thus, there is already a fact of a matter about whether a presently existing object will or will not at some point make itself apparent to an observer, and only such objects as have done so, are now doing so, or will do so exist.

Dummett leaves his ontology somewhat vague. In *Truth and the Past*, he states that “reality is the totality of what can be experienced by sentient creatures and what can be known by intelligent ones”.³² There is a suggestion here of a special status for experience that would seem to push Dummett towards idealism; more evidence for the same conclusion is provided by Dummett's statement earlier in the same paragraph that it would be senseless to speak of “a reality existing in utter independence of its being apprehended”.³³ This apparent idealism, however, seems to demand a weakening of Dummett's justificationism even beyond what he has already acknowledged to be necessary. It is the addition of “what can be experienced by sentient creatures” to the above list that causes problems; Dummett seems to leave open the possibility of something's having a real experience even if it lacks enough linguistic competence to be able to conceive of the assertion that it has such an experience. It might be argued that any sentient creature is always, in a sense, justified in asserting that it experiences whatever it experiences, whether it knows anything of language or not; but this seems an uncomfortable widening of the concept of being justified in asserting something. The difficulties here are by no means sufficient to destroy Dummett's theory, but they require further attention before this theory can pretend to completion.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

³² *Ibid.*, 92.

³³ *Ibid.*

Dummett's reformed anti-realism is coherent and not implausible, but in *Truth and the Past* it is by no means proved correct. The considerations supposed to force an abandonment of pure justification suggest rather than compel, while the arguments against realism seem to serve almost as well against Dummett's own view. If we can possess the concept of past states that obtain independently of our ability to justifiably assert their existence, it is hard to see why we may not conceive of other states that obtain similarly independently; even if we may not be able to imagine any particular such state, the proposition that one might obtain may still be intelligible. There may or may not be some argument that, working from the limits of what might be manifested in use, could foreclose on this possibility; in any case, Dummett has not provided such an argument.

The whole project of *Truth and the Past* relies on the idea that one can draw substantive metaphysical conclusions simply from the analysis of language. Dummett accepts this rather surprising notion because he believes both that truth is a property of sentences and that reality is constituted by the sum of truths.³⁴ Ultimately, these beliefs may not be compatible. Dummett, however, incorporates both into an embryonic system that appears both coherent and plausible, and this system stands as a serious contender for our allegiance even if it cannot command it unequivocally.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

WORKS CITED

Dummett, Michael. Truth and the Past. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Dummett, Michael. "The Reality of the Past". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n. s., 69 (1969).

AUTHENTIC NIHILISM: CREDITING TO NIETZSCHE HEIDEGGER'S DEBT

AMI HARBIN
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Nietzsche is ultimately placed by Heidegger within the metaphysical tradition—as the consummation and finale which facilitates Heidegger's movement henceforth. Nietzsche's position is crucial, Heidegger says, for without it his own questioning of Being itself could never have begun. I consider both Heidegger's naming of Nietzsche as an inauthentic nihilist and his placement of Nietzsche within the realm of metaphysics—moves Nietzsche himself would fervently and adamantly oppose. I look briefly at Heidegger's early claims about nihilism and authenticity, and appraise where, how, and to what end Nietzsche is located in the midst of these schemes. I conclude that, given Heidegger's use of Nietzsche, his early account of authenticity neither adequately accounts for nor gives sufficient credit to one's socio-historical context. I will suggest that holding Heidegger's views accountable to a more social view of autonomy would strengthen authenticity and clarify its importance.

The fourth volume of Martin Heidegger's lecture series *Nietzsche* lays out the theme of nihilism in the light of Nietzsche's work. Heidegger attempts to provide a comprehensive review of what Nietzsche means by nihilism by clarifying the stages of the nihilistic process itself. It becomes increasingly clear as Heidegger discusses authenticity and inauthenticity in the context of Nietzsche's supposed metaphysics that he intends this interpretation of Nietzsche to bolster and strengthen the themes of his own work on Being. Nietzsche is ultimately placed by Heidegger within the metaphysical tradition, as the consummation and finale which facilitates Heidegger's movement henceforth. Nietzsche's position is crucial, Heidegger says, for without it his own questioning of Being itself could never have begun.

I aim to examine both Heidegger's naming of Nietzsche as an inauthentic nihilist and his placement of Nietzsche within the realm of metaphysics—moves Nietzsche himself would fervently and adamantly oppose. To this end, I will look briefly at Heidegger's discussion of nihilism, followed by his early discussion of authenticity in *Being and Time*. I will then attempt to summarize what Heidegger means by his claims regarding authenticity and inauthenticity in this later work. I will appraise where, how, and to what end Nietzsche is placed in the midst of this scheme. Finally, I will conclude that Heidegger's early account of authenticity neither adequately accounts for nor gives sufficient credit to one's social context. I will suggest that holding Heidegger's views accountable to a more social view of autonomy would strengthen authenticity and clarify its importance.

I NIHILISM

Heidegger's project in the fourth volume of the lectures, simply entitled *Nihilism*, begins with the need to think through the notion of nihilism itself. He uses primarily Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*, selecting from the notes and attempting to combine textual exegesis with his own considerations in order to sufficiently characterize nihilism. By means of introduction, Heidegger states, "Nihilism makes a clean sweep and at the same time introduces new possibilities".¹ Heidegger wants to carefully pull this simultaneous,

¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*. Vol. 4. "Nihilism". New York: Harper & Row, 1982, 56.

dual-faceted movement apart that he may understand the significant progression of stages leading through nihilism. These stages carry one from the point of initial “illusionment”, through the realization that value systems are no longer helpful, to the final depth of questioning the Being of the world. Once Heidegger has completed the task of partitioning the stages of nihilism, he can then discuss the context within which these stages take place.

The stages of nihilism are articulated by Heidegger as follows: incomplete nihilism, extreme nihilism, and classical nihilism. What Heidegger calls “authentic nihilism” follows the conclusion of these three main stages. “Incomplete nihilism” begins with one holding externally-imposed values. The horizons are not internally created, but imposed upon one in the form of absolutes. Within this stage, one’s notions of all things transcendent fall, leaving only the current world. One’s uppermost values totter and collapse. At this point, one inhabits a predicament, as one struggles to live without values, lacking insight into how one goes about living in this way. This, then, leads into an awkward, transitory stage that Heidegger calls “extreme nihilism”. This is the initial movement from a devaluation to a revaluation. Heidegger says that this is “the condition of uncertainty, in which prior values are deposed and new values not yet posited”; it “consists in the fact that there is no truth in itself, although there is still truth”.² From extreme nihilism, one moves into what Heidegger deems “classical nihilism”. Classical nihilism is the anticipated period of revaluation; it “calls for a freedom from values as a freedom for a revaluation of all such values”.³ Within a Nietzschean context, classical nihilism emerges as a revaluation in the context of the will to power. It is helpful to note now, as it will prove important to Heidegger’s project later, that the classical nihilist does not reject the valuative process altogether, but merely alters that which is laid out by the values. That is to say, for instance, the classical nihilist may be concerned with setting up a framework of ethics similar to that of Christianity, but without the imposition of any religious authority. The values now are not the same type of externally imposed doctrines as were present in incomplete nihilism, but they remain values, and they surface within a valuative framework.

² Ibid., 55.

³ Ibid., 5.

Like many topics of Heidegger's discussions, nihilism—situated within a history and tradition, does not escape a certain contextualizing. Nihilism reveals itself as encompassing the Western tradition, beginning with Plato. Heidegger says that this history stands behind current thought and is the ground upon which everything current occurs. In Nietzsche's sense, nihilism "means to think the history of Western metaphysics as the ground of our own history; that is, of future decisions".⁴ Heidegger's discussion of nihilism thus backdrops all considerations of philosophical movement; Heidegger approaches authenticity out of nihilism's framework.

II AUTHENTICITY

Heidegger's understanding of authenticity in his earlier *Being and Time* has much to do with this sensing of one's current ground as the ground for future outlook.⁵ Authenticity is set against the background of Being-in-the-world, with *Dasein* as the being-there within the world. *Dasein* is carried along by the "falling"⁶ of the world, always already towards inauthenticity. Authenticity emerges first as

⁴ Ibid., 10-11.

⁵ With the intent of restraining myself in order to leave room for the application of the early authenticity to the later one encountered in *Nihilism*, I will do an injustice to the discussion at hand. This deserves much more space than is currently available, and as such will likely be (perhaps terribly) simplified. My hope is that what seems a disservice here will provide a service later.

⁶ "Falling" as described by Heidegger is as follows: "Through the self-certainty and decidedness of the 'they', it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic understanding or the state-of-mind that goes with it. The supposition of the 'they' that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine 'life,' brings *Dasein* a *tranquility*, for which everything is 'in the best of order' and all doors are open...When *Dasein*, tranquilized and 'understanding' everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts along towards an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it. Falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquilizing; it is at the same time *alienating*". (Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 222, italics Heidegger's). Falling is a deceptive aspect of *Dasein's* world which convinces inauthentic *Dasein* that no further thought or action is required. Falling is ever-present as a temptation towards inauthenticity and as a pull towards Being-in-the-world not as oneself, but as a member of "the they".

Dasein becoming aware of the ground upon which it stands, of the fact that this ground is not the permanent, absolute force it had seemed to be. *Dasein's* world is shaken. That which had once seemed clear and controlled has now been thrown open to what appears to be a complete lack. The process which ensues leads *Dasein* through a complete questioning of what the "ground" means. Heidegger's talk of *Dasein* as the being for whom Being is an issue becomes especially appropriate here. *Dasein* is authentic once it undergoes this realization, wherein its conception of Being-in-the-world has been fundamentally upset, and once it returns to a newly envisioned way of Being. Authenticity brings *Dasein* to an intriguing position. Suddenly, the ground which was once obscured by the one, and was then revealed to be without permanence, becomes absorbed into the ground on which *Dasein* must stand. *Dasein* endures a radical transformation, and returns to the need to take up the world as its home. Within this transformation, a novel way of conceiving of one's tradition emerges. *Dasein's* history and tradition has all been taken into question and it goes about living out of the same tradition, but with a different awareness altogether. *Dasein* realizes its place within the tradition, its limits therein become clear, and a type of openness comes out of this clarity. *Dasein* comes out of the concealment of everyday understanding, (somewhat synonymous with "the they"), and it is not revealed that there is a deep truth behind the world, but rather that authenticity requires that one know there is not. What should be emphasized here is the authentic ability to speak of one's tradition as non-absolute, while standing firmly within one's tradition. It is not as if *Dasein* has temporarily out-stepped the boundaries of its historically charged ground; as such, a move cannot and does not occur within the realm of historically-situated beings. *Dasein* is enabled, through authenticity, to press forward into possibilities which lay beyond its own tradition only because it recognizes the lack of a deep interpretation.

III INAUTHENTIC NIHILISM AND NIETZSCHE

Having briefly laid the necessary groundwork, the crucial thought of Heidegger's Nihilism may now be called into closer study. What does Heidegger mean by authentic and inauthentic nihilism, and how is Nietzsche associated with either or both?

Authentic and inauthentic nihilism are brought up within the dense discussion of metaphysics in the lecture. Both the authentic and the inauthentic forms of nihilism hark audibly back to the distinctions originally made in *Being and Time*. Inauthentic nihilism, according to Heidegger, has everything to do with the Western metaphysical tradition. Metaphysics, he argues, has established a framework of valuation and absolutes which has been draped over the whole of Western philosophical thought, beginning with Plato. This progression of thought in its entirety has been an expert humanization of the world. A nihilism which continues in this path is a type of psychological nihilism—when the term “psychological” is taken in the Nietzschean sense of an anthropology. As Heidegger describes it: “If nihilism is construed as a ‘psychological state,’ this means that nihilism concerns the position of man amid beings as a whole, the way in which man puts himself in contact with the being as such, the way he forms and sustains that relationship and thereby himself”.⁷ The position of this “man” is the position of a socialized group rather than an individual. The perpetual focus upon humans in attempts to understand the world has prevented the keen eyes of philosophers from scrutinizing Being; they omit Being from the centre of philosophical thought entirely, as they are caught up in traditional metaphysics. It is precisely this lack of thought regarding Being that constitutes inauthenticity. In the same way that inauthentic *Dasein* has never given consideration to the ground of Being upon which it functions as a being, the inauthentic nihilist has not fully torn up every shred of valuation with his or her need to get at Being itself. For only when the nihilist asks the questions under valuation, which are the “why values at all?” questions that inquire into Being itself, has he or she come fully through the three main stages of nihilism. Authentic nihilism is the resulting turning of one’s philosophical ear towards Being. All thinkers of the Western metaphysical tradition have attempted to structure and control the relation of beings to Being in a way that will suit them, but Heidegger conveys the need to let go of this project. Thus, Heidegger says, “Every authentic liberation, however, is not only a breaking of chains and a casting off of bonds, it is also and above all a new determination of the essence of freedom”.⁸ Thus, the authentic nihilism is again very much like the authenticity of *Being and Time*: both require a

⁷ Heidegger, *Nihilism*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

recognition of Being as the ground for Being-in-the-world, and both are accompanied by a drastic newness in sight and action. Being, Heidegger says, needs to be freed into a new realm of non-metaphysical considerations. We need to let Being be, while simultaneously realizing it as the ground of our study.

Nietzsche is positioned in this scheme as an inauthentic nihilist, within the realm of metaphysics, and as the crucial precursor to Heidegger's own work on Being. According to Heidegger's presentation of his philosophy, Nietzsche remains firmly grounded within the metaphysical tradition. He has moved successfully through the first stages of nihilism: he passed through the collapse of values of incomplete nihilism, through the transition of extreme nihilism, to the revaluation of classical nihilism. Yet he never moves beyond the valuation to the in-depth question concerning Being itself. Nietzsche doesn't consider that which lies behind the valuation.

Because Nietzsche surely recognized nihilism as a movement of modern western history but was unable to think about the essence of the nothing, being unable to raise the question, he had to become a classical nihilist who expressed the history that is now happening...Nietzsche had to conceive of nihilism that way because in remaining on the path and within the realm of Western metaphysics, he thought it to its conclusion.⁹

Nietzsche continues within the tradition of metaphysical thinkers in setting up a new valuation—the will to power. Nietzsche's will to power is not seen as the long-awaited overcoming of nihilism, but rather what Heidegger calls the “ultimate entanglement in nihilism”.¹⁰ Nietzsche is still thinking anthropomorphically, speaking in terms of a psychological system, writing within the realm of subjectivity, and is busy reversing categories rather than questioning their presence altogether. “As the fulfillment of modern metaphysics, Nietzsche's metaphysics is at the same time the fulfillment of Western

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 203.

metaphysics in general and is thus—in a correctly understood sense—the end of metaphysics as such”.¹¹

For Heidegger’s own philosophy, Nietzsche, as represented by Heidegger himself, played a vital and powerful role. We should note, however, the wholehearted refusal Nietzsche himself would make towards being called a metaphysician. This should give rise to critical reflection upon Heidegger’s use of Nietzsche to suit his own needs. As Michael Zimmerman explains, “When Heidegger says that Nietzsche’s thinking exhausts the possibilities of metaphysics, the implication is clear that Heidegger hopes to initiate a new beginning, one made possible by Nietzsche and others”.¹² It appears as though Heidegger read Nietzsche as conveniently having done the metaphysical dirty work to make way for a clean palette upon which Heidegger himself could begin his own writing. Heidegger, it seems, needed to retain just enough of Nietzsche for his own use, before condemning the rest for its inauthenticity. Hence, Jacques Derrida makes the following insightful comment:

In saving Nietzsche, Heidegger loses him too; he wants at the same time to save him and let go of him. At the very moment of affirming the uniqueness of Nietzsche’s thinking, he does everything he can to show that it repeats the mightiest (and therefore the most general) schema of metaphysics.¹³

Heidegger has to face Nietzsche’s accomplishments both with genuine gratitude and with a subtle animosity. It is, after all, Nietzsche’s “inauthenticity” that allows Heidegger himself to be “authentic”.

¹¹ Ibid., 138.

¹² Zimmerman, Michael E. Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity. London: Ohio University Press, 1982, 217.

¹³ Derrida, Jacques. “Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions”. Looking After Nietzsche. Ed. Laurence A. Rickels. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, 9.

IV AUTHENTICITY IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT

That Heidegger seems to need Nietzsche's inauthenticity to foster his own authenticity raises questions about the terms of authenticity on a whole. Heidegger describes authenticity as something which influences and is influenced by context, history, and the presence or absence of qualities in others. This is evidenced by his work on Nietzsche and by the aforementioned acknowledgement of the history of Western metaphysics. However, I would argue that Heidegger's depiction of authenticity over-emphasizes the presence of social context as blameworthy, and under-represents the credit due to such contexts. Thus, while authenticity is based on a developed acknowledgement of context's presence, it does little to credit it. A social context is involved in Heidegger's account often only in reference to "the they" and the problematic phenomenon of "falling", as was earlier described. Authenticity chiefly involves the constructive work of the individual *Dasein*, and largely ignores the supportive (and, as such, helpful) effects of a social backdrop or inheritance. I mean to suggest here that incorporating a more favourable view of the socially embedded *Dasein* into Heidegger's predominantly individualistic view of authenticity would serve to clarify its importance and relevance. Given Heidegger's own having been influenced by, and having inherited much from, Nietzsche, and yet given that (in authenticity's name) he himself overshadows rather than credits his important predecessor, it seems that social context is not being adequately appreciated. I suggest then, that bringing Heidegger's authenticity and a socially motivated relational autonomy into discourse would benefit Heidegger's standpoint by accounting for a more sufficient appreciation. This paper is, however, intended to propose rather than to flesh out such possibilities.

V CONCLUSIONS

In sum, I have first presented Heidegger's early accounts of nihilism and authenticity, and his location of Nietzsche as an inauthentic nihilist within this scheme. Secondly, I have considered the potential inadequacy of Heidegger's terms of authenticity, given especially Heidegger's own depth of inheritance from the work of Nietzsche. Finally, I have suggested that a more socially motivated, contextually influenced view of authenticity would account for the

apparent lack of acknowledged indebtedness within Heidegger's early work. That is, an authenticity more readily informed by the social context would be one more readily enabled to give credit where credit is due.¹⁴

¹⁴My analysis of the history of these philosophers, movements and ideas is primarily intended to question the legitimacy and utility of Heidegger's categories of nihilism, authenticity and inauthenticity. I mean to show that Heidegger's moves are perhaps ill-founded and surely deserving of critical attention. This paper stands as part of a larger, ongoing project in which I will argue that Heidegger's depiction of authenticity is both a useful and an insufficient one. I intend then to approach Heidegger's authenticity from a contemporary feminist perspective, and in so doing to sketch a path through Heidegger's problem. This paper is meant not to flesh out those implications, but rather to lay the important historical groundwork to preface and facilitate such possibilities in the future.

THE GIFT OF THE CROW:
RHETORIC AND DIALECTIC IN PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

AMIJOSEPH BROUSSEAU
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Well, Phaedrus, I am a lover of these divisions and collections, so that I may be able to think and to speak; and if I believe that someone else is capable of discerning a single thing that is also by nature capable of encompassing many, I follow straight behind in his tracks as if he were a god. Only a god would know for certain whether or not this is the right name for those who can do this correctly, but so far I have always called them dialecticians. But tell me what I must call them now that we have learned all this from Lysias and you. Or is it just that art of speaking that Thrasymachus and the rest of them use, which has made them masters of speechmaking and capable of producing others like them—anyhow those who are willing to bring them gifts and to treat them as if they were kings?

Phaedrus 266b-c

The noon hour has now passed, and with its passing, the spectre of the great god Pan has moved on from this peaceful place—this grove where our interlocutors lay speaking to one another. Helios, in his burning golden chariot, has begun his descent towards that hidden place beyond the western lands, and the shadows under the plane tree are beginning to lengthen. The endless song of the cicadas is carried upon a gentle whispering of the winds; the fury of Boreas is nowhere to be found. And still our two men from the *polis* press on with their dialogue. Let us listen to the words they share in this secret place. “When is a speech well written and delivered,” asks Socrates, “and when is it not?” And so we find ourselves possessed by the voice of this *erastes*, his words exert a force upon our thought as if they were a spell, an incantation that draws us along with him, inexorably; following the path that is beaten on the occasion of this great hunt. We begin to seek with him for that truth which lies behind the arts of speaking and of thinking; we lower our gaze as we are told, and keep watch for any sign of our prey, of tracks left behind. But in our dedication to this task given to us, in that moment when we are certain that the prey has been sighted, over there, just out of reach. We begin to take chase, and in our excitement we forget about our companion and guide, running with the pure joy of pursuit. But the beast is wiser than we; there was never a chance that we could have caught it. And it is then that we lose sight of the master of the hunt. We are left with nothing more than this necropolis of inscriptions in which his words are preserved, the text serving as a reminder of that which was once spoken.

At this stage of apprenticeship, our enquiry is constrained within the limits set by Plato’s script; our grasp of the dialectic is not sufficiently developed to allow us to set out on our own as of yet. For the time being, we must hold fast to the traces that have been left for us, we are obliged to interpret the text according to its presence within our present. In this sense we are the inheritors of an ancient tradition, and our task is one of attentiveness and emulation; to accept the gift in the spirit that it was given, and to open it delicately, paying heed to the vessel in which it was carried. It is not a question of looking towards some truth that resides within the text, in either explicit or implicit formulations. The history of this tradition—with its development of an imperative towards the cultivation of a spontaneous and radical reflectivity—calls us to enter into a conscious reciprocity with the text, and to take it up as one instrument amongst many; as a focussing apparatus that we may turn towards the sphere of

instability of the self and its dependencies within the world. And within the confines of this obligation, we move towards the recognition of our own empowerment as the instrument of this language, this tongue that we are attempting to grasp. Just as we utilise the text so as to orient ourselves within the history of our civilisation, so too does the text utilise the speaking subject in the manner of a puppet, speaking through us, possessing our bodies and making us dance to a tune that is not our own; each of us existing as conduits for the voices of our ancestors.

Here we bear witness to the *logos*, the animate substance of the discursive practices in which we move and breathe, suspended in the invisible medium of our linguistic world as a fish swims in water. The *logos* fills the spaces between things, enveloping the primordial structures of things within layers of meaning; meaning that over time becomes sedimented, replacing the order of the real with the order of the true. Just as we are thrown into the world, so too are we thrown into our speaking community—the latter superimposed upon the former. Prior to the acquisition of language, the young child experiences the world as an unmediated instantaneity of sense perceptions. Without the incantations of *logos*, without the song of the word, the soul becomes overrun by the power of being, and the subrational multiplicity responds to the impact of the world in kind: all is terror, all is hunger, all is joy. It is through the picking-up of concepts as instruments for the formation of a self, distinct from the world within which one moves, that the child begins to gain control over the onslaught of his senses, and becomes able to participate in the construction of truth within his linguistic community. We learn to *sing the world* in the manner that is shown to us by others. Our discursivity thus stands as a barrier between the world and the self, a barrier that we are not solely responsible in creating. Though the *logos* exists only through the action of speaking subjects, it is not something produced by them. This is the paradox of language that leads us to hypostatise our expression of the world as the world in itself.

Each individual is gifted with an inheritance of a truth regime that has been constructed over a span of preceding generations, and which serves to identify the individual as a subject with a certain stance towards the world as it is given. There stands an insurmountable chasm between the signifier and the signified: *the name is not the thing that it names*. By the principle of its nature, our

dianoia can only refer to itself. We write about the text, we speak about speech, and we think about thought. We are reminded of the *ouroboros*, the mythical serpent that eats only its own tail. Primordial being goes on existing outside of the parameters of our meaning-giving, and we are eternally forbidden from speaking it. Socrates bears witness to this trickery of the tongue, illuminating Phaedrus to the hidden reality of things; weaving myths of a hyperuranian realm and the true *onta* of being, revealing the instability of all our meaning, all our narratives. For while the structure of the real is closed to us, our language is not an absolute autonomy, and it is here that we encounter the question of truth and falsity.

We are concerned here with the love of Socrates, that is, his love for the divisions and collections through which he is able to think and speak. The philosopher's love for this play of language, this *logos* that emerges from our discursive practices, through which the human intellect is capable of ascribing meaning to the world; of differentiation and association, the sorting of sense perceptions according to conditions of similarity and dissimilarity, identity and difference. Socrates is entranced with the beauty of the song that he has inherited, the *logos* which speaks through him, and being moved by that beauty, he wishes to sing its praises in a manner which is fitting to its nature. He stands in the river, watching the current of the *logos* as it flows past him, and takes his own rationality as an object of discursive thought. And with the title of *dialectics*, he names that very function of his being by which he is able to give name to things. While the collection and division of things can be an entirely arbitrary procedure, carried out spontaneously and with little regard to that which is being categorised, the true dialectician aims to define his categories such that they correspond as closely as they can to the natural kinds that are observable in the world. It is here that the closing remarks of "Plato's Pharmacy" present themselves—that "dialectics is always guided by an intention of truth. It can only be satisfied by the presence of the *eidōs*, which is here both the signified and the referent: the thing in itself".¹ The movement of dialectics is thus arranged as an *entelechia*, a natural unity with its own principle of movement. That is, it possesses value only insofar as its operations are contained within its own teleology of truth, of a recognition of the eternal and unchanging heart of existence—the primordial collection

¹ Derrida, 166.

of all things under the category of *being*, of primary identity. But, as it is written, *only a god would know for certain whether or not the names that we give to these things are the right names*. The natural divisions are obscure and are made even more so by the sedimentation of prior artless acts of naming. Socrates thus recognises that even the most disciplined practitioner of the dialectical art may still fail to divide according to natural kinds, for he is trapped within the web of his language: we are without recourse to an absolute external standard, by which the convergence of the name and the thing could be verified.

It is to a trace left us by Sextus Empiricus that we now look, to the paraphrase of Gorgias of Leontini's speech "On the Nonexistent", to its nihilism of meaning and corresponding imperative towards the taming of the *logos*. As we explore this trace, we are led to first encounter the existence of nothing apart from the *logos*; looking further we are faced with the incomprehensibility of the *logos*; and lastly we are forced to admit the inexpressibility of the *logos*. In the schema presented here, the articulation of the world as it is in itself is rendered an impossibility: "logos does not manifest the multiplicity of substances, just as they do not manifest the nature of each other".² If nature neither exists nor can be understood nor conveyed to another, then all grounds for judgement are denied and all commonality is removed from discourse. Here there is no possibility of *noesis*, the face of the real is abolished, and thus we are left within a world of pure difference, where identity has been rendered nonexistent, a realm of disappearance and of simulacra, the fabrication of *eidolon* to conceal a primordial absence. And it is within this world that the discipline and strategies of the rhetorician are arranged to fit. For it is here that the act of creation is rendered possible: the construction or deployment of truth in myth, in poetry, in norms and laws. The act of expression is here formulated as a technique of coercion, a position that leads to a world where truth is a product of opinion, where the will to power stands as the only ground for knowledge, and where the persuasive are treated as kings.

This is the art of speaking possessed by Thrasymachus and his like, this art that has given them power and mastery over the souls of others, which exists as the deployment of language towards the end of persuasion. And it is in their famed ability to "create others like

² Gorgias, 203.

themselves”, to teach *arête*, to mould the soul of another into a form resembling that of the self, that we encounter the practice of rhetoric as a *techne* of control: the imposition of one’s will upon the passive substance of the other, the direction of the soul from without by means of speech.³ The *logos* is defined by its presence as a felt power, a power to enchant and to reveal, and it is this power that may be harnessed through the application of *techne*. For the rhetorician, words exist as tools that may be grasped and utilised in a variety of manners. To incite the emotions of a crowd, to soothe anxiety, to convince, to mislead; it is the task of the rhetorician to know the relations between the word and the affect, of the subtle sympathies between *phóné* and *psyché*. For the rhetorician, the living language represents a vast storehouse of medicines and poisons from which he may select that which is required for the accomplishment of his aim. In this medicology, we encounter the dual disciplines of diagnosis and prescription—the rhetorician is not a surgeon, his influence operates at a distance, through the invisible medium of air, of *pneuma*, the shared soul of the world. The rhetorical act aims at the shaping of intention qua opinion or willing, and is based upon a view of reality where the concept of *conatus*, or the internal principle of striving, possesses a primary ontic position, and is realised through a two-stage procedure of delimitation and norm setting. Through the deployment of language, the rhetorician is able to direct the desiring capacity of the human soul towards a determined good, and consequently defining an entire arrangement of behaviours aimed at this governing *telos*. Thus the human soul is reduced to the character of a puppet; a puppet not of the gods, but of other men who have disciplined themselves in their use of language, and who have become shapers of *dianoia*, of the consensus, of the reality of human existence.

At this, the anthropomorphised rhetoric presents itself, speaking with a voice for all to hear: “What bizarre nonsense! Look, I am not forcing anyone to learn how to make speeches without knowing the truth; on the contrary, my advice, for what it is worth, is to take me up only after mastering the truth. But I do make this boast: even someone who knows the truth couldn’t produce conviction of a systematic art without me”.⁴ But what is this truth about which rhetoric advises us, for has it not been determined that *the truth is*

³ Plato, 261a.

⁴ Plato, 260d.

something made through the deployment of this art of speaking that we are investigating?

In this we must return to the palinode, to the grounding of the art of division and collection within the recollection of our pre-embodied glimpse at the hyperuranian realm. Since all human souls have had a glimpse of the real in the time before being embedded in matter, it is within the passive rationality that defines the soul as human that Socrates locates the necessary justification for the accuracy of the dialectician's art; that what is required for the dialectician to be able to verify the accuracy of his divisions and collections is to recollect that primordial encounter with the structure of being and match his naming to it. This *anamnesis*, this negation of forgetting, is the foundation of the Platonic truth regime, for it grounds the philosopher, in the form of Socrates, as the master rhetorician. For while the disappearance of the real may open the space for the creative act, this position rests upon a fundamental destabilisation: *the belief that truth is an error requires the presence of a belief in truth*. The sophist thus strives from a place of weakness. In his attempt to mould the souls of others, to create a good towards which the soul may be oriented, he is defeated by a single inscription of truth. Again the conclusion of Derrida's text intrudes into our text, here stating, "dialectics supplants and replaces the impossible *noesis*, the forbidden intuition of the face of the father"⁵ and thus serves to negate the very openness that permitted the formulation of collection and division as a path to *episteme*. The practice of dialectics, with its teleological truth intention and grounding in *anamnesis*, is thus characterised as a rhetorical deployment of *logos* directed against the sophistic position of indeterminate meaning. Here we bear witness to a movement of closure in the master's act of dominion, the construction and replication of an *eidolon* that presents itself as *eidos*—in this we are caught in the strategy of a simulacrum. To say "herein lies the truth" is to recognise the moment of collapse against which all other goods are arrayed as negations.

There is no closure here. The limits of the ancient script have been rendered intangible: the words of another usurper have infiltrated themselves into this discourse, upsetting the old balance and calling for the cutting of new paths through these woods. It

⁵ Derrida, 167.

seems that our previous observation was in error, and that the great god Pan is in fact still very present in this place, hovering above our interlocutors, concealing himself in the wealth of nature, the drone of the cicadas drowning the laughter that flows from his razor beak. Though we may not be aware of his watchful eye, though we may forget our function within the cycle of generation and corruption, it is not in the nature of The Feeder to forget about us. He is wise to hide his face here, for his appearance engenders a great and frightening disruption in the concourse of human affairs; the terror of the stampeding herd, the recognition that all things are alive, watchful, and vying to devour the remains of the other. Pan represents those aspects of nature actively resistant to codification by our discursivity, and in this sense, he is a god that assumes many forms. But it is his black winged appearance that we are interested in here. For it must be remembered what the myth tells us: the art of rhetoric was first taught to man by the crow, and the debt for the egg that Corax laid, in the form of Tisias, his greatest student, was never paid. "*Kakou korakos kakon won*", it goes on and on, that from a crow, a bad egg will grow.

WORKS CITED

Derrida, J. "Plato's Pharmacy", in *Dissemination*. Barbara Johnson, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Gorgias. "On the Nonexistent", in *Classical Rhetorical Theory*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Plato. *Complete Works*. John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.