

# Does the Brain Think Me?

## Table of Contents

[The Philosopher: A History in Six Types by Justin E. H. Smith \[Princeton University Press, 9780691178462\]](#)

[Science and Religion in the Era of William James: Eclipse of Certainty, 1820-1880 by Paul Jerome Croce \[University of North Carolina Press, 0807822000\]](#)

[Young William James Thinking by Paul J. Croce \[Johns Hopkins University Press, 9781421423654\]](#)

[William James: Psychical Research and the Challenge of Modernity by Krister Dylan Knapp \[The University of North Carolina Press, 9781469631240\]](#)

[William James on Democratic Individuality by Stephen S. Bush \[Cambridge University Press, 9781107135956\]](#)

[I am Not a Brain: Philosophy of Mind for the 21st Century by Markus Gabriel, translated by Christopher Turner \[Polity, 9781509514755\]](#)

[American Horror Story and Philosophy: Life Is but a Nightmare edited by Richard Greene & Rachel Robison-Greene \[Popular Culture and Philosophy Series, Open Court, 9780812699722\]](#)

[The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory edited by Sven Bernecker, Kourken Michaelian \[Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy Routledge, 9781138909366\]](#)

[The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil by Chad Meister and Paul K. Moser \[Cambridge Companions to Religion, Cambridge University Press, 9781107055384\]](#)

[Background Practices: Essays on the Understanding of Being by Hubert L. Dreyfus, edited by Mark A. Wrathall \[Oxford University Press, 9780198796220\]](#)

[Morality, Moral Luck and Responsibility: Fortune's Web by N. Athanassoulis \[Palgrave Macmillan, 9781403935496\]](#)

[Consciousness and Fundamental Reality by Philip Goff \[Philosophy of Mind Series, Oxford University Press, 9780190677015\]](#)

[The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy edited by Sacha Golob, Jens Timmermann \[Cambridge University Press, 9781107033054\]](#)

[Rereading Ancient Philosophy: Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows by Verity Harte and Raphael Woolf \[Cambridge University Press, 9781107194977\]](#)

[Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy edited by Nathan Jun \[Brill's Companions of Philosophy: Contemporary Philosophy, Brill, 9789004356887\]](#)

[Asian Philosophies 7<sup>th</sup> edition by John M. Koller \[Routledge, 9781138629714\]](#)

[Asian Healing Traditions in Counseling and Psychotherapy edited by Roy Moodley, Ted Lo, Na Zhu \[SAGE, 9781483371436\]](#)

## [Bibliography](#)

[The Philosopher: A History in Six Types by Justin E. H. Smith \[Princeton University Press, 9780691178462\]](#)

What would the global history of philosophy look like if it were told not as a story of ideas but as a series of job descriptions—ones that might have been used to fill the position of philosopher at different times and places over the past 2,500 years? [The Philosopher](#) does just that, providing a new way of looking at the history of philosophy by bringing to life six kinds of figures who have occupied the role of philosopher in a wide range of societies around the world over the millennia—the Natural Philosopher, the Sage, the Gadfly, the Ascetic, the Mandarin, and the Courtier. The result is at once an unconventional introduction to the global history of philosophy and an original exploration of what philosophy has been—and perhaps could be again.

By uncovering forgotten or neglected philosophical job descriptions, the book reveals that philosophy is a universal activity, much broader—and more gender inclusive—than we normally think today. In doing so, [The Philosopher](#) challenges us to

reconsider our idea of what philosophers can do and what counts as philosophy.

Excerpt: This book, an essay in the proper Montaignean sense, seeks to answer that most fundamental of philosophical questions: What is philosophy? It does so, however, in an unusual way: by refraining from proclamations about what philosophy, ideally, ought to be, and by asking instead what philosophy has been, what it is that people have been doing under the banner of philosophy in different times and places. In what follows we will survey the history of the various self-conceptions of philosophers in different historical eras and contexts. We will seek to uncover the different "job descriptions" attached to the social role of the philosopher in different times and places. Through historical case studies, autobiographical interjections, and para-fictional excursions, it will be our aim to enrich the current understanding of what the project of philosophy is, or could be, by uncovering and critically examining lost, forgotten, or undervalued conceptions of the project from philosophy's distinguished past.

This approach could easily seem not just unusual but also misguided, since philosophy is generally conceived as an a priori discipline concerned with conceptual analysis rather than with the collection of particular facts about past practice. As a result of this widespread conception, most commonly, when philosophers set about answering the question as to the nature of their discipline, they end up generating answers that reflect the values and preoccupations of their local philosophical culture. Thus Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari answer the question, in their 1991 book [What Is Philosophy?](#), by arguing that it is the activity of conceptual innovation, the generating of new concepts, and thus of new ways of looking at the world. But this is a conception of philosophy that would be utterly unfamiliar to, say, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who suggested that philosophy is the practice of "shewing the fly the way out of the bottle," or, alternatively, that it is "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language," and it would be more unfamiliar still to the natural philosopher of the seventeenth century, who studied meteorological phenomena in order to discern the regularities at work in the world around us, and had no particular interest in devising new concepts for discerning these regularities. Thus

when Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy is the activity of concept coining, they should really be saying that this is what they would like philosophy to be.

Philosophy has in fact been many things in the 2,500 years or so since the term was first used, and here we will be interested in charting its transformations. We will be equally interested in exploring the question whether the activity of philosophy is coextensive with the term, that is, whether it is only those activities that have been explicitly carried out under the banner of philosophia that are to be considered philosophy, or whether there are also analogical practices in cultures that have evolved independently of the culture of ancient Greece that can also be called by the name "philosophy." I will be arguing that they can and should be, but even if we restrict our understanding of philosophy to those cultural traditions that bear some historical and genealogical relationship to the practice in ancient Greece that was first called by this name, we still discover a great variety of divergent conceptions of what the activity in question is. Let us, in any case, in what follows, use the term "Philosophia," with a capital "P," when we wish to explicitly mark out the genealogical connection between authors, arguments, and texts throughout the broader Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Christian world, while using "philosophy" to designate cultural practices, wherever they may occur, that bear some plausible affinity to those cultural practices that fall under the heading of "Philosophia," which, again, signals a particular historical tradition and thus, strictly speaking, a proper noun.

The sociologist Randall Collins, author of an extensive and very wide-scoped study of the development of schools of philosophy throughout history and at a global scale, identifies as philosophers those people, anywhere in the world, who treat "problems of the reality of the world, of universals, of other minds, of meaning." Collins does not discern any particular difficulty in picking out clear-cut examples of philosophical schools in different regions and centuries, and the problems he lists are not of particular or sustained interest to him as a sociologist. Yet there have been many self-identified philosophers who have not been interested in the problems in this list and have instead been interested in other, very different

problems (for example, explaining "unwholesome vapours"). There are, moreover, many thinkers who have been interested in these problems but who have not belonged to the sort of schools of interest to Collins; they have had the right interests but have lacked the sociological embedding to be able to come forward, socially, as philosophers.

Typically, where there is such a sociological context, philosophers have expended considerable effort to identify those activities or projects that philosophy is not. Some of these are mutually exclusive in relation to at least some others. Philosophy, to begin with a classic distinction, is not sophistry. This contrast in turn breaks down into two further defining features of the activity. First of all, philosophy is concerned with finding the truth, whatever the truth may be, unlike sophistry, which is concerned, to use the well-known phrase, with "making the weaker argument the stronger." Second, philosophy is practiced by people who are not interested in worldly gain. Philosophers do not accept money in exchange for their truth-revealing arguments, while it is principally for the sake of money that Sophists engage in argumentation. Philosophy moreover is the activity that deploys the laws of logic, or the rules of proper reasoning, in order to provide true accounts of reality. Here philosophy contrasts with traditions that we today think of as "religion" and "myth," to the extent that these tend not to take inexpressibility or logical contradictoriness as weaknesses in attempted accounts of reality. On the contrary, it is often argued that logical contradiction, expressed in the form of "mysteries," plays an important role in the success and durability of religions. Christianity, for example, endures not in spite of its inability to answer the question of how exactly three persons can be one and the same person, but rather because of the impossibility of answering this question. Philosophy has seldom been able to rely on mystery in the same way, even though it has often been called in to support mystic traditions using tools that are largely external to these traditions.

Philosophy, to continue, is often held to be the activity that is concerned with universal truths, to be discovered by a priori reflection, rather than with particular truths, which are to be discovered by empirical means. One way of putting this point is in terms of a contrast with an archaic sense of history,

where this latter practice has both civic and natural subdomains, both of which are concerned with res singulares, or particular things. This sense of history also contrasts with poetry: Aristotle distinguishes in the *Poetics* between history and poetry on the grounds that the former tells only about actuality, while the latter is concerned with all possibilities, whether they in fact happen, or fail to happen. He writes that "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen: what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity?" For Aristotle, philosophy is not concerned with particular things as intrinsically of interest, and therefore sees poetry and philosophy as more like each other than either of these is like history. "The poet and the historian," he explains,

differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.

The scope of poetry is wider than that of history, but poetry is also often contrasted with philosophy to the extent that the poets see no need to speak of the possibilities over which their thought ranges. Thus philosophy is like poetry and unlike history, on this old distinction, to the extent that it ranges beyond the actual, while it is like history and unlike poetry to the extent that its claims must not violate any appropriate rules of inference. As we will see, however, this division of the various endeavors that goes back to Aristotle, while a common one, is by no means universally accepted: from Heraclitus to Francis Bacon, G. W. Leibniz, and many others, the focus on the actual, and indeed on the particular, has been seen as a crucial component of the philosophical project.

Where, now, is "science" in these distinctions? What we mean by "science" is generally closest to what was formerly called "natural history": the methodical collection of particular facts in order to gain further knowledge about the actual world. There is also "natural philosophy," which was long understood as the speculative project that parallels the natural historical project of collection of particular facts. Seen as the joint endeavor of

natural history and natural philosophy, science was long constitutive of philosophy, and the circumstances and consequences of its separation are among the questions to which we will be returning frequently here.

Philosophy, then, is not history, myth, poetry, religious mystery, or sophistical argumentation, and it is not, any longer, science. It is an intellectual activity that bumps up against these other intellectual activities, perhaps overlapping with them, or coming to their aid, while also remaining quite distinct from them. Or so we often think.

In truth the activity of philosophy is often more muddled. To invoke a geological metaphor, philosophy generally only occurs in ores, and the process of extracting it to obtain it in its pure form is generally very costly, and often damaging to the sought-after element. As a reflection of its muddled character, in its earliest usages "philosophy" is generally deployed pejoratively, to describe an activity of people who are confused, who fail to understand the precise nature of their undertaking. This is particularly clear when we turn from "philosophy" to the agentive form of that noun, to the person who enacts or participates in or does philosophy: the philosopher.

Interestingly, while "philosophy" is only sometimes pejorative, variations on this word almost always are. From its first appearances in English in the late sixteenth century, the verb "to philosophize" has been almost without exception used to describe a pompous, posturing, or spurious sort of reasoning and has often been contrasted with true love of wisdom. Thus, for example, Henry More writes in the *Antidote against Atheism* of 1662, "My intent is not to Philosophize concerning the nature of Spirits, but only to prove their Existence." This declaration is somewhat analogous to the bumper sticker sometimes found in the United States declaring: "I'm not religious, I just love the Lord!" That is, the speaker is conscious of the negative connotations surrounding the type of person associated with the activity in which he or she is engaged, and so insists that he or she is only doing the activity, without belonging to the type. The verb "to philosophize" is also often used to describe a sort of pointless and ineffectual expenditure of intellectual energy that changes nothing in the world; thus Keats's imploring of the fish to do what he knows they cannot do, to philosophize away the ice on the rivers in

wintertime. In recent decades Anglo-American philosophers have adopted the phrase "to do philosophy." It is common now to take philosophy as a clearly defined activity, as something that one "does" in the same way that one might do physical exercise. We also see a retrojection of this locution back into the distant past, as a translation of the Greek verb *philosophein*. To find Aristotle speaking of "philosophizing" sounds archaic and somewhat degraded, while to find him reflecting on what it means "to do philosophy" seems up to date and respectable. Interestingly, the apparent disappearance of negative connotations to the agentive form of "philosophy," "philosopher," seems to parallel the shift in the verbal form from "to philosophize" to "to do philosophy?"

Evidently, the shift in both the verb and the agentive noun has much to do with the professionalization of philosophy, with the transformation of philosophy from something with which one might engage—whether pompously or humbly, fraudulently or honestly—as part of a way of life, to something that one is enabled to do only with the appropriate accreditation within a particular institutional setting. While professional philosophers in the developed world today might not wish to acknowledge that when they speak of "doing philosophy" they are speaking of a particular professional activity akin to practicing law or doing hospital rounds as a physician, it is unlikely that many of them would admit that philosophy is something that can be "done" in Tibetan monasteries or the winter encampments of the Inuit. Although the word is avoided, most professional philosophers today probably suspect that what Inuit are doing as they pass the long dark hours of winter speculating on the nature of time or the origin of the world is something closer to "philosophizing," in the somewhat degraded sense of needless or fanciful intellectual expenditure.

On both sides of the shift we've identified, from questionable philosophizing to professional doing of philosophy, the term "philosophy" has generally been free of negative associations, standing, like some transcendent idea, above the shabby efforts of would-be philosophers to realize it in their own thought and work: somewhat in the same way "poetry" stands to both "poet" and "poem." Philosophy and the self-identified philosophers who aspire to "do" it have a very different relation

between them than, say, that between medicine and the physician, where the relationship appears to be something of reciprocal ennoblement. Medicine is a noble art because of the work of its practitioners, and physicians are noble because medicine is in its nature a high calling. In contrast, self-proclaimed philosophers must always be ready to defend against the accusation that they are not living up to the calling of philosophy, and are therefore philosophers only in name. In other words, philosophy is not necessarily present wherever there are self-described philosophers. Thus Thomas Hobbes writes of the ancient Greeks in the *De corpore* of 1655:

But what? were there no philosophers natural nor civil among the ancient Greeks? There were men so called; witness Lucian, by whom they are derided; witness divers cities, from which they have been often by public edicts banished. But it follows not that there was philosophy.

These days, though you might get hit with a lawsuit for telling someone with a professional degree in philosophy that he is "not a philosopher," as Hobbes reminds us the simple presence of philosophers is not enough to guarantee the presence of philosophy.

The present history cannot be written in a conventional chronological order, since straightforward chronology, from past to present, from them to us, inevitably implies some sort of commitment to the march of progress, whereas part of our purpose here is to show that philosophy's motion throughout history from one self-conception to the next has been at best a sort of random stumbling, and at worst a retreat from an earlier more capacious understanding of the endeavor. What therefore must be avoided is the sort of historiography in which past thought is construed as preliminary or propaedeutic to what would eventually emerge as mature philosophy. This approach is sometimes disparaged as "the royal road to me," and it characterizes many of the most influential general surveys of the history of philosophy, notably Bertrand Russell's famous *History of Western Philosophy* of 1945." The idea of progress in historical processes has come under severe criticism by historians over the past several decades. Historical narratives that presume a gradual advance through stages, from a rudimentary or primitive stage in a process to a

more advanced and perfected one, and that identify the agents of change as a select number of great people, mostly men, have been deemed methodologically "Whiggish," and have largely been replaced by historical narratives that emphasize the limits of individual human agency and the adaptive sense of change within any given process. That is, change now tends to be conceived not teleologically, as change for the better, but simply as change that makes sense within a given context and a given local rationality. Thus, for example, the Industrial Revolution is not the result of the inventiveness and determination of a few clever European men but rather a gradual process of adaptation to new economic exigencies by players who could never have seen anything close to the full picture and that involved the incorporation of new technologies that had mostly been developed outside the European sphere. Similarly with military history: out with the brave and clever generals, in with an analysis of geographical and demographic advantages that favor one side, for a time, without ever ensuring the inexorable and unending ascendancy of one particular group over the others, as the star and the focus of history.

Significantly, Whiggish teleology has been largely left behind in the study of technology and science—fields where one could plausibly make a case that there is such a thing as real progress, and therefore that the history of the domain is, appropriately and accurately, a history of progress or ascendancy. Machines just keep getting better and faster, which is what technologists want them to be doing. How then could the history of technology not reflect this happy collusion between human will and reality? We can set this complicated question aside for now in order to turn to a related question that is more central to our present interests. Most philosophers, whether they wish to hold on to some idea of philosophical progress or not, will agree that philosophical progress is not exactly like technological progress. Philosophical arguments do not get "faster" or "more powerful" in the way that machines do. What is more, there is often thought to be an "eternal" dimension to the activity of philosophy, which renders progress impossible to the extent that past representatives of the tradition are conceptualized as our contemporaries, engaged with us in an "eternal conversation" that unites the

living and the dead in a single activity, in which we are all potentially equal regardless of the century in which we are born. Almost no one would wish to say that Aristotle had all the resources available to him to be as advanced in physics as Einstein was, while very many people would, by contrast, be prepared to argue that Aristotle was as advanced in his contributions to, say, moral philosophy, as has been anyone who came after him.

It is not hard to see how conceptualizing philosophy as an eternal conversation with its past representatives could, though superficially transhistorical and even atemporal, nonetheless support a teleological or progress-based conception of the history of philosophy. In taking the dead as our contemporaries, who are in no position to speak any more for themselves or to demand clarification or precision in our representation of their views, inevitably past philosophers get construed in our own image. But how can this be permitted to happen, when other disciplines with historical components, not least history itself, have become so sensitive in recent decades to the need for rigorous methodological reflection on historiography? The answer could well have to do with a simple lack of interest in the question of historical methodology as a philosophical question. That is, while philosophers, or at least the majority of philosophers in the English-speaking world, might be interested in the metaphysical problem of how we can know the past, they do not seem to be particularly interested in the problem of how we can know the past of philosophy itself, of how we can know that our characterizations of the aims and arguments of past philosophers are the correct ones. They are not interested in thinking about the way in which we deploy standards of evidence when considering textual sources, or secondary testimony, or other such philological matters. To take an interest in these questions would be to acknowledge that philosophy has a philological component, and therefore cannot be, simply, an unmediated, eternal conversation. And so, often, in the general refusal to consider the discipline as in part a philological endeavor, past figures come to be treated as mascots for positions that are deemed important today, whether these positions played an important part in the self-conception of the past philosopher or in the community in which he or she

thrived. We tell stories about the past, and call it "history."

"History" and "story" have the same etymology, indeed are the very same word in many languages, and there are some who argue forcefully that storytelling is the most we can ever do in our efforts to reconstruct the past; after all, even if all the things we report about the past are factually true, they are still selected by us, and are favored over infinitely many equally true facts that did not make the cut. Ironically, then, while the Whiggish historian who tells us how a led to b led to c led to me is probably going to insist on her loyalty to the truth, she is telling stories like the rest of us; she is making history turn out a certain way by selecting a series of facts deemed salient enough to constitute history.

And yet there may be a way, even in acknowledging these difficult issues, to do it better, to give a more adequate account of the past, not because it gets more of the facts from the past right, but because it picks out and strings together those facts from the past that, together, cause us to believe that we now understand more clearly what some historical process has really been about. This belief need not be definitive, nor need it last forever. A compelling account of the past is not like a scientific discovery.

A story needs characters, and in the history of philosophy we observe the recurrence, in a number of different times and places, of a few basic types of thinker, all of whom have been held to be "philosophers," notwithstanding the great differences between them.

There is, to begin, the *Curiosus*, the great forgotten model of the philosophical life. A principal concern of this book is to solve the mystery of his disappearance. He is the philosopher who expatiates on storms and tempests, on magnetic variation, on the fine-grained details of the wings of a flea. The *Curiosus* is often a *Curiosa*: many of the adepts of early modern experimental philosophy were women.

*Curiosae* and *Curiosi* believe that there is nothing shameful about knowledge of *res singulares*: singular things. These too can reveal the order of nature as a whole, and it is eminently the task of the philosopher, on their view, to discover this order. The paradigm statement of this approach to

philosophy may well be found in Aristotle's defense of the worthiness of marine biology against unnamed critics: looking into the viscera of some sea cucumber or cephalopod, he proclaims, citing Heraclitus, who was caught by distinguished visitors lounging naked on a stove: "Here too dwell gods." This dictum was invoked in Aristotle's explicit defense of the philosophical value of the study of zoology. The Curiosus, a familiar figure of the seventeenth century, just prior to the emergence of the figure of the scientist, seems to have been the last of the philosophers to see the gods, so to speak, in the particular things of nature.

Second, there is the Sage. This is likely the oldest social role of the philosopher and predates by dozens of millennia the first occurrence of the word philosophos. The label here is to be understood in a broad sense, to include any socially revered figure who is held forth as a mediator between the immanent and transcendent realms, who is held to be able to speak for the gods or interpret what is going on beyond the realm of human experience. It includes, for example, the Brahminic commentators on the sacred scriptures of India, who have provided us with the textual basis of classical Indian philosophy. This social role is also surely continuous with that of shamans and like figures in nontextual cultures, even if it only starts to look to us like a philosophical or quasi-philosophical endeavor at the point in history when the mediating role of the priests is laid down in texts that display some concern for conceptual clarity and valid inference. It is a role occupied by women and men alike, even if women in this role have often been deprived of institutional or broad social recognition. Tellingly, the French term for a midwife, a role long held to involve wisdom relating to the human body and its place in nature, is sage femme: a "wise woman" or "woman sage."

Third, there is the Gadfly, who understands the social role of the philosopher not as mediating between the social and the divine, nor as renouncing the social, but rather as correcting, to the extent possible, the myopic views and misunderstandings of the members of his own society, to the extent possible. Socrates is a special case of the Gadfly, since he does not have a positive program to replace the various ill-conceived beliefs and plans of his contemporaries, in contrast with the various social critics or

philosophes engagés who follow in this venerable and still vital vein.

Fourth, there is the Ascetic, who appears in what Karl Jaspers helpfully calls "the Axial Age," the age in which Buddhism and Christianity come onto the world stage, both positioning themselves as explicit rejections of the authority of the priests in their ornate temples. Cynics, Jainists (known to the Greeks as "gymnosophists" or "nude Sophists"), early Christians, and other world renouncers provide a template for a conception of philosophy as first and foremost a conformation of the way one lives variously to nature, or to divine law, or to something beyond the illusory authority of society, the state, or the temple. The Ascetic continues to be a familiar figure in philosophy throughout the Middle Ages, though now mostly confined within the walls of the monastery, and still has late echoes in secular modernity in figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche is generally seen as a peculiar individual, but this may have something to do with the fact that there was by the late nineteenth century no longer an obvious social role for him to play. Asceticism as a style of philosophy had gone out of fashion.

Fifth, there is the Mandarin. This is a pejorative term, though unlike "Courtier" (as we will soon see) it describes an entire class of people rather than exceptional individuals who may emerge from that class. The term comes from the examination system that produced the elite class of bureaucrats in Imperial China, and may be easily extended to the modern French system that produces normaliens, and also with only a bit more stretching to the system of elite education in the Anglo-American sphere out of which the great majority of successful careers in philosophy take shape. Mandarins have a vested interest in maintaining what Thomas Kuhn called "normal science" and are typically jealous guardians of disciplinary boundaries, wherever these happen to be found in the era of their own professional activity. Like Courtiers, Mandarins often have wealthy benefactors (now corporate rather than royal), and they stay close to centers of power (top schools in philosophy today tend to be found within a short drive or train ride from the world's major metropolitan concentrations of capital). But unlike Courtiers, they are able to pursue their careers more or less as if money were not an issue, and indeed are the ones quickest to

denounce the Courtiers for their unseemly conduct. It is the Mandarins whose fate is most uncertain in the post-university landscape into which we may now be entering.

A well-known and much despised social role for the philosopher, the sixth and final type, is the Courtier. A recent popular book set up Baruch Spinoza as the noble Ascetic against the unscrupulous Leibniz, who was ready to sell his philosophical services to whichever European sovereign was willing to pay the highest salary. We were meant to understand, from this narrative opposition between their two social roles, that Spinoza was *eo ipso* the better philosopher. It is as if we believe that one cannot be simultaneously ambitious and wise, simultaneously a worldly striver and a deep thinker. It is with the Courtier, too, for the first time in our list, that money makes its explicit appearance (though it was surely there in some of the temples of the priestly Sages as well). The more recent incarnation of the Courtier is the "sell-out," or, to put it in somewhat more euphemistic terms, the "public intellectual," who unlike the Gadfly is out there in society, not in order to change it, but in order to advance himself and his own glory. (The gendered pronoun here is intentional, and for the most part accurate.) But there is a problem in determining who fits this description and who does not; all philosophers need support, and few have the fortitude to retreat into pure asceticism. Those who get cast as Courtiers seem to be the ones who take earthly wealth and glory as the end in itself, rather than at most as a by-product of their pure love of wisdom. Or at least they are the ones who do a particularly bad job of concealing the fact that it is wealth and glory they are after. Whether, however, these desiderata are strictly incompatible with profound thought is an important question. Leibniz would seem to provide a counterexample to the claim that they are incompatible, but an interesting question remains, and indeed a question whose answer could tell us much about the nature of the philosophical project, as to why "Courtier" continues to function as such a potent *ad hominem* against the integrity of a philosopher.

This list, unlike Kant's list of the categories of the understanding, is not exhaustive, and it is not obtained by rigorous deduction. It could be amended and revised without end. One might also add the Charlatan, for example, the self-help guru

who promises to explain everything you need to know. But what we will find is that our six types, and various hybrids between them, give us enough to make sense of the life work and the social impact of more or less everyone who has been called a "philosopher" over the past few millennia.

Six chapters follow, and each chapter will be visited by at least one of the six types just listed, speaking in his or her own voice. Each chapter will to a greater or lesser degree circle around some of the philosophical problems of interest to a representative of a given type. But each chapter will do more than that, too; each will, namely, seek to elucidate a particular opposition that has been brought into service by philosophers seeking to define what is and what is not philosophy. The position of the featured philosophical type with respect to the opposition explored in any given chapter will not always be perfectly transparent, and where this is the case the reader is invited to make the implicit connections on his or her own.

In chapter one we will focus in particular on the idea that philosophy is principally an endeavor that deals with universal truths as opposed to particular facts, and we will see significant evidence that such a conception of philosophy occludes from view a large portion of what people have been doing under the banner of philosophy for the past few millennia. Chapter one's plaidoyer for the philosophical importance of singular things will return again and again throughout the book, and may be seen as a leitmotif, even as we move on to focus on other oppositions. In chapter two we will focus on the conceit that "philosophy" is a sort of proper noun, describing a particular tradition that descends from Greek antiquity, and we will contrast this idea with its opposites, which hold, variously, that philosophy is something that is practiced by specialists throughout the world in vastly different cultures, or even that philosophy is something that is entirely interwoven with culture and so is something in which all people participate *qua* culture-bound beings. In chapter three we will turn to questions of genre: the distinction between personalistic first-person writing and objective, treatise-like, third-person writing most of all, but also the distinction between literature and poetry on the one hand and philosophy-writing as a genre on the other. We will look at the ways in which these distinctions have served to bound philosophy



off from neighboring endeavors, and we will question the legitimacy of this bounding. In the fourth chapter we will turn to the question of philosophy as an embodied activity, and we will consider the potential significance of the fact that in the history of Western philosophy there are in general very few instructions as to what we should be doing with our bodies while our minds are exploring the universal and the eternal. This point of difference between much Western philosophy and at least one familiar school of Eastern philosophy—familiar to the West, that is—will then convey us into a broader discussion of the problematic nature of the classification of philosophical traditions by reference to these familiar cardinal points of the compass. In chapter five we will turn to the distinction between "analytic" and "continental" philosophy, as well as to related provincialisms, in the aim of discerning what more significant divisions between approaches to philosophy these may be concealing from our view, and we will return, once again, to lessons drawn from both chapters one and two: the importance to philosophy of attention to singular things, and, among these, the singular beliefs of people who belong to intellectual cultures other than our own. In the sixth and final chapter, we will turn to the difficult question of the relationship between philosophy and money: whether the two are incompatible, and, if not, what risks we run when we permit the two to join forces.

[Young William James Thinking](#) by Paul J. Croce  
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During a period of vocational indecision and deep depression, young William James embarked on a circuitous journey, trying out natural history field work, completing medical school, and studying ancient cultures before teaching physiological psychology on his way to becoming a philosopher. A century after his death, [Young William James Thinking](#) examines the private thoughts James detailed in his personal correspondence, archival notes, and his first publications to create a compelling portrait of his growth as both man and thinker.

By going to the sources, Paul J. Croce's cultural biography challenges the conventional contrast commentators have drawn between James's youthful troubles and his mature achievements. Inverting James's reputation for inconsistency, Croce

shows how he integrated his interests and his struggles into sophisticated thought. His ambivalence became the motivating core of his philosophizing, the heart of his enduring legacy. Readers can follow James in science classes and in personal "speculations," studying medicine and exploring both mainstream and sectarian practices, in museums reflecting on the fate of humanity since ancient times, in love and with heart broken, and in periodic crises of confidence that sometimes even spurred thoughts of suicide.

A case study in coming of age, this book follows the famous American philosopher's vocational work and avocational interests, his education and his frustrations—young James between childhood and fame. Anecdotes placed in the contexts of his choices shed new light on the core commitments within his enormous contributions to psychology, philosophy, and religious studies. James's hard-won insights, starting with his mediation of science and religion, led to his appreciation of body and mind in relation. Ultimately, [Young William James Thinking](#) reveals how James provided a humane vision well suited to our pluralist age. <>

#### Aside

[Science and Religion in the Era of William James: Eclipse of Certainty, 1820-1880](#) by Paul Jerome Croce [University of North Carolina Press, 0807822000] [paperback](#)

In this cultural biography, Paul Croce investigates the contexts surrounding the early intellectual development of American philosopher William James (1842-1910). Croce places the young James at the center of key scientific and religious debates in American intellectual life between the 1820s and 1870s. Early in the nineteenth century, most Americans maintained their scientific and religious beliefs with certainty. Well before the end of the century, however, science and religion had parted company, and, despite the endurance of religious convictions and widespread confidence in science, professionals in both fields expressed belief in terms of hypotheses and probabilities rather than absolutes. Croce highlights the essential issues debated during this shift by investigating the education of James and the circle of intellectuals of which he was part. In particular, the implicit probabilism of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, especially as interpreted by Charles Sanders Peirce's recognition of the fallibility of

knowledge, set the stage for James's reconstruction of belief based on uncertainty. Croce is writing a second volume dealing with the intellectual development of the mature William James. <>

Excerpt: The exaggerated dignity and value that philosophers have claimed for their solutions: ... This is why so few human beings truly care for Philosophy.... theoretic rationality is but one of a thousand human purposes. William James, 1879

In August 1868, William James was eager to remedy his single state. At age twenty-six, he had generally lived at home, but now he was on his own in Europe, seeking to improve his scientific credentials and his health. His postponed vocational commitment and his frequent eye, back, and digestive problems, punctuated by periods of utter discouragement, did not boost his confidence in relating with women. But in Dresden he had met a fellow American, Catherine Havens, who was also in Europe seeking improved health. He was clearly smitten, but he felt awkward. In their "forced separation," when he was in Divonne, France, he admitted often "posing" himself as a "model of calm cheerfulness and heroism." From that posture he often felt better when giving "moral advice" to her than when trying to act boldly himself. Now he admitted that he did not even know "how to talk to a 'jeune fille' [young lady] after being introduced." Not sure of his next steps with her, he called his own words "a quantity of non-sense." Such ambivalence was a burden not only on his romantic prospects but throughout the young adulthood of William James.

James had traveled to Europe, on leave from Harvard Medical School, to improve his understanding of the latest investigations in physiology and anatomy relating to psychology, especially the research at German universities and laboratories. He spent most of his time since arriving in April of the previous year shuttling between Berlin, where he attended physiology lectures, and a water-cure establishment in Teplitz, Bohemia, for his health. He was eager to gain mastery of the German language with its "truly monstrous sentences" and ready to learn from both the materialist science of Emil du Bois-Reymond and the alternative sectarian health practice of hydropathy, with its use of water in many forms to boost the living strength of patients. In between his scientific and sectarian visits, James stayed in Dresden in Saxony, then

independent, but soon part of a united Germany. He steadily improved his knowledge of German by reading science texts and "Kant's Kritik" and by "looking up the subject" of hydropathy that he was using at the Teplitz water cure. He was also eager to read the work of the English scientific synthesizer, "Herbert Spencer's biology;" the Bible; "a little book by ... one Ch. Renouvier," a French philosopher who advocated for the potency of free will; and, following his father's spiritual enthusiasms, "one of [Emanuel] Swedenborg's treatises." As his eclectic reading suggests, he was ready to learn contrasting views, which further added to his ambivalence.

While visiting the Établissement hydrothérapique in Divonne, with a "bold desire & intention to get well at any effort," despite the slowness of this remedy's impact on his constitutional strength, and with steady work "hovering and dipping about the portals of Psychology," he also took a broad philosophical view of the jostling material and immaterial dimensions of his life. He was eager to talk "about scientific matters" with his physiologist friend Henry Bowditch, also studying science in Europe, as they both hoped "to make discoveries" with impacts on medicine and beyond. And yet, he also declared that "fragments of man (thoughts, smiles) ... [are] worth more in the world than ... chemical reactions that could replace them." Perhaps it was during one of those reflective moments when James stepped back from his eagerness to improve his health and his science to draw a picture. The sketch depicting his time in Divonne harked back to his year of artistic training eight years earlier and made more reference to his hopes than to his actual surroundings. He had not forgotten Havens, and he felt "entranced" by another young lady at the water cure, but "she has never yet shot one beam from her eye in my direction." James the artist, however, depicted himself confidently and vigorously talking with not one "jeune fille" but seven. Even the little dog he drew seemed to hang on his every word. In the shaded bowers of the water cure, some of the ladies looked sickly, but all were in rapt attention to the young science student. And yet James presented himself with his back to the viewer, with full identity still cloaked. He tacitly acknowledged the distance of his artful imagination from his real-life situation by writing a joking caption to his work. Although staying in France and fluent in French, he used his newly acquired

German; he wrote "Die Kalt Wasser Cur zu Divonne" (the cold-water cure at Divonne), and he added that his imagined scene would be "vortrefflich gegen Melancholie" (splendid against, or to counter, melancholy).

During his stay in Divonne, James exhibited many traits of his youthful development: his attraction to science and to sectarian medicine, his confidence and social awkwardness, his art and academic learning, eager struggle and acceptance of limits, recognition of material and immaterial parts of life, and a self-deprecating sense of humor. During the 1860s and early 1870s, these commitments would animate his development but also intensify his ambivalent attitudes until his mid-thirties when he discovered ways to turn his burdens into opportunities. This book presents William James before the best-known James. Well before becoming the popular face of pragmatism and pluralism, before composing the essays on consciousness starting in 1904 showing the relation of things and thoughts that would grow into *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, before directing psychological attention to the spiritual core within abundant *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), before presenting his popular psychology and philosophy including *Talks to Teachers* (1899) and *The Will to Believe* (1897) on these topics and more to wide audiences from the 1890s, before his twelve years researching and composing his thorough and erudite *Principles of Psychology* (1890), before his appointment as a professor of philosophy in 1880, and even before he began to write his first major publications two years earlier starting at age thirty-six, James was already drawn to philosophical speculation during his early adulthood. From his late teens to his mid-thirties, he was as yet untouched by expectations for any philosophical achievements, and his speculations were guided by insights from his own experiences.

Experience was a keynote of James's thinking, first as source pulling him toward philosophizing and then as subject for theorizing. Ever since his youth, he associated experience with the natural, in contrast with the artificial. He detected artificiality in both scientific interpretations of experience in material terms and religious interpretations of experience in immaterial terms. But he also maintained that each also points to important ingredients of the sheer abundance of experience in its simultaneous physical and mental dimensions.

These impulses would provide the ingredients for his later integration of objectivity and subjectivity as different expressions of what he would formally label, in 1896, "pure experience," with "two divergent kinds of context ... woven ... into ... the general course of experience."

Every moment and every encounter include an uncountable riot of somatic and subjective experiences. In *The Principles* (1890), he gave the example of someone who hears "thunder crash"; it is not "thunder pure, but thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it." That description finds complexity in a simple moment, but that unpacking of one split second touches only on the "objective thunder" and the "feeling of the silence just gone," without attending to the other parts of experience occurring at the same time, including the season of the year, the time of day, the personal concerns of the listener, that person's wakefulness, and more parts of experience than could be listed—and more than would be useful for most purposes, but all fully real. We select different portions of experience, James maintained, on the basis of different interests and intentions, untrue to the robust reality of experience, but useful for concrete practical purposes. Early on, however, before he achieved those elaborations, James was simply open to natural experiences of all kinds, but already impatient with intellectual translations into abstractions. Natural experiences, he maintained, could not be reduced to their material components, any more than they could be understood only in immaterial terms. He honed this combination of naturalism without materialism from his own experiences in early adulthood. By the end of his young adulthood, when James became a philosopher, experience remained central to his thinking; he gravitated toward theories that would provide tangible orienting direction and toward ideas about practical consequences. And he regarded the mind's thoughts, feelings, spiritual states, and willful choices as forms of experience, still subject to all the buffeting contexts of material forces intertwining with products of mind.

James began his career by studying art and science, fields focused on natural facts; then he took up medicine as a way to gain physiological understanding of physical factors in the mind's operation just as the field of psychology was taking shape. James's best-known works continue

those student inquiries with philosophy providing direction through the thicket of experiences, but as with his first work in science, he kept assessing natural experience. These inquiries began with thinking and writing for his own personal direction. Then, even with fame and sophistication, he retained his initial impulse about philosophy: theories may be useful, but they remain "monstrous abridgement[s] of things" that "cast ... out real matter" of life as lived.' That was not a reason to stop theorizing. Theories guide understanding, even as humility guided his theorizing, with that sense of limitation prompted by the sheer abundance of experience.

To comprehend the young James, this book looks forward from the outlook of his own early years, within his own contexts and experiences, to an uncharted future. The young James looking back uses expressions more simple and direct than in later compositions, but they reward attention by displaying the interrelations and thematic directions he would continue to choose for steering through his diverse interests. His early notes, letters, and short publications display the depth of his ongoing commitment to the power of experience, which so often displayed contrasts that stoked his ambivalence. Each intellectually contentious interpretation suggested an artificially selected abstraction, while experience displayed natural facts in their comprehensive abundance, which gradually would become his setting for mediation. In particular, his education in science and religion, learned both in relation to and with an eye for their applications, would train his mind toward the interaction of material and immaterial factors. He carried these insights for the rest of his life: he would not blink at the full plenum of experience, its uncountable facts and relations, its rich layers of complexity, its pockets of mystery, its invitation to appreciate contrasting points of view based on diverse interests. James's early thinking would set his philosophy in formation.

### William James in Formation

My previous book, [Science and Religion in the Era of William James: Eclipse of Certainty, 1820-1880](#), focuses on his family, his teachers, and his peers, circles of influence on his youth and on his whole career. This book on Young William James Thinking goes to the center of those circles, with James himself applying his education in science and

religion, especially as their assumptions, ideas, and practices provided orienting shape to surrounding fields. This is a companion to the earlier book, with stories and evaluations of the young adult James on his way toward his mature life and thought, and with display of his youthful concerns persisting throughout his career. The earlier book of contexts tells tales of declining certainty especially through the rise of probabilistic thinking in the sciences and through secular challenges to religion, while this book reveals how he responded to these settings in his first work of young adulthood. The current book is therefore explicitly about James himself between childhood and fame, during almost two decades before his theories earned his first flush of broad prominence in 1878.

Up until the age of nineteen when James began his formal study of science in 1861, he had already received significant educational enrichment. He was the eldest of five children of parents who had in some ways reversed conventional gender roles: the reliable and stable Mary Walsh James managed the household affairs, while the impulsive elder Henry James shaped the family's religious orientation and directed the children's education. A sizable inheritance from his own father, the Irish immigrant and first American William James who had amassed a fortune in real estate surrounding the Erie Canal and with numerous business operations in upstate New York, enabled the father to pursue his spiritual commitments. Henry James, Senior (to distinguish him from his second son, Henry James, Junior, the novelist), was a writer and lecturer inspired by Emanuel Swedenborg; he shared with the Swedish empirical mystic an ardent belief that the material world, though a mere shadow, embodied a crucial set of correspondences revealing deeper spiritual truth. With his spiritual beliefs and compelling personal energy, the "Unrev[erend] James" readily circulated with leading Transcendentalists and reformers in the middle of the nineteenth century. These spiritual convictions also drove his devotion to the education of his children; their unstructured curriculum included frequent changes of schools in pursuit of the father's ideals, attendance at different churches, discouragement of specialization, and transatlantic travel to expose the children to "strange lingoes." The father's nurturing approach to childrearing anticipated trends that would grow after the end of his life in 1882, with the increasing importance

of elective interests and of global orientations within liberal education. He insisted on fostering spontaneity and natural impulses untainted by worldly affiliation for as long as possible in order to maintain the "admirable Divine mould or anchorage" manifest in childhood innocence and wonder. With the mingling of nature and spirituality in his philosophy, he thoroughly supported scientific investigation in order to uncover the spiritual messages embedded within empirical facts. He ardently believed his philosophic ideals and was convinced of their palpably philanthropic value: Science as "God's great minister" would bring spiritual transformation away from rigid rules and raw self-interest, toward a just society guided by humanity's authentic spiritual core.

Attention to the natural spontaneity of childhood would be a first step toward this ideal future. And so, as a child, William was encouraged to follow his own intellectual appetites, at first with confusion, since his father insisted that what the children were to do was "just to be something," in his brother Henry's puzzled memory, "something unconnected with specific doing, something free and uncommitted." William's early education, along with the family's wealth, even as it was dissipating across the generations, emboldened him to stray across boundaries of discipline and convention since he had early on felt sanction to "have a say about the deepest reasons of the universe." In his fifties, when well established as "a supposed professor," as he joshed about his academic status, he would still say "it is better to be than to define your being." That would leave him restless with "philosophic literature" for the rest of his life. Yet he was constantly compelled to have his say, with a vow to turn his frustrations into spurs to "do it better."

In the 1850s and 1860s, even the irreverent elder Henry James detected the growing power of science and hoped to ground his son's reflective temper in empirical studies. The father had been eagerly trying to connect his own philosophy to the work of some leading scientific figures: for example, physicist Joseph Henry had been his teacher in Albany, and they remained close friends, with years of substantial correspondence; and the family met physiologist William Carpenter during a visit to England, and William James would use his

texts in science school and in some of his first publications. With vicarious hope, the elder James said, "I had always counted on a scientific career for Willy." Carpenter even helped the Jameses pick out a microscope as a Christmas present for William when he was in his late teens; and, indeed, the young man eagerly declared that once equipped with a "microscope ... I would ... go out into the country, into the dear old woods and fields and ponds ... to make as many discoveries as possible." He was exhibiting a youthful version of his father's philanthropic hopes for scientific improvement of society. True to his father's educational approach, however, another strong vocational appetite appeared: after some art lessons, William at age sixteen declared his desire to be a painter. His studies at the studio of William Morris Hunt for a year starting in 1860 fostered his humanistic leanings and his eye for the particular facts of nature. The artistic training encouraged his return to science, and in the fall of 1861 he enrolled at the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, with his father's high hopes that this training would add scientific authority to the spirituality he had so fervently tried to instill.

William James would find in his professional training a largely different type of science from his father's belief in empirical manifestations of spiritual truths. His peripatetic childhood education, and even his father's spirituality, especially with its worldly focus, would contribute to his curiosities about the experiential workings of the world, which he would pursue with more thoroughness and rigor in his scientific education, but with doubts about the sufficiency of materialist explanations that his father could appreciate. The diversity of his early education and the irreverence of his father would also contribute to his philosophical scrutiny of the methods and assumptions foundational to scientific work, even as he maintained a scientist's commitment to open inquiry and the grounding of speculation in natural facts. He studied physics, chemistry, anatomy, and physiology before earning his only degree, an M.D., in 1869. Starting in 1861 at the science school, then in 1864 at Harvard Medical School, and in 1865 on a natural history expedition to Brazil, he gravitated toward Darwinian methods and approaches. His scientific affiliations, spiritual concerns, and speculations about their relations would gain both stimulus and challenge from discussions in the Metaphysical Club,

which would help him to take the first steps of his mature work in psychology and philosophy. Wrangling with the vigorous empiricism of Chauncey Wright and the challenging fallibilism of Charles Peirce, James joined in the club's gleaning of philosophical thought from the methods of science, which would lead to the advent of pragmatism. James began his teaching career in 1873 with courses in anatomy and physiology, and most of his initial publications were on scientific topics. Until the late 1870s, James readily called himself a scientist; science was his work, and science provided the starting points for his thinking.

During years of scientific study, James took his first steps in philosophy, even though at this point he called them "speculations." Like a moth to flame, he felt compelled to inquire, even though he felt burned by the abstract uncertainties of these deep reflections and their distance from lived experience. Speculative grubbing at finer degrees of subtlety and the renouncing of assumptions in favor of constant questioning made him feel uneasy and unstable by the late 1860s, to the point of wondering about his own sanity; he even called deep reflection an "abyss of horrors [that] would spite of everything grasp my imagination and imperil my reason."<sup>9</sup> For the young James, philosophical reflection was a personal business that was at once serious, compelling, and troubling. The searing intensity of philosophical reflection made him doubt its sense or worth, even as he craved its illuminating power for finding direction in life. Philosophy would remain unconnected to his vocational work at least until 1875, when he first taught a course on the psychological processes within the anatomy and physiology courses he had been teaching for the previous two years. His prior preliminary philosophizing was designed not for the seminar room, or even for publication, but as personal guidance. He did not have school training in philosophy; instead, many of his readings, journal reflections, discussions with friends, and even correspondence with letters as reflective essays became his graduate school, but they were generally the equivalent of modern night classes, since his speculative life took place after hours and alongside his vocational work.

On one level, James's private writings clearly show private purposes. Especially because philosophy was for him a guide to life, he would write

reflections about the implications of his scientific work and about his personal insights and "crises"; he wrestled privately with his thoughts to sort out his choices. Yet these private writings also show bursts of insights that he would spell out in later and more thorough published work. For example, in 1862 he declared that "nature only offers Thing. It is the human mind that discriminates Things." In his radical empiricism essays, he would call the undifferentiated mass of data that nature offers "pure experience" from which the mind carves out (or discriminates) mental conceptions. By age twenty, during his first practical encounters with empiricism in his science classes, he was already maintaining that the mental act of "division is artificial" and secondary compared to the undivided abundance of experience itself. In another example, he wrote to a friend in 1869, starting with scientific assumptions before adding his doubts: "[W]e are Nature through and through, ... the result of physical laws, ... but some point which is reason," that is, some aspects of nature are not reducible only to physical explanation. Clashing views, such as these different ways of understanding nature, present sharp contrasts, but he was already considering the weight of thinking on each side—what he would later call his pluralistic philosophy of "reality ... in distributive form," an embrace of "the shape" of the world not as "an all" explained by a unified theory but as "a set of eaches." When he was thirty-one, he expressed the same idea quite directly: he accepted "some point[s]" from each side; the persistent "law of opposition that rules [different] opinions" filled him with ambivalence, but he was hoping to understand their relations. Clearly convinced of the reality of natural facts but also restless to comprehend deep levels of meaning and interrelation, he was already positing the simultaneous life of immaterial factors within the material stuff of nature.

James worked philosophically in his private and public writings, from his youthful speculations to his mature professional ambitions, not to stay there, but to harvest the fruit of reflection—to put philosophy to use. Philosophy was an impulse, helpful but limited, and not always pleasant. His former student and admiring antagonist George Santayana said "there is a sense in which James was not a philosopher at all.... Philosophy to him was rather like a maze in which he happened to

find himself wandering, and what he was looking for was the way out." This discomfort with formal or fixed philosophies explains his tendency to circulate with those not bounded by "exactions and tiresome talk," as the younger colleague observed; unlike most of his fellow professional intellectuals, he was attracted to eccentrics and to alternative views. Another of James's students, Charles Bakewell, who would become a Yale philosopher and Connecticut politician, remembers going to seminars in his teacher's study at his house near campus; Bakewell noted that "the small work-desk tucked away in a far corner suggested that the writing of an article or a book was just an episode in the enterprise of full and joyous living." Even allowing for a student's positive prejudice for the teacher in these glowing words, the range of James's interests and contacts shows that he did indeed regard philosophy as just one facet of human consciousness—compelling despite the discomfort it could bring. While working in science in 1873 but beginning to consider a career using his speculative interests, James complained that "a professed philosopher pledges himself publicly never to have done with doubt," which then would constantly challenge any stable assumptions. Later in life, even when established in the field, he scrutinized himself in third person, stating frankly, "he hates philosophy, especially at the beginning of a vacation," because it is "really NOT as weighty as ... other things." Despite his scientific experience, many philosophers perceived that James was holding professional philosophy back from its need to align with the "conceptual apprehension of science," as Scottish philosopher James Seth maintained in support of the growing authority of science, while criticizing James for using "the intuitional and emotional apprehension of poetry and religion," which could produce nothing more definite than "picturesque effect." James the former science student agreed that all these human experiences need to be comprehended in relation to science but, he insisted, also in relation to still more dimensions of human experience." The discomforts of philosophy kept James at work in science during his young adulthood, and later that same impulse kept his philosophical focus on lived experience.

The sheer scale of the philosophical task shaped the fear of instability young James felt when speculating; and yet curiosity kept pulling him toward philosophizing, and this posture of

theorizing with sensitivity to personal experience would become crucial to his introspective method. As he reported in one of his first major essays in the 1870s, he was captivated by the "brute Fact" of "existence, ... to which ... the emotion of ontological wonder shall rightly cleave"; and cleave it did: as he declared just months before his death in 1910, "no one has intelligibly banished the mystery of fact." He had spent his life examining different philosophical orientations, and still he noticed that basic "logical riddle untouched." Such puzzlements became his version of fellow pragmatist Charles Peirce's "irritation of doubt" motivating philosophical inquiry; he steadily tried to derive lessons from speculations to address the uncertainties and mysteries of life. An edifying philosophy regarding truth as a function or direction could provide guidance, ways to set one's course, first of all for himself and then to a widening audience. During his young adulthood, when looking for direction, he put philosophy to work sharply on this task—pragmatic in action even before articulating pragmatic theory about action. His later philosophy was more elaborate, but speculations would never again be so useful as when they produced insights on how to live and what choices to make during his own first steps toward maturity.

In his early adulthood, James was not yet working in the field of philosophy; and in a sense, even in maturity, he entered the field of philosophy but avoided full immersion, especially as a profession with refinement of insights leading to abstractions and claims for certainty. For all his extensive learning and even with the ambitions of his last decade to write his definitive metaphysical statement, he still longed for "an earth that you can lie on, a wild tree to lean your back against." In this setting, he pictured himself with "a book in your hand ... without reading it"—many of his ideas were difficult to put into words, especially for expression of the relations of his interests; so early on he developed the skill of reading selectively, culling insights from a wide community of discourse, often quoting abundantly. Then he pulled back from that forest of information and interpretation to present his own angle of vision. This vivid self-expression coincided with the methods of the Stoic philosophers and Ralph Waldo Emerson; like them, he was attracted to thinking for improving the art of living rather than only as a site for professional

standing or precision. So he maintained that "philosophy ... is not a technical matter"; instead, "it is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means." This comment from the end of his life bears the latter-day impress of his youthful confrontations with philosophy; he remained attracted to its flames of insight but wary of its potential to burn away at our connections to experience. At age thirty-one, he vowed that he could not engage in "philosophical activity as a business," even as he quickly admitted his own philosophical drive, because "of course my deepest interest will as ever lie with the most general problems." So he explained, even as he later tried to make his own epoch-making mark, philosophy "is only partly got from books; it is our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos." This personal and practical approach to philosophizing fostered his attention to the abundance of experience, not yet divided into so many "Things" indeed; theory brings the useful tools of discrimination and organization, but we should not mistake its neat packages for robust reality. And yet, he wondered, Was there a way of thinking that could approach fidelity to experience, making use of the mind's power to detect unifying patterns and relations while still remaining faithful to the concreteness of natural facts? "We shall see," he declared at age twenty-seven, "damn it, we shall see." Understanding the depths of his own commitments is only partly got from his own books. In his early contexts, experiences, and private writings, when he was still struggling to have his say about the universe, he asked the questions and established the directions that would point him toward his mature theories. From his late thirties, when he started to publish widely and achieve fame, he still remained at heart almost a philosopher.

### Beneath Many Jameses

Becoming a philosopher rarely crossed James's mind before the mid-1870s, and when it did, the career seemed a remote dream—or nightmare. He accurately doubted in 1868 that a job in philosophy would even be "attainable at all" to someone with scientific rather than religious training. In his private writings and in Metaphysical Club discussions, the budding philosopher speculated about the character and implications of scientific work and its potential connection to broader questions. James's persistent speculations

for personal direction and in response to primal curiosities gave a religious quality to his philosophy, even as his first vocational commitment would lend a scientific dimension to his religious studies. These combinations have supported his widespread reputation at best for compromising and at worst for ambivalence and indecision. Much impatience with James assumes a dualist question: Did he favor science or religion? In 1878 he addressed that very concern when seeking a Lowell Institute public lectureship by assuring the organizer, "I can safely say that I am neither a materialistic partisan nor a spiritualistic bigot." Indeed. And he never did choose a side or even just try to balance their contrasts. He recognized that science and religion, which respectively contribute discovery of facts and sustaining of hope, manifest in divergent ways, energize many different fields, and have been used to support diverse values; and yet he detected that these distinct enterprises make common attempts to identify the elusive qualities of nature and offer guidance through lived experience.

As James noticed in his own experience and in theory, science and religion ask similar types of questions about the identity and character of the world and humanity, even as they generally provide different answers—answers that, at different times, for different people, and with selection of different parts of the complexities, gravitate toward or away from each other. William James grew up with an early form of spirituality from his father, but he would come to doubt the elder James's absolutist confidence and instead rely more deeply on science, absorbing its naturalism but also questioning its own claims to certainty. This comfort with uncertainty appears biographically by the end of his young adulthood when he finally felt ready to accept life "without any guarantee," and it would become a central feature of later theories in his commitment to genuine novelty. This orientation shows the importance of mystery for James, with kinship both to ancient apophatic traditions, in their emphasis on silence and committed action without waiting for certainty because so many topics remain steadily beyond human understanding, and to Charles Peirce's argument for the operation of chance that he called the tychistic character of the world. James generalized on his commitment to uncertainty and mystery by maintaining that "novelty ... leaks in[to]



experience, ... with continuous infiltration of otherness." This orientation shaped his approach to affirming "the validity of possibility" in the many fields he experienced and studied. And this openness to otherness spilled beyond his philosophizing into his social thought.

James's intellectual openness to uncertainties and his inquisitiveness also drove him to support those out of power. This included an impulse to "succor the underdog" that drew him to value people most others dismissed as eccentrics, and it would also make him a resource for promotion of gender and racial inclusion, even beyond the social steps he himself took. In his own time, James pushed publicly for positions more progressive on race than he was witnessing around him, with his agitation against lynching, against anti-Semitism in the Dreyfus affair, and against American domination of the Philippines. Yet he harbored many mainstream racial assumptions, including patronizing views of nonwhites and stereotyped perceptions of Jews; on initial encounter, he could speak with a bluntness typical of the time, especially when his "organ of perception-of-national-differences" was in a "super-excited state." These comments, crude by twenty-first-century standards, were not instead of his respect and curiosity but a step in expressing them. In the language of later years, his multiculturalism endorsed difference; or, to use his term from the end of his life, he urged embrace of "pluralism." His curiosity would draw him in, with pluralism as his theory for "perception-of-[intellectual]-differences," and then he invariably found impressive qualities in the heart of otherness—and then he referred to those qualities with casual directness. More simply, he firmly believed what he blurted out in 1867, "Men differ, thank Heaven." Witness his comfortable and even enthusiastic relations with his African American student W. E. B. Du Bois, who remembered, "I was repeatedly a guest in the home of William James; he was my friend and guide to clear thinking." For all his progressive impulses, James maintained views of race soaked in the culture—and the language—of his time. In one of his first essays, James relays a story of a missionary in Africa eager to "dissuade the savage from his fetishistic [sic]" healing practices; to this, James presents the "savage" responding coyly, "[I]t is just the same with [Western] doctors; you give your remedies, and sometimes the patient gets well and sometimes

he dies." James did not balk at the patronizing language; and yet, even after earning his mainstream medical degree, he welcomed the African's approach to healing in support of his own medical pluralism. In addition, he supported the African's "proverbial philosophy" as "no ... perverse act of thought"; such thoughts may be incomplete, but so too are even the most sophisticated and scientific propositions.

Even though James blurted out his enthusiasm that "[m]en differ," he acted with ambivalence about whether such pluralistic recognition could include women. He was torn between his acceptance of separate spheres from his upbringing through his own marriage and his avid impulses for pluralism and reform. So, while he felt a "presumption from use against" women's equality, he welcomed women's achievements and even anticipated elements of difference feminism in his observations that women "seize on particulars," which coincided with his commitment to concrete facts for puncturing the pretensions of abstract absolutes. James's mixed record on the cultural diversity of his time has inspired a similarly mixed reading of his legacy for support of identity politics in our time. Some evaluations of James critique his limited actions against social and institutional barriers to racial and gender equality in his own time, including in his own everyday life; but others praise him for his recognition of the way social contexts shape knowledge, a first step in challenging social hierarchies, and for his own contributions with progressive defiance of intellectually conventional and absolutist norms. James at once lived the prejudices of his time and announced theories that promote equity. And more: he did not just tolerate difference but lauded its potential to shake up convention with innovative insight; he even named his alternative interests "femininemystical" in contrast with his own "scientific-academic" training. His supporters provide, in effect, a James upgraded for contemporary culture, a cultural theory James, a James 2.0. The use of his thought and life as resources for healing assumptions of racial and gender hierarchy carries forward his own ambivalence from tension between his contexts and his eagerness for change. James's readiness to see both sides and his ambivalence show that his relational thinking, when applied to social issues, prompted him not only to pay attention to contrasting views but also to see the shortcomings

of each—and so, ultimately, their need for each other. This shows the depths of his readiness to live without guarantee, and it also indicates that his uncertainties, enlisted as resources for working toward future improvements, could include a wide swath of perspectives, even while steering him away from quick fixes. Instead, this posture, which he would call "meliorism," would promote gradual efforts toward improvement. What his perspective lacks for action on immediate change, it gains in inclusiveness of different points of view."

James first embraced novelties when he encountered deep dimensions of human consciousness during his educational development. Most religious believers, especially those hewing to traditions about divine depths, avoided psychological depths, and pioneers in the science of mind maintained a naturalistic focus with little attention to religion; however, in subconscious realms of mind, in these profound human experiences, which he understood as windows to nature, James found both spiritual and empirical significance. From these perspectives, he took the task of mediation in science and religion beyond compromise and tolerance, although he supported such enterprises for their encouragement of communication and openness to divergent commitments. Such moderate steps, however, did not touch on the depths of potential connection he perceived to lurk within scientific and religious enterprises and related fields. In our own time, despite more than a generation of studies repudiating the supposed warfare of science and religion, widespread assumptions persist that these fields are irreconcilably in conflict, or that they require thorough reconciliation—positions that do not challenge the assumption of their fundamental differences. James's biography and theories suggest another way.

James did not set immaterial (or apparently immaterial) elements in psychology, philosophy, and spirituality against empiricism or scientific inquiry and their profound social impacts, in subordination to them, or even alongside them. Instead, he thought of them operating through these worldly paths, ideas that in his maturity would be called panpsychic theories of mind in body, suggesting panentheist theories of spirituality within nature, and ideas that in later years would establish him as a precursor to nondualist theories

of embodied mind and somaesthetics. In his own scientific research and with his spiritual sensibilities developed in relation to his father and his own avocational interests, James detected the significance of immaterial elements of life embedded within the material world, before he developed formal theoretical labels for these ideas. Human hopes, volitions, motivations, ideals, thoughts, assumptions, faith, beliefs, convictions, feelings, personal energy, and the spark of life itself seem unempirical and may very well connect to abstract dimensions or even another world, but in our experience of them, he maintained, these are fully part of nature. With this orientation, James adapts his father's view of "inward being," which gives the "spiritual lift" to humans in their "spiritual existence" within their "natural existence." This view of spiritual or psychological dynamism circulating in natural matter both follows in the wake of Baruch Spinoza's and Swedenborg's references to "conatus," the living "endeavor" from the "interiors of the mind" striving for power and meaning, and anticipates what a contemporary neuroscientist has called the "life process." Antonio Damasio defines conatus in scientific terms as "the aggregate of dispositions laid down by brain circuitry that, once engaged by internal and environmental conditions, seeks both survival and well-being"; he treats conatus as an old term for modern research projects on the "mystery" of "conscious minds working" within "aggregates called tissues." From his youth, William James likewise maintained that the sciences are essential tools for understanding the character and natural operations of these vivid but often intangible parts of human life—even if scientific investigations are not themselves capable of final answers. His commitment to the intertwining of material and immaterial factors would appear throughout his work in his insistence on the simultaneous physiology and feelings of emotion, his study of humanity's embodied will, his scrutiny of human nature within evaluation of religion, his analysis of simultaneous objectivity and subjectivity in "pure experience" so often separated for various "temporary purposes," and his pragmatic recognition of the human "hankering for the good things" of both empirical and rational thinking. The disarming frankness of his reports from experience has been a key to his ability to gain acceptance, and even popularity, despite his unorthodox

mingling of science and religion, and other realms that conventionally remain far apart.

Much attention to James has grown from the sheer variety of his work, which has prompted investigators from different fields to evaluate him using the tools of many disciplines. He is a significant figure in many branches of philosophy, intellectual and cultural history, history of science, psychology, neuroscience, depth psychology intersecting with spirituality, religious studies, rhetoric, and even cultural studies and literature. He was a protean figure working before many of these disciplines had formed, often pointing in the directions that they would take—and even toward paths not yet taken. Commentaries on James from the disciplines of his contributions have been abundant and rich, but they generally have had little contact with each other. Aspects of James covered by different disciplines have led to puzzlement or selective disregard—just as his psychology of attention formation would predict—as if his integration of diverse interests was simply a marvel largely beyond explanation. There has been much smiling admiration for James, less as a founding father of particular schools of thought than as an avuncular figure admired by many. This place of honor has ironically undercut the ability to learn from some of his most important and helpful insights; it effectively lets each field adopt its piece of James without attention to the rest.

The interdisciplinary work of Miles Orvell provides a helpful metaphor for steering through different approaches: perspectives focusing on parts, each important, can remain vertical views, "in isolation," until attending to their connections horizontally, as "parts of a larger whole." Interpretations reflect their times; today, interpretation includes the power of specialized discourse. Many of these deep yet selective treatments arrive at James from the lens of their own disciplines and even echo the perceived warfare of science and religion. For example, some commentators examine his philosophical naturalism or his anticipation of other particular topics in philosophy or psychology but find his religious interests, much less his psychical research or study of sectarian medicine and depth consciousness, peculiar or eccentric distractions. By contrast, religious studies commentators discern his readiness to support belief and diverse religious experiences but pay little attention to his scientific

training and commitments. The disciplinary affiliations of the interpreters add weight to the differences, and their academic separation keeps each domain distinct, because of the tendency within professions, as James himself predicted, for "institutionalizing on a large scale to run into technicality." Modern scholarship encourages each point of view, emerging from its respective discipline, to be presented as the crucial element for understanding James, even though he himself did not think in these terms. Despite these limitations, the specialized work of the past few decades has also produced more understanding than we have ever known before. The more "horizontal" approach of this book, connecting phases of James's life and his different fields of study, especially as his commitments were coming into formation, can show the relations of previous interpretations—and the relations among his intellectual projects—with potential to complement and build on them.

This work of developmental biography pursues James's experiences through youthful texts and contexts to illuminate his intentions and directions on paths toward his mature theories. This method displays a surface resemblance to the work of Erik Erikson; rather than focus on mature work, the end points of a subject's career, he proposed "originology, ... which reduces every human to an analogy with an earlier one, and most of all to that earliest, simplest, and most infantile precursor which is assumed to be its 'origin.'" The result is examination of mature work, Erikson explains, in terms of the "infantile in the adult," with the proposition that these later creations result from "preservation of those earlier energies," adapted to adult language and work settings. For example, Martin Luther's personal tensions "in the period between puberty and adulthood" generated his personal changes that would lead to his revolutionary impact in the European Christian Reformation; "with this new person," Erikson summarizes, "a new generation, and with that, a new era." Similarly, this book connects the young and mature James to show relations between the less refined expressions of early thought and his more famous theorizing. However, in developmental biography, the vector is reversed: while Erikson explains later insights in terms of earlier identity, the method of this work is future oriented. Rather than emphasize youthful issues

lingering in mature work, this book depicts themes of growing importance—inchoate, still groping—beginning with his early explorations. The mingling here of biography and theory employs "culminology" for attention to the role of culminating theories in earlier work rather than the role of original psychological conditions persisting in later thought. This method also avoids another privileging of origins, the impulse to detect later theories already present in early thought. Instead, developmental biography offers assessment of direction emerging from choices made at each juncture, with no prior plan or guaranteed future; like adaptive purposes, personal and intellectual developments address the needs and hopes of each moment, with the later emergence only one possibility among others. The method of developmental biography coincides with James's own philosophical orientation, already articulated in the 1870s in his theory of mind as "an essentially teleological mechanism." With theories functioning "for the sake of ends" in each immediate setting, this outlook avoids the idealistic or religious teleology of prior perfect plans manifesting within the mundane world in favor of teleological purpose gradually taking shape, in Darwinian terms, with direction emerging from choices made at each juncture—or, as he put it in his youth, choices made without guarantee for any long-term future.

The method of developmental biography also reflects the growth of attention to the relation of body and mind, literally, in evaluation of biography and theory, for an account of a philosopher in formation. Previous evaluation of James's youth has put less emphasis on his intellectual life than on his personal issues; he did indeed have plenty of troubles that readily command attention. And studies of the mature James have tended to treat his early life as merely personal, with little theoretical significance. The conventional wisdom about James in his youth includes a picture of a young man weathering so many problems that his early life seems unconnected to the energetic work of the mature intellectual. That gulf between youth and maturity constitutes a puzzle addressed in this book through a combination of biographical storytelling and theoretical evaluation. James the mature psychologist himself explained that "by the age of thirty" character and thought have "set like plaster, and will never soften again." Inquiry here into what

he was learning through his mid-thirties shows the thinking that set his own directions toward his mature commitments and theories. This work on James's early intellectual development resembles what Thomas Sönderqvist calls an "existential project," with the life story presenting an "embodied mind," suggesting "the possibilities for action offered by a particular set of contexts," and with attention to the mature culminations of ideas first emerging in his early development. Young William James *Thinking* offers a case study into the roots of accomplished adulthood in youthful development, with a portrait of a life lived while theory thought: these chapters offer an opportunity to examine James before the familiar James, with that James as a possibility, still in formation and full of live and difficult choices.

Before James's contributions to different disciplines, he had not yet made contributions to any field. His thinking was still an undifferentiated mass—a disciplinary version of what he would call "pure experience," not yet conceptually parsed out into psychology, philosophy, religious thought, social commentary, and other fields—sometimes even laced with forlorn worry that he would not ever actually find any vocational direction at all. The perspective from young James's own point of view can reap rewards for understanding James's mature theories because in their roots his ideas readily display interconnections that would not be as apparent in their vivid branches. Young adulthood is a moratorium period in anyone's life, and James is famous for taking longer in that phase of life than most; he was indeed a late bloomer, and his early sprouts are related to and can help explain his later blooms. The connections presented in this developmental biography suggest possibilities for further research from looking at the many parts of his life in relation: his private and public writing, his little-known texts and canonical works, his alternative and professional commitments, his roles as seeker and as scientist, and his affiliations with other psychologists, philosophers, and religious thinkers, along with his legacy in a range of fields into our own time; and there are surely more insights to be gleaned from the main terrain of this book integrating biography and theory, pointing to the relation of youth and maturity, and his integrations of science and religion, and of material and immaterial realms of life. A bass note of these pages is not only that the

many Jameses vividly illustrate his pluralism—and the power of his discourse to reach different audiences—but also that his own pluralistic parts are interrelated once understood in the contexts of his development, with stories serving as theories in formation, and theories manifesting as the morals of the stories.

James's influential theories took time to mature before he was a figure of influence, which further underscores the significance of his extended period of young adulthood. Each chapter of this book exhibits the long reach of his education in science and religion, with his reflections on material and immaterial ingredients of natural life. In addition, the chapters show his array of interests on his own model of the active mind spontaneously pursuing its interests, which he would soon describe as key ingredients of consciousness. The range of ideas covered, each exhibiting James wrestling with material and immaterial dimensions of experience, emerges directly from his own interests.

A chronological approach would allow for more orderly reporting of life events in sequence (see the chronology), but the thematic focus here puts stories in the service of theoretical illumination. This thematic approach has allowed for more thorough attention to his engagement with particular theories as he lived through them, and it offers more depth of contextualization. The sharp focus in this book on particulars year by year, and even sometimes month by month, shows James with no clear or certain line of development toward the later figure we know better. Instead, he jolted in different directions, sometimes in apparent repetition while he worked out subtleties of thought, and with hesitations along with deliberate goals, as his mature outlooks only gradually emerged. In place of stories removed from his theoretical development or familiar theories emerging with artificial speed because delivered without attention to his contexts while thinking, readers will find here fulsome descriptions of his theories in formation and in their contexts, as this philosopher famous for theories of free choice made his own choices. The thematic chapters show his keen immersion in each of these topics: his science education, his understanding of medicine, his fascination with the ancients, and his own personal troubles.

The James of chapter 1 first encountered professional science with his work in laboratories,

his study of cutting-edge texts, his natural history exploring, and his circulation with the philosophical assumptions of authoritative advocates for the influence of science. While sharing widespread enthusiastic expectations that science could explain ever-more workings of the world, he responded with an alternative vision for the future of science, one with a thorough commitment to natural facts, but also with a humanist's humility about the limits of scientific ability ever to understand nature completely. Chapter 2 shows James studying scientific medicine while he also supported alternative sectarian practices and even used them to manage his own health. With this diverse background, he gained a thorough knowledge of human physiology and of its actions during mental operations, and he also gained an appreciation for the potential interaction of body and mind. This set him on a path toward continued advocacy of pluralism in general, and of other theories enlisting material and immaterial ingredients in relation. Chapter 3 finds James escaping from his scientific studies into the art and philosophy of the ancient world, with special interest in Greek worldviews and in Stoic philosophy before the dominance of monotheism. He found in the ancients' serene acceptance of nature's ways, and their artful coping with perennial human dilemmas, an elegant complement to the comforts of the Christian message of salvation beyond this world. As chapter 4 shows, by the late 1860s James suffered from tensions that grew from familial and societal expectations, vocational indecision, frequent ill health, awkwardness with women, clouds of depression, and uncertainty about his philosophical commitments, including the respective appeals of scientific and religious ways of looking at the world. However, just as sectarian medicine welcomed crises as stages toward healing, James during his troubled times continued his avid learning; his problems became opportunities for growth, with seeds set for later theoretical insights. Coping with the intertwining complexities of his problems constituted an interdisciplinary education, even as his memories of troubles provided a well of sympathy for his later audiences. Taken by chapter, this is a book about James's engagement with distinct themes that concerned him most as a young man; taken together, his engagement with these topics point to a budding philosopher embarking on the first steps toward his lifelong

commitment to capture concreteness, conciliate differences, and find the relation of immaterial and material dimensions of life.

The stories here present a chance to meet James again for the first time. Just as these chapters focus on James's early experiences and his search for reconciliation of contrasts, so the later chapters of his life would continue such mediation with variations on his ongoing commitment to science and to spirituality. In each of his theoretical inquiries, he recognized different sides of debate generally showing commitment to material or immaterial parts of life, he evaluated their tangible purposes and contributions, and he emerged with an alternative that integrated their respective contributions.

The ambivalence of his youth, and his difficulty in making choices, stayed with him through his last years when he found it difficult even to decide whether to retire or not. From the fall of 1905, he declared "Resign" over a dozen times in his diary, often with multiple exclamation points; even on a day when teaching went well, after which he proudly recorded, "gave good lecture," he added, "but must resign! Resign." Then on other days, he wrote the key word of his difficult choice but crossed it out, adding "Don't Resign!" This ambivalence would continue for two years, when he finally retired from teaching to become professor of philosophy, emeritus, in 1907. The type of indecision he had already experienced in his early years was a direct result of keen awareness of relations; and those impulses would become, as he had noticed by the end of his youth, the "philosophic ... habit of always seeing an alternative." Those early burdens became preparation for his mature achievement of conciliations, with deep appreciation of the merits within far-flung propositions. James was indeed a "great philosopher of the cusp," in Charles Taylor's elegant phrase expressing the conventional wisdom about James; to Taylor, these traits mean compromising built on such "wide sympathy" that he remained "open" and therefore uncommitted to any particular position. A close look at his youth shows James refining the burdens of his indecisions in his development of a decisive ambivalence, a decisiveness within his ambivalence, in the creation of perspectives boldly integrating contrasts.

Approaching William James's theories through his biographical development can display both the

halting steps in their formation and the depths of his commitment to avoiding abstract theoretical categories or one-sided choices. With his decisive ambivalence, each different orientation would serve as a potentially useful expression of intellectual, temperamental, or cultural impulses deeply grounded within the representatives of humanity supporting that position, even as he also recognized limits within each position. His theories have roots in his life, and his life has roots in his youth, when he had not yet separated his interests and insights into various publications distributed to different fields; also, his example and his thought can in turn address ongoing cultural and intellectual issues since his time. All these paths begin with his own stories, in context and in development when young James was making his own life choices without knowing any of this future impact. <>

[William James: Psychical Research and the Challenge of Modernity](#) by Krister Dylan Knapp [The University of North Carolina Press, 9781469631240]

In this insightful new book on the remarkable William James, the American psychologist and philosopher, Krister Dylan Knapp provides the first deeply historical and acutely analytical account of James's psychical research. While showing that James always maintained a critical stance toward claims of paranormal phenomena like spiritualism, Knapp uses new sources to argue that psychical research held a strikingly central position in James's life. It was crucial to his familial and professional relationships, the fashioning of his unique intellectual disposition, and the shaping of his core doctrines, especially the will-to-believe, empiricism, fideism, and theories of the subliminal consciousness and immortality.

Knapp explains how and why James found in psychical research a way to rethink the well-trodden approaches to classic Euro-American religious thought, typified by the oppositional categories of natural vs. supernatural and normal vs. paranormal. He demonstrates how James eschewed these choices and instead developed a tertiary synthesis of them, an approach Knapp terms *tertium quid*, the third way. Situating James's psychical research in relation to the rise of experimental psychology and Protestantism's changing place in fin de siècle America, Knapp

asserts that the third way illustrated a much broader trend in transatlantic thought as it struggled to navigate the uncertainties and religious adventurism of the modern age.

Excerpt: Two months before he died in August 1910, William James told Henry Adams that he was "an old man soon about to meet his maker:" Even before his prophecy, James began finishing his major philosophical writings *A Pluralistic Universe* and *The Meaning of Truth*. He also began wrapping up his psychical research, telling the novelist Hamlin Garland that he had had "no direct contact with mediums for many years.... Practically, I am quite out of it. Haven't the time or the energy!" Like many such statements, however, James was being cagey, revealing his desire to distance himself from the subject while being profoundly unable to walk away from it. In fact, James engaged psychical research tenaciously during his final years. He remained focused on Mrs. Leonora Piper, helping the Society for Psychical Research secure control of its research on her, overseeing the discussion regarding her future, and facilitating a major new test of her. He also supported studies of other mental mediums. Quite surprisingly, James resumed his study of Eusapia Palladino and sat with a table-levitating group in Bar Harbor, Maine, and with several physical mediums in New York City. James also continued to nurture his friendships with colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic, such as George Dorr and J. G. Piddington, as well as established a new one with Hereward Carrington. He likewise continued to encourage several family members and close friends to explore their psychic abilities, and he sustained his debates with the critics of psychical research, such as the authors of a Columbia University report who, after testing Eusapia, concluded she cheated. Most significantly, James wrote his last popular psychical research essay summarizing his final opinions. All in all, James not only was far from "out of it" but also was actively engaged in psychical research up to the very end of his life.

James's primary role with mental mediums during his final years focused on Mrs. Piper. Since Richard Hodgson had been her main handler for nearly two decades, his death in 1905 prompted questions about her future as well as about the rightful ownership of Hodgson's massive tome of unpublished research on her. James Hyslop, the

president of the newly re-formed American Society of Psychical Research who was looking to expand his organization's reach and influence, laid claim to Mrs. Piper and Hodgson's research.<sup>1</sup> The SPR leaders strenuously opposed this plan. They argued that since the work had been carried out under the SPR's auspices and since Hodgson had been its officer, ownership of the material and control of Mrs. Piper belonged to the SPR. They were also concerned that the private correspondence scattered amid Hodgson's rooms, which had served as the ASPR office for all those years, might contain compromising information about F. W. H. Myers's affairs that, if made public, might sully his reputation. As such, Oliver Lodge instructed James, "Don't let it get out of your control." James agreed with his SPR colleagues that Hyslop had far overstepped his jurisdiction, telling Isaac Funk, whom Hyslop had enlisted as an envoy to persuade James of his plan, that "if the Branch remains alive, the Council will publish; if it dissolves, the records revert to the parent Society. This is the legal view." In fact, the last act the ASPR took before disbanding itself was to ask the SPR to send Piddington to the United States "to débrouiller the whole mass of papers left in R. H's rooms"

Typically, James grew weary with the issue and relegated control to George Dorr and to his wife, Alice, whom he noted had had "much trouble and [been at] logger-heads ... over S.P.R. affairs (as my lieutenant) on account of Hodgson's death." But the dogged Hyslop did not relent, and matters worsened, prompting James to complain to Alice that all "these jealousies around Mrs. P. are deplorable." Eventually, though, James, who had distanced himself because of his severe dislike of Hyslop and his popularization of mediumship, convinced Hyslop to give up the matter, and the SPR prevailed. With Hodgson's research and private papers went Mrs. Piper to England in 1906-7, and so too her management. Piddington, another SPR leader whom James had befriended, became her primary handler, while Alice Johnson, the SPR's secretary who came with Piddington to the United States to fetch Mrs. Piper and the Hodgson material, stayed at his house. Such hospitality typified James's loyalty to the SPR. Ironically, and perhaps a little cruelly, his loyalty did not extend to Mrs. Piper. When asked to contribute funds for her future security, he declared that he was unwilling "to take any active or

financial responsibility whatever," adding "Years ago I foresaw the problem of her future looming ahead and have consistently avoided incurring responsibility." Given his decades-long support of Mrs. Piper, this seems unexplainable, yet even as James distanced himself from his "white crow," he continued to arrange sittings for his wife, daughter, son, and close friends and sat with her for the last time in May 1909. He also wanted to resume work on the "psychic synthesis" problem, but his poor health prevented him from "taking up any active work in psychics." Instead, he rallied support for Julian Ochorowicz's "Polish medium" and a new but unidentified SPR automatic writing subject "of great importance."

Finally, James supported G. Stanley Hall's plan to test Mrs. Piper.—against Lodge's wishes. James reasoned that Hall's tests would provide an opening to resume the debate over her value to scientific psychology, explaining to Dorr that "the only real question at stake is as to Mrs. Piper's supernormal knowledge." James told Hall to look for his upcoming report on Mrs. Piper, to which Hall replied he was "glad" to learn of it and that his own tests would reveal a "new phase of the Piper problem." Hall published the results in a book called *Studies in Spiritism*, written by his assistant Amy Tanner." Contrary to James's expectations, the results did not reveal a "new phase," because Hall simply advanced a version of the pathological explanation of Mrs. Piper. The Hodgson-control was, Hall concluded, nothing more than a "parasitic secondary personality." James passed away before the book was published, so he was unable to respond, although during the testing phase Hall informed James of his ability to trick the Hodgson-control into lying, which James acknowledged was "interesting psychologically." Some commentators believe *Studies in Spiritism* was the deathblow to James's defense of Mrs. Piper. One even wrote that the book led to a "devastating outcome." This claim, however, does not prove Hall's argument; it merely reasserts it. By contrast, as argued herein, James possessed a sufficient argument in the form of a *tertium quid* to rebut Hall. Given James's long-term opposition to Hall, it seems highly likely he would have made it had he lived long enough. Moreover, Hyslop found multiple factual discrepancies in *Studies in Spiritism*. However, the occurrence of James's death before the debate

could play out precludes final judgment on this matter.

James's defense of Mrs. Piper and mental mediumship during his final years was highly predictable, but his rekindled interest in physical mediumship, especially his defense of Eusapia Palladino, was quite shocking. Sparked by a new round of testing led by well-known scientists in France, Italy, and Britain, Eusapia enjoyed a brief renaissance from 1905 to 1910, which James dubbed the "Eusapia boom." Amazingly, James's reading of the European reports prompted him to revisit the "human rat hole" of physical mediumship and to make numerous dodgy statements in defense of Eusapia. For instance, he told various friends that he thought Enrico Morselli's book would "settle" the scandalous "condition of opinion as regards 'physical mediumship,'" that he "rejoice [d] in the triumph of Eusapia," that Eusapia had been "vindicate [ed]," that "physical phenomena also seem to be entering upon a new phase in their history," and that "public opinion" would finally catch up to the new reality. He emphasized that Marie and Pierre Curie's "very masterly" report on her "makes ordinary observation seem like child's play," that "no one who has seen much of Eusapia of late preserves any doubts about her genuineness," and that "Hodgson was evidently premature in his condemnation of E. P." He concluded that "judging by ... [Annales des Sciences Psychiques] the proof seems overwhelming," that "after Courtier's report on Eusapia, I don't think any [further] 'investigation' here will be worth much 'scientifically,'" that he "always suspected that she would turn out good," and that the tests "cast retrospective credit on [William] Crooke's [sic] ancient testimony." Finally, he proclaimed with uncharacteristic certainty, "I feel morally convinced[,] that is I would bet heavily—that the future will corroborate all this 'teleplasty' .. as a field of real experience surrounding the acknowledged order of nature and of tremendous cosmic import, whatever the import may be." Despite the use of the term "bet;" however, James's position was unpragmatic, and his use of absolutist language was atypical. It was one of the very few times he betrayed his *tertium quid* method of inquiry in favor of a dogmatic one. These statements were equally unwise since their substance was later proven false, revealing just how foolish he had been in defending them. They



also reveal how difficult it had been for James to defend his *tertium quid* approach over the decades. As he confessed to Eleanor Sidgwick, "It has been an enormous relief to my mind to quit the balancing attitude which I have voluntarily maintained for 15 years, and come to a stable belief in the matter." In fact, as this book has shown, James had embraced the third way throughout much of his lifetime.

The perils of abandoning his *tertium quid* for temporary psychological relief manifested themselves in James's misguided, if well-intentioned, support for Hereward Carrington, Eusapia's primary backer in England and the United States. An upcoming second-generation psychical researcher who went on to a distinguished career in the field, Carrington convinced the SPR council to reopen Eusapia's file for new rounds of testing in 1908. Subsequent testing in 1909, which James closely followed, led Carrington to argue that while Eusapia cheated on some occasions, she produced decent phenomena on others requiring explanation. James had reached this conclusion many years prior, so it made the two men natural allies. Indeed, when the two first met in New York City in 1907, Carrington impressed James as "tip-top: 28 years old, slender, neutral socially, an intellect primarily, for professional purposes, [and] ... fair minded." James subsequently befriended him much as he had the members of the Sidgwick Group, and for a brief time the two men worked in tandem in their support of Eusapia. In 1909, for instance, Carrington gave a speech at the Twentieth Century Club in Boston that invoked James's defense of Eusapia, while James, who introduced Carrington, vouched for his expertise and praised him for understanding her case.

With SPR approval and James's support, Carrington subsequently organized two Eusapia tours in the United States. The first occurred in the fall of 1908, when she held sittings with a number of interested parties such as Hugo Münsterberg at Harvard, a brass instrument psychologist skeptical of psychic phenomena and critical of James's psychical research, and the second in the winter of 1909-10, when James sat with her and experienced a queer "twisting of my chair." William Pepperell Montague, a professor in the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at Columbia University, had a sitting, too. Montague

observed "good levitation," floating furniture, and a spectral hand but also a great deal of what he took to be cheating. More important, he noted the unscientific character of these sittings, since Carrington had "made a miserable mistake in not segregating [sic] the incidental spiritists and others who support the show from the scientists who are investigating it," and vowed to conduct his own investigation.

So, in January 1910, Montague and a team of investigators tested Eusapia at Columbia's physical laboratory. Ever in search of support from orthodox scientists, James endorsed the tests and persuaded Carrington to allow them because the question of Eusapia's validity had to be determined by "authority, as in all science" James thought the American tests would verify the French, Italian, and British results, although he cautioned the researchers against trying to prove too much. But the Columbia team, whose report was published in *Science* magazine, not only found a lack of evidence supporting supernormal phenomena but also offered massive evidence of fraud even while admitting that the difficulties in meeting the standards of rigorous scientific method had somewhat limited their testing.

The report's damning conclusion threw Carrington on the defensive. He wanted to conduct a new round of tests to rebut the Columbia results, but James counseled him to relent: "Don't get your 'back up' and your teeth set to ram the thing by more 'evidence' down reluctant throats—you can't do it—no evidence will suffice after what they have seen; and Eusapia deserves it all! Her methods are too detestable for nomenclature! You are a serious student; leave your reputation in the hands of history, and pass on to more deserving subjects.... [It is] the dignified course." He also added a statement suggesting he had been mistaken as well. The Columbia report "proved fraud to be much more continuous and ubiquitous than you [or I] had supposed.... The case is too mixed for truth to be thrashed out ever on purely evidential lines... Eusapia, if true, deserves to have it never known, for her essential mendacity, and you, of clear-seeing in her case, must wait for the retrospective corroboration to be cast on her and you by possible future cases."

But Carrington was not persuaded and instead took his case to the court of public opinion. He found

three sympathizers (Howard Thurston, a professional magician; Joseph F. Rinn, the secretary of the Metropolitan Psychical Society; and Rinn's lackey, W. S. Davis, "Spruce St. printer") who made public offers of \$1,000 to anyone who could prove her a fraud. This desperate tactic backfired, for on 12 May 1910 the New York Times, which had made the "Eusapia boom" one of the year's biggest stories, published parts of the Columbia report along with signed statements from several of the report's lead authors. This reporting exposed Eusapia as a fraud and made Carrington and James, who were mentioned in some of the stories as her backers, look foolish.

The negative media coverage quickly became a public relations disaster for the cause of psychical research and for Carrington personally. This prompted James to imagine that Carrington must be having a "perfect hell of a time with all the publicity and turmoil" and that he would need "divine support" But James's consolation was not enough, for the Times coverage not only exposed Eusapia but also discredited her in the eyes of her well-heeled supporters, who subsequently called off their private sittings with her. This dried up the funds that Carrington had started to raise to pay for her extravagant fees, which, in turn, angered Eusapia, since not only had she been publicly humiliated but she had lost the promised income that had lured her to America. "The whole thing 'fell through,'" James lamented to Théodore Flournoy. "Eusapia's trip to the U.S. will simply have spoiled her, and discredited everyone else." James could not have been more correct, especially since he was "everyone else." He had been "had," and he looked the fool. "Eusapia's type of performance is detestable," he complained bitterly. "If it be not fraud simulating reality, it is reality simulating fraud!" Whatever it was, James had been publicly exposed for supporting a known charlatan with a long history of cheating—all in the name of legitimizing psychical research. It was probably the most humiliating and embarrassing moment of his illustrious career. Had he not abandoned his *tertium quid* method in favor of dogmatic support for Eusapia, he likely would have avoided it. Instead, the "Eusapia boom" became the Eusapia fiasco, discrediting him and psychical research.

After the debacle, James tried to console Carrington. Invoking words of comfort that were

clearly meant as self-consolation, he told Carrington "not [to be] be upset ..., that history would judge him as a serious student, and [that he] was glad that he conducted himself well in the newspapers by not losing his temper." But the truth was that James had long since doubted Carrington. Two years earlier he had confided to his daughter that he found him "interesting but colorless," a far cry from how he had felt about the Sidgwick Group.

Inexplicably, though, James was unable to follow his own advice to Carrington, as he continued to cling to the remote possibility that science might eventually show Eusapia's phenomena were genuine. When asked by *Cosmopolitan* magazine for his opinion, James reiterated that Eusapia's methods were "detestable" but maintained that the "uniqueness of the phenomena" justified studying her. A serious investigation, he stipulated, would require twenty-five sittings by a group of scientists, when she "may break the bounds which science hitherto has set to nature's forces." Privately, he continued to argue that despite Eusapia's cheating, which he had personally witnessed on numerous occasions over the years, he still believed there were too many instances when she was not caught cheating that required explanation. But the Columbia team had essentially performed those tests, and anecdotal evidence was hardly scientific. James just could not admit she was a fraud; his *tertium quid* approach prevented it.

Two other developments rekindled James's interest in physical mediumship during his final years. First, there were his sittings with a Spiritualist circle at George Dorr's "Oldfarm" house in Bar Harbor, Maine, in 1909, there is a new wave of advance in physical phenomena upon us," James told Piddington. "I have just got a report of table levitation from a circle ... which I attended a month ago, and where I saw something ... which awakens great confidence." James hoped that the tide of public opinion, which had turned against physical phenomena, would soon reverse its course to a more favorable position. Similarly, he told Alice he had been "rewarded by the sight of an object moving without contact, under conditions so simple that no room for fakery seemed possible." James wrote an essay providing the group's history and his analysis, noting that while the event had failed to move him emotionally and that the conditions

were not very satisfactory, there was too much evidence to be dismissed outright. Offering his usual caveat that the truth would be established pragmatically in the long run, he concluded, "The levee by which scientific opinion protects nature would be cracked for me, and I should be as one watching an incipient overflow of the Mississippi of the supernatural into the fields of orthodox culture. I find, however, that I look on nature with unaltered eyes today, and that my orthodox habits tend to extrude this would-be levee breaker. It forms too much of an exception."

Finally, there were James's erratic sittings with lesser-known mediums in New York City such as "Mrs. Beatty" and "Mrs. Mayer," the former whom he called an "excellent medium, for raps, & table & slate," and the latter convincing him of "the reality of the phenomenon as fully as was possible in a single sitting;" a view that was not weakened after a follow-up sitting. Several other sittings involved DeWitt Hough's "materialization," Wilson's ability to manifest a "psychic cold," Miss Crossly ("a very good medium"), and even a "voodoo lady" of "color." His library also contained marked-up books on the topic.

The renaissance in physical mediumship typified by the "Eusapia boom," the Bar Harbor group, and miscellaneous mediums in New York City revealed the wider, long-running debate over psychic phenomena, namely, that there would be argument without end. By 1910, for skeptics such as the authors of the Columbia report and the brass instrument psychologists, enough quality evidence had poured in. Multiple instances of verified, repeated, and consistent results had demonstrated that Eusapia and her kind failed to produce any phenomena outside the natural realm. Moreover, the cumulative body of evidence showed she and the others frequently cheated. They were simply frauds and therefore did not require further investigation. The matter was settled. But for James, who consistently held out for more effective study that might produce new and affirming evidence of supernatural quality, the matter was still open. As such, it was unwise to completely close the door on Eusapia and her ilk, no matter how "deplorable" she or they were. With the notable exception of his lapse during the Eusapia fiasco, James's *tertium quid* method of inquiry drove his approach to physical mediumship in these final years.

There were, however, severe limitations to this kind of intellectual justification. Clearly, it was both unrealistic and unfair, since James perpetually raised the threshold that skeptics had to pass over. The minimum number and quality of scientific studies required to prove a negative, difficult as that already was, was increased one notch every time a new report found nothing to support belief in supernormal or supernatural phenomena. This meant no amount of proof would ever convince James and thus knowledge through his model could never be attained. The *tertium quid* approach might have been principled, but when taken to the extreme it was self-defeating and irrational. It simply provided James with a kind of philosophical cover for a largely indefensible position. Indeed, it looked less like what Charles Peirce once called the "logic of science" and more like what he dubbed "sheer tenacity" and "stubbornness of the will."

The only effective way to address this kind of stance beyond insisting the logic of science was the most rational and justified form of pragmatic inquiry was to invoke critical humor. As it turned out, Hugo Münsterberg's sitting with Eusapia in New York in 1910 provided the occasion. After Eusapia's assistant (cleverly concealed in the séance cabinet) accidentally grabbed her toe instead of the wires and levers that were used to produce the desired effect, she screamed out, revealing the gig was up. The event prompted Josiah Royce, who all along had been skeptical of matters psychical and critical of James for engaging them, to write the following ditty that he wittily titled "The Search for Truth":

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo  
Catch Eusapia by the toe;  
If she hollers, then we know—  
James's doctrines are not so!

Such needling made its mark, revealing just how outlandish the whole affair had become. James, however, never lost his sense of humor about psychical research and would have likely laughed along with Royce and the critics. For instance, upon declining an invitation from Smith College to give a talk, James explained, "No more lecturing in this world for WJ, though I learn from the spirits ... thru Mrs. Piper, that 'going to lectures' is a favorite form of entertainment in the sweet bye and bye!" More seriously, James would have been sympathetic to F. C. S. Schiller's view that he had

"never supposed that the matter was going to be settled either way in a generation."

But by 1910 almost no one in the American scientific community was listening very much. The accumulated evidence manifested in Studies in Spiritism, the Columbia report, and so many other investigations had severely diminished any reasonable hope for rational belief in Spiritualism. Despite

James's plea for a *tertium quid* approach, the best phenomena Mrs. Piper and Eusapia Palladino produced had been explained naturalistically and the worst dismissed as fraud. This should have made James pause to wonder at the limits to his method of inquiry and to consider more carefully the damage that invoking it in defense of psychical research was doing to his reputation as a serious scholar. John Jay Chapman captured this point in unequivocal terms. Scolding James, he exclaimed, "O but you have done harm too—D. Miller exposing Palladino—under sofas—newspaper talk.—Who was it [that] set this fashion in higher philosophy? W. J. Miller was sick with excitement & all of them together—who started the spook hunt as a scholars' recreation? W.J." This was a damning and highly accurate assessment.

So, what then were James's final views about psychic phenomena? In 1909, James tried to explain them with clarity and conviction in a popular essay cleverly titled "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher." Marion Hamilton Carter, a freelance journalist best known for her coverage of the Terranova murder trial in 1906, provided the impetus. She and James maintained a correspondence during the first decade of the 1900s in which James encouraged Carter to develop her psychic abilities, while Carter, fawning over him as "St. James the Modern," described her experiences with raps and put James in contact with New York City physical mediums. Carter also tried to publish an essay on Eusapia in McClure's Magazine, only to have it "snatched it out" of her hands at the last minute by her editor in favor of James writing it. "For heaven's sake," she implored him, "do it, or try to keep him from letting Hyslop [write it]: James did write it, but for American Magazine, not McClure's. True to form, James's insecurities surfaced immediately. To his brother he proclaimed in self-amazement that "it will be queer if after all these years I have nothing to say!" Upon

completing it, James mailed copies to friends and family members to gauge their reactions. Unlike William's "Report on Mrs. Piper's Hodgson-Control," Henry Jr. found this essay "most interesting & uplifting!" So, too, did Carter and Emile Boutroux, who remarked that it offered more than "results"; it was mostly "a way of thinking and searching." And, indeed, it was. For the final time, James expressed his psychical research in terms of a *tertium quid*.

The main purpose of the essay, James wrote, was to "put my own state of mind upon record publicly." It was to be a record not of the truth but of "my truth, as I now see it," he added. James expressed that truth in several long-running themes, starting with the name "psychical research," which James dubbed "ridiculous" for its inability to capture a wide spectrum of phenomena ranging from automatic writing, phantasms, and ghosts, to psychics, physical mediumship, and mental mediumship, as well as a host of explanations such as fraud, coincidence, and natural, supernatural, and supernatural abilities. After rehashing the contributions from William Crookes, William Barrett, Edmund Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and the Sidgwick, as well as the Eusapia Palladino case and what he called "the best manifestations of the Piper control," James revisited the SPRs tactic of adopting skepticism, which he found useful for establishing personal belief but not so much the truth. He also rehearsed the cynicism of psychical research's critics, such as Thomas Huxley's famous dismissal of the entire project as "'twaddle," a view James dismissed as sheer dogmatism. Critically, James also invoked the language of his tender- and tough-minded dichotomy, noting the "emotionally touched" who hear the names of their recently deceased loved ones and are "'happy' to accept the revelation, and consider spiritualism 'beautiful,' while the 'hard-headed,' who are disgusted by such revelations, are wont to consider them "'bosh.' Thus do two opposite sentimentalisms divide opinion between them!" Invoking his *tertium quid* method of inquiry, James maintained that neither approach would yield a satisfying solution. Instead, he thought "their causation is far too complex for our feelings about what is or is not romantic enough to be spiritual to throw any light upon it. The causal factors must be carefully distinguished and traced," adding that "it is unquestionable that some theory of that mixed

type is required for the explanation of all mediumistic phenomena."

James framed psychic phenomena as "baffling" and found their myriad of explanations unsatisfying for their inability to corroborate the known evidence. After noting that Henry Sidgwick had worried it would be quite ironic after all of his time investigating psychical matters if the evidence did not allow for "finality of decision," James proclaimed his experience was like that: "For twenty five years I have been in touch with the literature of psychical research, and have had acquaintance with numerous 'researchers: I have also spent a good many hours (though far fewer than I ought to have spent) in witnessing (or trying to witness) phenomena. Yet I am theoretically no 'further' than I was at the beginning. With regard to explaining raps, table levitating, and cabinet performances, James was right; he had not made any progress. Still, he could not abandon all hope that there might be something supernatural to them. As James encapsulated it, "I find myself believing that there is 'something in' these never ending reports of physical phenomena, although I haven't yet the least positive notion of the something. In the face of the overwhelming evidence against James, this statement seems preposterous, even if he did write it before the Eusapia fiasco occurred.

Regarding mental mediumship, however, James had made progress. "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher" recounted the key role the subconscious played in explaining Mrs. Piper's phenomena. Identifying it as the "subliminal self," James reemphasized that "there is a residuum of knowledge displayed that can only be called supernormal" and invoked his will theory in which there is a will to communicate of some kind, either a will to deceive or a will to personate or both, "for the phenomenon is actuated by will of some sort anyhow." James added there were "psychological as well as 'spiritual' factors, and quite obviously, it throws open for us far more questions than it answers about our subconscious constitution." Impressed as he was with the former explanation, James could not help dwelling on the latter. As in "Report on Mrs. Piper's Hodgson-Control," James asserted his "dramatic possibility" argument, which he now claimed was a "probability," especially regarding his assertion that Mrs. Piper was like a "white crow" that disproved the maxim "all crows

are black." Adding that one has to follow one's "personal sense," James stated, "My own dramatic sense tends instinctively to picture the situation as an interaction between slumbering faculties in the automatist's mind, and a cosmic environment of other consciousness of some sort which is able to work on them." James thus hypostatized a universe full of "diffuse soul stuff, unable of itself to get into consistent personal form, or to take permanent possession of an organism, yet always craving to do so, it might get its head into the air, parasitically so to speak, by profiting by weak spots in the armor of human minds, and slipping in and stirring up there the sleeping tendency to personate?" The medium's subliminal consciousness was the conduit of that communication. Surely that was theoretical progress.

At the same time, "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher" displayed James's penchant for weak inductive arguments, especially his favorite metaphor that "weak sticks make strong faggots." As such, he was unable to prevent himself from making the most improbable of statements. Invoking his panpsychic view of the universe," that is, his theory of the sublime cosmic reservoir in which psyches survive bodily death in the "mother sea of consciousness," James claimed that "there is a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir. Our 'normal' consciousness," he explained, "is circumscribed for adaptation to our external earthly environment, but the fence is weak in spots, and fitful influences from beyond leak in, showing the otherwise unverifiable common connexion. Not only psychic research, but metaphysical philosophy and speculative biology are led in their own ways to look with favor on some such 'panpsychic' view of the universe as this." In short, "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher" repeated his major explanations and theories of psychical phenomena and called for more evidence to validate them—all in the name of his tertium quid method of inquiry.

James closed the essay with the very first question he had asked about psychic phenomena in 1869: "What is one to think of this queer chapter in human nature?" Now, after forty years of investigation, his response was the same as it had been at the start: "It is odd enough on any view"

Had James learned nothing valuable during the long interim? Could he not unpack meaning from his favorite idiom "queer"? As demonstrated throughout this book, he could, and he did. In fact, James was substantially further in his effort to understand and explain psychic phenomena, and his position had evolved considerably over time. During the 1880s, James groped toward the view that mediumism was a telepathic, supernormal event for which the unconscious somehow acted as a conduit. By 1890, he seemed content with that view. But that same year he also offered a supernatural explanation when he invoked a new concept, the "cosmic reservoir." For the next twenty years James vacillated between both explanations, refining the mechanisms of each theory while never dismissing outright the problems of fraud and natural explanations. Only at the end of his life did he finally suggest that a reconciliation of the supernormal and supernatural theories was possible through the sublime conscious cosmic reservoir thesis.

Thus, there was a "there" there for James, even if after four decades of exploring it he professed to have no idea of its nature, asserting he was "still in a state of bafflement as to all these phenomena." Claiming to be stumped by such bafflement, he confessed in exasperation, "It seems as if they were intended deliberately by the Almighty never to be either proved or disproved definitely." But once again, James was being too modest. He did have a final view; it was a panpsychic one of a dynamic "pluriverse" infused with organic psyches. He just could not commit himself to it. This was not because James was fundamentally ambivalent, as some James scholars have argued over the years. Rather, the lack of substantial facts and verified evidence accepted by the scientific community stopped him from proclaiming his theory true, especially since the empiricist in him understood that new evidence would roll in over time and refine or even undermine it. The rational view, James held, was to take the middle course between outright dismissal and complete acceptance. Thus, he posited a psycho-metaphysical hypothesis of consciousness returning to the cosmos upon bodily death while recognizing he might very well be wrong. As such, James concluded the "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher" with his unique view: "The only certainty is that the phenomena are enormously complex.... I ... still remain a psychical

researcher waiting for more facts before concluding.... Hardly, as yet, has the surface of the facts called 'psychic' begun to be scratched for scientific purposes. It is through following these facts, I am persuaded, that the great scientific conquest of the coming generation will be achieved." This view was the perfect expression of his *tertium quid* method of inquiry.

It was also not a view from nowhere. As this book has shown, James developed his third way through a lifetime fascination with and study of psychic phenomena. This intellectual proclivity originated during his boyhood experiences with the "non-normal," such as his father's ruminations on the dangers of Spiritualism, dinner conversations with his "spiritual uncles" who first investigated the Fox sisters, and James John Garth Wilkinson's "spirit cure." It was nurtured in his early manhood during the 1860s and 1870s when James first investigated levitating tables and wrote book reviews on Spiritualism and culminated when he befriended the members of the Sidgwick Group and joined the SPR and ASPR in the early 1880s. As this book has also shown, James fostered his *tertium quid* method of inquiry through his investigation and study of physical and mental mediums. Finally, this book has demonstrated James's third way grew out of explanations of various psychic phenomena, including his notion of the subliminal self and theory of cosmic consciousness, which in turn informed his psychological and philosophical doctrines of consciousness and the will to believe, all within the framework of the tough- and tender-minded dichotomy. Indeed, the immense time and effort James devoted to psychical research—from the daily labor of running the psychical societies and conducting the investigations to his debates with the skeptics and his encouragement of numerous family members, friends, and colleagues to develop their mediumistic abilities—substantiate Ralph Barton Perry's claim that "'psychical research' was not one of his vagaries, but was central and typical" of James's life and thought.

In demonstrating that James formed his *tertium quid* through his psychical research, this book has argued more broadly that James's intellectual disposition is best understood in the context of three major historical developments in the nineteenth century: the Victorian crisis of faith brought on by the rise of

Darwinism and scientific naturalism; scientific modernism, or the collective impact of statistical thinking, the prominence of the probability calculus, the role of exact measurement, and the mathematization of natural and social phenomena; and the professionalization of the sciences with its attendant rise of specialists, experts, and codified forms of knowledge produced by the educated elite at exclusive institutions, organizations, and societies. All three altered belief formation and gave rise to cognitivism. James's third way typified this larger trend in modernist thought. Bolstered by a hybrid of German *Wissenschaft* and British empiricism, it emerged amid a unique discourse of community that emphasized historicity, temporality, and dynamism expressed across a broad transatlantic culture of inquiry rather than as a distinct social class. Its faith in progress, science, and reason offered a more hopeful alternative to the "iron cage" of modernity inside of Max Weber's imprisoned Western civilization. As such, James was a thoroughgoing modernist, committed to the view that his method would reveal the truth about psychic phenomena in the long run. His method was thus a rebuke of antimodernist disenchantment with the modern world but not an uncritical embrace of its enchantment; it was the third way.

James's confidence in the future, however, was highly overblown. The next generation of psychical researchers, who called themselves "parapsychologists" in a Jamesian attempt to yoke their research program to scientific psychology, failed to find the empirical evidence for psychic phenomena that James had gambled they would. The two most prominent such researchers in the United States were William McDougall and Joseph Rhine. They received substantial funding to conduct original research at Harvard University in the 1920s and at Duke University in the 1930s, respectively. Utilizing updated scientific methods and statistical techniques in their experimental labs, they tested for psychic phenomena. Rhine and his wife claimed to have discovered the basic psychic element of all such phenomena, which they dubbed "psi." But their work failed miserably because of fundamental mistakes they made in their use of statistics. Worse, it was later revealed that their assistants had been cheating in collaboration with some of their subjects. In other words, while trying to overcome the shortcomings of pre—World War

I psychical research, postwar parapsychologists ran up against the same limitations: bad science, fraud, and willful belief. James's tertium quid method of inquiry, then, might have been rational, but the research program it facilitated failed to deliver the evidence over the long run. And, while he probably would have counseled holding out still longer, doing so indefinitely was neither sound epistemology nor good science. At some point, we must all put our cards on the table, but James's third way method of inquiry prohibited this.

During his lifetime, James's psychical research was interpreted in opposing ways in the intellectual community. On the positive side, Lawrence Pearsall Jacks, an Oxford University theologian, philosopher, and novelist, found literary inspiration in James's defense of mediumship and personalized religious belief. For instance, Jacks once told James that *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and psychical research were the primary basis for his stories in a book he was sending to him. Joking that James could have written the book, he explained, "I made a very primary careful study of all Mrs. Piper's utterances 'in the waking stage' & then drew [the character] Snarly Bob as being permanently in that condition." On the negative side, Friedrich von Hügel, the Roman Catholic philosopher, thought James had overemphasized the spiritual value of mediumistic phenomena. In particular, he believed psychical research had produced few facts of religious value while encouraging superstition. Like James, Hügel held that natural science methodology would add much in this light but unlike him noted that to continually invoke the names of natural scientists such as Crookes and Lodge was not an argument against the point. Hügel had made a valid criticism, but blaming James for others' misreading of his tertium quid approach in favor of or against Spiritualism was surely not James's fault.

Neither was the charge that James's defense of Spiritualism made him a "spiritist" or that he believed in Spiritualism. As one of his contemporaries correctly noted, James was neither. Instead, it would be more accurate to argue that James was a philosophical psychologist interested in understanding exceptional mental states. As his first intellectual biographer captured it, "His promotion of psychical research and of abnormal psychology generally, ... his collection and

description of religious experiences in all their variety, but with special emphasis on their oddity, [and] his disposition to credit mysticism as a source of knowledge, all testify to this preoccupation." Not surprisingly, this reality did not prevent numerous writers throughout the twentieth century from claiming James's "spirit" spoke to them postmortem in what came to be called "channeling," a kind of modern spiritualism without the spirits or séances in which the channeler simply outpours what he or she claims is the voice of a departed person.

James relinquished his lead role in psychical research in the summer of 1909. His "active connexion with psychical research ceases," he confessed to Henry Bowditch. It was simply "too zeitraubend [time-consuming] and umständlich [awkward], and requires quicker perceptive faculties and more memory for details than I am possessed of, to lead to anything, so I take a back seat." But taking a "back seat" meant only semiretirement. For despite all those years of complaining bitterly about the daily labor, James—amazingly—kept recruiting people to the SPR to the very end. He likewise maintained his friendships with his psychical brethren. For instance, while in Nauheim, Germany, where James was trying the water cure during what turned out to be his final visit to Europe, he informed his daughter that he expected "Piddington and Gerald Balfour to motor over probably tomorrow," and a month later he told his wife that he must write to Flournoy. Finally, after returning to America and while on his deathbed, James summoned enough energy to dictate some of his final letters to his psychical comrades.

But the ranks were thinning and had been for some time. As William exclaimed to James Sully just two years prior, "How times have changed! Of all the members of that philosophical dining club [that is, the Scratch Eight], to which you so kindly admitted me in 1882, you, he [Shadworth Hodgson] and I are the only survivors, if I remember aright. Gurney, Robertson, Stephen and Maitland are gathered in." On 26 August 1910, William James thinned the ranks still further, dying from the effects of an acutely enlarged heart at the age of sixty-eight. His wife, Alice, who was with him at the end, noted in her diary there had been "no pain and no consciousness." The toughminded would likely agree with Alice, but the tender-minded might wonder

whether aspects of James's consciousness were floating in the "mother sea of consciousness."

James's tertium quid method of inquiry left open that possibility without committing to it. As James had once put it, "These things lie upon the knees of the gods." <>

[William James on Democratic Individuality](#) by Stephen S. Bush {Cambridge University Press, 9781107135956}

Individualism's loudest proponents these days are libertarians and right-wing politicians and their constituencies. In advertising it, they absolve themselves and their society of responsibility for public goods, in particular those of political and economic equality. Feminists, radical democrats, and other people on the left oppose individualism vociferously for this very reason. Nevertheless, even in their robust commitment to public things, these critics of individualism hardly want to see mindless conformity on the part of the citizenry, uncritical deference to this or that official. We need, then, a robust theory of individualism that clarifies the right sort of personal responsibility and opposes the wrong sort. This book argues that William James provides just this sort of theory, and that in doing so he has a vital contribution to make to democratic theory. Many readers of James have regarded his work as apolitical, so the task before me is doubly challenging: to defend an unpopular concept by means of an atypical reading of a major figure. Thankfully, the task is made somewhat easier by the fact that important work has recently been done from a number of directions showing that James does have a political philosophy. I will build on this work and extend it by focusing on individualism and responsibility as the key political concepts in James's work. I will show how these ideas are integrally related to his philosophy more broadly; they are threads that run through his reflections on topics as varied as truth, knowledge, religion, ethics, and metaphysics.

To say that the contemporary moment is dire requires an acknowledgment that democracy in the United States has always failed in important ways. Despite advertising its democratic values, the United States has had a rotten streak of violence at its core since its inception, as it built itself on the blood of slaves and indigenous peoples. Democracy here and elsewhere continuously exists on the verge of its demise. It is always only



partially realized, always as much aspiration as achievement. It always flourishes more in local niches than across the societal whole. Every generation has its particular challenges. Ours has to do with, among other things, unprecedented wealth concentration in the hands of very few and the immense political power that their riches afford them. Wrapped up in this trend is the way in which the racism and sexism that have always been integral to the US political culture are resonating, on the one hand, with a political culture that instantiates corporate profits as the one nonnegotiable political good, and on the other, with a form of conservative Christianity that claims divine justification for inequalities of wealth, gender, and race, as well as for catastrophic environmental destruction.' The precarious status of the middle, working, and lower classes ensures a place for authoritarian nationalism in our political culture, since many welcome salvation from any quarter, even the most tyrannical one. Similar forces are at work across the world.

Neither of the two major political parties in the United States takes class as a matter of concern, so electoral politics is a back and forth between centrist and authoritarian bedfellows of financial elites. No matter the outcome, the rich win. And they are as capable as ever of enlisting state violence to defend their preeminence, doing so from Ferguson to Standing Rock to Zuccotti Park. For those who find these arrangements unconscionable, the future seems bleak. An increasing number regard post-democracy as the only appropriate way to describe US politics and pessimism as the only appropriate emotional response. The challenge is not to succumb to despair, grief, fear, or escapism.

Individualism has played a pernicious role in fostering the contemporary political and economic situation. It is a mask for the operation of power in service of the wealthy and privileged. It performs its ideological function by dissolving commitment to public goods, abandoning the poor, and legitimating egoistic pursuit of private gain. Under the banner of individual freedom, we reduce taxes on the wealthy, deprive the sick of medicine, and divert funds from public schools to private prisons. The discourse of individual freedom and responsibility directly contributes to the lordship of the few over the many.

William James, though, would insist that it is disastrous to relinquish the language of individualism to authoritarians and economic tyrants. Democracy cannot survive, much less flourish, without a robust commitment to the proper kind of individuality. Even as democracy requires a collective commitment to public goods that cuts against right-wing individualism, it refuses to subsume any single person to the community. Participation in collective self-rule only happens when each of us evaluates political and economic proposals from our unique vantage point, in light of our personal trajectory through life and our sense of our own disappointments, ambitions, and ideals. According to the vision of human flourishing that James endorses, people should fashion their conduct and values not through imitation of what has already been done, but through creative reflection on their own life experiences, their particular capacities, and their specific attachments.

James's contribution to political philosophy is particularly noteworthy for the extent to which he embeds his understanding of the political importance of individuality in a broader philosophy. The notions of individuality and responsibility that sit at the heart of his political theory are also at the center of his moral philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and epistemology. All these domains are interlinked, making his philosophy in general remarkably coherent and systematic. This is all the more so because his ideas about individual responsibility are coordinated with his avowal of collective responsibility. We are collectively responsible for our moral knowledge. Our ethics arise in history out of human social practices. They are not given to us from some nonhuman beyond, whether physical, metaphysical, or theological. The fact that morality is a human product requires us to tend to our shared moral beliefs and to ensure that they are in the service of human flourishing, not affording privilege to certain subsets of society over and against others. This is true for our political values as well, and indeed, James does not see moral and political values as categorically different items. Epistemologically, our knowledge arises out of human social practices. This does not make it a projection of human preferences or desires, but rather, it means that the way we classify the world, and thus the sorts of assertions we make, is conditioned by our practical ends. Our

practical ends give rise to certain conceptual schemes and discourses, but once those have been instituted by our linguistic practices, the assertions we make in light of them refer to particular states of affairs in objective ways. These states of affairs are what they are, even if we might wish them otherwise. Our religious beliefs and values are not exempt from this approach to knowledge and belief. Human activity shapes how we speak about what we take to be transcendent, but it does not determine whether or not anything transcendent exists. So in all these domains human behavior plays an essential role in constituting our values and beliefs. James's political philosophy of individualism and responsibility is a cord that runs through his entire philosophical project.

The most important differentiation between right-wing and democratic individualism is that democrats care about the achievement of individuality for all, not just themselves. Democratic individualists understand that a democratic culture can only come about when we have secured quality housing, education, income, and healthcare for all. The more one cares about individuality, the more fervently one opposes poverty and social injustice. James sees this clearly, which is why he affirms that socialism is the proper political economy for democracy. James shows right-wing individualism to be a sham, since a true commitment to individuality would celebrate diversity and pluralism, allowing for and promoting non-conforming and atypical expressions of sexual practices, gender identity, family arrangements, and religious commitment, a far cry from the normative heterosexuality and Islamophobia that conservatives are presently attempting to enforce.

It is hard to see the way from where we presently stand to this sort of democratic culture. The forces are pushing in the opposite direction. Democratic commitment, then, requires something akin to religious faith and religious hope. It can only persist if we actively commit ourselves to social ideals that we have not seen, whose achievement is uncertain. We must actively pursue plans whose outcome is improbable. Our commitment to democracy must outrun the available evidence for its attainability. This sort of attitude is difficult to sustain, and it becomes more so the more that undemocratic persons and institutions win the day.

James thinks individuals and communities can bolster their capacity to exercise democratic faith and hope. His meliorism is first a matter of attention. It demands that we put before our senses both suffering and political success: the one to remind us of the need for radical political commitment and the other to remind us of the possibility of political results. James starts Pragmatism by directing us to reflect on the misery and utter despair of starvation, sickness, and economic ruin. He fills "Is Life Worth Living?" with such imagery. He insists that those who are fortunate enough, like him, to have a sufficient degree of economic security, must develop their life's philosophy, goals, and ideals with sustained consideration of the havoc of poverty. He confronts the desire of the middle and upper classes to carry on with their leisure pursuits as though all is well. Despite the risks of voyeurism, pity, sentimentalism, despair, sadism, and apathy, democratic meliorism requires exposure to economic and political suffering in journalism, photojournalism, literature, and art, as well as considered reflection on such suffering as it occurs in our immediate environs. The appropriate response to the imagery of socially preventable misery is to adopt and sustain at the core of one's moral and political identity a priority for policies, proposals, and practices that alleviate the plight of the least well off.

But it is just as necessary to seek out and give one's attention to democratic victories, however small, and to whatever loci of possibility there may be. The cultivation of democratic agency requires awareness of and participation in those instances in which ordinary people insert themselves into political processes and take power over the institutions that affect their well-being. Such occurrences might be few and far between, but they do occur, and they exemplify democratic potential. Not least, one must attend to and exert effort on one's own person and one's immediate relationships. Cultivating habits, performing actions, and fostering discourses that have social improvement as their end, in keeping with one's sense of one's own vocation, instill a sense of possibility even when the effects are microscopic and local.

These forms of attention are the starting point for the development of what James calls the "strenuous mood," a life devoted to persistent action in the

service of moral and political ideals. They instill in us a keen and active sense of both the drastic need for social reform and the possibility that it can occur. But this is not enough. For James, a certain sort of religiosity is necessary lest we lose heart, lest our democratic faith expire and our hope run aground. Religion as James promotes it accomplishes several things. First, in its commitment to transcendent but nevertheless contestable ideals, it inspires us to assign greater importance to political and moral ideals than to narrower personal interests. Second, religious commitments supply a framework for the meaningfulness of these ideals in the face of the nihilistic threat that they are mere delusions, a waste of our time. Third, ongoing practices of communion with the transcendent, in prayerfulness and religious experience, attach psychological satisfaction to those ideals. Finally, in moments of loss, despair, and defeat, religious experiences console the faithful with a felt sense of the goodness of their cause. This is all well and good, and democrats of various philosophical persuasions should welcome those who practice this unconventional sort of religiosity, as they should welcome reforms in conventional religions in these directions.

But what about those for whom transcendence is not a live option? Does James's political philosophy unfairly consign them to a life of political inefficacy, despite the numerous examples of dedicated atheists and naturalists? Perhaps so. But we can nevertheless learn lessons from James's reflections on motivation and agency that apply to a naturalistic perspective. For one thing, James thinks that the way we organize the values by which we live our life is not fixed. We are not passive recipients of the values imposed upon us by family, school, and society. He thinks we can and should reflect critically on the goods that we pursue, and he thinks that we should assign preeminence to the well-being of our society over narrow personal interests. Even if this does not have the support of transcendence, like it does for the religious person, we can nevertheless construct our priorities in line with our ideals. Another lesson we can learn from James's religion is the importance of pursuing experiences that afford us pleasures and satisfactions, making life bearable amidst its misery. Music, art, literature, conversation, sexuality, meditation, and nature mysticism, for example, afford intensities analogous to the

experiences of the transcendent that James thinks are so vital. 'When such activities become a substitute for or distraction from the pursuit of justice, they are something akin to the 'opium of the masses' that Marx thinks religion is. But incorporated into a life that is dedicated to social ideals, they give the oscillation between moments of active striving and moments of passive receptivity that James thinks flourishing requires. These experiences serve as ends in their own right, but also rejuvenate us for political agency.

In "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," James presents a secularized version of his philosophy of experience, and he outlines how it could foster motivation for political action without a belief in transcendence. In that essay, as we saw in Chapter 6, he speaks of ways of attending, with a practiced and cultivated receptivity, to human beings. He also speaks of attaining ecstatic states in response to our apprehension of human value, but the mysticism he describes in this essay has no reference to transcendence. As we attend openly to others, we experience the shock of recognizing the unfamiliarity of the stranger's way of life. This undoes our normal ways of thinking and feeling and exposes our inner life to the mystery of the interiority of others, but without conquering that interiority by claiming total insight. It fosters sympathetic imagination. Just as experiences of transcendent value can reorient and reconfigure one's subjectivity, one's habitual center of personal energy, in such a way that disposes one to act politically in strenuous ways, so also could naturalistic experiences of human value. Furthermore, James's insights are well suited for the cultivation of a receptive encounter with representations of human value in art, photojournalism, and literature. An Alice Neel portrait or a Doris Salcedo sculpture conveys the humanity and vulnerability of its subject matter in ways that facilitate, for the properly prepared viewer, a disruption of the subject's psyche, enabling a deepened appreciation of the significance of others.

James's vision for troubled democracies is not limited to subjective dispositions and self-cultivation, though these are without a doubt of central importance to him. He cares about institutions, but sees them largely through a critical lens, suspicious of their resistance to reform. Good systems, he tells

us, are ones that can be "described in individualistic terms", which is to say, the test of an institution is whether it fosters innovation, pluralism, and individuals' capacity to reflect on and influence the institution's aims and operations. Educational institutions in particular are a preeminent and vital institution for instilling democratic habits in citizens. It is no surprise then that in the United States, conservatives and neoliberals alike have engaged in a sustained assault on education at every level, chronically underfunding schools in poorer communities, diverting resources to charter schools, promoting vouchers instead of educational justice, sapping public universities of state support, focusing on knowledge that can be measured in multiple choice tests as opposed to excellence in writing and thought, and failing to address the rising costs of higher education. Educators at all levels have a vital role to play at the front lines of the struggle for democracy, even though the fruits of their labor may only appear years and decades down the line. Education across the various disciplines of the sciences, arts, humanities, and social sciences instills intellectual virtues among the populace: reasoning and arguing, communicating with clarity and precision, sensitivity to evidence, and familiarity with history, for example. In the absence of these virtues, democracy dies. Reality television optics, demagogic charisma, discredited trickle-down economic theory, and denial of climate change circulate in the political culture, trumping the careful attention to reason, evidence, and facts that teaching at its best exemplifies and proliferates.

James's pragmatism, then, speaks to the contemporary moment just as it spoke to his. It encourages people to think reflectively and critically about the present state of their society and to endorse a vision of how it should be improved, then to throw their efforts to the task in the particular ways that best suit them. Critics have said that James's philosophy is unsuited for political commitment. In fact his is a comprehensive and compelling philosophy for social and political activism. James is intensely preoccupied with what sustains the exercise of individual agency for the sake of the public in the face of forces of oppression, exclusion, and conformity. With efforts such as these against obstacles such as these, "Democracy is still upon its trial ...".

[I am Not a Brain: Philosophy of Mind for the 21st Century](#) by Markus Gabriel, translated by Christopher Turner [Polity, 9781509514755]

Many consider the nature of human consciousness to be one of the last great unsolved mysteries. Why should the light turn on, so to speak, in human beings at all? And how is the electrical storm of neurons under our skull connected with our consciousness? Is the self only our brain's user interface, a kind of stage on which a show is performed that we cannot freely direct?

In this book, philosopher Markus Gabriel challenges an increasing trend in the sciences towards neurocentrism, a notion which rests on the assumption that the self is identical to the brain. Gabriel raises serious doubts as to whether we can know ourselves in this way. In a sharp critique of this approach, he presents a new defense of the free will and provides a timely introduction to philosophical thought about the self — all with verve, humor, and surprising insights.

Gabriel criticizes the scientific image of the world and takes us on an eclectic journey of self-reflection by way of such concepts as self, consciousness, and freedom, with the aid of Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nagel but also *Dr. Who*, *The Walking Dead*, and *Fargo*.

Excerpt: We are awake and thus conscious; we have thoughts, feelings, worries and hopes. We speak with each other, found states, choose parties, conduct research, produce artworks, fall in love, deceive ourselves and are able to know the truth. In short: we humans are minded animals. Thanks to neuroscience we know, to some extent, which areas of the brain are active when someone shows us a picture, for instance, or prompts us to think of something in particular. We also know something about the neurochemistry of emotional states and disorders. But does the neurochemistry of our brain ultimately guide our entire conscious mental life and relations? Is our conscious self only our brain's user interface, so to speak, which in reality does not contribute at all to our behavior but only accompanies what actually happens, as if it were an unimportant spectator? Is our conscious life thus only a stage upon which a show is performed, in which we cannot really — that is, freely and consciously — intervene?

Nothing is more obvious than the fact that we are minded animals who lead a conscious life. And yet, this most evident fact about ourselves gives rise to countless puzzles. Philosophy has occupied itself with these puzzles for millennia. The branch of philosophy that is concerned with human beings as minded animals, these days, is called philosophy of mind. It is more relevant today than ever before, as consciousness and the mind in general are at the center of a whole variety of questions for which we currently have nothing that even comes close to a full explanation in terms of our best natural sciences.

Many consider the nature of consciousness to be one of the last great unsolved puzzles. Why, anyway, should the light turn on, so to speak, in some product of nature? And how is the electrical storming of neurons in our skull connected to our consciousness? Questions such as these are treated in subfields of the philosophy of mind, such as the philosophy of consciousness, and in neurophilosophy.

Thus, it is here a question of our very selves. I first present a few of the main thoughts of the philosophy of mind with reference to central concepts such as consciousness, self-consciousness and self. In the wider public and in various disciplines outside of philosophy, there is much talk about these concepts, mostly without awareness of the philosophical background, which leads to confusion. Hence, to start out with, I discuss this background with as few philosophical assumptions as possible.

My sketch of the philosophical background of many of the conceptual building blocks of our self-understanding as minded animals forms the foundation of the second main goal of this book: the defense of our freedom (our free will) against the common idea that someone or something deprives us of our freedom unbeknown to us — whether it be God, the universe, nature, the brain or society. We are free through and through, precisely because we are minded animals of a particular kind. The particularity of our mind consists in the fact that we constantly work out a historically shifting and culturally varying account of what exactly it takes to be the kind of minded animal we are. Whereas some believe that we have an immortal soul which accounts for the various mental processes we constantly experience,

at the other extreme end of possibilities, many are happy to accept that all their mental processes are ultimately identical to brain states.

In this book, I argue that the truth indeed lies between these untenable extremes (and their more sophisticated versions spelled out by contemporary philosophers and mind scientists of various stripes). Here, the main idea is that what we call "the mind" is really the capacity to produce an open-ended list of self-descriptions which have consequences for how humans act. Humans act in light of their self-understanding, in light of what they believe to be constitutive of a human being. For instance, if you believe that your capacity to act morally presupposes that your soul has an immortal nature, you will live differently from someone who (like me) is convinced that they will live only once and this is the source for our ethical claims. Given that nothing would matter to us at all if we weren't conscious, sentient creatures with beliefs about what that very fact means, anything which matters to us, anything of any importance hinges on our self-conception as minded. However, there is a vast plurality of such self-conceptions spread out through human history as we know it from the writings and cultural artifacts of our ancestors as well as from the cultural variation across humanity as we find it on our planet right now.

It will turn out that we are neither pure genetic copying machines, in which a brain is implanted giving rise to the illusion of consciousness, nor angels who have strayed into a body but, in fact, the free-minded animals whom we have considered ourselves to be for millennia, animals who also stand up for their political freedoms. Yet, this fact about ourselves is obscured if we ignore the variation built into the capacity to conceive of oneself as minded.

### Mind and Geist

Let me give you an example of the variation we need to explore. Remarkably, there is no real equivalent of the English word "mind" in German. Likewise, the German word *Geist*, which plays a similar role as mind in English, cannot be translated in a literal way — that is, without further explanation. Here are more elements in a list of terms that have a whole variety of meanings even within English and which cannot easily be translated into every language: consciousness, the self, awareness, intuition, belief, cognition, thinking,

opinion. Let us call the vocabulary in which our self-conception as minded animals is couched our mentalistic vocabulary. This vocabulary has different rules in different languages, and even within a given natural language, such as English or German, there is really a variety of usages tied to specific local ways of understanding ourselves as minded. Depending on the kind of vocabulary to which you explicitly and implicitly subscribe as privileged over alternatives, you will, for example, think of your mind as extended into your computer, as locked in your brain, as spread out over the entire cosmos, or as connected to a divine spiritual realm in principle inaccessible to any modern scientific investigation. However, in order to make sense of this very variation, we have to assume that there is a core concept defining human self-understanding as minded. For simplicity's sake, my choice for the central term here is "mind."

I am aware that this might be more misleading than in the German context in which I started to work out my views about the topic at hand. For, in the German philosophical tradition, we rather speak of Geist as the relevant invariant. However, the notion behind the somewhat mysterious term Geist can be summarized in roughly the following way: what it is to be a minded (geistig) animal is to conceive of oneself in such a variety of ways.

Human beings essentially respond to the question of what it means for them to be at the center of their own lives in different ways. What does not vary is the capacity, nay, the necessity, to respond differently to this question. Our response to the question of what it means to be a human minded animal in part shapes what it is to be such an animal. We turn ourselves into the creatures we are in each case by developing a mentalistic vocabulary.

Let me give you another example. We all believe that there are pressing moral issues having to do with, say, abortion, economic equality, warfare, love, education, etc. At the same time, we all have beliefs about why we are even open to these issues. Again, here are two possible extremes. A social Darwinist will believe that morality is nothing but a question of altruistic cooperation, a behavioral pattern whose existence can be explained in terms of evolutionary biology/psychology. By contrast, a Christian fundamentalist maintains that morality is a divine

challenge to humans, whose nature is corrupted by sin. This has consequences for their actions and for their answers to pressing moral questions, as we all know. In both cases, the divergence of opinion results from the way in which the social Darwinist and the Christian fundamentalist think about their mental lives. I suggest that the social Darwinist will turn herself into the kind of altruistically inclined animal she takes herself to be, whereas the Christian fundamentalist will literally have a different mindset, one in which her mind will be shaped considering her conception of the divine. The Christian fundamentalist might be much more obsessed with the idea that God is watching and judging her every deed (and even her intimate thoughts), which will give rise to thought processes utterly absent in the social Darwinist, and vice versa.

In my view, there is no neutral ground to settle the issue, no pure standpoint from which we can start to answer the question of what human mindedness really is. For human mindedness exists only in the plurality of self-conceptions. If we strip it from its differentiation into a plurality of self-conceptions, we wind up with an almost empty, formal core: the capacity to create self-conceptions.

However, this formal core matters a lot, as I will also argue in what follows that this formal core necessarily gives rise to an irreducible variety of self-conceptions, and that this fact about us as minded animals is also at the center of morality in general.

### Elementary particles and conscious organisms

A major challenge of our times is the attempt to come up with a scientific image of the human being. We would like to obtain objective knowledge finally of who or what the human being really is. However, the human mind still stands in the way of achieving a purely scientific story, since the knowledge obtainable only from a subjective point of view has eluded scientific research to this point. To address this problem, future neuroscience is decreed as the final science of the human mind.

How plausible is the assumption that neuroscience can finally give us a fully objective, scientific understanding of the human mind? Until recently, one would hardly have thought that a neurologist or a neurobiologist, for example, should be the

specialist for the human mind. Can we really trust neuroscience in general, or brain science, to provide us with the relevant information about ourselves? Do they hold the key to the secret which has haunted philosophy and humanity ever since the Delphic oracle told us to know ourselves?

To what extent should we align our image of the human being with technological progress? In order to address central questions such as this in a sensible manner, we should scrutinize concepts of our self-portrait such as consciousness, mind, self, thinking or freedom more carefully than we are accustomed to do in an everyday sense. Only then can we figure out where we are being led up the garden path, if someone were to claim, for instance, that there is really no such thing as free will or that the human mind (consciousness) is a kind of surface tension of the brain, as Francis Crick and Christof Koch at some point supposed: synchronized neural firing in the 40-Hertz range — a conjecture which they have since qualified.

In contrast to the mainstream of contemporary philosophy of mind, the proposal introduced in this book is an antinaturalistic one. Naturalism proceeds on the basis that everything which really exists can ultimately be investigated in a purely natural scientific manner, be it by physics alone or by the ensemble of the natural sciences. In addition, naturalism at the same time typically assumes that materialism is correct — i.e., the thesis that it is only material objects that really exist, only things which belong to a reality that is exhaustively composed of matter/energy. But what then is the status of consciousness, which until now has not been explained scientifically — and in the case of which it cannot even be foreseen how this is supposed to be at all possible?

Remarkably, the German word for the humanities is *Geisteswissenschaften* — that is, the sciences which deal with the mind in the sense of the invariant structure which is constituted via historically and culturally shifting self-conceptions. The point of dividing academic labor into the natural sciences and the mind sciences corresponds to the fact that it is hard to see how the Federal Republic of Germany, the worlds of Houellebecq's novels, dreams about the deceased, thoughts and feelings in general, as well as the number it could really turn out to be material objects. Do they not exist, perhaps, or are they not real? Naturalists attempt

to establish precisely the latter claim by clearing up the impression that there are immaterial realities, which according to them is deceptive. I will have more to say about this in what is to come.

As previously mentioned, I adopt the stance of antinaturalism, according to which not everything which exists can be investigated by the natural sciences. I thus contend that there are immaterial realities which I consider essential for any accessible insight of sound human understanding. When I consider someone a friend, and consequently have corresponding feelings for him and adjust my behavior accordingly, I do not suppose that the friendship between him and me is a material thing. I also do not consider myself to be only a material thing, although I would obviously not be who I am if I had no proper body, which in turn I could not have if the laws of nature of our universe had been very different or if biological evolution had taken another course. Antinaturalism does, therefore, not deny the obvious fact that there are necessary material conditions for the existence of many immaterial realities. The immaterial does not belong to another world. Rather, both the material and the immaterial can be parts of objects and processes such as the Brexit, Mahler's symphonies, or my wish to finish this sentence while I am writing it.

The question of whether naturalism or antinaturalism is ultimately right is not merely important for the academic discipline of philosophy or simply for the academic division of labor between the natural sciences and the humanities, say. It concerns all of us, insofar as we are humans — that is, insofar as who we are in part depends on our self-conception. The philosophical question of naturalism vs. antinaturalism also plays an important historical role in our era of religious revival, since religion is quite rightly considered to be the bastion of the immaterial. If one over-hastily ignores immaterial realities, one ends up not even being able to understand the rational core of the phenomenon of religion, since one views it from the start as a kind of superstition or cognitively empty ghost story. There are shortcomings in the idea that we could understand human subjectivity by way of scientific, technological and economic advances and bring them under our control by means of such an understanding. If we simply ignore this and pretend that naturalism in the form of futuristic science will

solve all existential issues by showing that the mind is identical to the brain and that therefore nothing immaterial really exists, we will achieve the opposite of the process of enlightenment for religion will simply retreat to the stance of irrational faith assigned to it by a misguided foundation of modernity. Modernity is ill-advised to define itself in terms of an all-encompassing science yet to come. In other words, as the case of scientology proves: we should not base our overall conception of who we are and how absolutely everything hangs together on science fiction. Science fiction is not science, even though it often enables actual science to make progress. But so does religion.

Already in the last century thinkers from different orientations pointed out the limitations of a misguided Enlightenment project based on the notion that we can extend scientific rationality to all spheres of human existence. For instance, the first generation of critical theorists, most notably Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) in their influential book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, went so far as to claim that modernity was ultimately a misfortune that had to end in totalitarianism. I disagree. But I do believe that modernity will remain deficient for as long as it props up the fundamental materialist conviction that there are ultimately only particles dispersed in an enormous world-container structured according to natural laws, in which only after billions of years organisms emerged for the first time, of which by now quite a few are conscious — which then poses the riddle as to how to fit the obviously immaterial reality of the mind into the assumption that it should not exist according to the materialist's lights. We will never understand the human mind in this way! Arguably, this very insight led the ancient Greeks to the invention of philosophy, which at least holds for Plato and Aristotle, who both resisted naturalism with arguments still valid today.

To reclaim the standpoint of an antinaturalist philosophy of mind, we must give up the idea that we have to choose between a scientific and a religious image of the world, since both are fundamentally mistaken. There are today a group of critics of religion, poorly informed both historically and theologically, who are gathered together under the name of a "New Atheism,"

among whom are counted prominent thinkers such as Sam Harris (b. 1967), Richard Dawkins (b. 1941), Michel Onfray (b. 1959) and Daniel Dennett (b. 1942). These thinkers believe that it is necessary to choose between religion — that is, superstition — and science — that is, clinical, unvarnished truth. I have already rebutted at length the idea that our modern democratic societies have to stage a constitutive conflict of world images in *Why the World Does Not Exist*. My thesis there was that, in any case, there are no coherent world pictures, and that religion is no more identical to superstition than science is to enlightenment. Both science and religion fail insofar as they are supposed to provide us with complete world pictures, ways of making sense of absolutely everything that exists, or reality as a whole if you like. There simply is no such thing as reality as a whole.

Yet, even if I am right about this (as I still believe after several waves of criticism and polemics against my no-world-view), it still leaves open the question to be dealt with here of how to conceive of the relation between the mind and its non-mental natural environment. It is now a matter of developing an antinaturalist perspective vis-à-vis ourselves as conscious living beings, a perspective happy to join in the great traditions of self-knowledge that were developed in the history of ideas — and not just in the West. These traditions will not disappear because a small technological and economic elite profit from the progress of natural science and now believe that they must drive out ostensible and real religious superstitions and, along with them, expel mind from the human sciences. Truth is not limited to natural science; one also finds it in the social and human sciences, in art, in religion, and under the most mundane circumstances, such as when one notices that someone is sad without theorizing about her mental state in any more complicated, scientific manner.

### The decade of the brain

The recent history of the idea that neuroscience is the leading discipline for our research into the self is noteworthy and telling. Usually, this political background story is not mentioned in the set-up of the metaphysical riddle of finding a place for mind in nature. In 1989, the United States Congress decided to begin a decade of research into the brain. On July 17, 1990, the then president,



George H. W. Bush (that is, Bush senior), officially proclaimed the "Decade of the Brain." Bush's proclamation ends solemnly and grandiosely — as is customary in this genre: "Now, therefore, I, George Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the decade beginning January 1, 1990, as the Decade of the Brain. I call upon all public officials and the people of the United States to observe that decade with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities." A decade later, a similar initiative in Germany, with the title "Dekade des menschlichen Gehirns" ["The Decade of the Human Brain"] was launched at the University of Bonn under the auspices of the governor of North Rhine-Westphalia, Wolfgang Clement.

It is irritating that the press release for this very initiative began with a statement that is not acceptable as it stands: "As recently as ten years ago the idea that it could ever be possible to see the brain as it thinks was pure speculation." This statement implies that it is now supposed to be possible "to see the brain as it thinks," which, however, looked at more closely, is quite an astounding assertion, since it is ultimately a preposterous idea that one could see an act of thinking. Acts of thinking are not visible. One can at best see areas of the brain (or images thereof) which one might consider to be necessary prerequisites for acts of thinking. Is the expression "to see the brain as it thinks" supposed to mean that one can literally see how the brain processes thoughts? Does that mean that now one no longer merely has or understands thoughts but can also see them in a single glance? Or is it just associated with the modest claim of seeing the brain at work, without already implying as a consequence that one can somehow literally see or even read thoughts?

As far as I know, George Bush senior is not a brain scientist (let alone a philosopher), which means that his declaration of a decade of the brain can at best be a political gesture performed in order to funnel more government resources into brain research. But what would need to happen for one to be able to "see" the brain as it thinks?

Neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging, to which the German declaration alludes with its claim, constitute progress in medicine. Unlike earlier attempts to

understand the living brain, they are not invasive. Thus, we can visualize the living brain with computer-generated models (but not directly!) without serious medical interventions in the actual organ. However, in this case, medical progress is associated with a further promise, the promise to make thinking visible. And this promise cannot be honored. In the strict sense, it is quite absurd. That is to say, if one understands by "thinking" the conscious having of thoughts, much more is involved than brain processes that one could make visible by means of neuroimaging techniques. To be sure, one can make brain processes visible in a certain sense, but not thinking.

The two decades of the brain, which officially came to an end on December 31, 2010, were not intended to be restricted to medical progress but offered hope for progress in self-knowledge. In this context, neuroscience has for a while been charged with the task of serving as the lead discipline for the human being's research into itself, since it is believed that human thinking, consciousness, the self, indeed our mind as such can be located in and identified with a spatio-temporally observable thing: the brain or central nervous system. This idea, which I criticize in this book and would like to refute, I call for brevity's sake neurocentrism. With the rise of other superpowers, Eurocentrism — that is, the old colonialist view of Europe's cultural superiority over the rest of the world — is no longer taken seriously. One must now fight against a new ideological monster, neurocentrism, which is no less a misguided fantasy of omnipotence (and, incidentally, not very scientific either). While Eurocentrism mistakenly thought that human thinking at its peak was bound to a continent (Europe) or a cardinal point (the West), neurocentrism now locates human thinking in the brain. This spurs the hope that, in this way, thinking can be better examined, by mapping it, as Barack Obama's more recent initiative of a "Brain Activity Map" suggests. As if the brain was the continent of thinking such that we could literally draw a map with the structure of neuroimaging models on which we could locate, for instance, the (false) thought that naturalism is true.

The basic idea of neurocentrism is that to be a minded animal consists in nothing more than the presence of a suitable brain. In a nutshell, neurocentrism thus preaches: the self is a brain. To

understand the meaning of "self," "consciousness," "will," "freedom" or "mind," neurocentrism advises us against turning to philosophy, religion or common sense and instead recommends investigating the brain with neuroscientific methods — preferably paired with evolutionary biology. I deny this and thus arrive at the critical main thesis of this book: the self is not a brain.

In what follows, I will take a look at some core concepts of our self-understanding as minded, such as consciousness, self-consciousness and the self. I will do so from an antinaturalistic perspective. In this context, I will sketch some of the absurd consequences and extreme views that came out of naturalism, such as epiphenomenalism — that is, the view that the mind does not causally interfere with anything which really happens. Along with taking stock of some conceptual bits and pieces of our mentalistic vocabulary, I will scrutinize the troublesome issue of free will. Are we free at all, or are there good reasons to doubt this and to conceive ourselves to be biological machines that are driven by the hunger for life and that really strive for nothing other than passing on our genes? I believe that we are in fact free and that this is connected to the fact that we are minded animals of the sort which necessarily work out conceptions of what this means in light of which people become who they are. We are creative thinkers, thinkers of thoughts which in turn change the thinkers. It really matters how you think of yourself, a fact well known to psychologists and to human subjects in general, as we constantly during our conscious life engage with the realm of thoughts about ourselves and others.

Mainstream philosophy of mind for quite a while has sought to provide a theoretical basis for neurocentrism. This seemed necessary given that neurocentrism cannot yet claim to be based on empirical results, as neuroscience is infinitely far away from having solved even "minor" problems, such as finding a physical/neural correlate for consciousness, not to mention finding a location in the brain which correlates with insight into some complicated quantum-mechanical truth or the concept of justice. It has participated, sometimes even enthusiastically, in the decade of the brain. Yet, during the unfolding of mainstream philosophy of mind it has become apparent to many that it is anything but obvious that the self is a brain.

Many reflections and key results of the last two centuries of the philosophy of mind already speak against the basic idea of neurocentrism. I will thus also refer to long-dead thinkers, since in philosophy one should almost never assume that someone was wrong simply because they lived in the past. Plato's philosophy of mind loses nothing through the circumstance that it emerged in ancient Athens — and thus, incidentally, in the context of an advanced culture to which we owe some of the most profound insights concerning ourselves. Of course, Plato was wrong if he believed that we had an immortal soul somehow invisibly governing the actions of the human body. However, if you actually carefully read Plato, let alone Aristotle, it is far from clear that he believed in what the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle famously derided as "the ghost in the machine."

Homer, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Tom Stoppard or Elfriede Jelinek can teach us more about ourselves than neuroscience.

Neuroscience attends to our brain or central nervous system and its mode of functioning. Without the brain there can be no mind. The brain is a necessary precondition for human mindedness. Without it we would not lead a conscious life but simply be dead and gone. But it is not identical with our conscious life. A necessary condition for human mindedness is nowhere near a sufficient condition. Having legs is a necessary condition for riding my bicycle. But it is not a sufficient one, since I have to master the art of riding a bicycle and must be present in the same place as my bicycle, and so forth. To believe that we completely understand our mind as soon as the brain is understood would be as though we believed that we would completely understand bicycle riding as soon as our knees are understood.

Let us call the idea that we are our brains the crude identity thesis. A major weakness of the crude identity thesis is that it immediately threatens to encapsulate us within our skull as minded, thinking, perceiving creatures. It becomes all too tempting to associate the thesis with the view that our entire mental life could be or even is a kind of illusion or hallucination. I have already criticized this thesis in *Why the World Does Not Exist*, under the heading of constructivism. This view, coupled with neurocentrism, supposes that our mental faculties can be entirely identified with regions of the brain

whose function consists in constructing mental images of reality. We cannot disengage ourselves from these images to compare them with reality itself. Rainer Maria Rilke gets to the heart of this idea in his famous poem "The Panther": "To him, there seem to be a thousand bars / and back behind those thousand bars no world."

A recent German radio series called Philosophie im Hirnscan [Philosophy in the Brain Scan] asked the question whether it is "not the human mind but rather the brain" that "governs decisions." "Free will is demonstrably an illusion." What is worse, it claimed that neuroscience finally provides support for a thesis allegedly held by Immanuel Kant, namely that we cannot know the world as it is in itself. The German philosopher of consciousness Thomas Metzinger (b. 1958), a prime representative of neurocentrism, is reported to claim that philosophy and neuroscience agree: perception does not reveal the world, but a model of the world. A tiny snippet, highly processed, adjusted to the needs of the organism. Even space and time, as well as cause and effect, are created by the brain. Nevertheless, there is a reality, of course. It cannot be directly experienced, but it can be isolated by considering it from various vantage points. Fortunately, many philosophers who work in epistemology and the theory of perception would not accept this statement today. The theory that we do not directly experience reality but can only isolate it by considering it from various vantage points proves on closer inspection to be incoherent. For one thing, it presupposes that one can directly experience a model of the world, as the quotation indicates. If one had to isolate this model itself indirectly by considering reality from various vantage points on one's own, one would not even know that, on the one hand, there exists a model and, on the other, a world of which we construct internal models. To know that one constructs or even has to construct a model of reality implies knowing something about reality outright, such as that we can only know anything about it indirectly for some reason or other. Thus one does not always need models and is not trapped within them, so to speak. And why then, pray tell, does the model not belong to reality? Why should, for instance, my thought that it is raining in London, which indeed I do not first need to isolate by considering reality from various vantage points to have it, not belong to reality? If my thought that it is raining in London

right now does not belong to reality (as I can know it without first having to construct a model of mental reality), then where exactly does it take place? New realism in philosophy claims that our thoughts are no less real than what we are thinking about, and thus that we can know reality directly and need not make do with mere models.

My own view, New Realism, is a version of the idea that we can actually grasp reality as it is in itself by way of our mental faculties. We are not stuck in our brains and affected by an external world only via our nerve endings such that our mental life is basically a useful illusion, an interface or computational platform with a basic evolutionary survival value.

After the failures of the loudmouthed exaggerated promises of the decades of the brain, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of the biggest German newspapers, pithily reported: "The human being remains indecipherable." It is thus time for a reconsideration of who or what the human mind really is. Against this background, in this book I sketch the outlines of a philosophy of mind for the twenty-first century.

Many people are interested in philosophical questions, those pertaining to their own minds. Human beings care about what it means for them to be minded, suffering, enjoying, thinking and dreaming animals. Readers who are interested in philosophy but do not spend the whole day going through philosophical literature often have the reasonable impression that one can only understand a philosophical work if one has read countless other books first. In contrast, the present work should be accessible without such assumptions, insofar as it also provides information about the relevant basic ideas lurking in the background. Unfortunately, many generally accessible books about the human mind in our time either simply assume a naturalistic framework or are driven by the equally misguided idea that we have immortal souls on top of our bodies. My own stance is thoroughly antinaturalistic in that I do not believe that nature or the universe (or any other domain of inquiry or objects) is the sole domain there is. We do not have to fit everything into a single frame. This is an age-old metaphysical illusion. However, there is a further question concerning the structure of human mindedness, as the human mind certainly has neurobiological preconditions (no mind without

a suitable brain) but also goes beyond these conditions by having a genuinely immaterial side which we will explore.

### Can the mind be free in a brain scan?

My overall goal is the defense of a concept of the mind's freedom. This includes the fact that we can deceive ourselves and be irrational. But it also includes the fact that we are able to discover many truths. Like any other science or discipline, philosophy formulates theories, gives reasons for them, appeals to facts that are supposed to be acceptable without further ado, and so forth. A theory consists of propositions — claims that can be true or false. No one is infallible, certainly not in the area of self-knowledge. Sophocles portrayed this harshly in *Oedipus the King*, but hopefully things will not unfold so tragically here.

My main targets in this book, neurocentrism and its pioneering precursors — the scientific image of the world, structuralism and poststructuralism — are all philosophical theories. Sometimes it seems as if the empirical findings of brain research entail that the self and the brain are identical. Advocates of what I critically call "neurocentrism" act as though they could appeal to scientific discoveries that should not be doubted by reasonable modern citizens and thus to alleged facts recognized by experts. Yet, with its sweeping assumptions, neurocentrism formulates genuinely philosophical claims, which here means claims that one cannot delegate to some other branch of learning. Science itself does not solve philosophy's problems unaided by philosophy's interpretation of its results. Neurocentrism is ultimately just bad philosophy trying to immunize itself against philosophical critique by claiming to be justified not by philosophy, but by actual neuroscientific discoveries. Notice, though, that no neuroscientific discovery, no fact about our neurobiological equipment without further interpretation, entails anything about human mindedness.

For its interpretation of neuroscientific knowledge, neurocentrism brings to bear philosophical concepts such as consciousness, cognition, representation, thinking, self, mind, free will, and so forth. Our understanding of those concepts by means of which we describe ourselves as minded animals is stamped by a millennia-long intellectual, cultural and linguistic history. There is no possibility for us simply to sidestep this fact and take, as it were, a

neutral or fresh look at the human mind, as if from nowhere or from a God's-eye point of view. Our ways of thinking about ourselves as thinkers are mediated by the language we speak and by the manifold cultural assumptions which govern our self-conception, as well as by a huge range of affective predispositions. Our self-conception as minded always also reflects our value system and our personal experience with mindedness. It has developed in complex ways, in the tension between our understanding of nature, literature, legal systems, values of justice, our arts, religions, socio-historical and personal experience. There just is no way to describe these developments in the language of neuroscience that would be superior or even equal to the vocabulary already at hand. Disciplines such as neurotheology or neuroaesthetics are "terrifying theory-golems," as Thomas E. Schmidt sharply puts it in an article on new realism for *Die Zeit*. If a discipline only gains legitimacy by being able to observe the brain while the brain engages with a given topic or object, we would ultimately need a neuro-neuroscience. Whether we then would also still have to come up with a neuro-neuro-neuroscience, time will tell.

There is also a suspicious political motivation associated with neurocentrism. Is it really an accident that the decade of the brain was proclaimed by George H. W. Bush shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and thus with the end of the Cold War looming? Is this just a matter of political support for medical research? Does the idea of being able to watch the brain — and thereby the citizen — while thinking not also imply a new possibility for controlling social surveillance (and the military-industrial complex)? It has long been well known that possibilities for controlling consumers are expected from a better understanding of the brain: think of neuro-economics, another theory-golem out there.

As the German neuroscientist Felix Hasler (b. 1965) plausibly argued in his book *Neuromythology*, the decade of the brain also goes along with various lobbying efforts. By now, more students at American research universities take psychotropic drugs than smoke cigarettes. The higher resolution and more detailed knowledge of our images of the brain promise to contribute to social transformation in the context of what the German sociologist Christoph Kucklick aptly summarizes as a "control-

revolution." He observes that we live in a "granular society," where we are no longer merely exploited but are also put in a position to interpret ourselves as objects of medical knowledge. The crude identity thesis corresponds to the fantasy that our self, our entire human mind, turns out to be a physical object among others, no longer hidden from view.

The question, of who or what the ominous self really is, is thus revealed to be significant not merely for the discipline of philosophy but rather in political terms as well, and it concerns each one of us on an everyday level. Just think about the popular idea that love can be defined as a specific "neurococktail" or our bonding behavior be reduced to patterns trained in prehistoric times in which our evolutionary ancestors acquired now hard-wired circuits of chemical flows. In my opinion, these attempts are really relief fantasies, as they defer responsibility to an irresponsible and nonpsychological machinery which runs the show of our lives behind our backs. It is quite burdensome to be free and to thus figure that others are free, too. It would be nice if we were relieved of decisions and if our life played out like a serenely beautiful film in our mind's eye. As the American philosopher Stanley Cavell puts it: "Nothing is more human than the wish to deny one's humanity."

I reject this wish, and in this book I argue for the idea that the concept of mind be brought into connection with a concept of freedom, as it is used in the political context. Freedom is not merely a very abstract word that we defend without knowing what we actually mean by it. It is not merely the freedom guaranteed by a market-based economy, the freedom of choice of consumers confronted with different products. On closer inspection, it turns out that human freedom is grounded in the fact that we are minded animals who cannot be completely understood in terms of any natural-scientific model or any combination of them, be it present or futuristic. Natural science will never figure us out, not just because the brain is too complex (which might be a sufficient ground to be skeptical about the big claims of neurocentrism), but also because the human mind is an open-ended process of creation of self-conceptions of itself. The core of the human mind, the capacity to create said images, is itself empty. Without the variation in self-images, no one is at home in our minds, as it

were. We really exist in thought about ourselves, which does not mean that we are infallible or illusions.

And thus, we come to the heart of the matter. We exist precisely in the process of reflecting on ourselves. This is the lot of our form of life. We are not merely conscious of many things in our environment, and we do not merely have conscious sensations and experiences (including feelings); rather, we even have consciousness of consciousness. In philosophy we call this self-consciousness, which has little to do with the everyday sense of a self-conscious person. Self-consciousness is consciousness of consciousness; it is the kind of state you are in right now as I instruct you to think about your own thought processes, to relate mentally to your own minds.

The concept of mental freedom that I develop in this book is connected to the so-called existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). In his philosophical and literary works, Sartre sketched an image of freedom whose origins lie in antiquity and whose traces are to be found in the French Enlightenment, in Immanuel Kant, in German Idealism (Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel), Karl Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud and beyond. In contemporary philosophy this tradition is carried on in the United States primarily on behalf of Kant and Hegel, although Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are also assigned a role. So far, Albert Camus and Sartre have played a minor role in the revival of the existentialist tradition in the philosophy of mind.

I mention these names only in order to remind us of an important strand of human thought about ourselves. The philosophical tenet I take over from that tradition I call neo-existentialism, which claims that human beings are free insofar as we must form an image of ourselves in order to be individuals. To have a human mind is to be in a position in which one constantly creates self-conceptions in light of which we exist. We project self-portraits of ourselves, who we are and who we want to be, as well as who we should be, and via our self-portraits we relate to norms, values, laws, institutions, and rules of various kinds. We have to interpret ourselves in order to have any idea of what to do. We thus inevitably develop values as reference points for our behavior.

Another decisive factor at this point is that we often project false and distorted self-images onto social reality and even make them politically effective. The human being is that being which forms an idea of how it is included in realities that go far beyond it. Hence, we project visions of society, images of the world, and even metaphysical belief-systems that are supposed to make everything which exists part of a gigantic panorama. As far as we know, we are the only animals who do this. In my view, however, it does not diminish other animals or elevate us morally in any sense over the rest of the animal kingdom which would justify the current destruction of the flora and fauna of our planet, the only home to creatures who are able to orient their actions in light of a conception of a reality that goes beyond them. It is not that we human beings should be triumphantly intoxicated on our freedom and should now, as masters of the planet, propose a toast to a successful Anthropocene, as the epoch of human terrestrial dominance is called today.

Many of the main findings arrived at by the philosophy of mind in the twentieth and twenty-first century to this point are still relatively little known to a wider public. One reason for this certainly lies in the fact that both the methods and the arguments that are employed in contemporary philosophy typically rest on complicated assumptions and are carried out in a quite refined specialized language. In this respect, philosophy is of course also a specialized discipline like psychology, botany, astrophysics, French studies or statistical social research. That is a good thing. Philosophy often works out detailed thought patterns about particular matters in a technical language out of sheer intellectual curiosity. This is an important training and discipline.

However, philosophy has the additional and almost equally important task of what Kant called "enlightenment," which means that philosophy also plays a role in the public sphere. Given that all human beings in full possession of their mental powers constantly construct self-images which play out in social and political contexts, philosophy can teach everybody something about the very structure of that activity. Precisely because we are nowhere close to infallible with respect to our mindedness, we often create misguided self-conceptions and even support them financially, such

as the erroneous but widespread conception that we are identical with our brains or that consciousness and free will are illusions.

Kant explicitly distinguishes between a "scholastic concept" [Schulbegriff] and a "cosmopolitan concept" [Weltbegriff] of philosophy. By this he meant that philosophers do not only exchange rigorous, logically proficient arguments and on this basis develop a specialized language. That is the "scholastic concept" of academic philosophy. Beyond this, in Kant's view, we are obligated to provide the public with as extensive an insight as possible into the consequences of our reflections for our image of the human being. That is the "cosmopolitan concept" of philosophy. The two concepts go hand in hand, such that they can reciprocally critique each other. This corresponds to the fundamental idea of Kantian enlightenment — a role that philosophy already played in ancient Greece. The word "politics" itself, together with the set of concepts which still structure our overall relation to the public sphere, the polity, derives from ancient Greek philosophy. The idea made prominent by Plato's Socrates is that philosophy, among other things, serves the function of critically investigating our self-conception as minded, rational animals. For many central concepts, including justice, morality, freedom, friendship, and so forth, have been forged in light of our capacity to create an image of ourselves as a guide to human action. Again, we can only act as human beings in light of an implicit or explicit account of what it is to be the kind of minded creature we happen to be. Given that I believe that neurocentrism is a distorted self-conception of the human mind, full of mistakes and based on bad philosophy, it is time to attack in the name of enlightenment.

### The self as a USB stick

The Human Brain Project, which was endowed with more than a billion euros by the European Commission, has come under heavy criticism. Originally, its aim was to consolidate current knowledge of the human brain by producing computer-based models and simulations of it. The harmless idea was to accumulate all the knowledge there is about the brain, to store it and to make it readily available for future research.

Corresponding to the idea of medical progress based on knowledge acquisition are wildly exaggerated ideas of the capability of artificial intelligence which permeate the zeitgeist. In films such as Spike Jonze's *Her*, Luc Besson's *Lucy*, Wally Pfister's *Transcendence*, Neill Blomkamp's *Chappie* or Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*, mind, brain and computer are confused to give rise to the illusion that we could somehow (and soon) upload our mental profiles on non-biological hardware in order to overcome the limitations of biologically realized mental life. To convince us that there is no harm in such fantasies, in *Her* we are shown a protagonist who falls in love with his apparently highly intelligent software, "who" happens to develop a personality with existential problems so that the program decides to break up with its human lover. In *Transcendence*, the protagonist becomes immortal and omnipotent by uploading his self onto a computer platform to disseminate himself on the internet. In *Lucy*, the female protagonist, after she is able consciously to control 100 percent of her brain activity under the influence of a new drug from Asia, succeeds in transferring herself onto a USB stick. She becomes immortal by transforming herself into a pure mass of data on a data carrier. This is a rampantly materialist form of pseudo-Buddhist fantasy represented by the idea that such a mind/ brain-changing drug has to come from Asia, of course.

Along with the imaginary relief that we get in wishing to identify our self with the grey matter in our skull, our wish for immortality and invulnerability also plays a decisive role in the current world picture. The internet is presented as a platform of imperishability, onto which one can someday upload one's mind purified of the body to surf through infinite binary space forever as an information ghost.

Somewhat more soberly, the scientists of the Human Brain Project anticipate medical progress through a better understanding of the brain. At the same time, this project also proclaimed on its homepage, under the tab "Vision," that an artificial neuroscience based on computer models, which no longer has to work with actual brains (which among other things resolves ethical problems), "has the potential to reveal the detailed mechanisms leading from genes to cells and circuits, and

ultimately to cognition and behaviour — the biology that makes us human."

Scientific and technological progress are welcome, without question. It would be irrational to condemn actual progress merely because science over the last couple of hundred years has led to problems such as nuclear bombs, global warming, and ever more pervasive surveillance of citizens through data collection. We can only counter the problems caused by modern humanity with further progress directed by enhanced value systems based on the idea of an ethically acceptable sustainability of human life on earth. Whether we resolve them or whether humanity will obliterate itself sometime in the foreseeable future cannot be predicted. This depends on whether we will even recognize the problems and identify them adequately. It is in our hands to implement our insights into the threatened survival conditions of human animals. We underestimate many difficulties, such as, for instance, the overproduction of plastic or the devastating air pollution in China, which already afflicts hundreds of millions. Other problems are hardly understood at all at this point, such as, for example, the complex socioeconomic situation in the Middle East. These problems cannot be dealt with by outsourcing human self-conceptions to objective representations, maps and models of the brain. It is not only that we do not have enough time left to wait for neuroscience to translate everything we know about the human mind into a neurochemically respectable vocabulary. Rather, there is no need to do this, as we are already equipped to deal with the problems, but underfinanced and understaffed in the relevant fields of inquiry.

We certainly do not want to return to the Stone Age, indeed not even to technological conditions in the nineteenth century. A lamenting critique of modernity does not lead anywhere except for those who long for the end of civilization, which more likely than not reflects their own fears of civilization, their "discontent with civilization" (Freud). It is already almost unthinkable for us digital natives to write someone a letter via snail mail. If there were no email, how would we organize our workplace? As always, technological progress is accompanied by technophobia and the potential for ideological exploitation, which govern the debates over the digital revolution and the

misuse, as well as the monitoring, of data on the internet.

General technological progress is evidently not that bad. On the contrary: I am glad that I can write emails and be electronically connected with my friends around the globe. Furthermore, I am glad that I no longer have to go to a video store in order to rent films. I am glad that I can order pizza, book my vacation online, and find information ahead of time concerning hotels, beaches or art exhibitions. Our technologically sophisticated and scientifically respectable progressive civilization is not in itself a "context of delusion," as pessimistic cultural critics following the philosopher Adorno suppose.

Yet, as always, there are delusions today. The major delusion is that scientific and technological process unaided by cultural, philosophical, ethical, religious and artistic reflection could by itself lead to an enhanced understanding of the human mind in light of which we could improve on our decision-making or courses of action.

Admittedly, our present-day techno-scientific progress has its dark sides, problems of our own making on an undreamt-of scale: cyberwars, ecological degradation, overpopulation, drones, cybermobbing, terrorist attacks prepared in social networks, nuclear weapons, attention deficit disorders, and so forth. Nevertheless, remarkable regressions in the domain of self-knowledge are to be noted, which are this book's concern. When it comes to such

regressions, we are dealing with ideology, thus with a certain kind of illusion that proliferates for as long as no one revolts against it. Ideology critique is one of the main functions of philosophy in society, a responsibility that one should not avoid.

### Neuromania and Darwinitis — the example of Fargo

The British medical physician and clinical neuroscientist Raymond Tallis (b. 1946) coined the terms "neuromania" and "Darwinitis," by which he understands humanity's current misrepresentation of itself. Neuromania consists in the belief that one can know oneself by learning ever more about one's central nervous system, especially concerning the workings of the brain. Darwinitis complements this view with the dimension of our deep biological past

to make us believe that typical present-day human behavior is to be better understood, or perhaps only explainable at all, if we reconstruct its adaptive advantage in the struggle for survival amid the tumult of species on our planet.

Neurocentrism is the combination of neuromania and Darwinitis, and thus the idea that we can understand ourselves as minded animals only if we investigate the brain while considering its evolutionary prehistory.

A wonderfully ironic example of Darwinitis can be found in an episode of the brilliant television series *Fargo*. The psychopathic killer Lorne Malvo, skillfully played by Billy Bob Thornton, is temporarily arrested by a policeman who recognized him. However, Malvo had already previously come up with the ingenious idea of presenting himself as a priest on a church website, so that he is quickly released, since the police all too credulously take a supposed church's website on the internet for the real thing. When Malvo heads out of the police station, the above-mentioned policeman, who knows his true identity, asks him how he can reconcile his behavior — being a killer who uses a fake identity as a priest — with his human conscience. Malvo replies by asking him why human beings can visually distinguish so many shades of the color green. The policeman is at a loss but later asks his fiancée about it. She answers him as follows. Our refined color palette for green stems from the fact that, back in the time when we were

hunter-gatherers, we had to recognize our natural enemies as well as our prey in bushes and dense forests. Natural selection thus brought about our specific color vision, which generally speaking is hard to deny. Without natural selection and the color spectrum consciously available to us due to our biological equipment, our species would probably not exist.

Yet, Malvo does not merely evoke a biological fact. With his response, he actually wants to communicate that he is a hunter and to justify it. He would like to justify his behavior by pointing out that we are descended from hunters and killers and hence that his killing represents a kind of natural necessity. He thus advocates a crass form of social Darwinism and consequently a philosophical position. Social Darwinism advocates the thesis that every kind of interpersonal behavior between



human beings can be understood, explained and justified according to parameters implemented in the survival of biological species that can be investigated by evolutionary biology. What we do is driven by behavioral patterns ultimately rooted in hard-wired facts about our biological make-up and not in ethical reflection which floats free from our biology.

Although Darwinism, of course, first emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, certain basic ideas of social Darwinism are much older. The ancient Greeks already discussed it — for instance, Plato in one of his main works, in the first book of *The Republic*. The ancient philosopher Thrasymachus appears there and defines justice as "nothing else than the advantage of the stronger."<sup>22</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century, Arthur Schopenhauer began describing specifically human behavior in a proto-social-Darwinistic manner. For example, he explained romantic love as well as many other social facts and processes in general on the basis of human sexuality as courtship behavior in the biological sense of the term, which in his case was accompanied by a marked general misanthropy and misogyny in particular. Schopenhauer — to put it lightly — had problems dealing with the opposite sex.

One finds explanations like this everywhere in popular culture and science today. In particular, biological categories are employed to explain the basic structures of human behavior in relationships that we are all involved in on an everyday level. We indeed wish that it might finally be revealed that the human being is "only" an animal, too, and in any case we do not want to be so naïve as to believe that we have completely dropped out of the animal realm. Perhaps, from a bad conscience toward the other animals (whom we gawk at in zoos and happily grill on warm, summer evenings with a bottle of beer in one hand), we wish to pretend that the human being is no exception in the animal realm but rather, simply by coincidence, also a living being with a very peculiar kind of mind — and, by the way, most likely the only animal worried about

its position in the animal realm in light of the very idea of such a realm. This is one of the reasons why, as far as I know, we are the only animals that rip other animals to shreds with machines, pack their meat into their intestines, turn this mess into a

sausage, and then enter into a dialogue over the most skillful preparations for roasting them. In its sophistication, this goes way beyond any kind of cruelty we find in the animal kingdom, and it serves the function of creating a culture of meat consumption which makes it look as if meat was not really meat, given that sausages are highly artificial products obscuring their origins

### Mind — brain — ideology

One of the main theses of this book is that the issues that have been touched on up to this point, of delegating our self-knowledge to new scientific disciplines, are ideological and thus misguided fantasies. What I criticize here under the heading of ideology is a system of ideas and knowledge claims in the realm of self-knowledge, which misconstrues the products of the mind's freedom as natural, biological processes. Seen in this light, it is no wonder that the contemporary ideology of neurocentrism has particularly tried to dismiss the concept of human freedom. It is supposedly for the best that there are no products of human freedom at all.

The goal would be achieved if one were able to trace Heinrich von Kleist's *Amphitryon*, Gioachino Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle*, the hip-hop of the 1990s or the architecture of the Empire State Building as somewhat complex variants of the ludic drive prevalent in the animal kingdom. It is widely acknowledged that our sciences are still infinitely far from achieving this goal. Thus we find, toward the end of the much discussed German "Manifesto: Eleven Leading Neuroscientists on the Present and Future of Brain Research," which appeared in the popular science journal *Gehirn und Geist* [Brain and Mind]:

Even if we should someday eventually bring to light all of the neural processes that underlie human sympathy, being in love, or moral responsibility, the uniqueness of this "inner perspective" is still preserved. Even one of Bach's fugues is no less fascinating when one has precisely understood how it was composed. Brain research will have to clearly distinguish what it can say and what lies beyond its domain, as musicology — to stick to this example — has a few things to say about Bach's fugue but must remain silent when it is a matter of explaining its singular beauty.

As a representative example of neurocentrism — that is, the thesis that self = brain — one can point to the book by the Dutch brain scientist Dick Swaab (b. 1944) entitled *We Are Our Brains: A Neurobiography of the Brain, from the Womb to Alzheimer's*.

Right at the beginning of the introduction we read that:

Everything we think, do, and refrain from doing is determined by the brain. The construction of this fantastic machine determines our potential, our limitations, and our characters; we are our brains. Brain research is no longer confined to looking for the cause of brain disorders; it also seeks to establish why we are as we are. It is a quest to find ourselves.

This quote nicely illustrates how, according to neurocentrists, brain research is no longer supposed to be research only into the mode of functioning of an organ. It now wishes, or at least Dick Swaab wishes, to embark on the "quest to find ourselves." Without a healthy brain, admittedly, we would not exist. We could not think, be aware or live consciously. However, without many more arguments, it does not follow that we are identical to our brain.

An initial distinction which helps to clarify why we should resist the scientifically premature and philosophically deluded claim that we are identical to our brain even if we cannot exist without it is the distinction between necessary and sufficient conditions. For example, it is necessary that I have a bagel and jelly in order to be able to spread jelly on a bagel. But it is by no means sufficient. If the jelly is in the fridge and the bagel is in China, I do not easily achieve the state of having bagel with jelly smeared on top of it. For that to happen, I must properly blend jelly and bagel, for instance with butter, and all of us — me, jelly, bagel and butter — must be in the same place. The necessary material conditions for there being an event of bagel consumption do not suffice for this event to happen.

We are in a similar situation when it comes to the brain. One reason why we are not identical to our brain consists simply in the fact that we do not first have a body that is composed only of neurons but have many additional organs that consist of other kinds of cells. Furthermore, we would not even be

close to being what we are if we did not exist in social interaction with other human beings. We would have no language and would indeed not even be capable of surviving, since human beings are anything but born solipsists, as we cannot have a normal kind of consciousness without communicating with others.

Many cultural facts simply cannot be explained by observing a brain. At the very least, one must take into consideration a variety of brains that are found in mature, healthy human organisms. This makes the subject matter of neuroscientific observation forever too complex, since, because of its individual character and plasticity, even a single brain cannot be anywhere near to being completely described. Good luck to the attempt to investigate, for instance, the sociocultural structure of a current Chinese metropolis or even a small town in the Black Forest with the methods of neurobiology! Not only is such a project completely utopian, but it is also superfluous, since we are in possession of far better means. Our methods of describing and explaining cultural facts stem from the long history of the acquisition of self-knowledge, which besides philosophy includes, of course, literature, music, art, sociology, psychology, the colorful bouquet of the human sciences, religions, and so forth.

For more than a hundred years, the philosophy of mind has been centrally concerned with the relation between mind and brain, a question that became acute in early modern philosophy, especially with René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes famously formulated a (pretty crude) way of looking at the problem: for he asked how an immaterial (meaning: not material) thing, such as a thought or a series of thoughts, could ever interact with the material world. If it could, it could not really be immaterial, as only matter causally interferes with matter. If it could not, our actions seemed to be utterly mysterious, as we often act by forming a plan in the realm of thoughts about the near future and then carry it out in the world of bodies by moving our limbs accordingly.

However, the mind—brain problem harks back to antiquity, to the question already formulated in ancient Greece, namely, how our body relates in general to our mind or our soul. This has created the general mind body problem, of which our more recent mind—brain problem is a variant. The most

general formulation of the problem runs as follows. How can conscious subjective mental experience take place at all in an unconscious, cold, purely objective universe that unfolds according to natural laws? How could our subjective conscious states possibly fit into a larger scheme of things in the universe, which is not governed at all by the kinds of psychological or logical laws constitutive of our self-encounter as thinking beings? Suns, moons, fermions and galaxy clusters, dark matter and CO<sub>2</sub> do not have or support an inner life. How come that the brain does? The prominent Australian philosopher of consciousness David Chalmers (b. 1966) has called this the hard problem of consciousness. In other words, how does our apparently provincial perspective on the universe fit into the natural order of the universe which exceeds our attempt to conceive it?

At this point, it is very tempting in our current cultural climate to come up with a simplistic solution, one which basically just shrugs its shoulders and flatfootedly denies that there is a problem. For instance, one could suppose that the conscious self is generated by the brain. One could perhaps understand this production as a side-effect of an adaptive advantage in the struggle for survival of species and individuals. Consciousness would then simply exist because certain kinds of brains prevailed in evolutionary terms, namely those generating consciousness. This certainly looks like some kind of explanation. But if our conscious self is generated by the brain, it cannot simply and self-evidently be identical to what generated it. If A is generated by B, then A and B are in any event not strictly identical. Hence, either the self is generated by the brain (perhaps as an illusion that is useful for survival or as our organism's user interface) or it is identical with the brain. This is where theorizing begins, as one cannot obtain clarity and coherence in this matter by confusing production and identity, which Sam Harris (b. 1966) absolutely fails to do in his book *Free Will*. Harris there actually claims that the self is generated by the brain and hence is not free, while he also denies the existence of an independent mental level. However, how is it possible that the brain creates something with which it is identical? Traditionally, this model, the model of a *causa sui*, a cause of itself, was reserved to God, and it did not help theology's coherence either ... The problem is that, if there is only a brain and not in addition to it a mental level (let alone a

soul), then, if the brain produces consciousness, it has to produce a brain. Of course, this invites the immediate response that consciousness is identical only to a part of the brain, but again this does not help, as it is not the case that the non-conscious parts of the brain literally produce the conscious parts of the brain — at least there is no known mechanism that instantiates this part—whole relation.

To deny human freedom based on the claim that we are identical to our brain will never work, even if our brain unconsciously makes decisions for us. For one thing, on this model we are precisely still free, since the brain for its part is not supposed to depend on the unconscious decisions of another system. If my brain controls me, but I am my brain, then my brain controls itself, or I control myself. Thus freedom is not imperiled but rather elucidated. If the brain is a self-determining system where the non-conscious parts bring about explicit and conscious decision-making, this does not undermine our freedom but is, rather, an account of it. One of the many sources of confusion in Sam Harris's wishful thinking that he can eliminate his own free will by theorizing about it in an incoherent manner is that he really provides us with a (bad) model of free will and not with a way of undermining it. Also, why would free will require that I consciously create a conscious decision to do something? This view immediately runs into a vicious infinite regress, as I would have to pile up infinitely many conscious decisions to act in a conscious manner! I would have consciously to produce my consciousness of my consciousness, ... to act. This will not work. But it has nothing to do with the brain.

### The cartography of self-interpretation

The critique of neurocentrism is nevertheless only one objective of this book. At the same time, I would like to map the intellectual landscape of our self-knowledge by presenting some central basic concepts of the philosophy of mind. How are concepts such as consciousness, self-consciousness, self, perception and thinking connected and how, anyway, do they become part of our vocabulary?

In what follows, I will hence also be concerned with positive self-knowledge, and thus with the question of who we really are. The main positive thesis of the neo-existentialism sketched out here is the claim that the human mind engenders an open multiplicity of capacities all of which involve the mind, because

the mind creates an image of itself by way of these self-interpretations. The human mind makes an image of itself and thereby engenders a multiplicity of mental realities. This process has a structure that is historically open, and which cannot be conceived only in the language of neurobiology. Neurobiology will only ever be able to account for some necessary conditions of human mindedness, even if it informs us that there are restrictions on human action of which we might not have been aware before. The fact that no complete form of self-knowledge of the human mind can ever be achieved via neurobiology alone is grounded in the fact that the human mind is not purely a biological phenomenon.

Our capacity for developing false world pictures and misguided self-conceptions is intertwined with the phenomenon of ideology. What is crucial is that even false self-conceptions express something, as they present those who hold them as taking certain things to be true and accurately stated even though they are not. We are in constant dialogue with others about our self-image and general self-conception precisely because we are constantly negotiating and testing new modules of self-understanding. Some turn out to be delusional. Yet, those suffering from self-delusional models are afflicted by the associated beliefs. It is constitutive of the human mind that it can change according to its beliefs about itself, which includes the false ones. If I mistakenly believe that I am a great dancer and lead my life in light of this illusion regardless of my experience (which should teach me a lesson here), this changes my status as an agent.

The spectrum of the production of mental realities extends from a profound understanding of ourselves in art, religion and science (which includes the human, social, technological and natural sciences) all the way to the quite various forms of illusion: ideology, self-deception, hallucination, mental illnesses, and so forth. We have at our disposal, among other things, consciousness, self-consciousness, thinking, a self, a body, an unconscious, etc. The human mind is irreducibly multifarious and ever-changing. What remains is the core invariant of self-production.

The human mind does not have a reality that is independent from its self-images, such that one could simply compare this independent reality of the mind with its self-images. It exists only in such a

way that it makes self-images. It thus always becomes what it makes of itself. It has a history for precisely this reason, the history of mind or *Geistesgeschichte*, as we say in my neck of the woods.

A simple way to illustrate this thought is by the following contrast. As a matter of fact, I hardly know anything about trees. However, I know that elms are trees. But I could certainly not tell an Anhui elm from a Nikko elm without doing some kind of research (at least Google). Now imagine I see a tree somewhere and say to myself or to others that this is a Nikko elm. It might not even be an elm or an Anhui elm. Be that as it may, the tree is what it is regardless of my beliefs about it. It does not turn into an Anhui elm if I believe it to be one. And it does not change its status at all relative to my beliefs, which simply do not matter for the tree's being what it is. By contrast, if I am self-deluded and believe that I am a great tango dancer, I might start behaving in light of these false beliefs which sustain my self-delusion. Maybe I start traveling to Buenos Aires, where no one wants to dance with me, which I explain as a lack of recognition of my true tango genius, etc. In this case, my belief about myself, my capacities, my style, and so forth, changes me from someone with an accurate self-image into a deluded person. My beliefs about myself (including my beliefs about my beliefs) affect me profoundly and constantly. A mind is just not an elm, as you can tell from this little philosophical exercise.

Our epoch of the history of mind, modernity, has produced neurocentrism, which seems to be in harmony with a great basic motif of this epoch: to achieve enlightenment (the realization of a particular value system) through science. However, what we have increasingly forgotten in the recent history of this valuable epoch is the fact that it can founder and run aground. We need more modernity, not less. We currently lack a sufficiently widespread insight into the constitutive historicity of our self-images, which has been a central theme of philosophy for the last two hundred years and which ought not to be erased from our current concept of mind, which threatens to lose touch with its historical reality in the context of its wish to deny its own mindedness by replacing it with a silicon, plastic or neural counterpart. <>

[The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory](#) edited by Sven Bernecker, Kourken Michaelian [Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy Routledge, 9781138909366]

Memory occupies a fundamental place in philosophy, playing a central role not only in the history of philosophy but also in philosophy of mind, epistemology, and ethics. Yet the philosophy of memory has only recently emerged as an area of study and research.

[The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory](#) is an outstanding reference source on the key topics, problems, and debates in this exciting area, and is the first philosophical collection of its kind. The forty-eight chapters are written by an international team of contributors, and divided into nine parts:

- The nature of memory
- The metaphysics of memory
- Memory, mind, and meaning
- Memory and the self
- Memory and time
- The social dimension of memory
- The epistemology of memory
- Memory and morality
- History of philosophy of memory.

Within these sections, central topics and problems are examined, including: truth, consciousness, imagination, emotion, self-knowledge, narrative, personal identity, time, collective and social memory, internalism and externalism, and the ethics of memory. The final part examines figures in the history of philosophy, including Aristotle, Augustine, Freud, Bergson, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger, as well as perspectives on memory in Indian and Chinese philosophy.

Essential reading for students and researchers in philosophy, particularly philosophy of mind and psychology, the Handbook will also be of interest to those in related fields, such as psychology and anthropology.

Excerpt: The philosophy of memory today

Why a philosophy of memory handbook? Why now?

Memory is a fundamental cognitive capacity and as such interacts with virtually all other basic cognitive capacities. Given its centrality to the mind, it is surprising neither that theorizing about

memory is as old as philosophy itself nor that memory continues to be an active area of philosophical research. Important early ideas about memory were developed by Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the Chinese and Indian philosophical traditions. In the early modern period, key ideas were developed by figures such as Hume, Reid, and Locke. More recently, continental philosophers have made a number of valuable contributions, sometimes drawing on psychoanalytic insights. In the contemporary analytic tradition, research on memory is thematically oriented, clustering around a number of topics in philosophy of mind, epistemology, and ethics.

Despite this long tradition of inquiry, the philosophy of memory was until recently not recognized as an area of research in its own right. In recent years, however, the situation has changed markedly, and an increasing number of philosophers now count themselves as specialists in or active contributors to the philosophy of memory. The philosophy of memory is now well on its way to taking form as a distinct, coherent area of research, with a recognized set of problematics and theories. Many of the questions that have driven this development stem from a new interdisciplinarity, and philosophers of memory have often interacted as closely with colleagues in other disciplines, particularly psychology, as they have with other philosophers. Crucially, philosophers of memory, particularly those working in the analytic tradition, which is the focus of the present volume, increasingly recognize that they have as much to say to each other as they do to colleagues in psychology and other disciplines.

Philosophers of memory, in other words, increasingly think of themselves as philosophers of memory, and the area is in the process of developing its own infrastructure, as hooks, special issues, conferences, and workshops on all aspects of the philosophy of memory become regular occurrences. The aim of this handbook is to build on and contribute to this trend by providing a critical piece of infrastructure for the field: a comprehensive overview of the key concepts, debates, theories, and figures in the philosophy of memory. The handbook is designed to be a comprehensive reference work, accessible both to researchers and advanced students, that will be of use to the field for many years to come.

## The present handbook

The handbook consists of eight thematically oriented parts and one part on the history of philosophy of memory.

The nature of memory. This part covers highly general issues in everyday and scientific thinking about memory. For example, while we tend to take it for granted that memory is a unitary phenomenon, reflection on the variety of things that we can remember — things as different as facts, events, skills, to start with — suggests that it may in fact be irreducibly multiple, a suggestion which receives some support from current psychology and neuroscience. Is memory fundamentally a unified capacity, or is the term ambiguous among a number of essentially distinct cognitive capacities? The chapters in this part deal with this question, the phenomenology of memory, and memory and levels of scientific explanation. The metaphysics of memory. This part deals with core questions about what memory is. Does memory imply truth? What is it for someone to remember something? Does memory presuppose a causal connection with the past? Does it necessarily involve stored traces originating in past experience? When we remember, do we stand in cognitive contact with the past itself or only with internal representations of the past?

Memory, mind, and meaning. Remembering is intimately bound up with a wide range of other mental phenomena. Consider imagination: the ability to imagine possible events clearly depends on our ability to remember past events (with past events providing the raw materials for imagined events). Recent research, however, suggests that memory itself might be best understood as a form of imagination. The chapters in this part provide a survey of these connections, looking at memory in relation to consciousness, perspective, imagination, images, and emotion.

Memory and the self. The connection between memory and the self has long been appreciated, with memory providing one of the standard answers to the puzzle of personal identity. In recent years, other connections between memory and the self, have come to the fore, including the role of memory in constituting the psychological self. The chapters in this part look both at the traditional question of memory and personal identity and at

the relationships between memory and self-consciousness and memory and narrativity.

Memory and time. An adequate understanding of memory presupposes an understanding of its relationship to time. The chapters in this part look at a number of connections between memory and time, including memory and the concept of time, memory and the metaphysics of time, and the idea, prominent in current psychology and playing an increasing role in philosophy, that memory for past events amounts to mental time travel, an imaginative process in which the agent projects himself into the past, much as he projects himself into the future when imagining future events.

The social dimension of memory. Social influences on individual memory and remembering as a social phenomenon are key themes of recent research on memory. What is the role of memory in constituting collective identities (for example, a nation's memory for its past)? What impact do cultural practices of remembering have on the shape of the individual's memory? What is the relationship between internal memory and external "memory"? The chapters in this part draw on philosophical and interdisciplinary resources to survey answers to these and related questions.

The epistemology of memory. Epistemologists recognize that memory is a core epistemic source: without memory, we would be deprived of nearly all of our knowledge, both of the past and of things in general. But different epistemological theories (externalist theories, as well as internalist theories such as foundationalism and coherentism) account for memory knowledge in different ways, and all theories must deal with certain highly general questions about the nature of memory knowledge: is memory capable of generating new knowledge, or does it merely preserve existing knowledge? Given that we can't rule out the possibility that memory systematically misleads us about the past, can we really claim to know the past?

Memory and morality. Given its centrality to our mental lives, memory is bound to have an important ethical dimension. There are a number of emerging technologies that promise either to enhance memory (allowing superior recall) or to selectively inhibit it (allowing, for example, the forgetting of traumatic experiences). The chapters in this part will

survey the thorny ethical questions raised by these technologies, as well as looking at more general questions: might we have a duty to remember (or to forget) certain people, events, or facts? History & philosophy of memory. The final part of the volume is devoted to the history of the philosophy of memory, with chapters on figures and currents including Plato, Aristotle, classical Indian philosophy, Indian Buddhist philosophy, Chinese Buddhist philosophy, Augustine, Avicenna and Averroes, Aquinas, Locke, Reid, Hume, Hegel, Freud, Lacan, Bergson, Russell, Halbwachs, Bartlett, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Ricoeur.

Reflecting the diversity of topics that fall under the heading of philosophy of memory, this handbook is long, with 48 chapters (not including this introduction). It could, however, easily have been longer. There are, for example, active programs of philosophical research on habit memory, nondeclarative memory, working memory, and memory in nonhuman animals, to give but a few examples of topics that, for one reason or another, could not be given chapters of their own here. If the philosophy of memory continues to grow and develop at its present rate, it will not be long before a new edition of this handbook is called for. Hopefully, these topics — and others that have yet to emerge — will be included there.

[American Horror Story and Philosophy](#): Life Is but a Nightmare edited by Richard Greene & Rachel Robison-Greene [Popular Culture and Philosophy Series, Open Court, 9780812699722]

In [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#), philosophers with varying backgrounds and interests explore different aspects of this popular 'erotic thriller' TV show, with its enthusiastic cult following and strong critical approval. The result is a collection of intriguing and provocative thoughts on deeper questions prompted by the creepy side of the human imagination.

[American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) is Volume 114 in the series, Popular Culture and Philosophy, with Series Editor George A. Reisch. Editors are Richard Green and Rachel Robison-Greene. Greene is Professor Philosophy at Weber State University. Robison-Greene is the co-editor of *Orange Is the New Black* and *Philosophy: Last Exit from Litchfield* and *Girls and Philosophy: This Book Isn't a*

*Metaphor for Anything*. The book has 17 contributors.

The book is organized around the seasons of the show. As an 'anthology show,' *American Horror Story* has a unique structure in the horror genre because it explores distinct subgenres of horror in each season. As a result, each season raises its own set of philosophical issues.

The show's first season, *Murder House*, is a traditional haunted house story. Philosophical topics expounded in [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#)'s first season include: the moral issues pertaining to a mass murderer as one of the season's main protagonists; the problem of other minds. And whether it is rationally justified to fear the Piggy Man.

Season Two, *Asylum*, takes place inside a mid-twentieth-century mental hospital. Among other classic horror subgenres, this season includes story lines featuring demonic possession and space aliens. Chapters inspired by this season include such topics as: the ethics of investigative reporting and whistle-blowing; personal identity and demonic possession; philosophical problems arising from eugenics; and the ethics and efficacy of torture. Season Three, *Coven*, focuses on witchcraft in the contemporary world. Chapters motivated by this season include: sisterhood and feminism as starkly demonstrated in a coven; the metaphysics of traditional voodoo zombies; the uses of violent revenge; and the metaphysics of reanimation. Season Four, *Freak Show*, takes place in a circus. Philosophical writers in [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) look at life under the Big Top as an example of 'life imitating art'; several puzzles about personal identity and identity politics; the ethical question of honor and virtue among thieves; as well as several topics in social and political philosophy.

Season Five, *Hotel*, is, among other disturbing material, about vampires. Chapters inspired by this season include: the ethics of creating vampire progeny; LGBT-related philosophical issues; and existentialism as it applies to serial killers. Season Six, *Roanoke*, often considered the most creative of the seasons so far, partly because of its employment of the style of documentaries with dramatic reenactments, and its mimicry of *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity*. Among the philosophical themes explored in the season are

what happens to moral obligations under the Blood Moon; the proper role of truth in storytelling; and the defensibility of cultural imperialism.

Much to the surprise of many thoughtful people, it turns out that demons, ghosts, zombies, and vampires actually can teach us quite a bit about the real world. [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) shows us how to think about big picture issues. It's what good philosophy does. Whether it's ethics, evil, the human condition, or even something as grandiose as the meaning of life, it's scary how much fine philosophy is buried inside this highly entertaining volume. — Jack Bowen, author of *If You Can Read This: The Philosophy of Bumper Stickers* and *The Dream Weaver: One Boy's Journey Through the Landscape of Reality*

[American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) shows us the philosophical significance of the alluring terrors upon which this addictive TV show is based — and it shows us the ways in which American Horror Story can help us interpret our own stories. Be of like mind! Join us! — Dam Doll, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Delta College, Michigan

The dead do tell tales. Gothic tales on steroids — it's an uncanny world after all. [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) truly is to die for. It masses the tropes and immerses the reader in sagas of vampires, specters, witches, and zombies. And what would our current horror be without a crazed clown or two? — Ron Hirschbein, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, California State University, Chico

With a delightfully insane contemplation of demonic possession, [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) routinely captures the essence of harrowing secrets that drives a terrific and terrible truth knocking on all of our doors! — Brian A. Kinnaird, Chair of Criminal Justice, Bethany College

What constitutes personal identity over time? Are there souls that exist separate from bodies? What can we say about demons? The Devil? God? What's the true nature of evil? You might not be pondering these fairly deep questions while watching episodes of American Horror Story, but after you read this book, you won't be able to help but reflect upon them. And your appreciation for this profound show will grow exponentially, I assure you. — Robert Arp, author of *1001 Ideas that Changed the Way We Think*

Philosophers of occult lore have conspired to prepare a simmering cauldron of tasty yet toxic intellectual morsels. [American Horror Story and Philosophy](#) gives readers astounding new insights into the blood-curdling yet endlessly addictive TV show, American Horror Story.

[Morality, Moral Luck and Responsibility: Fortune's Web](#) by N. Athanassoulis [Palgrave Macmillan, 9781403935496]

[Morality, Moral Luck and Responsibility](#) is a critical examination of our understanding of morality and responsibility through the questions raised by the problem of moral luck. The book considers two different approaches to moral luck, the Aristotelian vulnerability to factors outside the agent's control and the Kantian ambition to make morality immune to luck and concludes that both approaches have more in common than previously thought. At the same time, it also considers recent developments in the field of virtue ethics and neo-kantianism. This book will appeal to anyone with an interest in normative theories and the fundamental questions surrounding moral responsibility and the attribution of praise and blame.

Excerpt:

One's history as an agent is a web in which anything that is the product of the will is surrounded and held up and partly formed by things that are not, in such a way that reflection can go only in one of two directions: either in the direction of saying that responsible agency is a fairly superficial concept, which has a limited use in harmonizing what happens, or else that it is not a superficial concept, but that it cannot ultimately be purified... — Bernard Williams

When Bernard Williams introduced the term 'moral luck' to modern philosophy, he intended it to be an oxymoron' because of the contradiction in the implications of the two terms: morality is associated with control, choice, responsibility and therefore praise and blame, whereas luck is about chance, unpredictability, lack of control and therefore the inappropriateness of praise or blame. If there is such a thing as moral luck, then we have to show both how it is possible to hold that crucial elements of the moral decision were outside the agent's control and how we still want to hold the agent responsible for the act and attribute praise or blame.



The problem of moral luck raises fundamental questions about how we understand ourselves and our moral obligations. On the one hand, even a casual observation of human nature reveals that it is subject to all sorts of contingencies. If we want to give a plausible account of human nature we need to recognize and accommodate all the factors outside our control, which play a crucial role in shaping who we are, what we do and what we are held responsible for. The moral life seems vulnerable to all sorts of influences, even to the point of catastrophic and irreversible disasters befalling entirely unwitting and undeserving agents. On the other hand, the very understanding of morality involves a robust conception of responsibility. There is a sense of unfairness in the suggestion that moral matters, and therefore matters of moral praise and blame, can be subject to factors outside the agent's control. Equality in the sphere of morality seems to require an equal footing and an equal chance to do what we are obliged to do and what we will be blamed for not doing.

These two elements are in conflict, exemplified by the possibility of moral luck. Williams movingly draws our attention to how luck has 'captured' agency in a tangled web of factors outside our control and more genuine acts of the will. He finds himself having to accept the possibility of luck and faced with two, equally problematic, options. One option is to accept that agency is a superficial concept. So when we speak of choice, agency and the voluntary we are using these terms in a superficial way, accepting that there are really no such things, as the real influence is the influence of luck. For how can there be real choice if it is not my choice? This 'solution' is truly repugnant, as it plays havoc with our understanding of morality. If we still want to make claims of moral responsibility, these are just superficial ones as morality is not really possible. The other option is to accept a concept of responsibility, but admit that it cannot be purified. This would mean that we would have to, at least to an extent, give up on a strong and pure conception of responsibility. This would entirely muddle our understanding of desert and its connection to agency and the voluntary.

The problem is a central one, as it appeals to a fundamental understanding we have of ourselves in terms of what we have done (or more aptly chosen

to do) and what we are responsible for. This sense of responsibility is conceptually tied in to agency and choice, and therefore threatened by luck. As a consequence, the only other response to moral luck, one rejected by Williams, is to resist its very possibility. Conceptually, morality is immune to luck, so we need to find a practical way of understanding this as a requirement which can be applied to us as human beings. That is, as beings which are clearly also subject to contingent factors.

The subject of this book is an exploration of the tension created by moral luck: of the requirement for moral immunity from luck, coupled with the need to offer a plausible conception of situated agency subject to contingencies. The discussion will cover two writers whose work is claimed to be at opposite ends of the spectrum on the problem of moral luck. On the one hand, we have the Aristotelian acceptance of the possibility of luck, such that the influence of contingent factors is recognized as a part of the good life. This allows Aristotle to give a plausible account of moral development, accounting for all the factors outside our control which shape us into who we become. On the other hand, we have the Kantian ambition to show how morality as immune to luck is a concept which has an application for human beings. This will allow the Kantian to make strong and pure judgements of responsibility. As we shall see, both these interpretations of Aristotle and Kant are, in part, correct, but also, in part, misleading. Aristotle is more than aware of the demands of reason, while part of the Kantian project involves trying to accommodate a plausible conception of gradual and contingent moral development. I will also consider the Stoics, as their answer to the problem of moral luck shares some of its starting points with Aristotle, while pre-dating some Kantian claims. Finally, I will examine three recent writers, Slote, Hursthouse and Herman, who work in the traditions of Aristotle or Kant, and use their theories to ask whether there really is much of a disagreement between Kantians and virtue ethicists as some commentators would have us believe.

### Moral luck

In Chapter 1 we see why the idea of 'moral luck' is problematic, as we could not find a clear and detailed definition that would meet with general approval. The term was introduced to moral philosophy through the use of examples, but this

method was unsatisfactory. As we saw, some of the examples were misidentified as cases of moral luck, either because they were cases of bad luck rather than moral luck, or because the examples were re-described so that the elements whose influence was down to luck were not relevant in the moral evaluation of the agent and therefore the examples were not genuine cases of moral luck. The use of examples to identify moral luck has given rise to a number of works on the issue because the interpretation of the proposed examples has been so controversial and disputed. Following the discussion of Aristotle and Kant, I can now speculate on why the examples of moral luck have provoked such radical disagreement amongst philosophers.

In Williams' terms, Aristotle's and Kant's answers to moral luck come from within specific systems of morality, that is morality used in the restricted sense. Different moral systems exemplify different degrees of resistance to the possibility of moral luck. Different practical examples of moral luck are developed from within particular systems of morality and can be criticized from other systems of morality which do not share the same outlook with respect to moral luck. In short, the disagreements about the classification of a particular example as a case of moral luck may often stem from a difference in perspective. As a result of the fact that some moral systems show a greater degree of resistance to moral luck than others, the interpretation of these examples can be disputed and these disputes are often very difficult to resolve as the systems of morality which lead to different answers are viewed as incompatible with each other.

The answer, then, to the problem of identifying the nature of moral luck cannot be any more detailed than the idea of a conceptual tension between 'morality' and 'luck', unless one is prepared to take on board a particular system of morality. Both Williams and Nagel point out that in some particular systems of morality, namely Kantian morality, there is immunity to luck, and Williams briefly mentions how this approach is to be contrasted with 'certain doctrines of classical antiquity' according to which some aspects of the moral life are subject to luck.<sup>1</sup> However, when both Williams and Nagel go on to discuss their examples of moral luck they do not specify under

which particular system of morality or under which understanding of morality these cases are indeed cases of moral luck. Thus, they leave the road open for other commentators to repudiate their examples from within specific understandings of morality. For example, Andre shows why the Gauguin example has been mis-described as an example of moral luck by analyzing it from an Aristotelian perspective.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, Williams also writes with reference to the Gauguin example 'I can entirely agree with Andre that an Aristotelian emphasis in ethics, for instance, would not run into the same difficulties.'<sup>3</sup> Part of the confusion, then, resulting from the use of examples to illuminate the problem of moral luck may arise from the fact that different writers write from different — or what they interpret as different — systems of morality.

A related point needs to be made here; some particular systems of morality may show localized resistance to certain types of luck, whereas they are more susceptible to other kinds of luck. For example, Slote's version of virtue ethics is resistant to resultant luck, but vulnerable to the influences of developmental luck. Therefore, Nagel's distinction between different types of luck (with the substitution of developmental luck as a wider idea encompassing situational luck) is a crucial aid in understanding a particular moral system's resistance to luck.

It seems then that we are not any further in providing a definition of moral luck outside a particular system of morality, other than the general thought that there is a conceptual tension between 'morality' and 'luck'. However, Williams' and Nagel's initial discussions can serve as inspiration for a further thought. Both original articles as well as the commentators which followed them perceive a difference in the approach to moral luck exemplified in the writings of Kant and Aristotle. The two philosophers are represented as writing from rival camps when it comes to their answer to the problem of moral luck, but I am not sure this interpretation is correct.

### From Aristotle or Kant to Aristotle and Kant

The shape of modern moral philosophy is fairly antagonistic. This spirit of 'rivalry', for want of a better word, is exemplified in Anscombe's article 'Modern Moral Philosophy' and the discussions it

generated. Anscombe saw Aristotle as providing us with a distinctive method of doing ethics, a way of doing ethics in many ways opposed to the Kantian tradition of ethics. Perhaps due to the great influence of Anscombe's article, perhaps due to other factors, this view of seeing different systems of ethics as opposing each other has prevailed in modern philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps due to the need to make virtue ethics 'heard' over what used to be the dominant ways of understanding morality — deontology and consequentialism — theorists worked hard to identify the differences between the theories and explain why one had the advantage over the other. Thus, until recently, for moral philosophy the choice was either Aristotle or Kant. Clearly, a third, dominant and well-discussed alternative is consequentialism, but for the purposes of this discussion I have concentrated on the other two.

However, this picture, a choice between Kant and Aristotle, is beginning to change. Partly in response to the virtue-ethical camp, neo-Kantians have worked hard to show how Kantianism can incorporate what have, so far, been the claimed advantages of virtue ethics, thus bringing the two theories closer together. The discussion of moral luck has had the unexpected result of showing why, at least in one respect, our understanding of the search for an adequate moral theory should change from Aristotle or Kant to Aristotle and Kant.

### Two pictures of the human life

The possibility of moral luck has revealed an understanding of the human life as having two aspects: on the one hand human beings are vulnerable to contingencies, subject to luck and hostages to factors outside their control; on the other hand human beings are autonomous agents, capable of making true choices, the objects of moral responsibility for their voluntary acts and immune to luck. One understanding of Aristotle is that his ethics exemplifies the view of human agents as vulnerable to luck, whereas Kant's morality is interpreted as seeing agents qua agents as immune to luck. However, this interpretation of Kant and Aristotle as focusing on rival understandings of human morality is incorrect. It is a misrepresentation of both Kant and Aristotle.

Both Aristotle's and Kant's understanding of morality is driven by the same two forces: on the one hand the recognition that morality must make

sense of and allow room for a conception of responsibility, and on the other hand the appreciation that any conception of morality must result in a plausible picture of the human condition as subject to luck. I would claim that it is a mistake to see either philosopher as exclusively dealing with only one of these requirements.

These two requirements, that of responsibility and that of a plausible picture of the human condition, are interrelated with the understanding of human beings as having two sides. The side of humans which is vulnerable to luck generates the idea that a plausible account of morality needs to accommodate the influence of contingent factors, whereas the view of humans as independent, rational beings allows us to make judgements about responsibility. The preceding discussion of moral luck has shown how both Aristotle and Kant are aware of both these two sides to the human condition, both these forces that operate on our understanding of morality.

The familiar picture of Aristotle is of the philosopher who more than anyone else recognized the influence of moral luck, and this picture is correct. Aristotelian ethics functions in a way that allows for vulnerability to considerations of constitutive, developmental, situational and, to a smaller extent, resultant luck, especially in extreme conditions. Aristotle's recognition of the possibility of moral luck is based on a very plausible picture of how things are and does its best to accommodate the possibility of luck. Constitutive luck can be partly accommodated as its positive influences, those that lead to virtue, are innocuous, that is at least their results have the merit of being indistinguishable from virtue even though they are not, qualitatively, the same as true virtue. The negative influences of constitutive luck, those that lead to vice, are more problematic as the end result, vicious acts, is a problem. However, agents so unfortunate as to have been the objects of bad constitutive luck are described by Aristotle as being in a bestial state of character, a state of character almost outside the normal human range. Their extreme bad luck removes them from the normal sphere of human morality.

Developmental and situational luck are more crucial for Aristotelian character formation and are the kinds of luck more frequently associated with Aristotelian ethics. We have seen how for Aristotle

moral development is gradual and dependent on a number of contingent factors. The development of virtue, the habituation in virtuous action, the opportunities for display of virtue, the external goods necessary for some virtues and so on are all subject to luck. However, unlike the continent and the incontinent agents who are fully at the mercy of luck, the virtuous agent is afforded some degree of immunity from luck. The virtuous agent can best accommodate the influences of bad luck as long as these are not extreme.

Lastly, resultant luck is, to an extent, accommodated. Action, in general, is important for Aristotelian ethics, since having the right character means acting in accordance with it and as soon as actions are performed it becomes more important that they have the intended results. However, unless an agent is subjected to extremely bad resultant luck, the fact that some of the results of some of his actions are outside his control does not unduly affect the evaluation of the Aristotelian agent. Furthermore, many of the contemporary examples of moral luck can be re-described to show how what the agent should be held responsible for is something other than the results of his acts which were outside his control, for example Chamberlain and Anna. Thus, many of the ways in which resultant luck is claimed to have an effect on morality can be accounted for in Aristotelian theory.

This understanding of Aristotle is correct and prevalent amongst commentators, but it is not the entire picture. As we have seen, the other half of Aristotelian ethics concerns itself with choice, the voluntary and a notion of independent reason. Virtue is not simply the end result of favourable circumstances and factors, but must involve a conscious understanding of the right reason and a definite choice of virtue for its own sake. This 'choice' seems to involve a notion of reason which is immune to the influence of luck. This is the kind of reason which is usually picked out as characteristic of the work of Kant.

For Kant, a central tenet of his moral theory is to hold that we are noumenally free, which results in the thought that morality is immune to luck. This is a project driven by a conception of 'morality' as equally available to everyone, at any time of their lives, regardless of past experiences, circumstances or even previous choices. This idea of morality is exemplified in an understanding of pure rationality

possessed by the intelligible self. Morality is immune to luck, as the very idea of 'moral luck' is almost nonsensical. Morality is simply not the kind of thing that can be the subject of luck.

This is the aspect of Kant which has, until recently, characterized discussions of his moral theory. However, as we have seen there is another aspect to Kant. This aspect of Kant's theory makes use of the 'virtues' and 'character'. Indeed Kant's discussion of the sensible character is reminiscent of the Aristotelian thoughts on character formation. Kant's sensible character is established over a long period of time and is difficult to change, is influenced by constitutive and developmental factors, requires good teachers and role models as well as appropriate habits and opportunities for action. Thus, it is unfair to accuse Kant of ignoring all these interesting and plausible accounts of moral character.

It seems then that Aristotle is aware of the need for a conception of responsibility generated by an understanding of reason as independent from luck as much as Kant is aware of the need to give a plausible account of how luck affects the everyday circumstances of our moral lives. Both philosophers are concerned with accounting for both sides of human morality, even though at times they seem to be more occupied with one side of the picture than the other.

This idea is being recognized, even if this recognition is implicit, by modern writers. As we saw, neo-Kantians have been focusing on previously little-known aspects of Kant's theory on virtue and as a result their work resembles what has been seen as the exclusive domain of Aristotelians. Virtue ethicists, on the other hand, seem driven by the concern to justify their theory outside contingent factors, Slote explicitly claiming moral immunity from luck for his theory, while Hursthouse openly claims many similarities between her account of Aristotle and Kant.

The mistaken view of Aristotle and Kant as having developed radically opposed theories comes from failing to see that both writers are concerned with both considerations, that is immunity to luck and a plausible account of the human condition as subject to luck. It is true that Aristotle is more well known for espousing a view of morality as subject to luck and that some of Kant's works concentrate

exclusively on building a picture of moral immunity to luck, but it is a mistake to represent either philosopher as being one sided. Thus, a strict distinction between Kant and Aristotle on the grounds that one theory is concerned with immunity from luck whereas the other is not is a misrepresentation of their ethical projects.

### A further distinction

We have come across, in the preceding discussion, a further way of distinguishing between Aristotelian and Kantian ethics: the distinction between character-based and agent-based theories. So far, I have tacitly accepted this distinction, but it is now time to question its viability and its usefulness.

In a sense, claiming that Aristotle's theory is a theory of character whereas Kant's is not, is incorrect. Aristotle does elaborate on the moral concept of 'character' within his ethics, but so does Kant. Indeed, the Kantian conception of the sensible character has much in common with the Aristotelian use of character. Both refer to character in the sense of strong and fixed dispositions, developed over a long period of time and resistant to change, open to external influences and habituation and so on. Thus, in these terms, Kant has a similar understanding of character to that of Aristotle. However, proponents of the distinction between character-based and agent-based theories could argue that although both theories make use of the concept of 'character', only Aristotle makes it basic in his understanding of ethics. In this sense the distinction claims that Aristotle and Kant differ in that character plays a basic or foundational role for Aristotle, from which other concepts are derived and justified, a role which is not present in Kant. Is this distinction then viable and useful?

It is difficult to give an answer to this question as it is not immediately clear what is meant by describing a theory as being 'based on character'. It is true that Aristotle's understanding of 'character', which corresponds to the Kantian sensible character, plays a fundamental role in Aristotelian ethics, which the sensible character does not have in Kantian ethics. In Kantian ethics true moral worth can only be attributed to the good will and not to the sensible character. However, the Aristotelian understanding of 'character' incorporates a notion of voluntary, moral choice which is not present in the Kantian sensible character as such. Virtue, for Aristotle, is not just the

result of habituation, education, favourable influences and so on — all of which are incorporated in the Kantian understanding of the sensible character — but requires a rational choice of virtue done knowingly and for its own sake. The confusion arises because in Kant the two aspects of the self — the intelligible and the sensible — are examined and understood separately. It is only the intelligible self that is the object of morality, it is only the sensible character that is subject to luck. In Aristotle this distinction does not occur; Aristotelian 'character' not only is shaped by luck but also includes an ability to reason that is somehow immune to luck.

How should we conclude, then, with respect to the distinction between character-based and agent-based theories? The distinction relies on a misinterpretation of Kant and Aristotle. It can only make sense if we assume that the notion of character operates in Aristotle in a different way than it does in Kant. This, however, is not true. The way Aristotelian character has been traditionally understood corresponds to the sensible character and thus Kant should not be accused of ignoring the concept of 'character'. At the same time this understanding of Aristotelian 'character' is mistaken, as the Aristotelian concept has as much to do with immunity from luck (associated with the intelligible self) as it has to do with vulnerability to luck (associated with the sensible self). Both writers, again, are concerned with both ideas. If we still want to claim that one concern is more central to one philosopher than to the other, we have to be very careful exactly how we phrase the distinction and what we imply by it.

### Responsibility

The problem raised by moral luck is essentially a problem of responsibility: given that there are two sides to the human condition, one immune to luck and one that is vulnerable, how do we reconcile the two in order to make judgements of responsibility? This question remains unanswered.

Slote, like the Stoics, attempted to give a picture of a theory of virtue that is immune to luck. The Stoic project was criticized for simply failing to explain the way things are. If the Stoic theory were correct, we would expect to see most agents reach and maintain a state of virtue, and this simply does not seem to be the case. At the same time we saw how the Stoics are aware of the implausibility of some

of their claims and how they try to incorporate more plausible accounts of morality in their thesis. However, this results in a theory with two conflicting aspects which are not reconciled.

Slote's move from the moral to the ethical is problematic as a strategy for avoiding moral luck and even if we were to grant him this move, although his system of morality avoids resultant luck, his reliance on intuitions makes it vulnerable to constitutive and developmental luck.

Herman's position is now closer to that of Aristotle, but perhaps the cost here is having to abandon some Kantian elements or leaving it unclear how all elements of the theory are reconciled. Similarly Aristotle wants to incorporate a picture of character as subject to luck while maintaining an understanding of reason as independent whose operation can generate judgements about responsibility, but it is not clear how the two can be integrated. In part, this concern is part of Hursthouse's attempt to give a naturalistic account of reason, which, as we saw, remains problematic.

Should we accept that part of our selves is subject to luck whereas part is immune and the two can operate together, while in some mysterious way maintaining immunity from luck, it is still not clear how we should decide questions of responsibility. What extremes of constitutive, developmental and situational luck can be overcome by an agent's ability to reason and make choices? If we accept that agents have an independent ability to reason morally, we still know nothing about the power of reason to overcome contrary obstacles. How much is too much for reason to overcome?

For Aristotle the decision, because of the nature of ethics, lies in perception of the particular situation. A decision cannot be made on such questions prior to knowing the particular details of each case. Thus, such a question cannot have a general answer in advance of looking at each case. Of course, any such judgements of particular cases have to be performed by those who can perceive correctly, that is the virtuous agent. So, judgements about responsibility can only be made by those who are skilled in doing so and only when they are faced with particular situations. For Kant the revolution in the mode of thought can take place in any agent at any time and is tied to his understanding of humans as noumenally free. However, our motives are

opaque even to us, and it may be impossible to know our own selves in this respect.

## Conclusion

The possibility of moral luck raises fundamental questions about what it is to be human and what it is to be a moral being, questions about freedom, responsibility, choice and control. To find answers to these questions is not the work of one philosopher or one theory, but the underlying project of both moral theory and practice, so it is not surprising that despite detailed discussions neither Aristotle, nor the Stoics, nor Kant, nor the neo-Kantians nor the virtue ethicists can come up with a complete and satisfactory answer.

However, sometimes looking at the problem without arriving at an answer can be illuminating in itself. The discussion of moral luck highlights a tension between morality and lack of control which underpins all the moral theories we have examined. It is a mistake to assume that Aristotelian theory accepts the possibility of moral luck as opposed to Kantian theory which rejects it. Both philosophers, and to an extent all the theories examined, are aware of the two forces that pull in opposite directions: the demand for control and the attribution of responsibility placed on us by our understanding of morality, and the need to accommodate the influences of luck within a plausible explanation of the human condition.

[The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil](#) by Chad Meister and Paul K. Moser [Cambridge Companions to Religion, Cambridge University Press, 9781107055384]

For many centuries philosophers have been discussing the problem of evil — one of the greatest problems of intellectual history. There are many facets to the problem, and for students and scholars unfamiliar with the vast literature on the subject, grasping the main issues can be a daunting task. This Companion provides a stimulating introduction to the problem of evil. More than an introduction to the subject, it is a state-of-the-art contribution to the field which provides critical analyses of and creative insights on this longstanding problem. Fresh themes in the book include evil and the meaning of life, beauty and evil, evil and cosmic evolution, and anti-theodicy. Evil is discussed from the perspectives of the major monotheistic religions, agnosticism, and atheism.

Written by leading scholars in clear and accessible prose, this book is an ideal companion for undergraduate and graduate students, teachers, and scholars across the disciplines.

### Excerpt: Evil and God

"The problem of evil" arises from an apparent conflict between two claims: the claim that God exists and the claim that the evil in the world is real. Calling it "the problem of evil," however, can be misleading, because various problems for theism arise from the reality of evil. One problem occurs among theists who seek to answer a question about God's purposes. In ancient and medieval times, for example, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologians generally assumed that God exists and is fully good, merciful, and all-powerful. A central question they sought to answer about God was: Why has God permitted evil in a world that God created? More recently, a different but related question has arisen: Is it reasonable to believe that God exists when there is so much evil in the world and, if it is reasonable, on what ground?

The general concept of evil covers a wide domain and can include everything that is harmful and destructive in the world. It thus connotes all bad or nefarious actions, states of affairs, and character traits. For instance, a theft, a drought, or an individual who routinely lies can be evil. Even so, the concept of evil has a deeper dimension. The moral deficiency of such actions as the beheadings of innocent civilians by ISIS, the serial killings of John Wayne Gacy, or the murders of the Holocaust does not qualify as simply wrong or immoral. Similarly, the harm of such events as the Bangladesh cyclone in 1991 (when more than 140,000 people lost their lives), the tsunami in Indonesia in 2004 (more than 250,000 victims), or the Tangshan China earthquake in 1976 (more than 700,000 people killed) is not simply bad or even dreadful. Such events encompass a deeper dimension of evil — one that generates a philosophical problem for theists.

The evil challenging theism does not reduce to human suffering. It can include what we may call "the fragility of human life," that is, its vulnerability to its destruction or demise. Even if human life includes a test of human character, some humans are not given the opportunity to undergo the test. For instance, some humans die in infancy, in

advance of any test of their character. This seems to be a missed opportunity for them, and it is arguably not good, even if they die without suffering. Human fragility, with or without suffering, seems to be part of the world's evil, and it prompts the question of why a morally perfect God would allow it. Credible answers do not come easily here.

In philosophical discussions, a common classification divides evil into two broad categories: moral evil and natural evil. Moral evils are brought about by the intentions or negligence of moral agents. Some moral evils are horrible, such as the previous examples from ISIS, Gacy, and the Holocaust. The evils of human trafficking, economic exploitation, and animal and human torture are further examples of horrible moral evils. Other cases of moral evil are less severe, such as speaking ill of another person or neglecting to recycle one's plastic garbage. In addition, certain character defects also can be moral evils, such as selfishness, excess vanity, and dishonesty.

Natural evils are not brought about by moral agents but result from such naturally occurring events as the devastating cyclone, tsunami, and earthquake mentioned earlier. Similarly, other natural events that cause harm to human beings and other living creatures would be cases of natural evils. Disabilities and diseases that have deleterious effects on humans and other animals, such as AIDS, Zika, deafness, and blindness, are also natural evils.

Attention to evil extends beyond the Abrahamic theistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It occurs in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas — the sacred scriptures and central religious texts of Hinduism. In traditional Buddhism, evil is the perpetuation of illusion by factors that foster constant becoming — a becoming that leads to suffering. This suffering, or *dukkha*, is the focus of the Four Noble Truths. In Daoism, evil is the result of a lack of balance between the two opposing and fundamental principles of Yin and Yang.

All of the major world religions attempt to address problems raised by evil, but evil is not problematic only for the religions of the world: it raises difficulties for atheism too. For a typical theist, evil is an aberration, something repugnant about the world. It is unwanted, unwilling by God, and contrary to the purpose of creation and the way

things ought to be. On a typical atheistic account, in contrast, evil is a natural part of the world, simply part of the way the world is. Typical atheists thus make a philosophical concession to the reality of evil that does not occur within various religious traditions, including the Abrahamic faiths that view evil as contrary to the way the world was meant to be.

Traditional theism faces profound problems raised by evil. It portrays God as the ultimate locus of being, meaning, and value; as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent; as a person or at least not less than a person (possessing consciousness, will, and intentions); and as worthy of human worship and hence morally perfect. The problem of evil demands some accounting for the evil in a world allegedly created by this maximally exalted God.

Typical discussions of the problem of evil bear directly on divine omnipotence and omnibenevolence (and sometimes omniscience). It seems, at least at first glance, that if a God with such attributes exists, then a world created by God would not include evil. As omnibenevolent, God would not want evil to exist. As omnipotent, God would have the power to make the world exist without evil. As omniscient, God would have the knowledge to accomplish the task. Since there is evil — widespread, horrific evil — there is some reason to believe that such a God does not exist. While there are theoretical problems for the non-Abrahamic faiths and nontheists raised by the reality of evil, they pale in comparison to the problem of evil for traditional theism. This book focuses on the problem of evil for theism.

The problem of evil has two major theoretical versions: the logical problem and the evidential problem. The logical problem concerns whether the basic claims of theism about God are inconsistent with the reality of evil. In the latter half of the twentieth century, some significant philosophers argued for an inconsistency here. A prominent atheist, J. L. Mackie, stated the following in an influential article: "Here it can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another" ("Evil and Omnipotence,"} Mackie holds that evil is a problem for theists in that there is a contradiction between the fact that evil exists

and the claim that the God of traditional theism exists. In particular, he alleges an inconsistency in affirming the following propositions:

- (1) God is omnipotent.
- (2) God is omnibenevolent.
- (3) Evil exists.

While one or two of these propositions may be true, Mackie argued, taken as a group, the three form a logically inconsistent set. Almost everyone agrees that (3) is true; Mackie thus inferred that an omnipotent or omnibenevolent God does not exist. Various theists have argued that if God (possibly) has a morally acceptable reason for allowing evil to occur, the logical problem of evil fails to show the nonexistence of God. In any case, whether the nonexistence of God can be demonstrated remains a matter of philosophical debate.

The evidential problem of evil suggests that, given the reality of evil, theism is probably not true, even if it is logically consistent. While there are various types of evidential arguments, the kind of reasoning employed is usually inductive. Such arguments also generally rely on actual cases of evil and suffering, sometimes described in graphic detail. A typical claim is that the existence of evil in its vast amounts and horrible forms provides reasonable evidence that the God of traditional theism (probably) does not exist.

A philosophical response to the problem of evil may attempt to show that arguments from evil against theism are unsuccessful. Such a response is often called a "defense" against evil, the most common being a "free will defense" that assigns responsibility for (some) evil to human freedom. A defense aims to support the view that God could have morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evils in question. Another approach aims to vindicate God by offering a plausible explanation for evil. An attempt to identify God's morally sufficient reasons or purposes for allowing evil is sometimes called a "theodicy." No single theodicy has convinced all inquirers about the problem of evil, and the book of Job suggests that humans, given their cognitive limitations relative to God's purposes, are not in a good position to have a theodicy, at least so long as God does not supply one. Many inquirers, including many theists, doubt that God has supplied a theodicy. Even so, it is an



open question whether one could have evidence of God's reality even in the absence of a theodicy.

## Overview

This book is divided into two parts. Part I, including Chapters 1 through 7, takes up some prominent conceptual issues and controversies regarding the problem of evil. Part II, including Chapters 8 through 13, examines some significant interdisciplinary issues related to the problem of evil, including those from Near Eastern religious studies, philosophy, science, and the history of science and religion.

In Chapter 1, "Evil and the Meaning of Life," John Cottingham notes that in the Judeo-Christian tradition, suffering is redemptive and that this redemptive component is understood in a unique way. This tradition differs from a secularist approach to evil that either simply accepts that the world has evil or attempts to find temporary meaning in the midst of the contingencies of life. The redemptive component in question does not entail that the purpose for evil emerges solely from something achieved in an afterlife. Scriptural and religious teachings promote the idea that the moral quality of human life and experience is central to the meaning and value of that life and that redemption aims to enhance that moral quality. According to Cottingham, the Judeo-Christian view that meaning is to be found within a moral framework - which includes such fundamental values as love, justice, and compassion - fits with common human intuitions.

In Chapter 2, "Beauty and the Problem of Evil," Charles Taliaferro presents an approach to the problem of evil within a version of Anselmian theism - the view that God is that than which none greater can be conceived. The essay is structured as a reply to those (such as Galen Strawson) who maintain that to suppose that the Christian God exists is morally repugnant and ugly. Taliaferro advances four reasons why responses to the problem of evil are incomplete if they do not include the aesthetics of beauty and ugliness. He also argues that the ugliness and beauty of the cosmos are compatible with a beautiful God, and he emphasizes that this God can be experienced, as represented in the works of Julian of Norwich and W. H. Auden. In confronting evil, according to Taliaferro, our sense of ugliness and beauty needs to be underscored.

Various philosophers have claimed that logical arguments from evil have been rebutted by one or more versions of the free will defense. In Chapter 3, "Logical Arguments from Evil and Free Will Defences," Graham Oppy argues that this is not the case. He grants that there is currently no successful logical argument from evil against God's existence, but he argues that the logical arguments from evil are no worse off than any other logical arguments for or against the existence of God. It may well be, according to Oppy, that there are yet-to-be-discovered versions of the logical argument from evil that are successful. He finds no reason to rule out such a claim.

In Chapter 4, "God, Evil, and the Nature of Light," Paul Draper discusses scientific debates about the nature of light as he evaluates the evidential problem of evil. By focusing on the structure of the reasoning in those debates, he notes a similarity in the debates between theism and what he calls "source physicalism." Comparison of certain theories of light with other incompatible ones, he argues, has shown some of them to be improbable - at least with other evidence held equal. Similarly, in his story, a popular version of theism can be shown to be improbable in comparison with an incompatible theory of physicalism entailing that physical reality is the source of the mental. Given various data about good and evil, Draper argues that this version of physicalism is much more probable than theism and that, with other evidence held equal, theism is likely false.

We do well to recognize the cognitive limitations of human beings when thinking about the problem of evil. A position called "skeptical theism" takes this consideration seriously. Skeptical theists are typically skeptical about whether evil can disconfirm theism and not about whether God exists. They are skeptical of our ability to have adequate knowledge of the moral matters crucial to the success of the evidential argument from evil. In Chapter 5, "Skeptical Theism," Timothy Perrin and Stephen Wykstra point out that skeptical theistic responses to evidential arguments from evil are typically grounded on two claims. The first is that if the God of theism exists, we should not be surprised that we are not privy to God's reasons for permitting evil. The second is that many of the evidential arguments for atheism are weaker than one might think. They examine the approaches of

various leading skeptical theists and evaluate some of the central issues raised by critics of skeptical theism. They conclude the essay by sketching a next step for skeptical theism given emerging versions of evidential arguments.

The problem of evil suggests reasons for the claim that God does not exist. A related problem, "the problem of divine hiddenness," does the same. Some inquirers have asked whether the latter problem is a version of the problem of evil. In Chapter 6, "Evil, Hiddenness, and Atheism," J. L. Schellenberg argues that it is not. He contends that there are different motives that might be attributed to God (anti-bad, pro-good, and pro-relationship) and that the divine hiddenness argument is more fundamental than the argument from evil. He proposes, however, that it may be beneficial for the two types of arguments to work together.

In Chapter 7, "Anti-Theodicy," Nick Trakakis describes how anti-theodicy presents an oppositional stance toward the project of theodicy. He discusses some of the morally objectionable and historically conditioned aspects of theodicy. He also engages with some recent criticisms of anti-theodicy, in particular one arguing that various approaches to anti-theodicy are committed to Schopenhauerian pessimism, the view that it would have been better if the world had never come into being. In addition, using the pastoral response to the problem of evil developed by John Swinton, Trakakis responds to another criticism of antitheodicy. He argues that anti-theodicy can avoid the dangers of both Schopenhauerian pessimism and Leibnizian optimism while also providing the means to resist the destruction of faith, meaning, and hope in the face of the world's evil.

Part II of the book addresses interdisciplinary issues related to the problem of evil. The systematic study of the natural world and the scientific knowledge thereby obtained have been remarkably informative for our species. In Chapter 8, "Cosmic Evolution and Evil," Christopher Southgate examines some implications of the sciences for the problem of evil. He focuses on cosmic theodicy, understood as the theological problem of suffering caused by the natural processes of the cosmos, including natural disasters, disease, and evolutionary development. This focus includes consideration of various theodicies and what may be needed for an account

that preserves the loving character of God given the pain and suffering found in the natural world. Southgate argues that such an account may include claims about eschatological redemption and the co-suffering of God with God's creatures.

In Chapter 9, "Ancient Near Eastern Perspectives on Evil and Terror," Margo Kitts examines the use of literary and artistic illustrations and religious idioms in the Ancient Near East to justify killings and mass-casualty violence. She notes that many idioms unearthed since cuneiform and hieroglyphic writings were deciphered reflect both an understanding of evil as cognate with death and terror and a captivation with displays of might and the terror of its victims. Using hermeneutics, Kitts aims to show that reading certain ancient texts may allow us to peer into our own intuitions about evil.

The last four chapters of the book are written from the perspective of either a particular religious tradition or, in the case of the final chapter, atheism. In Chapter 10, "Judaism and the Problem of Evil," Lenn Goodman approaches evil from a Jewish perspective focusing on "the suffering of innocents." Drawing from Maimonides, Goodman notes that unlike what is presented in some rabbinical teachings, the Torah's affirmations of the justice of God disallow the tormenting of the innocent for the purpose of enhancing eternal reward. Death and suffering, in this account, are consequences of human finitude and the cycles of the natural world, but life remains meaningful nonetheless. Finite embodiment, in this perspective, also underlies the individuality that allows us to imitate the divine perfection through getting to know God's wisdom, grace, and compassion and to conform to them in our own lives.

In Chapter 11, "Christianity, Atonement and Evil," Paul Fiddes considers the problem of evil from a Christian viewpoint implying that God overcomes evil and sin through the atonement of Jesus Christ. He focuses on the interconnection between atonement and theodicy, arguing that a free will theodicy requires the suffering of God, while the Christus Victor view of atonement, which affirms an objective conquering of evil,

requires a subjective shift in the ability of humans to deal with pain and suffering. These two theodicies need to intersect, according to Fiddes, in order to yield a satisfactory account of the reality of evil.

The result will expand the concept of atonement to include the enablement of response to God by all of creation.

In Chapter 12, "Islam and the Problem of Evil," Timothy Winter notes that while the various traditions within Islam include a range of approaches to the problem of evil, they share an adherence to the Qur'an. Using this sacred text, Islamic thinkers conclude that the suffering of the guilty was just punishment for their sin, but the suffering of the nonguilty can be directed toward the purification of the soul. In addition, many Islamic thinkers hold that the guiltless, including animals and infants, will receive compensation in the afterlife for the sufferings experienced in this life. Going further, a perspective common among Sunni thinkers includes the doctrine of "theistic subjectivism" entailing that the "evil" experienced by guiltless humans is not intrinsically evil, because God's ways are always wise even though human minds may be unable to grasp them as such.

In Chapter 13, "Naturalism, Evil, and God," Michael Ruse takes it as a given that the problem of evil is a challenge to belief that an all-powerful and all-loving God exists. He considers whether methodological naturalism, entailing that scientific explanations must not include divine interventions, exacerbates the problem of evil. He denies that it does so while acknowledging that to affirm methodological naturalism now is to affirm a Darwinian theory of evolution through natural selection. Ruse argues that a Darwinian understanding of humans (a) suggests that they are a combination of selfishness and altruism, (b) supports that humans can choose between right and wrong, and (c) acknowledges the existence of much pain and suffering in the world.

The intellectual challenges raised by the reality of evil, suffering, and terror continue to be vexing for theists of all stripes. Although scholarly research has advanced in the areas of philosophy, theology, history, religious studies, and science, final solutions to the problem of evil remain elusive. Even so, many insights have arisen from various areas in relation to inquiry about the problem of evil. Some of these insights emerge in this book's chapters.

[Background Practices: Essays on the Understanding of Being](#) by Hubert L. Dreyfus, edited by Mark A. Wrathall [Oxford University Press, 9780198796220]

This volume presents a selection of Hubert Dreyfus's pioneering work in bringing phenomenology and existentialism to bear on the philosophical and scientific study of the mind. Each of the thirteen essays interprets, develops, and extends the insights of his predecessors working in the European philosophical tradition. One of Dreyfus' central contributions to reading the historical canon of philosophy comes from his recognition that great philosophers help us to understand the "background practices" of a culture - the practices that shape and embody our most basic understanding of ourselves and the things and situations we encounter in our world. Background practices are all too often overlooked completely, or else their importance is misunderstood. Each chapter in this volume shows in one way or another how a broad range of philosophical topics can only be properly understood when we recognize how they are grounded in the background practices that shape our lives and give meaning to our activities, our tasks, our normative commitments, our aims and our goals.

This is a collection of gather together his arguments against representational theories of mind, knowledge, and action. In their place, Dreyfus proposes a theory of embodied coping as our primordial interaction with the world, drawing principally on Merleau-Ponty's "motor intentionality" and Heidegger's "Care" structure.

The editor rightly begins with a paper on Dreyfus's model of skill acquisition. The model, tellingly, may be best understood by the model that it opposes. The more traditional model plots a continuous curve from beginner to expert, as the learner acquires a richer and richer theory of the skill domain in which he is learning. He begins with the basic ontology — the things that make up the domain — and the relationships and interactions among them. A beginning driver in fact does learn by understanding the accelerator, the brake, the speedometer, etc., and how each affects the behavior of the car itself, and he learns basic rules about when to press the accelerator, when to press the brake, and so on. And Dreyfus's model doesn't dispute that beginning stage. But, once the beginner advances, the Dreyfus model diverges — it isn't a matter of consciously learning more rules (and more things), but instead a matter of embodying highly contextual heuristics and

strategies that resist explication as rules. And the reason that they resist explication as rules is that they simply aren't rules.

Some of the best papers are ones that respond to the objection that, if those more expert skills are not rule-driven, they become mystical — beyond explanation or account altogether. This is the objection that is born of the traditionalist saying, in one way or another, that there must be rules governing the expert's behavior and that we just haven't found them yet — how could it be otherwise? Here Dreyfus calls especially on Merleau-Ponty's notion of "motor intentionality" (and the new-to-me "energy landscapes" of the neuroscientist Walter Freeman).

These more positive accounts are suggestive but still a bit sketchy, as presented here. The strength of Dreyfus's work still lies in critique, I think. Even given Deep Blue, Watson, and other AI successes, the obstacles that AI researchers have found vexing (the "commonsense problem", the "frame problem") seem to justify the doubts Dreyfus raised with respect to the theoretical foundations of the AI project.

Overall, this is a very good collection for understanding both Dreyfus's critique of representationalism and the beginnings of a positive account in its place.

Reviewed by Mark Okrent, Bates College

Hubert Dreyfus died this past April at the age of 87, after a distinguished career in which his ideas and personality influenced several generations of scholars working in a variety of different areas. The publication of this collection of essays, written over a period of more than 20 years and expertly edited by Dreyfus' student and long-time friend and collaborator Mark Wrathall, is thus both timely and greatly appreciated. This is especially the case because of the organizing principle of this anthology, the notion of 'background practices', a concept which is, arguably, Hubert Dreyfus' most important contribution. For it is this idea, that being habituated into a set of background practices is a necessary condition on the intelligibility of people, objects, and institutions, that underlies both Dreyfus' distinctive skeptical evaluations of the possibilities of artificial intelligence and his seminal contributions to Heidegger interpretation.

Characteristically, Dreyfus attributed to the Heidegger of *Being and Time* the claim articulated briefly above: that an agent skillfully coping with its environment in terms of a set of background practices makes it possible for that agent to understand what is involved in being a person, object, or institution. And, interestingly, Dreyfus also uses this same conceptual framework as the guiding key for his interpretation of the later Heidegger's work on the history of being, technology, and nihilism, topics that provide the focus for many of the essays in this volume. This attribution to Heidegger of the concept and role of background practices is understandable and to some extent justified by the extent to which interpreting Heidegger as introducing this view in Division 1 of *Being and Time* has proven to be an exceedingly rich interpretive tool when employed by Dreyfus and his many outstanding students and followers, including John Haugeland, Mark Wrathall, Taylor Carman, Bill Blattner, Sean Kelly, and many others. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the term 'practice' does not appear prominently in *Being and Time* itself and that, as Dreyfus himself, following Heidegger, rightly insists, every good interpretation of classic philosophical works requires a strong contribution from the interpreter. Dreyfus' rich and influential reading of Heidegger, early and late, in terms of the role of background practices is an example of this truth.

The decision by the editor to use the title and subtitle of this anthology to link background practices with the understanding of being is especially fortunate in that, for Dreyfus, background practices are important precisely because such practices embody and ground an understanding of what it is for entities to be. And it is one of the most welcome features of the articles reprinted here that, while focused on a variety of different topics, many of them offer a number of overlapping and mutually informative statements of the fundamental aspects of this thesis.

What then is Dreyfus' basic claim regarding background practices? As developed in these articles, the thesis has several distinct constituent parts. First, background 'practices' are *practices*, in a very particular sense of that perhaps overused word. As Dreyfus articulates this sense of 'practice' in the relatively early (1989) "On the Ordering of Things," a practice is (1) a shared way of coping

with people, things and institutions, which thus (2) provides norms for distinguishing appropriate and inappropriate behavior in response to those different kinds of entities, and which (3) is embedded in the normative structure of our tools, institution and language:

Heidegger is interested only in the most general characteristics of our understanding of Being. He notes<sup>[1]</sup>, however, that this understanding is embodied in the tools, language, and institutions of a society and in each person growing up in that society. These shared practices into which we are socialized provide a background understanding of what counts as objects, what counts as human beings, and ultimately what counts as real, on the basis of which we can direct our actions towards particular things and people.

Second, in a move clearly reminiscent of Aristotle's account of the habituation of learners into virtue, Dreyfus holds that individuals are socialized into these practices through a process of guided habituation in which children learn the skills necessary to respond appropriately in various situations according to the norms of their local practices by the responses by adults to the child's behavior in concrete circumstances. At several places, Dreyfus uses the example of differences in child-rearing styles in Japan and the U.S. to illustrate this process. In the Foreword to Carol White's *Time and Death*, (2005) for example, he puts the point in this way:

The babies, of course, imitate the style of nurturing to which they are exposed. It may at first seem puzzling that the baby successfully picks out the gestures that embody the style of its culture as the ones to imitate, but, of course, such success is inevitable. . . . Starting with a style, various practices will make sense and become dominant and others will either become subordinate or will be ignored altogether.

Third, this process of habituation leads to the learner *knowing how* to react appropriately according to the norms of the practice, rather than the learner coming to know that some way of acting is in accordance with some principles of right behavior, and fourth, knowing how can never be made fully articulate in terms of a set of determinate beliefs:

The case of child-rearing helps us to see that a cultural style is not something in our minds, but, rather, a disposition to act in certain ways in certain situations. It is not in our beliefs but in our artifacts, our sensibilities, and our bodily skills. And like all skills it is too embodied to be made explicit in terms of rules.

It is this fourth point that informs Dreyfus' use of the locution '*background practices*': "Like the illumination in a room, a cultural style normally lets us see things just in so far as we don't see *it*. That is, like the background in perception, the ground of intelligibility must recede so we can see the figure." [49]<sup>[2]</sup> Finally, it is this set of background practices, embodied in our socially derived bodily skills and dispositions that is the necessary condition of any understanding of what it means for something to be. In a very helpful passage from "Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Technology, Art, and Politics" [1992], Dreyfus sums up (most of) these points:

[Heidegger] introduces the idea that the shared everyday skills, concerns, and practices into which we are socialized provide the conditions necessary for people to make sense of the world and their lives. All intelligibility presupposes something that cannot be fully articulate -- a kind of knowing-how rather than a knowing-that. At the deepest level such knowing is embodied in our social skills rather than in our concepts, beliefs, and values.

It is striking that in these essays, and indeed in his writings in general, Dreyfus tends to present this set of positions as a seamless whole. And, in fact, as Dreyfus develops his position, he makes it clear that there is a kind of coherence among the various aspects of his position concerning the nature and role of background practices, a coherence that makes the overall package both plausible and fruitful. Nevertheless, neither here, nor as far as I know in the remainder of his extensive writings, did Dreyfus ever present an argument that attempts to show that these various claims must go together or that any of them follow from any of the others. And there are contexts in which this tendency to treat, without sufficient argument, all of the aspects of his overall position as a single whole can be problematic. For example, even if knowing how to cope with an environment according to normative social practices is a necessary condition on anything being intelligible to an agent, and this knowing-how need neither consist in nor be caused by an

agent knowing that something is the case or following some set of articulate rules, it is not obvious that from these premises it follows that it is *impossible* to codify this know-how in a set of rules, and Dreyfus offers no argument to show that this does follow. But there are contexts in which Dreyfus both affirms and needs this conclusion. As a phenomenologist, Dreyfus would, of course, have claimed that his acceptance of the connections among his theses regarding the role and nature of background practices does not rest on argument, but rather that this connectedness is displayed by a sensitivity to the phenomena described. But there are still occasions, when a bit more argument might have proved helpful.

These particular papers concern the side of Dreyfus' work that focuses most directly on Heidegger interpretation and the implications of his interpretation of Heidegger for issues in metaphysics, philosophy of science, and (especially in the final seven papers) the development of understandings of being that later Heidegger referred to as the 'history of being'. Dreyfus mobilizes his core set of views concerning background practices in each of these essays in order to support a range of interesting, and controversial, theses.

To take an exemplary instance of the richness of these discussions, in "Heidegger's Hermeneutic Realism" (1991) and the later "How Heidegger Defends the Possibility of a Correspondence Theory of Truth with Respect to the Entities of Natural Science" (2001), Dreyfus attempted to develop a Heideggerian position regarding 'the status of the entities supposedly discovered by natural science' [94] out of materials derived from *Being and Time*, even though there is relatively little in that work that is directly concerned with that question. The view developed seemingly contains both 'realist' and 'antirealist' elements, but is deeply rooted in Dreyfus' reading of Heidegger in terms of background practices. Since, for Dreyfus' Heidegger, (1) entities are only understandable or encounterable as things that are through a set of practices that recede into the background, but (2) the ontological character of those entities that are revealed by a set of practices is relative to the specific character of the practices that reveal that class of entities, and (3) background practices themselves are variable historically and

geographically, it *seems* to follow that both what is and the ontological character of that which is varies as functions of the practices which reveal those entities. So, it also seems to follow that, for a Dreyfusian, the background practices that reveal the entities uncovered by natural science can have no privilege over entities revealed by other sets of practices, which, of course, is a distinctly antirealist position.

But Dreyfus argues against accepting this apparent conclusion from his own premises, by suggesting a distinction between two ways in which our everyday and scientific research practices might be necessary for an understanding of being. On the one hand, one might think, as is apparently presupposed in the above argument sketch, that the background practices in some way or other *constitute* the entities that they reveal; on the other hand, one might think that practices give one access to the entities that they uncover. And, if one adopts the second alternative, it then becomes possible to understand how modern scientific research practices allows access to "the functional components of the universe as they are in themselves", without denying that other sets of background practices reveal other realms of beings.

Overall, this book provides, for those unfamiliar with Dreyfus' thought, a useful introduction to his core views regarding the role and nature of background practices, and at the same time offers a handy collection of some of his more important essays for those who are already familiar with his work. It is highly recommended.

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[1] It is significant that this 'noting' is not footnoted, as it is rooted more in Dreyfus' overall reading of *Being and Time* than it is in any particular passage from that text.

[2] This characteristic way in which Dreyfus puts this fourth aspect of his views regarding background practices arguably owes as much to Merleau-Ponty as it does to Heidegger, although Merleau-Ponty is cited only once in these essays.

[Consciousness and Fundamental Reality](#) by Philip Goff [Philosophy of Mind Series, Oxford University Press, 9780190677015]

A core philosophical project is the attempt to uncover the fundamental nature of reality, the limited set of facts upon which all other facts depend. Perhaps the most popular theory of fundamental reality in contemporary analytic philosophy is physicalism, the view that the world is fundamentally physical in nature. The first half of this book argues that physicalist views cannot account for the evident reality of conscious experience, and hence that physicalism cannot be true. Unusually for an opponent of physicalism, Goff argues that there are big problems with the most well-known arguments against physicalism, Chalmers' zombie conceivability argument and Jackson's knowledge argument and proposes significant modifications.

The second half of the book explores and defends a recently rediscovered theory of fundamental reality or perhaps rather a grouping of such theories known as 'Russellian monism.' Russellian monists draw inspiration from a couple of theses defended by Bertrand Russell in [The Analysis of Matter](#) in 1927. Russell argued that physics, for all its virtues, gives us a radically incomplete picture of the world. It tells us only about the extrinsic, mathematical features of material entities, and leaves us in the dark about their intrinsic nature, about how they are in and of themselves. Following Russell, Russellian monists suppose that it is this 'hidden' intrinsic nature of matter that explains human and animal consciousness.

Some Russellian monists adopt panpsychism, the view that the intrinsic natures of basic material entities involve consciousness; others hold that basic material entities are proto-conscious rather than conscious. Throughout the second half of the book various forms of Russellian monism are surveyed, and the key challenges facing it are discussed. The penultimate chapter defends a cosmopsychist form of Russellian monism, according to which all facts are grounded in facts about the conscious universe.

Reviewed by Daniel Stoljar, Australian National University

This book is an interesting and energetic exploration of Russellian monism, a position in philosophy of mind that has gained considerable attention in recent years because it promises to move us beyond the physicalist-dualist stand-off. In the first part, Goff presents a critique of physicalism; in the second, he discusses the pros and cons of different versions of Russellian monism. Ultimately, he recommends a version he calls

'cosmopsychism', the bracing idea that the universe itself instantiates a form of consciousness.

Overall, the book is honest, unflinching, imaginative and argumentative; in other words, a very good philosophy book. Is it persuasive? I don't think so, and I say this not as a critic of Russellian monism, but as a fellow traveller. I agree with Goff that the truth lies somewhere in the vicinity of Russellian monism, but I think Goff has missed the most plausible development of the view. I will try to explain this by saying something about the first part of the book, and then something longer about the second. But, before turning to that, what is Russellian monism exactly, and how does it differ from standard physicalism and dualism?

The physicalist holds, roughly, that every instantiated property is either identical to or grounded in some physical property. The dualist objects that physicalism is false, since there are instantiated phenomenal properties -- properties associated with the consciousness of humans and other creatures -- that are neither identical to nor grounded in such properties. On this issue, Russellian monists side with dualism.

The dualist holds, roughly, that *almost* every instantiated property is either identical to or grounded in some physical property; the exception is phenomenal properties, which are fundamental, i.e. not grounded in anything. The physicalist objects that this makes it impossible to account for the evident integration of phenomenal and other instantiated properties. On this issue, Russellian monists side with physicalists.

How can Russellian monists side with the physicalist against the dualist *and* with the dualist against the physicalist? How can they thread the needle? The basic idea is to draw a subtle distinction between two classes of properties. In the first class are those properties that physics tells us about. In the second class are those properties that capture the intrinsic nature of matter or, more generally, the physical world. The Russellian monist argues that these classes of properties are different: the first is restricted to structural or dispositional properties; the second contains non-structural or non-dispositional properties.

If this point is accepted, and if we interpret physicalism as concerning the first class of properties, it is possible to reject both it and



dualism. Physicalism is false since phenomenal properties are *not* identical to or grounded in the structural properties that physics tells us about. But dualism is false too since phenomenal properties are identical to or grounded in the properties that capture the intrinsic nature of matter.

As I said, in the first part of this book, Goff gives his reason to reject physicalism. Of course, there are already well-known arguments here, such as the knowledge argument and the conceivability argument; indeed, these are precisely the arguments appealed to by standard dualists. But Goff prefers an argument based on what is often called 'revelation' (or 'phenomenal transparency'), according to which "phenomenal concepts reveal the complete nature of the conscious states they refer to" (p.124). He summarizes it this way: "we know what *pain* is through feeling pain, and hence if pain were c-fibers firing, we'd know about it. But we don't, so it isn't."

Actually, this argument is well discussed in the literature too, and I think it has several drawbacks. I will mention three.

First, the revelation argument apparently proves too little, since it targets identity versions of physicalism rather than grounding versions. In the passage I just quoted, Goff is assuming that physicalists hold that pain is identical to c-fibers firing. But what if they hold instead that pain is grounded in c-fibers firing, rather than being identical to it? Now the argument as stated above doesn't apply, and it is not easy to see how to adjust it so that it does. Of course, Goff himself goes on later to say it does apply, but the matter is complicated since he also says that "grasping the essence of a property does not entail grasping the essence of a property that grounds it".

Second, if the argument were adjusted so that it applies to a grounding version of physicalism, it would prove too much. While Russellian monism and physicalism are different, they have this in common (at least in their grounding versions): ordinary phenomenal properties are grounded in things that are not ordinary phenomenal properties. And this strongly suggests that, if the revelation argument were successful against physicalism, it would be equally successful against Russellian monism.

Third, revelation faces serious questions as a thesis about the phenomenal concept of (e.g.) pain.

Consider the sense-datum theory, according to which, roughly, to be in pain is to be acquainted with a mental individual of a given type. Along with most contemporary philosophers, I think this theory is false. But that is not to deny that many extremely good philosophers held it at certain points in their career -- G.E. Moore, for example. Now, that Moore held a false view of the complete nature of pain makes it plausible that he *failed* to hold the true view of the complete nature of pain, whatever that is. After all, given how rational Moore was (not to mention how interested in mental states he was), it is unlikely that he simultaneously held two inconsistent theories of pain. But then, according to the thesis of revelation, Moore did not have the phenomenal concept of pain. But that is absurd. Whatever the phenomenal concept is exactly, Moore is as good a candidate as any to possess it; it is just that he did not know the complete nature of pain. Hence, to have the phenomenal concept of pain is not to know its complete nature.

For these reasons, I doubt the revelation argument provides a good reason to reject physicalism. But I don't doubt there *are* reasons to reject physicalism - at any rate as Goff understands that (variously interpreted) doctrine.

For in fact, the version of physicalism at issue in the first part of this book is an extremely radical one. As Goff understands them, physical properties are entirely captured in logical/mathematical and nomic/causal terms. This entails that, if Goff's physicalism were true, we could in principle describe the world without remainder using a language whose non-logical and non-mathematical vocabulary was *restricted* to such expressions as 'causes' and 'it is a law that'; indeed, the totality of empirical knowledge could in principle be expressed in such a language. Independently of any view about consciousness, I find that incredible; and regardless of that, it is *not* the version of physicalism that is widely held in philosophy, as, indeed, Goff in effect points out later.

There is much more to say about this version of physicalism, and why Goff focuses on it. But let's turn now to the second part, in which he is concerned with developing Russellian monism.

Russellian monism comes in different varieties, but Goff is most attracted to its panpsychist version.



This view distinguishes two sorts of phenomenal properties. First are *ordinary* phenomenal properties, those associated with the consciousness of humans and other creatures, the ones we have been talking about so far. Second are *extraordinary* phenomenal properties, which are the non-structural properties that ground the structural properties that physics tells us about.

I think it is fair to say that this view faces a daunting set of difficulties. To begin with, it provokes what Goff, echoing Lewis, calls 'an incredulous stare'. For most of us, it is just unbelievable that things like electrons -- i.e. the bearers of fundamental structural properties -- are conscious in any way whatsoever. It might be replied (as indeed Lewis replied to his own incredulous stare) that the benefits of panpsychism outweigh its counter-intuitiveness. But unfortunately the literature on these matters, to which Goff himself has been a major contributor, runs in the other direction. The basic lesson of this literature is that panpsychism suffers numerous 'revenge' problems, i.e., problems that are counterparts of the problems that already face the physicalist and the dualist.

The most famous of these is the combination problem, which Goff introduces this way: "We feel we have some kind of grip on how . . . parts of a car engine make up an engine, but we are at a loss trying to make sense of lots of 'little' (proto) minds forming a big mind". Put differently, the combination problem strongly suggests that the relation between ordinary phenomenal properties and extraordinary ones if panpsychism is true is deeply analogous to the relation between ordinary phenomenal properties and physical ones if physicalism is true.

Goff provides an expert discussion of the combination problem and related problems in chapters 7-9. Simplifying somewhat, the main line of argument here, if I understand things correctly, consists of three main moves.

- First, he argues that the most virulent form of the combination problem is (what he calls) the subject irreducibility problem, the key premise of which is that "what it is for there to be a conscious subject C cannot be analysed into facts not involving S".

- Second, he distinguishes 'micropsychist' and 'cosmopsychist' Russellian monism. The micropsychist holds that the bearers of the extraordinary phenomenal properties are very small, perhaps sub-atomic particles or small regions of space-time. The cosmopsychist holds instead that they are very big, the cosmos or universe itself.
- Finally, he argues that, while the subject irreducibility problem presents an insuperable difficulty for micropsychism, the cosmopsychist has the resources to avoid it.

How can the cosmopsychist avoid the subject irreducibility problem? Goff distinguishes two ways to explicate grounding, the notion used to formulate both physicalism and Russellian monism: grounding by analysis and grounding by subsumption. X is grounded by analysis in Y if and only if (a) X is grounded in Y and (b) Y logically entails what is essentially required by X to be part of reality (p. 44-5, 216). In contrast, X is grounded by subsumption in Y if and only if (a) X is grounded in Y and (b) Y is a unity of which X is an aspect (p. 221). He suggests that condition (b) of grounding by subsumption can obtain even if condition (b) of grounding by analysis does *not* obtain; this yields a notion of grounding without analysis. He then argues that cosmopsychists may exploit this idea to answer the subject irreducibility problem, the idea being that what it is for S to be a conscious subject may be subsumed by facts not involving S -- e.g. facts about a conscious universe -- even if not analysed into such facts.

But there are several issues for this line of thought. For one thing, the examples that Goff discusses to motivate the idea of grounding without analysis do not do so. One such example is this: the fact that I have a total experience that includes an experience of red grounds the fact that I have an experience of red. Surely in that case the first fact logically entails what is essentially required for the second fact to be part of reality. For the first fact entails that I have an experience of red, which entails that that fact *is* a part of reality. A different example he uses is this: that the state of affairs *a*'s *being F* exists grounds that *a* exists. Surely again, the first fact here logically entails the second.

Moreover, even if there are cases of grounding by subsumption that are not cases of grounding by analysis, there is reason for thinking this will not help the cosmopsychist. What is at issue in

discussions of panpsychism generally (and physicalism generally) is not cases in which X grounds Y, for any X or Y; what is at issue rather is cases in which X grounds Y *where* X is the totality of fundamental facts, and Y is a non-fundamental fact taken arbitrarily. In such cases, it is common to assume, not simply that X grounds Y, but in addition that X a priori entails Y; indeed, Goff himself claims something like this when he says earlier that, "for any non-fundamental truth T, a transparent rendering of T is a priori entailed by a transparent rendering of the fundamental truths." Hence, on the assumption that if X a priori entails Y, X logically entails Y, it would appear that, in the relevant cases, grounding just is grounding by analysis.

How might Goff respond to the objection that the analysis/subsumption distinction is of no help to cosmopsychism? The most obvious suggestion is to distinguish a priori entailment and logical entailment: X a priori entails Y if and only if it is a priori that if X is true, Y is true; whereas X logically entails Y if and only if it is a logical truth that if X is true Y is true. However, while this difference exists, recognizing it makes Goff's defence of cosmopsychism weaker rather than stronger. For there are now not two but three notions of grounding: by analysis or logical entailment, by subsumption, and by a priori entailment. In addition, grounding by a priori entailment looks clearly to be the notion to focus on when considering any version of the combination problem, and hence any version of the subject irreducibility problem.

For these reasons, I also doubt that panpsychist Russellian monism -- in either its micro or cosmic versions -- is workable. Should we therefore give up Russellian monism? Not at all -- we should instead remind ourselves that Russellian monism need *not* be held in a panpsychist form!

When he first describes Russellian monism, Goff draws a distinction between the panpsychist version and what he calls, following David Chalmers, the panprotopsychist version. As we have seen, the panpsychist regards non-structural properties as themselves phenomenal properties, but of a rather unusual sort. The panprotopsychist holds instead that the nature of these properties is unknown, which of course is consistent with their being non-phenomenal.

I think the label 'panprotopsychist' is misleading. It suggests some deep affinity between panprotopsychism and panpsychism. But there need be no such affinity. One way to see this is to notice that many versions of physicalism may also be described as 'panprotopsychist', as Goff understands that phrase. For they too entail that the fundamental elements of the world are or contain "crucial ingredients . . . that explain consciousness."

Regardless of what it is called, panprotopsychist Russellian monism evades the problems we have been looking at. It does not face the conceivability argument or knowledge argument, since those arguments presuppose that we have a full grip on the relevant facts, at least in outline, which is something this position denies. It does not face the combination problem, since it does not say that ordinary phenomenal properties are grounded in extraordinary ones. And while it *might* face the revelation argument *if* that argument were persuasive, as we have seen, there is a serious question about whether it is persuasive in the first place.

Isn't this then precisely the version of Russellian monism that is most plausible? That's what I think, but Goff gives two arguments for the opposite view.

First, he says that panpsychism is simpler than panprotopsychism:

All we get from physics is this big black and white abstract structure, which we metaphysicians must somehow color in with concrete categorical nature. Assuming the falsity of substance dualism, we know how to color in one bit of it: the brains of organisms are colored in with consciousness. How to color in the rest? The most elegant, simple, sensible option is to color in the rest of the world with the same pen.

But it is hard to detect the force in this line of reasoning. Panprotopsychists will reply that the brains of organisms are *not* colored in with consciousness; rather they are colored in with something unknown that partially grounds consciousness -- an entirely different matter. And anyway, that theory A is simpler than theory B is not a good reason to prefer A to B if A (and not B) is known to be in trouble on other grounds.

Second, he says that panprotopsychist Russellian monism raises "the threat of noumenalism," the idea being that this version of the view leaves it unknown, and perhaps unknowable, what the ultimate nature of the world is. Now, at several points in this book, a limited role for a suggestion like this is acknowledged; in fact, Goff appeals to it often to deal with various versions of the combination problem. But in general, noumenalism is a bridge too far for cosmopsychist Goff. The whole point for him is to give a positive account of fundamental reality (hence the name of the book). Physicalism and dualism in their standard forms do attempt to provide such an account, as does panpsychism. But panprotopsychism does not, and that is why he finds it unattractive.

I think here we are close to the heart of the matter. For there seems to be a conflation in Goff -- and, I would argue, in others -- of two different philosophical tasks. The first task, a philosophy of mind task, is to say something sensible about consciousness and its relation to the rest of nature, something that avoids the problems of traditional physicalism and dualism. The second task, a task in speculative metaphysics, is to provide a specific, positive and complete account (not simply an abstract, negative or partial account) of fundamental reality -- a world-view, to put it in other terminology.

The first task seems to me to be achievable. Indeed, while I don't like the label, and would dispute a lot of the details, I think panprotopsychist Russellian monism, or something near enough, has achieved it; at least it represents our best chance of doing so.

But the second task is, in my view, unachievable. Someone asks: 'What is your specific, positive and complete theory of fundamental reality?' What, in all seriousness, am I supposed to say? I realize, of course, that adherents to the main positions of philosophy of mind -- not just traditional physicalism and dualism, but panpsychism too -- take themselves to have provided answers to that question. But so what? We know those answers are problematic, and one of the main points about Russellian monism is that it moves us beyond them.

In sum, the situation seems to me to be this. Russellian monism in its most plausible form -- that is, in its misnamed 'panprotopsychist' form --

violates some well-entrenched expectations about what a contribution to this part of philosophy should look like. But that shows us more about those expectations than it does about Russellian monism. It is a benefit of Goff's excellent book that it makes us see this even more clearly than we did before. Reviewed by Daniel Stoljar, Australian National University

[The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy](#) edited by Sacha Golob, Jens Timmermann [Cambridge University Press, 9781107033054]

With fifty-four chapters charting the development of moral philosophy in the Western world, this volume examines the key thinkers and texts and their influence on the history of moral thought from the pre-Socratics to the present day. Topics including Epicureanism, humanism, Jewish and Arabic thought, perfectionism, pragmatism, idealism and intuitionism are all explored, as are figures including Aristotle, Boethius, Spinoza, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Mill, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Rawls, as well as numerous key ideas and schools of thought. Chapters are written by leading experts in the field, drawing on the latest research to offer rigorous analysis of the canonical figures and movements of this branch of philosophy. The volume provides a comprehensive yet philosophically advanced resource for students and teachers alike as they approach, and refine their understanding of, the central issues in moral thought.

Excerpt: **Overview** Sacha Golob and Jens Timmermann; 1. Ethics before Socrates Catherine Rowett; 2. Socrates and Sophists A. G. Long, 3. Plato James Warren; 4. Aristotle Michael Pakaluk; 5. Epicureanism and Hedonism Voula Tsouna; 6. Stoicism Brad Inwood; 7. Ancient Skepticism Katja Maria Vogt, 8. Neo-Platonism Alexandrine Schniewind; 9. Early Christian Ethics Sarah Byers; 10. Boethius; Abelard and Anselm John Marenbon; 11. Medieval Jewish Ethics Tamar Rudavsky; 12. Moral Philosophy in the Medieval Islamic World Anna Akasoy; 13. "Christian Aristotelianism"? Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas Tobias Hoffmann and Jörn Müller; 14. Duns Scotus and William of Ockham Tobias Hoffmann; 15. Humanism Sabrina Ebbersmeyer; 16. The Protestant Reformation Jesse Couenhoven; 17.

Descartes's Provisional Morality Lisa Shapiro; 18. Hobbes SA. Lloyd; 19. The Cambridge Platonists Sarah Hutton; 20. Bayle Jean-Luc Solère; 21. Leibniz Gregory Brown; 22. Spinoza Steven Nadler; 23. Pascal Desmond M. Clarke; 24. Locke and Butler Stephen Darwalt; 25. Shaftesbury; Hutcheson and the Moral Sense James A. Harris; 26. Hume Paul Guyer; 27. Smith and Bentham Craig Smith; 28. Rousseau Susan Meld Shell; 29. Rationalism and Perfectionism Stefano Bacin; 30. Kant Jens Timmermann; 31. Fichte Allen Wood; 32. Hegel Dudley Knowles; 33. Mill Christopher Macleod; 34. Schopenhauer Alistair Welchman; 35. Kierkegaard R. Zachary Manis; 36. American Transcendentalism Russell B. Goodman; 37. Nietzsche Lawrence Hatab; 38. Marxism Jeffrey Reiman; 39. Sidgwick Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek; 40. Pragmatism Cheryl Misak; 41. British Idealism Robert Stern; 42. Ethical Intuitionism Philip Stratton-Lake; 43. Husserl and Phenomenological Ethics Nicolas de Warren; 44. Ethics in Freudian and Post-Freudian Psychoanalysis Edward Harcourt; 45. Noncognitivism: From the Vienna Circle to the Present Day John Eriksson; 46. The Frankfurt School Fred Rush; 47. Heidegger Sacha Golob; 48. Sartre Sebastian Gardner; 49. French Ethical Philosophy since the 1960s Todd May; 50. Wittgenstein's Ethics and Wittgensteinian Moral Philosophy David Levy; 51. Anti-Theory: Anscombe, Foot and Williams Simon Robertson; 52. Discourse Ethics Peter Niesen; 53. Decision Theory Ben Eggleston; 54. Rawls Katrin Flikschuh.

This book has what might seem an impossible goal: to provide in a single volume a sophisticated analysis of the dominant figures in the development of Western moral thought from the pre-Socratics through to the present day. Chronologically, this spans close to three thousand years. Exegetically, most of the figures involved are already the subjects of a secondary literature running into thousands of publications — in the case of authors such as Plato or Aristotle, of course, it goes far beyond even that. Offering a synoptic treatment of the shifting development of ethical and meta-ethical thought over this time frame is thus difficult, but it is also, we believe, extremely important — and for at least three reasons.

First, and most obviously, the type of focused analysis offered in this volume provides a natural point of orientation for anyone approaching a

given thinker or school for the first time. This applies both to scholars of one period interested in examining how the questions and the debates with which they are familiar are developed, discussed or dismissed in a very different intellectual context, and to those working on contemporary ethics or meta-ethics who want to explore some of the sedimented background that shapes current thinking on these matters. We have sought throughout to ensure that all chapters are accessible without specific prior knowledge of the philosopher's terminology or technical apparatus. Contributors have also flagged, at the end of each chapter, secondary literature especially suitable for further reading: these items are marked with an asterisk.

Second, by offering an overview of each figure or school, the chapters in this volume are able to sustain a form of clarity that is not always possible in much lengthier and more detailed works. In short, there are benefits in operating at all the possible levels of resolution when doing the history of philosophy, and we believe that the combination of concision and use of the latest research will allow the chapters here to shed new light even on authors whom the reader may know very well.

Third, the scope of the volume fosters an important type of conceptual juxtaposition. In some cases; this juxtaposition is formally recognised, as it tracks patterns of influence so significant that they dictate the agenda: for example; the chapter on Albert; Aquinas and the issue of 'Christian Aristotelianism'. In many other cases; however, the juxtapositions involved occur naturally in the mind of the reader as he or she sees questions; methods and concepts picked up; reformulated and transmuted by different authors. Sometimes this takes the form of cross-period thematic similarities — for example; the complex pattern of similarities and dissimilarities between aspects of Anselm's position and parts of Kant's. Sometimes it takes the form of changes in what one might call the 'standing constraints'; the underlying assumptions in a given period on what any adequate moral theory or moral method should look like. A particularly prominent example is the question of how philosophy should interact with revealed religion; an issue central to the discussion of cases ranging from medieval Jewish thought through the Scholasticism of the later middle ages to Bayle;

Kant and others. The developments in such constraints that this book chronicles are; of course, in part a result of factors outside of philosophical competence — industrialisation; for example. But by bringing together these authors and schools in a single volume; the hope is to provide a bird's eye view of some of the key conceptual shifts that feed into this type of large-scale change in the moral landscape.

Edited volumes often open with an introduction that provides a series of potted summaries of the various contributions. Given the scale of the present text; that would not be helpful; and we will leave the individual chapters to speak for themselves. It may help; however to make three brief remarks that can serve as background to what follows.

In the opening paragraph of this introduction; we moved fluidly between talk of 'ethics' and talk of 'morals'. This type of shift is particularly visible in contemporary writing. Indeed; it is to a large extent forced by current terminology: even those who see themselves as doing moral philosophy are unlikely to talk about 'meta-morals' rather than 'meta-ethics'. For some of the authors and movements discussed below much the same applies — over half of the contributors state that they will use 'ethics' and 'morals' interchangeably; with the same applying to their cognates. But for others the distinction marks a fundamental difference. Compare, for example; Hegel and the Habermas of texts such as *Justification and Application*. Both agree that there is a philosophical distinction to be drawn between ethics and morals; and they are readable as having opposing views on the explanatory priority of the two. More broadly there is also the further issue; one that arises particularly but not exclusively when ethics and morality are equated; of whether the normative standards discussed in what follows are really best thought of as either moral or ethical (rather than; say; ontological). This type of issue is particularly visible in modern thinkers — it is discussed extensively here; for example; in relation both to Marx and to Heidegger. Ultimately; the philosophical theories that follow are attempts to gloss terms like 'morality' and 'ethics'; and to trace their boundaries — this introduction can serve only to highlight the issue; and particularly the complex problems; problems of translation in the deepest sense; that arise when one tries to switch between

these ideas in a Greek or German Idealist or French post-war context.

The next issue concerns scope. This volume is intended not as a history of moral thought simpliciter; but rather of moral thought within the Western tradition. Terms like 'Western' are evidently as contested and problematic as 'moral'; but we have attempted to read the category broadly. It thus includes; for example; a study of traditions that existed to some degree in dialogue with the standard Western canon — for example; medieval Islamic thought. Why is the text limited in this fashion? One immediate reason is simply scope — no global study of moral thought (one which would immediately make the issue of what constitutes the moral even more problematic) could hope to achieve the desired balance between tightness of focus and depth of coverage in a single volume. A second reason is that in concentrating on a single tradition; broadly construed; one in which many of the figures would have read or at least known of many of those who preceded them, the volume is able to track and illustrate the way in which arguments and concepts are appropriated; challenged and transformed by a philosopher and his or her successors. This is an important part of what makes the volume a history; rather than simply a chronological list or a study of certain conceptual problems that happened to have been addressed by many different people in many different places — and it would not be possible in a study that encompassed large numbers of authors who lacked this kind of common textual framework. [One might agree with this and nevertheless object that the histories; in this sense, of non-Western thinkers have been inexcusably neglected by professional philosophers. We are sympathetic to that view, but rectifying that failing is not the task of the present text.]

The final issue concerns the distinctive status of moral philosophy and its interaction with other forms of reflection. Moral philosophy is characterised by the kind of urgency that other branches of philosophy lack. There is a perfectly coherent sense in which questions about the nature of time; the identity of persons; the possibility of causation or life after death can be postponed; one may even reach the conclusion that they do not permit of definitive universal answers at all. Things are different in moral matters. If we suspend

judgement about what to do we will, in effect, have done something already. Moreover; we will have done something about which we do not know whether it was justified. In this sense; action is inevitable in a way in which belief is not. Yet there are rarely any sharp boundaries between moral philosophy and other philosophical and non-philosophical disciplines. Which of the many other areas — epistemology; metaphysics; theology; political philosophy; psychology; education and aesthetics — are principally aligned with moral philosophy; even whether it is perceived as a distinct discipline and; if so; what it is called, largely depends on historical circumstances. One of the aims of this volume is to bring that out; and to show how ethics and morals have been variously aligned with ontology; politics; aesthetics; mathematics and others depending on the assumptions and goals of the thinker in question.

As will become dear in what follows; the solutions proposed to the question of how to lead our lives differ vastly. It is, for instance, tempting to assume that the moral status of an action depends on the effects it has on the well-being of the agent; the community; the human race in general or some even broader group of beings — which in turn immediately leads to the question of what well-being consists in. It is also plausible to assume that, as human beings, we ought to obey certain authoritative laws; but then we would also like to know what makes these laws authoritative; whether they are; for instance, imposed upon us by some higher being, by society or by the very nature of these laws. Or maybe we think that agreement among rational agents as such is what makes a good action good (to name but a few of many available options). And there are further problems that a moral philosopher; of whatever persuasion; needs to address. How do we come to apprehend the norms or values that underpin good choices? How do we come to act on them? What; if anything, separates judgement or apprehension from action? Can moral goodness be taught, and if so how? And do any of these answers depend on a notion of freedom of the will that is incompatible with the various determinisms philosophy and theology have to offer? What is more; disagreement about these higher-level as well as concrete moral questions among philosophers and ordinary moral agents may well fuel scepticism as to whether there are universal answers after all. For the reasons mentioned above; the challenge then is whether such scepticism is sustainable. The fifty-four chapters united in this

volume reflect the diversity and richness of these questions; and of the methods and approaches which have been employed to make sense of them throughout the history of moral philosophy.

[Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy](#) edited by Nathan Jun [Brill's Companions of Philosophy: Contemporary Philosophy, Brill, 9789004356887]

Over the course of the past 150 years, “writers from all sides of the political spectrum” have consistently “ignored, maligned, ridiculed, abused, misunderstood, and misrepresented” anarchism, characterizing it by turns as “destructive, violent, and nihilistic”; “pathetic and ineffectual”; “puerile and absurd”; and “irresponsible, immature, and unrealistic.” Anarchists themselves, meanwhile, have been variously portrayed as “wild-eyed” fanatics and terrorists who “reject[t] everything but lac[k] any idea of how to replace it”; hopelessly romantic idealists who abjure the “present, evil world” and pine for a “mythical golden age”; proponents of “mindless action” who dismiss “all intellectual activity [as] distracting or even reactionary”; and harmless apolitical poseurs who “do nothing but contemplate their navels.” Under the best of circumstances they have been dismissed as hacks; under the worst they have been persecuted, beaten, jailed, and even murdered, their writings censored, their organizations violently repressed, their movements crushed.

Academics in particular have proven exceptionally antagonistic to anarchism, habitually treating it “with prejudicial incredulity, condescension, and even hostility ... beyond the normal ignorance of the over-specialized.” Until recently, scholarly researchers have had precious little interest in, or regard for, anarchism under any description, while the few exceptions have almost invariably dismissed it as “irrational,” “ideologically incoherent,” and “theoretically nugatory”—a “shallow creed” that lacks “philosophical rigour” or “anything like an adequate theoretical formulation.”

All of this being said, there is widespread agreement at the time of this writing that anarchism's fortunes have improved dramatically—not just in intellectual circles, but also, and more importantly, in the wider context of global politics. This agreement is often articulated in terms of three general claims.

The first is that the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries witnessed a “remarkable resurgence” of anarchist or anarchist-inspired politics that began—or, at the very least, was first recognized—in the context of the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990s. Far from being an isolated and anomalous by-product of this movement, moreover, the “full-blown anarchist revival [that] reached critical mass around the turn of the Millenium” has been widely identified as a major factor of its emergence as a distinctive and powerful political force. Both at the time and subsequently, the basic political commitments of this “new anarchism” were widely characterized as the movement’s principal “basis for organizing” and the source of its “common philosophy.”

The second claim is that this resurgence, contrary to the expectations of many, has continued to grow in strength and influence over the past two decades and, in so doing, has had far-reaching and transformative effects on political movements throughout the world. As early as 2001 Barbara Epstein proposed that the anarchist-inspired movements of the time were poised to deal a coup de grace to “the traditional socialist left.” Three years later, David Graeber noted that anarchism was “veritably exploding,” that “anarchist or anarchist-inspired movements [were] growing everywhere,” and that the “traditional anarchist principles—autonomy, voluntary, association, self-organization, mutual aid, direct democracy” that motivated and inspired the anti-globalization movement were “playing the same role in radical movements of all kinds everywhere.” Since then the same kind of analysis has been applied to a diverse array of global political phenomena including the Arab Spring (2010–2012), the global Occupy movement (2011–2012),

the Indignados movement in Spain (2011–present), the Quebec student protests (2012), and the Nuit Debout movement (2016). It is in this context that anarchism has been described as “the most vibrant and exciting political movement of our time” and even as “the global revolutionary movement [of] the twenty-first century.”

The third claim is that anarchism has witnessed a corresponding “resurgence in the academy as a topic of cutting-edge scholarship and dynamic

pedagogy.” As Jeff Shantz notes by way of summary:

A glance across the academic landscape shows that in less than a decade ... there has been substantial growth in the number of people in academic positions who identify as anarchists. Indeed, it is probably safe to say that unlike any other time in history, the last ten years have seen anarchists carve out spaces in the halls of academia. This is especially true in terms of people pursuing graduate studies and those who have become members of faculty. Several anarchists have taken up positions in prominent, even so-called elite, universities.... The flourishing of anarchism in the academy is also reflected in other key markers of academic activity [including] academic articles focusing on various aspects of anarchist theory and practice; the publications of numerous books on anarchism by most of the major academic presses; and growing numbers of courses dealing in some way with anarchism or including anarchism within the course content. There have also emerged ... professionally recognized networks and associations of anarchist researchers, such as the Anarchist Studies Network of the Political Studies Association in Britain.

In view of the foregoing, some have concluded that anarchism “has become a respected field of study within academia” or, in Shantz’s somewhat cheekier formulation, that it is “suddenly ... almost hip to be an anarchist academic.”

Whether these claims provide an accurate reflection of the present and the recent past is a complicated question that far exceeds the remit of this preface. It is not my intention here to subject them to detailed critique, nor even to challenge the broad consensus they express, as others have already done so at considerable length. That said, the third claim does raise certain issues that must be briefly addressed in order to establish the context of this book. Although there is no question that “the volume of [scholarly] work in anarchist studies has grown substantially” over the last twenty years and “interest in anarchist research has grown in parallel,” the notion that anarchist studies has altogether transcended its marginal status—let alone that it has ignited an “anarchist turn” in one or several disciplines or come to be recognized as a “respected field” in its own right—is patently absurd. It would be far more accurate to say that

anarchism is tolerated to a greater degree than in the past—a not insignificant development in its own right, but scarcely an indication that anarchism has supplanted deeply entrenched liberal and Marxist orthodoxies in the academy. (Even if it were, this would not necessarily be a positive development, as has been made clear by Shantz, Gelderloos, and others who have reflected on anarchism’s problematic relationship with formal academia.)

More germane to our purposes is the fact that this toleration has not been practiced equally across the disciplines. Of particular note in this regard is philosophy, which, by all reasonable appearances, is no more receptive to anarchism now than it was twenty years ago. While it is true that “the range of disciplinary territories over which anarchists now roam has expanded,” only a smattering of recent scholarship on anarchism deals explicitly with philosophy, and the number of academic philosophers who claim anarchism as a principal research focus is negligible. As a result, philosophy has played a comparatively minor role in contemporary anarchist studies and has been underrepresented in general overviews of the discipline. This state of affairs is problematic not only because it involves the omission of a canonical intellectual practice from a discipline that prides itself on multidisciplinaryity, but also, and more importantly, because anarchism itself is frequently described as a “philosophy” and, to this extent at least, warrants far more explicitly philosophical investigation than it has received to date.

The resurgent interest in a form of politics that has been described as “new anarchism”—or, at the very least, as “anarchist-inspired”—has quite understandably provoked a desire to more fully understand the broader anarchist tradition that serves as its inspiration. In the absence of rigorous philosophical analysis, however, the basic theoretical and political commitments of this tradition have tended to be misunderstood. This, in turn, has generated a great deal of confusion regarding the nature of contemporary anarchism as well as its relationship to other forms of political thought, including earlier iterations of anarchism itself. While the present volume is in some respects intended to remedy this situation, the paucity of scholarly literature explicitly focusing on the relationship between anarchism and philosophy necessitates a somewhat different strategy.

Unlike other companion-style texts, which more often than not provide general outlines of established discussions within single disciplines (or across multiple disciplines), the present volume is seeking to fill a void; for this reason, it adopts a self-consciously inventive approach to its subject matter. Many of the chapters included herein consider anarchism’s pertinence to other philosophical theories and systems within the Western intellectual tradition (e.g., Marxism, libertarianism, liberalism, existentialism, phenomenology, nationalism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, pacifism). Others examine it in relation to specific philosophical subdisciplines (e.g., ethics, environmental philosophy, feminist philosophy), topics (e.g., sexuality, aesthetics), methodological or stylistic tendencies (e.g., Continental philosophy, analytic philosophy), or eras in the history of philosophy (e.g., nineteenth-century American and European philosophy).

Some explore their subject matter through highly specified lenses; others employ more conventionally synoptic approaches. Whatever their particular angle, all of them seek to shed light on the various ways that anarchism has been influenced and, in some cases, transformed by its engagement with nonanarchist philosophical discourses, as well as the distinctive contributions that anarchism itself has made, and continues to make, to the discipline of philosophy. It is the collective hope of editor and contributors alike that doing so will prompt further exploration of anarchism and philosophy and that this will lead to a fuller integration of the subject into the diverse fold of anarchist studies

### The Problem of Definitions

What is the relationship between anarchism and philosophy, and in what sense, if any, can anarchism be understood as a “philosophy” in its own right? How we answer these questions depends crucially, of course, on how we define the operative terms, both of which have been ascribed a bewildering range of conflicting meanings. Just as philosophy “has been understood in so many ways that it is practically useless to come up with a definition which embraces all that philosophers have sought to accomplish,” anarchism, too, has long been regarded as “disparate and incoherent” and has frequently been accused of being “too diverse” to qualify as a single, uniform entity. (It is no wonder, as James Joll once remarked, that



“anyone who has tried to write about anarchism sometimes comes to a point at which he wonders just what it is he is writing about.”)

In an initial effort to clarify matters somewhat, we might distinguish between two sorts of definitions. Those of the first sort, which we can call “generic,” identify a given definiendum as a particular instance of a general kind (as in “Bowser is a dog”). Those of the second sort, which we can call “specific,” indicate how a given definiendum differs from other instances of the same kind (as in “Bowser is a brown dog.”) In generic definitions like “Bowser is a dog,” whatever is true of the general kind (“dog”) is true of all its particular instances (including “Bowser”). The same is not true of specific definitions like “Bowser is a brown dog” insofar as they involve a particular predicate (“brown”) that is exclusively applied to a particular instance (“Bowser”) of a general kind (“dog”). As such, the question of how best to define a given term is reducible to two primary concerns, the first of which pertains to the general kind(s) of which the definiendum is a particular instance, the second of which pertains to what distinguishes the definiendum from all other instances of the same kind(s).

Disputes over the meaning of “anarchism” are sometimes reducible to disputes over specific definitions—as when Jones defines anarchism as a philosophy that rejects all authority as such, whereas Smith defines it more narrowly as a philosophy that regards all states as illegitimate. In this case, Jones and Smith agree on the general kind of which anarchism is a particular instance but disagree about how it differs from all other instances of that kind. This is in marked contrast with disputes over whether anarchism should be considered an ideology, a political philosophy, a social system, a theory of organization, a sensibility, a temperament, an attitude, an ideal, a faith, a culture, a tradition, an orientation, a tendency, a movement, a recurring historical phenomenon, or something else entirely. Such disputes concern the generic definition of anarchism and, as such, are obviously deeper and more profound than those of the former sort. Furthermore, because the definitions of general kinds themselves are often contested, even those who ostensibly share a given generic definition

may nonetheless disagree over what this definition entails.

The fact that all of this applies equally to the term “philosophy” adds an additional level of complexity to the questions posed at the outset. In order to ascertain the relationship between anarchism and philosophy (or A and P as a shorthand), one must first determine the general kinds of which each is a particular instance—that is, one must define them generically. One possibility is that A and P are particular instances of altogether different kinds. In this case, any relationship between them is purely contingent insofar as the instantiation of A is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the instantiation of P (and vice versa).

Another possibility is that A and P are particular instances of the same general kind (call it “Z”). In this case, both A and P are necessarily related to Z (since the instantiation of Z is a necessary but not sufficient condition for both the instantiation of A as well as the instantiation of P), Z is contingently related to A and P (since the instantiation of A and the instantiation of P are sufficient but not necessary conditions for the instantiation of Z), and the relationship between A and P is contingent (since the instantiation of A is neither necessary nor sufficient for the instantiation of P, and vice versa).

Still another possibility is that A itself is a particular instance of the general kind P. In this case, A is necessarily related to P insofar as the instantiation of the latter is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the instantiation of the former. This, in turn, raises the question of how A is specifically defined—that is, how it is distinguished from all other instances of the general kind P. Now, if a generic definition of P—for example, “P is a particular instance of the general kind Z”—is simply stipulated, ascertaining the definition of A amounts to determining whether A itself is a particular instance of P, a particular instance of Z, or a particular instance of some altogether different general kind. The problem with the case at hand, however, is that the definition of P itself is deeply disputed and not simply stipulated. In order to answer the aforementioned questions, therefore, we must begin by independently considering the various ways “anarchism” and “philosophy” have been defined, as this will presumably reveal

several possibilities with regard to how the two are related.

### Definitions of Philosophy

As Alexis Papazoglou notes, “[W]hen philosophers give definitions of philosophy they are not usually offering descriptive definitions ... of a cultural practice that a sociologist or anthropologist might have given” but “normative definitions” that prescribe “what philosophy should be, what it should be aiming at, how it should be aiming at it, and so on....” The goal of this section, it must be emphasized, is not to make prescriptions of the latter sort but merely to understand in what relevant sense(s) anarchism can be conceived as a philosophy or, at the very least, as relating to philosophy in some way. As such, the definitions we consider will be purely descriptive in nature.

In ordinary language the word “philosophy” generally indicates a particular approach to, or perspective on, something (as in “philosophy of parenting” or “philosophy of management”). Although this constitutes a generic definition in the sense of specifying what kind of thing philosophy is, it is unhelpful for our purposes since it is trivially true that anarchism entails a particular approach or perspective. (As Peter Marshall says, “All anarchists are philosophical in a general sense.”) For us the relevant question is not only what kind of approach or perspective anarchism is, but also, and more importantly, what it is a perspective on or approach to. Answering these questions obviously requires a greater degree of specificity than the trivial definition provides. To this end, there are six general definitions of philosophy that are worth our while to consider.

1. The first (hereafter “P1”) refers to a basic view of reality—that is, to a more or less comprehensive and internally coherent worldview or system of thought (as in “Marxist philosophy” or “Christian philosophy”).
2. The second (hereafter “P2”) refers to a more or less uniform way of understanding some particular dimension of reality (as in particular political philosophies, moral philosophies, metaphysical philosophies, epistemological philosophies, and so on).
3. The third (hereafter “P3”) refers to mode of inquiry or form of intellectual practice that uses rational methods to investigate “the most general or fundamental questions about

the nature of reality and human life insofar as those problems are beyond the competence of the special sciences to raise or resolve.”

4. The fourth (hereafter “P4”) refers to a particular tradition of intellectual practice or inquiry (in the sense of P3) defined by a more or less uniform subject matter and range of approaches (as in “Western philosophy” or “Eastern philosophy”).
5. The fifth (hereafter “P5”) refers to the philosophical study (in the sense of P3) of the theoretical basis of a particular mode of knowledge (as in “philosophy of science” or “philosophy of religion”) or the explicitly philosophical exploration (again, in the sense of P3) of issues arising within a particular domain of human experience (as in “political philosophy” or “moral philosophy”).
6. The sixth (hereafter “P6”) refers to a professional academic discipline that provides instruction and conducts scholarly research pertaining to philosophy in one or more of the senses described above.

These definitions highlight a basic distinction in conventional understandings of philosophy. As in the trivial case above, P1 and P2 characterize philosophy as a kind of “view” or “perspective,” whereas P3, P4, P5, and P6 characterize it as a kind of intellectual “practice” or “activity.” (In other words, P1 and P2 presuppose a different generic definition of philosophy from P3, P4, P5, and P6.) Although the kind of activity or practice described in P3 may in some cases generate perspectives or views of the sort described in P1, there may be ways of generating such perspectives or views that do not involve “philosophizing” in the sense described in P3. The same is true of the kinds of perspectives or views described in P2 in relation to the modes of study and investigation described in P5 insofar as a view or perspective of this sort may or not be the product of explicitly philosophical inquiry.

### Definitions of Anarchism

As in the case of “philosophy,” it is not our intention here to prescribe how the term “anarchism” ought to be defined but rather to describe “its various uses, and ... the varying intentions with which it was used.” Definitions of anarchism have emerged in a wide and diverse range of historical, political, social, and cultural contexts. Some have been

formulated by self-identified anarchists, others by sympathetic writers and fellow travelers, still others by hostile critics. Some date from the mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, others from the mid to late twentieth centuries, still others from the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Some have been articulated explicitly in texts of various kinds, while others are implicit in the political activities of individuals and groups. In seeking to understand such definitions, our chief interest lies in determining what particular actors, “writing at the time [they] did write for the audience [they] intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate” by means of them. It remains an open question whether there is some one “determinate idea to which various writers contributed” or whether there is “only a variety of statements made by a variety of different agents with a variety of different intentions.”

Generic definitions of anarchism, including those alluded to above, may be divided into two broad categories. The first, which I call “intellectual” definitions, understand anarchism first and foremost in terms of its theoretical content—i.e., a set of distinctive beliefs, judgments, values, principles, ideals, and so on—and/or the intellectual activities and practices that give rise to this content—i.e., the methods and approaches it employs in critiquing existing political, social, and economic institutions; describing and justifying alternative forms of organization; critically engaging with other perspectives; and so on. The second, which I call “practico-political” definitions, understand anarchism chiefly in terms of particular (non-intellectual) activities, practices, and practical objectives. Whereas definitions of the former sort pertain to how and what anarchists qua anarchists think, definitions of the latter sort are principally concerned with how they act and what they do.

Because intellectual definitions generally regard anarchism as a kind of ideology, philosophy, or theory (or as a group of related ideologies, theories, or philosophies, or as a broad ideological, philosophical, or theoretical tendency, orientation, or tradition), they are often favored by political philosophers and others who analyze political thought “in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions” and “concentrate on argument analysis of largely canonical texts.” Practico-political

definitions, in contrast, tend to regard anarchism first and foremost as a social and/or political movement (or as a group of interrelated political movements, or as a practical tendency or orientation within or across various political movements). As such, they are often favored by sociologists and others who analyze political movements by studying “institutions, organizations and social practices.”

The difference between the two, it should be noted, is largely a matter of emphasis rather than substance. In the first place, no one denies that “anarchism” refers, at least in part, to a revolutionary political movement that emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century and which still exists in various forms in the present. There is some disagreement as to when and how this movement developed; what it sought to achieve; whether it espoused a distinctive ideological or political-theoretical perspective (and, if so, what that perspective was); and how it relates historically and ideologically to various contemporary political movements that have been described, or described themselves, as “anarchist.” That said, the fact that there is, or at least has been, such a thing as an anarchist political movement (or a group of anarchist political movements, or an anarchist tendency or orientation within or across various political movements) is scarcely in dispute.

So, too, few would claim that there is or could be an anarchist political movement that is not founded in some way on a particular perspective or range of perspectives—more specifically, on a particular set of underlying beliefs, ideas, values, principles, and/or commitments. Robert Graham warns against the tendency to define anarchism solely in terms of “a historically-embodied movement or movements,” as this approach conflates “anarchism as a body of ideas with anarchism as a movement.” Even if anarchism is chiefly regarded as a political movement that is distinguished from other movements on the basis of its practices or practical tendencies, one may still ask what ends anarchists hope to achieve through these practices, why they choose these particular practices and ends over others, and so on. One obvious answer to these sorts of questions is, again, that what anarchists do is at least a partial function of what anarchists believe—in other words, that anarchist practice is related in non-trivial ways to anarchist thought.

(Since we are mainly concerned with the relationship between anarchism and philosophy, and since all six definitions enumerated in the previous section define philosophy in terms of intellectual content or activity, we will not consider practico-practical definitions of anarchism in any significant detail here—although we will briefly revisit the relationship of anarchist thought and anarchist political activity in the conclusion.)

All of this being said, even those who define anarchism in intellectual terms disagree amongst themselves as to how anarchist thought as such should be characterized. This disagreement bespeaks a more basic tension concerning the role that reason and intellectual analysis plays (or ought to play) in anarchist politics. Though anarchists of all stripes have generally agreed that “anarchism owes little to the writings of the ‘intellectual,’ many have considered it important to defend anarchism against the sorts of charges and accusations enumerated in the preface by attempting to demonstrate that it is “coherent” (i.e., that its substantive claims are mutually consistent) and “rational” (i.e., that its substantive claims may be justified on purely rational grounds). However, some have gone a step further by portraying anarchism as an explicitly “scientific” worldview “anchor[ed] firmly and irretrievably in Enlightenment rationalism.” This is particularly true of Kropotkin and other “classical” anarchists for whom anarchism employs the methods “of the exact natural sciences” to construct “a mechanical explanation of all phenomena ... including ... the life of human societies and their economic, political, and moral problems” or “to construct a synthetic philosophy comprehending in one generalization all ... of Nature.” In associating anarchism with notions of “self-regulating natural mechanisms, relations and processes that are rational and that, if left alone, allow a more harmonious social order to emerge,” Kropotkin and his ilk were not content to demonstrate that it is intellectually credible (insofar as it is supported by or, at the very least, compatible with reason); rather, they were explicitly intent upon characterizing anarchism as a rationalist ideology that places foremost emphasis on reason and scientific analysis in the formulation and justification of its beliefs, ideas, principles, and commitments.

Others have claimed that anarchism rejects “rationalist discourses of Enlightenment humanism” including “essentialist notions of the rational human subject and ... positivistic faith in science and objective historical laws.” For those who defend “non-rationalist” perspectives of this sort, anarchism is neither solely nor even chiefly a matter of rational deliberation, theoretical analysis, or “intellectual awareness” more generally, but of non-rational sensibilities, convictions, aspirations, and ideals. According to this view, anarchist beliefs, ideas, principles, and commitments reflect underlying “psychological and temperamental attitudes” or “mood[s],” which means that anarchist political movements are not so much applications of a “doctrine” or “a body of theory” as they are expressions of “an attitude, or perhaps one might even say a faith: the rejection of certain types of social relations, the confidence that certain others would be much better ones on which to build a livable society, the belief that such a society could actually exist.” In this way, anarchism is closer to being “a species of Romanticism” than a “wayward child of the Enlightenment” or the “odd man out” in a broader set of Enlightenment ideologies.

We must avoid the temptation to overstate the difference between rationalist and non-rationalist interpretations. An emphasis on ideas, or on the role that intellectual analysis plays in the formulation and justification of these ideas, does not necessarily entail a commitment to a particular theoretical perspective, let alone a de-emphasis on practices or on the role that psychological or emotional factors play in motivating and inspiring these practices. Nor does calling attention to the limitations of intellectual analysis necessarily entail a blanket opposition to science, philosophy, and related discourses. As Graeber remarks:

Anarchism is ... a project, which sets out to begin creating the institutions of a new society “within the shell of the old,” to expose, subvert, and undermine structures of domination but always, while doing so, proceeding in a democratic fashion, a manner which itself demonstrates those structures are unnecessary. Clearly any such project has need of the tools of intellectual analysis and understanding.

At the same time, he continues, anarchist intellectuals must “reject self-consciously any trace of vanguardism” and avoid taking on the role of

“an elite that can arrive at the correct strategic analyses and then lead the masses to follow.”

Although neither perspective categorically denies that rational deliberation and reflection are important to anarchist thought, and although both emphasize the centrality of practice, non-rationalist perspectives understand anarchism in terms of sensibilities, convictions, aspirations, or ideals that emerge organically from concrete, lived experience rather than considered rational deliberation or judgment. It is only after such sensibilities, convictions, aspirations, or ideals come into being at the level of practice that they are subjected to intellectual analysis, and even then the analysis in question is largely concerned with strategy or tactics (as Graeber puts it, a “discourse about revolutionary practice”) rather than “high theory.” In other words, it is not anarchist thought itself that is the product of intellectual analysis, but rather the strategic and tactical discourses that are formulated in response to that thought. This explains, in turn, why non-rationalist accounts have generally been uninterested in arguing for anarchism or providing rational justification for it more generally.

For rationalists like Kropotkin, there is no reason in principle why the ideas that emerge organically from the concrete, lived experience of political struggle should be regarded as “non-rational” in nature. Such ideas are “rational” just in case they are justified by sufficient reasons (and so can be explicated and justified in terms of those reasons), and this is true regardless of how those ideas come about. Although some who defend non-rationalist perspectives may agree that anarchist ideas are “rational” in this sense, they do not necessarily consider this to be an important consideration. After all, perspectives of this sort are not just claiming that anarchist ideas emerge from non-rational sources, but that it is a matter of indifference whether anarchist ideas qualify as rational in the first place.

In short, while intellectual definitions of anarchism uniformly emphasize anarchist thought, this does not entail a uniform understanding of the mechanisms by which this thought is generated. The same is generally true with regard to characterizing the general kind of which anarchist thought is a particular instance. Although some definitions use terms like “ideology,” “theory,” and “philosophy”

interchangeably, many more hold them as distinct. We must therefore differentiate those that describe anarchism as a “philosophy” from those that describe it as a “theory,” an “ideology,” or something else entirely. We must also draw a distinction between those that understand anarchism as a single ideology, theory, or philosophy and those that see it as a broad philosophical, ideological, or theoretical tendency, orientation, or tradition comprised of otherwise diverse elements.

### Anarchism as Political Ideology

In most cases, “ideology” is defined as a “consistent set of ideas [or] central assumptions” (or as a “sheaf of overlapping [ideas or assumptions] assembled around a core characterization”) that pertain to the particular dimension of human reality known as “politics” or “the political.” Although the meaning of the term “political” is itself disputed, it is generally understood to refer to the social dimension of human existence or, more specifically, to the various ways that human beings constitute (or are capable of constituting) themselves as social creatures. According to Ponton and Gill, for example, politics may be defined as “the way in which we understand and order our social affairs, especially in relation to the allocation of scarce resources, the principles underlying this, and the means by which some people or groups acquire and maintain greater control over the situation than others.”

Whereas “political” activity or practice refers to actual or hypothetical constitutions of the social domain itself, “political” discourse and thought refer to various ways of speaking and thinking about this domain as well as the the fundamental issues to which it gives rise—e.g., “the exercise of power ... the public allocation of things that are valued ... the resolution of conflict ... the competition among groups and individuals pursuing their interests ... [and] the determination of who gets what, when, and how.” Understood in this way, political thought is a broad category that “refers to thinking about politics at any level of conceptualization and articulation.” As such, it encompasses “the political speculations of a whole community, over a certain period” including its “leaders, statesmen, commentators, writers, poets, publicists, social reformers, litterateurs, and the like” as expressed in “policies, programs, plans, activities, organizations, constitutions, etc.”

Although anarchism is often defined as an “ideology” in the generic sense described above, there is considerable disagreement regarding the particular “ideas” or “assumptions” that distinguish it from other ideologies. As David Miller writes:

Of course, an ideology is never a fully coherent doctrine; every ideology is open-ended, capable of being developed in different directions, and therefore of generating contradictory propositions. But generally speaking we can at least find a coherent core, a consistent set of ideas which is shared by all those who embrace the ideology in question ... It is by no means clear that we can find such a set of core assumptions in the case of anarchism. We must [therefore] face the possibility that anarchism is not really an ideology, but rather the point of intersection of several ideologies.

Here Miller seems to be suggesting that the “ideas” and “assumptions” that constitute ideologies are first-order claims, assertions, or propositions. As Paul McLaughlin notes, many scholars have taken it for granted that such “ideas” and “assumptions,” if they exist, are to be found in the writings of individuals who have been identified, or identified themselves, as “anarchists.” Although McLaughlin seems to agree with Miller in defining ideologies as “collections of particular beliefs articulated in particular texts and expressed in particular activities,” he nonetheless rejects the notion that ideologies can be reduced to “collections of individuals.” When anarchism is approached in this way, he writes:

[I]t is not the least bit surprising that scholars [who employ it] conclude that it is an inconsistent, contradictory, or incoherent ideology. Individuals themselves change and also change their minds. We can hardly expect them to be consistent—say “consistently anarchist”—throughout a lifetime and a body of work ... [E]vading [the] basic challenge of ideological inquiry by simply identifying an ideology with a collection of individuals—and, once again, with every aspect of their lives and thought—is indolent and uninformative.

As McLaughlin himself admits, however, “anarchism has been defined in numerous ways” (for example, as “the rejection of rule, of government, of the

state, of authority, or of domination,” as “a theory of voluntary association, of decentralization, or federalism, of freedom...” and so on), and “locating or specifying the [ideas and assumptions] that characterize [it] is a challenge” even when we focus on the extent to which [they] “have gained expression in ... activities” rather than the writings of individuals.

A much more useful approach is provided by Michael Freeden, who defines ideologies in general as complex “clusters” or “composites” of decontested political concepts “with a variety of internal combinations” (we will refer to this as Freeden’s “weak” definition of ideology). For Freeden—unlike for Miller and McLaughlin—ideologies are not constituted by particular claims, assertions, or propositions but by particular political concepts “characterized by a morphology,” i.e., an inner structure that organizes and arranges those concepts in particular ways and, in so doing, removes them “from contest by attempting to assign them a clear meaning.” The structure of an ideology is determined by the particular ways it decontests the concepts it contains; the decontested meanings assigned to these concepts are determined in turn by how they are organized and arranged within the ideology, as well as the historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts within which the ideology itself is situated.

Ideologies assign fixed meanings and degrees of relative significance to concepts by means of two basic operations. The first involves identifying, defining, and organizing their “micro-components”—i.e., the particular referents that specify what they are concepts of. Every concept has several possible microcomponents, each of which, in turn, has many possible meanings and degrees of relative significance within the overall concept. This allows for “diverse conceptions of any concept” and an “infinite variety” of “conceptual permutations” within “the ideational boundaries ... that anchor [them] and secure [their] components.” The second, in contrast involves arranging concepts within a hierarchy of “core,” “adjacent,” and “peripheral” elements as well as determining their relative significance among other concepts of the same type.

The core concepts of a particular ideology are distinguished by their “long-term durability” and are “present in all known cases of the ideology in

question.” As such, “they are indispensable to holding the ideology together, and are consequently accorded preponderance in shaping that ideology’s ideational content.” Adjacent concepts, in contrast, “are second-ranking in the pervasiveness and breadth of meanings they impart to the ideology in which they are located. They do not appear in all its instances, but are crucial to finessing the core and anchoring it ... into a more determinate and decontested semantic field.” Lastly there are peripheral concepts, which are “more marginal and generally more ephemeral concepts that change at a faster pace diachronically and culturally.” Each of these categories, moreover, has an internal hierarchy that accords different degrees of “proportional weight” to the concepts they comprise.

Both operations can be applied in a variety of different ways. In some cases these differences are a function of the identification, definition, and organization of micro-components within the concepts themselves. In others, they are a function of the presence or absence of other concepts; of the relative position of concepts within the morphology; or of the different levels of proportional weight accorded to concepts that occupy the same relative position in the morphology. Although Freeden’s approach recognizes that ideologies have core elements that are “indispensable to holding [them] together, and are consequently accorded preponderance in shaping [their] ideational content,” it avoids defining ideologies strictly in terms of these (or any other) concepts. Its goal as such is not only to identify the core concepts of ideological morphologies but also, and more importantly, to investigate the various “conceptual permutations” they contain. Because these are virtually unlimited, ideologies have “the potential for infinite variety and alteration” and, for this reason, are capable of expressing themselves in a wide and diverse range of manifestations. This is true even of core concepts, the meanings of which can vary enormously from one particular “manifestation” of a given ideology to the next. Ideologies that recognize the same core concepts can be and often are quite different from one another; even a single ideological tradition can include a variety of distinct tendencies.

As such, the question of whether anarchism is characterized by a set of core propositions is largely irrelevant to its identification as an ideology. What matters, on the contrary, is that it involves a stable “cluster” of concepts as well as a particular morphology—that is, a particular way of organizing and arranging concepts so as to accord them specific meanings and degrees of significance. Although there is no question that anarchist ideas are “fluid and constantly evolving” and that their “central content ... changes from one generation to another ... against the background of the movements and culture in and by which they are expressed,” different tendencies within anarchism nonetheless “have largely similar morphologies,” meaning that they tend to affirm the same basic set of core concepts even though “[these] are expressed in different ways, depending on context.”<sup>85</sup> Were this not the case, it would be difficult to account for the ubiquitous tendency to regard anarchism as a distinctive political perspective, let alone the fact that conventional treatments of anarchism consistently highlight particular concepts (e.g., freedom, anti-statism, anti-capitalism, prefiguration, etc.) rather than others. This suggests that anarchism qualifies as an ideology at least according to Freeden’s “weak” definition.

According to (what we will call) Freeden’s “strong” definition, ideologies are not simply conceptual assemblages but “clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes usually held by identifiable groups that provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community.” Unlike the “weak” definition, the “strong” definition encompasses ideas as well as the concrete forms of political activity they animate, and this (along with additional characteristics to be discussed below) serves to distinguish ideologies from less explicitly practice-oriented forms of political thought such as political philosophy or political theory. As we have already noted, anarchism may be understood as a “movement composed of dense networks of individuals, affinity groups and collectives which communicate and coordinate intensively, sometimes across the globe, and generate innumerable direct actions and sustained projects.” It may also be understood as an “intricate political culture”—that

is, “a family of shared orientations for doing and talking about politics, and to living everyday life”—that animates these networks and infuses them with content.” Insofar as the “major features” of this culture (e.g., “a shared repertoire of political action based on direct action, building grassroots alternatives, community outreach and confrontation; shared forms of organizing ...; broader cultural expression in areas as diverse as art, music, dress and diet ...; [and] shared political language that emphasises resistance to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and more generally to hierarchy and domination”) follow straightforwardly from the conceptual morphology described above, it is clear that anarchism qualifies as an ideology in this stronger sense as well.

All of this being said, it remains an open question whether anarchism is only a political ideology. Although it is certainly possible that ideology constitutes an altogether distinct category of political thought, it may just as well be a general kind of which political theories or political philosophies are particular instances—in which case anarchism might qualify as a political theory, a political philosophy, or some other species of political thought as well as an ideology. Indeed, even if political theory or political philosophy are entirely distinct from ideology, it is possible that anarchism is related to them in nontrivial ways. We will consider each of these possibilities below.

### Anarchism as Political Theory

The term “political theory” is typically used in two senses. The first refers to a form of political thought that explores fundamental political questions, problems, and issues. As Terence Ball writes:

So long as people live together in communities, fundamental questions—“theoretical” ones, if you like—will inevitably arise. No community can long exist without addressing and answering, at least provisionally, questions of [this] sort. [These include] questions about justice and fairness in the distribution of duties and resources.... about offices and authority ... about grounds and justification ... about punishment ... about the limits and extent of obligation ... [in short] questions ... that any civilized community, or at any rate its most reflective members, must address and attempt to answer.

Whereas other forms of political thought are concerned with questions that emerge in specific political contexts (e.g., about public policy), political theory deals with questions that are taken to be universally applicable in any and all “civilized communities.” For this reason, it tends to be more speculative and abstract than the former.

As Anthony Quinton notes, the distinction between this first sense of political theory and similarly abstract or speculative modes of political thought like political philosophy “is fine, to the point, indeed, of being barely discernible.” Insofar as the former is identified as a subfield of political science, it “is more closely allied with empirical methodologies and less inclined toward the normative claims of humanities scholars (although political theorists are more normative and ‘philosophical’ than other scholars in the social sciences).” In practice, this is generally taken to mean that political theory is both explanatory and predictive as well as normative in character—in other words, that it is concerned with describing or explaining fundamental political phenomena as well as prescribing what ought to be the case ideally. This implies that political philosophy is coextensive with normative political theory, whereas political theory more broadly encompasses non-normative questions and non-philosophical methods. Such a distinction is largely tendentious, however, since canonical works of political philosophy frequently involve descriptive or explanatory analyses rooted in the use of empirical methodologies. For our purposes, it is just as well to regard political theory in this first sense as equivalent to political philosophy (about which more below).

The second sense refers to a “subdiscipline of political science” which studies significant “texts, arguments, and discourses” in the history of political theorizing. Understood in this way, political theory involves a “historical narrative [or] a sequenced story that examine[s] the ways in which a number of outstanding individuals such as Aristotle, Hobbes or Rousseau applied their wisdom” to particular political issues, problems, and questions. Its foremost objective, in other words, is to interpret and/or critically evaluate the political thought of particular thinkers and writers in terms of the particular issues with which they are concerned; the



particular methods they employ in investigating these issues (whether “philosophical, historical, economic, psychological, sociological, theological, or anthropological”); and the particular conclusions at which they arrive. Although students of this sort of political theory do not deny the existence of significant commonalities among otherwise distinct political perspectives—indeed, the notion of political-theoretical “schools,” “movements,” “tendencies,” and the like is articulated precisely on the basis of such commonalities—they are keen to emphasize the distinctiveness of individual thinkers and, by extension, the various ways in which their political ideas differ.

The same critique that McLaughlin leveled against the “individualistic approach” to ideology would seem to apply here as well. Although conventional accounts of anarchism tend to characterize it as “the brainchild of certain nineteenth-century thinkers—Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, etc.” these “‘founding figures’ did not think of themselves as having invented anything particularly new.” Like other anarchists, on the contrary, they tended to understand anarchism as a product of the combined efforts of countless “anonymous individuals who played active roles in the workers’ movement of the nineteenth century” as well as the “common people [who practiced] anarchism without being aware of it or with no previous knowledge of the word anarchism.” Even the rationalist Kropotkin insisted that anarchism was “born among the people.” This suggests that anarchist ideas evolved from the real-world political struggles of “activists” rather than the deliberations of a small group of intellectuals or theoreticians—in which case anarchism does not qualify as a “political theory” in the second sense described above. This is not to say that individual figures like Proudhon and Bakunin were not political theorists or that their work cannot be studied as political theory, but only that anarchism itself is not reducible to the political theory of any one individual.

## Anarchism as Philosophy (Political and Otherwise)

As we noted at the outset, many notable anarchists (as well as commentators on anarchism) have described anarchism as a “philosophy.” To cite just a few examples:

- [Anarchism] is the philosophy of the sovereignty of the individual.
- Anarchism—The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.
- Anarchism is the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself.
- The liberation of man from economic exploitation and from intellectual and political oppression ... finds its finest expression in the philosophy of anarchism...
- Anarchism is that political philosophy which advocates the maximization of individual responsibility and the reduction of concentrated power.
- Anarchism is a philosophy based on the premise that men need freedom in order to solve urgent social problems, and begin to realize their potentialities for happiness and creativity.
- Anarchism is a philosophy of freedom. It is a body of revolutionary ideas which reconciles, as no other revolutionary concept does, the necessity for individual freedom with the demands of society. It is a commune-ist philosophy which starts from the individual and works upwards, instead of starting from the State and working downwards.
- Anarchism is a philosophy in its own right. Although as a social movement it has developed a wide variety of strands from extreme individualism to communism, all anarchists share certain common concerns.
- Anarchism is a political philosophy in the authentic sense: it poses the fundamental ethical question of political legitimacy. It is not content with disinterested description of the political order but seeks, from the standpoint of “justice,” to assess the legitimacy of this order and its alternatives.
- Anarchism is a political philosophy concerning any form of nonauthoritarian political organization dealing with local and daily life.
- Anarchism is a political philosophy ... favoring social order based on voluntary association and rejecting the legitimacy of the state.

These examples make clear that those who describe anarchism as a “philosophy” typically

mean “political philosophy.” Generally speaking, this refers either to a more or less uniform way of understanding the particular dimension of reality known as “politics” or “the political” (as in P2), or else to an intellectual practice or mode of inquiry that philosophically explores this dimension of reality (as in P5)—that is, by means of “rational methods” such as argumentation (the justification of propositions by means of deductive and/or inductive reasoning) and analysis (the critical evaluation of propositions by means of the same). Before considering the extent to which anarchism qualifies as a political philosophy in either or both of these senses, let us briefly examine its relation to the other definitions of philosophy outlined previously.

The notion that anarchism qualifies as an instance of P1 is dubious. Anarchists past and present have refused to characterize anarchism as a fixed, comprehensive, and self-contained system of thought; on the contrary, they have insisted that it “recognizes only the relative significance of ideas, institutions, and social forms.” and have explicitly denied that it is “necessarily linked to any [one] philosophical system,” as when Emma Goldman argues that anarchism “leaves posterity free to develop its own particular systems, in harmony with its needs. Identifying anarchism with P3 is problematic for two related but distinct reasons. In the first place, anarchism has never understood itself as an attempt to answer “the most general or fundamental questions about the nature of reality and human life”; it is not “a metaphysics, cosmology, ecology, or spirituality ... an ontology, philosophy of history, ethics, economics, or positive political program.” In the second place, anarchism as such is not committed to any particular mode of inquiry or form of intellectual practice, rational or otherwise; as Goldman says, it does not seek to “impose an iron-clad program or method.”

As we have already seen, the role that such modes of inquiry play in anarchist thought is a matter of dispute. Feral Faun writes, for example, that anarchism emerges not from rational analysis but from “the energy of insurgent desire,” seeking after “the revitalization of desire as a creative impulse” and “the refusal to let utility and effectiveness dominate over enjoyment, playfulness, experimentation and poetic living.” Giovanni Baldelli makes a similar point:

Anarchism is not a philosophy ... Anarchism must rely on fundamental principles that are the result of an act of choice and are operative as an act of faith, regardless of whether they may be fitted into one philosophical system or another and whether they may have received rational and even scientific support.

So, too, Alfredo Bonanno: “Anarchism is not a political theory. It is a way of conceiving life, and life ... is not something definitive.” For defenders of these sorts of perspectives, “there is no difference between what we do and what we think, but there is a continual reversal of theory into action and action into theory.” As Graeber puts it, “Anarchists like to distinguish themselves by what they do, and how they organize themselves to go about doing it ... [They] have never been much interested in broad philosophical or strategic questions.” None of this is to say, again, that anarchism explicitly disclaims rational inquiry or analysis—only that anarchist thought as such is not uniformly committed to any particular method, rational or otherwise.

It will be recalled that P4 refers to a particular tradition of intellectual practice or inquiry (in the sense of P3) defined by a more or less uniform subject matter and range of approaches (as in “Western philosophy” or “Eastern philosophy”). Although anarchism does not qualify as an instance of P4 in the strict sense, it is certainly possible to situate anarchist thought in relation to various philosophical traditions of this sort—indeed, this is precisely what many of the chapters in this volume aim to do. Even if Schmidt and van der Walt are right to argue that anarchism is “a product of the capitalist world and the working class it created”—or, more controversially, that it has no existence prior to Bakunin and the First International—no one can deny that anarchists have critically engaged with other thinkers, perspectives, and traditions and that anarchism itself has been influenced by a wide range of political, intellectual, and cultural movements (e.g., the Renaissance and the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, Left Hegelianism, Comtean positivism, and Darwinism, inter alia.) While none of this establishes that anarchist thought belongs to a particular philosophical tradition, it at least provides evidence of a longstanding discursive relationship between anarchism and philosophy.

As was noted in the preface, even a cursory examination of the scholarly literature of the past fifty years reveals that academic philosophers have had precious little interest in, or regard for, anarchism under any description, while the few who have bothered to discuss it have almost invariably belittled or misrepresented it. One notable exception to this general rule is “postanarchism”—also known as “poststructuralist anarchism” or “postmodern anarchism”—a recent current in anarchist political theory associated most prominently with Todd May, Lewis Call, and Saul Newman. At the highest level of generality, postanarchism urges “the adoption into anarchism of poststructural theory to enrich and enliven existing practices.” Although it is extremely critical of certain aspects of classical anarchist thought—and although it has been subject to its fair share of criticism in turn—postanarchism nonetheless sees itself as “self-consciously engaged with and responding to” the broader anarchist tradition.

The same is not true of other philosophical currents that have been described, or have described themselves, as “anarchist”—most notably the “philosophical anarchism ... associated with the work of Robert Paul Wolff and others from the 1970s to the present.” In this context, the term “anarchism” refers to “principled skepticism toward the legitimacy and authority of states”; as such, it functions as little more than “an abstract descriptor used by academic philosophers to position themselves within philosophical debates.” Beyond this, philosophical anarchism has proven altogether oblivious to and uninterested in the broader anarchist tradition and has consistently failed to engage with the social, political, and cultural history of the anarchist movement.

It is an open question whether and to what extent postanarchism has impacted actually-existing anarchist political movements. What is beyond dispute is that postanarchist thought is largely (though by no means exclusively) a creature of academic philosophy—that is to say, of P6—and this fact alone renders it suspicious in the eyes of those contemporary anarchists who regard institutional academia as “hierarchical and elitist” and “separate from the everyday conditions of the working class(es).” This suspicion is of a piece with the broader anarchist tradition, which has long been skeptical of and even hostile toward

institutionalized scientific and theoretical discourses and the “bourgeois intellectuals” who employ them. Bakunin, who is particularly representative on this score, vigorously rejects the precedence of “abstract theory” over “social practice” and rails against those who defend “the predominance of science over life”—the “abstract thinkers” who, by “lifting [themselves] in thought above [themselves],” achieve nothing but “the representation of perfect abstraction.” The worst of these are professional academics, whom Bakunin describes as “modern priests of licensed political and social quackery.” Inclined “by their very nature ... to all sorts of intellectual and moral corruption,” academics “poison the university youth” and produce “doctrinaire[s] full of conceit and contempt for the rabble, whom [they are] ready to exploit in the name of [their] intellectual and moral superiority.” Just as the Roman Catholic Church “once sanctioned the violence perpetrated by the nobility upon the people,” so does academia, “this church of bourgeois science, explain and condone the exploitation of the same people by bourgeois capital.”

Malatesta—to cite another classic example—also denies the “infallibility of Science,” rejects any and all attempts “to give ‘a scientific basis’ to anarchism,” argues that deterministic and mechanistic conceptions of the universe are incompatible with notions of “will, freedom, [and] responsibility,” and claims that philosophy is often little more than “a play on words and an illusionist’s trick.” He contends that “most of the so-called intellectuals are, by reason of their education, their family background, [and] their class prejudices tied to the Establishment” and that their “natural tendency” is “to keep apart from the people and form themselves into coteries; to give themselves airs and end up believing themselves protectors and saviors whom the masses should worship.” For Malatesta, anarchism is not a matter of intellectual hairsplitting but of action: “what is important is not what we achieve, but how we achieve it.” This clearly echoes Bakunin’s pronouncement that “... the time of grand theoretical discourse, written or spoken, is past ... [and] ... it is no longer time for ideas but deeds and acts.”

If I am right in suggesting that anarchist thought lacks any significant relationship to Ps, this leaves only one option—viz., that anarchism is a political

philosophy (or a group of related political philosophies, or a broad political-philosophical tendency or orientation). As noted previously, “political philosophy” can refer either to a more or less uniform way of understanding “politics” (as in P2), or else to an intellectual practice or mode of inquiry that philosophically explores politics” (as in P5)—that is, by means of “rational methods” such as argumentation and analysis. Although there is no reason in principle why all instances of the former must be products of the latter, conventional accounts tend to take for granted that “political philosophies” (in the sense of P2) differ from political ideologies, political theories, and other forms of political thought insofar as they are formulated by means of “political philosophizing” (in the sense of P5). It behooves us, accordingly, to examine P5 in closer detail.

Political philosophy in the Western intellectual tradition has been characterized by two distinct but related ends that it has pursued by means of the “philosophical” practices and modes of inquiry described in P3. The first end, which may be termed “constructive,” involves the formulation of rigorous definitions of fundamental political concepts; the systematic organization of these concepts into clearly-defined “perspectives” or “positions” (i.e., “political philosophies” in the sense of P2); and the defense of these “perspectives” or “positions” vis-à-vis the provision of arguments. The second end, which may be termed “critical,” involves evaluating already-existing definitions of fundamental political concepts as well as the various “political philosophies” they constitute. In its constructive dimension, therefore, Western political philosophy has been principally concerned with assigning particular meanings to “political concepts” (i.e., concepts in terms of which the basic subject matter of the political is described and evaluated); marshaling these concepts in the formulation of descriptive or normative propositions; and organizing these propositions into a more or less coherent theoretical framework within which political questions may be scrutinized and answered. In its critical dimension, by contrast, political philosophy has sought to critically evaluate and compare political philosophies in terms of one or more of their basic elements.

As Michael Freeden notes, “formal” political philosophy of this sort—as well as the “political

philosophies” that issue from it—displays “strong similarities” with political ideology, particularly as concerns its “normative and recommendatory features ...” For example, both seek to decontest political concepts, formulate distinctive political “ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes,” and—in many cases, at least—to “provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community ...” At the same time, there are also important differences between them. In the first place, whereas political philosophy has tended to be a restricted discourse that is “accessible only to specialists and thus bereft of wider public impact,” political ideologies typically emerge out of, or coextensively with, popular political, social, and cultural movements. In the second place, whereas political philosophy has generally been a solitary enterprise carried out by “exceptionally talented, or expertly trained, individuals,” political ideologies tend to develop out of the combined efforts of countless “activists”—many of them anonymous. In the third place, whereas political philosophy self-consciously avoids emotionally-charged rhetoric in favor of dispassionate logical analysis and argumentation (the “rational methods” described previously), political ideologies are chiefly interested in persuading the public and, for this reason, have tended to follow the exact opposite strategy.

All of this would seem to imply that political philosophy (in the sense of both P2 as well as P5) does not differ from political ideology in terms of what it does so much as how, why, and in what context it does it. Indeed, this is at least partly what Freeden has in mind when he concludes that political philosophy—no less than political theory—is “an ideological phenomenon” There are at least three important conclusions that may be drawn from this claim: first, that “political philosophies” (in the sense of P2) are particular instances of ideology rather than altogether distinct forms of political thought; second, that P5 is but one form of ideological thinking; and third, that formal political philosophy of the sort described above is but one form of P5. The last point is especially key, as it decouples the use of rational methods as such from the particular ways they have been used in the history of Western political thought. This challenges the notion that political philosophizing does not or

cannot exist outside of the restricted, individualistic milieu of formal political philosophy. It also broadens the scope of political philosophy beyond the narrowly descriptive and normative concerns of the latter and incorporates forms of political thinking that focus on strategic and tactical questions (e.g., questions of how to transform existing political realities to bring them in line with ideal conceptions of justice or the good life) as well as the critical philosophy associated with thinkers in the “Continental” tradition.

In previous sections, we not only established that anarchism qualifies as a political ideology in Freeden’s sense but also that it embodies many of the features that are commonly associated with ideologies—for example, the fact that it was born out of popular movements rather than the speculations of solitary thinkers operating in elite intellectual contexts. We also noted that many anarchists have employed philosophical methods to articulate and justify anarchist ideas (thereby echoing the distinctive means and ends of formal political philosophy) as well as to explore strategic and tactical questions. This fact by itself illustrates an obvious but important sense in which anarchism and philosophy are related. At the same time, earlier observations regarding the relationship of anarchist ideas to anarchist practices make it clear that anarchism is not a wholly rationalistic mode of political thought, as this would imply that its practices proceed from its ideas, at least some of which are themselves products of rationalistic deliberation or analysis. As we have seen, on the contrary, anarchists have long insisted that their ideas are products and not (or not just) producers of their practices and practical tendencies.

Note that the latter claim (viz., that anarchist practices proceed from anarchist ideas) does not necessarily negate the former claim (viz., that at least some anarchist ideas are products of rationalistic deliberation or analysis). It is possible, for example, that at least some anarchist ideas were generated through *ex post facto* attempts by anarchist intellectuals to explain or justify preexistent anarchist practices and practical tendencies. Although such attempts proceed from anarchist practices and not the other way around, they are nonetheless rationalistic in nature, if only in a minimal sense. This suggests that the intellectual content of anarchist ideology contains both

rationalistic as well as non-rationalist elements—in other words, that anarchist thought is a matter of the heart as well as the mind.

While anarchism does not appear to qualify as an instance of P1, P3, P4, or P5, it is nonetheless non-trivially related to instances of each. Furthermore, although P2 and P5 appear to qualify as particular instances of political ideology, and although some instances of anarchist thought are non-trivially related to P5, anarchism as such does not qualify as a particular instance of P2. This suggests that anarchism is not a political philosophy even though anarchist thinkers have occasionally drawn upon the methods of formal political philosophy. On the contrary, anarchism is an ideology or ideological tradition the intellectual content of which has been shaped in part by the distinctive practices and associated concerns of P5.

## Conclusion

Whether it is understood as a kind of “view” or “perspective” (as in P1 and P2) or as an “activity” or “practice” (as in P3, Pa, P5, and Ps), philosophy is thoroughly intellectual in character, concerned first and foremost with ideas rather than actions. As Freeden notes, even its more explicitly political iterations tend to be “private discourses” that are out of touch “with the real-world arena of policy-making” and “removed ... from the practice and language of politics.” While there is no question that formal political philosophy sees itself as a “guide, a corrective, and a justification for enlightened and civilized forms of organized social life and political institutions ... the disciplinary constraints that apply to producing good philosophy have all too often distanced its practitioners from the actual stuff of politics and have contributed to a general sense of the estrangement of philosophy from political life.” Interestingly, the fact that political ideologies tend to place a much heavier emphasis on engaged political activity is one reason among many why they have been considered inferior modes of political thinking—the underlying assumption being that this emphasis is at odds with the intellectual values of “rationality, clarity of argument, logical coherence, and consistency.”

All of this is moot, of course, if political philosophy is itself a species of ideology that “involves selective decontestations of political concepts like any other” and “displays features common to other

ideological forms ... such as an appeal to unexamined value assumptions, and the investment of emotional attachment to particular points of view.” In this case, what distinguishes political philosophy from other ideologies is precisely its tendency toward political disengagement, where this, in turn, is either a basic commitment of its practitioners or else a contingent consequence of its methodology and subject matter. Such disengagement, moreover, would appear to make political philosophy a rather bloodless and ineffectual member of the ideological family even if, on some level, it has intellectual merits that other more practice-oriented ideologies lack.

Although anarchism is clearly an ideology in the weak sense of displaying a conceptual morphology, it is also an ideology in the strong sense insofar as it has consistently emphasized practice even in its more explicitly philosophical iterations. This comes as no surprise since, as we have seen, anarchism was born from and shaped by active political engagement and has always scorned abstract theory divorced from action. If anarchist thought appears “less sophisticated” than formal political philosophies, it is precisely for this reason.

Understanding the world in various ways is important, but anarchism’s foremost imperative has always been to change it. More than anything else, perhaps, this explains its general aversion to the abstract content and esoteric methodologies associated with P5, to say nothing of the other forms of “philosophy” that we discussed.

At the same time, the fact that anarchism isn’t a “philosophy” (or a species of philosophy) in its own right does not mean that it is altogether unrelated to philosophy. As we have seen, on the contrary, there are deep connections between anarchist thought and philosophy under various descriptions. The intellectual content of anarchism has been shaped in significant ways by its engagement with other philosophical currents, and several of its most exemplary thinkers were artful practitioners of P5 (and, in some cases, of P3 as well). There is no question that anarchists have done and continue to do philosophy even if this enterprise has played a comparatively minor role in the historical development of anarchist thought. Understanding these connections is necessary in order to fully comprehend anarchism as a historical phenomenon

no less than as a body of thought and practice; this is one reason why anarchist studies would benefit from more explicitly philosophical or intellectual-historical research.

On the other hand, even if we agree that anarchist thought is not a “political philosophy” in the sense of P2 and is not chiefly a product of P5, it remains an open question whether this is an altogether neutral fact. One can certainly argue—as many anarchists have—that rationalistic approaches like P5 are objectively superior to (or, at the very least, have certain decisive advantages over) non-rationalistic approaches, in which case the failure of anarchist thought to engage more explicitly with the former is a lamentable historical shortcoming that anarchist thinkers should proactively seek to overcome. It has been claimed, for example, that political ideas founded on irrational (or at least non-rational) “faith,” “confidence,” or “belief” rather than considered rational judgments are arbitrary and foundationless, which implies that there are no clear ways to promote, advance, or advocate for them within the marketplace of ideas (and ideals), and thus no non-arbitrary reasons to organize movements that pursue political goals in their name. If true, this would mean that ideologies that can rationally articulate and justify their ideas would appear to be better off than ideologies that are unwilling or unable to do so, in which case anarchism would benefit by more robustly embracing P5.

In short, the question of how philosophy and anarchism are related, no less than the question of how they ought to be related, are relevant not only to the study of anarchism as such, but also, and more importantly, to the ongoing development of anarchist thought and practice in the present. What follows is an initial attempt to make this important fact more explicit and, in so doing, to inspire deeper inquiry going forward.

## Contents

Editor’s Preface

Acknowledgments

About the Contributors

Anarchism and Philosophy: A Critical

Introduction by Nathan Jun

1 Anarchism and Aesthetics  
by Allan Antliff

2 Anarchism and Liberalism  
by Bruce Buchan

3	Anarchism and Markets by Kevin Carson
4	Anarchism and Religion by Alexandre Christoyannopoulos and Lara Apps
5	Anarchism and Pacifism by Andrew Fiala
6	Anarchism and Moral Philosophy by Benjamin Franks
7	Anarchism and Nationalism by Uri Gordon
8	Anarchism and Sexuality by Sandra Jeppesen and Holly Nazar
9	Anarchism and Feminism by Ruth Kinna
10	Anarchism and Libertarianism by Roderick T. Long
11	Anarchism, Poststructuralism, and Contemporary European Philosophy by Todd May
12	Anarchism and Analytic Philosophy by Paul McLaughlin
13	Anarchism and Environmental Philosophy by Brian Morris
14	Anarchism and Psychoanalysis by Saul Newman
15	Anarchism and Nineteenth-Century European Philosophy by Pablo Abufom Silva and Alex Prichard
16	Anarchism and Nineteenth-Century American Political Thought by Crispin Sartwell
17	Anarchism and Phenomenology by Joeri Schrijvers
18	Anarchism and Marxism by Lucien van der Walt
19	Anarchism and Existentialism by Shane Wahl
	Index of Proper Names
10	Anarchism and Libertarianism by Roderick T. Long
11	Anarchism, Poststructuralism, and Contemporary European Philosophy by Todd May
12	Anarchism and Analytic Philosophy by Paul McLaughlin
13	Anarchism and Environmental Philosophy by Brian Morris

14	Anarchism and Psychoanalysis by Saul Newman
15	Anarchism and Nineteenth-Century European Philosophy by Pablo Abufom Silva and Alex Prichard
16	Anarchism and Nineteenth-Century American Political Thought by Crispin Sartwell
17	Anarchism and Phenomenology by Joeri Schrijvers
18	Anarchism and Marxism by Lucien van der Walt
19	Anarchism and Existentialism by Shane Wahl
	Index of Proper Names
	Editor's Preface

[Asian Philosophies](#) 7<sup>th</sup> edition by John M. Koller  
[Routledge, 9781138629714] [paper](#)

John Koller has continued to improve his undergraduate textbook to Asian Philosophies. Because the section chapters are arranged to cover both and Indian and East Asian philosophies in the weeks there are in a semester, Koller skimps on the admirable recent developments philosophical tantra [Abhinavagupta] and modern philosophical trends in India, which would complement his coverage modern East Asian trends.

What are the main ideas that have shaped Asian cultures? What are the fundamental values that have guided the lives of Asian peoples over the millennia? How have the great thinkers of Asia thought about these ideas and values? This book is intended to help answer these questions, enabling us to understand the principal philosophies of the great Asian traditions.

Basic human ideas and values derive from answers to fundamental questions about existence and human life. People everywhere, whether Asian or Western, seek to answer the same basic questions: Who am I? What is real? How do we come to know something? How should we relate to others? What is the right thing to do? What is good? However, these questions arise in different contexts and assume different forms for people living at different times and in different places, and the answers given vary accordingly. But these

questions, sometimes arising out of wonder, and sometimes arising out of human suffering and the efforts to improve the conditions of human existence, are questions that every reflective person seeks to answer. It is these questions and their answers that provide the fundamental ideas and values that guide the development of whole cultures as well as the lives of individual persons.

By studying the great philosophical traditions of Asia, it is possible for us to understand these traditions' carefully considered answers to these questions, answers that are supported by profound insights and good reasons. Because these answers have guided the thought and action of the peoples of Asia over the centuries, they provide the basic clues to the guiding ideas and values of Asian societies today. And in today's world, where the very future of humankind depends upon understanding and cooperation among people with diverse values and ideas, it is imperative that these values and ideas be understood.

As each of us tries to creatively develop our own personal philosophy, we can benefit enormously from an understanding of the different ways that the basic questions of life have been answered by the great thinkers in the Asian traditions.

## WHAT'S NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Revisions of most chapters in light of recent scholarship
- Updating of all references
- Additional text boxes in each chapter to highlight important material
- Expanded coverage of Confucianism
- Added material on Theravada Buddhism
- Added material on Buddhism and ecology
- Added discussion of the Soto-Rinzai split
- Added primary source explanations of important terms
- Expanded glossary

The seventh edition, like the sixth, is organized into two equal parts on South and East Asia.

## Philosophical Questions

Philosophical questions arise out of reflection on experience. Experiencing sorrow and grief, we ask, What is suffering? Experiencing pleasure and joy, we ask, What is happiness? Reflecting on the difference between waking experience and

dreaming experience, we ask, What is real? Reflecting on mistaken claims to know something, we ask, What is knowledge? Reflecting on our experience of hurting others by our actions and on our own suffering caused by the actions of others, we ask, What are the right and wrong ways of action? And reflecting on our own struggles to achieve personal identity and give meaning to our life, we ask, Who am I? These questions, the fundamental questions of philosophy, are important because philosophers everywhere understand that the unexamined life is not worth living, and that philosophical reflection will show how life should be lived. They are also important because their answers, as incorporated in basic human practices, ultimately determine the value and meaning of life.

Asian philosophy, for the most part, unlike much modern Western philosophy, has not sharply separated thought from practice and has tended to see the conceptual and the spiritual as closely related. Asian philosophical thought, like Western, is self-critical, is concerned with conceptual analysis, and emphasizes good arguments. But Asian philosophy also tends to emphasize insight into and understanding of reality as a guide to life. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, for example, are all ways of practice as well as philosophies or ways of thought. Their philosophical dimensions have grown out of reflections on practice. At the same time, philosophical presuppositions and reflections have given rise to and guided these ways of practice. This intimate interrelatedness of philosophy and practice is one of the reasons why philosophy has been held in high esteem throughout Asia and why it is seen as relevant and important to everyday life.

Because Asian and Western philosophies are different in important ways, the Western reader should attempt to consider the Asian philosophical traditions in their own contexts and in terms of their own merits. Often they do not fit neatly into modern Western intellectual categories, which tend to divorce thought from practice and philosophy from religion. Indeed, one of the main challenges to understanding Asian thought is to see where it is like and where it is unlike Western thought.

## South Asian Philosophies

India is famous for the high regard it accords the seeker of wisdom and for its reverence and respect



for wise persons. Three thousand years ago, the sages of India were pondering the questions, What is the Self? and What is the nature of ultimate reality? Pursuing these two questions, they came to the realization that the innermost Self is one with the ultimate reality. The immediate practical problem arising from this discovery was that of how one could come to know and to realize this inner Self and thereby become one with the very essence of the universe. The theoretical problems raised by this discovery centered on the difficulty of relating the multiplicity and diversity of experienced reality with the sages' insight into the unity of all existence and the difficulty in ascertaining how knowledge of such an ultimate reality could be achieved. Reflection on these issues led to questions about the basis of morality, the nature and function of society, the means of valid knowledge, the principles of logic, the nature of the self, and the means of self-realization.

As Indian thinkers reflected on these fundamental questions, they often disagreed with each other. Their differing insights and understandings led to the establishment of a variety of philosophical traditions, many of them continuing to this day. Although the Vedanta tradition is in agreement with the sages who declared innermost Self and ultimate reality identical, other traditions reject this vision of reality. Some traditions, like Nyaya and Vaisheshika, are frankly pluralistic, while others, like Sankhya and Yoga, are dualistic. The Jain and Buddhist traditions, though they disagreed with each other in significant ways, both rejected the authority of the Vedas, and the existence of God, while emphasizing the importance of yogic discipline. The Carvakans, sometimes called Lokayatas, were materialists, denying the existence of God, soul, and any kind of life after death.

Despite this diversity of philosophical views, there has been widespread agreement that the self-discipline of Yoga is needed to achieve the total integration of life and to attain life's highest goals. According to the Bhagavad Gita, an extremely influential Hindu text, this discipline is available to all persons when it is channeled through the activities of worship and devotion, the activities of work, and the activities of knowledge and concentration. From a Hindu perspective, these paths of self-discipline are simply the philosophical

wisdom of the ages being put into practice by the people.

There has also been widespread agreement concerning the importance of living morally, fulfilling one's moral duties, especially the duty to avoid hurting other living beings. At least part of the reason why living a moral life is so important is the widespread agreement that all human actions are governed by the principle of karma, which says, roughly, that because every action inevitably produces its effects, therefore it is our actions that make us the kinds of persons we become. To become good, we must engage in morally good actions. Performing bad actions will make us into bad persons. Jainism, a tradition more than 3,000 years old, epitomizes the importance of conjoining the ways of virtuous living and yogic meditation in order to overcome human suffering.

According to Buddhism, a tradition that originated in India 2,500 years ago, the basic problem of life is that of overcoming suffering. The essential teachings of the Buddha revolve around questions being asked by many thinkers of his time: What is suffering?

On what conditions does it depend? How can these conditions be eliminated? What path should one follow to eliminate suffering?

These questions led to inquiries into the nature of the self that suffers and the causes of suffering, giving rise to philosophical views of self and reality. The problems of justifying the claims made about the nature of the self and the nature of reality led, in turn, to theories of logic and knowledge. The problem of how to overcome suffering led to the development of understanding about morality and mental discipline and a new understanding of consciousness. Thus, the eminently practical problems of finding ways to overcome suffering provoked the reflections that constitute Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu philosophical traditions.

### East Asian Philosophies

The three enduring philosophical traditions in China are Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, all of which were influenced by the yin-yang way of thinking about change found already in the Book of Changes (Yijing) three thousand years ago. Confucianism, which began with the teachings of Confucius in the sixth century BCE, incorporated important features of competing traditions, such as

Legalism, Mohism, the School of Names, and yin-yang thought, as it developed. Daoism, with its emphasis on nature and spontaneity, began at about the same time and provided a counterbalance to Confucian thought. It also provided much of the philosophical framework and vocabulary necessary for Buddhism to take hold in China, where it became the third great Chinese philosophical tradition fifteen hundred years ago.

Before the development of Chinese Buddhism, philosophical thought was concerned primarily with the ways of moral, social, and political life or with understanding the ways of nature. The central problems of Chinese philosophy are reflected in the Confucian question, How can human beings and human society achieve their fullest possible development? and in the Daoist question, How can humans achieve harmony with nature? Some two thousand years ago, Confucianism became the official ideology of China, with Confucian writings constituting the core curriculum of the imperial university system and the basis of the civil service exams. Knowing Confucian thought was an indispensable requirement for government service, making Confucianism the basis for social and political life.

As philosophy developed in China, there was an increasing tendency to see human nature in terms of natural processes. To the extent that this identification took place, the problem of achieving harmony with nature was the problem of being in harmony with oneself. In turn, being in harmony with oneself was regarded as the necessary basis for achieving a harmony with other persons. Being in harmony with oneself, in harmony with humanity, and in harmony with Heaven and Earth is the highest good in Chinese philosophy, as reflected already in the Book of Changes three thousand years ago. Because human nature is seen as essentially moral, the dominant concern of Confucian and Neo-Confucian philosophy has been morality. The Confucian questions, How can I be good? and What is the basis of goodness? are basic questions throughout the history of Chinese philosophy, as is the Daoist question, How can I achieve harmony with the Dao?

The development of Chinese Buddhism in the fourth and fifth centuries CE fostered an interest in metaphysical questions about the nature of the self and reality and in the relationship of knowledge to

liberation, causing Confucian and Daoist thought to become involved with these issues. At the same time, Confucian concerns with fostering the way of humanity and social harmony and Daoist concerns with the workings of nature allowed Buddhism to develop in new ways in East Asia.

As Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism spread from China to Korea and from Korea to Japan, all of these traditions underwent exciting new developments, taking new forms and considering new questions, giving rise to distinctive Korean and Japanese philosophies.

### Interactions and Shared Concerns

Although Buddhism was the main vehicle of interaction between Indian thought and the thought of East and Southeast Asia, it turned out that the influence was largely one way, from India to the rest of Asia, with India experiencing little influence from the rest of Asia. The most notable external influences on Indian thought came from the Greeks who came to India with Alexander the Great and from the Muslims who came to India between the eighth and eleventh centuries and ruled India from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

There are many differences among the philosophies of South and East Asia, but they all share the practical concern of how to live better. There is shared agreement that the development of moral virtue is an important ingredient of a successful way of life, and that the well-being of the individual cannot be separated from the well-being of the family and the larger social community. They also agree that to follow the way to a better life, we must have a deep understanding of ourselves and the world.

Because it is concerned with the fundamental thought and practices of the Asian peoples, philosophy has been of primary importance in Asian cultures. Therefore, in order to understand the life and the attitudes of the peoples of Asia, it is necessary to understand their philosophies. And in order to understand their philosophies, it is necessary to look at the traditions in which these philosophies developed and through which they continue to nourish the cultures of Asia.

### CONTENTS

Glossary

Pronunciation Guide

Preface

Acknowledgements  
 Introduction  
 PART 1 South Asian Philosophies  
 South Asian Chronology, South Asian Texts:  
 A Timeline  
 1. Historical Perspectives  
     Historical Overview, Dominant  
     Features, Review Questions,  
     Further Reading  
 2. Vedas and Upanishads,  
     Indus Culture, Vedic Thought,  
     Origins of Existence, The  
     Upanishads, Quest for Brahman,  
     Quest for the Ultimate Self  
     (Atman), Tat Tvam Asi, Review  
     Questions, Further Reading  
 3. The Jain Vision  
     Overview, Mahavira, Karmic  
     Bondage, Reality, Kinds of Karma,  
     Way of Liberation, Knowledge,  
     Faith, Conduct, Impact of Jain  
     Thought, Review Questions,  
     Further Reading  
 4. Buddhism: The Basic Teachings  
     Overview, The Buddha, Quest for  
     Enlightenment, Enlightenment, The  
     Buddha's Teachings, The Noble  
     Fourfold Truth, The First Noble  
     Truth, The Second Noble Truth,  
     The Third Noble Truth, The Fourth  
     Noble Truth: The Eightfold Noble  
     Path, Review Questions, Further  
     Reading  
 5. Interdependent Arising and the  
 Development of Mahayana  
     Conditioned Existence,  
     Mindfulness, How to Practice  
     Mindfulness, Perfection of Wisdom  
     and Rise of Mahayana, Reading  
     the Texts, The Diamond Sutra, The  
     Heart Sutra, Review Questions,  
     Further Reading  
 6. Madhyamaka and Yogacara  
     Overview of Madhyamaka: The  
     Middle Way Tradition,  
     Nagarjuna's Method, Yogacara,  
     Nature and Function of  
     Consciousness, Knowledge of  
     Reality, Review Questions, Further  
     Reading  
 7. Society and the Individual  
     Bhagavad Gita, Human Aims,  
     Social Classes, Life-Stages,  
     Review Questions, Further  
     Reading  
 8. Self and the World: Sankhya-Yoga

Overview, Causality, Evolution of  
 the World, Yoga: The Way of  
 Discipline, Forces of Bondage,  
 Techniques of Yoga, Review  
 Questions, Further Reading  
 9. Knowledge and Reality: Nyaya-  
 Vaisheshika  
     The Problem of Knowledge,  
     Perceptual Knowledge, Inference,  
     Comparison, Testimony,  
     Objects of Knowledge: The  
     Vaisheshika Categories, The  
     Knower, Review Questions, Further  
     Reading  
 10. Self and Reality: Mimamsa and  
 Vedanta  
     Mimamsa, Vedanta, Shankara's  
     Nondualism, Appearance and  
     Reality, The Qualified Nondualism  
     of Ramanuja, The Dualistic  
     Vedanta of Madhva, Review  
     Questions, Further Reading  
 11. Theistic Developments  
     Vishnu, Krishna, Kali, Shiva,  
     Review Questions, Further  
     Reading  
 12. Islam  
     Introduction, Basic Teachings of  
     Islam, Development of Sufi  
     Thought, The Sufi Path, Interaction  
     Between Muslims and Hindus,  
     Religion and Politics, Review  
     Questions, Further Reading  
 13. Tradition and Modernity  
     Overview, Gandhi, Aurobindo,  
     Iqbal, Radhakrishnan, Review  
     Questions, Further Reading  
 PART 2 Philosophies of East Asia  
 East Asian Chronology, East Asian  
 Texts: A Timeline  
 14. Historical Overview of East Asian  
 Philosophies  
     Pre-Confucian China,  
     Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism,  
     School of Names, Philosophy of  
     Change, Legalism, Synthesis,  
     Buddhism, Korean Philosophy,  
     Japanese Philosophy, Neo-  
     Confucianism, Basic  
     Characteristics, Review Questions,  
     Further Reading  
 15. Yinyang Philosophy in the Book of  
 Changes  
     History of the Text, Yinyang Way  
     of Thinking, Consulting the Yijing,  
     Influence on Daoism and

- Confucianism, Contemporary  
Relevance, Review Questions,  
Further Reading
16. Confucianism: The Thought of Confucius  
Confucius, Human-heartedness  
(Ren), Propriety (Li), Filiality  
(Xiao), Rightness (Yi), Rectification  
of Names (Zheng Ming),  
Governing by Virtue, Review  
Questions, Further Reading
17. Development of Confucianism: Mengzi,  
Xunzi, and Dong Zhongshu  
Challenges to Confucian Thought,  
Mengzi, Xunzi, Dong Zhongshu  
and a New Form of Confucianism,  
Review Questions, Further  
Reading
18. Daoism: The Daodejing  
Laozi, Nonaction (WUWEI) and  
Self-So-Ness (Ziran), The Dao and  
Its Functions, Dao, Function (de),  
Review Questions, Further  
Reading
19. Zhuangzi's Daoism  
Zhuangzi, Arguments Against  
Conventional Knowledge, Dao  
and the Ordinary World, Review  
Questions, Further Reading
20. Chinese Buddhism  
Introduction from Central Asia and  
India, Translations and  
Interpretations, Review Questions,  
Further Reading
21. Neo-Confucianism: The Grand  
Harmony  
The Buddhist Challenge, Neo-  
Confucian Beginnings, Zhou Dunyi,  
Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi,  
The Idealism of Lu Xiangshan and  
Wang Yangming, Wang  
Yangming, Dai Zhen, Review  
Questions, Further Reading
22. Korean Philosophy  
Introduction, Wonhyo, Chinu,  
Korean Neo-Confucianism, Yi  
T'oegye, Yi Yulgok, Review  
Questions, Further Reading
23. Japanese Philosophy  
Overview, Tendai, Pure Land, Zen,  
Dogen, Indian and Chinese  
Foundations, Daoist Influences,  
Aims of Zen, Zazen, Koan  
Practice, Zen Teachings,  
Oxherding: Stages of Practice,  
Review Questions, Further  
Reading

## 24. Recent Thought

Kang Youwei, Zhang Dongsun,  
Xiong Shili, Fung Yu-lan, Nishida  
Kitaro, Post-Mao Thought, Review  
Questions, Further Reading

Notes

Index

[Rereading Ancient Philosophy: Old Chestnuts and  
Sacred Cows](#) by Verity Harte and Raphael Woolf  
[Cambridge University Press, 9781107194977]

This book revisits, and sheds fresh light on, some key texts and debates in ancient philosophy. Its twin targets are 'Old Chestnuts' - well-known passages in the works of ancient philosophers about which one might have thought everything there is to say has already been said - and 'Sacred Cows' - views about what ancient philosophers thought, on issues of philosophical importance, that have attained the status of near-unquestioned orthodoxy. Thirteen leading scholars respond to these challenges by offering new perspectives on familiar material and challenging some prevailing orthodoxies. On authors ranging from the Presocratics to Plotinus, the book represents a snapshot of contemporary scholarship in ancient philosophy, and a vigorous and illuminating affirmation of its continuing interest and power. The volume is dedicated to Professor M. M. McCabe, an inspiring scholar and teacher, colleague and friend to both the editors and the contributors.

Excerpt: Many of us privileged to study and teach ancient philosophy for a living will at some point have encountered, within or outside the academic environment, an interlocutor who asks, often in incredulous tones, some form of the following question: how do you find anything new to say about material that is so old?

Now there are various replies one could give. One might, for example, mutter words to the effect that the study of ancient philosophy did not really take off as an academic subject until the work of nineteenth-century German philologists, and that the discipline is therefore rather 'younger' than it may seem. But if a response of this sort does not strike our interlocutor, or even us, as particularly compelling — after all, that surely leaves considerably more than a century for scholars to have delivered the goods! — that may be because of a nagging suspicion that the questioner is onto

something. Certainly, when it comes to the foremost philosophical figures of the ancient world, Plato and Aristotle, though not only to them, it can sometimes be hard to resist the thought that, just maybe, everything that might usefully be said about their work has already been uttered.

The present volume is intended as an antidote to that pessimistic thought. It seeks to address the idea that when dealing with at least some of the best-known works, authors or schools in the ancient philosophical tradition, we are inevitably faced at times with texts that have previously been mined by scholars with great thoroughness and skill. But it does so by embracing, rather than despairing at, that state of affairs. Its collective response to our sceptical interlocutor is that, when looked at with fresh eyes, the most well-worn texts can yield new insights, and the hoariest received opinions about them can prove to be less of a solid edifice than may appear.

No doubt much of contemporary scholarship on ancient philosophy can be read, at least implicitly, as joining in with such a response. The distinctiveness of this volume is that it aspires to do so in an explicit and self-conscious way. It identifies two particular categories — the 'old chestnut' and the 'sacred cow' — that may be taken to encapsulate the potential problem of reading texts that have long been the subject of scholarly scrutiny, and encourages contributors to select examples of such categories, reflect on them, and, we hope, demonstrate in practice how fruitful it can be to engage with ancient philosophy under those headings.

To elaborate a little, then, on our two main categories: 'old chestnuts' are pieces of ancient philosophical text that, for the most part, have received a large and sustained amount of scholarly attention, been subject to a number of competing (sometimes fiercely debated) readings, but are now at a stage where debate seems to be flagging, if not exhausted: Diotima's speech in the Symposium, to take a text covered (from different viewpoints) by two of the papers in this volume, may serve as an example.

'Sacred cows', on the other hand, are not specific texts, but views about what some ancient school or thinker may have held on a question of philosophical importance — views which have come

to be sufficiently entrenched as to represent something like an orthodoxy and to be taken to be so obvious as to need no argument: 'Plato's Socrates was a eudaimonist' would be an example, again taken from this volume. What the different categories of old chestnut and sacred cow are in danger of sharing is the supposition that, for significant portions of the ancient philosophical corpus, the wellsprings of interpretation may be close to running dry.

Based (with some additions) on a conference held in July 2014 in Figeac (France) in honour of Professor Mary Margaret McCabe, this volume begs to differ. One of its major inspirations is the work of McCabe, Emeritus Professor of Ancient Philosophy at King's College London, Fellow of the British Academy, 2014-17 Keeling Scholar-in-Residence at UCL, and the 2016-17 Sather Professor at Berkeley (the first female scholar of ancient philosophy to be appointed to that office). Known to all with more than a passing acquaintance with her as 'MM', her influence permeates each of this volume's contributions, exerted not just by means of her powerful and original publications on ancient philosophy,<sup>1</sup> but also through her gifts as teacher and discussant.

Her published work, to be sure, sets the standard for the bold revisiting of familiar texts. To take an example, McCabe's paper 'Escaping One's Own Notice Knowing: Meno's Paradox Again' begins its interpretation of Meno's Paradox (an old chestnut if ever there was one) by asking whether one 'should apologize for coming back yet again ... to Meno's paradox.' McCabe offers due homage to two of the paradox's most stalwart recent interpreters — Gail Fine and Dominic Scott — before succinctly indicating what she still finds unsatisfying about their readings, and going on to offer her own distinctive and persuasive interpretation of that much analysed passage.

This is not the place to dwell on the details of that interpretation. Instead let us return to McCabe's question about whether apology is needed for returning to a particular old chestnut, and fill in the ellipsis. McCabe speaks of coming back to the paradox as 'to something that has puzzled me for forty years'; and in this phrase one hears something of what, for those of us fortunate enough to have had philosophical conversations with MM over an extended period of time, makes her approach to

philosophy, and to the ancients' way of doing philosophy, such a rewarding and invigorating one. MM has the Socratic knack not just of feeling the force of a philosophical puzzle herself, but of being able to communicate its force to others, in such a way as to implant the idea that nothing could be more urgent, here and now, than trying to get to the bottom of it.

It is this aspect of MM's relation with philosophy — of being constantly open to philosophical puzzlement, however venerable the puzzles may be, and of helping others to be so too — that gives this volume an indispensable part of its orientation. About any substantial piece of philosophy, there is always something fresh to say, because it is always possible to feel the problems afresh, and by doing so on one's own terms, to seek new ways of understanding them: a lesson that has been put into practice for some years now in the King's College London 'Old Chestnuts' seminar, initiated by MM and Verity Harte in 2000 and still running today as a graduate ancient philosophy summer seminar. We here pay tribute to its participants, past and present, for helping continue to infuse the old chestnuts concept with ever new and unexpected flavours.

MM's gift for communicating philosophical ideas, and for enabling others to think them through for themselves, is related to the view — one that she strongly holds and whose credentials in ancient philosophy hardly need stating — that philosophy at its best is carried out through the medium of dialogue and conversation. This is no mere slogan. As her recently published collection, *Platonic Conversations*, amply attests, seeing ancient philosophical authors as engaged in dialogue — direct or indirect — with their readers, with themselves and with one another, offers tremendous scope for enhancing our understanding of many difficult passages. Prominent here is the thesis that much light is to be shed on Aristotle if we regard him as being in more or less continuous dialogue with Plato, not just with general aspects of Plato's thought (as all might agree) but closely and sensitively with individual passages of his work, a thesis corroborated by McCabe with reference to some choice Aristotelian chestnuts such as *De Anima* 3.2.6 and *Metaphysics* 7.13—16.7

MM's output is not confined, however, to Plato and Aristotle. She has done pioneering work in

elucidating the structure of Presocratic thought and has also made significant contributions to the study of Hellenistic philosophy. This volume reflects that breadth of interest. 'While the majority of papers are on Plato, who represents — via several books and numerous articles — the largest component of MM's scholarly production, philosophers discussed in the following pages range widely, from Heraclitus to the Stoics to Plotinus. What the papers presented here have in common is the aim of stimulating, by example, new thinking about texts and ideas whose very status as old chestnuts or sacred cows is evidence, as we believe this volume's contents will confirm, of their continuing ability to puzzle and provoke.

While philosophers of the archaic period have left us plenty of chestnuts, none is so obviously fruitful in this regard as the provocateur Heraclitus. Shaul Tor (Chapter I) opens our collection with a focus on Heraclitus B1 23 ('nature likes to hide'), whose very translation, tellingly, is up for dispute. Arguing against recent rejections of the personifying force of the verb *philein* (as 'to like' or 'to love'), he detects therein the influence of a sacred cow, itself fostered by Heraclitus' ancient readers. Heraclitus' nod to the intentional forces at work in nature, reflected and reinforced for the reader who comes back to B1 23 from other Heraclitean fragments, sits ill with an influential narrative, originating with passages of Plato and Aristotle, which finds their predecessors engaged in a pre-Weberian 'disenchantment' of the world.

Aristotle and, above all, Plato are, of course, the principal purveyors in the ancient philosophy chestnut business, also thereby providing interpretive fuel for many sacred cows. Thus, it is no surprise that the remaining papers in our volume are focused on the writings and thought of these two, in particular Plato; and that this is so even when our authors take up responses to them in the work of later authors. Six contributors take on a Platonic old chestnut directly, adopting different strategies for striking at it. Charles Brittain focuses on exposing the precise structure of Socrates' parodic interpretation of Simonides' Ode to Scopas in the *Protagoras*, arguing that Plato has Socrates play a skilful game exploiting late fifth-century interpretative gambits collected in *Poetics* 25, while offering, through his Socrates' misadventures, the makings of a positive Platonic theory of

interpretation. An upshot of this reading is defence of the heretical view that Plato's Socrates is not always averse to the deliberate use of fallacy in constructing his arguments.

Raphael Woolf and Angela Hobbs each take a swing at the speech of Diotima in the Symposium. Woolf picks up the famous objection by Gregory Vlastos that the speech does not properly value the role of the individual in interpersonal love. Holding, against recent detractors, that Vlastos's charge was not misplaced he argues that it has nevertheless been misdiagnosed and that, with its proper basis in mind, we should not simply dismiss Diotima's position. Where Woolf opts for a strike on an already notorious feature of Diotima's famous speech, Hobbs argues that, even in a hoary old nut of this kind, there are new veins to be mined, often obscured by contemporary prejudices. Such, she argues, is the claim that Eros is a daimon, some kind of magical figure (in the non-debunking sense), with the corollary implications for Socrates, insofar as Diotima's description of Eros is widely recognized as featuring traits resonant of Socrates. The idea of a magical aspect to Socrates, and to the philosophy he represents, should not, she insists, be dismissed or downplayed because of the negative associations that magic also has elsewhere in Plato. Instead, an understanding of magic as radically transformative can explain both its Platonic use and its connotations therein for bad and good.

Verity Harte and Dominic Scott both come at chestnuts, in the fertile branches of the Republic, that involve the distinction between knowledge and (true) belief. Each takes aim by arguing that the nut is best attacked with the aid of passages from elsewhere in the work. Harte argues that material on powers hidden in the conversation between Socrates and Thrasymachus in Republic 1 sheds light on the individuation conditions for powers subsequently exploited in the famous argument to distinguish philosophers from 'philodoxers' at the end of Republic 5. Scott argues that when, in Republic 10's discussion of mimetic poetry, Socrates descends from the apparently heady metaphysics of his opening discussion to a more workaday view of knowledge drawn from 'experience' (empeiria) and thence to an opaque contrast between the knowledge of users and the true belief of makers, not only is this not inconsistent with the rest of the work, but its consistency, both in its local context

and in the work as a whole, comes into focus through careful attention to the work's recurring double focus on the situation of legislators both actual and ideal.

Typically, a Platonic old chestnut will be a specific passage of a work. Sometimes, however, a work as a whole is so puzzling in its overall construction that it constitutes a chestnut in itself. Such is the situation of the *Cratylus*, Malcolm Schofield's target. The *Cratylus* is famous for the worry that a perfect image of Cratylus would be another Cratylus. Schofield argues that the dialogue presents us with a puzzle in its own two portraits of Cratylus: an enigmatic figure at its opening, whose views are its stimulant, but who is silent for the bulk of the dialogue, only to emerge a regular discussant at its close. The solution, Schofield argues, and an insight into the project of the dialogue as a whole, is to see that Cratylus, reportedly a teacher of Plato, is used as a figure to enable the working through of some of the deepest paradoxes that Plato sees as arising from contemporary naturalist theories of naming.

Three further contributors, Amber Carpenter, Tad Brennan and Joachim Aufderheide (Chapter 10), tackle passages with old chestnut status, two Platonic, one Aristotelian: Socrates' argument in the *Gorgias* that the tyrant who does what he wants is not thereby powerful or happy; the proposals regarding women as guardians in Republic 5, the first of the three waves that Socrates is there faced with; and Aristotle's definition of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6. Each, however, aims thereby to bring down a sacred cow. Carpenter argues that the orthodox view that Socrates is a eudaimonist misses the way in which, both in this argument and elsewhere, he carefully distinguishes the (human) good from happiness and uses constraints on the former to undermine conventions regarding the latter: Socrates should thus be more correctly regarded as an 'agathist' than a eudaimonist. Brennan argues that not only are Socrates' (and Plato's) attitudes to women consistent, they can be used to critique the conventional wisdom that, in the central books of the Republic, Plato sets to one side the work's governing city-soul analogy. The endorsement of the selection of some women against the backdrop of a general anti-feminist stance towards women is a figure for the rational selection of some pleasures

against the backdrop of rational suppression of the majority of appetites. Aufderheide argues that a careful scrutiny of Aristotle's definition of virtue, in conjunction with his account of the good person as a measure (EN 3.4), shows that Aristotle does not accord virtue priority in definition over right action. Accordingly, despite the obvious centrality of virtue to his ethical theory, Aristotle was no virtue ethicist: proponents of twentieth- and twenty-first-century virtue ethics, taken as defenders of a distinct normative theory, are wrong to revere Aristotle as its founder.

Three final contributors remind us that ancient readers of Plato and Aristotle (and others) had their chestnuts too: some still in fruit, others that have receded from view. Ricardo Salles argues that the harmony theory of soul in Plato's *Phaedo*, a recurring old chestnut, had a decisive influence on the Stoic theory of soul as *pneuma* tensed in a particular way. In turn, tracing the contours of the Stoic reading of the passage and their parallel theory brings out what is distinctive of the *Phaedo* theory as compared with apparently similar accounts of material powers in the *Timaeus*. In the background of Richard Sorabji's contribution are two Aristotelian chestnuts, the famous Sea Battle argument of *De Interpretatione* 9 and his theory of causes succinctly presented in *Physics* 2.3, in particular the way they figure, in later ancient authors, as a backdrop of perennial arguments about the requirements for actions being 'up to us' and thus morally accountable. Sorabji argues that the great second-century (AD) Aristotelian, Alexander of Aphrodisias, can be rescued from a current consensus as to the nature (and weakness) of his response to the Stoics, by recognition that his argumentative focus is on denying necessitation, right up to the moment of action, not causation and that he does not suppose that the cause must be divorced from the agent's beliefs, desires or in general their character.

Peter Adamson concludes our collection with an account of how Plotinus aims to crack one aspect of a truly old, old chestnut, much chewed over by late ancient Platonists, the Myth of Er: specifically the role it accords to a *daimōn* in connection with each human life. Showing the careful way in which Plotinus makes sense of the relations between three apparently inconsistent passages on a human's *daimōn*, from the *Republic's* myth, the *Phaedo* and

the *Timaeus*, Adamson offers a case study of Plotinus 'reading Plato from Plato' in *Enneads* 3.4 [15]. Plotinus emerges not only more cautiously optimistic about the prospects for human development than other, Gnostically inclined late ancient Platonists, but also as a nondogmatic and subtle interpreter of Plato whose reading of his own and our old chestnuts still deserves serious attention.

#### Contents

List of Contributors

Preface

Introduction

Verity Harte and Raphael Woolf

1 On Second Thoughts, Does Nature Like to Hide? Heraclitus B123 Reconsidered by Shaul Tor

2 Deinos (Wicked Good) at Interpretation (Protagoras 334-4S by Charles Brittain

3 The Unhappiness of the Great King (Gorgias 461-81) by Amber Carpenter

4 Love and Knowledge by Raphael Woolf

5 Socrates, Eros and Magic by Angela

Hobbs

6 The Psychological Import of the First

Wave in *Republic* 5 by Tad Brennan

7 Knowing and Believing in *Republic* 5 by

Verity Harte

8 Knowledge, True Belief and Poetry in

*Republic* 10 by Dominic Scott

9 Another Two Cratylus Problems by

Malcolm Schofield

10 Is Aristotle a Virtue Ethicist? by Joachim

Aufderheide

11 Soul as Harmony in *Phaedo* 85e-86d

and Stoic Pneumatic Theory by Ricardo

Salles

12 A Neglected Strategy of the

Aristotelian Alexander on Necessity and

Responsibility by Richard Sorabji

13 'Present without Being Present': Plotinus

on Plato's *Daimōn* by Peter Adamson

Mary Margaret McCabe Bibliography

1978-2016

Volume Bibliography

Subject Index

Index Locorum

[Asian Healing Traditions in Counseling and](#)

[Psychotherapy](#) edited by Roy Moodley, Ted Lo, Na Zhu [SAGE, 9781483371436]

[Asian Healing Traditions in Counseling and](#)

[Psychotherapy](#) explores the various healing approaches and practices in the East and bridges them with those in the West to show counselors how



to provide culturally sensitive services to distinct populations. Editors Roy Moodley, Ted Lo, and Na Zhu bring together leading scholars across Asia to demystify and critically analyze traditional Far East Asian healing practices—such as Chinese Taoist Healing practices, Morita Therapy, Naikan Therapy, Mindfulness and Existential Therapy, Buddhism and Mindfulness Meditation, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy—in relation to health and mental health in the West. The book will not only show counselors how to apply Eastern and Western approaches to their practices but will also shape the direction of counseling and psychotherapy research for many years to come.

### Excerpt: Traditional Healing, Multiculturalism, Counseling, and Psychotherapy

Since the 1960s, the developments in multiculturalism and counseling and psychotherapy offered a tremendous potential for innovative research, theory building, and practice of multicultural (cross-cultural, intercultural, transcultural) counseling and psychotherapy. While the evolution and trajectory of U.S. multicultural counseling, psychology, and psychotherapy development attempted to parallel the sociocultural, political, and historical events within North American and European societies, it has also largely neglected to offer a critical analysis of Eurocentric approaches and methodologies. The curriculum of counseling and psychotherapy programs in Western universities are essentially ethnocentric, Eurocentric, and individualistic. Even multicultural counseling has systemically failed to address the root causes of anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, suicide deaths, and many others. The focus on cultural competencies and racial identity theories over the decades has led to a lack of research on critical issues such as oppression, domination, racism, poverty, and marginalization of ethnic minority communities. Moreover, it has also failed to theorize and engage the practice of indigenous, cultural, and traditional healing in health and mental health care. Nor did it allow for an acknowledgment and focus on the traditional healing practices of Diaspora ethnic or visible minority communities: indigenous, aboriginal, First Nation, and many other indigenous communities from around the world. Indeed, on the contrary, the

opposite has happened in mainstream counseling psychology and psychiatry where indigenous healing traditions have been critiqued for being unscientific, primitive, or just mumbo jumbo arising from undeveloped, unsophisticated, and nascent societies in the developing world, or in the West from the era of slavery or the colonial period.

In more recent decades, with the advent of diversity (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age) taking a more prominent place in multicultural counseling, the healing traditions of non-Western cultures are also being acknowledged and accepted for their clinical and healing potential. These changes in both counseling and multicultural counseling are illustrative of the fact that counseling and psychotherapy are in dire need of change to avert the crisis that these mental health fields find themselves in: poor rates of participation by non-Western communities in psychotherapy, premature termination if they engage in therapy, and failure to adequately address the mental health needs of communities and groups that are not identified as part of the dominant culture. More importantly, there is a clear understanding that health and mental health interventions would need to be situated in local cultural contexts to solve local problems. As Good and Good said, "the meaning of illness for an individual is grounded in ... the network of meanings an illness has in a particular culture" (p. 148)<sup>a</sup> It seems that indigenous and traditional healing practices are then an obvious resource for any intervention in a local context; the network of meanings for both the illness and the wellness is best mediated through practices that arise from within the same cultural contexts. Thus, in recent years, counseling and psychotherapy have become more open to the idea of locating culture more centrally in their healing project. Yet, this is not a new idea, since psychoanalysis and psychotherapy have its roots in 19th-century European culture with deeply underpinning Jewish roots through its founder, Sigmund Freud. Subsequently, each type of psychotherapy has developed out of its own cultural context and represents the dominant worldview of that time and age. For example, CBT and client-centered therapy (CCT) are uniquely North American. However, in our contemporary context, with a diverse population, each approach may find its own adherents depending on the cultural match between the therapy and the help-

seekers—for example, for those with a past orientation, psychoanalysis may be meaningful, while for those with a future perspective, solution-focused therapy may be more effective. Traditional healing is based on the cultural context of the specific tradition from which it arose. For example, aboriginal cultural healing practices, such as healing circles, storytelling circles, sweat lodge ceremonies, medicine wheel, and the Pimaatisiwin circle are deeply rooted in thousands of years of aboriginal cultures.<sup>1</sup> It is often more holistic with an emphasis on the spiritual and social aspects of an individual and his or her community. That is appealing to many who are dissatisfied with the more clinical approach in many current therapies. An integration of aspects of such traditional healing with current psychotherapies may offer a blend that is refreshing to the users and rewarding to counselors and psychotherapists. Indeed, working alongside these Western-trained practitioners are the traditional healers who are fast becoming part of the healing landscape of health services, who offer a form of medical pluralism and dual interventions by using cultural and traditional healing practices as one of many sources of healing for their health and mental health needs.

The various chapters in this book are ordered in such a way to offer the reader an introduction into the complex field of Asian traditional healing and its integration into counseling, psychotherapy, and psychiatry. The earlier chapters explore the historical trajectory and the evolution of Asian healing to both contextualize its age-old roots and draw attention to the potentiality in contemporary clinical practice. Specific modalities of practices are discussed with a focus on integration into Western health and mental health approaches.

Part A: The Ancient Art of Asian Healing Traditions offers a discussion on the origins of Asian traditional healing through its exploration of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism and its constructions of healing. For example, in Chapter 1: Confucianism and Healing, Kwang-Kuo Hwang explores the concept of self-exertion and putting oneself in the place of another as the core idea that arises from Confucian theory. The chapter discusses several ideas that establish a critical background to Asian healing traditions—for example: the two branches of neo-Confucianism—Cheng-Chu School of lixne and Lu-Wang School of

xinxue—in the Sung—Ming dynasties; Wang Yangming's theory on the Unity of Knowledge and Practice, which was imported to Japan before the era of Meiji Restoration; and the development of Confucianism during the Cultural Revolution. Chapter 2: Taoism and Healing, by Catherine Tien-Lun Sun, on the other hand, explores how the essence of Taoism (found in the taijitu) illustrates the concepts of harmonious equilibrium, noninterference, mutual generation, mutual attenuation, and dynamism—for example, the human body and the universe are both conceived of being made up by the interaction and composition of yin and yang, and the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. From this conception, the elements of traditional Chinese healing are derived. Furthermore, in Chapter 3: Buddhism and Healing, Tony Toneatto discusses how Buddhist psychology, which is primarily concerned with the alleviation of human suffering, distress, and dissatisfaction, closely resembles many clinical perspectives in clinical psychology and psychotherapy. Finally, in this section, Chapter 4: Qigong and Healing (Based on Taoist Philosophy) and Chapter 5: Ki and Healing examine the concept of qi or ki in different contexts. Qi, or ki, or sometimes referred to as the life force or energy flow, underlies many concepts in traditional healing and is explored throughout this book. Specifically, in Chapter 4, Amy L. Ai explores how the ancient art of QG, part of TCM and an energy-based health care practice and originating in Daoism (or Taoism), has the potential for clinical practice. And Chapter 5, by Tadashi Ogawa and Mami Ishii, considers how ki (or qi) is conceptualized in a Japanese context to engage with healing and mental health.

Part B: Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into Clinical Practices includes chapters that explore how Asian healing practices can be integrated into various clinical approaches. Specifically, in Chapter 6: Infusing Asian Healing Traditions Into Counseling Psychology, Ben C. H. Kuo and Beatriz Rodriguez-Rubio discuss the incorporation of Asian traditional healing into counseling and psychotherapy. The chapter reviews the current understanding, views, and debates on indigenous healing or helping approaches and contemporary practices and training of counseling psychology. Integration into psychotherapy is further expounded in Chapter 7: Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into

Psychotherapy by Boon-Ooi Lee, who argues that through this kind of integration psychotherapy may become more culturally relevant as worldviews embedded in psychotherapy largely reflect the EuroAmerican concepts of the self, human nature, well-being, and suffering. Chapter 8: Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into Biomedicine, by Tenzin Lhundup and James H. Lake, engages the reader in an interesting conversation about the inclusion of Asian traditional healing practices into biomedicine. This chapter explores how conventional biomedicine (also known as allopathic medicine) and Asian healing traditions including TCM, Tibetan medicine, and Ayurveda, present many complex issues and opportunities in the treatment of medical and psychiatric problems. Finally, in Chapter 9: Integrating Mindfulness Meditation, Buddhism, and Therapeutic Practices, Marco Mascarin explores the relationship between Buddhism and mindfulness meditation and its integration into clinical practice. This chapter begins with the historical Buddhist traditions that gave rise to mindfulness meditation, considers several concepts of Buddhism—amongst them, the Four Noble Truths, an Eightfold Path, and right mindfulness—and articulates a strong position for strategic integration into therapeutic work.

Part C: Asian Healing Traditions and Their Contemporary Formulations considers the approaches that have been developed in the current period but has roots in culture and traditions. For example, in Chapter 10: Chinese Taoist Cognitive Psychotherapy, Yu-ping Cao, Jie Zeng, and Ya-lin Zhang discuss how Chinese Taoist cognitive psychotherapy (CTCP), a culturally grounded approach, shaped by Confucianism (e.g., social hierarchies and collective responsibility, moral development, self-cultivation, professional achievement, control over nature) and Taoism (e.g., easy enjoyment of life's pleasures, development of a flexible personality, acceptance over action, conformity to natural laws), can be a contemporary clinical approach to healing. Chapter 11: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Asian Thought, by Kenneth Fung and Zhuo-Hong Zhu, explores the third wave of psychotherapy, acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and its roots in Eastern philosophy and its integration into clinical practice. ACT consists of six interrelated processes: (1) cognitive defusion, (2) acceptance, (3) contact with the present moment, (4) self-as-

context, (5) values, and (6) committed action. The chapter discusses how ACT is used to treat a variety of psychological and medical problems, neurosis, psychosis, chronic pain, and other health and mental health concerns.

In Chapter 12: Japanese Contemplative Practice of Naikan, Chikako Ozawa-de Silva and Yoshihiko Miki discuss Naikan, the introspective healing practice derived from Japanese Mahayana Buddhism, referred to as a "pre-religious practice" as it does not require any religious belief or knowledge but can lead to self-transformation through cognitive and conceptual shifts. This chapter explores how Naikan as a discursive and analytical method of structured self-reflection can lead to relief from physical and psychological discomforts. Furthermore, in Chapter 13: Morita Therapy, Charles P. Chen discusses Japanese Morita therapy as an alternative helping approach for therapeutic and counseling interventions. The chapter explores how Morita therapy supports emotional and psychological well-being as well as psychological coping and healing. Finally, in Chapter 14: Reiki Therapy, Martha R Novoa and Emily Kedar discuss the history and origins of Reiki, its evolution and use in the West, and the future of Reiki in counseling and psychotherapy.

Part D: Asian Healing Traditions Inspire Creative Therapies explores new therapies that use Asian healing traditions and their foundation for therapeutic work. In Chapter 15: Tai Chi and Meditation, Paul Posadzki and Samantha Jacques discuss Tai Chi (TC) and meditation. This chapter considers the conceptual congruence and therapeutic benefits of both these practices. Furthermore, in Chapter 16: Hakoniwa: Japanese Sandplay Therapy, Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Makiko Kasai introduce Sandplay therapy with a Eastern paradigm that emphasizes verbal and direct expression, linear and cause—effect thinking, and a distinction between physical and mental wellbeing. This chapter discusses its relationship to Jungian and Eastern philosophy and clarifies how Japanese values and perspectives on the self and mental health are consistent with the practice of Hakoniwa. In contrast, in Chapter 17: Oishii: Japanese Delicious Moment Therapy, Mami Ishii and Ted Lo introduce the readers to a new and novel approach to healing and therapy. Oishii is a Japanese concept of "deliciousness." The holistic

nature of Japanese aesthetics values the simplicity, harmony, and impermanence as seen in many traditional healing practices. This chapter explores these ideas through the four domains of wellness: (1) the body (biological), (2) the mind (psychological), (3) the spiritual (metaphysical), and (4) the social (society).

Finally, in the Conclusion: [Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into Counseling and Psychotherapy](#), Roy Moodley, Julie Hong, and Na Zhu offer a brief summary of some of the critical issues that were discussed. The conclusion considers issues of integration and the ways in which integration is accomplished. In bringing these ideas and thoughts together, the concluding piece endeavors to strengthen the relationship between Asian healing and Western Eurocentric clinical approaches.

Contents
Foreword
Joseph E. Trimble
Acknowledgments
Introduction
PART A: THE ANCIENT ART OF ASIAN HEALING TRADITIONS
Chapter 1 — Confucianism and Healing by Kwang-Kuo Hwang
Chapter 2 — Taoism and Healing by Catherine Tien-Lun Sun
Chapter 3 — Buddhism and Healing by Tony Toneatto
Chapter 4 — Qigong and Healing (Based on Taoist Philosophy) by Amy L. Ai
Chapter 5 — Ki and Healing by Tadashi Ogawa and Mami Ishii
PART B: INTEGRATING ASIAN HEALING TRADITIONS INTO CLINICAL PRACTICES
Chapter 6 — Infusing Asian Healing Traditions Into Counseling Psychology by Ben C. H. Kuo and Beatriz Rodriguez-Rubio
Chapter 7 — Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into Psychotherapy by Boon-Ooi Lee
Chapter 8 — Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into Biomedicine by Tenzin Lhundup and James H. Lake
Chapter 9 — Integrating Mindfulness, Meditation, Buddhism, and Therapeutic Practices by Marco Mascarin
PART C: ASIAN HEALING TRADITIONS AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY FORMULATIONS

Chapter 10 — Chinese Taoist Cognitive Psychotherapy by Yu-ping Cao, Jie Zeng, and Ya-lin Zhang
Chapter 11 — Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Asian Thought by Kenneth Fung and Zhuo-Hong Zhu
Chapter 12 — Japanese Contemplative Practice of Naikan by Chikako Ozawa-de Silva and Yoshihiko Miki
Chapter 13 — Morita Therapy by Charles P. Chen
Chapter 14 — Reiki Therapy by Martha P. Novoa and Emily Kedar
PART D: ASIAN HEALING TRADITIONS INSPIRE CREATIVE THERAPIES
Chapter 15 — Tai Chi and Meditation by Paul Posadzki and Samantha Jacques
Chapter 16 — Hakoniwa: Japanese Sandplay Therapy by Carolyn Zerbe Enns and Makiko Kasai
Chapter 17 — Oishii: Japanese Delicious Moment Therapy by Mami Ishii and Ted Lo
Conclusion: Integrating Asian Healing Traditions Into Counseling and Psychotherapy by Roy Moodley, Julie Hong, and Na Zhu
Glossary
Index
About the Editors
About the Contributors

<>

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