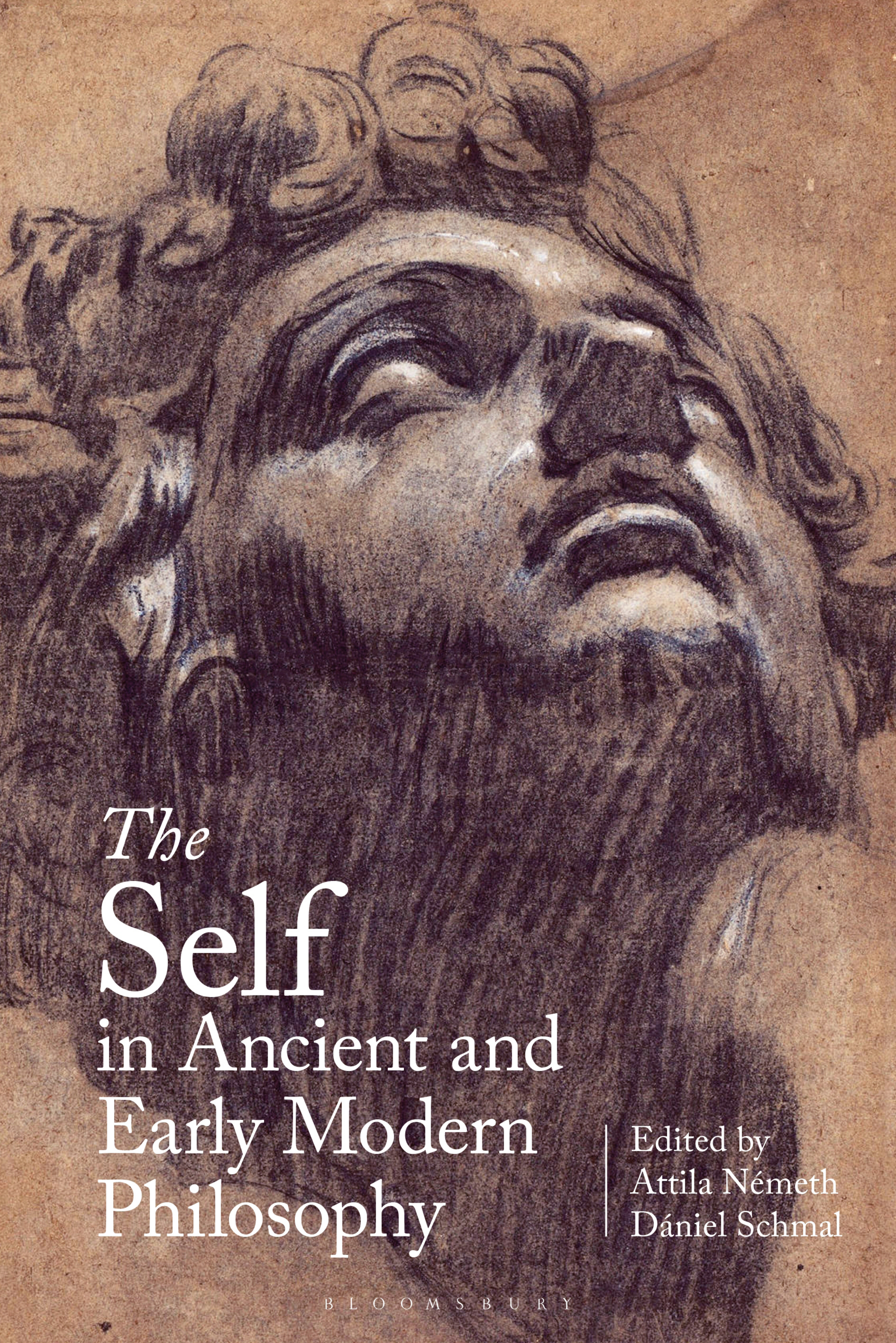

The
Self
in Ancient and
Early Modern
Philosophy
Edited by
Attila Németh
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For David Konstan

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Since the central research question, whether the points of contact between the two periods on the self under specific scrutiny mark a tension or continuity, may be approached from multiple angles, we decided to commission, on the one hand, some comparative papers that place a primary emphasis on the connections concerning the self between the two periods and beyond (Part Two), and on the other, chapters that concentrate on either side of the two historical eras (Parts One and Three). The ensuing volume received financial support from the Hungarian National Research Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH) for Open Access Publication, under the code MEC_K 141323.

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The cover image, the portrait of Giuliano de' Medici, is a drawing by Jacopo Tintoretto from the 1540s – currently in the possession of the Art Gallery of South Australia. It is based on two copies of Michelangelo's statues in Tintoretto's workshop, where Tintoretto, along with his students – including his own son, Domenico – made detailed copies of antique sculptures and those of Michelangelo. It wonderfully reflects the complexities of our topics on the self.

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Introduction

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> *This is the clearest indication of a mind that is ignorant (*inprudens*): it goes around with no stable identity, and (what I find most dishonourable) it is inconsistent with itself. Consider it a great thing to play the role of one person (*unum hominem agere*). But only the wise person does that; the rest of us take on many different forms (*ceteri multiformes sumus*). At one time you find us thrifty and serious, at another time extravagant and silly. We keep changing our masks (*personam*), taking one off and putting on another that is its opposite. This, then, you should demand of yourself: keep up the part you have begun to play (*ut qualem institueris praestare te*), right until you leave the stage (*talem usques ad exitum serves*). See to it that you can be praised; or if not that, at least make sure you can be recognized. Of the person you saw just yesterday, it could fairly be said: 'Who is he?' That's how much he has changed.*
>
> Seneca, *Ep.* 120.22

Seneca the Younger not only foreshadows Shakespeare's famous line, 'All the world's a stage,'[1] but also manages to cram into a paragraph some of the focal issues concerning the notion of the self that previously and consequently determined the history of this idea in antiquity and beyond. Although no philosophical definitions of the *self* were formulated before the early modern period, various ideas and concepts that fell outside of ancient and later conceptions of the soul and were groping towards the notion of the self, had been conceived in Greek, Latin and Arabic from antiquity onwards. One of these is the question of personal identity and its continuity over time that Seneca addresses here in language that comes originally from the theatre, through the

image of the mask (*persona* L.; *prosōpon* Gr.). As Seneca claims, in our lives, we continuously wear different masks as if on stage and most dishonourably keep changing them in accordance with the roles we momentarily decide to play, thus not only leading an inconsistent life but even unaware of who we really are. Seneca finds most of us ignorant of the need to act consistently and demands that we present ourselves till the end through a self-identical narrative, in the likeness of the wise man who creates and enacts a single role for himself in harmony with his self-understanding.[2]

The trope of the mask used in connection with the natural and social roles a person may play goes back to the Stoic Panaetius (second century BCE), the evidence for which comes down to us – and possibly to Seneca as well – through Cicero (*Off.* 107-15).[3] It remained formative even for Epictetus, and the ontological definition of a person by Boethius as 'an individual substance of a rational nature',[4] already reflects to a certain extent our modern conception. Its varied denotations in the Trinitarian and Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries CE, or its diverse philosophical conceptions, for example, in John Locke or Immanuel Kant and in later thinkers, ought however to remind us that ideas do not necessarily develop in a linear way and therefore that we are not to assume an underlying homogenous core identity for concepts or ideas based on a continuing progress from antiquity to modernity and from a primitive to some more advanced formulation. Instead, it is their specific historical contexts and their possible connections we need to pay attention to in order to understand what is unique or what is common in the diverse formulations of the idea of personhood or the self through the ages.

The notion of the self, however, is still a hotly contested concept and it is debated how far we are entitled to project it back in time. Although the work of Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault on spiritual exercises and the transformation of the self has stimulated some important recent explorations on the problems of the self in ancient philosophy, several important scholars and philosophers (like Brad Inwood, Christopher Gill, Charles Taylor and Bernard Williams) have argued that our view of ancient thinkers on the self is profoundly distorted by the Cartesian subjective-individualist model of selfhood that is typical of modernity.[5] Our modern notion of the self tends to be subjective and private, based on interiority and self-consciousness, as opposed to antiquity, where the idea of the self appears in epistemologically and ethically relevant contexts, in terms of non-Cartesian categories. This opposition also raises some questions about the early modern conceptions of the self: should we see the early modern references to ancient pagan or Christian authors as documents of a cultural

code, a taste for antiquity, a way of conceiving some original ideas in terms of certain classical traditions? Or do they represent a genuine return to a real source of inspiration? Do these points of contact mark opposition, tension or continuity?

Perhaps one way to attempt to give an answer to these broad, inherently connected questions of conceptual development and attribution in an introduction to a volume that studies diverse historical aspects of the self is to ask one of the most, if not the most fundamental question concerning the subject of our investigation: is the notion of the self a genuine idea at all? In other words, is the self something real or is it merely an artificial construct? If you think of the self as a biological organism, then it is obviously real since we can easily comprehend the identity of an organism like that of a human being or an animal at a single time and over time. But we can also make a distinction between a human being and a person and take the latter concept as something much more psychological. Once we move to a notion of the subject of consciousness that is reflectively aware of how it experiences the world, it immediately becomes less clear what constitutes this self or subject of consciousness and what it is capable of. Such a psychological notion of the self is much more elusive.[6] Some contemporary philosophers, for example, think that the subject of consciousness is grounded in the brain: its unity at a time and over time must be a function of the brain.[7] But the notion of the self understood this way is still very puzzling, since it is not clear what the bearer of these mental states that we experience from the first-person point of view is – that makes us aware of our own self. On Hume's conception, for example, the self is not a substance or entity which has certain conscious states, but it is constituted by them as the sum of its own mental states. Since one's conscious states are causally connected in a series of relations – connected by similarity, by memory and so on – these very relations constitute a self that exists at a single time and across time. Again, it results in a thin notion of the self: it only warranties a causal connection between one's earlier and later mental states, but not a substance for one's persistence that is often considered as the sufficient condition for one's personal identity.

Hence the idea of the self is drawn into a vicious circle. A more substantial conception is too organic, while a more psychological notion presents the self as ontologically puzzling. But there might be a third way out of this circle by treating the self as a simple substance that is distinct from the body and not reducible to the mental states of which it is the subject. On this view, the self is the subject of consciousness but it does not necessarily remain the same or similar psychologically over time.[8] It continues to exist as the same subject for

mental attributes over time but it does not include these mental attributes themselves. This distinction introduces an important difference between the notion of the self and that of a person. While the standard idea of personal identity requires that someone is the same person if and only if (a) he or she is the same subject or self and (b) remains sufficiently the same or similar psychologically over time (compare Seneca above), the idea of the self understood as a subject independent of its mental attributes does not require the latter criterion, that is psychological similarity. The Platonic immortal soul seems to lend itself as an obvious example, which through multiple incarnations preserves its personal identity without a necessary similarity of mental states, for example, if we consider the different characteristics of its awareness between its earthly and heavenly existence. Nonetheless, as with all examples, this one also needs some qualification, since according to Socrates in the *Phaedo* (107c-d), it would be a great blessing to the wicked if they could just simply lose their badness by leaving their earthly existence: to escape evil one needs to become as good and wise as possible to acquire the greatest benefits on their journey in Hades. Hence, it seems souls only lose their individual mental characteristics upon their complete assimilation to the Forms.[9]

These three main strands that answer affirmatively the question whether the notion of the self is genuine are obviously not exclusive alternative conceptions of the self,[10] especially not in opposition to those who take it as a fiction.[11] Yet, collectively they can be seen as a benchmark and canon to which we can compare different positions: hence, also the historical and philosophical studies that make up our volume. This summary, therefore, also helps us in the Introduction to highlight some of the complexities the idea of the self had in its ancient and early modern expressions as articulated in our chapters and to address these questions concerning the conceptual development of the self and its retrospective characterizations.

The volume itself consists of three major sections. Part One examines certain major, influential figures in the development of the notion of the self in Greek and Roman thought (Chapters 1–4). Part Two extends this list of thinkers or schools, and comparatively explores their connections with some of the major or minor figures of the early modern era, thus not only connecting but also filling in some essential gaps in each period (Chapters 5–7), besides introducing some further distinctions in our topic (Chapter 8). Part Three, then, places a major emphasis on some of the figures of the early modern period (Chapters 9–12).

In ‘Part One: Antiquity’, Andrea Nightingale approaches Plato’s conception of the self from his mythic narratives concerning the soul (Chapter 1, ‘“Who Are

We, Where Are We?": Plato's Narratives of the Mortal Philosopher and the Immortal Soul'). Since narratives shape time and space in terms of characters and events, Nightingale investigates the narrative structures of Platonic myths – narrowing her focus down to the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* – to help identify Plato's conception of the soul's personal identity over time. Although whether it is accurate to confer identity or the notion of personhood on the Platonic immortal soul is still strongly contested, Nightingale, by elaborately mapping out the two major narrative arcs in the myths of Plato's middle dialogues – the one that focuses on the individual's human life ('quest narrative'); and the other that concentrates on the life of the immortal soul ('*nostos* narrative') – and by studying their thresholds (the points where a character moves from one chronotope to another) shows not only how these narratives function in relation to one another, but also elucidates Plato's conception of the true identity and personality of the soul. According to her interpretation, although the soul does not remain the same or similar psychologically over time, given that the continuity of its consciousness is interrupted from time to time, it remains identical as the subject of its own ever-changing mental states. Her analysis, therefore, reveals a soul that is a simple substance, distinct from the body and not reducible to the mental states of which it is itself the subject: a result that chimes in well with our third characterization of the self.

Attila Németh investigates how Lucretius' portrayal of the Epicurean self takes shape in his *De Rerum Natura*, a Latin hexameter poem about Epicurus' philosophy in six books, through the subtle manipulation of his poetic and didactic voices (Chapter 2, 'Lucretius and the Epicurean Self'). Lucretius, on the one hand, portrays himself in relation to Memmius, the poem's addressee and dedicatee as a teacher; on the other, he also represents himself as a pupil and a faithful disciple of Epicurus; these two voices are also combined in a third archetypal relationship, that of the Lucretian speaker/narrator to the reader. Lucretius enacts this set of nested relationships in a literary language through which he encourages his readers to transform themselves by speaking to them in an authoritative voice that helps them to assimilate themselves to the ideal Epicurean way of life. Németh argues that although these voices are quite distinct, they can be conceived as different roles or personae within the same model of the self enacted in different contexts. In fact, they constitute different, inherently connected performative functions of the self that all serve one central philosophical aim: the assimilation of oneself to the ideal Epicurean self through reading, learning, and teaching. Since the practice and the modes of this self-fashioning are based on Lucretius' normative modelling of human psychological

dispositions, the self that consequently occurs appears to be identical with the embodied rational soul, whose conscious states are causally connected (cf. Lucretius' *palingenesis* argument *DRN* 3.832-42, 972-5), and yet whose occurrent mental states are completely dependent on one's own continuous self-reflectivity and the ensuing (or failure of) the Epicurean transformation. This is a thin, primarily psychological notion of the self that is closest to our second characterization of the self.

Stefan Röttig concentrates on the relationship between the mind – the principal part of the soul (*principale* L.; *hēgemonikon* Gr.) – and the body in Seneca's philosophy and, in particular, on their respective roles in the developments of their affective and emotive states (Chapter 3, 'The Senecan Embodied Self as the Source of Affections and Emotions'). By contrasting Seneca's idea of involuntary affections (those that exclude rational assent) with full-blown emotions (those that include rational assent), Röttig draws attention to how Seneca links involuntary affections to both one's body and the mind, a distinction he exploits in his following analysis of Seneca's unique division of the mind in *Ep*. 92, the last epistle of the fourteenth of twenty surviving books of the *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*. He argues that Seneca here associates the sensation of bodily affections with one of the irrational components of the mind – reflected in Seneca's idiosyncratic division of the *principale* in *Ep*. 92 – thereby carving out an important role for irrational affections in the functioning of the mind. On his interpretation, the irrational component of the mind literally becomes the seat of emotions, the source of vitality for subsequent rationally formed emotions. His analysis thus reveals Seneca's notion of the mind as essentially embodied, and reconstructs a Stoic version of a non-reductive, physicalist self that is predicated on a mind and body dualism that comes closest to a mixture of our first two characterizations of the self.

Anne Sheppard's chapter examines discussions of the effect of tragedy on the emotions by Iamblichus, Proclus and Olympiodorus, showing how these form part of their account of the ethical development of the self (Chapter 4, 'Neoplatonists on *Katharsis*, Emotions and the Self'). Iamblichus endorses Aristotle's view that tragedy and comedy produce a type of *katharsis* (purification) which leads to *metriopatheia* (a state of moderate emotion), whereas Proclus and Olympiodorus follow Plato in holding that tragedy leads to an unhealthy excess of emotion. The *katharsis* associated with tragedy should be distinguished both from emotional therapy through music, as described by Iamblichus and Olympiodorus, and from another kind of purification, that of the reasoning part of the soul, which, according to Neoplatonists from Plotinus onwards leads to

apatheia (total freedom from emotion). As opposed to the Stoics, however, who regarded emotions as false rational judgements, and therefore, the state of *apatheia* as ensuing always from correct rational judgements, for the Neoplatonists *apatheia* was not a goal but a means to an end: that is to pure contemplation of the intelligible. For Plotinus, *apatheia* meant having the irrational parts of the soul so well under control that they do not disturb the contemplation of the mind or the rational self at all. As Sheppard's analysis shows, the Neoplatonists – aside from their differences on whether the entire soul descends into the body – saw reason in a very Platonic way as the true self of a person and regarded human ethical progress as the means by which we can turn reason away from our emotions (again, following in the footsteps of Plato). Their conception of a person, consequently, appears to be embodied and therefore distinct from the rational self that, given its rootedness in the intelligible, appears to be in harmony with our purely psychological characterization of the self.[12]

These chapters of Part One, which, needless to say, do not offer an exhaustive history of ancient conceptions of the self, confirm collectively that the idea of the self did not develop in a linear way, nor did it correspond to any single concept such as the soul or the mind or the rational faculties; all of which, even if they were conceptualized very differently by different philosophical movements over the centuries, at least had a common denotation in the Greek words *psychē*, *hēgemonikon* and *nous*, or in Latin the *anima*, *animus*, *mens* or *ratio*. Ancient notions of the self were closely related to the various widespread conceptions of the soul in relation to the body, this relationship often expressed through reflexive pronouns (*heautos*, *heautē*, *heauton*, etc.),[13] up until the Greek word for self, *autos*, became detached, when Aristotle spoke of a friend as another *autos*, another self.[14] As our chapters bring out clearly, their philosopher protagonists, quite independently of the history of this Aristotelian neologism, either in the crossings of narrative arcs (Chapter 1) or as matters of mind and body dualism (Chapters 3–4), or even in the form of a normative literary ideal (Chapter 2), discussed many issues of the self in relation to their conceptions of personal identity or to the problems of what it is to be a person.

In 'Part Two: Connections', these problems of the self are taken further or highlighted from various angles in relation to the philosophical thought of the early modern period, while new protagonists brought into play. David Konstan, in a chapter that is explicitly more illustrative than demonstrative, is concerned with the problem of other minds – the doubt that other people have minds at all: a modern worry rooted in Descartes' *Meditations* and not yet present in ancient philosophy, a difference that he finds essentially connected to the dissimilarity

between ancient philosophical practices that were dialogical and interactional and the isolated manner in which Descartes did philosophy (Chapter 5, 'From Socrates to Descartes: Talking, Reading and the Problem of Other Minds'). While for Greek and Roman philosophers, even the reading of books remained an instrument for collective engagement among themselves as readers, for Descartes, similarly to his insistence on isolation as the condition for fundamental philosophical investigation, reading became an occasion for solitary immersion in a text. In consequence, some Cartesians even came to the radical conclusion that the *Meditations* not only exclude a separate *mens* but that its central *ego* also eliminates any *alter ego.* So much for Aristotelian friendship. As Konstan succinctly puts it, Descartes' 'world is populated by a single, thinking monad, in radical contrast to the social self presupposed by the Greek and Roman thinkers' (p.104). On the contrary, however, Konstan also illustrates how the literary character of Descartes' work and the solitary modern literature Konstan touches upon enter into a dialogue with their readers – in not completely dissimilar ways as Lucretius did before – and displays the sociability of even the early modern (and modern) literary self. Although this seems to weaken the above contrast Konstan makes between these two periods, he does not wish to resolve this dilemma by Bernard Williams' distinction, who claimed that the 'I' of the *Meditations* proper is different from the 'I' that occurs in the *Replies* to the *Objections*. Instead, Konstan comes to the conclusion that Descartes' isolated mental cave and doubt about other minds was a fiction that not only places Descartes at the dawn of modern philosophy but also at the beginning of a quite curious literary tradition, in which he becomes the forerunner of Proust, Dostoevsky, Wright and Sábato. By shedding this new light on Descartes, Konstan brings attention to Descartes' intersubjective notion of the self.

Gretchen Reydams-Schils explores potential parallels between the Stoics' and Locke's notion of the self (Chapter 6, 'The Stoics and Locke on Self'). Specifically, she addresses the question whether for the notion of self to do serious philosophical work it is necessary to posit a reified self as an entity in its own right, as some have claimed to be Locke's position. In previous works, Reydams-Schils has already argued that the Stoics developed the strongest pre-Cartesian model of the self, one that, however, does not require any self over and above the functions the Stoics typically assign to the soul. To summarize:[15] (1) Unlike its Platonic and Aristotelian counterparts, Stoicism (with exceptions like Posidonius and, as Röttig notes in Chapter 3, Seneca) supports a monistic perspective of the human soul and refrains from relying on irrational components or functions to explain passions and irrational actions. For the Stoics, reason

operates effectively or fails to do so, and this absence of inner conflict between rational and irrational aspects elucidates irrational behaviour. Consequently, the Stoics established a cohesive psychological framework. (2) Moreover, this unified soul is corporeal and entirely integrated within the human body. The Stoics conceptualize humans as unified entities comprising both soul and body, creating a complete amalgamation where each part retains its distinct identity. (3) Additionally, for the Stoics, being rational implies being social, not the other way around, as even animals exhibit sociability to some degree; thus, a Stoic recognizes herself as part of an expansive social network. (4) At a higher level of existence, Stoics assert that a human being is entirely woven into the universe's order. The substance of human reason is inherently aligned with the divine principle that orchestrates all reality. Turning to Locke, Reydams-Schils asks what notion of self is presupposed in his claim that a 'person' is 'a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places' (*Essay* II.xxvii.9)? The notion of continuity over time and space is central here, but does such continuity in fact presuppose a reified self over and above self-awareness implied in every act of perception as defined by Locke?[16] While the Stoic notion of 'person' may be quite different from Locke's, the Stoics' concept of appropriation (*oikeiōsis*, the relation to self all animals are born with) could be seen as fulfilling an analogous function, once human beings have reached the stage of reason, as the 'person' does for Locke. Moreover, if Locke indeed reserves 'self' for the first-person perspective, and 'person' for the third-person one, Reydams-Schils argues, the discourse of self does something very similar in Stoicism. A third crucial parallel could be discovered between Locke's use of memory and that of the Stoics, especially with the Roman Stoics. Some of Locke's concerns (how to account for the Resurrection, for example, or the Last Judgement) have no counterpart in Stoicism. But as this chapter shows, the comparison between these two views of 'self' is mutually illuminating, and that it helps us to rethink some of the artificial divides posed in scholarship between the ancients and the moderns.

Will D. Desmond offers a comparative reading of Lucian's and Diderot's dialogues by juxtaposing the two authors, in particular their works that explore Cynic selfhood as an ethical option and even as an inevitability (Chapter 7, 'Cynic Selves in Lucian and Diderot'). Lucian's portraits of Demonax, Peregrinus, Diogenes, Menippus and a generic *Cyniscus*, place Cynics in a variety of contexts (slave auctions, Athenian assemblies, panhellenic Games, Hades) that reveal them as alternatively exemplars of almost heroic virtue (Demonax, Menippus)

or as targets for merciless mockery (Peregrinus). Lucian's satirical dialogues are notoriously difficult to pin down and the ambivalence he shows towards Cynicism and Cynics is revisited by the equally complex dualism that Diderot enacts in his dialogue *Rameau's Nephew* between his narrator ('Moi') and Rameau's jaded nephew ('Lui'), both of whom lay explicit claim to the mantle of 'Diogenes': the one as bourgeois, enlightened intellectual, and the other as shameless improvisatory conman respectively. All the typical preoccupations of Cynic literature feature in both writers' dialogues – for instance, the critique of prevailing customs, the revolt against conformity, shamelessness, living 'according to nature', gleeful or mocking laughter, linguistic versatility, rejection of formal learning and intellectual abstractions and cosmopolitanism. While comparing the treatment of such quintessential Cynic themes, Desmond focuses on the leitmotif of inequality that is the dominant and even unifying theme for the two authors. Inequality for Lucian and Diderot comes in many forms (physical, psychological, social, financial) and it can be presented as natural or contingent and unnatural, while the responses (ranging from indifference to self-contempt to rage and even rebellion) define different modes of Cynicism/cynicism. The ambivalence of both writers may well reflect the precariousness of Cynic ideals within the cultural hierarchies of imperial Rome and *ancien régime* France. More universally and less obviously, both Lucian and Diderot may point to the possible failure of all ideals (whether Platonic, Aristotelian, Christian, Enlightenment or Cynic) in the 'real' world. Individuals in their diversity are generally 'unequal' to their cherished ideals, and even those who seem perfectly to enact them may also reduce them to practical absurdity. If this is so, as Desmond shows, then the comparison of Lucian and Diderot uncovers a significant commonality of outlook in important sceptical voices from the 'second Sophistic' and Enlightenment, pre-revolutionary France.

Deborah J. Brown and Calvin G. Normore offer an in-depth analysis, showing that important parts of what they call 'the subjective turn' were in place since antiquity, especially in the Augustinian tradition (Chapter 8, 'Persons Who Are Selves'). Their historical analysis serves two purposes: on the one hand, they offer a number of criteria for disentangling the terminological confusion surrounding the concept of subjectivity (with competing terms like 'subject', 'person', 'self', etc.); on the other, they show that the basic outlines of their proposal can be justified by main patterns emerging from the history of philosophy. The concept of 'person' has been defined in the history of philosophy, they argue, in two different ways: by emphasizing thinking, and by emphasizing action. On the first view, a person is a natural kind, a thinking substance, while

according to the latter a person may consist of different roles that various people can assume at different times – see Seneca *Ep.* 120.22 above. The point that Brown and Normore make is that neither of these approaches includes what is essential to selfhood: namely, our ability to ask ourselves who we are. Although both traditions contain gestures towards this stance, the self-reflective element emerges emphatically in a third approach that stretches from Augustine through Peter John Olivi in the fourteenth century to the early modern period, by asking who we are in relation to ourselves or to other beings. Regardless of how this question is answered, Brown and Normore maintain that the inquiry into who we are is precisely the relationship that is constitutive of one's selfhood. Thus, this question is not a detached epistemological enterprise but a 'self-constituting, individualizing, perspectival act' that combines elements present in rudimentary forms in the first two traditions. If Brown and Normore are on the right track, then the general picture sketched at the beginning of this introduction needs to be refined, since questions about the self have been distanced from questions about substance from the very beginning of the Augustinian tradition.

This final chapter of Part Two offers a smooth transition to 'Part Three: Early Modern', which focuses on developments in the early modern period with particular reference to the ancient authors on whom seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers frequently drew in formulating their own views. The question of how ancient texts shaped early modern thought in various ways adds a new complexity to the material under consideration. As a part of the cultural heritage of the cultivated elite, early modern references to ancient ideas implied several motives ranging from rhetorical embellishment to highlighting of real inspirations. Since antiquity in general functioned as a cultural code with multiple meanings, the role of these early modern allusions can only be identified on a case-by-case basis.

Early modern discussions of the self share several assumptions with their Graeco-Roman antecedents. In both periods, we can distinguish between questions concerning one's relation to oneself, and questions concerning the metaphysical substratum forming the ontological basis of one's self. The first approach gives rise to various characterizations of the self depending on the kind of self-relatedness explored. Both in ancient and early modern times, one could speak of a private or public self, of a spiritual or social self and so on; and even if these labels reflect the preferences of the contemporary scholar, there is ample textual evidence that justifies them. The second approach, nevertheless, brings into focus several specific, if not completely new issues that emerge in the early modern period; one of them, for example, is the emphasis on the role of the

subject. According to Descartes, so the story goes, subjectivity is present as an indisputable component of every mental state. Having identified the *ego* as a fixed, Archimedian point whose existence cannot be dissociated from the *cogito*, Descartes called it a *res*, an individual thing or substance but at the same time, he did not identify its nature as a 'thinking substance' before the final meditation. So, it could be argued, that while we are uncertain about the ultimate nature of the self, the self is all the time present in its special function, as a subject fundamental to all acts of thought. In other words, the *ego* belongs to every act of experience as such. The first development in the early modern period is, therefore, a heightened – though not unprecedented – awareness of the subjective character of the self, resulting in an undeniable presence of the first-person perspective in every act of thought.

A second supposed theoretical advance in the concept of the self is its more pronounced detachment from the metaphysical notion of substance. The first steps in this direction were again taken by Descartes, who, in his late correspondence with Antoine Arnauld, outlined a new approach to the self, centred on memory. He believed that beyond the metaphysical unity of the soul's substance, a more personal kind of coherence is achieved through certain functions of the memory that connect subsequent states of the *ego* and make them available to the subject. This approach did not intend us to be rid of the notion of substance; it simply reflected the concern that the identity of substance does not guarantee the subject's access to itself in any meaningful way. Selfhood requires more than persisting as the subject of one's own modifications: so much for the idea of the self as a simple substance that is distinct from the body and not reducible to the mental states of which it is the subject. It also requires an epistemic relationship to oneself as a unified being that recognizes its own coherence in terms of personal history, unified agency and self-consciousness.

Although this approach stems from Descartes, it was John Locke who pursued this line of thought and provided a full-blown expression of it in his *Essay*. As we know, he did not reject the notion of substance either, but he completely separated the identity of a substance by a full-fledged concept of the self. As a result of his epistemological programme, 'substance' becomes an almost empty term, referring to an unknown reality that is supposed to explain the conjunction of certain ideas in experience (2.23.1-2). While substance is 'something we do not know what', the human self is recognized as belonging to us in a conscious way, as the primary object of self-consciousness. Its well-being is important because it is the source of our happiness or misery. Unlike the unknown substance that is supposed to support the self, the self is what we care about. Its

boundaries are defined by the extent of consciousness, which reaches back into the past, making past states of affairs relevant to who we are, regardless of any change in the underlying substrate.

Another line of development, which also has ancient precedents, becomes more pronounced in the empiricist tradition with the decline of the metaphysics of substance in the eighteenth century. The notion of substance was completely rejected by David Hume, who famously asserted that the self is 'but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement' (1.4.6). Here the ancient image of the theatre returns:

> The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd. (Hume, 1975: 253)

Regardless of how Hume's successors have received his bundle theory from a philosophical point of view, the attempt to capture what we call ourselves at the level of ideas is indicative of an important trend in early modern culture. To define one's relation to oneself in terms of the relations of one's states of consciousness means that the self does not seek itself as something given. Rather, it tends to see itself as the product of a constitutive process with multiple causal determinants and diverse outcomes reflected in the unique life histories of individuals. The self and its identity come to be seen as contingently constituted through a historical process and the episodes of a human life.

Although this brief overview is not entirely off the mark, two facts should not be neglected. First, in the early modern period, many other currents coexisted with those highlighted here. Critics of the empiricist view could break new ground by exploring the transcendental conditions for the unity of conscious states (as Immanuel Kant and his intellectual successors did), or they could assign new roles to the old notion of substance (as Victor Cousin and his followers did in nineteenth-century France). References to old ideas could take on new meanings and interfere with other ideas in a variety of ways. The other aspect that warns us to be cautious about the general picture we have just sketched can be clearly seen in the first study of 'Part Three: Early Modern'.

Tamás Pavlovits claims that there is a sharp divide between the ancient and early modern conceptions of the self (Chapter 9, 'Know Thyself! Pascal on Self-Knowledge'). He argues that Pascal's conception of the self is thoroughly anti-essentialist. This position does not simply mean that he distances himself from traditional metaphysical questions, rather, Pavlovits argues that Pascal breaks ground with the metaphysical and epistemological concerns typical of his time. Instead, he proposes a perspective based on the affective nature of the self. Pascal defines the self through the orientation of its love. Closed in on itself after the fall, the *ego* falls prey to its own instinct of self-love. It boasts itself as the centre of its own desires and aspirations. Pascal calls the resulting construction the 'Me' (*Moi*) and shows how unbridled personal ambition maintains this imaginary product of self-love. After carefully describing the structure of the 'Me' and contrasting it with the true self, Pavlovits concludes that Pascal belongs to the Augustinian tradition but is the first to describe the self as a completely flexible construct. The self can transform itself by changing the direction of its love; it can close in on itself but it also can be restored to its original openness. This is clearly visible through the social aspects of its existence. As long as we see ourselves as the centre of self-love, we are not only creating a false being but we also wish to see it as dominant, having power over other human beings. Thus interpreted, the illusory self is at the origin of the social order, which is based on a false but for our survival providentially produced hierarchy of privileges. On the other hand, as a construct based on self-centred egoism, the 'Me' is also responsible for mutual hatred and injustice in societies. Nevertheless, Pavlovits goes on to show that in Pascal, the flexible structure of the self gives hope for a different system of relationships with people who are considered as the body of Christ. This change – if only through the assistance of divine grace – promises a more authentic form of coexistence, a life for the sake of others without the need to place oneself at the centre of universe.

In the seventeenth century, nevertheless, even more conciliatory approaches to the same problems emerged. In a chapter focusing on Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655) and Jacques Abbadie (1654–1727), Andreas Blank explores an unlikely convergence between two patterns of thought, both of which go back to ancient sources (Chapter 10, 'Jacques Abbadie on Social Selves and Spiritual Selves'). This joint study of the work of Gassendi, who was inspired by the newly discovered Epicurean philosophy, and that of the Berlin-based Protestant pastor, Jacques Abbadie, who reached back to Augustine's concept of *delectatio*, brings to the light a 'web of similarities and dissimilarities'. In line with what we learned in Pavlovits' chapter on Pascal, Augustine's famous assertion about the evil nature

of pagan virtues is based on the idea that even the most heroic act of self-denial can turn out to be a mere ruse, using specious virtues as a mask to hide the true nature of fallen subjects not only from their fellow citizens but also from the agent itself. This is why social status, in Abbadie's view, can represent a danger even to ourselves when we use the esteem of others 'to deceive ourselves more efficiently'. Blank provides an in-depth analysis of the conciliatory strategies taken by Abbadie and Gassendi to bring Augustinian suspicion about social values in a line with the Epicurean principle of pleasure which makes the same values a legitimate source of self-love. Although the Augustinian perspective takes the subject to be a suspicious construction, it also makes concessions to social values like esteem, reputation and excellence, if only for the sake of humanity's survival. By contrast, the Epicurean principle of enjoyment renders esteem and social values legitimate objects of desire. On Blank's assessment, the efforts of Gassendi and Abbadie can be considered as converging attempts to resolve the tension between one's social and spiritual selves. 'For Abbadie, as for Gassendi, it is the insight into the fragile and imperfect nature of temporal happiness that renders the desire for esteem compatible with loving God' (p. 199). But Abbadie goes beyond Gassendi in maintaining that the desire for excellence is not incompatible with the soul's eternal life in God. Social virtues will be present in the state of final happiness as divine gifts, so that the awareness of one's excellence will be based on perception of one's true values and entail the recognition of the soul's debt for these presents to God.

Tensions, however, do not always resolve so easily: a similar conflict is discussed by Dániel Schmal in the context of Fénelon's ambiguous approach to friendship (Chapter 11, 'Fénelon on Friendship'). Fénelon's writings present two conflicting views. On the one hand, *amicitia* is one of the most prestigious values of Roman republicanism; on the other hand, still in the spirit of the paradigm discussed in the previous chapters, it is a prime target of Augustine's criticism. It is one of those values that inspire great deeds and give the appearance of heroic virtue but, Augustine contends, in reality they are nothing but sins disguised as selfless love. The tension between these doctrines is easily palpable in Fénelon. As a well-educated prelate who feels at home in classical literature, he often evokes the heroic examples of friendship as part of his pedagogical and political agenda. The examples of antique heroism represent a veiled criticism of the Sun King's policies by providing the outline of a political community based on selfless virtues. But Augustinian trends are also present in Fénelon's treatment of friendship. Being one of the most important proponents of a radical vision of the spiritual self, Fénelon regarded friendship as a relation that easily falls prey to the

hidden interests of self-love. He therefore finds the ancient ideal of friendship odious and regards it as a dangerous idol of the self: 'No one believes more than I do that all love without grace, and apart from God, can never be anything but self-love in disguise' (cf. p. 207). In comparing these two tendencies, Schmal does not so much seek to find in the texts the means of reconciliation, but rather sees in them a tension revealing conflicting commitments in the process of constructing the self in early modern times.

In the final chapter, Ursula Renz introduces the reader to the problem of self-knowledge in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant (Chapter 12, 'Kant's Scepticism Regarding Self-Knowledge of Our Moral Motives: Locally Restricted but Unmitigated'). Although there is greater chronological distance between Kant and the authors touched upon so far than between the early modern authors discussed earlier, the subject under discussion here is in many ways connected to the earlier topics. The connections will be clear if we bear in mind all that we have learned from the previous chapters on the ambiguity of the self and about early modern scepticism about self-knowledge in the Augustinian paradigm. In her essay, Renz points out that Kantian philosophy is characterized by a strong scepticism about whether any of our actions derive from true respect for the moral law or they are merely in accordance with our duty under the moral law. Some reasons for this scepticism may arise from the epistemology of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant radically limits the possibility of self-knowledge because we know only the empirically accessible (and morally indifferent) phenomena of action. The author argues that, despite this epistemological restriction, we can have some knowledge essential to ourselves as moral beings. The maxims of our actions are known to us, and the empirical experience of ourselves enriches self-knowledge. At the same time, Renz submits, this knowledge is not inconsistent with Kantian scepticism – with the recognition that the limits of our knowledge make it impossible for us to recognize the precise motives of our actions in any particular case. This leaves ample scope for modes of self-deception. Renz's conclusion is that self-deception, however, arises from a lack of knowledge of ourselves rather than the other way around.

This volume, thus, by exploring these and other aspects of the self in the history of philosophy, contrasts some of the more and less important thinkers of the ancient and early modern worlds and consequently illuminates their connections and contradictions, their intellectual tensions and how they complement each other. As a result, it facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of both the concept of the self as it developed on the broadest scale of cultural and intellectual history and of the influence and creative relationships between individual thinkers

that underlie that development. More focused than competing studies on the influence of ancient philosophy on early modern thought, its concentration on the concept of the self raises a plethora of new questions and answers never formulated before from specific vantage points made possible by these chapters.

Notes

1 At least in Margaret Graver and Tony Long's translation in Asmis et al. (2015: 483–4).
2 For the idea that leading a life requires searching and aiming toward the good that implies ordering human action into a narrative, briefly described as a 'narrative quest', cf. MacIntyre (1984: 219). For the idea of the narrative self in Seneca, see Németh (2023).
3 On Panaetius' four *personae*, see Gill (1988).
4 In *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*.
5 Inwood (2005); Gill (2006); Taylor (1989); Williams (1973).
6 See Williams (1970) and Parfit (1971).
7 See McGinn (1991).
8 See McGinn (1982: 140–62).
9 At the other, more current spectrum of the history of philosophy, Galen Strawson's idea of the sense of self as a single mental conscious physical subject that has a personality and yet is distinct from its particular experiences, thoughts and so on, could be another example for this third alternative conception of the self and also a good one, considering that it shows that the restricted notion of the self is not only compatible with an incorporeal entity but that it does not even necessarily lack a materiastically respectable character – at least according to Strawson (1999).
10 For a current, broad overview, see Tieu (2023).
11 Cf. Daniel Dennett's idea of the self as a (useful) fiction in Dennett (1988).
12 A distinction which is highly elaborated in Remes (2007).
13 See Edward (2012).
14 As formulated by David Konstan in an unpublished paper, with reference to Jeremiah (2012). This is, however, not to say that *autos* was a term widely used in this meaning after Aristotle as the English word 'self' has been.
15 Reydams-Schils (2019).
16 For the rejection of this reading – because it would lead to a regress problem – see, for instance, Thiel (2011) and Weinberg (2016).

Part One

Antiquity

1

'Who Are We, Where Are We?'

Plato's Narratives of the Mortal Philosopher and the Immortal Soul

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In the middle dialogues, Plato offers many portrayals of the philosopher's contemplation of the Forms. In particular, he uses narratives to depict the philosopher using his mind to depart from the body and apprehend the Forms. In addition to this narrative of the philosopher, Plato gives the immortal soul a storyline: in a number of dialogues, he portrays the soul as starting out in a realm where it sees the Forms, then lives in mortal bodies and, in the ideal case, returns to dwell forever with the Forms. In this essay, I will examine two narratives – the narrative of the immortal soul and the narrative of the mortal philosopher – in Plato's *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Based on the topic and style of each dialogue, Plato uses one or both of these narratives. For example, in the *Phaedo*, which deals with Socrates' death and the afterlife of the soul, Plato presents the narratives of the mortal philosopher and the immortal soul. In the *Symposium*, Plato presents the narrative of the philosopher in the Ladder of Love but does not offer a narrative of the soul. Plato's narratives of the philosopher are well known to scholars: in addition to presenting dramas in which Socrates is the protagonist, Plato also sets forth short narratives of an unnamed, idealized philosopher (e.g. the philosopher in the Ladder of Love in the *Symposium* or in the Allegory of the Cave in the *Republic*). Plato's narratives of the immortal soul, however, are less well known. Of course, in these dialogues, the soul is immortal: it lives many mortal lives and is also punished and rewarded after each mortal life. Indeed, as Plato suggests, a soul that lives a philosophical life for a period of time in human bodies can leave the earthly world forever and dwell everlastingly with the Forms. In his narrative of the immortal soul, Plato

indicates that the soul has a happy beginning, a painful life in bodies and, in the best case scenario, a happy ending in the realm of the Forms. In short, in the middle period dialogues, Plato creates narratives of both the mortal philosopher and of the immortal soul. As we will see, these two narratives have different narrative arcs and operate in different places and temporalities. I will discuss the two narratives separately and then show how these narratives function in relation to each other.

The two narratives that I will examine are as follows:

(1) The Narrative of the Soul: Exile and Return
Borrowing from Empedocles and the Orphics, Plato gives the immortal soul its own identity and storyline. The soul first lives a happy life in the realm of the divine Forms and then incarnates and reincarnates in earthly bodies. The soul wants to escape the alien earthly realm and dwell with the Forms, which are kindred to it. But it can get attached to the bodily and social realm and thus deviate from its mission. The soul that practices philosophy in a full way can return to its first beginning with the Forms. This is a *nostos* narrative.

(2) The Narrative of the Philosopher: The Journey to Enlightenment
The philosopher journeys to the Forms by using his reason and departing from the bodily realm for a period of time.[1] When he apprehends the Forms, the philosopher gains enlightenment. This narrative has two variants:

(a) A philosopher journeys to the Forms. Here, the human philosopher is the protagonist.
(b) The soul living in a human body journeys to the Forms. Here, the soul is the protagonist. This narrative features the soul living a human life as a philosopher.

These two variants represent the journey to the Forms from two different perspectives, that of the human philosopher and that of the soul living a human life and practicing philosophy. This is a quest narrative.

In the two narratives listed above, the soul and the philosopher have different agendas. The immortal soul living in a human body wants to get off the cycle of reincarnation and return to its incorporeal life with the Forms (though the soul can get stuck in the physical world and lose track of its own desires; it then gets punished and gets another chance in the next life). The human philosopher has his own aims: he wants to achieve intellectual and ethical virtue

so that he can live a happy life. To do this, the philosopher must transcend the bodily realm and contemplate the Forms. By gaining knowledge of the Forms, the philosopher will live a good and happy life. As I argue, we can better understand Plato's ideas if we consider these two narratives together. How does the narrative of the mortal philosopher's journey to the Forms interact with the story of the immortal soul's exile and return to the Forms? As we will see, when the philosopher contemplates the Forms, the aims of both the human and the soul converge.

Let me first say a few words about narrative. A narrative features one or more characters acting or suffering over a period of time in one or more places. As many scholars have noted, narratives shape time in terms of characters and events. As Porter Abbot notes:

> Narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events. 'Event' is the key word here, though some people prefer the word 'action'. Without an event or an action, you may have a 'description', an 'exposition', an 'argument', a 'lyric', some combination of these or something else altogether, but you won't have a narrative.[2]

To explain what he means by an event, Abbott separates narratives from descriptions: 'my dog was bitten by a flea' is a narrative and 'my dog has fleas' is a description.[3] In contrast with a description, a narrative contains an event. In sum, a narrative features one or more characters acting or suffering over a period of time in one or more places.

I choose to discuss narratives rather than myths in this essay for several reasons.[4] First, some narratives in Plato do not count as myths. For example, the Ladder of Love in the *Symposium* is a narrative but not a myth. In addition, within a given myth, one can find several narratives. Thus, the palinode in the *Phaedrus* features narratives of the preincarnate immortal soul and of a human philosopher recollecting the Forms. We can also find the different chapters (as it were) of a single narrative spread out in a given dialogue. Note also that a narrative can unfold in a first-person statement or speech and also in the question–answer format. For example, the Allegory of the Cave is set forth in the question–answer format and has a clear narrative. Finally, narratives can be found even in a short statement made in a philosophical argument. As I suggest, if a short passage in the question–answer format features a protagonist who acts and/or undergoes an experience in a specific place over a period of time, it is a narrative. As we will see, narratives in Plato operate in many different discursive formats.

The two narratives that I discuss here take place in different chronotopes or 'time–place zones' (to borrow Bakhtin's term).[5] By this, I mean narratives that operate in specific configurations of time and space. For example, in some narratives, the hero dwells in a mythical place where time is static (it does not move forward biologically or chronologically); in others, the protagonist dwells on earth in biological and historical time; in yet others, the protagonist lives in alien and unnatural places and temporalities (science fiction is an example of this kind of narrative). I use the notion of the chronotope to clarify the different times and places that shape the narratives that I discuss in this essay. As we will see, the philosophic soul (or the rational part of the soul) operates in two different time-place zones. I identify these two chronotopes as follows:

(1) The 'earthly chronotope'. Here, the place is earth and the temporality is biological and chronological. The narrative of the mortal philosopher takes place in this chronotope.
(2) The 'hyperearthly chronotope'. The place is the invisible and incorporeal realm of the Forms and the temporality is eternal, that is to say, outside of time's forward arrow. In principle, this should not be a place at all. But Plato refers to this region as a '*topos*'. Rather paradoxically, the mind/soul of the philosopher can enter this chronotope even though he himself dwells in time. The narrative of the immortal soul takes place in this chronotope.

These two chronotopes help us to understand the stages on which the mortal philosopher and the immortal soul act in Plato's narratives.[6]

I am particularly interested in threshold narratives where a character crosses a boundary from one chronotope to another. In one key threshold narrative, a person is on the threshold of death and heading for some other life (e.g. Socrates in the *Phaedo*). In Bakhtin's theory, different chronotopes in a narrative take on meaning in relation to each other. Thus, on his last day, Socrates dwells on earth (and, more specifically, in prison) in the chronotope of biological and historical time. He, or his soul, will move to a different temporality and place when he dies. His life and his afterlife are clearly linked together.

The Narrative of the Immortal Soul: Exile and Return

In Plato's middle and late dialogues, the soul is immortal and maintains itself as a centre of consciousness. It has intellectual and ethical capacities and can dwell with or without a body. When it lives on earth, it reincarnates into different

mortal bodies. The soul is judged after each earthly life and is either punished or rewarded. It may be sent to live in a new mortal body, or it may be released from the cycle of reincarnation and live with the gods and/or the Forms. The fact that the soul is judged again and again indicates that it must persist in its identity from one life to another.

Plato sets forth the narrative of the immortal soul in a number of dialogues. Let us look first at the *Timaeus*, where Plato presents the entire story of the soul in a short passage. In a discussion of the Demiurge's creation of the human souls, Timaeus states:

> Going back to the mixing bowl in which he had mixed together the soul of the universe, he [the Demiurge] poured the remains of the previous material, mixing them together pretty much in the same way, but these remains no longer had an invariable and uniform purity, but a second or third degree of purity. When he put the universe together, he divided the souls as equal to the number of the stars, and he assigned each soul to each star and, placing them in there as though in a chariot, he showed them the nature of the universe and told them the laws of destiny. [As he said to them,] one and the same initial birth would be assigned to all of them, so that no-one would be slighted by him. And, once they were sown into the fitting organs of time, they would necessarily be the most god-respecting creature. Since human nature is twofold, the superior class would hereafter be called 'man'. And when they [the souls] would be implanted in bodies according to necessity, there would be influx and efflux in their bodies, and the following would necessarily come into being – first, sensation that is innate and common to all, which comes from violent affections; and second, desire mingled with pleasure and pain and, in addition, fear and anger and all such things that naturally follow or oppose these. If they [the rational human souls] should master these, they would live justly, but if they should be conquered by these, they would live unjustly. And if the soul lives well for the appropriate period of time, it would return to its home in the star, its partner, and live a blessed and congenial life. (41d–42b)

Here, we find the basic *nostos* narrative: the soul starts out living on a star in the heavens, which is its native 'home' (*oikēsis*). It then incarnates and reincarnates in mortal bodies. If it lives well for a specific period of time on earth, it can return to its star. Thus, even when the souls live on earth, they are 'heavenly plants':

> Concerning the most sovereign part of our soul, we must understand this in the following way: god gave to each of us, as a daimon, that which we say dwells in the topmost part of our body and lifts us up from the earth to our kindred (*suggeneian*) in heaven, since we are not a terrestrial plant but a heavenly plant

> (*phuton . . . ouranion*), if we speak in the most correct way: for from there, where our soul was originally born, the divine [part of the soul] suspends our head, that is, our root, and keeps our body upright. (90a–b)

Here, the souls inhabiting bodies are upside-down plants that have their roots in heaven. This passage emphasizes the divine aspects of the soul. This narrative of the immortal soul, then, takes the form of a departure from a divine home, a long stay on earth, and (in ideal circumstances) an eventual return to the heavens.

We find a similar narrative of the soul in the *Phaedo*, though in this case Plato sets forth different chapters of the narrative in different parts of the dialogue. Note that, in this text, he does not divide the soul into parts (as he does in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*). Let me briefly present the three chapters of the narrative. First, in the Recollection Argument, Socrates states: 'our souls existed previously . . . before they took on a human form, apart from bodies, and they had intelligence' (76c; ἦσαν ἄρα . . . αἱ ψυχαὶ καὶ πρότερον, πρὶν εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώπου εἴδει, χωρὶς σωμάτων, καὶ φρόνησιν εἶχον). Note that this passage features an event: the soul lives at a specific time in its history then enters a body after this period. This makes the passage a narrative.

Before incarnation, then, the soul had knowledge and intelligence, though it tends to forget this when it enters a body. Since the soul can recollect the Forms and the knowledge it once had, it must have continuous existence and maintain its own identity over time. As I have argued elsewhere, the Forms are divine.[7] Thus, the soul first lived with divine beings. In addition, the soul has divine elements that make it possible for it to dwell with the Forms.

As Plato indicates, the soul is most at home with the Forms. Thus, in the Affinity Argument, Socrates claims that the soul is 'akin to' (*sungenēs*) the Forms. This metaphor of kinship suggests that the soul has a sort of family relationship with the Forms. Of course, the soul is 'akin to' the Forms because it has the capacity to contemplate them. But the metaphor of kinship invites us to go further: the soul gravitates to the Forms as though to its family members. If this claim is correct, then the soul is naturally suited to be with the Forms.

In the second chapter of the narrative, the soul incarnates and reincarnates in bodies on earth. In spite of its divine beginning, the soul can get attached to the bodily and social realm. It turns towards bodily pleasures and social goods such as honor, success and power. This keeps the soul imprisoned in the mortal realm. The soul will continue to reincarnate until it practices philosophy in a series of lives. Thus, as Socrates says, after bodily death, '[the souls of the base] wander

around until, due to the desire of the corporeal element which accompanies them, they are once more imprisoned in a body' (81d-e; πλανῶνται, ἕως ἂν τῇ τοῦ συνεπακολουθοῦντος, τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς, ἐπιθυμίᾳ πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα). In this short passage, Plato sets forth a section of the narrative.

In the third chapter of the narrative, the soul that practices philosophy in a human life gets off the cycle of reincarnation and moves to a region where it lives with divine beings. Socrates describes the soul's permanent departure from the body in a discussion of the philosophic activity of practicing death:

> Isn't it the case that [the soul], being in such a condition, goes away into that which is like itself, to the invisible, divine, immortal, and wise? And when it arrives there, isn't it blessed, since it has been released from wandering, foolishness, fear, and fierce loves and all other human evils, and, as is said of the initiated, truly lives for the rest of time with the gods? (81a)

In these rhetorical questions, we find a narrative in which the soul journeys to the Forms and achieves blessedness. Note also that Plato identifies the Forms as divine. Of course, to dwell with these divine beings, the soul has to purify itself by practicing philosophy. As Socrates says in the eschatology: 'All those who have sufficiently purified themselves by philosophy live for the rest of time entirely without bodies' (114c).

In the *Phaedo*, then, Plato sets forth the chapters of the story of the soul in different parts of the dialogue. In this text, we find a homecoming narrative: the soul starts out in a divine place but is sent to live in mortal bodies; it suffers through incarnations and, if it practices philosophy successfully, returns to live forever in its original home. Here, Plato borrows from the Orphics and Empedocles, who set forth similar narratives for the soul and the daimon (respectively).[8]

We find this same *nostos* narrative in the *Phaedrus*. Plato sets forth the narrative of the immortal soul in the palinode. In the first chapter of the story, the preincarnate soul flies up to the edge of the heavens with the gods and looks out at the Forms. Some souls get only a small glimpse of the Forms but every soul that enters a human body on earth has contemplated these realities (247a–248b). In the second chapter of the story, the soul has fallen to earth and lives in a human body. The soul then reincarnates until, in a given life, it practices philosophy and recollects the Forms. In the third chapter, the soul gets off the cycle of reincarnation after living three successive lives as a philosopher (249a). In short, the soul regains its wings and returns to its original disembodied life with the gods. There it can regularly contemplate the Forms. Plato identifies

the soul's ultimate goal as a 'journey to the realm beyond the heavens' (τῆς ὑπουρανίου πορείας; 256d).[9] Here again, we have a *nostos* story.

Clearly, I take the soul as a being that maintains its identity in its life inside and outside of mortal bodies. Some may wonder if it is right to confer identity (and, perhaps, personhood) on the immortal soul.[10] Let us briefly consider this in relation to Locke's conception of personal identity in *An Essay on Human Understanding*. In this text, Locke uses the social conception of a 'person' rather than the biological conception of 'man'. To have an identity, he claims, the person must be aware of him or herself and be held accountable for his/her actions (book 2, sections 10, 16, 26). As he states:

> Wherever a man finds what he calls himself, there, I think, another may say is the same person. It is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit, and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery. This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness – whereby it becomes concerned and accountable; owns and imputes to itself past actions, just upon the same ground and for the same reason as it does the present. All which is founded in a concern for happiness, the unavoidable concomitant of consciousness; that which is conscious of pleasure and pain desiring that that self that is conscious should be happy. And therefore whatever past actions it cannot reconcile or appropriate to that present self by consciousness, it can be no more concerned in than if they had never been done. (2, 26)

Locke treats a person as responsible if he or she has a relatively continuous self-awareness. Interestingly, he also discusses the identity of the soul in the possible case of reincarnation. As he claims, the soul must remember its earlier life or lives if it is to be granted identity. If the reincarnating soul does not have memories of its past lives, it is not the same person.

Plato's reincarnating soul fits Locke's criteria in several ways: it can have a recollection of an early period of its life, though in this case it only remembers the Forms,[11] and it is accountable for its actions in every human life. Thus, in Plato's eschatologies, the soul gets judged, punished, and/or rewarded based on how it has lived in a mortal life. This affects the next mortal life that it will take up. In short, Plato places great emphasis on the soul's responsibility for its actions in a mortal life (as Locke will do). However, Plato's soul does not remember its past lives in human bodies. Of course, for Plato, the soul's identity is not located exclusively in the physical and human world (here, his ideas differ dramatically from Locke's). Indeed, in some middle dialogues, Plato considers the bodily

realm as a punishment for the soul. Plato's conception of the soul, then, does not fully meet the criteria that Locke sets forth for personal identity. It is worth noting that, in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, Plato indicates that there is a fixed number of souls (*Rep.* 611a, *Tim.* 41d-e): this indicates that each soul is an entity unto itself. I take it that Plato's soul has its own identity and a continuity of consciousness (even though it does not remember everything about its past lives). It is the same soul that acts and suffers from one life to another.

The Narrative of the Philosopher: Departure, Journey, Enlightenment

The narrative of the mortal philosopher also takes the form of a journey, but it has a different narrative arc. To put the story very simply: the philosopher departs from the physical realm via reason, journeys to the Forms and gains enlightenment. Let me emphasize that, in Plato's dialogues, the protagonist in this narrative can be either the philosopher himself or the soul living as a human philosopher. In the latter case, even though the soul is the protagonist, the narrative focuses on the soul's life as a human being. Thus, the narrative deals with the life of a human philosopher rather than with the immortal and everlasting life of the soul. As I mentioned above, this is a quest narrative.

Let me offer several examples of this narrative, using both protagonists. Consider first a narrative that features the human being as the protagonist. In the *Republic* 6, Socrates states:

> Will it not be a fair defence to say that the real lover of knowledge would naturally strive for true Being [the Forms] and would not linger over the many particulars that are a matter of opinion? He would advance and wouldn't be blunted in his *erōs* or cease from this desire until he lays hold of the nature of each [Form], with that part of his soul [reason] which is fitted to grasp it because it is akin to this. Approaching true Reality with this part of the soul and having sexual intercourse with it, and giving birth to intelligence and truth, he would achieve knowledge, live truly, be nourished, and cease from his birth-pangs. (490a-b)

This passage takes the form of a rhetorical question and an answer to that question. For this reason, one may not notice that it contains a short narrative. The narrative is as follows: the philosopher desires the Forms, rejects the physical world, journeys to reality, has sexual intercourse with the Forms, gives birth and is released from his birth pangs. The philosopher makes this journey because he

has an erotic desire to go to the Forms. Once he has intercourse with the Forms, he gives birth to intelligence and truth and achieves enlightenment. Clearly, the philosopher uses the reason in his soul to grasp reality, but the story is told as though the philosopher himself apprehends the Forms. One can easily grasp that this is a quest narrative.

The second example of the narrative of the philosopher features the soul as the protagonist. As Socrates says in the *Phaedo*:

> Have we not been saying for a long time that the soul, when it makes use of the body to examine something, either through sight or hearing or any other sense – for inquiry through the body means examining things with the senses – is dragged by the body towards things that never stay the same, and it wanders in an agitated state and spins around as though drunk, since it lays hold of such things? Very much so. But when the soul inquires, alone by itself, it goes thither to the pure, ever-existing, immortal and unchanging [Reality]; and, since [the soul] is akin to this, it is always in its presence, that is, when it is by itself and when this is permitted. And it ceases from its wandering and, in relation to those things, always stays identically in the same state, since it lays hold of such things. And this state is called wisdom. (79c-d)

Here, in the format of question and answer, Socrates portrays the soul as doing specific things in order to contemplate the Forms and gain wisdom. This passage presents two different events in a short narrative: first, a soul examines things with the body and ends up wandering in a state of agitation and spinning around like a drunkard; second, a philosophic soul separates itself from the body and goes to the realm of the Forms, where it stops wandering, achieves stability and becomes wise. The verbs of wandering, being agitated or confused, spinning around and going to the realm of the Forms, show the soul acting, changing and having specific experiences. In short, when a soul uses the body, it wanders and gets lost on its journey of inquiry. However, when a soul practices philosophy and inquires without the body, it 'goes thither' to the pure realm of the Forms. Here, the soul makes a successful journey. Clearly, the soul living as a philosopher has a distinct goal in its human life: to journey to the Forms, which are kindred to it, and to become stable and wise. In this passage, then, we find a short narrative portraying one soul as wandering in a dazed state and another soul – a philosophic one – going to the Forms and achieving wisdom. The soul living as a philosopher carries out a number of actions that allow it to reach its goal. Here, we find the quest narrative of the human philosopher where the soul is the protagonist of the story.

Let us turn now to the ascent scenes, which well exemplify the narrative of the mortal philosopher. In these scenes, the human philosopher is the protagonist who makes the journey: he ascends, step by step, until he sees the Forms. First, let us look at the ascent passage in the *Symposium*. As Diotima says right before she presents the Ladder of Love: 'he who has been educated in erotic matters up to this point, and has seen beauties in the right order, reaches the goal of his erotic pursuits: suddenly he will see a beauty wondrous in nature, and this, Socrates, is the final object of all the previous toils' (210e). As Diotima suggests, the philosopher who reaches the ' *telos*' of his journey will have a sudden and wondrous vision of the Form of Beauty. Diotima emphasizes that the philosopher who sees Beauty will live a good and happy life (211b0-d).

The philosopher who contemplates Beauty has departed from the physical and human realm. We can infer that he uses his reason, though Plato only refers to this obliquely (211e–212a). Note that, in the narrative of the ascent (210a–211d), the philosopher contemplates Beauty as an entire human being, even though (rather paradoxically) he is completely 'uninfected' by the flesh. Of course, the human being as a soul-body composite cannot enter the realm of the Forms: only the rational element in the soul can do this. We can infer that the philosopher's mind transcends the human and physical realm altogether. But Plato represents the philosopher as a whole human being making the journey. This is a classic quest narrative.

Likewise, in the Allegory of the Cave, Plato portrays the philosopher as a whole human being leaving his life in the dark subterranean prison of the physical world and journeying up to the Forms. In the Allegory, Plato offers many details about the philosopher's body, focusing in particular on his neck, legs and eyes (514a-c). Clearly, Plato chose to portray the philosopher as an embodied human being who sees different objects and changes his views as he ascends from the cave. Of course, as Socrates says right after the allegory, it was the rational part of the soul that made this journey (517a-b). Thus, the human philosopher in the narrative stands in for the rational part of the soul. Still, the Allegory itself represents a human philosopher ascending out of the cave (and coming back down later on).[12] This is a quest narrative, although the philosopher, at times, resists the forward movement due to his disorientation. In the Allegory, Plato creates a narrative of the mortal philosopher that features a philosopher making a difficult journey out of the cave and achieving wisdom and happiness in the realm of the Forms (516d-e).

Plato composes the ascent narratives to emphasize the life of the human philosopher. In the Allegory of the Cave, he also indicates that the philosopher

must descend back into the cave (here, the soul is living a human life). In short, the soul living as a philosophic human being cannot stay with its kindred Forms but must return to a dark place that is alien and unpleasant. In the Allegory of the Cave, then, the soul goes home to the Forms for a time but then returns to earth. Here, the quest narrative of the philosopher stands in stark opposition to the *nostos* narrative of the soul.

In Plato's narratives of the mortal philosopher, the two protagonists – the embodied human philosopher and the soul living in the body of a philosopher – influence the reader in different degrees. The narrative in which the embodied human philosopher is the protagonist has more power over the reader than the narrative in which the invisible and immortal soul plays the starring role. The reader can relate much better to the philosopher than to the soul. That said, both narratives function as protreptics designed to turn the philosopher towards philosophy.

The Interaction of the Narrative of the Immortal Soul and the Narrative of the Philosopher

As Plato indicates in many dialogues, it is the soul that moves and acts in a human life. When the soul lives as a human, it has human desires, pains and pleasures. It acts and suffers in response to a myriad of sensations, natural events and social interactions. In short, the soul acts, thinks, feels and suffers *as a human*. It has human agency. Of course, in addition to having human agency, the soul is an agent in its own immortal life. In short, the philosophical soul is a double agent: it lives and acts in a human life while also attempting to serve its own immortal purposes.[13] When the soul (or the rational part of the soul) contemplates the Forms, it helps the human it inhabits to live a good and happy life. But it also furthers its own purposes – to leave the body forever and dwell everlastingly with the Forms. Thus, even when the soul lives a human life, it has its own agenda. Qua soul, it wants to leave the prison of the body and dwell with the Forms. We must keep in mind the soul's double agency as we examine the interaction of the narrative of the immortal soul (the *nostos* narrative) and the narrative of the mortal philosopher (the quest narrative).

How do the narratives of the philosopher and the soul interact? Plato brings these narratives together in a number of dialogues. Let me begin with the *Phaedo*. Here, Plato invites the reader to juxtapose the narrative of the mortal Socrates with the narrative of the immortal soul. For example, Plato uses the

same images and terminology to describe both Socrates the philosopher and the immortal soul that occupies his body. Thus, Socrates presently lives in a 'prison' (δεσμωτήριον) but the officials will 'release' (λύουσι; λελύμενον) him from his bonds (δέσμοι) so that he can ready himself for death (59e–60c). Likewise, the soul is bound in the 'prison' of a body (62b, 67d, 82e, 92a, 114b-c) and can only be 'released' (λύσις, λούειν; 62b, 64c, 64e–65a, 67a, 67d, 70a, 82d, 83a, 83b, 84a, 84b, 107c, 114c) by practicing philosophy. In addition, Socrates, the human who has just been released from physical bonds, discusses his soul's imminent release from the prison of his body. Here, the verbal echoes show how the two narratives intertwine.

Plato also brings the narratives together by having Socrates use the pronoun 'I' in reference to both himself and to the soul living in his body. For example, when Crito asks him how to bury his body, Socrates states:

> Men, I cannot persuade Crito that I am this Socrates who is now conversing and arranging each of the things that have been said, but he thinks I am the man whom he will soon see as a corpse, and he asks how to bury me. And regarding what I said before in a long discourse, that when I drink the poison, I will no longer remain with you, but I will go away to the joys of the blessed, I think that I am speaking these things to him in vain, to encourage you and also myself. (115c-d)

Here, Socrates uses the first-person singular pronoun to refer to himself and to the soul living within him: 'I' Socrates am now conversing with you and, when 'I' die, 'I' the soul will journey to the gods. Of course, the human being Socrates is not immortal – he will not go to the place of the blessed; only the soul that lives in his body can do this. Still, this double use of the first-person pronoun invites us to consider these narratives together.

We can see how these narratives work together if we analyse them in terms of the two chronotopes listed above. In the narrative of the mortal philosopher, the philosopher uses his reason to move from the earthly chronotope to the hyperearthly chronotope, where he contemplates the Forms. Although, to speak more strictly, it is the soul living as a philosopher that sees the Forms (not the philosopher as a human being). Of course, the soul can live and function in two different chronotopes: it can dwell in the incorporeal and eternal realm of the Forms or in a mortal and temporalized body. In short, when the soul living as a philosopher separates itself from the body and contemplates the Forms, it leaves the earthly chronotope and enters the hyperearthly chronotope. At that time, it dwells in a region whose Beings are incorporeal and eternal. In the narrative of

the philosopher, of course, the soul lives in a human body and must return to earth and live a human life. But, during the time that it contemplates the Forms, the soul helps both the philosopher and itself: the philosopher enjoys a happy and good mortal life due to his virtue and the soul gets to visit its original home for a period of time. The soul also helps its own cause by living the kind of life that will help it to leave the physical realm forever and return to a blessed life with the Forms. Thus, if we take these narratives together, we can locate Socrates' mortal life in the wider context of the immortal soul that presently inhabits him.

I want to turn now to the palinode in the *Phaedrus*, which brings these two narratives together in a slightly different way. In this text, Plato presents the two narratives, one after another, in a single, uninterrupted speech.[14] In the palinode, Socrates sets forth the narratives of the soul and the philosopher. Note that the soul is the protagonist in both of these narratives. In short, the soul – with a charioteer, two horses and wings (or, on earth, the stumps of wings) – acts and suffers in both the narrative of the preincarnate soul and the narrative of the philosopher.

Let us first examine the narrative of the immortal soul. As we have seen, in the *Phaedo*, Plato refers to the preincarnate soul dwelling with the Forms in a brief passage. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato offers a detailed account of this early period of the soul's life. Using the image of the charioteer with two horses and a set of wings, Plato portrays the preincarnate souls flying together with the gods up to the edge of the physical universe to apprehend the Forms. As Socrates indicates, while the gods contemplate the Forms with complete ease, the souls see the Forms less well because they do not have perfect virtue. Some souls get a better look at the Forms than others, but all of them have some vision of the Forms (247a-b).[15]

Of course, the preincarnate souls' wondrous vision of the Forms does not last. As Socrates explains, the souls couldn't control their horses and they trampled each other and injured their wings. These souls then fall to earth, lose their wings and live in mortal bodies. Note that this narrative includes a fall from a happy state. However, the soul practicing philosophy in a human life starts to grow back its wings. As Socrates states, the soul will reincarnate in mortal bodies until it lives three successive lives as a philosopher (249a, 256b). At that point, the soul regains its wings and returns to the gods. In this speech, then, Plato sets forth the entire story of the soul, with its preincarnate life, its incarnation and reincarnation in mortal bodies and, finally, in the ideal scenario, its return to a bodiless life with the gods.

Note that Socrates refers to the Forms as dwelling in a 'place beyond heaven' (*ton hyperouranion topon*, 247c). He describes this region as follows:

> The colourless, shapeless, and intangible truly existing Being occupies this place, and is visible only to intelligence, the soul's pilot, and all true knowledge is concerned with this. Now the mind of the god, being nourished on intelligence and pure knowledge, and the mind of every soul that cares to receive what is fitting, when it sees real being for a time, rejoices, and as it contemplates truth, is nourished and feels happy.[16] (247c-d)

In this chronotope, the Forms have no colour, shape or substance but exist eternally outside of time and space. Rather paradoxically, Plato spatializes the Forms by portraying them as occupying a 'place' (a '*topos*'). Indeed, he depicts the gods as flying upwards, sitting on the 'rim' or 'edge' of heaven (i.e. the edge of the physical realm) and looking outwards to 'see' the Forms (247c). In addition, the journey of the gods to the Forms takes place in time: the gods ascend to the rim of the heavens and sit there for the period in which the heavens make a full rotation (247c-d). Socrates also claims that divine and human souls move themselves and other objects: insofar as the souls move, they are temporalized (245c–246a). The souls, then, are incorporeal but temporalized. This allows them to dwell both inside and outside of a body.

The Form of Beauty takes pride of place in Socrates' speech. As Plato indicates, Beauty shines the brightest in the realm of the Forms. He portrays the souls' vision of Beauty as follows:

> Beauty was brilliantly shining to look upon when the souls – we with the blessed chorus following Zeus and others following other gods – saw that blessed sight and vision and were initiated into the mysteries that are rightly called the most blessed. And in a perfect state we celebrated as mystic initiates, being free from all the evils that awaited us at a later time. And as the highest initiates we viewed in a pure light perfect and simple and calm and happy visions, being ourselves pure and not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, being imprisoned like an oyster in its shell.[17] (250b-c)

By speaking of an initiation into the 'most blessed mysteries,' Plato refers to the Eleusinian Mysteries. As scholars have shown, the final initiation ritual (the *epopteia*) could include an epiphany of Demeter and/or Persephone.[18] Thus, Plato represents the 'blessed vision' of the Forms in terms of a divine epiphany. Indeed, he marks the Forms as divine when he says that 'the memory [of the soul of the philosopher] always keeps as close as possible to those things [the Forms] by being close to which god is divine' (πρὸς γὰρ ἐκείνοις ἀεί ἐστιν μνήμη

κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν; 249c). We can infer that the gods are divine because they can contemplate the Forms fully and everlastingly. They get their divinity from the Forms.[19] Plato does not explain why the divine Form of Beauty shines so brightly among the Forms, but he does indicate that beautiful bodies on earth, especially that of a beautiful boy, can imitate Beauty particularly well (251a). As we can see, this passage on the Form of Beauty takes place in the first narrative, the narrative of the immortal soul. But Beauty also features in the second narrative, the narrative of the mortal philosopher.

Let us look now at the second narrative in the palinode – that of the human philosopher. In this narrative, the protagonist is the tripartite soul that lives in the body of a philosopher. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato represents the tripartite soul as a charioteer driving two horses. The soul also has wings, though it loses these when it enters an earthly body. Here, I want to focus on the scene where the philosophic lover sees the Form of Beauty when he looks at the beautiful face of his boyfriend.[20] In this narrative, we do not find a slow ascent to the Forms but rather a sudden recollection. As Socrates states:

> Coming near the boy, [the charioteer and horses] saw his radiant face, which flashed like lightning. And the memory of the charioteer, as it looks upon him [the boyfriend], was carried to the true nature of Beauty, and it saw Beauty once again standing with Self-Control upon a holy pedestal. When the charioteer saw this, it felt terror and fell backward in reverence.[21] (254b-c)

When the lover is in the presence of his boyfriend, the rational part of his soul sees the boy's beauty and suddenly remembers the Form of Beauty, which it saw long ago in a preincarnate state. The rational part of the soul sees Beauty 'once again' in the present. Plato thus portrays the rational part of the soul (the charioteer) as remembering the Form of Beauty, which it saw long ago in a preincarnate state. By focusing on memory, that is to say, the soul's ability to recollect the things it saw before incarnation, Plato brings the earthly and the hyperearthly chronotopes together.

Note also that the charioteer does not actively control its lower parts when it sees Beauty. Rather, it is 'compelled' to pull on the reins due to the terror it feels in the presence of Beauty. It has this terrified reaction because it sees a divine being. Plato makes this clear by having Beauty stand on a holy pedestal, as if it were a god. In addition, he portrays the soul's charioteer as feeling reverence and fear when it sees Beauty – the very responses that humans had when seeing a god in Greek poetic narratives of epiphany.[22]

In this narrative of the philosopher, Plato does not portray the soul advancing upwards, step by step, to the Forms. Of course, the wings of the soul allow it to ascend to the Forms, but the soul that has entered a mortal body has lost its wings. Still, the soul living in the philosopher is eager to fly: 'remembering true [Beauty], it feels its wings growing and longs to fly upwards, but it cannot do this and it looks upwards like a bird, paying no attention to the things below' (249d). Here, the soul of the philosophic lover is just starting to grow back its wings. The narrative of the philosopher in the palinode, then, does not have an ascent scene. Rather, the soul living as a philosopher is 'carried' (*ēnechthē*) to the realm of the Forms when it sees the beautiful boy (254b). Indeed, the memory of the Form of Beauty happens 'quickly'.[23]

By depicting the soul in the philosopher as recollecting its preincarnate vision of the Forms, Plato forges a direct link between the narrative of the immortal soul and the narrative of the philosopher. Plato brings these narratives together in the following passage:

> A person must gain an understanding of a conception in accordance with the Form, moving from many sensible perceptions and collecting these into a unity by way of reason. This is the recollection (ἀνάμνησις) of those things which our soul saw then, when it journeyed with the god and lifted its vision above the things which we now say exist, looking up to real being. Thus, the mind of the philosopher is justly said to be winged. For the memory [of the philosopher's soul] always keeps as close as possible to those things [the Forms] by being close to which god is divine. And that man alone who rightly makes use of these memories, and is initiated in the ever-perfect mysteries, becomes truly perfect.[24] (249b-c)

Here, the soul of the philosopher living on earth recollects 'those things which our souls saw then', that is to say, when it journeyed with the gods to the edge of the heavens and saw the Forms. The discourse of 'now' and 'then' effectively links the two narratives together. The soul can recollect the Forms because, in a human life, it has practiced philosophy and has collected many particulars into a unity. In addition, the soul's memory of its preincarnate state keeps it close to the Forms. Since the gods become divine by their closeness to the divine Forms, we can infer that the soul contemplating the Forms becomes divine as well. Here, the narrative includes the idea that the soul living in the philosopher 'becomes like god'.[25]

As Plato suggests in the final line of the passage, the man himself lives the best life: he is initiated into the mysteries that feature a vision of the divine Forms.

Strictly speaking, however, it is the soul living in the man that in fact gets initiated, or rather, re-initiated because it was already initiated in its preincarnate state. In this passage, then, Plato links the two narratives (and the two chronotopes) by portraying the immortal soul living a human life as remembering its preincarnate vision of the Forms. These two narratives feature a single protagonist – the soul – that remembers its preincarnate vision of the Forms while it lives on earth in a human body. Thus, in the palinode, Plato places the life of the philosopher in the larger context of the everlasting life of the soul. Thus, the narrative of the mortal philosopher (the quest narrative), is nested in the wider narrative of the soul (the *nostos* narrative).

In sum, Plato sets forth the narrative of the soul and the narrative of the philosopher in a number of dialogues. However, the dialogues that feature these two narratives differ in important ways. I do not want to suggest that Plato uses the exact same narrative in every text. Still, I hope to have shown that Plato creates a specific narrative for both the immortal soul and the mortal philosopher – a *nostos* narrative and a quest narrative. Finally, as I have suggested, we need to look at a wider range of narratives in Plato, including those found in short passages in which Socrates is making philosophic arguments.

Notes

1 I use 'he' for the philosopher because Plato refers to the philosopher as a male in the texts that I examine (however, Diotima must be a philosopher even though Plato does not give her this label).
2 Abbott (2002: 13).
3 Abbott (2002: 13).
4 For good discussions of myth in Plato, see Brisson (2000), Morgan (2000) and Lear (2006).
5 I discuss Bakhtin's conception of the chronotope in detail in Nightingale (2001).
6 I will not be discussing the chronotope of Hades, where the soul is punished or rewarded in between lives. In the eschatological myths, Plato offers different ideas about the place where the souls get judged and either punished or rewarded in between lives. I call this place 'Hades', with the understanding that Plato has expanded the traditional notion of this region. On Plato's eschatologies, see Annas (1982), Nightingale (2001), Kamtekar (2016) and Betegh (2006).
7 Nightingale (2021).
8 Empedocles presented a narrative in which the daimon starts out its life with the gods, enters mortal bodies and reincarnates, and (under the right conditions)

returns to the gods: this narrative informed Plato's thinking about the soul and its narrative. The Orphic myths also portray the soul as having divine elements. But, due to an originary crime, it is punished by living in the prison of mortal bodies. It reincarnates until it gets initiated in the Orphic mysteries in its present human life; it then goes to live an everlasting and happy life with the gods in a good part of Hades. For a discussion of the Orphic narrative of the soul (including extensive bibliography), see Nightingale (2021: chapter 3).

9 I will discuss the narrative of the soul in the *Phaedrus* in further detail below.

10 Bostock (1986: 35–7) and Gerson (2003: chapter 1 and *passim*) discuss the question of conferring 'personhood' on the soul. Inwood (2006) and Tor (2023) offer excellent discussions of the personhood and identity of Empedocles' daimon.

11 Of course, Plato does not use the theory of recollection in all the middle dialogues.

12 Note that the philosopher has to make the journey to the Forms again and again, throughout his/her life. Strictly speaking, this would be a repeated-quest narrative.

13 Souls that get caught up in earthly and human life lose this double agency: they act only as a human being.

14 For useful discussions of the palinode, see Ferrari (1986: 113–203) and Werner (2012).

15 As Socrates notes (249b), the souls living in human bodies on earth have seen the Forms to some extent, otherwise they would not be humans.

16 ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος καὶ ἀναφὴς οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα, ψυχῆς κυβερνήτῃ μόνῳ θεατὴ νῷ, περὶ ἣν τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐπιστήμης γένος, τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τόπον. ἅτ᾽ οὖν θεοῦ διάνοια νῷ τε καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ ἀκηράτῳ τρεφομένη, καὶ ἁπάσης ψυχῆς ὅσῃ ἂν μέλῃ τὸ προσῆκον δέξασθαι, ἰδοῦσα διὰ χρόνου τὸ ὂν ἀγαπᾷ τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τἀληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ.

17 κάλλος δὲ τότ᾽ ἦν ἰδεῖν λαμπρόν, ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῷ μακαρίαν ὄψιν τε καὶ θέαν, ἑπόμενοι μετὰ μὲν Διὸς ἡμεῖς, ἄλλοι δὲ μετ᾽ ἄλλου θεῶν, εἶδόν τε καὶ ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην, ἣν ὠργιάζομεν ὁλόκληροι μὲν αὐτοὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀπαθεῖς κακῶν ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρῳ χρόνῳ ὑπέμενεν, ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὃ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὀστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι.

18 See especially Clinton (2004) and Petridou (2013). See also Nightingale (2021: chapter 2), who discusses the final epiphany in the Eleusinian mysteries in the context of the phenomenon of divine epiphany in ancient Greece. She identifies Plato's philosopher as a new kind of Eleusinian *epoptēs*.

19 On the divinity of the Forms, see Vlastos (1965–6), Long (2020) and Nightingale (2021: chapter 1).

20 Given the scope of this essay, I will not discuss the long passage on the lover's interaction with the boy and the erotic madness that inspires him.

21 καὶ πρὸς αὐτῷ τ᾽ ἐγένοντο καὶ εἶδον τὴν ὄψιν τὴν τῶν παιδικῶν ἀστράπτουσαν. ἰδόντος δὲ τοῦ ἡνιόχου ἡ μνήμη πρὸς τὴν τοῦ κάλλους φύσιν ἠνέχθη, καὶ πάλιν εἶδεν αὐτὴν μετὰ σωφροσύνης ἐν ἁγνῷ βάθρῳ βεβῶσαν: ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἔδεισέ τε καὶ σεφθεῖσα ἀνέπεσεν ὑπτία.

22 I have discussed poetic accounts of divine epiphany in Nightingale (2021: chapter 2). In these poetic texts, humans respond to a divine epiphany with fear, awe and reverence.

23 As Socrates says at 250e, a soul that has not been 'initiated' and seen the Form of Beauty recently will not move 'quickly' (ὀξέως) to the realm of the Forms. The recently initiated soul, by contrast, has the opposite experience.

24 δεῖ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον συνιέναι κατ᾽ εἶδος λεγόμενον, ἐκ πολλῶν ἰὸν αἰσθήσεων εἰς ἓν λογισμῷ συναιρούμενον: τοῦτο δ᾽ ἐστὶν ἀνάμνησις ἐκείνων ἅ ποτ᾽ εἶδεν ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ συμπορευθεῖσα θεῷ καὶ ὑπεριδοῦσα ἃ νῦν εἶναί φαμεν, καὶ ἀνακύψασα εἰς τὸ ὂν ὄντως. διὸ δὴ δικαίως μόνη πτεροῦται ἡ τοῦ φιλοσόφου διάνοια: πρὸς γὰρ ἐκείνοις ἀεί ἐστιν μνήμῃ κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν. τοῖς δὲ δὴ τοιούτοις ἀνὴρ ὑπομνήμασιν ὀρθῶς χρώμενος, τελέους ἀεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενος, τέλεος ὄντως μόνος γίγνεται.

25 For a good discussion of the notion of the soul 'becoming like god', see Sedley (1999).

2

Lucretius and the Epicurean Self

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Lucretius is a poet of many voices. This polyphony – present in his great didactic poem, *De Rerum Natura* (*DRN*), which in six books and over seven thousand hexameter lines reshapes Epicurus' philosophy to fit his Roman social and political context – has been understood in various ways: as a rhetorical strategy designed to associate his readers now to the poet and now to his addressee, thereby facilitating Lucretius' arguments and instruction,[1] or as designed to assist the creation of a range of emotional responses from readers through the dialogue of these voices that could never be achieved in simple prose.[2] One thing common to these different interpretative approaches is that both emphasize how these alternating Lucretian voices involve the reader in the argument of the poem. In this chapter, I wish to draw attention to another consequence, namely how the interplay between Lucretius' multiple poetic voices helps to create an Epicurean self that is presented to the reader as an Epicurean archetype for imitation and emulation.

I will argue that Lucretius' Epicurean self takes shape through the subtle manipulation of his poetic and didactic voices. Lucretius' portrait in relation to Memmius, the poem's addressee, creates a relationship that emphasizes his role as teacher; but Lucretius is also a pupil and a faithful disciple of Epicurus, the godlike master to whom he not only claims to assimilate himself but in certain aspects even to outdo by traversing hitherto untrodden paths (1.926-34 = 4.1-9). This is no small achievement, considering that Epicurus has already managed to traverse the measureless universe (1.61-79). These voices are also combined in a third archetypal relationship, that of the Lucretian speaker/narrator to the reader. This combination is also enacted in the language through which Lucretius encourages his readers to transform themselves – a literary language that creates an authoritative voice through which Epicurus and the poet's own persona and

way of speaking help readers to assimilate to the ideal Epicurean way of life through reading and learning.

The voices of the Epicurean pupil, the teacher and the intratextual literary persona all fit within broader traditions of epic, didactic and philosophy. Although these are apparently quite distinct and different, they can be conceived as alternating roles of the same self enacted in different contexts. This chapter argues that, in fact, they constitute distinct performative functions of the self that are inherently connected with each other. In consequence, the study of Lucretius in relation to the question of the self provides us with a new and different vantage point from which to think about the *DRN*. This study, nevertheless, does not primarily focus on the usual questions of Epicurean identity that have been amply treated, for example, in scholarly discussions of Lucretius' theme of *palingenesis*;[3] instead, it offers a perspective on the view of the Epicurean self that Lucretius displays through the transformation of himself, first as a pupil who tirelessly puts pen to papyrus in order to spread the teachings of Epicureanism (1.140-5) and then by means of (and as a product of) his efforts as a writer, who becomes a teacher, the creator of a didactic poem addressed to Gaius Memmius – a Roman orator and poet and possibly the patron of the historical Lucretius – and by implication, to his readers.

Lucretian Polyphony

How is the self construed in a didactic poem? Can it be construed at all? Is it not simple overinterpretation to clothe Lucretius' ancient polyphony in the modern conceptual cloak of the 'Self'? What distinguishing marks make a poetic voice into a self?

The concept of self for Epicurus, as I have argued in detail elsewhere, is a product of a self-awareness that is generated by one's bodily and mental affections – described by Epicurus in the *pathologikos* and *aitiologikos tropoi*, respectively.[4] This psychophysical self-awareness is constantly developed by one's self-reflective thinking in relation to one's immediate natural, social and cultural environment and the awareness of one's holistic psychophysical disposition thus acquired creates a sense of identity that can in fact be described as the self in Epicurus' philosophy. It is not to be identified with the soul because the self does not simply stand for our occurrent mental dispositions. Instead, it is an awareness of an identity built on our psychophysical memories of our constantly changing and transformable psychophysical being. The self, consequently, is a psychological

construction, expressed in the Greek of the Epicurean papyri by certain personal and reflexive pronouns that cannot be immediately transferred to or translated in Lucretius' poem. Instead, Lucretius enacts the Epicurean idea of the self in different roles, in multiple contexts. These inherently connected performative functions of the self, I wish to suggest, are construed primarily through Lucretius' various narrative and narrating techniques. One of them is a common, genre-independent poetic method that Katharina Volk has recently called 'poetic simultaneity'. By this Volk means the sense that the poem is coming into being in front of the reader's eyes, as if the poet's persona were composing the poem in the moment of reading.[5] Since such a similarity to oral composition-in-performance is an illusion based on a premeditated construction, it also betrays the poet's persona narrating his creative actions actually to be a fictive, planned fabrication. This persona, the author's voice, is therefore not to be identified with the historical Lucretius – a distinction that has been an accepted, even if never completely uncontroversial, commonplace in literary scholarship on the *DRN*.[6]

This Lucretian intratextual persona becomes immediately apparent after the first few lines in the proem of book 1, in the invocation of Venus:

> Quae quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas, / nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras / exoritur neque fit laetum neque amabile quicquam, / te sociam studeo scribendis versibus esse / [25] quos ego de rerum natura pangere conor / Memmiadae nostro, quem tu, dea, tempore in omni / omnibus ornatum voluisti excellere rebus. / quo magis aeternum da dictis, diva, leporem.
>
> Since you [Venus] alone steer the workings of nature, and since nothing is born without you into the shining shores of light, and nothing will come into being and prosper or be delightful without you, I really desire you to be my comrade in writing these verses [25] which I am beginning to set down about the nature of things for our common friend, Memmius, whom you, Goddess, have always wished to excel by furnishing him every accomplishment. And for this reason, even more, grant, Goddess, to what I say an everlasting charm. (1.21-8)

In this section of the invocation, we witness Lucretius' intratextual character or fictional persona eagerly (*studeo*) inviting – as we read on in the moment – the goddess to be his companion and help him to write the verses about the nature of things (*de rerum natura*) that he is just about to compose (*pangere conor*). In the midst of this urging, Lucretius forges an intratextual persona that he immediately couples to a central Epicurean ethical tenet, friendship (cf. 1.140-2). This persona is asking for help in his task because he is doing it for one of the Memmian *gens*,

for our Memmius, whom Venus has always wished to excel (*voluisti excellere*). Hence, it is all the more (*quo magis*) that Venus ought to grant an ever-living charm (*aeternum leporem*) to the poet's speech (*dictis*). This reasoning, again, reveals another characteristic of Lucretius' intratextual voice: after the poet and the friend, his persona is suddenly disclosed as that of a teacher, hence underscoring his chosen genre, didactic poetry.

Lucretius has yet another request from Venus:

> Effice ut interea fera moenera militiai / [30] per maria ac terras omnis sopita quiescant; . . . / [41] nam neque nos agere hoc patriai tempore iniquo / possumus aequo animo nec Memmi clara propago / talibus in rebus communi desse saluti.
>
> Meanwhile, make the wild labors of warfare [30] lie quietly sleeping on all seas and lands . . . [41] For it is not possible for me to do what I am doing with an easy mind when the fatherland is in danger, nor can the famous descendent of Memmius deny himself to the salvation of our country. (1.29-30 and 41-3)

The pointed *nos* (as opposed to the *ego* in 1.25 above) of his second request complicates further Lucretius' relationship with Memmius and the reader. Although in Latin the first-person plural most often simply means the first-person singular, yet if taken literally – 'us' being its referent – then it may mean various things in this specific *locus*: 'us Epicureans', referencing the extratextual occupation of Lucretius and Memmius, teaching and learning their Epicureanism when Memmius is not preoccupied with his obligations; or, as Volk has argued, *nos* is used to implicate the listener/reader, just as the first-person plural of verbs and pronouns are repeatedly put to use in the *DRN* to involve the student, Memmius and the reader alike.[7] Thus, when Lucretius invokes Venus – because she alone governs the nature of things and without her nothing comes forth into light, nothing joyous and lovely is made, including Lucretius' poem (1.21-3) – and asks her to create the ideal conditions for his/our chosen task, if the *nos* is taken in the plural the reader is also meant to be implicated in the creative process and hence Lucretius starts shaping not only his verses but his extratextual listeners when he says this.[8] In consequence, the poem becomes 'the story of us', as aptly described by Monica Gale.[9] Lucretius' poem begins to narrate not only how our particular cosmos comes about in the infinite universe, and changes or stays the same, out of a vast number of atoms and void but in a narrative that includes us readers from the beginning, along with Epicurus, the poet, the Memmii and so on; and by implication, we are invited to be a part of this creative

process and therefore to reflect on ourselves and our thoughts and feelings through Epicurus' philosophy as presented in Lucretius' writings.[10]

Sometimes this request is explicit: 'weigh [the arguments] with keen judgment and if they seem to be true, give in, but if they are false, equip yourself to fight them' (2.1040-3). On other occasions, we are urged by implication to do this, as for example when Lucretius is explaining in book 4 that in their dreams everyone's mind is intent on one's daily pursuits, and therefore Lucretius in his sleep is dreaming of tackling his/our task (*nos agere*; 4.969-70) of constantly investigating the nature of things and expounding his discoveries in his native tongue. The *nos agere* again (cf. 1.41 above) invites us to investigate the nature of things, including ourselves and, indeed, we become also actively engaged, like Lucretius' self-conscious persona, and we start to reflect and fact-check his teaching concerning ourselves: whether the same happens to us when dreaming.

These two poetic techniques, 'poetic simultaneity' and 'implication', consequently help to make Lucretius' intratextual personae of the poet and teacher come to life, as well as to keep the reader involved. Since these personae perform their roles not only intratextually – they are not simply certain literary characters interacting with each other, as in a novel for example – but in Lucretius' didactic poem, each of them has an active, powerful connection with the reader – by inviting the reader to learn, (self-)reflect as a teacher and in harmony with Lucretius' imitation of Epicurus, as a student and a poet, to reshape himself as an Epicurean –, these voices, therefore, offer distinct but inherently connected models of the Epicurean self.

Moreover, I wish to suggest that these techniques, by being reapplied in a linear fashion as Lucretius' narrative unfolds, also produce a complex matrix of referentiality, with these intratextual personae being regenerated multiple times and hence formulated as if they were self-reflective. Obviously, as constructed literary voices, they do not attain real self-consciousness but are portrayed as distinct personae exhibiting self-conscious activities throughout the text and therefore emphasize the self-reflective aspect of the Epicurean model of the self. The basic characteristic of the Epicurean self is that it is a product of constant self-reflective thinking and narrative via one's memory, creating an uninterrupted consciousness of oneself in relation to one's immediate natural, social and cultural environment.[11] Therefore, we should next examine how the first few lines of the proem of book 2 offer an excellent example of Lucretius composing an image of Epicurean self-reflectivity:

> Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis, / e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem; / non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas, / sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est. / [5] suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri / per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli. / sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere / edita doctrina sapientum templa serena, / despicere unde queas alios passimque videre / [10] errare atque viam palantis quarere vitae.

> It is sweet, when on the great sea the water's surface is disturbed by storms, to watch the great struggle of another man from the land, not because one has a pleasing desire for anyone to suffer, but because it is sweet to realize that you yourself are untouched by those evils. [5] And it is also sweet to see the great contests of war drawn up across the field if you have no personal share in the danger. But there is nothing more pleasant than to hold the high celestial sanctuary of the wise, fortified with teaching that brings serenity. To look down on other humans and see them everywhere straying and wondering as they are searching the right path of life. (2.1-10)

Much ink has been spilt on these and the following lines; consequently, my aim is not to offer yet another overarching interpretation of the Epicurean spectator metaphor but simply to draw attention to its perhaps most obvious and hence least discussed aspect, its self-reflectivity. As David Konstan has importantly shown, *cernere* in line 4, if taken in its most frequent meaning in the *DRN* – 'to detect' or 'to discern' –, liberates line 4 from being a disclaimer that tones down the apparently cynical harshness of the previous line and, instead, it offers the following reading: 'it is sweet to discern the kind of evils to which you yourself are not susceptible'.[12] The kind of *mala* in question must be the 'avoidable evils', argues Konstan, since no one is free from fortuitous harms. But seafaring is an avoidable type of hardship: it was commonly regarded as an unnatural occupation in Rome and hence it was considered as a sign of greed (cf. 5.1006: *improba navigii ratio*). Under this light, the storm-tossed ship appears not as a helpless victim but as a victim of one's unnatural and immoderate desires – the metaphor can also be taken for a passionate soul pursuing its unnecessary desire for wealth – and therefore the spectator is not taking pleasure in another's misfortune but in his own Epicurean self that is rid of unnatural desires and content with its natural state of mind.

In agreement with Konstan's reading, the little I wish to add builds upon his observation that taking *cernere* in this sense also avoids repeating the sense of *spectare* in line 2. This difference underscores, in my understanding, the self-reflective process involved in the simile, which in harmony with Epicurus'

theory takes its cue from perception (*spectare* [2] / *tueri* [5]), followed by a rational reflection (*cernere* [4]) and its result (*tenere* [7]).[13] The Epicurean spectator or the ideal Epicurean self is fortified by the teachings of the wise (*munita doctrina sapientum*) as an outcome of his rational reflection. Lucretius, therefore, presents the ship and military metaphors from the position of the teacher and as an attack on two unnecessary desires, greed and ambition, in order to shape an ideal of the Epicurean self in the image of the spectator and to provide a powerful image of and for self-reflectivity by anticipating the reward of these sort of activities.[14] Furthermore, by implicating the reader with the help of the second person singulars – both in the first ship simile (*quibus ipse malis careas*) and then in the second military simile (*tua sine parte pericli*) – the metaphors not only demonstrate but are also meant to motivate the reader's self-reflection and self-reform.

Lucretian Self-Fashioning

Lucretius' imitation of Epicurus in the proem of book 3 might be considered yet another image of the Epicurean self-fashioning, driven by Lucretius' didactic self-reflectivity. Nonetheless, not everyone would agree: Volk's fascinating interpretation of the proem, in a nutshell, argues that Lucretius cashes in an earlier, seemingly unnatural juxtaposition of Epicurus with Ennius and Homer (1.62-79 and 1.117-26), portraying Epicurus in 3.1-30 as though he were a poet in order to cast himself as a literary successor who follows his role model in an act of *imitatio*. Her reading chimes in well with the two zoic metaphors she takes as symbols for poetic activity: swans (3.7) were traditionally associated with poetry – Lucretius even compares the different qualities of bird songs (4.180-81)[15] – and the horse race (3.7-8) is also a traditional simile for poetic activity – deployed, again, later by Lucretius (6.47 and 92-4) – not to mention the image of bees in line 3.11. Hence, in Volk's interpretation, Lucretius places himself in this proem in the Latin literary tradition that modelled itself on Greek literary forerunners and by constructing his achievements in reference to Epicurus the 'poet', he becomes the first *Roman* poet to sing the song of Epicurean pleasures. '[H]is imitation is not ethical but literary, a practice that can be paralleled throughout the history of Latin poetry, and one whose aim is not the good life but rather the composition of a *dignum* . . . *carmen* / . . . *pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis* (5.1-2).'[16]

I think Volk's reading of how Lucretius approximates philosophy and poetry is ingenious but her confinement of Lucretius to a literary imitation is instantly troubled by the immediate context of the few lines she rests her interpretation on. Let us therefore take a closer look of the passage:

> O tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen / qui primus potuisti inlustrans commoda vitae, / te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus, inque tuis nunc / ficta pedum pono pressis vestigia signis, / [5] non ita certandi cupidus quam propter amorem / quod te imitari aveo; quid enim contendat hirundo / cycnis, aut quid nam tremulis facere artubus haedi / consimile in cursu possint et fortis equi vis? / tu, pater, es rerum inventor, tu patria nobis / [10] suppeditas praecepta, tuisque ex, inclute, chartis, / floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant, / omnia nos itidem depascimur aurea dicta, / aurea, perpetua semper dignissima vita. / nam simul ac ratio tua coepit vociferari / [15] naturam rerum divina mente coorta / diffugiunt animi terrores, moenia mundi / discedunt: totum video per inane geri res. / apparet divum numen sedesque quietae, / quas neque concutiunt venti nec nubila nimbis / [20] aspergunt neque nix acri concreta pruina / cana cadens violat semperque innubilus aether / integit et large diffuso lumine ridet. / omnia suppeditat porro natura neque ulla / res animi pacem delibat tempore in ullo. / [25] at contra nusquam apparent Acherusia templa, / nec tellus obstat quin omnia dispiciantur, / sub pedibus quaecumque infra per inane geruntur. his ibi me rebus quaedam divina voluptas / percipit atque horror, quod sic natura tua vi / [30] tam manifesta patens ex omni parte retecta est.

> You who was first able to bring such bright light from shadows so deep, illuminating the things that are useful for life – I follow you, the flower of the Greek stock; and I am now setting my feet in the path of the signs you left behind. Not from any desire to compete with you, but because I wish to imitate you out of love; why would the swallow compete with the swan in singing; or what can goats with trembling limbs achieve in a race against a mighty horse? You are our father, the discoverer of the order of nature, you provide to us paternal principles, from your pages, illustrious man, just as the bees on the flowering hillside meadows drink up everything, in the same way we graze on all of your golden teachings, 'golden', since they are worthy always of eternal life. As soon as your reasoning begins to give voice to the nature of things springing from your divine mind, the soul's fears are routed, the walls of the world split apart and I see things borne downward through the infinite abyss. And the power of the gods appears to me and their serene homes, which the winds do not shake nor do any clouds sprinkle them with rains, nor does the snow frozen by sharp frost pollute it falling white, and the sky always cloudless blankets it, and it smiles far and wide with outward-spreading light. And nature furthermore provides

> everything, and nothing saps the peace of the soul at any moment. But on the other hand nowhere can be seen the sanctuary of Acheron, nor does the Earth stop us from seeing everything in its place beneath our feet, whatever is falling downward through the abyss. From these things a kind of divine pleasure seizes me, and terror that in this way nature through your power is opened up so completely and uncovered from all sides. (3.1-30)

Looking at the proem as a whole, it appears outright to be therapeutically and ethically motivated.[17] For as soon as Epicurus' reason starts preaching (*vociferari*) through Lucretius – as he ingests the golden words of his father's precepts – nature is revealed in its reality, with no underworld or avenging gods to fear. This consequence, in harmony with Epicurus' philosophy that the study of physics is only worth pursuing as a means of happiness (for Epicurus' scientific knowledge illumining life's blessing see lines 3.1-2) and with Lucretius' constant message that the darkness (of *religio* or religious superstition) and the terrors of the mind must be dispelled by the aspect and law of nature (see again lines 3.1-2 and 3.15-17; also cf., e.g., 1.146-8 or 6.39-42), not only has transparent therapeutic and hence ethical implications, but addresses the central target of Epicurean therapy: the fear of death. If we understand that nature provides everything to the gods and that nothing at any time impairs (*delibat*) their peace of mind (*delibare* being a delicate expression of divine indifference – cf. *KD* 1 – as opposed to unnecessary libations on altars, *libare*, that stem from *religiosus* anxiousness), thanks to your power (*tua vi*) Epicurus, we can then discern that there is no Acheron, even if the flat Earth blocks our vision downwards; in consequence, we can witness our poet trembling in his divine delight (3.25-30).[18] And this mental glimpse of the absence of Acheron, in fact, chimes in well with the central aim of book 3:

> [37] metus ille foras praeceps Acheruntis agendus, / funditus humanam qui vitam turbat ab imo / omnia suffundens mortis nigore neque ullam / esse voluptatem liquidam puramque relinquit.
>
> That fear of Acheron must be hurled out headlong – that fear which shakes human life at its very foundations, covering everything over with the blackness of death, and which does not leave any pleasure fluid and pure. (3.37-40)[19]

There is no denying that Lucretius builds his imitation on literary metaphors. However, I would argue that this is not in order to emphasize that his voice is that of the first Roman poet singing the carmen of Epicurean pleasures – the claim formulated openly and out loud by the proem of book 4 (4.1-25),[20] – but

rather to show his readers the rewards of the *imitatio Epicuri*. This accords well with the earlier anticipation of the Epicurean spectator: namely, the divine yet mortal pleasures of a constructed Epicurean self (*divina voluptas atque horror*).

Since Cyril Bailey, commentators have been keen to point out that Lucretius here follows the glory of the Grecian race 'firmly', with *ficta* taken as an adverb from *figo* instead of from *fingo*.[21] Yet, both etymologies are possible and by offering a decisive solution commentators strip 3.3-4 of the next playful comparison: Lucretius follows Epicurus' signs, pressed with an irresistible intellectual strength, with his footprints that are moulded (*ficta* → *fingo*) by his creative imagination.[22] These *ficta vestigia* are not conceived out of competition but love – an ancient catchword for friendship – in Lucretius' act of *imitatio* of the father.[23] Importantly – notice again the implication – of *our* father (*nobis*; 3.9) whose golden pages we feed upon (*nos depascimur*; 3.12). Again, if the plural is taken literally, it might mean either us Epicureans, or even more restrictively those, who are trying to imitate the master and thus become Epicureans – consequently implicating the readers over again. We ought not to worry if our voices do not sound as polished as that of a swan, or if we cannot run with the pace of a racehorse, as long as we understand what is at stake: thanks to our hardworking imitation (through copying or memorizing his fatherly precepts: 2.581-2), Epicurus' philosophy is announced and by the nature of things it is revealed that we have no grounds to fear either the gods or the shades of Acheron.

There is, nevertheless, another pressing question. Even if Lucretius' polyphony is designed as the ethical driving force of his didactic poem in order to facilitate his readers' self-reform, how or to what extent can it be successful? Lucretius seems to demand a lot from his readers if he takes it for granted that just because he has managed as a literary pupil to reform himself and become a teacher, his golden verses ought to have the same effects on us. As Phillip Mitsis has argued, Lucretius tries to trap us through our reader elitism. It is a typical feature of didactic poetry to expect most readers to identify with the seemingly omniscient narrator, while shaking our heads at the sick masses, or in this case at the childish Memmius, and in consequence, silently identifying ourselves already with Epicurus and Lucretius and with the ethical presumptions of their arguments.[24] But how much does this trap underwrite our real transformation? Self-reform requires that we first recognize our false values before we start to change them in harmony with Epicurean philosophy. For that, we need to be perceptive not only towards Lucretius' subtle literary techniques but most of all to his arguments.

And Lucretius himself acknowledges that it is not something that happens automatically:

> [870] Proinde ubi se videas hominem indignarier ipsum, / post mortem fore ut aut putescat corpore posto / aut flammis interfiat malisve ferarum, / scire licet non sincerum sonere atque subesse / caecum aliquem cordi stimulum, quamvis neget ipse / [875] credere se quemquam sibi sensum in morte futurum; / non, ut opinor, enim dat quod promittit et unde / nec radicitus e vita se tollit et eicit, sed facit esse sui quiddam super inscius ipse.
>
> Accordingly when you happen to see a man upsetting himself that after death and having been buried he may rot or perish in fire or through the evil deeds of wild animals, it's obvious he is not speaking honestly, and that there is some hidden and invisible pressure of the heart in him, even as he himself might deny that he believes that he will have any kind of sense-perception when he is dead. I think this is because he is not convinced of the truth of his position and the arguments that lead to it and he is not eliminating and ejecting himself radically from life, but he pretends that there is something that survives him although he is unaware of what that might be. (3.870-8)

Lucretius is aware that even though he has devised some thirty-plus arguments for the mortality of the soul in the first and larger part of book 3, still many of his readers may not recognize that 'in real death there will be no second self alive' (*in vera nullum fore morte alium se*; 895). Hence, he needs to address the fear of being dead even with some further arguments and examples. But this is actually just one of the kinds of fear Lucretius intends to treat, along with the fear of death that springs from the thought that our pleasures will be reduced and the fear of premature death that frustrates our plans and projects.[25] For the therapy of these latter sorts of fears, there is a need for even stronger philosophical medicine and some other literary means as well. Hence, to coerce his readers into the correct outlook on death, Lucretius constructs some abusive arguments presented by personified Nature herself: the life-as-banquet metaphor (3.931-49) and the *mempsimoiria* theme (3.955-62).[26] Although commentators have taken this 'Speech of Nature' as the literary culmination point of book 3, I think Lucretius tightens his grip even more on his readers in his ensuing demand for self-reproach:

> [1024] Hoc etiam tibi tute interdum dicere possis: / 'lumina sis oculis etiam bonus Ancus reliquit, / qui melior multis quam tu fuit, improbe, rebus. . . . / [1045] tu vero dubitabis et indignabere obire ? / mortua cui vita est prope iam vivo atque videnti, / qui somno partem maiorem conteris aevi, / et vigilans stertis nec somnia cernere cessas / sollicitamque geris cassa formidine mentem / [1050]

> nec reperire potes tibi quid sit saepe mali, cum / ebrius urgeris multis miser undique curis / atque animi incerto fluitans errore vagaris.'
>
> Sometimes you might even say this to yourself: 'Shame on you! Even good Ancus left the light of life behind, and he was much better than you in many things . . . But you are prepared to hesitate to die and to whine on about it? You, whose life is dead already, even though you still live and see: and you waste the majority of your life in sleep, and waking you snore, and you are constantly seeing dreams, and you carry in yourself a mind disturbed by vain terror; and you cannot even begin to find often what the problem is when you are drunkenly oppressed in misery by many fears from all sides, and you wander indecisive in the uncertain wavering of your mind. (3.1024-6 and 1045-52)

Lucretius' imperative for self-shaming not only shows common elements with the Pythagorean and Stoic practices of *meditatio*,[27] but is, I would claim in the context of discussing how to dispel the fear of death, his strongest literary means for therapy and hence the real dramatic high point in his readers' self-reform in book 3. The embarrassment Memmius and Lucretius' readers ought to feel if they still recognize themselves in the recommended self-reproach seems to me as strategically well-placed as the description of the Athenian plague at the end of book 6.[28] On one possible interpretation of the abrupt ending of *De Rerum Natura*, readers are put to a test with the menacing description of the plague and left to see for themselves whether they can face the grimmest image of death after Lucretius' therapy.[29] Here, at the end of book 3, just as in times of danger when 'one can really look into a person and know, in his adversity, who he is: for then, at last, the true voices are drawn forth from the depth of the breast; the mask is torn off; the fact remains' (*eripitur persona, manet res*; 3.55-8),[30] the advised self-reproach also serves as a test for Lucretius' readers. If they are honest enough to themselves, they can really examine halfway through their reading whether their convictions uphold the mask of their reader elitism. Nevertheless, before their final test with the Athenian plague, Lucretius not only lets them see through the honeyed rim of his cup filled with wormwood (4.10-25), but also displays them Epicurus' and his own divine mortality in portraying the next level of his own *imitatio Epicuri*.

The Lucretian Self

> Quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen / condere pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis ? / quisve valet verbis tantum, qui fingere laudes / pro meritis eius possit qui talia nobis / [5] pectore parta suo quaesitaque praemia liquit ? / nemo,

> ut opinor, erit mortali corpore cretus. / nam si, ut ipsa petit maiestas cognita rerum, / dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi, / qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae / [10] nunc appellatur sapientia, quique per artem / fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris / in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.
>
> Who is able in the power of his mind to compose a song commensurate with the majesty of nature and the things that we have discovered here? Who is so strong in words that he is able to create a song of praise commensurate with the services of that man who has left to us such great prizes which were born and sought for out of his mind? No one I believe of mortal birth. If it is right, as the majesty of that very nature we have learned about herself demands, to speak it: a god he was, a god, illustrious Memmus, who first of all discovered that way of life which is now called Wisdom, and who through his science brought life out of such stormy seas and such dark shadows, and placed it in a light so serene and bright. (5.1-12)

Lucretius' proem of the fifth book of his *De Rerum Natura* has generally been seen as a eulogy of Epicurus (5.1-54),[31] since Lucretius has gradually elevated Epicurus' image from that of an epic hero (1.62-79), through the Epicurean father (3.1-30), to the status of a healer at once both mortal and divine. But Lucretius is also progressing and growing as he moves forward in his poem.[32] Although commentators have taken Lucretius' answer to his poetic question at its face value that there will be (*erit*) no one of mortal birth able to compose a poem worthy of Epicurus' discoveries,[33] in the light of Lucretius' unparalleled poetic achievements, I think his question is merely figurative or even ironic and an opportunity to elevate himself to Epicurus' position.[34] Indeed, as a student and teacher, Lucretius is himself tracing Epicurus' footsteps, following and explaining his doctrines in his verses (5.55-7). In consequence, the activities of these learning and speaking personae transform his poetic self:

> Qua prius adgrediar quam de re fundere fata / sanctius et multo certa ratione magis quam / Pythia quae tripode a Phoebi lauroque profatur, / multa tibi expediam doctis solacia dictis;
>
> But before I begin to utter my oracles on this matter, more solemnly and with more certain reason than those which the Pythia declares from the tripod and laurel of Phoebus, I will expound to you many consolations in words of wisdom. (5.110-13)[35]

Lucretius takes on the role of a hierophant as he is about to transmit Epicurean wisdom (*expediam*: notice again the method of poetic simultaneity) from the position he elsewhere attributes to Epicurus.[36] This indicates a full-fledged

transformation. Is this also a requirement of those who are not only willing but able to reform themselves?

In a completely different context concerning the nature of sounds, Lucretius urges Memmius and his readers: 'once you perceive this well, you may be able to give a reason to yourself and others' (*quae bene cum videas, rationem reddere possis / tute tibi atque aliis*; 4.572-3).[37] Readers, therefore, seem to be expected to become teachers themselves by participating in the process of reasoning and thus they do not seem to be deprived of potentially turning out to be hierophants or revelators themselves like Lucretius.[38] Indeed, if Lucretius' poetic enlightenment could not offer his listeners a complete and successful assimilation to the teachings of Epicurus, what sort of spiritual conversion would it advertise? Is the seemingly divine status of the Epicurean spectator, in fact, out of reach? If it were, how could Lucretius display it as the reward of the Epicurean disposition, as the model of the Epicurean self?

Nonetheless, it is far from clear whether by reading a didactic poem one can achieve as much.[39] Lucretius nevertheless, by creating the different voices of his personae that fulfil distinct roles that, together, help him to shape the extratextual reader, at least leaves open the possibility of aligning ourselves with one of his personae: the one which matches our current intellectual disposition, whether student, adept, teacher or poet. As we progress, we can still modify our identity according to how far we are on the journey of transforming our individual selves into the ideal Epicurean self. In principle, we can mount the glorious chariot [of the Muses] with Lucretius (6.47 and 6.92-5), entering the creative race of transforming our identity to assimilate ourselves as far as possible, in the end, to Epicurus (cf. 3.319-22).

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Notes

1 Mitsis (1993).

2 Segal (1990: 46–7).

3 See Warren (2001) and Sorabji (2006: 94–114) on *palingenesis*; Németh (2017) for the evidence in the papyri.
4 See Németh (2017, chapter 1).
5 Volk (2002: 13).
6 See Clay (1988); see also Mitsis (1993: 124 n. 21).
7 Volk (2002: 77).
8 In Mitsis' reading (1993), this must be actually Lucretius' ideal extratextual reader that is the result of his 'didactic coercion'.
9 Gale (2004: 53).
10 Cf. Long ([1997] 2006: 219).
11 See Németh (2017).
12 Konstan (2008: 34).
13 Lucretius' presentation is in close agreement with Epicurus' self-reflective thinking in the *aitiologikos tropos* as characterized in book 25 of *On Nature*; see Németh (2017: 24–69).
14 Beside the method of the *tua res agitur*, for the use of ethical dative in a similar sense, cf. Volk (2002: 78–9). Also see the use of *recreare* in 1.942 and 4.17 in the famous wormwood metaphor for presenting the poem as medicine. For the metaphor anticipating the goal of the Epicurean teachings, see Asmis (2016), p. 454, and n. 55 for more literature on anticipation as a poetic technique.
15 See Sedley (1998: 57–8 on 3.6-8); and (1998: 140–1) on how Lucretius recasts himself in the role of the swan in 4.180-1, repeated in a different context in 4.910-11.
16 Volk (2002: 116).
17 See Nussbaum (1994); and Epicurus: 'Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul' (Us. 221 = LS 25C). On Lucretius' use of rhetoric in the proems, see Classen (1968) and Asmis (1983).
18 See Schrijvers (1970).
19 Translated by Nussbaum (1994: 195).
20 See even the imagery of its first couple lines (*Avia Pieridum perargo loca nullius ante* / trita solo; 4.1-2), echoing the proem of book 3; and Lucretius' explicitly ethical purpose to engage Memmius and the reader with the understanding of nature so they can perceive its utility (4.23-5). For why 4.1-25 as a repetition of 1.926-34 is still well placed as the proem of book 4, see Gale (1994a). For bibliography on the *Entstehungsgeschichte* of *DRN*, see Schindler (2023: 7 n. 51).
21 Bailey (1947: v.2, 987); Brown (1997: 92); Kenney (2014: 74).
22 As David Konstan has kindly pointed out to me, he once thought he was the first to consider this different derivation of *ficta*, only to find out that he had been anticipated here by Ubaldo Pizzani: see Konstan (1988: 65).

23 Lines 4-5 also emulate 2.356 that is a part of the story in which the prints marked by the cloven hooves of a calf, that had been slain besides the incense-burning altars, are sought by its bereaved mother (*quaerit humi pedibus vestigia pressa bisulcis*).
24 Mitsis (1993: 126–8).
25 For an excellent discussion of the different fears of death involved, see Warren (2004).
26 For Nature's *prosopopoeia* in details, see Gellar-Goad (2018); for the analysis of the arguments, Reinhardt (2002). For the abusive characteristics, see *stulte* in 939 and *barde* in 955; also cf. Lucretius' preceding *miser* in 952. These are really fascinating arguments but they fall outside the focus of this chapter, so I cannot quote them here.
27 Erler (1997: 85). For Stoic *meditatio* in general, see Newman (1989); for the Pythagoreans, see Thom (1995).
28 Modelled on Thucydides 2.49-51.
29 Clay (1983: 262–6). Taking the plague as a proof for the poem being unfinished, see Sedley (1998: 157–65). Also see Gale (2020: 434–6) for a summary of the problems involved and more bibliography.
30 Translated by Nussbaum (1994: 199).
31 Gale (2009: 109).
32 See Clay (1983: 212–15, 231, 266) and Segal (1989: 205–7).
33 See Gale (2009: 110) and Asmis (2016: 458).
34 See Volk (2002: chapter 3) for Lucretius' poetic achievements. The futurum *erit* rather indicates that there will be no one after Lucretius; and even the *mortali corpore cretus* (5.6) might be taken as a pun, since atomic *corpora* are immortal and hence we are all composed of immortal material that implies our potentiality to become divine.
35 Lines 5.111-12 are reapplied from a different context in 1.738-9, where Lucretius compares his literary forebear, Empedocles, to his predecessors; see Sedley (1998: 12–14).
36 Asmis (2016: 454–5) argues for the proem of book 3 being such a *locus*, but also see *DRN* 6.6, Epicurus' *SV* 29 and Németh (2017: 190–9) in general. For Epicurus as a mystagogue, see Gale (1994b: 194–5). Asmis reads the entire poem as a conversion narrative, arguing that Lucretius as an Epicurean convert rearranged Epicurus' philosophy into a journey of conversion, poetry reflecting its sanctity, but Asmis would not take her argument as far as any Epicurean rising to Epicurus' status.
37 See also 1.404-9 for the phrase 'see yourself by yourself (*per te tute ipse videre*)'. Cf. Clay (1983: 225) and Asmis (2016: 445–6).
38 *Contra* Asmis (2016: e.g. 448).
39 For issues of the interaction between Epicurean literary texts and their readers see Németh (2024).

3

The Senecan Embodied Self as the Source of Affections and Emotions

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Introduction

To be a self in Stoicism means to be embedded in a body. Before going into the relationship between body and self, it is helpful to clarify what 'self' means here. Occasionally it is said that there is no appropriate counterpart for the word in Greek or Latin.[1] That may perhaps be largely true but in the case of the Stoics, we have evidence that the early Greek Stoic Chrysippus used *egō* as a term for the self or 'I' and, further, identified it with the so-called *hēgemonikon* (literally translated: 'that which rules').[2] The *hēgemonikon* is the centre of all mental activity and the origin of motion. It confers upon animals and humans the abilities to perceive, to get impressions (*phantasiai*) and to give rise to impulses (*hormai*), which cause movements.[3] Humans, being essentially rational creatures, obtain at a certain age much more complex abilities because of which they can articulate their impressions propositionally and assent to the content of those propositions. The context of Chrysippus' just mentioned identification of the self with the *hēgemonikon* is clearly human: he is concerned with the utterance (*phonē*) of 'I' and the gestures *we* habitually make when saying it (pointing with one of our fingers to our chest or moving our lower lip and chin in this direction). But since animals have a *hēgemonikon*, too, it stands to reason that he and other early Stoics must have granted them at least a minimal, that is to say, non-rational self that does not imply that they are able to say 'I' or assent to propositionally articulated impressions.

There are at least three ways to investigate the Stoic understanding of the self–body relation. First, since the Stoics were materialists, assuming that the self, I, or *hēgemonikon*, is corporeal, one could tackle it from a merely physical point of view. However, such an approach has to start from the broader concept of the

soul (*psychē*), which the Stoics use when dealing with the physical side of mental life. According to them, the soul consists of *pneuma* (roughly: 'fiery air'),[4] and they describe its relation to the body as a form of blending (*krāsis*).[5] The second approach to the self–body relation focuses on its psychological aspects, while at the same time taking into account its physical dimension. With the term 'psychological', I want to emphasize the powers of the self. They are not all shared with the body in which it is embedded, even though it is itself corporeal. With recourse to contemporary philosophy of mind, I would label the position of the Stoics as non-reductive physicalist. Third and last, the self–body relation could be approached ethically, pursuing the question of the relative *value* of the self and the body. In this chapter, I want to take up the second approach.

Some work has been done on the self–body relation in Stoicism.[6] The contribution of the Roman Stoic Seneca to this subject, however, has not hitherto attracted much scholarly interest. Only Brad Inwood and A. A. Long seem to have addressed Seneca's approach to any length.[7] Inwood observes that Seneca is never committed to psychological dualism, that is to say, the view that the soul has irrational forces capable of giving rise to emotions that override the judgments of reason. Instead, the Roman Stoic emphasizes a kind of soul–body dualism.[8] Long is more occupied with the ethical implications of this dualism and points to the superiority Seneca repeatedly ascribes to the mind.[9] I draw on both of their works but try to take them further. I want to give a more nuanced picture of the relationship between the self and the body in the philosophy of Seneca by investigating their role in affections and the development of emotions.

To tackle this project, I first turn to Seneca's idea of involuntary affections, which occur, contrary to full-blown emotions, in a way that does not involve assent. As I will show in the next section, 'Involuntary Affections and the Body', Seneca links them to the self and the body in several respects. Afterwards, I delve into the controversial passages of letter 92 of the *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* to demonstrate that they are much more Senecan and Stoic than they have taken to be. In my reading, their main subject is the embodied self and its relation to emotions and pleasure. Finally, I summarize my results and determine to what extent the early Stoics may have considered the embodied self as shaping our psychic phenomena.

Involuntary Affections and the Body

Seneca believes that every human being is subject to certain involuntary affections. In the research literature, they are often referred to by their Greek

name, *propatheiai* ('pre-emotions'), but Seneca calls their instances *primus ictus animi* ('initial mental jolt'), *prima agitatio animi* ('initial mental agitation') or *primus motus* ('first movement').[10] He marks them off from full-blown emotions (such as anger) which deprive us of our agential control and make us do things we would not do under normal circumstances (think of hurling insults at someone). Whether we become fully passionate is up to us, it depends on our assent (*assentiri/ adprobare/ assensus mentis*) and the mental content we assent to (for example, 'I should be avenged').[11] What is striking is that Seneca connects these involuntary affections to the body:

> *Nam si quis pallorem et lacrimas procidentis et irritationem umoris obsceni altumve suspirium et oculos subito acriores aut quid his simile indicium adfectus animique signum putat, fallitur nec intellegit corporis hos esse pulsus. Itaque et fortissimus plerumque uir dum armatur expalluit . . . .*
>
> Turning pale, shedding tears, the first stirrings of sexual arousal, a deep sigh, a suddenly sharpened glance, anything along these lines: whoever reckons them a clear token of passion and a sign of the mind's engagement is just mistaken and fails to understand that they're blows of the body. Thus even the bravest man has often grown pale while donning his arms . . . .[12]
>
> *Ne extra rerum naturam vagari virtus nostra videatur, et tremet sapiens et dolebit et expallescet; hi enim omnes corporis sensus sunt.*
>
> Lest it should seem that this virtue of ours strays outside the natural order, the wise person will tremble and feel pain and grow pale. For all these are sensations of the body.[13]

Scholarship has mainly been concerned with tracing the origin of such involuntary affections in the intellectual history of Stoicism.[14] Fewer efforts have been spent explaining why Seneca connects them to the body. This question is even more pressing because he describes quite different phenomena. Compare the aforementioned brave man who grows pale while donning his arms with someone who shivers after being sprinkled with cold water – an example Seneca cites in *De ira* shortly before the above quoted passage.[15] Even though the affections in both cases accompany a sensation, we would say that only the latter is strictly bodily, whereas the former is partly brought about by some cognitive activity.[16] So it must be asked why Seneca regards them both as blows or sensations of the body.

It is not a new philosophical undertaking to link affections to the body. Already Socrates supposes in Plato's *Phaedo* that pleasures come from the body

(*dia toū sōmatos*) and that the body fills us with sexual passions, desires and fears.[17] But also here, it is unclear whether the body is the single or a partial cause of affections. In any case, from Socrates' point of view, the soul does not experience them any longer when death separates the soul from the body (and if it is a philosopher's soul, it will then not be attached to it at all).[18] As long as the soul is tied to the body, the soul cannot prevent the body from interfering in its matters.[19]

Among the Stoics, it is most of all Posidonius who reveals how far affections (*pathē*) are connected to the body by developing a subtle classification in which he distinguishes four different kinds:

(1) of the soul without qualification (*psychika haplōs*), such as desires, fears and fits of anger;
(2) of the body without qualification (*sōmatika haplōs*), such as fevers, chills, contractions and the opening up of the pores;
(3) of the body with mental effects (*peri psychēn sōmatika*), such as lethargies, madness arising from black bile, mental pangs from physical gnawing pains, impressions (*phantasiai*) and feelings of relaxation; and
(4) of the soul with physical effects (*peri sōma psychika*), for which he refers to changes of appearance in fear and grief, such as tremors and pallor.[20]

Although Seneca ascribes involuntary affections undiscriminatingly to the body, I want to suggest that he does not mean to say that the body is always their single cause. Instead, he connects them to the body in different senses, similar to how Posidonius does,[21] as will become apparent from what follows.

Some involuntary affections are brought about by our bodily constituents.[22] These affections can be pleasurable or painful,[23] depending on the character of their bodily cause. Seneca never gives a clear example of them but it is possible to extrapolate one from his ethical reflections. He attends at one point to hunger and thirst,[24] arguing that all nature demands is to get enough to eat and drink for sustaining life.[25] Regularly exceeding these normative restraints leads to the formation of the vice of self-indulgence that makes a person seek ways to stimulate hunger and thirst despite their being no longer present. Hunger and thirst perfectly match Seneca's delineation of involuntary bodily affections: they occur solely based on a deficient state of the body and go along with a particular sensation. Speaking with Posidonius, they are of the body and have mental effects.

Other involuntary affections emerge, on the contrary, after an impression (*species*) or a belief (*opinio*) that one has been wronged.[26] Here it is evident that

the cause cannot lie in the body. While hunger and thirst usually come up independently of what we think, these involuntary affections would not arise without some cognitive activity. But what sort of cognitive activity do they involve? Seneca states somewhat enigmatically that 'the soul does not so much cause them as suffer them' (*patitur magis animus quam facit*).[27] By making this remark, he wants to underline that they never depend on a consciously given assent.[28] But does he also offer a positive account?

Like the early Stoics, he is convinced that humans *and* animals have a self.[29] The animal self, however, is differently fashioned (*regium est illud et principale aliter ductum*). Consequently, animals cannot speak – all they have is an inarticulate and confused voice (*vox . . . non explanabilis et perturbata*). Further, they perceive and act differently from humans: ' . . . it [their self] grasps the visible presentations of things that provoke its impulsive behavior, but in murky and confused form' (*Capit* [*principale*] . . . *uisus speciesque rerum quibus ad impetus euocetur, sed turbidas et confusas*). The crucial word in this sentence is *capere*. It stands for a cognitive process that also applies to humans, as can be taken from letter 113, where Seneca relates it to the onset of an impulse:

> *Omne rationale animal nihil agit nisi primum specie alicuius rei irritatum est, deinde impetum cepit, deinde assensio confirmavit hunc impetum.*

> No animate creature endowed with reason does anything unless, first, it has been prompted by the impression of some particular thing; next, it has entertained an impulse; and finally, assent has confirmed this impulse.[30]

As Graver's and Long's translation suggest, *capere* denotes something other than mere passive sensation.[31] It indicates that animals and humans have cognitive mental states that are often also motivational. Still, *capere* does not express assent and therefore it remains involuntary. The early Stoics distinguished something they called *eīxis* ('yielding') from assent.[32] Inwood was the first to argue that yielding is the equivalent of assenting in animals.[33] He describes it as a passive and automatic reaction to impressions. But *capere* is not a translation of 'yielding', neither can it be characterized as a purely passive reaction nor does it occur only in animals. Seneca seems to have been aware of a different phenomenon that he tries to accommodate in his epistemology and theory of action.

The involuntary affections that arise after the impression or belief of being wronged must go back to the cognitive process of *capere*. In their case, it appears to be best described as an evaluation in a weak sense (not involving assent): The self interprets something as good or bad whether it wants it or not. This

evaluation may trigger perceptible bodily reactions: paleness (see the example of the brave man above), knee trembling, a rising heartbeat or cold extremities.[34] The similarity to Posidonius' fourth kind of affections is striking.

Seneca maintains that every emotion (*adfectus*) begins with an involuntary first movement (*primus motus non uoluntarius*).[35] The question is which of the previously presented two types of affections he has in mind: the one whose cause lies in the body or the one brought about by the cognitive process of *capere*. By itself, a merely bodily affection can hardly be the source of an emotion.[36] To have that quality, a self must have valued something in a weak sense as good or bad (think of hunger and thirst, their unpleasant sensation alone seems insufficient to lay the ground for developing an emotion). After such an evaluation, rational agents can pause and reflect on whether they want to become fully passionate. But until then, their animal self applies a mechanism, at the end of which stands an involuntary cognitive affection that may entail a perceptible bodily reaction.

Letter 92

The Text and Its Recent Readings

Seneca's letter 92 has much to offer concerning the psychophysical relationship between the self and the body and their contribution to the development of affections and emotions. However, the theory presented here is hardly elaborated and kept so concise that scholars have proposed quite different readings. Before presenting and discussing these readings, it is necessary to quote the relevant parts of the letter in full:

> [1] *Puto, inter me teque conveniet externa corpori adquiri, corpus in honorem animi coli, in animo esse partes ministras, per quas movemur alimurque, propter ipsum principale nobis datas. In hoc principali est aliquid inrationale, est et rationale; illud huic servit, hoc unum est quod alio non refertur sed omnia ad se refert.* . . . [8] *Inrationalis pars animi duas habet partes, alteram animosam, ambitiosam, inpotentem, positam in adfectibus, alteram humilem, languidam, voluptatibus deditam.*

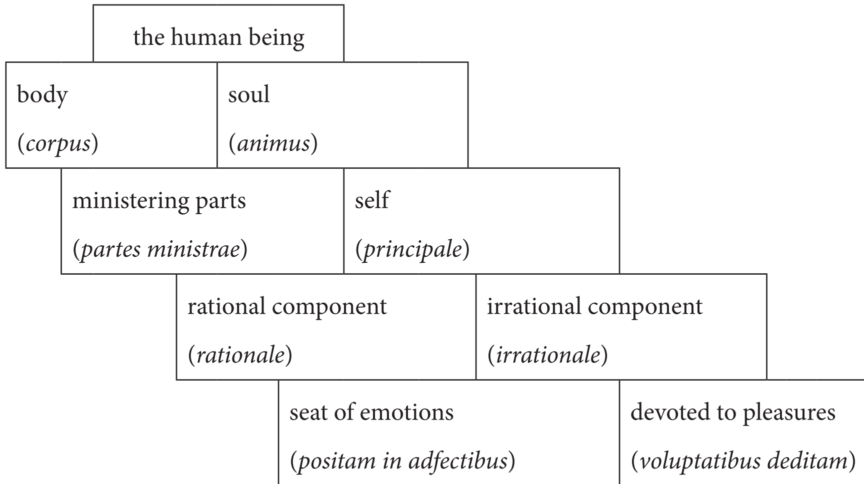
> [1] You and I will agree, I think, that one pursues outward things for the body's sake, that one cares for the body in order to show respect for the soul, and that the soul includes ministering parts, responsible for our motor and nutritional functions, which are given to us for the sake of the self itself. This self includes

> both an irrational and a rational component. The former is at the service of the latter, which is the one thing that does not look to anything else but rather refers everything else to itself. . . . [8] The soul's irrational part has itself two parts: the one part spirited, ambitious, and wayward, its seat is the emotions; the other base, idle, devoted to pleasures.[37]

In recent times, these passages have been less interpreted as evidence for Seneca reverting to a Platonist psychology. Instead, there are two strategies that both aim to keep him as an orthodox Stoic philosopher. One is the dialectical reading of Inwood and the other is the rhetorical reading of Graver. I address their approaches in the remainder of this section and critically examine them.

Following Inwood, Seneca adopts Platonic thoughts about the structure of the soul but maintains them merely as an agreed basis to show that happiness is to be found in the perfect development of rationality.[38] That Seneca does not take these views for granted is already indicated, according to Inwood, in the first sentence of the letter: 'You and I will agree, I think . . . ' (*Puto, inter me teque conveniet* . . .). Also in the first sentence of 92.2, Seneca stipulates: 'Now, if we agree about this . . . ' (*Si de hoc inter nos conveniet* . . .). Inwood explains why Seneca is making this dialectical move: the ethical goal of pursuing rationality is supported more readily on Platonic than on Stoic psychological premises. He provides two reasons for his assumption: first, compared to Plato, the psychology of the Stoics is somewhat technical and, second, Seneca writes in an environment in which Plato was more influential.

A consequence of Inwood's reading is that the theory Seneca unfolds in letter 92.1 and 8 cannot be attributed to him. It is a foreign, Platonic piece implemented merely to arrive at the ethical conclusion that rationality is the highest good. However, even without more profound analysis, the text betrays conspicuous Stoic elements: Seneca uses the term *principale* with which he refers to the concept of the *hēgemonikon*,[39] and he presents it similarly to the Stoics as that which rules in the soul. The last point gives rise to another objection: besides the talk of irrational parts and their resemblance to the *thumoeides* ('spirit') and *epithumētikon* ('appetite'),[40] there is not much Platonic going on in the letter. Nothing points to the possibility of a psychological conflict like that which Plato's Socrates narrates in book 4 of the *Republic*.[41] The irrational parts of the *principale* or self are by nature subject to its jurisdiction and do not operate on their own terms.[42] Several scholars have also drawn attention to the fact that Seneca, unlike Plato, divides the self and not the soul (*animus*/ *psychē*) into a rational and two irrational parts.[43] His division runs as follows:[44]



It may be striking that Seneca first identifies something irrational in the self (*principale*) and then takes the soul (*animus*) to have two irrational parts (see the penultimate sentence in 92.1 and the beginning of 92.8). But the change of terminology should be considered as a variation. To assume that it conveys a philosophical claim (that the soul and not the self possesses irrational parts) would mean that Seneca breaks out of the *diairesis* for which there is no indication. Neither does he use the terms 'soul' and 'self' interchangeably. If that were true, he would not deploy a *diairesis* or one that differs from the above. The first option contradicts the evidence; the second seems unlikely because then *principale* would not be the Latin equivalent for *hēgemonikon*, which is not what we find in Seneca, Cicero and Calcidius.

Graver approaches the letter from the angle of *Quellenforschung*, being primarily interested in Seneca's source. She has worked out that it bears many similarities with the so-called Doxography C on Peripatetic ethics in Stobaeus but also diverges from it in important respects.[45] Regarding the passages that matter for now, she detects that Seneca, as the doxographer in C, divides the soul into rational and irrational parts. Unlike the doxographer in C, though, Seneca does not allow for a psychological conflict in which the activity of the lower parts interferes with the one of the rational element.[46] On the contrary, 'the rational part alone . . . determines what the creature should pursue and does not pursue.'[47] Her explanation of why Seneca speaks of different parts at all is that he strategically adapts himself to the theoretical claims of the Peripatetic he is arguing against in letter 92, in order to defeat him more effectively. This reading differs from Inwood's in that, at its core, Seneca endorses the psychological model he presents.

Graver is most recently followed by Reydams-Schils, who adds to her account that Seneca also lists the ministering parts at the beginning of the letter in Peripatetic terms ('motor and nutritional functions').[48] But Reydams-Schils' conclusion regarding the unorthodox shaping of his argumentation extends slightly beyond Graver's. For her, Seneca avails himself of a doxographical pattern that appears in several ancient authors.

I do not exclude that the psychological model in 92.1 and 8 contains non-Stoic aspects to some extent and that the reason for this could be a rhetorical strategy on Seneca's part to refute an adversarial ethical theory. And it may be true that, in doing so, he draws on other sources. My sole intention in what follows is to demonstrate that the passages at stake feature more theoretical elements compatible with Senecan and Stoic philosophy than has been noticed so far.

The Doctrinal Reading

The letter begins with Seneca and Lucilius agreeing on three points:

(1) One pursues external things (*externa*) for the body's sake.
(2) One only cares for the body because it is the seat of the soul.
(3) The soul is divided into ministering parts (*partes ministrae*) and the self (*principale*).

By external things, Seneca obviously means food and drink items necessary for the sustenance of the body. But it is clear that he only confers an instrumental value to them. Actually, they are provided for the soul in the body, which indicates that in some form, the soul's existence depends on the body's existence.[49] Such a dependence is already implied by the early Stoics, who concede at most that the soul survives the body for some time after death, especially if virtue made it firm.[50]

Seneca then proceeds to divide the soul into ministering parts and the self. This distinction captures, in a nutshell, the essential functioning of the soul that the early Stoics put forward. For them, a part of the soul is, on the one hand, a nerve-like pneumatic stream (*pneūma*) extending from the *hēgemonikon* in the heart to various parts of the body.[51] These include the five sense organs (eyes, ears, nostrils, tongue, flesh), the testicles and the trachea. On the other hand, the early Stoics use the term 'part of the soul' to denote psychic entities. Thus, the *hēgemonikon* itself is a part of the soul, as are its different powers,[52] which inhere in its substrate much like sweetness and fragrance in an apple.[53] In adult

human beings, they encompass sense-perception or sensation (*aisthēsis*; in particular: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch), impression (*phantasia*), assent (*synkatathēsis*), and impulse (*hormē*).[54] How the outspread pneumatic streams assist the *hēgemonikon* is illustrated by experiencing pain in one's finger. The pain is localized in the finger. But due to the pneumatic interconnectedness between the body and the *hēgemonikon*, this psychic entity gives rise to a sensation (*aisthēsis*) of that pain.[55] In other words, whenever the flesh is affected, the *hēgemonikon* employs its power of touch to convey this sensation.

Returning to letter 92, it is noticeable that Seneca does not spell out the ministering parts as pneumatic streams extending from the self to the body but as enabling us to move and be nourished. Perhaps now we face a Peripatetic or Aristotelian aspect, as Reydams-Schils proposes.[56] That need not be necessarily so. Without a doubt, locomotion and nurture play a significant role in Aristotle's philosophy. However, Seneca does not tie these powers to the irrational component (the *inrationale* is a part of the *principale*, being first of all the seat of emotions and pleasures and not responsible for locomotion and nutrition).[57]

What is more, several scholars agree that the Stoics distinguished between two senses of the soul: the soul as that which is in a total pneumatic blend with the body and the soul in the narrower sense of the *hēgemonikon*, located in the heart and linked to the body through nerve-like pneumatic streams, as has been demonstrated shortly before.[58] This distinction is reflected in several Stoic sources, although the Stoics frequently call the soul in the first sense 'nature' (*physis*), 'pneuma of nature' (*pneūma physikon*) or 'pneuma that is grown together with us' (*pneūma . . . symphyton hēmīn*).[59] There are good reasons to assume that the distinction is also at work in Seneca's division of the soul into ministering parts and the self. What speaks in favour of this assumption is that on the standard Stoic account, nurture is assigned to the soul in the first sense.[60] The only difference is that Seneca describes the parts of the soul–body blend by which we are nurtured as ministering parts. But that sets merely another nuance and can hardly be taken as un-Stoic. His other classification of the ministering parts seems to allude to those parts of the soul–body blend by which we primarily move, namely our limbs. In contrast to nurture, however, these parts are connected to the *hēgemonikon* or self via nerve-like pneumatic streams, so that it can translate its contents into localized movement.[61] Here the disadvantages of a *diairesis* can been seen, as it conveys the impression that the units into which something is divided are strictly separate.[62] In fact, our limbs (and many other body parts) are places where the pneumatic streams of the *hēgemonikon* mingle with the pneuma of the entire soul. From a Stoic perspective, it still appears

legitimate for Seneca to contrast them in order to emphasize the existence of a self and a realm beyond the self within the soul–body blend.[63] Everything that falls into the latter category is given to us for the sake of the former.

The more severe interpretive issue begins with Seneca dividing the self into an irrational and a rational component (*In hoc principali est aliquid inrationale, est et rationale*). This thought has often been taken as proof of Seneca's unorthodoxy,[64] because the early Stoics conceptualized the *hēgemonikon* of adult human beings as inherently rational. Seneca does not go into the powers of the self but describes the relationship between its rational and irrational component. It is analogous to the ministering parts and the self on the one hand and the body and the soul on the other hand: the irrational component serves (*servit*) the rational one (as the ministering parts are for the sake of the self and the body is cared for to keep the soul alive). The rational component, however, is autonomous – it refers everything to itself (*omnia ad se refert*).

The issue is not Seneca's view regarding the rational component, which aligns perfectly with Stoic psychology. What is striking is his acceptance of irrational parts within the self. Despite the possibility that he may incorporate a psychological claim of his opponents and coin it in a Stoic way by making the twofold irrational component too impotent to overrule reason (recall Graver's reading), it is plausible that he has his own understanding of it that is compatible with Stoic principles.

He establishes a connection between the irrational part of the self devoted to pleasure and *the body*. This connection becomes evident through his analysis of Virgil's depiction of the Scylla after subdividing the irrational component.[65] Virgil describes this mythical creature as consisting of two parts: it has a human face and a maiden's breast; from the waist down, it is animal-like, with dolphin tails and a wolf's belly. Seneca identifies this upper part with reason and its perfection, namely virtue (*virtus*) or wisdom (*sapientia*). At the same time, he compares the lower part of the Scylla with the irrational part devoted to pleasure: 'Attached to it [i.e. virtue] is unserviceable and unstable flesh [*huic committitur inutilis caro et fluida*], a mere repository for food, as Posidonius calls it.'[66] Hence, Seneca does not believe that one of the irrational parts of the self generates pleasure all by itself. Instead, the pleasure he discusses originates in the body and is sensed by the self.[67] His diaeresis, which began with external things (i.e. food and drink items) needed for the body to sustain the soul, suggests that the pleasure in question pertains to the gratification experienced when satisfying hunger and thirst (the reference to Posidonius additionally supports this interpretation). Thus, Seneca's perspective aligns closely with the observation of

the early Stoics that pain is connected to the body, while its sensation occurs in the self.

Still, it might be odd to speak of an irrational part of the self devoted to pleasure if what is actually meant is the sensation of bodily pleasure within the self. But that is nothing uncommon in Seneca, as an earlier letter shows:

> *Non educo sapientem ex hominum numero nec dolores ab illo sicut ab aliqua rupe nullum sensum admittente summoveo. Memini ex duabus illum partibus esse compositum: altera est inrationalis, haec mordetur, uritur, dolet; altera rationalis, haec inconcussas opiniones habet, intrepida est et indomita. In hac positum est summum illud hominis bonum.*

> I do not put the sage in a separate class from the rest of humankind, and neither do I eliminate pain from him as if he were some sort of rock, not susceptible to any sensation. I keep in mind that he is made up of two parts. One is irrational, and it is this that is bitten, burned, or in pain. The other part is rational; it is this that holds unshakable opinions and that is fearless and unconquerable. In this latter resides the highest good of humankind.[68]

Although the logical subject of the irrational and rational part is the sage, both adjectives cannot just stand for the body and the soul (or, more precisely, the self).[69] The point is that the sage experiences the damages conferred on his body but can resist the pain because he does not evaluate it (in a strong sense) as bad. Such a sensation certainly involves the body but ultimately it is an activity of the irrational part of the self, meaning its being receptive to bodily affections independently of any cognitive processes.

What about the irrational part of the self mentioned by Seneca in letter 92.8 as the seat of emotions (*positam in adfectibus*)? In contrast to the irrational part devoted to pleasure, he provides almost no further information on it. Besides characterizing it as spirited, ambitious and wayward (*animosam, ambitiosam, inpotentem*), he merely adds that it is superior (*meliorem*) to the other irrational part and 'certainly bolder and worthier of a man . . . ' (*certe fortiorem et digniorem viro*).[70] Admittedly, from all the steps in his diaeresis, this is the one that has the strongest non-Stoic ring. It appears as if he accommodates idiosyncratically the spirited part of Plato's or Aristotle's psychological model.[71] Both ancient philosophers associated it with the irrational part of the soul.[72] However, neither of them nor any Platonic or Peripatetic philosopher or those inclined towards Platonic or Aristotelian doctrines (as, for example, Antiochus of Ascalon) determined spirit as the seat of emotions.[73] This gives rise to the possibility that Seneca at least partly could have inserted his own Stoic ideas here. When he expounds on the functioning

of the irrational part of the self in this context, he may allude to his notion that we are all subject to impressions that cause involuntary affections involving our body, which introduce the development of emotions.[74] They are 'worthier of a man' because, in their case, the self is cognitively active (without giving assent) and does not merely sense bodily pleasure and pain.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to shed light on the psychophysical relationship between the self and the body in Seneca's philosophy, using early- and middle-Stoic thought as a backdrop. The focal point of this exploration has been their role as sources of affections and emotions. In conclusion, it can be stated that the self senses bodily affections because it is the principal part of the soul that is pneumatically outspread throughout the body. Although Seneca does not explicitly articulate this idea, it is suggested by his view that the soul possesses ministering parts provided for the sake of the self. Furthermore, it is important to note that Seneca associates the sensation of bodily affections with the irrational part of the self, thereby indicating that the latter's generation of pleasure and pain is not autonomous but wholly based upon the influences on the body. From strictly bodily affections, he distinguishes cognitive affections, such as when one has the impression of being wronged. Despite having a bodily component, they do not originate in the body and are then sensed by the self. Instead, the self brings them about by the cognitive process of *capere*, which I have interpreted as an assent-independent evaluation. It is reasonable to consider that cognitive affections also belong to the irrational part of the self. While Seneca does not provide clear evidence for this assumption, as in the case of bodily affections, it is a natural conclusion from his overall description of them, and it could underpin his acceptance of an irrational part of the self being the seat of emotions, since these affections (and not mere bodily affections) are the starting point for developing emotions.

How Seneca connects affections and emotions to the embodied self reveals that it is not inherently illegitimate for a Stoic to speak of irrational parts of the self. What we learn from him can also help us to explain concepts of the early Stoics that are not immediately understandable in light of their rationalistic psychology. So, they posit that some impressions are impelling.[75] Drawing on Seneca, the cause for their having such a character could lie in the body or be an assent-independent cognitive activity.

I would like to thank Attila Németh for his challenging comments which helped me immensely to improve this chapter. Further thanks go to Jon Bornholdt and Jake Rohde who assisted me in eliminating the Germanisms and enhancing the level of clarity. I am also grateful to Brad Inwood, without whom I would have got caught up in my thinking.

Notes

1 Cf. Inwood (2007: 483).
2 LS 34 J (= Gal., *PHP* 2.2.9-11 = *SVF* 2.911).
3 For the fact that animals have a *hēgemonikon*, see Ar. Did., *Epit*. *Phys*. 39 (= DG 471,11); see also Inwood (1985: 32).
4 Cf. Gal., *PHP* 5.3.8 (= LS 47 H).
5 Cf. Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* 4.3-10. For some recent literature on the Stoic theory of blending, see Helle (2018; 2022), who is at the same time a good example for the 'physical approach'.
6 Cf. Long (1982 = Long, 1996, chapter 11), Annas (1992: 47–50), Long (1999) and Gill (2006: 29–46).
7 Cf. Inwood (2005: 23–64) and Long (2017). Gill (2006: 43–6) touches on the self–body relation in Seneca in his discussion of the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* but is mainly concerned with its differences from modern ideas. Reydams-Schils (2010: 199–202) is rather concerned with explaining how the repeatedly occurring Platonic theme of the detachment of the soul from the body fits into Seneca's Stoicism.
8 Cf. Inwood (2005: 40f.).
9 Cf. Long (2017: 220). According to Reydams-Schils, Seneca uses the Platonic theme of the detachment of the soul from the body '. . . as a kind of propaedeutic device to underscore an essentially Stoic scale of values' (Reydams-Schils, 2010: 201). Therefore, as with Long later on, she tackles the dualistic features in Seneca's philosophy more from an ethical angle.
10 Cf. Sen., *Dial*. 4.2.2, 3.5, 4.1 (= *De ira* 2.2.2, 3.5, 4.1).
11 Cf. Sen., *Dial*. 4.1-4 (= *De ira* 2.1-4).
12 Sen., *Dial*. 4.3.2 (= *De ira* 2.3.2), trans. by Kaster and Nussbaum (whose translation I also use in the following), modified.
13 Sen., *Epist*. 71.29. trans. by Graver and Long, modified. I also use their translation in the following and only indicate when I made changes to it.
14 The majority of them trace it back to the period of Early Stoicism, cf. Abel (1967: 57 n. 22; 1983: 88–92), Huber (1973: 65), Malchow (1986: 52–7), Rist (1989; 2000f.), Graver (1999), Stevens (2000: 159–62) and Graver (2014: 270 n. 44).

15 Sen., *Dial.* 4.2.1 (= *De ira* 2.2.1): *Omnes enim motus qui non uoluntate nostra fiunt inuicti et ineuitabiles sunt, ut horror frigida adspersis* . . . ('. . . indeed, any movements that occur independent of our will cannot be overcome or avoided, like shivering when we're sprinkled with cold water . . .').
16 Cf. Inwood (2005: 58–60).
17 Cf. Plat., *Phaed.* 65a and 66b-d. In Plato's later dialogues, these emotions are characterized primarily as states of the soul (cf. Müller, 2017: 148, col. 2).
18 Cf. Plat., *Phaed.* 80e-81a.
19 Cf. especially Plat., *Phaed.* 66b-d.
20 Cf. Posid. F 154 EK (= Plut. [?], *De libid. et. aegr.* 6). I am here drawing heavily on the translation of Kidd.
21 I am withdrawing here from a position I have taken up in Röttig (2022: 82, 105f. and 157).
22 Cf. Sen., *Epist.* 23.6, 24.17.
23 Sen., *Epist.* 23.6: 'The pleasures it [the paltry body] accumulates are empty, short, and regrettable' (*vanas suggerit* [*corpusculum*] *voluptates, breves, paenitendas*); Sen., *Epist.* 24.16: ' . . . unjust assaults or superior forces . . . threaten it [the paltry body] with pain' (*ex iniuria . . . aut ex potentioribus viribus denuntiabitur* [*corpusculum*] *dolor*); and Sen., *Epist.* 65.21: 'This [the body] is the only thing in me that can suffer injury' (*Quidquid in me potest iniuriam pati hoc* [*corpus*] *est*).
24 Cf. here and in the following Sen., *Epist.* 119.2f., 14.
25 This thought is connected to Epicurus' *tetrapharmakos*: ' . . . the good is easy to get . . . ' (*tagathon men euktēt(on)*, Philod., *Adv. [soph.]* col. 4,13, 87 Sbord., own trans.). I will explore in a paper on Seneca's understanding of the *telos* (in progress) how he makes this Epicurean tenet compatible with his Stoicism.
26 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.1.3, 2.2f., 3.5 (= *De ira* 2.1.3, 2.2f., 3.5).
27 Sen., *Dial.* 4.3.1 (= *De ira* 2.3.1), trans. slightly modified.
28 I take him to be referring to this sort of involuntary affections because of the examples he gives beforehand, cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.2.6 (= *De ira* 2.2.6).
29 Cf. here and in the following Sen., *Dial.* 3.3.7f. (= *De ira* 1.3.7f.).
30 Sen., *Epist.* 113.18.
31 See also Sen., *Epist.* 78.2.
32 Cf. LS 53 S (= Plut., *Moral.* 1057 A); LS 65 G (= Plut., *Moral.* 447 A); DL 7.51.
33 Cf. Inwood (1985: 76f.).
34 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.3.3 (= *De ira* 2.3.3).
35 Cf. Sen., *Dial.* 4.4.1 (= *De ira* 2.4.1). See for the model of the three movements of an emotion Röttig (2022: 96f., where I give an overview of the research literature, and 102–13).
36 Inwood (2005: 58 n. 57) argues in a similar direction.
37 Sen., *Epist.* 92.1 and 8, trans. modified.

38 Cf. Inwood (2005: 38–41).
39 See p. 61 in this chapter. We also find evidence for the equivalence of the two terms in Cicero and Calcidius. Cicero says that by *principatus*, he means what the Greeks call *hēgemonikon* (cf. Cic., *ND* 2.29). Calcidius, allegedly quoting Chrysippus, lists the *principale* as the most significant part of the soul (cf. Calc., *Comm.* 220 [= LS 53 G]; the passage has to be treated with caution, though, see n. 60 in this chapter).
40 Cf. Plat., *Rep.* 4.439d, 440e–441a.
41 Cf. the story of Leontios in Plat., *Rep*. 439e–440a. Initially, Leontios did not want to look at the dead bodies lying at a place of public execution but he was then overwhelmed by his desire. Admitting his defeat, he yelled at his eyes: 'Look for yourself, wretches, and fill yourselves with an image of the beautiful!' (trans. by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy).
42 Graver makes the same observation, see below in this section.
43 Cf. Scott (1986: 83) and Asmis (2015: 229).
44 See the section in this chapter titled, 'The Doctrinal Reading' for a detailed explanation of every step of the diaeresis.
45 Cf. Graver (2018: esp. 327–30 = Graver, 2023: chapter 5, esp. 124–7) and Stob. 116.19–152.25 (the most recent edition and translation of the text provided by Georgia Tsouni is available in the same volume in which Graver, 2018, is published).
46 Therefore, the psychological model in C is close to the one of *Republic* 4.
47 Graver (2018: 329).
48 Cf. Reydams-Schils (2023: 62–4). For more on this point, see p. 66f. in this chapter.
49 Seneca never unambiguously argues for the mortality or immortality of the soul. He largely adheres to Socrates' tenet that death is either a transition or an end (cf. Plat., *Apol.* 40c5-9; Sen., *Epist*. 65.24; see for more evidence Röttig, 2022: 247f.) and applies the same therapeutic strategy as Cicero in the first book of his *Tusculans* that in either way there is no reason to fear death (cf. Röttig, 2022: 248f.). Given that Seneca considers the mortality of the soul at least possible, it is understandable why he deems the body here as a necessary condition for the existence of the soul.
50 Cf. *SVF* 1.146 (= Epiph., *Adv. haeres*. 3.2.9), *SVF* 2.817 (= Lucani, *Commenta* 9.1 = Us. 289), DL 7.156 and Cic., *Tusc.* 1.77.
51 Cf. Aët., *Plac.* 4.4.4 (= *SVF* 2.827), 21.1-4 (= LS 53 H) and Gal., *PHP* 3.1.9f. (= *SVF* 2.885). Galen supposedly quotes from Chrysippus' lost treatise *On Soul* (*Peri psychēs*).
52 See the references in n. 51 in this chapter.
53 Cf. Iamblichus in Stob., *Anthol.* 1.368.17-20 (= LS 53 K).
54 Cf. Aët., *Plac.* 4.21.1-4 (= LS 53 H) and Gal. *PHP* 3.5.31f. (= *SVF* 2.896). Aëtius additionally mentions reproduction (*sperma*) and utterance (*phōnē*) as psychic parts (they extend from the *hēgemonikon* to the testicles, the pharynx and the tongue,

respectively; see also Gal., *PHP* 3.1.9f. [= *SVF* 2.885]). Panaetius, on the contrary (cf. Nem., *De nat. hom.* 15.212.9-11 [= partly LS 53 I]), groups utterance together with impulse and argues that reproduction (here: *to spermatikon*) is not a part of the soul (*psychē*) but a part of nature (*physis*). Plot. *enn.* 4.7.7 (= *SVF* 2.858) explicitly refers to *aisthēsis* in the context of the powers of the *hēgemonikon*. Iamblichus in Stob. 1.368.19f. (= LS 53 K) mentions *phantasia*, *synkatathēsis* and *hormē* but has *logos* ('reason') instead of *aisthēsis*.

55 Cf. Plot., *Enn.* 4.7.7 (= *SVF* 2.858).

56 See p. 65 in this chapter.

57 Aristotle describes nurture as belonging to the *alogon* (cf. *EN* 1.13, 1102a32f.). In *DA* 3.9, 432a15–3.11, 433b30, he concludes that the prevalent cause of locomotion is *orexis*, which he contrasts there with *noūs*.

58 See for the two senses of the Stoic conception of the soul Long (1982: 41, 45), and Annas (1992: 55f.). The first sense has already been touched on p. 57f. and n. 5 (in this chapter). Long (1982: 45) puts the pneumatic extension of the soul this way: '. . . soul can be treated as either all of its *pneūma* or only the most tenuous parts of that substance, depending on what questions we are asking'.

59 See n. 54 in this chapter, *SVF* 2.716 (= Pseudo-Galen, *Introduct. s. med.* 9.367.697, 726 Kühn = partly LS 47 N) and Gal., *PHP* 3.1.9f. (= *SVF* 2.885). It is remarkable that Galen moves from the soul in the first sense to the soul in the second sense without any further explanation.

60 Cf. Long (1982: 43–5). Calc., *Comm.* 220 (= LS 53 G), allegedly quoting Chrysippus, mentions nurture as a psychic part in the narrower sense. The reliability of this quotation has first been called into question by Long (1982: 56 n. 2). He was then followed by several other scholars (cf. Reydams-Schils, 2006: 186f.; Ju, 2007; Powers, 2012: 260; Reydams-Schils, 2020: 3). Tieleman (1996: 96–9) is the only one who opts for taking the Calcidius passage as a reliable report of Chrysippus' words.

61 There has been a disagreement among the early Stoics as to how the self causes locomotion through pneuma (cf. Sen., *Epist.* 113.23). Cleanthes seems to have thought that a temporal gap occurs between the mental event and the event of walking, whereas Chrysippus appears to have denied such a gap.

62 The same holds for the first step in Seneca's diaeresis, where he divides the human being into body and soul.

63 It seems legitimate, too, to contrast body and soul against the backdrop that the Stoics would not argue that they share all their features (see the first step in Seneca's diaeresis).

64 Inwood (2005: 38 n. 23) gives an overview of the older literature. Cf., in addition, Setaioli (1988: 304f.), Setaioli (2000: 298f. n. 126) and Zöller (2003: 134).

65 Cf. Sen., *Epist.* 92.9f.

66 Sen., *Epist.* 92.10.

67 To be distinguished from bodily pleasure is the emotion of pleasure (cf. Sen., *Epist.* 59.1-4).

68 Sen., *Epist*. 71.27, trans. modified.

69 Contra Smith (2004): 'Here Seneca is primarily concerned with the sapiens and the distinction between the soul and the body . . .'

70 Sen., *Epist*. 92.8.

71 There seems to me to be a weak point in Graver's argumentation (cf. n. 45 in this chapter). On the one hand, she argues that Seneca takes over elements of his Peripatetic opponents' psychology but, on the other hand, she has not proven in any way that Seneca's subdivision of the irrational component has a Peripatetic origin.

72 Cf. Plat., *Rep*. 4, 439e–440a and Aristot., *DA* 3.9, 432b5-7. Frede (2020: 398f. and 469) points to a difference between Plato and Aristotle in that regard: while in Plato spirit is further elucidated as being capable of implementing the demands of reason (cf. Plat., *Rep*. 4, 442b-c; see for further references Frede, 2020: 469), we do not find this understanding in Aristotle.

73 Aristotle would neither assert that it is 'worthier of a man', as he recognized that animals are also driven by *thumos* (cf. *EN* 3.4, 1111b12f.).

74 See p. 60–2 in this chapter.

75 'What stimulates impulse, they say, is nothing other than an impression that immediately impels to something of interest [*phantasian hormētikēn tou kathēkontos autothen*]' (Stob., *Anthol*. 2.86.17f. [= LS 53 Q], my trans.). See for the meaning of *kathēkon* here Inwood (1985: 56).

4

Neoplatonists on *Katharsis*, Emotions and the Self

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Introduction

The Neoplatonists of late antiquity saw themselves as interpreters of Plato. However, the philosophical curriculum established by Iamblichus in the late third century CE began with Aristotle before proceeding to close study of twelve Platonic dialogues, starting with *Alcibiades* I and concluding with *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*.[1] The harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, which arguably began with Antiochus of Ascalon,[2] gathered pace under the Neoplatonists and in many areas of philosophy the Neoplatonists sought to smooth away contradictions between the thought of Plato and that of his greatest pupil. They also picked up and transformed a number of Stoic ideas.

In psychology, the Neoplatonists accepted the picture presented in Platonic dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, according to which our souls existed before birth in an intelligible realm to which they can return after death or even, in exceptional circumstances, during life in the body. Plotinus held the unusual view that part of our soul never descends into the body but remains permanently in the intelligible world, a view abandoned by most subsequent Neoplatonists. By contrast, Iamblichus regarded the human soul as a mean between intellect and the body, always operating at both a higher and a lower level. Plotinus and his successors all combined their Platonist belief in the soul as an immortal, incorporeal entity with the account of the capacities of the soul found in Aristotle's *De anima*. They held that the rational part of the soul, whether descended or undescended, is the real self but recognized that much human behaviour involves irrational aspects of the soul which they saw as fundamentally linked to the body.[3] Sometimes, in talking about the irrational aspects of the

soul, they made use of the conception found in Plato, *Republic* 4, according to which our souls are composed of reason, spirit and desire; emotions belong with spirit and/or desire rather than with reason.

Neoplatonist accounts of psychological phenomena that involve irrational parts of the soul help us to understand how the Neoplatonists thought about persons in all their complexity. The Neoplatonists themselves regarded human ethical development as the progressive development of reason in turning away from emotion. Their discussions of the effect of tragedy on the emotions, which will be examined in this chapter, are set within an ethical context and form part of their account of ethical development.

The Neoplatonists discuss the effect of tragedy using an elaborate classification of the virtues which combines Platonic and Aristotelian ideas. However, they disagree among themselves over just how tragedy's effect on the emotions is to be related to the virtues and in doing so they clearly recognize the divergence between Plato and Aristotle on this topic. As we shall see, a number of Neoplatonic authors associate *katharsis*, the term used by Aristotle in the *Poetics* to characterize the effect of tragedy, with rational education of the emotions and with achieving a state of *metriopatheia* (moderate emotion). Neoplatonists from Iamblichus onwards associate such a state with *politikē aretē*, the 'civic' or 'political' virtue which is the third in a series of seven levels of virtue: natural virtue (*physikē aretē*), habituated or ethical virtue (*ēthikē aretē*), civic or political virtue (*politikē aretē*), purificatory virtue (*kathartikē aretē*), contemplative virtue (*theōrētikē aretē*), exemplary virtue (*paradeigmatikē aretē*) and hieratic virtue (*hieratikē aretē*). The scale is used in the *Life of Proclus* written by Proclus' pupil and successor, Marinus, and clearly set out in Olympiodorus, *Commentary on the Phaedo* 8.2-4 and Damascius, *Commentary on the Phaedo* I.138-44.[4] The second level, *ēthikē aretē*, is acquired by habituation, without the involvement of the reasoning part of the soul. Discussions of the therapeutic role of music by Iamblichus and Olympiodorus suggest that the Neoplatonists regarded emotional therapy through music as appropriate to *ēthikē aretē* while *kathartikē aretē* involves a different kind of *katharsis*, a purification of the reasoning part of the soul; someone who has reached this level goes beyond *metriopatheia* to achieve *apatheia* (freedom from emotion).

Plato and Aristotle on the Effect of Tragedy

In order to understand the Neoplatonist discussions of the effect of tragedy on the emotions, we need to go back, albeit briefly, to what Plato and Aristotle have

to say on this topic. In Plato's *Ion*, 535b-e, the rhapsode Ion describes himself as experiencing pity and fear when he recites sad or frightening passages of Homer,[5] while in *Gorgias* 502b-c Socrates presents tragedy as aiming only at giving pleasure to its audience; like rhetoric, it is no more than a form of flattery (*kolakeia*). A much more extended critique of both Homer and tragedy is offered in the *Republic* where one of Socrates' complaints against poetry is that it encourages harmful emotions. In *Republic* 2 and 3 both tragic poetry and Homer are discussed in the context of how the future guardians of the ideal state are to be educated. Passages of Homer which might make the future guardians fear death as well as passages which encourage grieving for the dead are censored at 386a–388e, along with passages which encourage too much laughter (388e–389a). There follows the well-known distinction between three modes of presenting poetry: narrative, mimetic (or imitative) and a mixture of the two. Drama, including tragedy, is mimetic while Homer offers a mixture of narrative and *mimēsis*. At 395c–396a Socrates insists that the future guardians, if they engage in any kind of *mimēsis* – which seems here to mean if they do any acting on the stage – must imitate only those who are brave, moderate (*sōphronas*), pious (*hosious*) and free, not women, slaves or bad men. Part of the problem about imitating women is that, according to Socrates, this would involve imitating those who are experiencing emotions such as grief or *erōs*.

Plato's distrust of the emotional effect of both Homer and tragedy becomes still more evident in *Republic* 10, where he uses the theory of the three parts or components of the soul developed in *Republic* 4 to make his view more explicit. As in *Republic* 3, 605c-d again refers to the danger of passages of Homer which present grieving heroes, this time also mentioning passages of tragic poetry of that kind. At 606a-d, Socrates explains that such poetry nourishes the lowest, desiring part of the soul, the *epithymētikon*, encouraging emotions such as pity.[6]

There has been much discussion over the extent to which Aristotle's account of tragedy in the *Poetics* is a response to Plato. I share the view that it is such a response, although to say that is not to offer anything like a complete interpretation of what Aristotle has to say on this subject. Aristotle's comments on the effect of tragedy on the emotions are, notoriously, tantalizingly brief. In 6.1449b24–7, he defines tragedy as 'a *mimēsis* of a good, serious action, complete and exhibiting magnitude, using language that has been made pleasurable in different ways in separate sections of the work, in dramatic, not narrative form, by means of pity and fear bringing about the *katharsis* of such emotions'. The emotions involved are the same as in Plato but Aristotle holds that, rather than making them grow in an unhealthy fashion, tragedy somehow 'purifies' them.

Katharsis is evidently beneficial but it is completely unclear what it is or how it works. In modern times, three types of interpretation have dominated discussion. Sometimes *katharsis* has been seen in medical terms, referring to a 'purgation' of pity and fear, which are expelled from the soul in the same way as unhealthy elements are expelled from the body by appropriate drugs. Other interpreters have understood *katharsis* as a kind of 'purification', in which the pity and fear are transformed rather than expelled. A third approach – the one which I find the most promising – looks to Aristotle's ethical theory for explanation.[7] On this view, just as in his ethics Aristotle argues that the virtues are mean states, in which the right amount of emotion is felt, in the right way, so in the *Poetics katharsis* is a balanced emotional state in which the spectators of tragedy feel some pity and fear but only the right amount, in the right way. To interpret *katharsis* along these lines is to set the *Poetics* within an ethical context in a way which seems to me to be correct, not least because it echoes the ethical context of Plato's discussion of tragedy in the *Republic*. Of course, there are important differences between Aristotle's approach and Plato's: Aristotle in the *Poetics* is concerned with the effect of tragedy on all of its citizen audience, not with the education of elite rulers as Plato is in *Republic* 2 and 3. (By *Republic* 10, however, Plato seems to be thinking of a wider audience.) Nevertheless, if Aristotle's remarks about *katharsis* are a rebuttal of Plato's view of the effect of tragedy on the emotions, that rebuttal will only work if it preserves something of the ethical context of Plato's discussion.

Aristotle also mentions *katharsis* in *Politics* 8. Here he is more explicitly responding to Plato but he associates *katharsis* with religious rites rather than with education. In *Politics* 8.3 and 8.5-6, Aristotle argues that *mousikē*, which for the ancient Greeks included poetry, should form part of education, picking up on some of the language and ideas used in Plato's discussion of musical education in *Laws* 2. In 8.7, he considers what kind of musical modes, rhythms and instruments should be used in education and at 1341b32–1342b34, he notes that music can be used for *katharsis* as well as for entertainment and relaxation, associating such *katharsis* with the therapeutic effects of religious rites mentioned in Plato, *Ion* 536c. He goes on to discuss in detail the remarks made by Plato's Socrates in *Republic* 3.398c–400e. He criticizes Socrates for accepting the Phrygian musical mode while rejecting the *aulos* among musical instruments. According to Aristotle, both the Phrygian mode and the *aulos* arouse the emotions in an undesirable way while the Dorian is a mean among modes, well suited to education.

Katharsis in *Politics* 8 appears to be a phenomenon produced by certain types of what we would call instrumental music. Aristotle is not talking about tragedy here

– although we should not forget that Greek tragedy included music in our sense of the word nor that the plays were performed at religious festivals in honor of the god Dionysus.[8] The passage in *Politics* 8 certainly does not clear up all the problems raised by the ' *katharsis* clause' in the *Poetics*' definition of tragedy; in fact, it raises further problems about the relationship between the 'therapeutic' *katharsis* of the *Politics* and the tragic *katharsis* of the *Poetics*. Nevertheless, consideration of that passage in its context brings into sharper focus the background against which *katharsis* in the *Poetics* should, in my view, be understood: a background of response to Plato, concern with education and the Aristotelian ethical theory that virtue lies in a mean.

Neoplatonism: The Ethical Context for *Katharsis*

There are three Neoplatonic texts – one from Iamblichus, one from Proclus and one from Olympiodorus – which mention *katharsis* in connection with tragedy and which take sides in the dispute between Plato and Aristotle over its emotional effects. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Neoplatonists, like both Plato and Aristotle, consider *katharsis* within a wider ethical context, concerned with the education of the emotions and with moral development. We need therefore at this point to make something of a detour in order to understand the significance of *katharsis* within Neoplatonic ethics.

Our detour starts with one of the latest Neoplatonists, Olympiodorus, who was teaching philosophy in Alexandria in the sixth century CE. In Olympiodorus, as already in Proclus in the fifth century CE, we find a tendency to elaborate and systematize earlier Platonist thought. While it would be a mistake to read all the details of ideas found in these later philosophers back into Plotinus or Iamblichus, let alone into Aristotle or Plato, they can nevertheless provide us with a useful guide in many areas of Neoplatonic thought, including ethics. Olympiodorus' discussions of *katharsis* in his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* have already attracted some attention from scholars trying to understand *katharsis* in Aristotle, alongside the Neoplatonic texts which mention *katharsis* in connection with tragedy.[9] However, they need to be set within a wider context of late Neoplatonic ethics of which those scholars appear to have largely been unaware. In three passages of his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* Olympiodorus distinguishes between several different types of *katharsis*, describing them all in medical terms as ways of healing those who suffer from *pathē*, passions or emotions. The first passage, 6.6–7.8, runs as follows:

> For Socrates' admonishments are like painless purifications, or medicines drenched in honey. For [Socrates] does not heal souls by [applying] the opposites [of their current conditions], as Hippocrates prescribes for bodies when he says 'opposites are cures for opposites'; nor in the way that Aristotle exhorts us to check spirit with desire, and desire with spirit, inasmuch as these are opposites; nor as the Pythagoreans do, through the 'tasting' of emotions, i.e. 'with the tip of the finger', as they put it, for one could never heal the person who is inflamed with emotions, they say, without some small concession to them. (And this is also why in the Poet [sc. Homer], Athena is depicted as urging Pandarus to break his oath, on the ground that he is painfully eager to do so – for if we reasoned otherwise, it would be very strange to suppose that the god was issuing a summons to wrong-doing – and this is why the Poet also depicts [Pandarus] being punished through his tongue, [as the spear enters] into that [organ] with which he broke his oath.) (Trans. Griffin, modified, 2015: 79–80)

This passage lists three types of *katharsis*: a Socratic one which works by healing like with like, an Aristotelian one which uses opposites and a Pythagorean one which works by giving the patient a taste of the emotion from which they suffer. The same three types reappear in the second passage, at 54.15–55.11, where the second type is described as 'Peripatetic or Stoic'. In both passages, a Homeric example is used as an illustration of the Pythagorean type of *katharsis*: Athena urging Pandarus to break the truce between the Greeks and the Trojans in *Iliad* 4.86-103 is interpreted as her increasing a desire to break the truce that he already had. I shall come back to the significance of this example shortly. The third passage of Olympiodorus, *In Alc.* 145.13–146.13, gives a more elaborate list, of five types of *katharsis* in all: the first type is a matter of 'escaping into sacred precincts' or acquiring teachers or studying books, the second type is 'forceful correction' (*epiplēxis*) and the third, fourth and fifth types are the Pythagorean, Aristotelian and Socratic types described in the two earlier passages. All three passages of Olympiodorus raise a number of interpretative puzzles. I cannot go into all of these here and propose, after one comment on Olympiodorus' 'Aristotelian' type of *katharsis*, to focus on the Pythagorean type and the mention of Pandarus' breaking of the truce.

According to Olympiodorus, Aristotelian *katharsis* is a matter of checking one Platonic part of the soul with another, spirit (*thymos*) with desire (*epithymia*) and vice versa. This is not an allusion to any surviving Aristotelian text. As I mentioned just now, at *In Alc*. 54.17, this type of *katharsis* is described as 'Peripatetic or Stoic' and so the description of it at 54.15–55.1 appears in von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* as frag. 489 in vol. III. It looks as though

we have here the traces of an Aristotelian and Stoic discussion about the emotions and the three parts of the soul from Plato's *Republic*. Some passages of Seneca, Cicero and Philodemus collected by Rose as fragment 80 in his Teubner edition of the fragments of Aristotle also reflect such a discussion. However, it is clear that this is *not* an allusion to either of the surviving mentions of *katharsis* in Aristotle, in *Poetics* 6 and *Politics* 8.7. It seems to come from some kind of ethical discussion concerned with the education of the emotions.

The Pythagorean type of *katharsis* is also concerned with the education of the emotions. Pandarus' breaking of the truce posed a problem for Platonist interpreters of Homer who believed in the goodness of the gods, as we can see from Olympiodorus' remark at *In Alc*. 7.1-2 'for if we reasoned otherwise, it would be very strange to suppose that the god was issuing a summons to wrongdoing'. Exactly the same interpretation of this episode in the *Iliad* is offered at much greater length by Proclus at *Commentary on the Republic* I.102.29–106.10, as part of a defence against Plato's accusation in the *Republic* that Homer presents the gods as responsible for evil. At 103.7-11 Proclus compares the way in which the gods bring about the breaking of the truce in the *Iliad* to 'the opening up of wounds, which in the short term extends the suffering of bodies but, by casting out the pus concealed under the skin, becomes in time the cause of health arising' (trans. Baltzly, Finamore and Miles, 2018: 215), while at 104.20–105.1 he compares Pandarus to the person who chooses the life of a tyrant in the myth of Er in *Republic* 10, in order to emphasize that in the end it is Pandarus, not Athena, who is responsible for his actions. Both Proclus and Olympiodorus claim that Athena is acting for Pandarus' own good even though he ends up being punished by having Diomedes' spear go through his tongue (see *Iliad* 5.290-6). Pandarus has a bad moral character and wants to break his oath before Athena intervenes. It seems that the Pythagorean type of *katharsis* is a way of curing bad people of their emotional excesses and so bringing them into a better moral state.

We find the same connection between moral evil and a healing type of *katharsis* in two passages of the *Commentary on the Encheiridion of Epictetus* by another sixth-century Neoplatonist, Simplicius. At 35.341.455-9, Hadot (part of a longer discussion at 35.340.445–341.464) Simplicius declares:

> Hence it is also right for teachers not to oppose children's desires in every case, but frequently give in to them, and sometimes abet them, on the grounds that this soul can't completely vomit up that kind of emotion until such a time as it has acted in accordance with it and is surfeited by its activity. (Trans. Brennan and Brittain, 2002: 48–9)

He makes another, similar statement at 38.386.611-15 Hadot:

> In the same way, health and political power are only a source of greater harm to the wicked: some 'goods' are given correctively, but some by way of retribution, so that by the exacerbation of their emotions they become satiated and eventually vomit out their emotional disorder, and thereafter become ready for correction and purification. (Trans. Brennan and Brittain, 2002: 79–80)

In Simplicius, healing is produced by (metaphorically) vomiting out the excess of emotion.

Neoplatonism: *Katharsis* and Tragedy

I return now to the Neoplatonic texts from Iamblichus, Proclus and Olympiodorus which mention *katharsis* in connection with tragedy. All of them should be seen against the backdrop of the ideas about *katharsis* in an ethical context which I have just been discussing. In the first of the three, Iamblichus' *Reply to Porphyry (De mysteriis)*[10] I.11.30.4-15 Saffrey-Segonds, after a general statement about the value of exercising the emotions in a moderate way (*metriōs*), the benefits of watching and listening to ecstatic ritual are compared with the effects of tragedy and comedy which stabilize and purify the emotions, making them 'more moderate' (*metriōtera*):

> There is also another similar point to be made on this matter. The powers of the human emotions that are within us, when they are repressed, become correspondingly stronger; but if one exercises them in brief bursts and within reasonable limits, they enjoy moderate relief and find satisfaction and hence, being 'purified', are laid to rest through persuasion, and not by violence. That is why, when we behold the emotions of others both in comedy and in tragedy, we stabilize our own emotions, and render them more moderate, and purify them; and similarly in the sacred rites, by viewing and listening to obscenities we are freed from the harm that would befall us if we practised them. (Trans. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell, modified, 2003: 49–50).

It seems that Iamblichus approves of tragic – and comic – *katharsis* because it produces *metriopatheia*.

Metriopatheia is often regarded as an Aristotelian ethical ideal, a way of expressing Aristotle's view that virtue lies in a mean, and contrasted with the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*.[11] In later Neoplatonism, however, both ideals have their place within the scale of virtues set out in the introduction to this chapter.

Although the development of that scale can be seen as another example of the late Neoplatonic elaboration and systematization of doctrine that I mentioned earlier, its roots go back to Plato and Aristotle. It is no accident that the scale is fully set out in late Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Phaedo* because it is in *Phaedo* 67c–69e that Plato's Socrates distinguishes between the ordinary understanding of the virtues, based on a calculation of pleasures and pains, and the true virtue attained by the philosopher who purifies his soul by practising philosophy and paying no attention to bodily pleasures and pains. A similar distinction, between 'demotic' virtue and the virtue of the true philosopher, is found in the *Republic* at 500d.[12] If the Neoplatonic distinction between *politikē* and *kathartikē aretē* goes back to Plato, some of the other levels of virtue recall distinctions made by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* where *physikē aretē* (natural virtue) is distinguished from *kyria aretē* (virtue properly so called) at 6.13.1144b1-18 and where the account of habituation in 2.1-4, together with the discussion of *theōria* in 10.7-8, contains the seeds of the Neoplatonic distinction between natural virtue, habituated virtue and contemplative virtue.[13] The highest two levels of virtue in the late Neoplatonic scale of seven, exemplary and hieratic virtue, can also be presented as having some basis in Platonic texts, although of course the full scale is not found in Plato or indeed in earlier Neoplatonists.

Plotinus in *Ennead* I.2 (19) develops the distinction found in the *Phaedo* between civic and purificatory virtue while Porphyry in *Sententiae* 32 goes further and expands Plotinus' two levels to four: as well as civic and purificatory virtues, Porphyry describes a third level at which the purified soul acts intellectually and a fourth, exemplary level.[14] The full scale of up to seven levels found in Marinus, Olympiodorus and Damascius draws on Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and earlier Neoplatonists to present a composite picture into which many earlier philosophers' claims about virtue can be fitted. Aristotelian *metriopatheia* is associated with the third level, that of civic virtue, while a transformed version of Stoic *apatheia* is associated with the fourth level, that of purificatory virtue. One might expect the Neoplatonists to associate *katharsis* of the emotions with purificatory virtue, *kathartikē aretē*, but that is not what we find. It may be helpful here to recall that the philosopher of the *Phaedo* pays no attention to bodily pleasures and pains; similarly, for the Neoplatonists, one who has attained the purificatory level of virtue is *apathēs*, 'free from emotion', living a life of reason comparable to that of the gods (cf. Plotinus I.2 (19).3.10-21). Such a person is not going to be spending time in the theatre. The *katharsis* described in the Neoplatonic texts concerned with tragedy is a phenomenon at the level

of civic virtue, the highest level of virtue which non-philosophers can hope to attain. I shall have more to say later about purificatory virtue and *apatheia*.

We have seen that Iamblichus compares the benefits of watching and listening to ecstatic ritual to the effects of tragedy, and comedy, approving of all these phenomena on the grounds that they produce *metriopatheia*. He does not distinguish between different types of *katharsis* in the way that Olympiodorus does in his *Alcibiades* commentary but the *katharsis* referred to by Iamblichus appears to be the same as the Pythagorean type of *katharsis* described by Olympiodorus, the type to which Pandarus is subjected for his own good.

Proclus refers to this same type of *katharsis* in his discussion, in *Commentary on the Republic*, I.49.13–51.25, of the question whether Plato's views on tragedy and comedy are shown to be false by the account of *katharsis* found in Aristotle:

> It is thus clear that since tragedy and comedy imitate every kind of character and fall upon their audience in conjunction with pleasure, we must beware of them, lest their allure draw those who are easily led into a similar condition, filling the lifestyle of the young with the evils that result from imitation. Instead of an expiation that relates to moderation of the emotions there is implanted in their souls a condition that is injurious and hard to remove; a condition that obscures its unity and simplicity, the opposites of these things having been impressed [upon the soul] from its fondness for the various objects of imitation. These [genres of] poetry reach out to that [aspect] of the soul that is most exposed to the emotions. One [comedy] arouses the love of pleasure and leads to absurd laughter, while the other [tragedy] trains one in the love of pain and drags one down into ignoble lamentations. Each, however, nurtures the emotional aspect of us and would do so to a greater extent the more they achieve their function. Thus we too say that the statesman must devise some emetics for these emotions, not with the consequence that our attraction to them is intensified, but in a way opposed to this, so that they are restrained and their motions are checked in a harmonious manner. Thus, these genres of poetry which are, in addition to their variety, immoderate in their stimulation of the emotions, are far from useful in their expiation. For expiations do not consist in excess but in restricted activities that have a slight similarity to the things for which they are expiations. If there is no need for us to have educated people turn out to be lovers of lamentations or lovers of laughter, then there would be no need for them to associate with imitations that amplify both of these emotions. (Proclus, *In Remp.* I 50.2-29, trans. Baltzly, Finamore and Miles, modified, 2018: 139–40)

This *katharsis* is not the ethical doctrine which Olympiodorus labels as 'Aristotelian', 'Peripatetic' and even 'Stoic' in his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades.* It is the

view to which Aristotle gives such brief expression in the *Poetics*. Proclus offers an account of this kind of *katharsis* which matches what we find in Iamblichus, in Olympiodorus' descriptions of 'Pythagorean' *katharsis* and in Simplicius. He uses the word *aphosiōsis* ('expiation') and mentions 'an expiation that relates to moderation of the emotions' (50.7-8), describing tragedy and comedy as 'immoderate in their stimulation of the emotions' and declaring that 'expiations do not consist in excess but in restricted activities that have a slight similarity to the things for which they are expiations' (50.21-6). The aim of the right kind of *katharsis*, then, is *metriopatheia*, as in Olympiodorus and Iamblichus. At 50.17-18, Proclus, like Simplicius, describes this kind of *katharsis* as leading to vomiting out the excess of emotion: 'the statesman must devise some emetics for these emotions'. The reason why this is the province of the statesman, the *politikos*, is that we are here in the realm of *politikē aretē* where *metriopatheia* is the goal. So where does Aristotle's account of tragedy (and comedy) come in? There is a significant difference here between Proclus' position and that of Iamblichus. Whereas Iamblichus was quite happy to endorse the idea that tragedy and comedy produce a *katharsis* that leads to *metriopatheia*, Proclus upholds Plato's view of tragedy and comedy against Aristotle's attempt to defend these genres and so denies that tragedy and comedy produce this kind of *katharsis*; tragedy and comedy produce an unhealthy excess of emotion and Plato was right to condemn them.

The third Neoplatonic text that mentions *katharsis* in connection with tragedy is another passage of Olympiodorus, this time from his *Commentary on the Gorgias*. In *In Grg.* 33.3, consideration of the brief remarks about tragedy at *Gorgias* 502b-c leads Olympiodorus to comment as follows on Plato's expulsion of tragedy and comedy from his ideal state in the *Republic*:

> Note that Plato banished tragedy and comedy from his constitution. It is obvious why he banished comedy, since it uses old wives' tales, but he dismissed tragedy because it draws out our emotions and builds up the passion of grief within us. Those who want to introduce tragedy justify its introduction, first because it imitates heroic matters, and secondly because it does not allow our emotions to remain inflamed within us, but draws them out and gets rid of them. Because they teem with grief, it has been claimed that 'if the spectators do not cry, tragedy has not had any effect.' (Trans. Jackson, Lycos and Tarrant, modified, 1998: 225)

Olympiodorus appears to be alluding to Aristotle as defending tragedy against Plato when he says, 'Those who want to introduce tragedy justify its introduction,

first because it imitates heroic matters, and secondly because it does not allow our emotions to remain inflamed within us, but draws them out and gets rid of them.' The second justification mentioned in this sentence looks like an allusion to a theory of *katharsis* and in fact corresponds neatly to the 'Pythagorean' type of *katharsis* mentioned in the *Alcibiades* commentary.[15] Unlike Proclus, Olympiodorus is open to the idea that the *katharsis* produced by tragedy is the ethically beneficial 'Pythagorean' *katharsis* that helps us to get rid of undesirable emotions and leads to a state of *metriopatheia*. Nevertheless, Olympiodorus seems in the end to side with Plato and to accept Plato's view that tragedy feeds emotions such as grief rather than ridding us of them.

I have been arguing that in all the Neoplatonist authors I have discussed – Iamblichus, Proclus, Olympiodorus and Simplicius – we find the view that there is a kind of *katharsis* which can heal those who are morally 'sick' by giving them a taste of the excessive emotion from which they suffer. In order to bring about such healing, the gods may need to act in a way which appears to make them responsible for evil; however, it is not the gods but the excessive emotions of characters such as Pandarus which are to blame. More positively, this kind of *katharsis*, labelled as 'Pythagorean' by Olympiodorus, can lead to *metriopatheia* and to civic virtue. There is no disagreement on the ethical doctrines involved or on the implications for theodicy. The Neoplatonists are drawing on Aristotle to develop their own account of *katharsis*, relating it to ethical ideas also derived from Aristotle.

More broadly, the Neoplatonist scale of virtues is itself an example of the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, integrating Aristotelian, and indeed Stoic, ethics within an overall framework ultimately derived from Plato. However, the Neoplatonists disagree over the relevance of this ethical notion of *katharsis* to the aesthetics of tragedy and comedy and on this point there is no attempt to harmonize Plato and Aristotle. We might expect them to argue in favour of Plato and against Aristotle but that is not quite what we find either. Iamblichus thinks that tragedy and comedy produce a beneficial type of *katharsis*, thus, apparently, siding with Aristotle against Plato. Proclus disagrees, holding that tragedy and comedy do not have this effect but rather produce an unhealthy excess of emotion – in other words, he rejects Aristotle's account of the emotional effects of drama in favour of Plato's. Olympiodorus is aware that Aristotle in the *Poetics* can be interpreted as advocating 'Pythagorean' *katharsis* – the interpretation accepted by Iamblichus – but seems in the end to reject justifying tragedy in these terms and to side with Proclus.

Neoplatonism: Habituated Virtue and Therapeutic Music

In agreeing with Plato's view of the effect of tragedy on the emotions, Proclus and Olympiodorus are accepting that those who have not advanced beyond the level of civic virtue may be understood as having souls divided into reason, spirit and desire, according to the view presented in Plato, *Republic* 4. For these later Neoplatonists, those who have not yet attained civic virtue and *metriopatheia* may still be capable of habituated virtue which is the virtue of the irrational part(s) of the soul. At this level, the emotions are subject not so much to education as to therapy. Iamblichus and Olympiodorus both describe the effects of music in terms which make the connection between a therapeutic effect on the emotions and habituated virtue. Iamblichus in *On the Pythagorean Life* 15 (64) describes Pythagoras as transforming the irrational emotions of his pupils and restoring them to virtue:

> He thought that the training of people begins with the senses, when we see beautiful shapes and forms and hear beautiful rhythms and melodies. So the first stage of his system of education was music: songs and rhythms from which came healing of human temperaments and emotions. The original harmony of the soul's powers was restored, and Pythagoras devised remission, and complete recovery, from diseases affecting both body and soul. It is especially remarkable that he orchestrated for his pupils what they call 'arrangements' and 'treatments'. He made, with supernatural skill, blends of diatonic and chromatic and enharmonic melodies, which easily transformed into their opposites the emotions of the soul which had lately without reason arisen or were beginning to grow in his students: grief, anger, pity, misplaced envy, fear; all kinds of desires, appetite, wanting; empty conceit, depression, violence. All these he restored to virtue, using the appropriate melodies like mixtures of curative drugs. (Trans. Clark, modified, 1989: 26–7)

On the Pythagorean Life 25 contains similar material. These stories are traditional: Plutarch in *On Isis and Osiris* 384a refers to 'the Pythagoreans' as using the sound of the lyre to charm and cure the emotional and irrational part of the soul, while Sextus Empiricus in *Against the Mathematicians* 6.8 tells a story about Pythagoras' use of the pipe (the *aulos*) to sober up some drunken youths. Similar stories appear in Olympiodorus' *Commentary on the Gorgias* §5.3, where music is described as 'charming the emotions' and the claim is made that 'in ancient times melodies were medicines for the emotions', as well as in other Alexandrian Neoplatonists.[16]

Neoplatonism: Purificatory Virtue, *Apatheia* and the Rational Soul

While *Republic* 4 offers us a picture of a tripartite soul, prone to division and struggle, the *Phaedo*, and indeed *Republic* 10. 611a–612a, present a very different picture, according to which the true soul, and the true self, is the rational part. The Neoplatonist theory of different levels of virtue makes room for both Platonic approaches. Plotinus is clear in I.2 (19).3.10-22 that the purificatory virtues belong to the rational soul alone and his emphasis, like that of Plato in the *Phaedo*, is on how the (rational) soul can free itself from the body. He uses the Stoic term *apatheia* in a very un-Stoic way: in the first place, for him *apatheia* is not an end in itself but a means to the true aim, contemplation of the intelligible;[17] second, and importantly, whereas orthodox Stoics regarded emotions as false judgements and held that the sage achieves *apatheia* by always judging correctly, for Plotinus *apatheia* means having the irrational parts of the soul so well under control that they do not disturb the soul in any way.[18]

Like Plotinus, and like Plato in the *Phaedo*, Porphyry in *Sententiae* 32 emphasizes that the purification involved in his second level of virtue is a matter of detachment from the body. Again like Plotinus, Porphyry subscribes to a Platonist psychology, according to which the emotions belong to lower, irrational parts of the soul rather than being false judgements. In *Sententiae* 32.16-18, purificatory virtue is said to consist in 'abstention from actions in concert with the body and participating in the emotions that affect it', while in 32.25-6, *sōphrosyne* at the purificatory level is defined as 'not sharing in emotions'. Presumably, from Porphyry's perspective, the lower parts of the soul are always wanting, as it were, to intrude on the rational part and drag it towards participating in emotion but the soul which has purificatory virtue will resist this as far as it can. This theme is developed further towards the end of *Sententiae* 32, where in 95-127, in a passage which echoes Plotinus I.2 (19).5.5-21, Porphyry describes how the person of purificatory virtue will admit only necessary bodily pleasures, pains and desires, feeling no fear, using anger (*thymos*) and fear only for admonition (*nouthetēsis*).

When Marinus comes to give an account of Proclus' purificatory virtues, in chapters 18–21 of his *Life*, he lays considerable emphasis on Proclus' practice of ritual purification. He quotes Plotinus I.2 (19).5.7-9 on the correct attitude to the necessary pleasures of food and drink before explaining that Proclus ate and drank little and was largely vegetarian; he goes on to describe how Proclus celebrated all kinds of religious rites. In chapter 20, he turns to Proclus' courage

in the face of physical pain, his restraint of anger and his abstention from the pleasures of sex. Here his text combines partial quotations of passages of Plotinus I.2 (19).5, at least one of which is also picked up by Porphyry in *Sententiae* 32, with what sound like biographical details of how Proclus behaved during his final illness.[19] Finally, chapter 21 sums up Proclus' purificatory virtues in a paragraph which begins with language taken from *Phaedo* 67c8 and 83a8, which is filled with echoes of several different passages of Plotinus I.2 (19), and which firmly distinguishes between 'feeling emotion in moderation' (*metriopathein*) and 'being free from emotion' (*apathein*), associating the latter with purificatory virtue.[20]

Marinus' emphasis on ritual practice reflects the greater importance in later Neoplatonism of ritual and the magical practices known as theurgy.[21] At the same time, it is worth noting how closely Marinus links his account of Proclus' purificatory virtues with the accounts of these virtues found in Plotinus and Porphyry. We should also remember that the increasing acceptance of theurgy by Neoplatonists from Iamblichus onwards went together with changes in psychology. If one believes, as Iamblichus and subsequent Neoplatonists did, that the whole soul descends and that action by the divine is needed to enable its return, ritual practice becomes much more important as a way of purifying the soul and making possible its detachment from the body.

Conclusion

I have argued that Neoplatonist comments on tragic *katharsis* need to be understood against the broader background of their ethical system, in which virtues can be found at different levels corresponding to different relationships between the emotions and the rational part of the soul. While Proclus and Olympiodorus disagree with Iamblichus' approval of tragedy and comedy, preferring to side with Plato against Aristotle, all three philosophers share the same ethical outlook and the same, Platonist view that reason is the true self. They all believe that ethical development is the development of our rational powers towards a state of pure contemplation, free from the distractions of the body and the emotions associated with it. They all hold that at the level of civic virtue, the emotions can be educated so as to achieve *metriopatheia*, that at the lower level of habituated virtue, the emotions can be subject to therapy through music and that at the higher level of purificatory virtue, the rational soul which is the true self achieves *apatheia* as a means to the highest virtues of all.

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Notes

1 See Festugière (1969); Westerink, Trouillard and Segonds (1990: lxviii–lxxiii).

2 See Karamanolis (2006).

3 For sources and bibliography on Neoplatonic psychology, see Sorabji (2004). On the innovative views of Iamblichus, see Steel (1978) and Finamore and Dillon (2002). On the way in which Neoplatonic psychology combines Plato and Aristotle, see especially Blumenthal (1996).

4 For a full account of the scale of virtues, see Saffrey and Segonds (2001: lxix–xcviii). O'Meara (2003: 40–9) argues convincingly that it was Iamblichus who expanded the shorter scale found in Plotinus and Porphyry into the more complex list found in later philosophers.

5 Note the use of *eleinon* 'pitiful' at *Ion* 535c6, *phoberon* 'frightening' at 535c7 and *phobos* 'fear' at 535c8 and cf. Halliwell (2002: 218–19).

6 Note the use of *eleein* ('to pity') at 606b3, of *eleinon* ('pitying') at 606b8 and of *eleois* ('expressions of pity') at 606c5.

7 In dividing interpretations of *katharsis* into these three types, I follow Lear (1988). Lear himself advocates a fourth, different approach.

8 See Scodel (2011: 40–3); in more detail, Easterling (1997: 36–53, 151–77).

9 See Ničev (1970: chapters 7 and 8), Ničev (1978), Janko (1984: 146–8) and Belfiore (1992: chapter 8).

10 On the correct title for this text, see Saffrey and Segonds (2013: introduction).

11 See Sorabji (2000: 194–210). On the transformation of the contrast between *metriopatheia* and *apatheia* into a hierarchical distinction in Philo and in Clement of Alexandria, see Lilla (1971: 99–111).

12 Cf. also the mention of *politikē andreia* at 430c2-3.

13 Cf. O'Meara (2003: 46–9).

14 On the levels of virtue in Plotinus and Porphyry, see Dillon (1983) and Chiaradonna (2021).

15 Note the use of the verb *phlegmainein* both in this passage and at *In Alc.* 6.14, quoted on p. 80 above, to refer to emotions being swollen or inflamed. The same verb is used

again at *In Alc.* 55.4. Sebastian Moro Tornese has pointed out to me that Plato uses *phlegmainō* to refer to physical inflammation in *Timaeus* 85b, while Paul Demont has drawn my attention to Plato's use of *phlegmainousa* to describe the luxurious city of *Rep.* 2.372e that succeeds the primitive city of pigs. In an earlier discussion of this passage (Sheppard, 2021: 188–91), I suggested that Olympiodorus' interpretation of *katharsis* differed from that of Proclus; closer study of the texts alongside the passages from Olympiodorus, *In Alc.* has led me to realize that Olympiodorus and Proclus interpret tragic *katharsis* in the same way, although Olympiodorus is less explicit about siding with Plato against Aristotle.

16 For similar stories told by Ammonius, Proclus' pupil and Olympiodorus' teacher, as well as by the later Alexandrian commentators David and Elias, see Sheppard (2005: 152–3). O'Meara (2005: 140–1) argues that Olympiodorus regards Pythagorean music therapy as operating at the level of habituated virtue. Music as therapy of the emotions also appears in Iamblichus, *Reply to Porphyry* III.9, in a complex passage distinguishing between therapy which is a mere product of human skill and true religious possession which Iamblichus argues is due to the kinship between musical harmony and the divine harmony of the universe.

17 Cf. Flamand (2003: 423).

18 See I.2 (19).5.5-21. Cf. III.6 (26).5.13-29, where Plotinus uses *Phaedo* 67c5-6 to ask what is meant by *katharsis* and separating the soul from the body.

19 For the details of Marinus' use of Plotinus and Porphyry here, see the notes in Saffrey and Segonds (2001).

20 The distinction between *metriopatheia* and *apatheia* also appears in Proclus, *On Providence* §29: cf. Lautner (2000: 276–7).

21 On theurgy, see Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013) and Addey (2014).

Part Two

Connections

5

From Socrates to Descartes

Talking, Reading and the Problem of Other Minds

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It is commonly agreed that the problem of other minds, at least in its strong form, is a modern one, with its roots in Descartes' meditations. By strong form, I mean the doubt that other people have minds at all, rather than whether their thoughts and feelings are accessible to us. Richard Sorabji, for example, affirmed that 'it never occurs to Aristotle to raise doubts about other minds',[1] and the same can be said of Plato, Epicurus and the Stoics. It is true that, as Voula Tsouna has shown in a series of papers, certain sceptics, and among them one branch of the Cyrenaic school, did question whether we can know what other people are thinking and feeling. But they did not go so far as to doubt whether other people have minds as such. As Tsouna observes in her most recent and extensive treatment of the Cyrenaics: 'properly speaking, the Cyrenaics were not in any doubt about other minds. They firmly believed, first, that other minds exist and, second, that they are inaccessible to us.'[2] But if indeed the classical philosophers never suspected that people other than themselves were not endowed with minds, then the question arises: Why not? Various answers are possible, although to my knowledge the matter has never been directly addressed. In what follows, I suggest that one reason is that philosophical thought was essentially interactional and, more specifically, took the form of dialogue and conversation. No one thought to retire into a private space, cut off from all human communication, in order to consider whether other thinking beings existed, in the manner of Descartes. Dialogue necessarily involves two or more people and, so, two or more minds: you do not tend to doubt that the person with whom you are conversing has one. What is more, I propose to interpret Descartes' extraordinary insistence on isolation as the condition for fundamental philosophical investigation as a function of new reading practices that were emerging in his time. Of course, the classical Greek

philosophers were highly literate and wrote extensive treatises, to be read by disciples or by a wider public. However, as I will suggest, the book remained an instrument for collective engagement among readers, and not an occasion for solitary immersion in a text. That such a change in the nature of literacy might explain or account for the novel and hugely influential experiment of Descartes cannot be proved incontrovertibly, to be sure. What follows is perforce hypothetical, illustrative rather than demonstrative. The argument invokes not only philosophical analyses but also examples of literary practices, both ancient and modern. It is my hope that it will shed light on a largely neglected issue in classical philosophy as well as on ancient conceptions of the self.

'I went down yesterday to Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston to pray to the goddess and also out of a desire to see how they were going to conduct the festival, since they were putting it on now for the first time.' The reader will have recognized here the opening words of Plato's *Republic*, over which, an ancient grammarian tells us, Plato laboured for days in search of the right arrangement.[3] Having witnessed and enjoyed the spectacle, the two were returning to the city when Polemarchus, the son of Cephalus, along with Adeimantus, Plato's own brother, and several others called to them and caught up with them and persuaded them to stay on for a torch race on horseback and an all-night celebration. In the meantime, they repair to Cephalus' house, where they encounter several other guests. And so begins the grand conversation on the subject of justice.

Plato's *Lysis* begins in a similar fashion:

> I was walking from the sanctuary of Academus toward that of Lycian Apollo by the road outside the wall, the one that runs just under it, and as I arrived at the gate by the spring of Panops, I ran into Hippothales the son of Hieronymus and Ctesippus from the Paianian deme and other youngsters who were standing in a group with them.

Socrates is invited to join them in visiting a new gymnasium, where they will encounter several bright and handsome youths, and so he does. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates relates how Hippocrates the son of Apollodorus banged at his door at the crack of dawn to drag him to the home of Callias, where a stellar cast of sophists chanced to be in residence.

I mention these opening scenes to indicate how often Socrates finds himself amidst a crowd. He likes being out of doors, in public spaces, whether festivals or gymnasia, and he enjoys conversing with many people as much as he does with a single interlocutor. Literary scholars have for several decades now explored how the initial scene and other aspects of staging relate to or illuminate

the philosophical burden of the dialogues.[4] Xenophon, too, in his *Memorabilia*, shows Socrates discoursing among a crowd, and only engages in one-on-one conversation with the young Euthydemus when he has sufficiently diminished his ego and stimulated his curiosity to warrant special attention as a potential follower (*Mem*. 4.2-3). Socrates carries on his philosophical investigations by means of discussion and cross-examination – the famous method of elenchus, with one or with many.

The reader may be thinking that this is of course true for Plato and Xenophon: their mentor, Socrates, was something of a street philosopher and in the *Phaedrus* he is represented as expressing deep reservations about the advantages of writing. But an argument can be made that all of classical philosophy was essentially dialectical in this respect. Aristotle's school was dubbed 'peripatetic' because he is said to have conducted his lectures while walking round the Lyceum, trailed by students. Whether he did so or not, his surviving writings testify to the oral presentation of his doctrines and incorporate in their texts what are evidently questions from the floor (the title of his treatise on physics is *Phusikē akroasis* or *Lecture Course on Nature*). Consider the passages in which Aristotle discusses whether happiness can, as he interprets Solon to be saying, only be achieved after death, when a person is secure from misfortune. Aristotle begins:

> Must no one at all, then, be called happy while he lives; must we, as Solon says, see the end? Even if we are to lay down this doctrine, is it also the case that a man is happy when he is dead? Or is not this quite absurd, especially for us who say that happiness is an activity? But if we do not call the dead man happy, and if Solon does not mean this, but that one can then safely *call* a man blessed as being at last beyond evils and misfortunes, this also affords matter for discussion. (*NE* 1.10, 1000a10-18, trans. Ross)

The chapter concludes:

> Nor, again, is he many-coloured and changeable; for neither will he be moved from his happy state easily or by any ordinary misadventures, but only by many great ones, nor, if he has had many great misadventures, will he recover his happiness in a short time, but if at all, only in a long and complete one in which he has attained many splendid successes. When then should we not say that he is happy who is active in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period but throughout a complete life? Or must we add 'and who is destined to live thus and die as befits his life'? Certainly, the future is obscure to us, while happiness, we claim, is an end and something in every way final. If so, we shall call happy those among

> living men in whom these conditions are, and are to be, fulfilled—but happy men. So much for these questions. (*NE* 1.10, 1101a8-21, trans. Ross)

These are not, I think, merely the reflections of a person who is thinking aloud, weighing objections and replies. Our best guess as to the composition of Aristotle's esoteric treatises is that they were either his own notes that he continually updated or those of students, who may have compared their jottings and perhaps had access to the master's drafts. I think of them as the record of Aristotle's responses to questions raised by students, or that perhaps occurred to him as he was lecturing. Throughout the ethical and other works there is this sense of interaction; Aristotle is not just writing in his study, he is speaking to and with others.

The Stoics derived their name from the portico where they assembled, an outdoor space that did not resemble a modern lecture hall, with the professor at the podium. The Epicureans debated their doctrines in the garden of the master, whence their sobriquet. It now appears from the substantial fragments of Epicurus' great work, *On Nature*, which ran to thirty-seven books, that he, too, lectured in a give-and-take style, responding to comments from his colleagues and disciples. But the pedagogical concern of the Epicureans, and their attention to the individual needs of novices, comes out most clearly in Philodemus tract, *On Frank Speech*. Take the following fragment:

> [It has become obvious from what has been said] that they [teachers] will differ for each {student}, one much, [one little,] just as a lad differs from a woman and old men will differ from <[women]> and youngsters alike. Even if one is rather sententious, as Metrodorus says Polyaenus was, 'often rather insinuating himself into conversation and quite sociable', he will be still more worthy.[5]

To be sure, the focus of the pamphlet is on the right way for a teacher, already in possession of the truths of Epicureanism, to dispose students of difference classes and temperaments to accept criticism and admonishment, rather than on engaging them in philosophical dialogue. But the intention is to communicate and interaction and engagement with the students is presupposed. In the same spirit, didactic poetry, and literature generally, invariably had an addressee, most often named, like Memmius, whom Lucretius instructs in his *De Rerum Natura*.[6] Ancient philosophy was pervasively communicative.

These were, of course, early days, before the book had become, perhaps, the principal medium of scholarly communication. What of later developments? Take the circle of the Neoplatonist Plotinus and his eminent disciple, Porphyry (third century CE). Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, in their study,

Christianity and the Transformation of the Book, note that in this school, a concern for style and rhetorical flourishes were regarded with suspicion: 'But books nevertheless played a central role in the philosophical life as led by Plotinus and his students.'[7] They quote in illustration a passage from Porphyry's biography of his master concerning the importance of commentaries on ancient texts: 'In our gatherings he would have the commentaries read out to him, whether they were those of Severus, or Cronius, Numenius, Gaius, or Atticus, or else among the Peripatetics those of Aspasius, Alexander, Adrastus, and others that were to hand.'[8] Grafton and Williams add: 'A sizable library must have been at Plotinus's disposal.' Certainly – but I would emphasize that it was read aloud and collectively. Aspasius is the author of the earliest surviving commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, dating to the middle of the second century CE. It, too, has a distinct aroma of the classroom. Take the following passage, in which Aspasius quotes Aristotle as saying, 'ethical virtue is about pleasures and pains' [1104b8-9], and remarks

> One might question in what sense ethical virtue is about pleasures and pains. For intellectual virtue surely is not . . . How then can ethical virtue be about pleasures and pains? Is it like the case of instruments, as one might say that the art of flute-playing is about flutes, or the art of carpentry is about the axe and the saw and other tools? Or is it rather like subject and matter, in the way that the musical art is about melody, and the geometric art is about magnitude?[9]

This is the kind of work that Plotinus and his circle read aloud to each other. As Gregory Snyder puts it in his book, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World*: 'In order to be brought to life, a text required a performer and almost always presumed the presence of an audience. The audience may have partaken in the performance to a greater or lesser degree . . . And in the ancient world, even the text itself, whatever it may be, is simply one particular version of a work.'[10]

Grafton and Williams go on to cite Porphyry's remarkable account of how he was persuaded to change his own views on epistemology. First, he wrote a refutation of Amelius, his opponent. Then Plotinus 'had Amelius read this out to him, and when it had been read, he smiled and said, 'Let it be your task, Amelius, to resolve the confusion . . . Amelius wrote a sizable book. . . . Yet again I wrote a refutation against what he had written. Amelius replied to what I wrote,' and after further argument, Porphyry 'wrote a recantation which I read out at the lecture session.'[11] What Grafton and Williams adduce as evidence for the importance of books and writing can also be interpreted as indicating the still blurry boundary between literary and oral exchange. The back and forth

commentaries and refutations are part of a living dialogue, for which the books serve almost as props. Again, consider the way in which Porphyry edited the manuscripts of his teacher: 'we have arranged the books, which were fifty-four in number, so as to form six enneads; we have written, too, commentaries on some of them, irregularly, because our friends asked us to write on whatever they wanted cleared up for them' (p. 39, quoted from the *Life*, 26.28-32). As Grafton and Williams observe, Porphyry's respect for his teacher did not 'impede him from adding material of his own to the texts'.[12] It is not for nothing that the ancient philosophical sects were called 'schools'.

Nothing is farther removed from this picture of communal philosophical inquiry than Descartes' radical withdrawal from society and to the extent possible from every reminder of the external world, which he says, in his *Meditations*, is the indispensable precondition for questioning all received ideas and the starting point for true philosophical investigation. As he states in the First Meditation, 'I have expressly rid my mind of all worries and arranged for myself a free stretch of time. I am here quite alone.'[13] And in the Second Meditation, he announces: 'I will suppose, then, that everything I see is spurious. I will believe that my memory tells me lies, and that none of the things that it reports ever happened. I have no senses.' What induced Descartes to suppose that this was the way to pursue philosophy?

We may perhaps account, at least in part, for the difference between Plato's imagined conversations and Descartes' description of his own self-imposed isolation by noting that Plato's culture was still predominantly oral – the medium of thought was still the spoken word – whereas Descartes belonged to the more profoundly bookish world of early modern Europe. Descartes' image of himself as a solitary thinker, an individual cut off from society and engaged in a purely private quest for understanding, is analogous to the way both reading and writing were imagined, for example, at the dawn of the modern novel. Thus, Ian Watt, in his seminal study, *The Rise of the Novel*, explains that in the eighteenth century, a 'characteristic feature of the Georgian house is the closet, or small private apartment usually adjoining the bedroom. Typically, it stores not china and preserves but books, a writing desk and a standish [a reading stand]'.[14] Samuel Richardson, according to Watt, was the prophet of this new way of writing and reading: 'his readers found in his novels the same complete engrossment of their inner feelings, and the same welcome withdrawal into an imaginary world vibrant with more intimately satisfying personal relationships than ordinary life provided, that they had afforded Richardson in the writing'.[15] The result is that, 'ceasing to be conscious of the printed page before our eyes we surrender ourselves entirely to

the world of illusion which the printed novel describes. This effect is heightened by the fact that we are usually alone when we read, and that the book, for the time being, becomes a kind of extension of our personal life.'[16] In his *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Proust describes how Marcel curls up with a book: 'I had stretched out on my bed, with a book, in my room which sheltered, tremblingly, its transparent and fragile coolness from the afternoon sun, behind the almost closed blinds . . . It was hardly light enough to read . . . The dark coolness of my room related to the full sunlight of the street as the shadow relates to the ray of light.'[17] The experience of being alone, withdrawn from sensory awareness of the outside world and engaged only with one's own thoughts, is not unlike the conditions that Descartes evokes as being favourable to his own cogitations.

The withdrawal from the world that is presupposed as the condition of the modern writer and reader becomes a pathology in a text such as Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. The comparison is not as far-fetched as it may seem. It is possible to regard both texts as a kind of existential experiment, a view of the world from a hidden corner, in which one makes an uncompromising effort to strip away all the opinions that one has cherished and to treat them as 'utterly false and imaginary', in Descartes' words.[18] Nothing is as it seems and what is worse, the outside world stands a good chance of being governed not by a benevolent God but by a 'malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning', as Descartes puts it.[19] Yes, this is a scandalous and even blasphemous hypothesis that Descartes puts forward only to refute it decisively with unarguable proofs of God's goodness and perfection. But suppose he should not succeed. In his radical doubt, he wonders what it means to think that he is a man. He cannot claim to be 'a rational animal', since he would then have to inquire what these terms mean, 'and in this way one question would lead me down to slope to other harder ones'.[20] He had previously and naively thought, he says, that he had 'a face, hands, arms' and so forth and a soul, too, which he imagined to be 'something tenuous'.[21] But he catches himself up short:

> what shall I now say that I am, when I am supposing that there is some supremely powerful and, if it is permissible to say so, malicious deceiver, who is deliberately trying to trick me in every way he can? Can I now assert that I possess even the most insignificant of all the attributes which I have just said belong to the nature of a body?[22]

He is about to discover that he is at least a thinking thing, whatever that might be; since he is thinking these thoughts, or doubting these doubts, there must at least be thinking. Very comforting.

Dostoevksy's underground man also perceives the world to be governed by a nasty demon, only in his case, the malice resides precisely in its apparent rationality. As he puts it, 'the laws of nature have continually all my life offended me more than anything'.[23] For him, 'the laws of nature, the deductions of natural science, mathematics' demonstrate that man is descended from apes, that selfishness is innate and that the conclusion from this is that 'all so-called virtues and duties' are mere prejudices.[24] All this is a consequence of his own radical doubt. As he puts it: 'Where are the primary causes on which I am to build? Where are my foundations? Where am I to get them from? I exercise myself in reflection, and consequently with me every primary cause at once draws after itself another still more primary, and so on to infinity.'[25] What a Cartesian doubter we have here.

In 1945, Richard Wright published a short story, evidently modelled on Dostoevsky's, under the title, 'The Man Who Lived Underground'. In this tale, which was based on a prisoner's narrative that Wright had read and which inspired, in turn, Ralph Ellison's great novel, *The Invisible Man*, a man wrongfully accused of murder escapes from the police station where he is being held and hides in the sewer system beneath the ground: the 'underground' is literal in this case. While exploring the tunnels, he hears hymns being sung in a church, the sound filtering through cracks in the tunnel wall, but it repels him and, later on, when he again hears the spiritual, 'Glad, glad, glad, oh so glad I got Jesus in my soul,' he reflects: 'They're wrong.'[26] During his explorations underground, he comes upon a movie theatre, the basement of an undertaker's establishment, a butcher shop, the safe deposit room of a jewellery store that he subsequently burglarizes by slipping through an opening he has made in the wall. Afterwards, he pastes the multi-dollar notes on the walls of his tunnel as green wallpaper and scatters the diamonds on the slimy sewer floor. He surveys his handiwork and is led to meditate: 'Maybe anything's right, he mumbled. Yes, if the world as men had made it was right, then anything else was right, any act a man took to satisfy himself, murder, theft, torture.'[27] He watches impassively through his peephole when the watchman of the jewellery store is charged with the theft and commits suicide. In fact, at the end, the man is conscience stricken and turns himself in to the police, but when he leads them to the manhole through which he descended, one of the officers shoots and kills him. Driven from a world in which values and morality are topsy-turvy, the underground man is plunged into radical doubt about the order of things and imagines that something like Descartes' malicious demon has deceived everyone.

I may adduce one more novelistic representation of the world seen from below or outside, this time a work that I believe is one of the masterpieces of

modern existential literature: I am referring to *El Túnel* by the Argentinian writer, Ernesto Sábato, who was born in 1911 and died in 2011, just a few months before his 100th birthday. In this novel, first published in 1948, a painter recounts how he came to murder a woman he loves, justifying the deed with the implacable logic of a paranoid psychopath. To my mind, Sábato's novel is even more terrifying than Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*, which appeared in 1942, for the way in which it represents the sealed off mental world of its narrator.[28]

Can we see in Descartes the spiritual ancestor of these narratives of mad isolation, as though his experiment in separating himself from the world and imagining that everything outside himself was under the control of a malevolent demon had become, in the course of centuries, detached from his own prior conviction in a benign deity and now, bereft of his ontological argument, had left in its wake only a sense of despair in an immoral, irrational and perverse universe? More particularly, can we take Descartes' distance from all other people, and from sensory experience generally, as a reflex of a new practice of writing and reading, in which the author's withdrawal from society is parallel to the isolation in which readers now consumed a text, like Marcel in his darkened cubicle and sensitive only to the world of his book? For Descartes did envision a solitary reader, who would pay undivided attention to his argument. As he writes in the prefatory 'Letter to the Sorbonne', his arguments are not for the many, in part because they involve difficult chains of reasoning but 'above all, because they require a mind which is completely free from preconceived opinions and which can easily detach itself from involvement with the senses' (p. 5): in other words, people like himself and equally removed from engagement with others. (So, too, Dostoevsky's underground man records that, as a youth, 'I spent most of my time at home, reading,' at p. 161.) For this reason, too, as he explains in his preface to the reader, Descartes composed the work in Latin rather than in French (pp. 6–7). Such a sense of blinkered concentration was becoming the ideal even in so public a medium as the theatre. In 1614, twenty-seven years before Descartes published his *Meditations*, Ben Jonson introduced his comedy, *Bartholomew Fair*, with a skit in which the stage-keeper, who presumes to offer his opinion of the play about to be performed to members of the audience, is driven off by the book-holder and the scrivener or scribe, who in turn proposes to the spectators formal Articles of Agreement on how they are to watch the show. The scrivener reads out: 'It is also agreed that every man here exercise his own judgement, and not censure by contagion, or upon trust, from another's voice or face that sits by him.'[29] Addressing the elite audience that attended the small, indoor theatre that Jonson favoured, as against the huge outdoor arenas

where Shakespeare put on his plays, Jonson has two bookmen set conditions designed to atomize the viewers, converting them into isolated individuals – private readers, as it were – as opposed to a collective public of spectators.

Jean-Luc Marion, one of the leading students of Cartesian philosophy, observes: 'The *Meditations* explicitly sets out to demonstrate with certainty the existence of God and the immortality of the *mens humana* . . .; this acknowledged aim is characterized from the outset by an omission, that of separate intelligences.'[30] After a careful review of relevant passages, Marion affirms: 'We thus come to a radical conclusion: The *Meditations* renders conceptually impossible the acknowledgment of another person – at least in the sense of another *mens* – who would function as an *ego*' (p. 129), and he sums it up with the pithy formula: 'Fundamentally, the *ego* excludes any *alter ego*' (p. 131). Marion leaves open the possibility that Descartes' view of love may afford the ego possibility of 'surpassing the solitary *ego* in the direction of an *alter ego*' (p. 135). Be that as it may, we may note that Descartes, writing from a solitary place and directing his meditations to a solitary reader, resembles the ancient philosophers to the extent that he does not worry about the problem of other minds – but this is because he simply does not consider them at all. His world is populated by a single, thinking monad, in radical contrast to the social self presupposed by the Greek and Roman thinkers.

And yet, no sooner does one begin to read Descartes' *Meditations* than one realizes that he is in constant dialogue with someone – for he continually poses questions and seems to be answering imagined interlocutors. Consider his doubts about the possibility of a God who would deceive his creatures: 'Perhaps there may be some who would prefer to deny the existence of so powerful a God rather than believe that everything else is uncertain. Let us not argue with them, but grant them that everything said about God is a fiction.'[31] Who are these objectors and whom is Descartes advising to grant them their premise as a basis for further reasoning? Say it is an internal dialogue, presupposing no auditor save his own former self, who represents conventional opinion; as Descartes says: 'I will now shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw from all my senses . . . I will converse with myself and scrutinize myself.'[32] Even so, Descartes is conscious of the passage of time. For example, he begins the Fourth Meditation with the words: 'During these past few days I have accustomed myself to leading my mind away from the senses' (p. 37). Descartes is telling a story of his philosophical progress, and his narrative presupposes a reader – indeed, a critical reader, prepared to pose objections and judge the value of his arguments. So, too, Dostoevsky's underground man is engaged in a continual exchange with unnamed opponents of his views, to

whom he frequently refers as 'gentlemen': 'I ask you, gentlemen . . .,' or 'You laugh?' (p. 138), or 'you know' or 'I will tell you' (p. 139). This may be a facile paradox: the mere fact of publishing a work presupposes that there are others to whom one is speaking, although it is not always the case that the addressee is so frequently and explicitly invoked. The underground man himself recognizes the problem: 'why do I call you "gentlemen", why do I address you as though you really were my readers?' (p. 155). We might vary Descartes' famous formula and say: 'I write, therefore we are.'

But there is one feature of Descartes' *Meditations* that goes well beyond any such perfunctory acknowledgment of the existence of others and the necessary embeddedness of all philosophical inquiry in some form of dialogue, however attenuated or reduced by a fiction of solitary thought or conversation with oneself. For Descartes published his *Meditations* in 1641 together with an appended set of six 'Objections and Replies', which he had obtained by circulating his writings prior to their appearance among a group of friends; a year later, he issued a second edition supplemented by a seventh set of 'Objections and Replies'. This, certainly, is not a sign of a wholly withdrawn self, enclosed or encysted in a private world. Quite the contrary, Descartes' text reads like the precipitate of ongoing exchanges, conducted perhaps by letter but very much preserving the face-to-face quality of dialogue, just as much as Plato's own dialogues or the intensely communal study that took place among the circle of Plotinus, or in the lecture hall of that eminently conversational Stoic, Epictetus, whose lectures were recorded by his pupil, Arrian, and published under the title 'Discourses' (the case of that other Roman Stoic, Musonius Rufus, is similar). Curiously enough, although Epictetus did not record his own reflections, he purports to believe that Socrates did put pen to paper (*Discourses* 2.1.32): 'What? Didn't Socrates write? – Indeed, who wrote as much as he? How so? Since he could not always have with him someone to criticize his beliefs or be criticized in turn, he criticized and examined himself and was always wrestling usefully with at least some notion or other'. Gregory Snyder remarks: 'Here, a written text provides a technology for having a conversation with oneself in the absence of a dialogue partner.'[33] If Socrates writes, it is just conversation by other means. Could this be true for Descartes as well – and is it wrong, then, to explain the difference between his isolated 'meditations' and ancient dialogues such as Plato's by reference to the way people read in antiquity and in the modern period?

Bernard Williams, in his 'Introductory Essay' to the *Meditations*, suggests that the 'I' of the *Meditations* proper 'is different . . . from the "I" that occurs in

the *Replies* to the *Objections*'.[34] He explains: 'In the *Replies*, Descartes speaks straightforwardly for himself, and the "I" represents the author of the *Meditations*. The "I" in the *Meditations* themselves represents their narrator or protagonist, whom we may call "the thinker."'[35] I suppose I could take this as a way out of the dilemma I have posed and argue that the intersubjective nature of the 'Objections and Replies' is a holdover from an earlier way of doing philosophy and contrary to the approach adopted in the *Meditations* proper. And yet, I would prefer to recognize the dialogical character of the *Meditations* themselves, which indeed may help to account for what many critics have regarded as a fatal misstep in the logic of Descartes' fundamental argument: *cogito ergo sum*. Thus, as a recent study points out:

> Many critics have complained that, in referring to the 'I,' Descartes begs the question – that he presupposes what is supposedly established in the 'I exist.' Among the critics, Bertrand Russell objects that 'the word "I" is really illegitimate'; that Descartes should have, instead, stated 'his ultimate premise in the form "there are thoughts"'.[36]

Might it be that the assumption of an 'I' or *ego* as the subject of the verb *cogito*, instead of the bare predicate *cogitare* or 'thinking', came naturally to Descartes precisely because he was always implicitly imagining himself in relation to another, a 'you' or *tu*?

There is, I think, something hybrid about Descartes' self-presentation: he appears both as a bare-thinking thing, shorn of all attributes and as René Descartes, engaging in debate with others, for whom his other self – that self that continues to harbour received opinions – is a proxy. But there is also something new in the *Meditations* that resides in the very preconditions of Descartes' philosophical procedure. He wants to discover what an isolated, pre-social individual is obliged to assume to be real. Yes, he wishes to demonstrate that, 'I am not alone in the world' – but he is satisfied with demonstrating that there is 'some other thing' which is the cause of his ideas.[37] He has no difficulty, he says, in understanding where he gets his ideas of other creatures, 'even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels'. Strip all else away and 'there remains only the idea of God'.[38] The peculiarly solipsistic character of Descartes' project is not the result of literacy, of course, nor, I am sure, of the invention of print as the principal medium of the diffusion of texts. It is not a matter of the technology of writing and reading so much as of the way texts were generated, received and used.

There is a difference between Descartes' sense of the scene of writing and reading and the prevailing image in classical antiquity, when texts were always, I

believe, more like scripts or libretti, to be completed or realized by reading aloud and in company. As Guglielmo Cavallo puts it, 'reading a literary text could be compared to performing from a musical score'.[39] William Johnson, in his remarkable book on reading and readers in late antiquity, observes in connection with the correspondence between the young and future emperor, Marcus Aurelius, and his tutor Fronto: 'We have the clear sense of a man lost in his interior world, of the philosopher personality that becomes a leitmotif in the Aurelian bibliography.[40] In terms of reading, he is clearly reading by and to himself. We have already established that readings aloud over dinner were routine, including the reading of serious matter, and it is in this context that Marcus' readings alone should be seen.'[41] Johnson concludes:

> the prevailing impression from the correspondence . . . is of a man whose intellectual life is mostly interior and deliberately secluded. This apparent fact is important as a corrective to any view that seeks too simplistically to situate intellectualism solely within society, but it is also significant that Marcus's intellectual seclusion seems to have appeared rather odd to his contemporaries. The more social, communal situating of intellectualism that we see at play in Galen, Gellius, and elsewhere appear, by contrast, to be the norm.[42]

To be sure, the image of the solitary thinker was itself something of a *topos* in classical Greece and Rome. Euripides, for example, was said to betake himself to a lonely cave on the island of Salamis, where, according to Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 15.20.5, citing Philochorus), he sometimes spent entire days thinking and writing. Other ancient biographies (which in general tend to embellish) add that he did so to avoid the masses. But this antisocial behaviour was clearly regarded as an eccentricity, no doubt partly as a way of contrasting him with the highly sociable Sophocles.[43] Euripides was also said to possess a large personal library.

As another illustration of reading practices in antiquity, we may take a rare example relating to an ancient novel. In one of the manuscripts (Venetus Marcianus gr. 410) of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, dating to the 3rd or 4th CE and one of the five Greek romantic novels that survive entire, there is attached a kind of appendix that purports to derive from a lecture or discourse (*phōnē*) by one 'Philip the Philosopher', otherwise unknown. The appendix is perhaps to be dated as early as the fifth century, although majority opinion assigns it to the Byzantine period.[44] The text begins with a *mise-en-scène*, in which a certain Nicolaus is described as calling urgently upon Philip to defend 'the book of Chariclea' (she is the heroine of Heliodorus' novel) against the wanton disparagements of critics (*philologoi*), who are reading it (*anagignōskousin*, v. 11 Colonna) – evidently out

loud and in a group – at the gates of a temple. Just what these scorners might have objected to be is unclear; Richard Hunter plausibly suggests that they may not have been expressing puritanical or high-minded contempt for the low genre of romantic fiction so much as having some ribald fun at expense of the heroine's virtue or chastity.[45] Nicolaus wants Philip to demonstrate that, on the contrary, the novel is 'beyond all reproach' (v. 15 Colonna). Philip defends the poem for the virtuous way in which the protagonists are characterized. He emphasizes that 'the story cries aloud' (v. 64 Colonna) to highlight that those who commit vicious acts will ultimately be punished. However, Philip also asserts that he is too old for such 'childish toys' since he has long since abandoned them for philosophy. He believes that erotic narratives are more suitable for youth, not so much because boys are licentious, but rather because they are not yet ready for the higher demands of pure philosophy. If they are nevertheless to be exposed to such works, it is because they provide, when properly interpreted, a kind of propaedeutic to higher things.[46] The relevant point here is that the entire conversation is conducted publicly, with Heliodorus' novel serving something like the function of the essays by Amelius and Porphyry in Plotinus' class.

Among the most illuminating passages on the communal and interactive way a reader might address a text in classical antiquity is a comment by fourth-century Christian bishop Synesius (*Dio* 18.1-5):

> Often, I prefer not to wait for the outcome of a book to derive some good from it, but I lift my eyes and wrestle with the writer, letting not a moment go by but giving myself over to the occasion, and, as if reading on, I string together from my own mind what I think follows, and then I test what is said against what is written. And I am frequently aware of having chanced upon the same thought and the same wording. It has also sometimes happened that I have hit the argument, and what may stray from the wording nevertheless very much approximates the harmoniousness of the composition. And even if the thought was different, it was still something suitable, at all events, to the man who created the book, and one of which he would not have disapproved if he had argued it. And sometimes I know I've encountered noble and worthy people, when I had some composition in my hands, and when they asked me to read to them to hear it in common, I did so. When it was suitable, now and then, I would devise something and recite it – not having prepared it, by the God of Discourse, but rather whatever occurred to me I entrusted to my mind and tongue. Then indeed there arose a great uproar, and applause broke out among those who praised that man whose composition it was, and not least for the very additions I had made. Thus the god made my soul a soft wax tablet for what was imprinted in the words or characters.

It is remarkable how easily Synesius passes from his dialogue with a text to a recital in the circle of his friends. Readers did not surrender themselves to literatures' 'world of illusion', in Watt's phrase, but maintained that interrogative relationship to the text, with novels as much as with other genres, engaging in dialogue with them until they could, like Socrates according to Epictetus, find suitable interlocutors with whom to converse. Descartes' *Meditations*, by contrast, are like messages stuffed in a bottle and tossed out to sea. In writing this way, Descartes may plausibly be seen as a forerunner of Proust, Dostoevsky, Wright and Sábato – and far removed from the philosophical and literary dialogue of classical antiquity.[47]

Among the modern philosophical strategies for undermining Cartesian scepticism about the existence of other minds is to challenge the implicit assumption that the mind, or cognition, is located in individual human beings (or other creatures). Some argue that the very idea of a self derives from social interactions and so inevitably entails a second-person perspective. Thus Jay Garfield affirms:

> We may take ourselves naively to be independent subjects who accidentally discover others; we may take our access to our own minds to be more fundamental than our access to others; we may take association to be somehow accidental or optional. But we are wrong to do so. We become persons in interactions with second persons; and as persons, we fully manifest who we are only in such interactions.[48]

Another view holds that cognition is inescapably embodied and that knowing another is not a matter of inferring thoughts or the very existence of a consciousness but to encounter the entire self. As Anita Avramides expresses it:

> Rather than think that my initial encounter is with a body that is believed to contain a mind, we should think of my encounter as with what John McDowell – following Peter Strawson – has called 'a seamless whole'. It is the idea of others as 'seamless wholes' that I want to capture with the move from talk of 'knowing other minds' to talk of 'knowing others as persons'.[49]

A further extension of the idea of embodied minds is that cognition may extend beyond one's physical body and include the instruments on which one essentially relies (the mathematician's chalk and blackboard, or today computer are cited as examples) and even other people, when the relationship between them meets certain conditions of prolonged intimacy. As Thomas Fuchs and Hanne De Jaegher explain the theory:

> Research into the 'social brain' has also favoured a third-person paradigm of social cognition as a passive observation of others' behaviour, attributing it to an inferential, simulative or projective process in the individual brain. In this paper, we present a concept of social understanding as an ongoing, dynamical process of participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation. This process may be described (1) from a dynamical agentive systems point of view as an interaction and coordination of two embodied agents; (2) from a phenomenological approach as a mutual incorporation, i.e. a process in which the lived bodies of both participants extend and form a common intercorporality. Intersubjectivity, it is argued, is not a solitary task of deciphering or simulating the movements of others but means entering a process of embodied interaction and generating common meaning through it.[50]

In her article in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on 'Other Minds', Avramides sums up the view of 'interaction theorists' by observing:

> Rather than taking individual agents to be constitutive of social interaction, these interaction theorists take them to be constituted by their interaction with others. While philosophers in ancient Greece raise skeptical questions concerning others, it has been suggested that the problems they raise tend to be 'thin' rather than 'thick' ones. Plato and Aristotle, for example, discuss the value of friendship, but do not ask why we should think others exist to be friends.[51]

We might recall, however, that Aristotle described a friend as 'another self' and that when he was asked, 'What is a friend?' he replied: 'One soul dwelling in two bodies' (μία ψυχὴ δύο σώμασιν ἐνοικοῦσα; Diogenes Laertius 5.20.1). So, too, in Cicero's essay *On Friendship*, Laelius, his spokesman, affirms that a human being naturally 'both loves himself and seeks out another whose mind he may so mingle with his own as almost to make one mind out of two' (*et se ipse diligit et alterum anquirit, cuius animum ita cum suo misceat ut efficiat paene unum ex duobus*; *De amicitia* 81). If Aristotle did not doubt the existence of other minds, as Richard Sorabji stated, it may have been because friendship, for him, an instance of the kind of union of minds that is postulated by theories of distributed cognition and enactivism.[52] If we can have such direct access to the minds of at least some others, then it is impossible to imagine that all other human beings are mere automata.

Greek philosophy, I have suggested, was conducted primarily in the medium of speech and this holds true not just for Socrates but also for those who came after, despite the innumerable books that they composed. Philosophy was an interpersonal affair, and the second-person perspective was native to it. For all

that Euripides may have sought refuge from time to time in a cavern overlooking the sea (if there is any truth to the story), he composed tragedies for his fellow citizens gathered in an open-air theatre. Indeed, the setting itself of his plays, like that of all Greek tragedies and comedies, was in the open; interior scenes were never represented on the classical stage. Philosophy, which from the beginning was intended to improve human lives or, in the medical image that was universally adopted, to heal souls, was a social activity through and through. Of course, people wrote in the privacy of their homes, often at night to the glow of an oil lamp; Quintilian encourages it, for example, precisely because it is often the only time is free of social obligations.[53] But what was written would then be the subject of discussion within the school and often outside. Descartes imagined something different: writing in a mental cave of his own making for readers who for all he could demonstrate had no minds of their own. It was a fiction: he was always writing for others and not just in the 'Objections and Replies'. But it was a fiction enabled and encouraged by the reading practices of his time and it gave rise to a peculiarly paranoid type of narrative and to the problem of other minds that has obsessed philosophers to this day.

This chapter is an extensively revised and expanded version of Konstan (2009a, in Spanish). I am grateful to the editors of *Nova Tellus* for permission to cite parts of that chapter here.

Notes

1 Sorabji (1974: 88).
2 Tsouna (1998: 89 n. 1).
3 See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On the Arrangement of Words* 25; cf. Demetrius, *On Style* 21, Quintilian 8.6.64 and Diogenes Laertius 3.27.
4 See, for example, Blondell (2002) and Pérez Cortés (2004).
5 Col. VIa, trans. Konstan et al. (1998: 101).
6 See Strauss Clay et al. (1993) and Németh, Chapter 2 in this volume.
7 Grafton and Williams (2006: 33).
8 Grafton and Williams (2006: 34), citing Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 14.10-14 (mistakenly identified on p. 299 n. 35).
9 Heylbut 42.13-18; trans. Konstan (2006).
10 Snyder (2000: 2).
11 Grafton and Williams (2006: 34, quoting Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 18.10-24).

12 Grafton and Williams (2006: 39).
13 Descartes (1996: 12).
14 Watt (1957: 188).
15 Watt (1957: 195–6).
16 Watt (1957: 198).
17 Proust (1954: 83).
18 Descartes, First Meditation (1996: 15).
19 Descartes, First Meditation (1996: 15).
20 Descartes, Second Meditation (1996: 17).
21 Descartes, Second Meditation (1996: 17).
22 Descartes (1996: 18).
23 Dostoevsky (1943: 139).
24 Dostoevsky (1943: 136).
25 Dostoevsky (1943: 139–406).
26 Wright (1978: 554).
27 Wright (1978: 551).
28 Sábato's novel was translated into English by Harriet de Onis in 1950 under the title, *The Outsider*; interestingly, Camus' novel appeared in English under exactly the same title.
29 Cited in Jamieson (1966: 333–4).
30 Marion (1999: 121).
31 Descartes, First Meditation (1996: 14).
32 Descartes, Third Meditation (1996: 24).
33 Snyder (2000: 22).
34 Descartes (1996: vii).
35 Descartes (1996: vii).
36 Newman (2005); the quotation from Russell is from Russell (1945: 567).
37 Descartes, Third Meditation (1996: 29).
38 Descartes, Third Meditation (1996: 29 and 31).
39 Cavallo (1999: 73).
40 Johnson cites the biography of Marcus in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* 2.1, 2.6, 3.7, 4.10, 8.3, 15.1, 22.5, and Dio Cassius 71.1.2, 71.35.1-2, 6.
41 Johnson (2010: 150).
42 Johnson (2010: 153).
43 See Stevens (1956) and Tyrell (2020: 56–7).
44 Text in Colonna (1938: 365–70); translation (based on text by Herscher) in Lamberton (1986: 306–11, discussion on 148–57). Lamberton observes that the argument 'is dependent primarily upon the Neoplatonic tradition and specifically on Plotinus', but that 'there are words, phrases, and ideas that unavoidably belong to the Christian tradition' (p. 156). Further discussion can be found in Konstan (2009b), on which this paragraph is partly based.

45 Hunter (2005: 127–8).

46 Plutarch, responding to Plato's critique of poetry in his essay, 'How a Youth should Listen to Poems', explains: 'for what is discussed in philosophy, it is obvious to us that the very young enjoy more and are more attentive and manageable in regard to things that do not seem to be said philosophically or in earnest' (14D). He insists, accordingly, that poetry is not simply harmful but contains much that is useful; one has simply to trim away the mythological and dramatic element in it (*to muthōdes kai theatrikon*, 15E), mixing into the residue a suitable dose of philosophical content. Philip, who alludes to Socrates' conversation about literature in Plato's *Phaedrus*, is adopting the strategy that Plutarch recommends.

47 Another figure influenced directly by Descartes' sense of isolation is, of course, Samuel Beckett. See Schulz (1973: 31–6 = chapter 2, 'Beckett and Descartes'); Bennett (2012).

48 Garfield (2019: 7); cf. Gallagher and Zahavi (2008).

49 Avramides (2020a: 1134–5). On the idea of the 'lived position' as a pre-philosophical relation to others, see Avramides (2001: 204, Avramides coined the expression). Cf. Stoll (2018: 79): 'In the lived position, there is no need to take the problem of other minds too seriously since, under such ecologically valid conditions, we already know that others exist and that we can generally apply our mental concepts unproblematically. The business of philosophy is to work out just how this can possibly be the case.'

50 Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009: 465, from the abstract).

51 Avramides (2020b). 'Thin scepticism' raises doubts about whether and to what extent we can know what others are thinking and feeling; 'thick scepticism' entertains the possibility 'that all others apart from myself are automata/zombies – non-thinking, non-feeling individuals who move in a manner similar to the way I move'.

52 For a fuller discussion, see Konstan (2018).

53 10.3.19-27; cf. Ker (2004).

6

The Stoics and Locke on Self

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In this chapter I explore potential parallels between the Stoic notion of 'self' and Locke's, as developed in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, especially for the role which consciousness or self-awareness, personal identity, and self-concern play in both accounts. Locke is not directly affiliated with the revival of Stoicism from 1500 onwards, spearheaded by figures such as Lipsius, nor with the so-called Neo-Stoicism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and his connections to this current of thought are not as strong as those, for example, of his pupil, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury. But he had an excellent knowledge of Cicero and admired especially his *De officiis* (mentioned in IV. iv.8).[1] Though Cicero is not a Stoic himself, he transmitted many Stoic views. Locke also had a strong interest in Seneca, especially in his *Letters* and *On Anger*; he owned Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers* and Plutarch's *Moralia*.[2]

My primary aim, however, is not to address the extent to which, if any, Locke could have been influenced by Stoicism (directly or indirectly, for example via Cudworth, as argued by Whiting;[3] the role of Stoicism in the Platonist tradition often tends to be underestimated). Instead I focus on the question whether for any notion of 'self' to do serious philosophical work, it would have to be reified in the sense of being an ontological entity in its own right.[4] It is precisely, as I argue, in trying to answer this question that a comparison between John Locke and the Stoics will prove fruitful. Yet, the treatment of this question does allow us to reinvestigate some potential connections and to detect how Locke is grappling with Stoic ideas. In order to arrive at this non-reified self and its function, I start from a summary of the role of the discourse of 'self' in Stoicism and an analysis of where and how exactly 'self' enters into Locke's exposition.

The Stoics on Self

In previous work[5] I have argued that the Stoics developed the strongest pre-Cartesian model of self, one that, however, does not require that this self be an entity over and above the functions the Stoics typically assign to the soul. Succinctly put:[6]

1.1 Contrary to its Platonic and even Aristotelian counterparts, Stoicism (with the possible exception of Posidonius) endorses a monist view of the human soul and does not rely on irrational parts or functions to account for the passions and irrational behaviour. For the Stoics, either reason functions properly or it does not, and the latter case, not some kind of inner conflict, accounts for irrational behaviour. Thus, the Stoics posit a unified psychological model.

1.2 Second, this unified soul, itself corporeal, is fully embedded in the human body. So, the Stoics see human beings as unified wholes of soul and body, in which each is completely mixed with the other and yet maintains its identity.

1.3 For the Stoics to be rational means to be social (though not the other way around, given that animals too display certain types of sociability), thus a Stoic always sees herself as part of a network of social relations.

1.4 At the next level of reality, according to the Stoics, a human being is completely integrated into the order of the universe. Human reason is literally made of the same substance as the divine principle that structures all of reality.

Now, in nothing I have said so far is the discourse of 'self' particularly in evidence. One can describe all of these features from a third-person perspective as applying to the Stoic analysis of what they call the governing principle of the human soul (the so-called *hēgemonikon*), reason, or volition (*prohairesis*, the term Epictetus adopts). The language of 'self', however, reflects the first-person perspective, when Stoics talk about how human beings relate to themselves and even have the capacity to reflect about their own governing principle.[7] And it is precisely that language of reflexivity that rises to great prominence in later Stoic sources.

In these accounts the turn to oneself serves the goal of happiness, which for the Stoics resides in virtue as the perfect functioning of reason. But, as I have pointed out already, this relation to oneself is never to be separated from the fabric of both one's social relations and the order of the universe. For the Stoics, the discourse of 'self' allows for a constant weighing of traditional values – according to which wealth and social status, for instance, would mistakenly count as good – against

the values which their philosophy prescribes, with virtue as the only good and vice as the only evil.

Locke on Person and Self

If we now turn to Locke, how does 'self' enter into *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*? I will build my analysis in this section and the following on two definitions.[8] The first goes as follows:

> a 'person' is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places, which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and as it seems to me essential to it. (II.xxvii.9)

2.1 In this passage, Locke's language of 'self' is subsumed under 'person'. Hence, for him, 'person' is the central term, which is not the case for the Stoics. As he tells us himself, Locke borrows the term from forensics, where it pertains to the law, to rights and obligations, to questions of accountability, and thus also to rewards and punishment (II.xxvii.18, 20, 26; II.xxviii.30). As such it builds on Roman law.[9] In ancient Stoicism, and especially as it is attested for Panaetius,[10] 'person' has a narrower and more specific use, namely in the sense of a certain role or function a human being can adopt (see also Epictetus' use of *prosōpon*, as in *Diss.* 1.2; 2.10). Seneca, too, preserves the connotation of an actor's 'mask' (as in *Ep.* 120.22, *On Mercy* 1.1.6, and *On Tranquility* 17.1).

2.2 In his definition of 'person' Locke deliberately avoids using the notion of substance, unlike Descartes who does adopt the language of essence and embraces the notion of the mind as a 'thinking substance' (*Meditation* VI). 'Substance' as traditionally conceived, and especially in the Aristotelian tradition, is one of Locke's primary targets in his *Essay*; for him, 'substance' is too obscure and too underdefined a notion to do heavy theoretical lifting in human cognition, which does not have access to the inner constitution of things. Locke starts expressing his distrust very early on in his account (as in I.iii.19; see especially II.xxiii-xxiv; xxxi-xxxii; III.vi, x; IV.iv). Thus, he connects personhood with consciousness and not with substance,[11] so neither with the soul nor the human being as such.[12]

2.3 With the claim that this 'thinking being' has reason and reflection we encounter one of two fundamental sources of 'ideas' for Locke: sense-perception

and reflection on the operations of our mind or thinking. Consciousness or self-awareness is at work both in sense-perception and in reflection as the ability humans have to observe their own thinking. Consciousness is thus foundational for Locke's account (already mentioned in I.viii). Or, as he states in the same passage in which our first definition occurs (II.xxvii.9): 'it's impossible for anyone to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive when we see, heat, smell, taste, feel, meditate or will anything, we know that we do so'. ('Perceiving' for Locke refers both to sense-perception and reflection on the operations of the mind; see also II.i.1.) As a corollary to this position Locke also states: 'I can speak but of what I find in myself' (II.xi.16). In a striking instance of reflection based on consciousness Locke takes human beings' ability to observe the 'train' or succession of their ideas as the basis for the idea of duration (II.xiv).

2.4 Like Locke, the Stoics assume self-awareness. Through their theory of 'appropriation' (*oikeiōsis*),[13] however, they give a more robust theoretical account and attribute self-awareness to animals as well as human beings.[14] According to this theory all living beings are born with an awareness of themselves and their bodily constitution that allows them to care for that constitution in function of self-preservation, which in a human being who has arrived at the age of reason entails the promotion of this rationality as the pursuit of virtue and happiness. Stoic 'appropriation' thus involves much more than proprioperception; rather, the latter is the basis of the former.[15] Though Locke posits a loose connection between consciousness, substance (as the entire human being), and body, he too claims that consciousness has awareness of *whichever* substance and bodily components it finds itself associated with (as in II.xxvii.10-11, 16-18, 23-5). Weinberg posits that 'consciousness' in Locke is 'a reflexive self-referential perception *internal* to any perceptual act'.[16] Thiel uses 'inherent reflexivity'.[17] Both Thiel and Weinberg reject an explanation in terms of higher-order perception (and this interpretation is endorsed by Boeker).[18] This notion of 'inherent reflexivity' would also fit well, I submit, with the Stoic notion of 'appropriation'.

As we will see, for Lock consciousness serves both purposes of personal identity and self-concern. The Stoics, however, posit self-preservation as the most basic motivational factor in humans and animals, and not the pleasure and pain principle, as Locke does (yet he also claims that God gave humans pleasure and pain in view of self-preservation, II.vii).[19]

2.5 We are now in a position to assess exactly how the language of 'self' enters into Locke's definition of a 'person':

> a 'person' is a thinking intelligent being . . . that can consider itself as itself.

'Self' here refers explicitly to a *relation* expressed in the use of the reflexive pronoun or, in Locke's terms, 'a reflex act of perception' (II.xxx.13; see Weinberg above) – and this point is confirmed by the position of his discussion of 'self' in the treatise, under the heading of 'ideas of relations' (II.xxv onwards). In this context Locke starts from a *comparison* of a thing with itself at different times or with another in a different place (II.xxvii.1). Although Locke does sometimes use the expression 'the self', he uses as often simply the notion of 'self' without article as expressing the relation which the reflexive pronouns indicate, in the same linguistic form as we find in Stoicism (see for ex. II.xxvii.17; xxx.9). Latin, of course, cannot rely on a definite article (but can use expressions such as *ipse*), and our Greek sources do not build their discourse of selfhood on 'the self' either –which, incidentally, Foucault (1984) realized in using his famous phrase 'le souci *de* soi' not '*du* soi'.

Thus, Locke, who also refuses to reify the 'will' (which he considers to be a power, II.xxi.5-6) and to equate self with soul (II.xxvii.6),[20] minimizes the importance of the notion of 'substance' and does not present us with 'the self' as a distinct ontological entity. He adopts an agnostic stance on this issue: just as God in his essence is unknowable to us, we cannot know 'the real essence of a pebble, or a fly or of our own selves' (II.xxiii.35). 'Thinking' is not to be considered the *essence* of the soul but rather an *action* (II.xix.4) and 'self depends on consciousness not on substance' (II.xxvii.17).

In sum, neither Locke nor the Stoics reify the 'self'. Yet this absence of a distinct ontological category does not prevent the discourse of 'self' from playing a very robust philosophical role in Locke's treatise, as it does in Stoicism. We have already seen one respect in which it is crucial, namely, in the notion of self-awareness. So, to which other uses does Locke put his discourse of 'self'?

2.6 As Locke parses it, for a thinking being to 'consider itself as itself' amounts to considering itself as

> the same thinking thing in different times and places.

The question of personal identity or being *the same* is thus central to Locke's discourse of self, in the sense both of how we can distinguish one thinking being from another in a different *place* and how continuity of identity is maintained over *time*. And again these concerns surface already very early on in the treatise (see, for example, I.iii.4-5) and cover also the Christian notion of the resurrection. Such identity can be described in the third person ('the same thinking thing') as

well as the first,[21] and, as in Stoicism, self-language serves the latter perspective. To give another example: 'Whenever a man finds what he calls himself, there I think another may say is the same person' (II.xxvii.26; see also 21).

The Stoics had their own puzzles about identity and, like Locke, appear to have assumed that the impermanence of matter (or material particles in Locke's case; II.xxvii.3) of a living thing does not imply the impermanence of that individual (for the debate around the so-called Growing Argument, see LS28 and Sedley 1982). But such puzzles are not as prominent in their discourse of self as they are in Locke's.

Seneca, however, does address the issue of continuity in one's identity (*Ep.* 121.16). Thiel,[22] who is critical of the relevance of Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* for Locke (by underestimating the evidence for this view, I would argue), claims that in this passage Seneca is not concerned with a human being's identity over time (following Gill).[23] But he leaves out the crucial line (mistranslated in the Loeb version): 'It is me that nature commends to me, and not a boy to me, or a young man, or an older man' (*Non enim puerum mihi aut iuvenem aut senem, sed me natura commendat*). Moreover, Seneca also states: 'I am still the same' (*ego tamen idem sum*).

2.7 A more fruitful comparison, however, can be found, I would argue, in the role *memory* plays in Locke's account of what it means to be oneself, alluded to in the last component of his definition of 'person':

> which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and as it seems to me essential to it.

Succinctly put, it is through memory of one's own past, and exactly as far as that memory extends, that consciousness guarantees personal identity: 'whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions is the same person to whom they belong' (II.xxvii.16, see also 17, 24).[24] This consciousness of past actions does not merely have an epistemological function, by which I mean the role memory plays in the acquisition of knowledge, as in the well-known example from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1.1, that from memory experience is produced. Earlier on in his treatise Locke himself has discussed this function of memory (as, for instance, in I.iii.21 or II.i.2). In his discourse of self, however, Locke uses memory as a form of consciousness to establish personal identity and moral accountability.

Similarly, the later Stoics of the Roman imperial era tease out the relevance of memory for their notion of 'self', albeit, again, without Locke's focus on the

problem of continuity. For lack of a better term, I have coined the phrase 'existential memory' (Thiel uses the phrase 'experience memory'),[25] in order to indicate that the Stoic sage's memory is meant to encompass all the aspects of his or her life; memory is thus an important source of the content of 'self'. The Stoics are primarily concerned with what one might call psychological integrity or a unified self, in the sense that a sage can fully own his past and give all his experiences a place in his life as governed by the goal of reaching maximal consistency of reason in service of virtue or the good.

Seneca provides us with the most fully developed example of this function of memory, in his *On the Shortness of Life* (10-15).[26] He establishes that the past is the only division of time of which one can be certain, or rather of which a sage can be certain: 'It is a mark of a stable and calm mind to be able to go through all parts of its life; the minds of people who are preoccupied, as if they are bearing a yoke, cannot turn and look back' (*Brev. Vit.* 10.5). Moreover, the non-sage who has fallen prey to vice may have entire sections – or should we say 'dark corners'? – of the past on which (s)he'd rather not dwell. Ultimately, a sage can retrieve all of collective history, too, in order to make good use of it (14.1-2) and can also face the future calmly because (s)he will not be afraid of changing fortunes. As in Locke, memory here serves the discourse of 'self', but for a Stoic like Seneca there is more at stake than mere continuity: memory is meant to serve the achievement of virtue, the only good, in the strict sense, which the Stoics acknowledge.

Locke on Care for Self and Happiness

Let us now turn to the second definition which I would like to examine more closely:

> Self is that conscious thinking thing, whatever substance made-up of – (whether spiritual or material simple or compounded it matters not) – which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends. (II.xxvii.17)

3.1 In this passage we do not start from the notion of 'person' but from that of 'self' – note again, not 'the self' – and here, too, Locke brackets the question of substance, but he does posit a 'thinking thing' that is 'conscious', whereby we could assume that 'self' picks out precisely this aspect of what it means to be a person. The primary issue now is not identity and continuity, but rather what we

might call, in line with Foucault,[27] 'care for self/oneself' in being 'concerned' for oneself. Locke himself actually uses the phrase 'care of ourselves' in connection with the pursuit of happiness (II.xxi.52).[28] The emphasis is here on the question of happiness. And this use of 'self', I submit, is much closer to the Stoic perspective (as well as its Platonic-Socratic antecedent),[29] as I have outlined it in the introduction.

3.2 Unlike the Stoics, however, who start from a human being's initial drive towards self-preservation, Locke in his account of happiness, as stated already, starts from pleasure and pain as the primary motivational factors of human action. (Pleasure and pain are so foundational for Locke that he posits them together with thinking and reasoning as the basis for our intuitive knowledge of our own existence, IV.ix.3.) This claim refers his readers back to his earlier treatment of pleasure and pain (from II.xx onwards) and the will as a power (from II.xxi onwards). According to Locke present uneasiness, pain, and the want for an absent good have a much greater hold on human motivation than a more remote greater good (II.xxi.30 onwards). But if happiness is 'the utmost pleasure we are capable of' (II.xxi.43), we should be able to adopt a more long-term perspective as well.

3.3 So far Locke's account of what determines human happiness, with its emphasis on pleasure, stands in stark contrast to the Stoics and their polemic against the Epicureans. But in order to allow for the possibility of taking oneself beyond the immediate perspective of present pain, uneasiness and want, especially in light of the eternal afterlife (II.xxi.38, 60, 70), Locke also states:

> The power to suspend the prosecution of any desire makes way for consideration. There being in us a great many uneasinesses, always soliciting and ready to determine the will, it is natural, as I have said, that the greatest and most pressing should determine the will to the next action; and so it does for the most part, but not always. For, the mind having in most cases, as is evident in experience, a power to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires; and so all, one after another; is at liberty to consider the objects of them, examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others. In this lies the liberty man has; and from the not using of it right comes all that variety of mistakes, errors, and faults which we run into in the conduct of our lives, and our endeavours after happiness; whilst we precipitate the determination of our wills, and engage too soon, before due examination. To prevent this, we have a power to suspend the prosecution of this or that desire; as every one daily may experiment in himself. This seems to me the source of all liberty; in this seems to consist that which is

> (as I think improperly) called free-will. For, during this suspension of any desire, before the will be determined to action, and the action (which follows that determination) done, we have opportunity to examine, view, and judge of the good or evil of what we are going to do; and when, upon due examination, we have judged, we have done our duty, all that we can, or ought to do, in pursuit of our happiness; and it is not a fault, but a perfection of our nature, to desire, will, and act according to the last result of a fair examination. (II.xxi.48; see also 52)

So, the counter-measure to being beholden to present 'uneasiness' is to realize that we are capable of suspending our desires because we are 'at liberty to consider the objects of them, examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others'. I submit that one needs to supply here the basic tenet of Locke's epistemology that we can examine our *perceptions* (see my point 2.3 above). We can then determine the will, that is, make value judgements (or 'judge of the good and evil of what we are going to do'; see also the opening line of II.xxi.49) in light of that assessment, and this determination of our will by our own judgement amounts to our freedom. But once the judgement is made, we cannot but act accordingly.

This method, I would argue, maps very well unto Stoic moral theory.[30] Take Epictetus, for instance, who urges his audience also to suspend desire (as in *Ench.* 2, on initially removing it altogether, perhaps addressed to a beginner; *Diss.* 1.4; 3.13, on refraining from desire as an exercise). In the following passage, he recommends holding off on acting on first impressions:

> With such opposing thoughts [following Socrates' example] you will conquer the impression and not be dragged off by it. But for a start, don't be carried away by its vividness, but say:
>
> > *Wait for me a bit, impression; let me take a look at you and what you are about, let me test you.*
>
> Next, don't let it lead you on by painting a picture of what comes next. Otherwise, it is off and away, taking you wherever it wishes. Instead, confront it with another impression, a fine and noble impression, and dismiss this foul one (*Diss.* 2.18.23-6, trans. Long; see also 3.12; *Ench.* 1, 34).[31]

Here we can posit the Stoic notion of 'impression' as parallel to Locke's 'perception'. Epictetus recommends that one examine one's impressions so as not to be carried away by them. The suspension of desire which Locke recommends is reflected in the phrase: 'Wait for me a little.' As Epictetus tells us elsewhere (as in 3.8), as long as our judgement has not been finalized by assent to the values

expressed in the proposition that accompanies the relevant impression, we can still change course. But once we have given assent, for the Stoics impulse and action according to that judgement (parallel to Locke's 'prosecution' of desires) are bound to follow (on this point, see also Seneca *On Anger* 2.1-4). Hence it is essential for Epictetus that humans have the capacity to hit the pause button, so to speak, between impression and the initial value claims that express it, on the one hand, and assent and impulse, on the other, or again in Locke's terms to 'suspend the prosecution of any desire'. A Stoic like Epictetus would even agree that our freedom lies in such assessments and giving or withholding assent. Though Locke does not rely on the same technical terms as the Stoics do in their psychology, the parallel is striking. From Locke's treatise as a whole we can also derive the reason why he does not adopt the actual Stoic terminology as such. The issue is not so much that he might consider the terminology of the Ancients obsolete (III.ix.10). Rather, he reserves the terms 'judgement' and 'assent' for the weighing of probabilities, a point on which he, again, parts ways with Stoic epistemology. According to the Stoics the sage will give assent only to what is certain and the content of a so-called 'kataleptic impression', which is meant to yield fully accurate and reliable access to reality (LS40).

To sum up the points registered so far, whereas for Locke accountability is connected to his notion of 'person', his discourse of 'self' manifests itself primarily in three areas: (1) in the self-awareness that forms the basis of consciousness; (2) in identity over space and time as anchored in memory; (3) and in the human concern for happiness. In all three areas, there are striking points of contact with Stoicism. Neither view assumes a reification of 'the self' in order for this notion to play an important role. Yet crucial differences should not be overlooked either. First, whereas the Stoics, too, examined the kind of puzzles of identity that captured Locke's interest, their focus on memory in the discourse of 'self' is meant to serve primarily progress towards virtue and happiness. Second, though Locke endorses a form of examining one's values and temporarily suspending one's desires to arrive at proper value judgements, he fully embraces the claim rejected by the Stoics that human beings are primarily motivated by pleasure and pain.

God and Morality

As I pointed out, by establishing a privileged connection between human reason and the divine active principle Stoicism considers a human being's 'self' as both

intrinsically social and fundamentally embedded in the natural order of the universe (1.3 and 1.4 above). Are there worthwhile points of comparison between Locke and the Stoics on these two aspects of the discourse of 'self'?

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke arguably does not take us very far for the question of human sociability, that is, beyond claims that God 'by an inseparable connection, joined virtue and public happiness together' (I.ii.6), or that words are signs that are needed for communication between different people (as in III.i.1).[32] Like Descartes in his *Meditations*, Locke uses the isolated consciousness of a thinking being as his point of departure. Though for my purpose here I will not dwell on this point, the importance of this difference cannot be overestimated. But there are important parallels and connections to be gleaned for the relation between the divine, human beings, and the world. Or rather, it seems that despite his disagreements with them, in this area the Stoics did command some respect from Locke, in his use of the so-called argument from design and the foundation he establishes for morality.

According to Locke we have demonstrative knowledge of the existence of God (see also below), and in this context he includes the so-called argument from design (see also I.iii.9; *Essays on the Law of Nature*, 1654: 109, 133, 151, 153 von Leyden), that the order in the world points to a divine maker. He quotes Cicero (*De leg.* 2.16; IV.x.6) to register this point. It is worth quoting the relevant Cicero passage at some length. I have marked the passage used by Locke with square brackets:

> So in the very beginning we must persuade our citizens that the gods are the lords and rulers of all things, and that what is done, is done by their will and authority; that they are likewise great benefactors of man, observing the character of every individual, what he does, of what wrong he is guilty, and with what intentions and with what piety he fulfils his religious duties; and that they take note of the pious and the impious. For surely minds which are imbued with such ideas will not fail to form true and useful opinions. [Indeed, what is more true than that no one ought to be so foolishly proud as to think that, though reason and intellect exist in himself, they do not exist in the heavens and the universe, or that those things which can hardly be understood by the highest reasoning powers of the human intellect are guided by no reason at all?] In truth, the man that is not driven to gratitude by the orderly courses of the stars, the regular alternation of day and night, the gentle progress of the seasons, and the produce of the earth brought forth for our sustenance – how can such a one be accounted a man at all? And since all things that possess reason stand above

> those things which are without reason, and since it would be sacrilege to say that anything stands above universal Nature, we must admit that reason is inherent in nature. (Trans. Keyes)[33]

In this passage Cicero combines two lines of reasoning, one an argument from perfection, moving from human reason to divine perfect knowledge, and the other an argument from design, that the very order of the universe is indicative of a higher reason. That Cicero is here drawing on Stoic views becomes clear if we compare this passage with the claims of his Stoic character Balbus in the second book of his *De natura deorum*. The ending of the *On Laws* passage echoes a(n in)famous syllogism attributed to the Stoic Zeno, as quoted by Cicero in his other work (*De natura deorum* 2.21): 'that which has the faculty of reason is superior to that which has not the faculty of reason; but nothing is superior to the world; therefore the world has the faculty of reason' (*Quod ratione utitur id melius est quam id quod ratione non utitur; nihil autem mundo melius; ratione igitur mundus utitur*). Locke for his part combines the very same two lines of reasoning, the one from perfection (IV.x.6) and the one from design (IV.x.7), but transposing them from nature or the world to God by quoting Romans 1.20 ('the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made even his eternal power and Godhead').

In his view of ideas of moral relations (II.xxviii), Locke also reflects on the relation between human and divine reason. He distinguishes between three kinds of law: (1) the divine law, as 'the measure of sin and duty' (II.xxviii.8), particularly with an eye to life after death, resulting from the 'light of nature' or the 'voice of revelation'; (2) civil law, which is the 'measure of crimes', governing life, liberty or goods; and (3) the law of 'opinion' or 'reputation', which he also calls the 'philosophical law' as the 'measure of virtue and vice'.

The Stoics would reject Locke's alignment of virtue and vice with 'opinion' and his claim that virtue and vice 'vary according to country and society' (II.xxviii.10). Yet (as he points out explicitly in the preface to the second edition in response to Lowde), Locke does also allow for the possibility that virtue and vice may, in fact, refer to actions that in their own nature are right and wrong and to that extent they are 'coincident with the divine law'. This is how Locke can, then, accommodate a certain respect for 'the heathen philosophers', in a context in which he quotes Cicero on the pairing of virtue and praise (II.xxviii.11). I suggest that he has primarily the Stoics in mind when he states that in these views of the Ancients 'the true boundaries of the law of nature were on the whole

preferred', in line with both human beings' reason and 'their own interest'. In other words, this notion of virtue and vice aligns with the divinely established law of right and wrong, thereby advancing 'the general good of mankind'. Elsewhere, too, Locke praises the Stoic view of natural law,[34] even if he sees the need to surpass it.

So, for his acceptance of the notion of divine Providence and the argument from design, and for his concession that virtue and vice can align with natural law, which in turn reflects divine law, Locke could have found support in Stoicism. Yet there are, again, also fundamental differences in both views. As stated already, the Stoics posit a direct connection between divine and human reason; the latter is literally made of the same stuff as its divine counterpart and hence the Stoic sage can, in principle, adopt the divine perspective.[35] Locke, by contrast, emphasizes the limits of human knowledge (see especially IV.iii), which thus needs to be complemented by revelation for matters pertaining to God and faith (IV.xviii), but in such a way that revelation does not annul reason, which can be considered 'natural revelation' (IV.xix.4).

Locke states that the combination of the 'idea of a supreme being, infinite in power, goodness, and wisdom whose workmanship we are, and of ourselves, as understanding, rational creatures' would be sufficient to 'place morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration' (as in mathematics, IV.iii.18). Yet, in epistemological terms, there still is a gap between the two forms of certain knowledge: 'we have an *intuitive* [immediate] knowledge of our own existence and a *demonstrative* knowledge of the existence of God' (IV.iii.21; see also IV.ix and the argument from design above).

In Stoicism the isomorphism between divine and perfected human reason ultimately also anchors sociability in the community of gods and humans as rational beings. Given that Locke does not accept this isomorphism, he needs to resort to the merely voluntarist claims that God as Providence *made* humans as social creatures (III.i.1) and that He *provided* humans *with* the faculties they needed to make sense of the world (I.iii.12, against the assumption of innate knowledge); or to know duties,[36] to the limited extent they can, and to communicate with one another, as best as they can.

In one remarkable passage Locke even echoes a Stoic rendering of the *power* of reason (see, for instance, Seneca *Ot.* 5.6), only to turn it on its head to underscore the *limitations* of human knowledge:

> Reason, though it penetrates into the depths of the sea and earth, elevates our thoughts as high as the stars, and leads us through the vast spaces and large

> rooms of this mighty fabric, yet it comes far short of the real extent of even corporeal being. And there are many instances wherein it fails us . . . (IV.xvii.9)

Even if, as the Stoics claim, human reason can adopt the perspective of the universe as a whole, from the heavens to the depths of the earthly realm, it remains the case, so Locke avers, that we cannot answer even such basic questions as the 'real extent of corporeal being' and that reason often fails us.

Unlike John Locke, the Stoics did not provide a systematic account of their use of the discourse of self. But Locke's account, insofar as it does not rely on a reified notion of self, can help us make sense, in retrospect, of the role this discourse plays in Stoicism. Some of Locke's concerns (the Christian notions of resurrection and the final judgement, for instance) have no counterpart in Stoicism. Conversely, unlike Locke's version, the Stoic discourse of self builds on the fundamental isomorphism between divine and human reason to present the relation to ourselves as intrinsically social and as embedded in the overall order of the universe. Perhaps we cannot quite state that Locke, in his distinctive stance, was directly influenced by Stoicism; yet there are clear indications that some aspects of this school of ancient thought met with his approval, almost *malgré lui* and that he thought *with* the Stoics. I hope to have shown that the comparison between these two non-reified views of 'self' is mutually illuminating. So, then, it seems that for his notion of self Locke is closer to the Stoics than to the Cartesian *ego* and this realization will help us rethink, in turn, some of the artificial divides between the ancients and the moderns.

Notes

1 For Locke's knowledge of and reliance on this text, see Mitsis (2003), who also draws attention to important Epicurean parallels (see also 2016). Long (1997) focuses on the notions of self-ownership (expressed in *Second Treatise* § 173; see also 123) and private property, as do Hill and Nidumolu (2021), under the heading of self-guardianship. I do not address the topic of self-ownership in this chapter.

2 Nuovo (2008); Hill and Nidumolo (2021: 5–6).

3 Whiting (2008).

4 This inquiry started with a response to Inwood (2005: 321–52, his chapter 'Seneca on Self Assertion'), in Reydams-Schils (2011: 297, also 298 n. 5).

5 Reydams-Schils (2005).

6 Reydams-Schils (2017).

7 On this point, see also Long (1991).
8 Hill and Nidumolu (2021: 14–16).
9 See Justinian *Inst.* 1.2–3.1; Long (1997: 13) and Thiel (2011: 4.2).
10 In Cicero's *De officiis* 1.107-17; Gill (1988).
11 Hill and Nidumolu (2021: 1–19).
12 For a summary, see Boeker (2021: 121–4).
13 For the best current account, see Klein (2016), with extensive bibliography.
14 See also Whiting (2008: section 6); for a discussion of Locke on animals' cognitive abilities, see Weinberg (2016: 46–8).
15 Long (1997: 26); Hill and Nidumolu (2021: 11–13).
16 Weinberg (2016: 27, emphasis added, see also 32–3).
17 Thiel (2011: 116).
18 Boeker (2021: 119–20).
19 On the relation between Locke's hedonism and Stoic traits of his view, see Mitsis (2016).
20 Also Hill and Nidumolu (2021: 18–19).
21 On this point, see also Whiting (2008: 101 n. 2, 'itself as itself') and Weinberg (2016: 147 n. 7).
22 Thiel (2011: 100–2).
23 Following Gill (2006: 43–5).
24 Thiel (2011: 122) states that memory could be considered a 'form of consciousness', with consciousness being the broader notion; see his entire section 4.1 on the importance of memory for Locke.
25 Reydams-Schils (2005: 31–4); Thiel (2011: 125).
26 Reydams-Schils (2005: 32); see now also Németh (2023).
27 Foucault (1984).
28 Hence Taylor's claim (1989: 49) that Locke shows no such concern needs to be nuanced: 'In fact, of course, Locke recognizes that we are not indifferent to ourselves; but he has no inkling of the self as a being which is essentially constituted by a certain mode of self-concern'; see also his chapter 9, which starts from Neo-Stoicism; by contrast, see Thiel (2011: 4.2). For some of the issues with Taylor's assessment of Stoicism, see Reydams-Schils (2017).
29 Reydams-Schils (2005: chapter 1).
30 See also Nuovo (2008: 11–12, on passions as judgements); Mitsis (2016: 168, 171–3).
31 ταῦτα ἀντιθεὶς νικήσεις τὴν φαντασίαν, οὐχ ἑλκυσθήσῃ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς. τὸ πρῶτον δ᾽ ὑπὸ τῆς ὀξύτητος μὴ συναρπασθῇς, ἀλλ᾽ εἰπὲ "ἔκδεξαί με μικρόν, φαντασία· ἄφες ἴδω τίς εἶ καὶ περὶ τίνος, ἄφες σε δοκιμάσω." καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν μὴ ἐφῇς αὐτῇ προάγειν ἀναζωγραφούσῃ τὰ ἑξῆς. εἰ δὲ μή, οἴχεταί σε ἔχουσα ὅπου ἂν θέλῃ. ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἄλλην τινὰ ἀντεισάγαγε καλὴν καὶ γενναίαν φαντασίαν καὶ ταύτην τὴν ῥυπαρὰν ἔκβαλε.

32 In his *Essays on the Law of Nature* Locke does allow for the possibility that 'according to the law of nature all men alike are friends of one another and are bound together by common interests' (1654: 163 von Leyden; see also 195, 205).

33 Sit igitur hoc iam a principio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores deos, eaque, quae gerantur, eorum geri iudicio ac numine, eosdemque optime de genere hominum mereri et, qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, qua mente, qua pietate colat religiones, intueri piorumque et impiorum habere rationem; his enim rebus inbutae mentes haud sane abhorrebunt ab utili aut a vera sententia. quid est enim verius quam neminem esse oportere tam stulte adrogantem, ut in se rationem et mentem putet inesse, in caelo mundoque non putet, aut ut ea, quae vix summa ingenii ratione comprehendantur, nulla[2] ratione moveri putet? quem vero astrorum ordines, quem dierum noctiumque vicissitudines, quem mensum temperatio quemque ea, quae gignuntur nobis ad fruendum, non gratum esse cogunt, hunc hominem omnino numerari qui decet? cumque omnia, quae rationem habent, praestent iis; quae sint rationis expertia, nefasque sit dicere ullam rem praestare naturae omnium rerum, rationem inesse in ea confitendum est.

34 *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1654: 109 von Leyden), with an explicit mention of Seneca, 111; Nuovo (2008: 17); Mitsis (2016: 158–63).

35 See also 1.3, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, 1654: Introduction 4, 113, 199 von Leyden on duties, as discussed by Mitsis (2016).

36 *Essays on the Law of Nature*, 1654: 111, 133, 199 von Leyden; Mitsis (2016: 160–1).

7

Cynic Selves in Lucian and Diderot

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A direct comparison of Lucian and Diderot has seldom, if ever, been made. At first glance, the writer of light satire and the lead editor of the *Encyclopédie* would seem to have little in common. But on reflection, some parallels begin to emerge. Lucian may have rejected the more stable career of a sculptor for the less settled existence of a travelling rhetorician; Diderot passed over the more established professions of the trades, the law and Church for the financial insecurities of writing and translating. The bohemian life of a wandering 'concert orator',[1] may be background for Lucian's continual attention to the interplay between true Greekness and its 'barbarian' or substandard others; ever at the edges of established society, Diderot had to carefully negotiate the ambiguous border between free critique and censorship. As they surveyed their societies, the pervasive corruption of the times (whether of the high Roman Empire or *ancien régime*) afforded each writer much to critique and mock – above all, the inequality, superstition and ignorance they perceived around them. Both were prolific in attacking these and promoting their versions of wisdom or 'enlightenment': Lucian's approximately eighty prose works range across multiple genres and styles; Diderot contributed some 7,000 of the *Encyclopédie*'s 74,000 articles (and its cross references) and experimented with genre in his essays, dialogues and plays.

Both writers' experiments with shifting perspectives, self-reflexivity, metafiction and indeterminacy have been understood as foreshadowing themes of postmodernity.[2] At the same time, both authors consciously play with 'classical' models and traditions – perhaps most of all, those of the ancient Cynics. The received stories of Antisthenes, Diogenes, Crates and others speak of strong personalities who gave up wealth, status and citizenship to wander precariously from city to city, occupying the liminal spaces between belonging

and alienation, city and country, humanity and animality and even between tradition and innovation, for as satirists and wits, the great Cynics drew freely on Homer, tragedy, comedy, philosophy and other genres for their repartee as for their creative literary hybrids. In Lucian's case, a significant number of his dialogues place the spotlight on Cynic figures.[3] As a result, they are among the most important sources for ancient Cynicism: they 'give us the liveliest images we have of what the Cynic classics might have been like, and are the primary means whereby Cynic traditions became part of European literature'.[4] In the later 1700s, they were favourite reading for Wieland, 'the German Lucian' – one of the many to respond to D'Alembert's call for a new Diogenes to champion Enlightenment values. Diderot, also, is happy to associate himself with the moral courage, humour and simplicity of 'Diogenes' but eschews his dirt, asceticism and anarchic shamelessness.[5] His greatest meditation on Cynicism and Enlightenment was never published in his lifetime: *Rameau's Nephew*, with its debate between a bourgeois intellectual ('Moi') and a shameless entertainer and conman ('Lui') is at once a contest about the true nature of Cynicism and of enlightenment generally. As such, *Rameau's Nephew* has been praised as 'the fundamental book of modern cynicism',[6] and as 'arguably the greatest work of the French Enlightenment's greatest writer'.[7]

This chapter will explore issues of Cynic selfhood in *Rameau's Nephew*[8] and a range of Lucian's Cynic works. Both authors present a variety of Cynic selves – to entertain their audiences, but also to stimulate them to look afresh at 'classical' concerns such as the limits and value of knowledge, the function of thought, the dignity and freedom of the self (or their absence), the search for moral paradigms and ends, the relation of happiness and virtue, the tragic or comic significance of life in face of death. Composing satirical dialogues rather than systematic treatises, both authors prize wit over didacticism, even as their ostensible contrast of 'good' and 'bad' Cynic types inevitably goads readers to reflect on which is which. Their final 'message' about the self remains elusive. Despite this caveat, I will venture a more determinate conclusion: Lucian presents his 'good' Cynics as paradigms of the self's true, inner unchangeableness; with his 'bad' Nephew, by contrast, Diderot introduces a totally relational self that would remain for later thinkers a disturbing, if extreme, possibility. With both authors, one detects an undercurrent of evangelization: each in his own ways *suggests* the necessity of Cynicism: each person is, or should be, a 'Cynic' in the best meaning of the word. I will begin with the kaleidoscope of Lucian's Cynic corpus before turning to Diderot's singular work.

Lucian: Selected Cynic Works

Taken individually, Lucian's dialogues and essays often seem transparent, particularly when their characters have allegorical names and a penchant for moralizing. Taken in pairs and groups, conclusions are harder to draw. This is evident when one juxtaposes the two Lucianic works that are thematic precedents for *RN* – *The Parasite* and *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses* (*De Mercede*).[9] The former is a mock-serious praise of the craft and life of the parasite. Following from a general definition of *technē*, Simon proves to Tychiadēs that parasitism *is* a useful synthesis of knowledges: as the most 'royal' craft (23) that transcends even rhetoric and philosophy, it offers the key to success, honor, virtue, and happiness – and all without toil or extensive education. By a torrent of inductions, deductions, allusions and learned readings, Simon persuades his hearer to become a parasite without delay.[10] But in *Salaried Posts*, Lucian's narrator argues the opposite, presenting systematic reasons for his hearer *not* to enter into such voluntary 'slavery' (1) to the rich: his hopes, whether of escaping poverty and gaining luxury, will be crushed; he will be tyrannized by a host of superiors and rivals; he will have to flatter and prance, reselling himself continually for his monthly pay; he will lose *aidōs*, freedom and *eugenēs* (23-4) – his 'dignity', say; in the end, he will be dismissed summarily, older now but still poor. Far better than being a trophy philosopher of the rich (the narrator exclaims) is Cynic poverty, sustained by nature's free lupins, herbs and water (24-5). Many of these ideas recur in *RN*, as does Lucian's play with *aporia* and contradiction: *Moi* does not convince *Lui* with his last appeal to free Cynic poverty, just as *Lui* does not fully convince the narrator that everyone *is* (or should be) a self-interested parasite.

Where *RN* presents two perspectives on Cynicism and insinuates that one should choose the 'winner', as if their encounter were a game of chess, Lucian seems to make his choice much more obvious through two contrasting biographies: that of Demonax, a 'good' Cynic, and that of Peregrinus, a 'bad' or fake one. The former should be a measure (*kanōn*) for the times (Lucian writes), a philosopher who combines the self-possession of Socrates with the wit of Diogenes and Crates: with winning cheer, he makes people laugh as he debunks all false claims to expertise and superiority, whether from sophists, philosophers, prophets, magicians, aristocrats or magistrates.[11] Indeed, this entertaining-educating Demonax furnishes Lucian with a paradigm for how to conduct his own satirical campaign against self-important imposters (*alazōnes*).[12] The greatest offender here is Peregrinus whom Lucian nicknames *Proteus* – a shapeshifter who

constantly changed his appearance, now a Christian, now a Cynic, now a god-to-be, now smokey ash and always a butt for Lucian's mockery. For Lucian, Peregrinus has no conviction or ethical substance: underneath the protean mimicries was nothing but a 'lust for fame'.[13] Diderot's Nephew also longs to be recognized as a 'genius' and he, too, lives out a creed of cynical self-interest. He is not likened by Diderot to Proteus, but *RN*'s epigraph suggests that his mythological paradigm is Vertumnus, god of seasons who could change shape at will.

Lucian's implicit contrast of a virtuous Demonax and vicious Peregrinus is writ large in his broader Cynic corpus, where he tends to categorize Cynics as 'good' (e.g. Cyniscus in *Cynic*) or 'bad' (the masses of beggars in *Fugitives*, *Lapiths* and *Dialogues of the Dead*). This neat categorization has been influential in scholarship on Cynicism and it is perhaps not surprising, then, that it structures Diderot's *Encyclopédie* article, 'Cynique'. In this, he praises Diogenes and his true followers as 'enthusiasts of virtue' (*enthousiastes de vertu*), but condemns the 'false cynics' of later antiquity as 'brigands disguised as philosophers'.[14] The corruption of Cynicism became extreme 'under the emperors':

> Ignorance of the fine arts and contempt for decency were the origin of the discredit into which the sect fell in the centuries to come. All the buffoons, impudents, beggars, parasites, gluttons, and idlers in the cities of Greece and Italy (and there were many of these people under the emperors), boldly took the name of *Cynics*. Magistrates, priests, sophists, poets, orators – all those who had before been the victims of this species of philosophy believed it time to take their revenge; all felt the moment; all raised their cries at once; no distinction was made in the invectives, and the name of Cynic was universally abhorred.

Readers of Lucian may hear echoes of his description of the false philosopher,[15] or of the Acropolis of his day swarming with 'begging-bags and flattery, beards and shamelessness, staves and gluttony, syllogisms and avarice'[16] – or of 'every city' filled with men who abandoned conventional duties for a life of 'barking, gluttony, thievishness, excessive interest in females, truckling, fawning upon people who give them things, and hanging about tables'.[17] Diderot's public 'Cynicism' would always steer close to a more literary Diogenes and socially concerned Demonax, in line with the preferences of a D'Alembert – and Lucian. The vital importance of such cultured Cynicism for Diderot is evident in his exclaiming 'Terre! terre!' upon finishing the *Encyclopédie* – a 'quotation' from Diogenes' rather equivocal response to long books.

In addition to *idealizing* and *satirizing* Cynics, Lucian *mimics* Cynic personae in a great variety of contexts.[18] Here the moralizing tone is not so transparent.

Nevertheless, Lucian's overriding drive is to expose *alazōnes* – charlatans, fakes, hypocrites. Diderot might well judge from such morality plays as *Philosophies for Sale* and *The Fisherman* that the second-century Mediterranean cities swarmed with such cynical imposters who abused the social system for their own gain. The curtain opens in *Philosophies for Sale*, where the motivating 'comic idea' is that Zeus and Hermes have arranged for an auction of philosopher-slaves. All major groups are represented and when 'the Cynic' steps forward for inspection, he advertises himself as a citizen of the cosmos, a liberator, 'prophet' of truth and free speech, teacher of asceticism, of voluntary poverty, shamelessness, solitary independence, and savage, animal happiness (8-10) – all the Cynic 'excellences'. This 'dog' from the Black Sea (i.e. Diogenes) is the genuine article and no *alazōn* but the buyer is not greatly impressed and will not take him for more than two obols – an insulting price that 'Diogenes' does not forget in the dramatic sequel, *Fisherman*.

Here, in three acts, Lucian levels his sights on contemporary philosopher-imposters, with fake Cynics being by far the most prominent. In the first part (1-39), a mob of the major 'classic' philosophers (led by Plato) brings the Syrian Frankness (*Parrhēsiadēs*: Lucian himself?) to trial for mocking them in *Philosophies for Sale*. Lady Philosophy presides in judgment, Diogenes speaks for the prosecution and Frankness defends himself with the help of Truth, Freedom, Free Speech (*Parrhēsia*), Investigation and Proof (17). Denying that he ever insulted Philosophy herself, Frankness argues that his satirical truth-telling was directed against the philosopher-*alazōnes*: *they* brought Philosophy into disrepute by usurping her name and not matching their words with deeds. Loudest among these are the fake Cynics who sport long beards, carry staves, mouth the phrases of Diogenes but stash in their travelling bags (*pērai*) gold, perfume, razors, mirrors and dice (45). What these fakes seek is honor (31) – and even more, money, as they flock to the dinner tables of the rich.[19] Before such truth-telling, Plato, Diogenes & Co. drop the charges. Not only is Frankness universally acquitted but in the final 'act' (46-52), he is commissioned to go 'fishing' for fake philosophers and the morality play ends with them lured to their deaths with bait of figs and gold.

The whole reveals itself essentially as an allegory of Lucian's own satirical practice, as he seeks (in the words of Diderot's *Moi*) to 'show who are really good and unmask the villains'.[20] A brief survey of some Lucianic works reveals how often Cynic figures become ethical paradigms, as they unmask fakes and free minds for the one redeeming thing – laughter. In *Zeus Cross Examined*, Cyniscus questions Zeus about the meaning of destiny, fate and the Fates: his *parrhēsia* (5)

is so audacious that he verges on *hybris* (9), backing Zeus into inconsistencies, frustrations and veiled threats that Cyniscus blithely brushes off. For all his patronizing statements that Cyniscus cannot know 'everything', it is clearly Zeus who is the unenlightened one – even if he is not explicitly called a 'fake' or an object of mere superstition.[21]

The *Icaromenippus* also takes its main character into heavenly regions. Menippus' fabulous journey begins in despair and ends in joyful scepticism. On earth, he realizes that wealth, honor, power and 'all' human things are 'ridiculous (*geloia*), trivial and insecure'. So, too, are the higher teachings of philosophers, marred by sheer plurality and unresolved antimonies (8-9).[22] As he flies to heaven for new enlightenment, a panoramic vision of the earth and mankind confirm that human life is a 'ridiculous' mass, a *kykeōn* and cacophony (12-17). At journey's end, the gods' judgment ratifies this judgment (29-33): Zeus will destroy all the schools. Now, as if suddenly unburdened by false expectations, Menippus rejoices – and hurries home to tell of this 'good news' (*euaggelioumenos* 34). On its surface, the story contrasts the 'good' scepticism of Menippus with the 'bad' dogmatism of other philosophers. Yet Menippus seems blithely dogmatic in his rejections, and whether *he* is to be included among the philosophers who (as if Cynics to a man) 'shout, go dirty, take cold baths, walk about barefoot in winter, wear a filthy mantle and like Momus carp at everything the others do' (31), is not stated. Furthermore, the whole is clearly a fantastical tale: his friend first feels mocked (2) and only gradually warms to the 'truth' of the story (3) – or perhaps to his role as sympathetic listener. Do such hints suggest that Menippus' deconstruction of human knowledge should include itself also? If so, Lucian may slyly develop Menippus into a Pyrrhonist sceptic who denies *all* knowledge claims, including the claim that there is no knowledge. At the same time, Lucian's Menippus achieves an end higher than laughter: the world may end but the Cynic can *laugh* at the spectacle, and help others to laugh.[23]

Cynic strength of character that can laugh at universal failure: such an ethical *telos* may be plausibly abstracted also from Lucian's various journeys to Hades (*katabaseis*). In the *Downward Journey* (*Kataplous*), penniless Cyniscus and Micyllus, a poor cobbler, happily join Hermes on the road to Hades and help him on the way by cheerfully driving on the tyrant Megapenthes to his rightful punishment. In life, his impressive wealth, dress and bodyguards masked his inner savagery (16-17, 26) and scarred soul (28). Micyllus gleefully anticipates the equality which Hades will impose on all his ilk, when 'the tables are turned, for we paupers laugh while the rich are distressed and lament' (15). Again, in the

Menippus, the Cynic hero journeys to Hades and chirpily reports back how the rich and powerful suffer there: there the false front of wealth is stripped off (12), Mausolus lies not in his great Mausoleum but in a little hole (17), Diogenes laughs mockingly at Sardanapalus, Midas and other tycoons (18) and the democracy of Hades has passed a decree to single out the rich for special punishment (20). All this is supposed to be hilarious and as Menippus rises back to life, Teiresias gives him the sage advice to avoid the vain cant (*lēros*) of philosophers: 'make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a great deal and taking nothing seriously' (21).[24]

These selections illustrate three Lucianic themes that have counterparts in Diderot's *RN*. First is laughter at potentially everything – a laughter that hovers between mockery and mirth. A dominant target of ridicule are the rich and powerful: so prevalent is the trope that Lucian's work has been read as evidence of a virulent alienation in the second-century empire – analogous, very approximately, to that in pre-revolutionary France.[25] And if Diderot was the chief Encyclopedist, Lucian, too, has his scenes of universal vision: Icaromenippus surveys the world; *all* types of philosophers come forward for sale, or for baiting; in Hades, the Cynic hero sees *all* the legions of the dead. Perhaps most 'classical' and influential on later writers is Lucian's version of the Cynic-Stoic image of human life as a pageant or parade:

> So as I looked at them [the crowds of the dead in Hades] it seemed to me that human life is like a long pageant (*pompē*), and that all its trappings are supplied and distributed by Fortune (*Tychē*), who arrays the participants in various costumes of many colours. Taking one person, it may be, she attires him royally, placing a tiara upon his head, giving him body-guards, and encircling his brow with the diadem; but upon another she puts the costume of a slave . . . And often, in the very middle of the pageant, she exchanges the costumes of several players; instead of allowing them to finish the pageant in the parts that she had been assigned to them, she reapparels them, forcing Croesus to assume the dress of a slave and a captive, and shifting Maeandrius, who formerly paraded among the servants, into the imperial habit of Polycrates . . . When the time of the pageant is over, each gives back the properties and lays off the costume along with his body, becoming what he was before his birth, no different from his neighbour. (16)

Despite having passed into cliché, the simile remains a suggestive one concerning Lucian's understanding of the self. Roles are assigned equally to everyone and while these different roles are temporary and contingent, they nevertheless determine one's station and self, for a time: one *is* the character given by Fortune and freedom is exercised best by those who play their parts –

not by those who don roles not theirs – like the *alazōn* Peregrinus Proteus. Lucian's Peregrinus foreshadows the paradigm that Diderot fairly creates in his Rameau, the protean self who can play *any* part. But in general Lucian's characters are sharply defined and fixed in their roles: they can rise above the 'parade' altogether, recognize the power of Fortune and have the strength to detach themselves from all contingencies, including the need to play artificial roles. In Hades, Olympus and everywhere in between, Lucian's Cynics can laugh at events and puppet masters, because they alone are free and self-sufficient: they alone have their centre in themselves or (in metaphysical terms not used by Lucian) are self-moving substances unchanged by external relations.

Diderot: Rameau's Nephew

The Cynic selves in Lucian's works are typecast, one-dimensional and little individualized: complexity arises at the level of narrative and between compositions.[26] For some readers, however, the two characters of Diderot's *RN* may revisit Lucian's contrast between 'good' and 'bad' Cynics. The narrator (*Moi*) is a man 'of substance', with family, profession, status and the virtues of moderation, plain sense and self-dependence that D'Alembert (and others) associated with 'Diogenes'. He is a creature of habit: he begins by describing his practice of taking walks in the Palais-Royal, following his random thoughts. It is here, among the chess tables of the Café de la Régence that he had a most singular encounter with the nephew of the composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. The nephew Jean-François Rameau (*Lui*) is (in the narrator's judgment) 'one of the weirdest characters in this land of ours', a creature of paradoxes and strangely blended opposites: his mind is 'a compound of the highest and the lowest, good sense and folly';[27] in physical appearance he is sometimes as emaciated as a Trappist monk, other times as fat as a Cistercian, now as dapper as a gentleman, now as ragged as a beggar.[28] He has the loudest voice ('what awful lungs!'[29]) yet as the dialogue progresses he 'speaks' just as often through silent pantomime. This Nephew has the most variable style (both sublime and casual[30]), the most various residences (garret, tavern, street, friends' houses, respectable houses, stables) and the most variably mercurial moods, as he 'lives for the day, gloomy or gay according to circumstances'.[31] This Nephew seems in constant motion and will claim that he 'never gets tired',[32] and yet is 'always the same'.[33]

A model of inconsistency ('nobody is less like him than himself'), this Nephew is so energizing and fascinatingly paradoxical that the narrator seeks

him (or his ilk) out 'once a year'.[34] And yet, he does not think highly of such 'queer birds' (*ces originaux*) and in the dialogue itself is often pained by the Nephew's amoralism. The narrator's wavering between fascination and condemnation inspires questions in the reader. Is Rameau a bad man? Or is he a paradigm of honesty – a needed gadfly for stagnating, self-deceived selves like the narrator? The narrator himself suggests this with his almost programmatic statement: Rameau belongs to those singular originals who 'break the tedious uniformity that our social conventions and set politenesses have brought about'.[35] By his shocking ebullience, Rameau 'stirs people up . . . makes them take sides, brings out the truth, shows who are really good and unmasks the villains'. Indeed, he 'restores to each of us a portion of his natural individuality'.[36] This main question that the dialogue poses may indeed be the dominant one for all modern encounters with the challenge of Cynicism: do figures like the stimulating, convention-smashing and (allegedly) truth-exposing Nephew really restore the narrator from habitual tedium to his true self – and if so, what might that 'true' and 'natural individuality' be?

After framing his narrative, the speaker proceeds to the dialogue with Rameau. The torrent of talk is dominated by the Nephew but it hangs upon a central incident. Rameau has just been banished from the Bertin household for an ill-judged witticism, or (as he puts it) a momentary lapse when he showed 'a bit of taste, intelligence and reason';[37] with one comic mistake, he has suffered a change of fortune and wanders about now, one of the failures of life.[38] The incident crystallizes the condition of the Nephew and his protestations regarding the necessity of cynicism. His position is that of a parasite on aristocratic houses: for 'bed, board, coat, waist-coat, breeches, and shoes, plus one *pistole* per month',[39] he takes on the role of what he often terms the 'fool' or 'jester' (*le fou*).[40] Able to read any situation, adapt himself to any mood and ingratiate himself with *Monsieur*, *Madame* or *Mademoiselle*, telling stories, singing, arguing, acting, imitating, cajoling, lying, flattering, promising, bullying, the Nephew has no trade or respectable knowledge whatsoever,[41] and yet can secure a living from the super-wealthy by his talent, perhaps even 'genius' for mimicry and manipulation.[42]

A conman and proud, the Nephew pursues a peculiar trade and life. Yet, he claims that his singular condition is in fact representative of all and that he alone is honest in facing the truth: all individuals, behind façades of useful work and social duty, are in the business of pleasing others to gain their bread.[43] The only exception might be the sovereign king – though here the narrator completes the Nephew's argument as if it were his own, contending that the king too must 'take

up a position', performing pantomimes before his mistress and God.[44] The vision of human life as 'pantomime' is as resonant as Lucian's pageant but now in place of a 'long pageant' of separate figures there is a hierarchy, or rather, web of dependence, without Fortune (or God) to choreograph the whole. Here the narrator's echo of the Medieval dictum that everyone, from serf to king, has their *dominus* would be inverted by Diderot in *Jacques the Fatalist* when Jacques quips, 'everyone has his dog: The Minister is the King's dog, the first Secretary is the Minister's dog, the wife is the husband's dog, or the husband is the wife's dog.' More abstract would be the Hegelian, Marxist and other theories of alienation and *ressentiment* that directly or indirectly take the Nephew's position as representative of the modern self, enmeshed in capitalist structures of many-sided exploitation.[45]

Lubricating the system is money – the only real value, and before a sovereign *louis d'or*, the Nephew performs a pantomime of ironic reverence.[46] It is the inner meaning of the 'wisdom of Solomon – drink good wine, blow yourself out with luscious food, have a tumble with lovely women, lie on soft beds. Apart from that the rest is vanity'. What about patriotism, helping friends, returning favours, productive labour, social responsibilities, raising children? The narrator asks, optimistically sketching the link between happiness and the virtues of helping the unfortunate, supporting family, working honorably.[47] All 'vanity', the Nephew scoffs. Here his praise of money and luxury places him on the side of the classical Aristippus rather than Diogenes and he certainly does not reject money as merely conventionally valuable.[48] The value of money may rest solely on social agreement and have no natural intrinsic worth. Yet it allows one to escape the violence of nature and its ramifications the social jungle: 'in nature all the species feed on each other, and all classes prey on each other in society'.[49]

The reductive individualism of the Nephew's quasi-Hobbsian *physis* comes to a point in his insistence on hunger as the fundamental reality: everything he (and everyone) does and says is to satisfy the relentless, daily demands of the belly: *Ingenii largitor venter*.[50] What goes in must come out, and the Nephew illustrates how he consciously lives according to the basic law of nature, before which all are equal: 'the most important thing is to evacuate the bowels easily, freely, pleasantly and copiously every evening. *O stercus pretiosum*! That is the final outcome of life in every sphere.'[51] The mock-serious praise of shitting as the most important activity, goal and 'outcome' of the day and the life would certainly be shocking to contemporary audiences who expected their Cynics to follow the polished exemplars set by Bayle, D'Alembert, Prémontval, Wieland and Diderot himself.[52] Nevertheless, the Nephew's naturalism definitely has limits. He does

not perform his toilet in the Tuileries, sleep in the vestibules of churches, masturbate on the streets, satirize the rich to their faces, let alone break the law.[53] Though his admiration of *le grand criminel* may have influenced Goethe's notion of the 'demonic' and Hegel's critique of Romantic glorifications of evil,[54] in *RN* it remains verbal only: his alienation drives him to fit into the crevices of society, not to break the social contract outright.

Nevertheless, his praise of bowel movements definitely marks Rameau as a Cynic who takes 'enlightened', scientific materialism and other ideals to a vicious, unexpected extreme:[55] in his shockingly free truth-telling, the free exchange of labour (facilitated by money) serves an ideology of tyranny and subordination;[56] living in accordance with nature and reason amount to crafty scheming after carnal satisfactions; daring to know (as in Kant's *sapere aude*) culminates not in learning 'to reason correctly' but in the tricks and 'idioms' of the trade; art and literature are useful merely for perfecting the art of appearances; the sociability and reciprocal utility underlying civil society culminate in gossip, wit and being 'pretty, amusing, and attractive';[57] a knowingly cynical heteronomy becomes the only possible autonomy; the rejection of Platonic soul, Christian dogma, Cartesian 'thinking substance' (the self as *res cogitans*) and other absolutes leads to the relativism of cynical self-interest. The Nephew is indeed the *reductio ad absurdum* of central Enlightenment values: Reason, Nature and Freedom take on a manic quality as embodied in him – analogous to the ancient understanding of Diogenes as a 'Socrates gone mad.'[58]

If the manic Nephew embodies Diderot's own fears of the incoherence of the Enlightenment's self-understanding, he dramatizes the contradiction more obviously in the contrast of his two characters: *Moi*, again, represents the claims of conventional morality, with its assertion of objective values, moral freedom and the happiness of virtue; the unconventional amorality of *Lui* is rooted in the deterministic materialism of Newtonian science, which makes of man little more than an alimentary tube or puppet.[59] This dualism, foreshadowed by the ancient Cynic opposition of self and Fortune, crystallized in Kant's system and so typical of the Enlightenment, dominated Diderot's thought.[60] It is fascinating how he translates this central Enlightenment dichotomy (freedom-necessity) into a debate about the truth of Cynicism. For at both the beginning and end of the dialogue, both characters invoke Diogenes as *their* ideal self and ethical paradigm.[61] Here the dialogue form allows Diderot to go beyond mere juxtaposition and to suggest the mutual imbrication of his two contrasting Cynic selves.

Thus, in the initial interchange,[62] the narrator's opening gambit ('What have you been up to?') elicits from the Nephew the core of his ethical Cynicism: the

satisfaction of natural, necessary bodily needs, as they arise – what 'everybody' does. Yet such satisfaction occurs only in society, and in Paris Rameau must shave to earn his crust. 'A mistake,' the narrator quips, inspired by the ancient trope of the sage's beard. Playing along, the Nephew launches into an encomium of his own statuesque beauty – with overtones, perhaps, of the 'noble savage' and a distant echo of Epictetus' praise of the magnificent Cynic body.[63] For his part, the narrator is put in mind of statues of 'Caesar, Marcus Aurelius and Socrates' – prominent paradigms for the age of reason and enlightened despots (*rois philosophiques*). The Nephew deflates the moment by placing himself-as-Diogenes next to Phyrne the prostitute instead: quick-and-easy sexual satisfaction is part of *his* Cynicism. The Nephew's 'impudence' thus pushes the bounds of civilized discourse and the narrator's expectations. In all, the opening interchange typifies how the Nephew will tease the narrator as *Monsieur le Philosophe* and 'Cato', prodding him to exchange his Cynic-Stoic respectability for the truer folly (*foi*) of Rameau.

Towards the end, the narrator makes a determined effort to reassert *his* moral Diogenes. Diogenes was 'the one person free to do without pantomime . . . the philosopher who has nothing and asks for nothing'; he could forgo patrons and clothing, laugh at his poverty and like 'the savage' turn for satisfaction 'to the earth, animals, fish, trees, plants, roots, streams'; he was not ungodly ('the Cynics were the Carmelites and Cordeliers [i.e. Franciscans] of Athens'), nor without worldly honor (Lais and Phryne offered themselves to him for free); by contrast, Rameau pays a heavy 'price' for his luxuries.[64] Unpersuaded, Rameau retorts that this Diogenes is an 'animal' who 'suffers' meaninglessly; better to get 'good bed, good food, warm clothes . . . [by] charity than have to work for them'. Both the pious ideal and brusque critique jostled within Diderot's own mind: caught between two almost impossible extremes of Cynicism, he ends the dialogue by simply letting the two part ways. Rameau's final words – 'He laughs best who laughs last' – answers nothing: who does in fact get the last laugh?

First readings may respond by choosing a winner, as if both characters were all-of-a-piece, representing 'good' and 'bad' options: *either* the nephew *is* everyman, more insightful, honest, and courageous than the admiring but weak narrator; *or* the narrator is the more grounded, thoughtful and courageous one, as he mediates between the 'carnival' of reason and reasonable demands of society. A dialectical, Hegelian-style response regards both selves – *Moi* the solid but inarticulate, 'simple consciousness' (*einfaches Bewußtsein*), *Lui* the hyper-articulate man of 'pure culture' who reflects society's contradictions in his own 'disintegrated consciousness' (*zerrissenes Bewußtsein*) – as incomplete and

needing rapprochement or synthesis.[65] Such a rapprochement has often been noticed in *RN* itself, as both characters progressively modify their language. What I suggest here is that *both* Diderot's 'Cynic' characters contain elements of two basic understandings of the self – the self as substantial and as relational.

The *first* notion reflects a psychology typical of Enlightenment thought and illustrated by, for example, Lucian's characters: the self is a solid, substantial, 'atomic' entity with its own nature that remains fundamentally unchanged by circumstances (both social and spatiotemporal). The Nephew also understands himself in this mould: 'I am myself and I remain myself, but I act and speak as occasion requires,'[66] a claim that suggests a commanding inner core (e.g. reason). In other moments, his self-contempt[67] is phrased in such a way as to suggest that he feels he has not lived up to his ideal self, inner paradigm, or true nature – for instance, as a conman of genius.[68] Oppositely, the Nephew can give a mock-serious defence of his 'dignity' as something inherent to himself, that persists *completely* outside the network of social recognition.[69]

Yet, later Rameau is happy to sell his dignity for the right price, insisting only that he does so freely and of his own accord.[70] Here are psychological complexities that may confound Kant's binary distinction between inherent 'dignity' and social 'price'. They introduce the *second* understanding of the self as relational, social and hence fluid and unstable. Where Hobbes asserts that a person has no inherent dignity or 'worth' separate from the 'price' assigned to him by others' judgement, the Nephew speaks of society as 'a kind of credit system – no intrinsic value, but value conferred by public opinion'.[71] The Nephew's value, like that of a coin, rises and falls with the estimation of others – most notably that of his patron. Enmeshed in the world of gossip, the Nephew has not the courage of a Diogenes or Rousseau to retire to his garret to 'discover [his] real self' in solitude.[72] As if convinced that the 'real' self has no solid core beyond hunger and a will to survive, he lectures the narrator 'that in a matter as variable as behaviour there is no such thing as the absolutely, essentially, universally true or false, unless it is that one must be what self-interest dictates'.[73] When the narrator ventures that he might have 'great refinement of soul', the Nephew scoffs: 'I? Not at all. Devil take me if I really know what I am,' for he shifts from moment to moment, speaking 'things as they come to me', with 'freedom of speech' unbounded by any respect for truth.[74]

This *parrhēsia* (freedom of expression) spills well beyond the verbal and one central motif of *RN* is the Nephew's seemingly universal powers of mimicry. The roles he can play are far more varied than street-performer Diogenes or Lucian's Peregrinus: great man, tragic protagonist, pimp, virgin, violinist, keyboard-

player, puppet, Stentor, bassist and string players, an abbé, his own wife.[75] When worked up, he is able to mimic *everything* and *everybody*: 'a young girl . . . priest, king, tyrant . . . slave', all sorts of instruments, indeed, 'a whole orchestra, a complete opera-house'.[76] At the dialogue's climax, the whole café gathers round to watch the Nephew represent the totality of culture *and* nature:

> Everything was there . . . What didn't he do? He wept, laughed, sighed, his gaze was tender, soft or furious: a woman swooning in grief, a poor wretch abandoned in the depth of his despair, a temple rising into view, birds falling silent at eventide, waters murmuring in a cool, solitary place or tumbling in torrents down the mountain side, a thunderstorm, a hurricane, the shrieks of the dying mingled with the howling of the tempest and the crash of thunder; night with its shadows, darkness and silence, for even silence itself can be depicted in sound. By now he was quite beside himself . . . [Then he fell silent and he] mechanically wiped his face. (*RN* 104)

The possibility of the self as universal mimic clearly fascinated Diderot. It represented one aspect of his *own* self, as a *diable de ramage*, 'a bird who can imitate human voices . . . [and metaphorically] a person with multiple voices, in the literal sense of the word, and without the will to bend them back into a single, well-rounded profile'.[77] Again, in *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, Diderot would write that great actors can play all parts without being touched emotionally by any. In these terms, Rameau seems the greatest of actors, and yet what is at the centre seems no self-possessed faculty of 'reason': when most characteristically himself, at the height of performance, he is 'beside himself' and when it is over, his mechanical wiping suggests a puppet with no inner control or purpose – no settled identity of his own. He can become 'everything' yet *is* nothing other than the bundle of contradictions witnessed by the narrator. Montaigne's persona, full of contradictions and 'inner instability'[78] is standardly said to move in this direction, and out of the Enlightenment focus on useful sociability emerged the trope of the civilized self as an *actor* and *mirror* of others' judgements:[79] yet such precedents are brought to a perplexing climax in Rameau, an individual without defining individuality. Whether or not he is a true 'original' and should be 'regarded as one of the great creations of literature',[80] if he is indeed a relational self who exists only in his manifestations, then he may be ancestor to many disparate heirs: Hegelian *Geist*, Nietzsche's Dionysian will, the socially constructed self, the self of endless mimetic desire. If so, Diderot's creation has ramifications beyond his immediate conception. Does Rameau have the 'last laugh' or does the whole encounter jolt the narrator (and us) to

reaffirm that his 'natural individuality' is *not* infinitely malleable nor without determinate essence?

Conclusion

Let us attempt some conclusions regarding Cynic selves in our two elusive authors. In the second-century Roman world as in eighteenth-century Paris, Cynicism was an ancient phenomenon with developed traditions which Lucian and Diderot found stimulating and exasperating in equal measure. Both admired aspects of 'classic' Cynicism – the freedom of speech, independence of spirit, criticism of superstitions, honest exposure of 'cynical' hypocrisy, wit, laughter. At the same time, both shied away from the dirt, shamelessness, and savage naturalism that were also part of traditional Cynic lore. Lucian may accept figures like Diogenes and Crates because safely ensconced in the 'classic' past: among contemporary Cynics, only Demonax is equal to those hallowed paradigms, while the majority are fakes unworthy of the title they usurp. Diderot's Nephew represent both the fascinating and repulsive sides of Cynicism but what we are to make of him, Diderot does not say. One possibility is that a final decision between Nephew and narrator cannot be made: if the author of *RN* is indeed the 'Menippus of the Enlightenment',[81] then he may sometimes revisit the radical scepticism implied in Lucian's *Icaromenippus* and *Dialogues of the Dead*. This option seems even more relevant for Diderot in *RN*: *Moi* and *Lui* are internally fractured to a far greater degree than (say) Lycinus and Cynicus in Lucian's *Cynic*. These and other Lucianic characters are more one-dimensional and subject to allegory, as if reducible to a determinate core: most of all, his Cynic heroes suggest selves that are simply *themselves*, unbreakable atoms of self-sufficient energy that remain unchanged despite Fortune's assignations. Indeed, Lucian seems to love depicting such characters' irrepressible humour as if it were the last laugh in all cases.

Relational versus substantial selves: such a broad judgement on two prolific, many-sided authors amounts simply to the suggestion that Lucian, for all his hints of postmodern elusiveness, looks back more to the more fixed character-types of Homer, Aristophanes and even Plato; Diderot, for all his debts to Christian Platonism and Lockean individualism, looks ahead to the fracturings of the self at the hands of Hegel, Nietzsche and others. In exploring issues of selfhood, both authors fasten upon Cynicism as fundamental, as if only the homeless Cynic – whether Peregrinus or Demonax, Rameau or the *flaneur*

narrator – can really force us to attend to the thing itself. In doing so, Lucian's Cynic heroes and Diderot's anti-heroes may suggest that for both writers, each individual is, and should become, the 'Cynic' that he or she in fact is – whether moral or amoral, dogmatic or sceptical. If so, both regard Cynicism (in some form) as a necessity, as if they were both were giving their own subtle response to D'Alembert's proclamation: 'Every age, and ours above all, would need a Diogenes; but the difficulty is in finding men courageous enough to be one, and men courageous enough to suffer one.'

Notes

1 Bracht Branham (1989: 3).
2 For a postmodern Lucian, see Ní Mheallaigh (2014: 1–38). For a postmodern Diderot, see for example, Bewes (1997: 111–15, 199–203) and Stanley (2007).
3 For example, *Demonax*, *Peregrinus*, *Philosophies for Sale*, *Fisherman*, *Fugitives*, *Menippus*, *Icaromenippus*, *Dialogues of the Dead*, *Zeus Cross-Examined*, and *Cyniscus* (whose authenticity Bracht Branham, for one, defends, 1997: 17 n. 54; cf. 1989: 237 n. 4).
4 Bracht Branham and Goulet-Caze (1997: 16).
5 On D'Alembert's *Essay sur la société des gens de lettres et des grands* (1753) and its contemporary influence, see Shea (2010: 23–44).
6 Niehues-Pröbsting (1997: 350). Sloterdijk (1983) does not discuss *Rameau's Nephew* at any length, surprisingly.
7 Cronk (2006: vii) and cf. Wilson (1972: 419).
8 Henceforth, abbreviated as *RN*. References are from Tancock's Penguin translation.
9 All translations of Lucian are from the Loeb translations by A. M. Harmon. Unlike Horace's Second Satire (taken by O'Gorman, 1971, as *RN*'s interpretive key), Lucian's *Saturnalia* (a series of letters between poor and rich) does not afford obvious structural parallels to *RN*.
10 I have found only three brief comparisons of Lucian's *Parasite* and *RN*. For Morley, Lucian is 'the Voltaire of the second century' and 'his satire is vivid, brilliant, and diverting. Yet everyone feels that Diderot's performance, while equally vivid, is marked by greater depth of spirit' (1886: 355–6). Crocker agrees that Diderot's Rameau 'far [surpasses] his prototypes in Plautus, Terence, and Lucian' (1966: 265). For Chapman, by contrast, Diderot's 'essay [*sic*] brings out a very striking resemblance between the social systems of Rome under the Caesars and of France under Louis XIV and Louis XV. . . . Yet Diderot has none of Lucian's moral passion' (1931: 73–4; cf. Wilson, 1972: 421).
11 For detailed references, see Bracht Branham (1989: 61–2). Jones sensibly notes that the Cynicism of Lucian's Demonax is 'of the milder kind' (1986: 31).

12 On this, see, e.g., Anderson (1976: 106–9) and Richter (2017: 412).

13 22 (*erōs tēs doxēs*).

14 'Les faux cyniques furent une populace de brigands travestis en philosophes.'

15 *Dialogues of the Dead* 10.7 (368).

16 *Fisherman* 42.

17 D.L. 6.38. O'Gorman (1971: 55) contains references to Diderot.

18 For this threefold approach, cf. Niehues-Pröbsting (1979: 211–13).

19 34-6, 40-1, 46, 47 et al.

20 *RN* 35.

21 In Hall's analysis, Lucian's iconoclasm is all-inclusive but does not extend to *contemporary* religious practice (Alexander and Peregrinus excepted) (Hall, 1981: 19–200).

22 Some of the antimonies (e.g. space and time limited or not; the divine exists or not) anticipate those that made Kant despair of 'pure reason'.

23 Bracht Branham: 'Menippus stands out . . . as perhaps the most succinct embodiment of those qualities that distinguish Lucian the writer' (1989: 13).

24 Relihan's interpretation of the *Dialogi Mortuorum* is more paradoxical and 'post-modern':

> The only philosophical position presented, defended, or parodied in the *Dialogues of the Dead* is that of Cynicism itself; specifically, Menippus' peculiar application of it. It is shown to be true and not true, meaningful and meaningless, a cause for hope and a cause for despair. This seems to be part of a general desire on Lucian's part to create works of comic criticism that do not allow the reader any one fixed or certain vantage point, or any privileged attitude or point of view. (1987: 203)

25 Baldwin argues that the 'consistent' hostility of Lucian's Cynics' towards the rich (1961: 201) is not a 'purely literary cliché' (208) but reflects social realities of 'class hatred and violence' (207) as well as Lucian's own 'purpose to create a programme of social criticism unmistakably associated with the Cynics' (201). Hall forcefully disagrees (1981: 221–51).

26 'Lucian manipulates his characters as easily as he contrives his stories or plots; here again he is content to play a facile game with a few basic types. He may use the same character under several different names, so that there is often little distinction between Cyniscus, Diogenes and Menippus, between Diogenes and Socrates, or between Croesus and Megapenthes . . . We can expect neither depth nor consistency, and we have to see any one character in terms of what he is doing elsewhere.' (Anderson, 1976: 67)

27 *RN* 33; cf. 51 ('such sagacity and such baseness, such alternately true and false notions'), 81 (astonishingly correct judgements).

28 *RN* 34.

29 *RN* 34.
30 *RN* 94.
31 *RN* 34.
32 *RN* 54; but contrast 106.
33 *RN* 125.
34 *RN* 35, cf. 45, 64, 92 for his mixture of admiration and scorn. Diderot himself was fascinated by paradox: see Brewer (2006: 182–9).
35 *RN* 35.
36 *RN* 35.
37 *RN* 46.
38 For the incident, see *RN* 84-85. Pride accompanying the fall: 86. Nephew leading band of tragic failures: 79.
39 *RN* 87.
40 On his role as jester, analogous to kings' fools, see 83 with Bernstein (1992: 59–83).
41 *RN* 38 ('I don't know any history because I don't know anything'); cf. 57-8 (even great masters hardly know the basics). An exception here is surely music (e.g. 108), to which the narrator often tries to bring the conversation back; yet in his music lessons also, the Nephew claims to teach nothing (*RN* 58-61).
42 See *RN* 49-50, 71-4, 84-8 for the Nephew's evocations of his art; cf. 93-6. Talent: 74-7, cf. 87, 93.
43 Honesty: *RN* 111. Everyone is Rameau: e.g. *RN* 37 (uncle Rameau who 'is a philosopher in his way. He thinks of nothing but himself'); 38 ('the wisdom of Rabelais's monk'); 55-6 (the narrator himself, poor mathematics tutor); 61-2 (everyone from the king down to the dancing-master follow their 'trade idioms'); 70 (with his notions of happy virtue, the *narrator* is the oddity, one of 'a handful of visionaries'); 78 (what he says and does 'is the sentiment and opinion of the whole of society'); 83 (he has learnt his lessons in roguery 'systematically' while 'most others have done [so] by instinct') et al.
44 *RN* 121.
45 Marx, whose favourite prose author was Diderot, popularized Hegel's interpretation of *RN*: see Hulbert (1983: 268–9). On Hegelian and Marxist interpretations, see Schmidt (1996), cf. Wilson (1972: 194–5, 421–2).
46 *RN* 110. Other encomia of money: 40-1 (Racine versus wealthy merchants), 50-1 (successful sycophants), 84 (when it rains, 'happy the man' who has the price of a taxi). O'Gorman references Diderot's *Satire contre le luxe* and Helvétius' *De l'esprit* for contemporary evaluations of luxury (1971: 89), while Huilling compares Duclos and Rousseau's *Second Discourse*: 'French soil was well prepared for the nephew's eulogy of sparkling coins' (1994: 96). For Stanley, this passage looks ahead to Marx, Simmel, Baudrillard and socialist critics of 'empty . . . exchange value' (2007: 396–7).
47 *RN* 65-7.

48 See Desmond (2006) for an argument that the critique of wealth forms *the* core of early Greek Cynicism.

49 *RN* 63. Diderot's engagement with Hobbes was lifelong: Thielemann (1952).

50 *RN* 78. The tag from Persius and Rabelais is amplified in many passages: e.g. 34 (the Nephew's first daily thoughts are where to get dinner, then supper); 63 ('the voice of conscience and honor is very hard to hear when your guts are crying out'); 72 (rivals like Palissot are not quite so hungry); 80 (Rameau's ilk are 'more famished' than wolves); 84 (writers, critics and 'all the down-and-outs are united in front of food'); 85 ('Sir Belly is a character I have never had anything against'); 120 ('I always come back to hunger, the sensation I am always conscious of').

51 *RN* 52.

52 See Shea (2010: 23–44); cf. Niehues-Pröbsting (1979: 50–2; 1997).

53 *RN* 69 (satire), 88 (law).

54 Goethe's demonic: Warning (2010: 368–9).

55 Another such moment is his description of the Master having sex with a large lady (*RN* 92).

56 Only 'tyrants and slaves' everywhere: *RN* 65.

57 *RN* 56-7 (on how to educate daughters); cf. Hulliung (1998: 100–1).

58 For the argument that *RN* 'stages an auto-critique of the Enlightenment through Cynicism' (Shea, 2010: xiv), see Harth (1984), Niehues-Pröbsting (1997: 347–53), Stanley (2007) and especially Hulliung (1998: 94–106).

59 See *RN* 71-2 for his image of Monsieur and Madame as mechanical puppet and mound of matter, respectively. Determined patterns of events issuing from social contracts between different characters and ranks: 89-92.

60 'It was always characteristic of Diderot's thinking to seek truth by the confrontation of opposites' (Wilson, 1972: 418). For Crocker (1974), the fundamental opposition in Diderot's thought is order (represented by *Moi*) and disorder (*Lui*).

61 'Diderot scripts his dialogue, that is, as a face-off between two contrasting images of Cynicism: on the one hand impudent free speech and intellectual promiscuity ("je fréquente volontiers chez les autres"), on the other austerity and autonomy' (Shea, 2010: 56); cf. Niehues-Pröbsting (1979: 46–7).

62 *RN* 36-7.

63 *Disc.* 3.22.

64 *RN* 122-3. Hulliung notes how the narrator echoes ideas of d'Alembert's *Essay on the Society of Men of Letters* and Diderot's own 'Cynique' article (1998: 104–5).

65 *Phenomenology of Spirit* §§521-526.

66 *RN* 82.

67 E.g. *RN* 45 ('[I am] an ignoramus, a fool, a lunatic, rude, lazy . . . an out and out shirker, a rogue, a gormandizer') or 70 ('a thief happy to be among wealthy thieves').

68 *RN* 49-51.

69 *RN* 48.
70 *RN* 70-1.
71 *RN* 62.
72 *RN* 115-16.
73 *RN* 83.
74 *RN* 79.
75 *RN* 44, 48, 51, 53, 54 (*clavecin*), 72, 73, 96, 122, 124-5, respectively.
76 *RN* 102-3.
77 Gumbrecht (2021: 14), drawing on Starobinski (2012).
78 Taylor (1989: 178); cf. Lagrée (2016) for Montaigne's vision of an 'always moving, vanishing, and elusive' self (465).
79 Hundert (1997) traces this from Mandeville's *Fable* through Addison, Smith, Hume and others. A more ancient inspiration may be Horace's Priscus and Tigellius, with whose *inaequabilitas* (lit., 'inequality') O'Gorman links Rameau's inconsistency (1971: 85–91): 'Diderot . . . made Lui *inégal* by nature . . . [while] Moi [has] the virtue essential to the *vir bonus* of antiquity – *aequabilitas* – which implies both steadiness of character and philosophical serenity' (88).
80 Wilson (1972: 417).
81 Groh (1987); cf. Starobinski (2012).

8

Persons Who Are Selves

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The 'problems of the self' that dominate contemporary discussions link the concepts of self and person but not, we argue, in helpful ways. Even if extended to other things, 'person' is typically taken to signify an individual human being, and thus when 'person' and 'self' are conflated, problems of the self often become questions about what part(s) of the human being are essential to the self. The resulting focus on *what* the self is ignores the more fundamental question of *who* the self is. To answer this question, we need to consider why the self is a problem for itself – what makes it be (or is it seen?) so elusive to itself? We take a historico-philosophical approach to this topic. Two quite different conceptions of person – persons as loci of consciousness and persons as loci of agency – shape emergent problems of the self in medieval and early modern discussions. We argue that where and only where the two conceptions of persons coincide is it appropriate to regard a person as a self. At stake are issues about the relationship of reflexive awareness and agency to selfhood – whether one could be passively a self or whether one has to in some sense constitute oneself. We conclude by drawing some consequences for contemporary debates about selfhood.

Problems of the Self and Problems of the Person

Here is a thought experiment, due in all its essentials to David Lewis.[1] Imagine that there are two beings, two goddesses let us say, who know everything there is to know about the world except that neither one knows which goddess she is. The two goddesses have names – Athena and Minerva – let us suppose. Suppose that Athena causes the corn to grow and Minerva causes the sun to shine. Each

knows that just as each knows everything else. Suppose the one who is in fact Minerva wonders whether *she* causes the sun to shine. What does she learn when she discovers that she does?

Lewis' thought experiment brings out something which other philosophers, Thomas Nagel, for example, have emphasized.[2] There seems to be a way of looking at the world which is centreless. What Athena knows as we begin the thought experiment is just what Minerva knows, no more, no less, and it is, by hypothesis, everything that just anyone can know about the world. What Minerva learns when she learns that *she* causes the sun to shine is not another objective fact about the world – she already knows all of those – it is rather something which we might call a perspectival fact – she learns something akin to what we all learn when, not knowing where we are, we stand in front of a map with a red dot on it with the legend, 'You are here.'

Of course, I am here – where else could I be? What the legend and the dot tell me is not *that* I am here – which I knew all along – but where *here* is – at least where here is relative to other things depicted on the map. What Minerva learns is like that – not that she is herself or that Minerva is Minerva – both of which she knew all along but that *she* is Minerva – that is, that she is *that* object which is located in the world along with other objects.

We take this ability that each of us has to wonder who we are in relation to other things that are not us as fundamental to what it is to be a self. Perhaps what is also fundamental is that we wonder who we are in relation to other things that we assume can wonder who they are. Otherwise, why would we wonder? But we acknowledge that this way of looking at things is confusing. On the one hand, it suggests that a self, myself, yourself, is not an object in the world along with other objects but something outside the world so that one could know everything there is to know about the world and not know anything about oneself – or any other self for that matter. On the other hand, what I learn when I learn where here is is not something about some realm outside the world but something about how *this* place, this perfectly ordinary place, is related to other perfectly ordinary places. By analogy, one might think, what Minerva learns when she learns that she is Minerva is not a fact about something arcane – a mysterious herself – but something about Minerva – for example, that *this* perfectly ordinary thing is Minerva.

If we accept the direction in which these thoughts lead us, we can infer that being a self involves at least a kind of self-awareness that is not reducible to the sum of true statements that may be made about oneself or known by just anyone; that being a self involves occupying a unique perspective on those truths, a

perspective which, meanwhile, does not add anything by way of objective facts about the world. What else can we say about what a self is?

A simple but unhelpful answer to the question of what a self is is to say that a self is a person – simple because the terms 'self' and 'person' are often used interchangeably but unhelpful because we are about as unclear about what a person is as about what a self is. A standard dictionary will tell you that a person is an individual human being. In philosophy, 'problems of the self', as they are called, are mostly connected to the mind/body problem. Is my self more truly my mind or does it include my body as well? Could I persist despite a complete replacement of the matter of my body or if I had no body at all, as Descartes supposes? Could I persist despite a complete replacement of my mind provided there was sufficient continuity of consciousness or thoughts, as Locke supposes? Such questions presuppose that 'person' is well understood as referring to an individual human being, and the question is which part of my person, if any, is essential to my being the self I am – me? But 'person' is more ambiguous than this. To begin, it is not at all obvious that we should conflate it with 'individual human being'.

The extension of 'person', at least under the law, has encompassed in its history plagues of rats, homicidal pigs, bridges, churches and corporations, including since the Middle Ages, the Holy See. When, in 2014, the owners of the for-profit, craft store chain, Hobby Lobby, convinced the Supreme Court of the United States of America that Hobby Lobby had rights to religious freedoms – was a *moral* person, no less – the horse on persons needing to be coextensive with human beings had well and truly bolted.[3] Is Hobby Lobby also a self? We talk about corporations as if they have emotions and attitudes, like greed and self-interest, and about their rational or irrational behaviour, but do these applications warrant the label 'self' or are they just handles for the greed, self-interest, rationality or irrationality of the corporation's executives? Roger Scruton finds the idea (which he attributes to Samuel von Pufendorf and Wilhelm von Humboldt) that a corporation is nothing more than a *persona moralis composita*, an aggregate of its members who truly are moral persons, absurd for the simple reason that 'the membership of corporations is in a state of flux'.[4] That the corporation has identity conditions distinct from its members at any given time is what enables it to be held accountable for the decisions of its past members and to exercise a duty of care toward its future, not-yet-existent members. Self-consciousness is not necessary, moreover, for a corporation's status as a person:

> Why should [a corporation's] lack of self-awareness impede our natural tendency to transfer our moral attitudes towards it, and to summon it for judgement in the tribunal of personal life?[5]

Why indeed? Unless 'self' and 'person' are presumed *a priori* to be synonymous, any argument to the effect that a corporation cannot be a person because it lacks self-consciousness is simply begging the question. The obvious solution is to deny that it follows from a corporation's being a person that it is a self.

If not all persons are selves, are all selves at least persons?

The thesis to be explored here is that it is where a person is able to wonder which person it is that a self is born. You can wonder where you are because you are the kind of thing that can get lost, and you can wonder about yourself because you can know things about a person and not know that you are that person. Think of John Perry's messy shopper, scowling at the person leaving a trail of sugar all over the supermarket floor, without realizing they are that person.[6] Knowing one's self is *knowing who*, not *knowing what* (or *that*) you are, which is why discovering who one is does not add to the stock of information about the world that can be accessed from any perspective whatsoever. Self-awareness is often thought to be intimately connected to being a self, but why is this so? Why couldn't I be a self who never thinks about herself? We think that this is not possible, given the work the concept of the self has to do. If we are correct, this has consequences for how we might rethink contemporary problems related to the self. They may turn out to be variations of a more fundamental conundrum facing any self, namely, that a self is the kind of thing that constitutes itself in the very act of wondering whether it is itself.

Could the Poets Be Right about Something?

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 'self' derives from Old English (with Proto-Germanic equivalents) and is used reflexively to refer to a person already mentioned or under consideration:

> As a noun from *c.* 1200 as 'the person or thing previously specified'; early 14c. as 'a person in relation to that same person'. G. M. Hopkins used *selve* as a verb, 'become or cause to become a unique self' (1880) but its use seems to have been restricted to poets.[7]

Two points are salient in this etymology. One is its connection to the concept of persons. To get to a self, we start first with a person. The second is that the term is essentially reflexive. Talking about a self is referring a person to that very same person. Grammatically, this is why 'self' appears as the second element in compounded reflexive pronouns (e.g. *herself*). 'Self' is an indexical. Each usage has an inescapably unique reference.

The absolute uniqueness of any self's experience of itself was not lost on the poets, notable among whom is the Victorian Romantic poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89) mentioned above. That 'selve' could be used as a verb – *to selve* – carries all manner of metaphysical implications. For Hopkins, the self is self-enacted in reflexive acts of awareness. It is not there to be discovered in the way that one might dig up an ancient pot but is dynamically constituted and recreated through self-conscious activity:

> Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
> Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
> Selves – goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
> Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*.[8]

'Selving' is an act and being free, it is something we can choose not to perform. We can, of course, distract ourselves from ourselves and think of more pressing things. But not to selve at all is not to live up to one's utter uniqueness, which is, for Hopkins, the mark of the creator. While Hopkins has a Cartesian argument for God's existence based on the impossibility of any finite creature pre-existing and causing itself, the fact that every 'self is an absolute which stands to the absolute of God as the infinitesimal to the infinite' means that not to selve is not to do that for which each of us 'came' and thus not to glory God in the way appropriate for persons.[9] Hillis Miller points to the deep influence of John Duns Scotus' account of individuation on Hopkins.[10] (Hopkins 'found' Scotus in 1872.) Scotus' idea of a primitive thisness (*haecceitas*) takes the form of an individualising act of self-consciousness in Hopkins' idea of selfhood. Selving puts a person in direct contact with God through God's unique idea of them, unmediated by generic, intelligible species or Aristotelian forms. Far from being an empty-handed search for a substantial self, as Hume supposes, selving is a rich interior sensing, analogous to the sensing of the external world, that captures the utter uniqueness of one's own perspective and the richness of feeling – that 'taste of myself' as he lasciviously puts it – that accompanies self-awareness. The self is an act rather than a substance.

> . . . my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of I and me above and in all things . . . is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the smell of walnutleaf or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man (as when I was a child I used to ask myself: What must it be to be someone else?).[11]

Taste is an interesting sensory modality to choose to describe self-awareness, for one might think that taste always inherently connotes the self's experience of

itself. In describing the taste of something, I am always describing how it tastes *to me, now, in this fleeting moment*. I can only conjecture how it tastes to you or how it would taste to me at a different time. Every unity we experience, whether an individual object or an aggregate pattern, has what Hopkins calls an 'inscape' like this – its individuality thrusts itself upon the mind and is immediately present to it in a way that affirms that the perception of it is *mine* and, thus, that *I am me*. Everything is alive and inherently active, even the most seemingly static of things, including mountains: 'The mountain ranges, as any series or body of inanimate like things not often seen, have the air of persons and of interrupted activity.'[12] Persons are alive and maybe even mountains share in something of personhood, but only selves selve.

That the notion of self is linked to a special kind of self-reflexive, self-constituting, individualizing, perspective-occupying act that only (human) persons are capable of, grows out of previous discussions in the history of philosophy about what persons are. According to one tradition, 'person' in its first intention denotes a natural kind – human beings or creatures with a rational nature – and only derivatively or by analogy refers to things, like a corporation, of human creation. According to a second tradition, persons are made, not discovered and the category of *personae fictae* is not restricted to corporations or what, following Hobbes, would be considered 'artificial' persons like the Leviathan. We are all *personae fictae*. On this second view, a person is not so much a thing as a role, which can be occupied by distinct entities at different times. Whereas the first tradition emphasizes the fact that persons must be capable of thought; the second emphasizes that a person is generated to serve as a special kind of agent, capable of representing their interests first and foremost and secondarily those of others, entering into contracts and bearing rights and responsibilities. Neither conception obviously entails that a person is a self, a thing capable of occupying a unique perspective on either the world or itself. It is in a third tradition, beginning with Augustine perhaps but reaching its zenith in the work of Peter John Olivi, that these traditions converge on a notion of person that supports the concept of the self.

Two Traditions of Thinking about Persons

Tradition 1: Persons as Thinking Substances

The idea that persons are things to be discovered rather than made derives from Boethius' *Liber Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*. Boethius there defines a person as

an 'individual substance of a rational nature'.[13] Right off the bat, there are problems with this definition, metaphysically and theologically. The emphasis on substancehood raises the familiar problems of personal identity. If a person is a substance, which substance is it and is it material or immaterial? Could a person persist despite undergoing replacement of its substantial parts? This seems to be a natural requirement given the continual replacement of matter in the human body. But Locke at least extended the possibility to the replacement of the rational soul, while Hume denied the need for any substratum at all. Even if we suppose that there must be a substratum for thoughts, could there be more than one that is identical with a single person (fission)? Could a single substratum support distinct persons (fusion)? If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', the concept of a person is starting to bear a tenuous relationship to that of an individual substance of a rational nature. It is not, moreover, as if such thoughts about how 'substance' and 'person' semantically come apart never crossed anyone's mind in the period Boethius occupied. Theologically, the substance of God is said to support three persons and what makes each a person distinct from the other persons of the Trinity has nothing to do with their substratum since that is essentially one and the same.

Nonetheless, Boethius' view was, for over a millennium, the classical approach to the topic and it remains important today. P. F. Strawson is, we think, a good recent example of this approach and in taking it he is not very far from, for example, Aquinas.[14] For Aquinas, it is the whole human being (body and soul) that is the natural person. In considering the objection to Boethius' definition that the separated soul is a substance of a rational nature but not a person, Aquinas replies that the soul is an (essential) part of the human species and, so, although,

> it may exist in a separate state, yet since it ever retains its nature of unibility, it cannot be called an individual substance, which is the hypostasis or first substance, as neither can the hand nor any other part of man; thus, neither the definition nor the name of person belongs to it.[15]

Taking Aquinas' analogy at face value, we ought to conclude that the separated soul is only a person homonymously, just as a severed hand is a hand in name only and only because of its once having been a functioning part of a complete human being. The separated soul must await the resurrection of the body to fully exercise those capacities that mark it off as an individual substance of a rational nature and thus, on Aquinas' picture, to return to its status as a person.

All this fits with Boethius' definition – the separated soul is not a person because, unlike the persons of the Trinity, it lacks a complete essence. But

arguably being an individual substance of a rational nature is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a person. To see that it is not necessary, consider the difficulty Aquinas faces in accounting for the experiences of the separated soul. Will my separated soul be me or only homonymously me? If it is me, what makes it me since it is not the individual substance I am? If it is not me, who is it? If it is conscious and capable of rational thought, should it not count as a person? But if it is a person, who is this person and what do they have to do with me? Aquinas does not deny that the separated soul can think or have the very same thoughts I had as I died, which seems to make it more of a person than a severed hand is a hand because a severed hand cannot grip or do any of the things that hands ordinarily do. But wherever there is a person, there must, presumably, be an answer to the question who the person is.

The insufficiency of Boethius' definition recalls our original puzzle. By defining a person as *a kind of thing*, an ordinary composite of form and matter in a world of composites that can be grasped by anyone, Boethius arguably loses sight of what is essential to being a person. It is perfectly reasonable to infer from Boethius' definition that there could be a person who is thinking but never wonders whether it is they who are thinking, because to wonder this is not to wonder whether there exist individual substances of a rational nature but to wonder which one of those things one is. If one could be an individual substance of a rational nature and never realize who one is, being an individual substance of a rational nature arguably falls short of being a person who could be a self.

Tradition 2: Persons as Roles

Etymologically, 'persona' is the Latinization of the Greek term πρόσωπον (prosopon), a term which had its roots in Greek theatre. The prosopon was the face or mask worn by an actor on stage. Hence, to 'personate' someone is to stand in for them or play their part. For obvious reasons, Greek theologians chose not to use this term to refer to the persons of the Trinity, preferring instead ὑπόστασις (hypostasis), which, Boethius noted, is close to his idea of a person as an individual substance of a rational nature. But as the natural Latin translation of 'hypostasis' is 'substance', it was unacceptable to Latin theologians to suggest that God is three substances – that is, that God has really distinct parts. Tertullian designated the relationship between God, Christ and the Holy Spirit a Trinity of three 'persons' in one substance, and confusion ensued.[16]

The problems of the Trinity and those of the Incarnation, where theologians held that although Christ is a human being, Christ was a person before becoming

a human being and remains that same person after, forced metaphysicians to posit some distinction between human beings and persons. Ockham, for example, distinguishes between the expressions 'human being' (*homo*) and 'human nature' (*humanitas*). 'Human being' denotes a substance with a nominal definition – 'a human being is either a nature composed of a body and intellectual soul not sustained by any subject or is some subject sustaining a nature composed of body and intellectual soul'.[17] 'Human nature' has no (nominal) definition and is just a general name for the particular composites of body and intellectual soul which we are. 'Human being' is thus a descriptive term while 'human nature' is a name. The significance of Ockham's distinction for understanding persons is this. 'Peter is a human being' and 'Peter is a human nature' are both true. If, however, the Holy Spirit assumes the human nature that is Peter, then Peter ceases to be a human being, but Peter continues as a human nature. The Holy Spirit (that person) becomes a human being and although Peter continues to exist, he does not exist as a person or suppositum at all. Except for the persons of the Trinity, nothing is a person simpliciter but only a human nature meeting the negative condition that it has not been assumed by anything. There is a clear overlap here between Ockham and the kinds of thought experiments that motivate Locke to decouple the notion of personal identity from that of rational substance.

Aside from theological contexts, the other main context from which the concept of 'person' as a role was drawn was Roman law. Cicero is an important source for understanding how 'person' developed its 'forensic' connotations in Hobbes and Locke. As Marco Simendic notes,[18] Hobbes cites Cicero in *De Homine* as saying that he bears or sustains three personae while arguing a case: his own, his adversary's and the judge's.[19] On Cicero's view, *persona* marks the fundamentally normative character of our being that differentiates us from brutes and makes us subjects of duties and subject to authority. Although we are able to adopt different *personae* because we are rational and capable of moral self-direction, the particular *personae* we adopt are many and varied, some occurring by chance and circumstance and some by choice. Each persona has its own well-defined role and set of duties.[20] An 'upright man lays aside the role of a friend (personam amici) when he assumes that of a judge (*personam iudicis*)'.[21] The 'person of the state' (*persona civitatis*) – the magistrate – impersonates the state. As commentators like Simendic point out, this is one of the earliest signs that 'the civitas exists as an independent corporate entity, separate and separable from its persona'.[22]

The lines of connection between Cicero and Hobbes on the commonwealth and roles and power of the Sovereign are many and have been well documented.

The idea of representation – strictly speaking, *personation* – is crucial to the legitimacy of Sovereign power.[23] Simendic (32) notes that Hobbes' Sovereign is tasked with the procuration of the safety of the people and is defined as a *persona representativa*.[24] For both Cicero and Hobbes, 'person' is defined in terms of certain social roles that individuals can play and inherent to the notion is the idea that to be a person is to be constrained by certain social norms.[25] For Hobbes, it is only in a sovereign state that individuals can take on different *personae* – become captains of industry, navigators, philosophers, scientists or engineers. A person is '*he whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing to whom they are attributed, whether Truly or by Fiction*'. A 'Naturall' person is not a person in the state of nature but someone whose words and actions are their own, whereas an 'Artificiall' person represents the words and actions of another.[26] The Sovereign is the Artificiall person authorized to speak and act on behalf of the common interest. In transferring their authority to the Sovereign, the multitude of men are made 'One Person'.[27]

For Hobbes, however, there are pre-civil conditions on the kinds of being that can enter into the society of persons. They must be *rational* – the Hobbesian state is the product of individuals deliberately transferring their right, power and authority to a Sovereign in exchange for security – and they must be *alive* – that is, complex organisms subject to an innate 'endeavour' or 'striving' (*conatus*) to remain in existence that is manifested consciously through the coordinated operations of their passions. Could something that was not already a person participate in the process of creating a sovereign state? Hume clearly thinks not: '*Men are necessarily born in a family-society, at least; and are trained up by their parents to some rule of conduct and behavior*' – and laws can only gain traction where the idea of a rule of conduct is already present in people's mind.[28] For Hobbes, the answer seems to be 'yes'. A human in the state of nature is nothing more than a bundle of appetites but those appetites, particularly the desire for security or self-preservation, are sufficient to trigger the creation of civil society.

Neither the tradition that originates with Boethius nor that which views a person as a special kind of representational role emphasizes the kind of reflexive, self-consciousness – as in wondering or knowing *who* we are – that we associate with selfhood. Interestingly, however, there are elements in each of these accounts reflected in the turn toward subjectivity as the defining quality of selfhood that occurs in the later Middle Ages. The persons of the Trinity are distinct because each is a unique subject of predicates that the others are not – the Father relates to Christ but not to the Holy Spirit by paternity, to take one

example – and thus each person is distinct from the other by 'ratio' even though each is not a distinct substance. The concept of a natural person in the second tradition, meanwhile, is essentially self-reflexive but not explicitly self-conscious. A person may personate themselves – they do so whenever they speak – but they may do so unwittingly and they may personate someone else, say if they are acting on a stage, and do so other-consciously. It is, however, a short step from here to thinking that what is definitive of a person is that they can do all this self-consciously and herein lies the possibility of selfhood.

The Subjective Turn

Contemporary problems of the self, which we defined above as worries about *what* the self is, are connected to worries going back at least to Augustine about what part of the human being is essential to being me, where 'being me' is defined in terms of the mind's immediate subjective experience of itself. Augustine argues that the mind could not be something material (like air or fire or body) because even if we suppose it were any one of these, we must still grant that it would nonetheless know itself in a way distinct from how it knows other things (it would know *who* among the things it knows it is, as we would say):

> That is to say, it would not think of it[self] by means of an imaginary phantasy, as absent things or something of the same kind are thought of which have been touched by the sense of the body, but it would think of it by a kind of inward presence not feigned but real – for there is nothing more present to it than itself; just as it thinks that it lives, and remembers, and understands, and wills. And if it adds nothing from these thoughts to itself, so as to regard itself as something of the kind, then whatever still remains to it of itself, that alone is itself.[29]

Augustine thinks no material thing could be known in this way. Wondering whether one is one's brain or some other part will never bring one to encounter one's self. Augustine thinks, however, that there is something paradoxical about searching for the self given that it is not the sort of thing that could go missing. Recalling the *aporia* of Plato's *Meno* (80d) that one cannot search for something one does not already know, the puzzle for Augustine, as Mateusz Stróżyński points out,[30] is why the mind seeks ardently to know itself despite the fact that it cannot be absent to itself. It cannot know itself through any image the way it knows other things because it could always doubt whether an image is truly of itself but it cannot coherently doubt its own existence. The mind is like the eye

which cannot see itself and which, even if it sees itself reflected in something like a mirror, will not be seeing itself but only some image of itself. Yet, strangely, the mind knows itself anyway:

> Then let it not seek itself for it will never find itself. For eyes will never see themselves except in a mirror; nor are we to believe in any way that such means may be also used for the contemplation of incorporeal things, as that the mind should know itself as it were in a mirror.[31]

Doubting that we know ourselves is not so much self-refuting then as self-affirming.[32] As Stróżyński writes: 'If we know that we do not know ourselves, we already know ourselves, because we are this knowing.'[33] If the self were to try to know itself as a subject knows an object, it would still only know itself through the activity of seeking or knowing. The self is immediately present not *to itself* as an object but *in itself*, as a 'living awareness'.[34] There is, moreover, nothing left to discover – one knows oneself completely in every act of thinking. That we nonetheless search for ourselves in vain is due to our fallen state, our susceptibility to be distracted by sensible images.[35] To restore ourselves to ourselves takes an act of will that fixes attention on itself not as to an object but as pure subjectivity:

> Let the mind, therefore, know itself, and not seek itself as though it were absent; let it fix the attention of its will, by which it formerly wandered over other things, upon itself, and think of itself.[36]

There are obvious resonances between Augustine's argument and that of Descartes for the immateriality of the mind, its direct presence to itself, and its immunity to doubt. My ability to know my mind *adequately* – that is to say, to know that it thinks and therefore exists – without knowing whether bodies exist is not, as Descartes assures Gibieuf in a letter of 19 January 1642, a case of *abstraction* where we inadequately conceive a thing through some attribute and thus as an 'incomplete entity', but a case of *exclusion*, an adequate conception of a thing through its distinct attributes and thus as a complete entity (AT 3: 477; CSMK: 202-3).[37] What enables this conviction that I have an adequate and not merely abstract idea of my own mind is the independence of the clear and distinct idea of 'myself' as a thinking thing, distinct from any idea I have of body:

> I have, on the one hand, a clear and distinct idea of myself, insofar as I am solely a thinking non-extended thing and, on the other hand, a distinct idea of body, insofar as it is an extended, non-thinking, thing. (AT 7: 78; CSM 2: 54.)

For both Augustine and Descartes, the soul satisfies the Boethian definition of a person. It is an individual substance of a rational nature, but it is through its

essential agency – thinking and willing – that the self knows who and what it is. Doubting plays an important role for each in establishing the unmediated knowledge of the self, not just because it is self-refuting to doubt that one thinks, but because it constitutes a deliberate act of turning the attention of the self to itself that is unavoidably self-enacting. It is in the very self-reflexive act of doubting one's existence that the self is inescapably present.

One might think nonetheless that neither Augustine nor Descartes have extracted themselves fully from the *aporia* of the *Meno* because neither avoids the subject/object dichotomy that renders self-awareness problematic. The self knows itself through an act of thinking but what it is is a substance not an act. Between Aquinas and the moderns stands an important figure in our thinking about the natural conditions for personhood: Peter John Olivi. It is in Olivi that the notion of person more accurately captures what we today look for in the concept of self. In defining *personalitas* (personhood), Olivi restores the constitutive role of self-reflexive consciousness in constituting a person:

> A Personhood (*personalitas*) or person is a *per se* existent that fully returns or remains in itself or is completely reflected in itself but no third thing constituted from soul and body is such but only the intellectual part is, therefore, etc.[38]

Breaking this down, we see that there has to be a subject, a per se existent or, as elsewhere, *suppositum*, to be self-reflected, and one that does not constitute an accidental unity. Olivi is here more on the side of Boethius than the legal tradition on the question of what a person is, although he does not use the language of 'substance'. His definition does not preclude the per se existent from being the 'third thing constituted from soul and body', but what it is is not relevant to its being a person. It is only through the activity of self-reflection, which belongs to the rational soul, that a per se existent is constituted as a person. Whatever being this per se existent is, it must possess a free will to be capable of actively turning its attention to itself and thus constitute a person. Mere awareness, as in sleep or drunkenness, does not suffice. Moreover, because being a person is a matter of willed reflection, one can completely know oneself as the sole author of one's act, irrespective of what else is thought about in the act. *Liberum arbitrium* is presupposed in the distinctive attitudes (*affectus*) or habits associated with being a person, including zeal (anger towards bad deeds), revenge, praise and blame, mercy, friendship and love, hostility, shame, glory, gratitude, ingratitude, subjugation, domination, hope, distrust, providence and negligence.[39] The capacity for love is also a defining feature of persons and presupposes our ability to regard others as persons, capable of the same kind of

self-reflexive consciousness and free will that is definitive of our own personhood. We can only be friends with those who are autonomous, capable of freely reciprocating our friendship or love. Each of the affections listed presupposes an awareness of the difference between acts that are freely willed and those which are outside a person's control. Each is an essentially social emotion. Without self-reflection, we would be like beasts, who even when a motion originates within them, cannot direct their attention to it and so cannot exercise self-control.

> Moreover, if we attend to the act of reflection this is made clear. For we manifestly experience in us that our mind as much through thought (cogitatio) as through love is reflected or converted to itself directly and immediately as to a direct and immediate object of itself. But no power is able to reflect itself immediately on it self unless it has liberty, for every virtue of power has besides itself some objects to which it can be turned or is turned. Therefore, that it draw itself back from them so that it fully turns itself to itself, cannot be done unless it masters (dominetur) its turnings so that it is able now to turn itself, now to withdraw. For whatever reflects itself to itself seems to be indeed absolute and free (liberum) from all inclinations by which powers are necessarily dragged to extrinsic objects.[40]

The influence of Augustine's theory of cognition and perception, where besides the object thought about and the apprehension of the intellect, there is a third element – *intention* or *attention* (which Augustine refers to as a *voluntas*)[41] – is transformed in Olivi into a condition for personhood. A human being without autonomy – the madman or the wanton (someone who only acts unreflectively from their first-order desires) – cannot be a person. Only beings capable of self-reflective, voluntary control over their thoughts and actions (which, for Olivi, requires the awareness of being a self-mover) can be persons. Although Olivi appeals to internal criteria in defining the conditions for personhood, it is interesting that the attitudes and habits he singles out as typifying personhood arise only in the course of social interactions, where it is not only one's own but also others' autonomy that is a fundamental presupposition.

Whether the connection is intentional or not, it is easy to see the resonances of Olivi's emphasis on self-reflection in Locke's definition of a person as,

> a thinking, intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving, that he does perceive.[42]

In Locke's account of personal identity, what is crucial to the idea of a person is the capacity for ideas of reflection to 'carry' the succession of ideas and impressions as if they constituted a unified whole or substance. This is why Locke thinks that even if a person does overlap with a substance, the unity of substance is incidental to the status of the person or its identity over time. At the same time, the criteria for personhood are as much intersubjective as subjective, normative as well as natural: 'person' is a 'Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery.'[43] The ground for this normativity is not just the consciousness of the person but its activity in stitching its experiences together into one continuous succession, relating the person continuously to itself. It is in this self-making activity that responsibility for one's thoughts and actions is born.

There is a similar pattern of reasoning in Hume's account of personhood (minus the reliance on a will). Hume's second sense of self from Book II of the Treatise – the self 'as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves' – is said to 'corroborate' the first sense of self from Book I – the self 'as it regards thought or imagination' or the infamous bundle or succession of impressions and ideas.[44] The Book I self is not, as noted above, a Hobbesian pre-social self or human being in the state of nature. The two senses of self are simply different ways of describing the same thing but the second concerns those distinctively self-reflective affects – especially, pride – that constitute acts of self-making through self-awareness. What the self is is the succession of perceptions, which Hume observes are 'distinct existences', but self-reflection is assumed. The 'idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us' and 'our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person'.[45] The sense of self concerned with our passions and our future emphasizes both the higher-order reflective capacities of the mind and its intersubjective experiences. Principal to this understanding of self are the 'indirect passions' that have either the self as their 'object' – pride and humility – or the self's self-reflective relationship to others – love and hate – as well as the moral sentiments, particularly sympathy, by which we are able to 'enter into the sentiments of others, and embrace them with facility and pleasure'.[46] Sympathy is produced through the recognition of resemblance between ourselves and others as well as by causal relations, for example, ties of blood and acquaintance, influenced by education and custom. These are self-reflective affects that at the same time locate us relative to other selves, answering the 'Who am I?' question rather than the 'What am I?' question from Book I, and that we take to be definitively self-enacting perceptions.

The fact that persons are, on these early modern accounts that emphasize the subjective and intersubjective aspects of personhood, disconnected from the concept of substance is not, from a historical perspective, that radical a shift. As we have seen, in both the theological and legal–political contexts, this had to be. But this emphasis puts natural constraints on what sorts of entities can occupy the status of selves. Selves are persons who are capable of mutual recognition (recognition as subjects of certain kinds of experiences); doubts about who they are; self- and other-regarding passions; and moral sentiments. This makes it unlikely that any of our early modern figures would recognize non-subjective entities – states or corporations – as original persons (persons whose own self-reflective agency constitutes themselves) although once there are original persons, they presumably have the power to confer on such non-subjective entities the status of legal persons. Hume is quite clear on this: rationality is not enough for the existence of a person who is a self. We must be capable of 'entering into the sentiments' of another and view her as enough like us in passion and power, neither dominant nor subservient, to view her as a person in this sense. Neither animals nor corporations nor commonwealths meet these Humean conditions for personhood.[47]

Conclusion: The Inner Life of Corporations, *inter alia*

It seems pointless to mourn the lost conflation of 'person' and 'human being' one finds in Boethius. Equally, we should resist the temptation to answer problems of the self by seeking to identify which parts of a human being qualify as the essence of the self. On all the major accounts of the self present in the history of philosophy, there is an intimate connection between the notion of a person and that of a self – a self just is a person either reflected back onto itself through the active, self-conscious direction of its attention to itself or through its subjective and intersubjective affective engagement with others. Selves thus lie at the point of convergence between persons as loci of consciousness and persons as loci of agency (or what passes instead of agency for those like Hume sceptical of free will). Hobby Lobby's ascension to the status of being a moral person under the law reflects an over-emphasis of the criterion of agency at the cost of the subjectivity and intersubjectivity that is a core feature of the notion of personhood as it has matured throughout the history of philosophy. There is a danger in pushing the boundaries of the self in the direction that personhood has taken in recent court battles, extending it, as a result, to corporations. Relying on 'analogues' of subjective capacities to justify the *moral* status of corporate persons runs the risk of turning them into selves or diminishing

the differences between a mere (unreflective) person under the law and a self. In referring to the 'mental repertoire' of corporations, Scruton, for example, is happy to attribute to corporations beliefs, deliberative desires, intentions, the recognition of duties and dispositions to uphold them and moral feelings like pride, remorse and guilt, for which policies are proxies and which are 'sincere' when upheld and 'insincere' when not.[48] It is easy to be duped by this way of speaking about the inner life of corporations but it ignores both the natural propensities of autonomous, self-reflective beings and the practices of mutual recognition that are crucial to bootstrapping a person into a self.

The contemporary problems of the self that we are used to hearing about are less interesting in light of this history. This history shows us much to keep thinking about besides the hackneyed mind–body problem and the question of what parts of the human being are essential to the self. Is brute awareness (as animals possess) sufficient for a self or do we need an element of self-control and self-direction of attention to oneself to be 'fully reflected' as a self? For us, the self-reflexive component is essential. The problem with Hume's bundle theory concept of self is perhaps not so much the lack of grounding or unity among the thoughts, as many have objected, but the idea that one could be a self with thoughts that seem to come from nowhere and just pass through, like water through a sieve. Without self-reflective agency, what stops these thoughts from being indistinguishable from alien thoughts, as equally likely to be the thoughts of an evil genius or mad scientist as one's own? Hume, we know, tries to build 'mineness' back into his picture of the mind as an intrinsic feature of certain thoughts – those self- and other-differentiating passions and sentiments – but he can only do this by fiat. Wouldn't we want all our thoughts to bear the mark of ownership so that we do not have to wonder which are our own and which are alien to us?

What, finally, can we say now about Minerva's predicament? In some sense, it does not matter to Minerva's knowing who she is whether she discovers that she is Minerva or that she makes the sun shine. In actively searching for herself, she enacts herself – she 'selves', as Hopkins would approve – and gives herself in the process the unique perspective on the world that constitutes her being herself and not another thing. The rest is, as they say, gravy for the gods.

Notes

1 Lewis (1979: 520–1).
2 For example, Nagel (1989).

3 *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 573 U.S. 682 (2014).
4 Scruton and Finnis (1989: 245–6). A reply by Finnis follows Scruton's main article. Why Scruton links such a view of persons to natural law theories is to us a bit obscure. There is no obvious reason to think that naturalism about persons is essential to natural law theory or excluded by the terms of alternative, positivist, accounts of the source and force of the law.
5 Scruton and Finnis (1989: 249).
6 Perry (1979).
7 See Harper (2022).
8 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire, Dragonflies Draw Flame', Hopkins (1948: 95).
9 Hillis Miller (1955: 296).
10 Hillis Miller (1955: 302–3).
11 Hopkins (1937: 309, cited in Hillis Miller, 1955: 293–4).
12 Hopkins (1953: 115, cited in Hillis Miller, 1955: 301).
13 *Reperta personae est definitio* 'naturae rationabilis individua substantia' (Boethius, 1973: 84).
14 Cf. Strawson (1959: chapters 1–2; Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologiae*, part I. q. 29 art, 1 and q. 75 art. 4).
15 Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologiae*, part I. q. 29, art. 1, r. 5.
16 Tertulllian devotes much of his *Adversus Praxean* to arguing this. See Tertullian (1948: esp. chapters 6 and 7).
17 *Summa Logicae*, chapter 1.7, Ockham (1874: 25. lin. 78-81).
18 Hobbes (1978: 33–87, at 83). See Simendic (2011: 26).
19 On the connection between Cicero and Hobbes, see Skinner (2005: 161).
20 Cicero (1913: 117–24).
21 Cicero (1913: 311).
22 Simendic (2011: 30); Wood (1988: 132).
23 Hobbes (1651: 175).
24 Hobbes (1668: 80) and Simendic (2011: 32).
25 Gill (1988: 171) and Simendic (2011: 32, 45).
26 Hobbes (1968: 217).
27 Hobbes (1968: 218).
28 Hume (1975b: 190).
29 Augustine, St. *De Trinitate*, 10.10.16. English translation, Augustine (2002: 57).
30 Stróżyński (2013: 284–5).
31 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.3.5; Augustine (2002: 47), cited in Stróżyński (2013: 285).
32 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.10.13-16.
33 Stróżyński (2013: 285).
34 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.4.6.
35 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.5.7.

36 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.8.11; Augustine (2002: 53).

37 References to Descartes' texts are from *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols, ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (1897–1913; hereafter, AT). Translations unless otherwise indicated are from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (eds), vols 1–2 (hereafter, CSM) and J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A. Kenny (eds), vol. 3 (hereafter, CSMK) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–91).

38 *Item, personalitas seu persona est per se existentia in se ipsam plene rediens et consistens seu in se ipsam reflexa*. Olivi (1922–6: 526).

39 See Pasnau (1999: 16).

40 Olivi (1922–6: 324–5).

41 Brown (2007: 160–1).

42 Locke (1975: 335).

43 Locke (1975: 346).

44 Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1.4.6.5 (1975a: 346).

45 Hume (1975a: 317).

46 Hume (1975a: 318).

47 Hume (1975a: 186).

48 Scruton and Finnis (1989: 254).

Part Three

Early Modern

9

Know Thyself! Pascal on Self-Knowledge

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'The most common precept of both pagan and Christian philosophy is that of knowing yourself; and there is nothing in which men have agreed more than in the confession of this duty.'[1] Pierre Nicole, a Jansenist thinker, moralist and theologian, begins his moral essay *De la connaissance de soi-même* (1675) with this statement. Nicole was a friend and colleague of Pascal, they often worked together, especially on writing the *Provinciales* (1656), and Nicole also participated in the first edition of the *Pensées* at Port-Royal (1670). The *Moral Essays* were deeply influenced by Pascalian thought. According to Nicole, the precept 'know thyself' is a universal and ubiquitous injunction in the philosophical tradition. In his essay, Nicole shows its importance in Jansenist thinking and rests part of his argument on Pascal's *Pensées*. He thus makes it clear that for Pascalian thought self-knowledge is an eminent duty and that it is the condition *sine qua non* of the virtuous life.

According to tradition, before it became a central principle in the philosophy of Socrates, the injunction to know thyself was an inscription in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. In Socratic practice, self-knowledge was meant to uncover the true self deeply hidden behind everyday illusions. But the self is not an object of knowledge like any other. Knowledge directed towards the self does not leave it untouched because the self is both the subject and the object of knowledge. Knowledge of the self necessarily transforms the self. This transformation is very important: it leads to the knowledge of the true self and focuses on living a happy life by elaborating on virtues in the soul, especially the virtue of justice.[2] As Nicole points out, the tradition of 'know thyself' was not only dominant in ancient philosophy, but has continued to live on in modern thinking, although the meaning of the self as well as the method of self-knowledge has, in the meantime, changed profoundly. If we want to define the relationship of Pascalian thought to this tradition, we must necessarily specify two things. On the one

hand, one has to understand how Pascal interprets the structure of the human self,[3] and on the other hand, one has to see how self-knowledge affects changes in this structure.

Descartes, Pascal's contemporary, is probably the most important thinker concerning the modern self. With the *cogito*, he redefined the position of the self in modern philosophy: the *ego* is interpreted as consciousness and become the starting point of all philosophical reflection. For Descartes, the *ego* is characterized by three important aspects. First, it is the result of self-reflection: consciousness reveals itself through cognitive evidence that resists doubt and it is a substance that exists by itself. Second, it discovers within itself the idea of infinite perfection, that is, the idea of God, an analysis of which reveals that the ego was created by God himself. Third, the *ego* possesses free will, without limitation, through which the soul becomes the image of God. In these respects, the Cartesian theory of the self is integrated into a metaphysical framework and is essentialist, insofar as the *ego*, while being a substance, conceals an essence that refers by its nature to a metaphysical origin. In analysing Pascal's self-knowledge, I will show the difference between the Cartesian and Pascalian concepts of the self. I will argue that Pascal's conception of self is far from being essentialist. Although his interpretation of the self is deeply influenced by the theology of St Augustine, he avoids identifying metaphysical aspects (in the classical sense of the term) in the structure of the self. He refuses to see in the *ego* a substance and to find in the depths of the human soul a metaphysical core and also refuses to declare that the self hides something that makes it an image of God. However, this difference does not mean that Pascal's conception is anti-modern or traditionalist.

The structure of the self, according to Pascal, is no less complex than according to his contemporaries, Descartes or Locke. However, Pascal's interpretation of the self is not ontological or epistemological as it was for his contemporaries,[4] but moral and ethical. Pascal belongs to the Socratic tradition of self-knowledge in this sense. According to Pascal, 'human life is [only] a perpetual illusion' (Sel. 743, Laf. 978),[5] and thus the structure of the self is characterized by disguise, falsehood and hypocrisy. Self-reflection and introspection are hardly aimed at the foundation of the edifice of science as in Descartes, nor at the definition of personal identity as in Locke, but at the struggle against the oblivion of the self, against illusion and hypocrisy. In Pascal, self-knowledge has an ethical stake and works towards achieving just and virtuous behaviour in life. Justice and injustice are always important values in the interpretation of the structure of the self.

In the secondary literature, we often come across analyses of the Pascalian self. On the one hand, Pascal's position in this respect differs radically from Descartes', and on the other hand, the typically Pascalian expression 'hateful self' (*le moi haissable*)[6] has long attracted the attention of interpreters. Interpretations of the Pascalian self are grouped around these two topics. The relationship between the Cartesian ego and the Pascalian self has been analysed by Jean-Luc Marion, Vincent Carraud and Pierre Guenancia and we find a long comparison between Descartes and Pascal in Félix Ó Murdchaha.[7] The nature of the hateful self has been thoroughly analysed by Vincent Carraud, Laurent Thirouin, Jean Mesnard and Michael Moriarty.[8] Nevertheless, studies devoted to the problem of self-knowledge in Pascal are rare.[9] I would therefore like to systematically understand how self-knowledge works in Pascal, how it influences the structure of the self and human behaviour and where its limits lie. To understand the importance of self-knowledge in Pascal, it is necessary to see how real self-knowledge influences social behaviour and how it transforms the natural relationships in the structure of the self. The precept of knowing thyself has two dimensions: a social and a subjective dimension. It serves to distinguish between the social and the natural self on the one hand, and the Me (*le moi*) and the self (*le soi*) on the other,[10] by defining the proper relationship that man should form with himself. We must therefore examine these different dimensions.[11]

The Social Self and the Natural Self

'You must know yourself. If this does not serve to find the truth, at least it serves to order your life. And nothing is better (*Et il n'y a rien de plus juste*)' (Sel. 106, Laf. 72). This fragment of the *Pensées* shows the importance of the precept of self-knowledge in Pascal's thinking.[12] But it also reveals that the value of this precept is ambiguous. Self-knowledge influences one's way of living, it leads to a certain *savoir vivre* and order of life. The ordered life has an ethical meaning: the self-knowledge works towards justice. However, this knowledge is limited because it 'does not serve to find the truth'. In other words, putting self-knowledge into practice does not lead to ultimate truth and justice, nor does it make life happy. What can be the real meaning of this fragment?

In a first approach, this fragment seems to summarize the doctrine that Pascal develops in a short writing entitled *Three Discourses on the Condition of the Great*. Here Pascal analyses the human condition from a social perspective and

focuses on the status of the 'great', that is to say, the nobles and aristocrats. To present his understanding of social status, Pascal defines the origin of social inequalities. This text also has a pedagogical dimension, as Pascal was writing to a prince, the son of Duc de Luynes, to teach him how to behave in a just manner.[13] The central thesis of this text is that the human condition is twofold: it is divided into a social condition and a natural condition. While the social condition creates social hierarchy by establishing inequalities among men, the natural condition ensures perfect equality amongst them. According to the Pascalian interpretation, social hierarchy is necessary and inevitable, but it is arbitrary. The social laws that founded this hierarchy and make social inequalities legitimate are based only on the arbitrary will of ancient legislators and on custom. Nevertheless, they define the frameworks of social justice, so it is unjust not to respect them. Although it is right to respect hierarchy in society, it is also right to see that the natural condition of mankind makes human beings equal.

What are the consequences of the discovery of the difference between the social condition and the natural condition on the behaviour of a prince? Pascal points out that the nobles must give a double consideration (*une double pensée*) to their own condition: they need to know their natural condition while accepting their social status. They must know themselves and in this way, they must discover their natural condition. While behaving by their social status, they must consider themselves equal to everyone else: 'If public thought elevates you above the common man, may the other humble you and keep you in perfect equality with all men; for this is your natural state.'[14] According to Pascal, a prince behaves unjustly when he confuses these two conditions: when he thinks that his social condition is natural and his social position is instituted by nature. It is 'self-forgetfulness' that occurs when a prince fails to know himself: 'One must forget oneself for that, and believe that one has some real excellence above them [other men], in which consists the illusion that I am trying to reveal to you.'[15] Self-forgetfulness necessarily creates illusions in human life, the consequence of which is unjust behaviour.

The importance of the Pascalian theory is to underline the difference between two modes of being a man, social and natural, which create two different forms of self. The social self is not the same as the natural self. In the *Pensées*, Pascal shows that social functions are rarely based on real values and that the imagination plays an important role in their constitution. The clothes of magistrates, jurists and doctors are disguises that aim to influence the imagination of others, to mask the absence of real science: 'The majesty of these sciences would command enough respect by itself. But having only imaginary knowledge, they must take up those

vain tools that strike the imagination to which they must appeal; and in this way they do, in fact, inspire respect' (Sel. 78, Laf. 44).

The fragment Sel. 78, Laf. 44, which shows the functioning of the imagination in society and the *Three Discourses* emphasize the same thing: one should not confuse oneself with one's social rank or function, since these are arbitrary or imaginary constructs. Hierarchy is necessary for the proper functioning of society but man cannot behave in a just manner without knowing his true worth: his natural condition. The imperative of knowing thyself therefore breaks with an illusion by encouraging one to wake up from one's self-forgetfulness and to behave in a just way. Now we understand better the fragment that underlines the importance of the principle of knowing thyself: 'You must know yourself . . . it serves to order your life. And nothing is better' (Sel. 106, Laf. 72). Knowing our true condition is indispensable for an ordered life and for behaving in a just manner. The ability to distinguish between the social and the natural self is in Pascal's view the *sine qua non* of a just life. Self-knowledge thus aims at founding a just life in Pascal.

However, the justice thus obtained is far from being true justice. In the fragment Sel. 106, Laf. 72 Pascal points out that 'this would not serve to find the truth'. Self-knowledge, as it appears in these quoted texts, does not seem to lead to full and true self-knowledge. It does not reveal the truth of the self and does not allow one to become fully just. This limitation shows the ambiguity of the percept of self-knowledge in Pascal's thinking. Self-knowledge is important but it is not sufficient for a just life. To explain the reason behind this limitation, it is necessary to see how Pascal interprets the structure of the natural self.

The Hateful Me

Pascal interprets the structure of the natural self in a way quite different from Descartes. In a fragment of the *Pensées*, he writes that 'my self consists in my thought' (Sel. 167, Laf. 135). However, this fragment seems to be a summary of an argument by Descartes in the Third Meditation and does not reflect Pascal's conception of the self (Marion 1986, 313). For Pascal, the self does not consist in thought but love. That is to say, Pascal interprets the human self not in an epistemological or cognitive but in an affective context. In another fragment, where Pascal asks the question, 'What is the self?' (*'Qu'est-ce que le moi?'*) (Sel. 567, Laf. 688), he explicitly refers to a Cartesian situation: he depicts someone standing at the window looking at passers-by outside.[16] This situation serves to

underline two things in Descartes' Second Meditation: that the knowledge of material and external things depends on the ideas in the soul (in this case, the human beings) and that the soul knows itself more immediately and more adequately than material things.[17] In Pascal, the situation is the same ('A man goes to the window to see the passers-by,' Sel. 567, Laf. 688), but the conclusion is quite different. Instead of analysing how to recognize a human being behind the hats and coats, Pascal is interested in interpersonal love.

The question Pascal is asking concerns the object of love that is essentially connected to his notion of the self: is love capable of accessing the true self of the other or is it necessarily attached to something else in the other? 'Does someone who loves another because of her beauty really love her?' (Sel. 567, Laf. 688). What is the relationship between the love of the other and the self of the other? Pascal lists examples to show that 'we never love a person, but only some qualities' (Sel. 567, Laf. 688). Love sometimes aims at physical qualities (beauty), sometimes at mental qualities (judgment, memory) without being able to reach the true essence of the other. In this respect, defining the self as a substance does not allow us to understand the essence of the self, because 'the substance of a person's soul' (Sel. 567, Laf. 688) is an abstract thing and therefore it cannot be the object of love. Pascal's criticism of the Cartesian ego is clear.[18] The Cartesian ego, which is grasped in the evidence of the *cogito*, is an abstract substance and cannot be the true self of a person because it cannot be loved. The true self cannot be expressed by physical and mental qualities.[19] It is nevertheless something because Pascal points out that, 'I can lose these qualities without losing myself' and 'qualities . . . do not constitute the self, since they are perishable' (Sel. 567, Laf. 688). The self seems to have a certain identity without being a substance and without being identical to physical and mental qualities.

In the *Pensées*, Pascal uses a neologism invented by himself to designate the self: '*le moi*', the substantive form of the personal pronoun '*moi*'.[20] Commentators often see in this neologism an explicit opposition to the Cartesian *ego*.[21] But Pascal also had other intentions with the use of this term. In the English translations, this is not apparent and even in the French text it is still not visible but in the *Pensées* Pascal makes a difference between the Me (*moi*) and the self (*soi* or *soi-même*). To keep this terminological distinction, we will distinguish between the *Me* and the *self*. Before showing the importance of this distinction, we need to understand what the nature of the Me is.

The first editors of Pascal's *Pensées*, Antoin Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, felt the need to clarify the meaning of this term: 'The word MOI [Me] which the author uses . . . signifies only self-love (*amour-propre*). It is a term he was accustomed to

using with some of his friends.'[22] This remark is added to fragment Sel. 494, Laf. 597 where Pascal speaks of 'the hateful self' (*le moi haïssable*) which I translate as 'the hateful Me'. This expression underlines that the Me is not defined on a cognitive level but that it must be interpreted in an affective context, in the perspective of love and hate. What does it mean that the Me is self-love and why is it the object of hate?

To understand the Pascalian doctrine of the 'hateful Me', it is necessary to see how much Pascalian thought is rooted in the Augustinian tradition and Jansenist theology.[23] In this tradition, the concept of concupiscence and grace play a central role in the interpretation of the human condition. Man is no longer in his original state, in that of his creation, but as a result of sin, he now exists in a reduced and corrupted state.[24] His fall has profoundly modified the dispositions of human nature, which is why Pascal distinguishes between two different natures: the first and the second nature. The second nature, which characterizes man today, is corrupted and is entirely dominated by concupiscence. Concupiscence is a desire that determines one's whole life and binds the soul to material objects. It is a bond so strong that only divine grace can unbind. Concupiscence corrupts the heart and determines the natural mechanism of love in the soul. Consequently, in the Augustinian tradition, to understand the self, it is more important to discover the affective status of the soul than to describe the cognitive relations of the mind. The central role of love in Pascal's interpretation of the human condition and the structure of the self is thus intimately linked to this tradition. According to Pascal, without knowing the effects of concupiscence, the structure of the self remains incomprehensible. The Me as self-love is the effect of concupiscence.

The fall, corruption and concupiscence create a double nature in human beings. The second does not entirely erase the first nature, which remains present at least in some traces. These include the desire to know the truth and the desire for happiness. The simultaneous presence of two opposing natures makes human nature particularly complex. To understand it, we must necessarily realize its origin by seeing how corruption and concupiscence modify human nature. However, the knowledge of concupiscence does not make human nature transparent. In fragment Sel. 164, Laf. 131, Pascal shows the human condition to be paradoxical: 'Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself' (Sel. 164, Laf. 131). The knowledge of the double nature reveals only that 'man infinitely transcends man', since the presence of the two opposite natures does not allow a satisfactory definition of the human condition. Concupiscence seems to be the key to self-knowledge according to Pascal: 'Without this most incomprehensible of all mysteries, we are incomprehensible to ourselves. The

knot of our condition takes its twists and turns in this abyss, so that man is more unintelligible without this mystery than this mystery is unintelligible to man' (Sel. 164, Laf. 131).

However, the keys to understanding human nature, corruption, sin and concupiscence, are themselves mysteries. This knowledge based on concupiscence therefore only leads to the recognition of the paradox that man infinitely transcends man. This shows us two things in Pascalian thought: on the one hand, to know the Me, one must necessarily understand how love influences its own structure; on the other hand, the knowledge of the Me does not lead to the discovery of one's true self because the effort to determine human nature runs up against its own paradoxes. Knowledge is important for the realization of the paradoxical nature of man but it is not sufficient for 'finding the true self' because the self remains deeply hidden.

Pascal's analyses of the structure of the Me do not stop here. They lead to an understanding of the affective relationships within this structure that makes one's Me the object of hatred. Why does the Me become hateful? In the fragment Sel. 743, Laf. 978 Pascal states that, 'The nature of self-love and of this human [Me] is to love only self and to consider only self' (Sel. 743, Laf. 978). This is a result of concupiscence: the love, which naturally characterizes human nature, turns towards itself and becomes self-love (*amour-propre*). Self-love thus mainly defines the structure of the self, at least on its surface, and becomes a synonym of the Me.[25] The Me is thus the production or creation of self-love. It becomes a closed centre of love where love turns in on itself. According to the fragment Sel. 494, Laf. 597, the Me is hateful because it 'makes itself the centre'.[26] The Me becomes the centre through its self-love by closing in on itself and losing the natural self's openness. At the same time, self-love implies not only firmness but also the will to power: 'it is irritating to others, in that it would subjugate them, for each [Me] is the enemy and would like to be the tyrant of all others' (Sel. 494, Laf. 597). Through its egocentrism and will to power, the Me becomes hateful to others. So the expression 'hateful Me' means above all that the self is not lovable to others, its structure and the behaviour that stems from it make the self hateful to others.[27]

In Pascal, the problem of justice is intimately linked to the analysis of the structure of the self. In the *Three Discourses* Pascal shows how the confusion between the social self and the natural self makes human behaviour unjust. Self-love also implies an unjust relationship to the self. In a long fragment devoted to this relationship (Sel. 743, Laf. 978), Pascal shows that one has no interest in knowing oneself because knowledge of the self is quite contrary to concupiscence

and self-love. As a result of self-love, everyone wants to be liked and valued by others and to see themselves as 'great', 'perfect', 'happy' and so on. However, human nature is full of imperfections that make man 'small', 'miserable' and 'unhappy' and this is tantamount to saying that the object of self-love does not deserve to be loved and valued. The self is therefore not interested in knowing the truth about its nature. 'It conceives a mortal hatred against this truth . . . convincing it of its faults' (Sel. 743, Laf. 978). The great want to be flattered and the men around them flatter them, we want to hear praise and the people around us offer it. Therefore, the image that man forms of himself is a pure illusion that has no correspondence to reality. Just as the social self is based on imagination, the Me is also an effect of imagination: 'We are not satisfied with the life we have in ourselves and in our own being: we want to live an imaginary life in the mind of others, and for this purpose we endeavour to make an impression. We labour constantly to embellish and preserve this imaginary being and neglect the real one' (Sel. 653, Laf. 806).

The origin of the illusory aspect of the social self and the Me is always self-love. Man loves himself and wants to be loved, respected and valued by others. Therefore, he exerts an influence on their imagination to create and maintain an illusory image of this Me. At the same time, he identifies with this image behind which his true nature is deeply and carefully hidden: 'Man is, therefore, only disguise, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both in himself and with regard to others. He does not want to be told the truth. He avoids telling it to others' (Sel. 743, Laf. 978). Pascal makes clear the mechanism that prevents man from knowing himself. Being dominated by self-love, the structure of the self is such that it turns man away from knowing himself. His self-love makes man prefer to remain in his corrupted and self-centred state by persevering in his self-forgetfulness. So, the precept of 'know thyself' clearly contradicts concupiscence and corruption.

By speaking about the hateful Me, Pascal thinks of the hatred that others feel before the Me that loves only itself. The Me is therefore hateful to others because it wants to dominate everyone. But man must also hate himself: 'We must love only God and hate only ourselves' (Sel. 405, Laf. 373).[28] The effect of self-knowledge is self-hatred. Through its knowledge, the self discovers its structure: its dual and paradoxical nature, its self-love which creates the Me as an affective and closed centre. Through this knowledge, man understands his imperfection, his misery and his shortcomings. Man recognizes that the love he feels for himself and desires from others is unjust. Self-knowledge is therefore opposed to injustice and aims to restore the right relationships in the self and human

behaviour. If self-love is unjust, it must be cured by an opposite affect: by self-hatred. It is therefore right to hate the Me.

This analysis shows clearly that Pascal uses love and hate to define the structure of the self. Self-love creates a centre in this structure by forming the Me but this centre is not identical with the real and true self. The definition of this structure in an affective context makes it clear that the precept of knowing yourself is ambiguous in Pascal. It is necessary to know oneself but a cognitive approach is not able to know this structure in its real depth. The true self remains hidden. It is not a centre like the Me, it is not a core, it is not a substance. The difference between the Me and the self is clear:[29] the Me is a centre in that structure which self-love produces but which does not correspond to the totality of the self. The Me is an artificial effect of second nature, corruption, concupiscence and self-love. It creates illusions and involves unjust behaviour. The source of injustice is a confusion that the absence of self-knowledge, or the forgetfulness of self, makes possible: man confuses his illusory Me with his real self. To counteract this injustice, man must understand that the Me that makes itself the centre does not correspond entirely to the self. This discovery leads man to understand that the Me is not lovable but hateable. The hatred of the Me thus becomes a means to free the self from the illusions and hypocrisies that characterize one's natural condition. One must hate the Me because only self-hatred can restore justice.

However, the question must be asked as to what the scope of self-hatred is, and what exactly it means, according to Pascal's intention, to hate oneself. Does self-hatred forbid and exclude self-love?

The Annihilation of the Me

The fragment Sel. 151, L. 119 sums up Pascal's position on the love and hate that one owes to oneself: 'Let man judge his worth now . . . Let him hate himself; let him love himself. He has in himself the capacity for knowing truth and being happy, but he possesses no truth, either constant or satisfactory' (Sel. 151, Laf. 119). Here Pascal does not explain what the principles of self-hatred and self-love are. One of the last chapters (*liasses*) of the *Pensées*, entitled 'Christian Morality', is devoted to the problem of just behaviour. The central subject of this chapter is the 'thinking member'. This is a metaphor borrowed from St Paul: everybody should consider themselves as if they were members of the body of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12. 4-6). Pascal speaks of self-love in this context: 'To regulate

the love we owe to ourselves, we must imagine a body full of thinking members, for we are members of the whole, and must see how each member should love itself' (Sel. 401, Laf. 368). This fragment makes it clear that the precept of self-hatred is not unlimited. Self-hatred concerns only the Me, the 'centre' that self-love produces in the structure of the self but does not concern the whole self.

In a long letter written to his sister on the occasion of the death of their father,[30] Pascal talks about the origin of self-love. He describes in the context of Augustinian theology what the state of man's creation consists of. According to St Augustine's doctrine, when Adam was created, he experienced two different types of love: love for God and love for himself. While the love for God was infinite, the love for oneself was limited and had to relate to God. In this state, self-love was righteous, innocent and sinless. But after the fall, when man fell under the dominion of concupiscence, the situation changed: love for God disappeared and its place was occupied by self-love. Self-love thus became infinite, that is to say that is to say perfectly dominating the human condition. Without mentioning the Me, Pascal describes its birth in this letter: by becoming dominant in human nature, self-love closed in on itself and created the Me. We can conclude several things from this. The Me does not correspond to the true self. In the first nature, which has not entirely disappeared from the present nature, the Me did not yet exist. This does not mean that the self did not exist but that its structure was different. It was not closed because self-love did not create a centre in that structure. It also follows that man should not hate himself totally. The precept of self-hatred does not relate to the structure of the self as a whole but only to the centre artificially produced by self-love. In other words, hatred of the Me does not mean hatred of the self.

In the *Logique de Port-Royal*, Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole make an important point regarding the relationship between piety and the self. They recall that Pascal used to say that 'Christian piety annihilates the human Me' (III, 19). This remark is in line with the rule of thinking members which defines the love that the self owes to itself. If a member may not know that he is a member, he behaves as if he were independent, forgetting that his life depends on the life of the body as well as on the life of the other members: 'it believes it depends only on itself and wants to make itself its own centre and body' (Sel. 404, Laf. 372). He becomes egocentric, which is completely unacceptable and unjust behaviour. Pascal emphasizes the importance of knowing oneself: knowing oneself means that the member becomes aware that he is only a member and that his life depends entirely on the body: 'when it comes to know itself, it is as if it has returned home and no longer loves itself except for the body' (Sel. 404, Laf.

372). 'Loves itself except for the body' means to hate the self-love in oneself because self-love makes itself the centre, creates the Me and separates it from the 'body'. Instead of closing in on himself by loving only the self, one must love the 'body' and it is through the love of the 'body' that he must love himself. In this metaphor, the 'body' means Jesus Christ, of whom all Christians are members. The precept of loving only God and hating the Me means that we must love ourselves through the love of God. The self-knowledge that reveals man as a member of a body aims at restoring the original situation of the first nature where man loved God infinitely and loved himself with a limited love. This procedure leads to the annihilation of the Me.

Pascal interprets the human self as a structure that closes in on itself through self-love. Self-knowledge aims to discover the nature of this closure and to restore openness. The closure and openness in the structure of the self are explained by the fact that the structure of the self is defined on an affective level and not on a cognitive level. Self-love creates a closure that implies unjust behaviour. Self-knowledge counteracts this closure by discovering its origin and trying to restore the original openness of the self. The opening is due to love that is no longer directed towards the self but towards God.

It must be emphasized, however, that mere self-knowledge cannot effect the entire restructuring of the self. According to the Augustinian tradition, for Pascal concupiscence is too strong and dominant for natural knowledge and the human will to rid human nature of it. The Augustinian and Pascalian will are not as free as the Cartesian will. Only divine intervention can change the disposition of the heart and restore God's love to man. However, we see the character of this change in the structure of the self: by ridding itself of the closure of self-love and opening itself to God the self tends to annihilate the Me. The self, which must love God infinitely and itself in a regulated way, loses its closure and, consequently, also loses the Me. The Pascalian self is not a metaphysical core, it is not a substance, it is not the image of God. It is an opening towards the infinite. This opening is realized by the love of God and the love of others. The Pascalian self is a thinking member of a body in a community with other members. So the self composes a whole through the other selves.

Conclusion

The most important difference in Pascal's approach to the self from his contemporaries is that Pascal interprets the self in an affective and not in a

cognitive context. The self is not seen as the unity of consciousness, nor as a substance but is situated on an ethical plane and encloses values. His interpretation of the self is linked to issues of justice and injustice. Pascal thus develops a normative approach to the self: its structure implies unjust behaviour that needs to be changed. In this respect, the principle of knowing thyself plays a very important role. The human soul is in an imperfect state that requires ethical work on the self. However, Pascal's relation to the philosophical tradition of self-knowledge is ambiguous. He is part of it because, according to him, as well as to Socrates, self-knowledge aims at discovering illusions in the structure of the self and at breaking with them. Reflections on the self and the search for its true nature lead to a virtuous and just life. However, Pascal does not fit harmoniously into this tradition. On the one hand, because the self is not defined metaphysically: it has no supernatural core, it does not include elements that make the self an image of God. On the other hand, self-knowledge is not sufficient to change the disposition of the self. Pascal interprets the structure of the self in an affective framework, in the context of love and hate. Pure intellectual and rational self-knowledge is not able to change these affects. As Pascal says: reason is not able to change the disposition of the heart which is the source of love in human nature. One of the fragments in *Pensées* sums up Pascal's position: 'Philosophers. A fine thing to cry to a man who does not know himself, that he should come to God of himself! And a fine thing to say this to a man who does know himself!' (Sel. 174, Laf. 141). Knowing ourselves is not enough to know God, it is a necessary condition for opening up to God.

So what is the scope of Pascal's self-knowledge? Self-knowledge is necessary but it is not perfectly effective. It is necessary to know oneself even if this knowledge does not serve to find the truth. Self-knowledge is important to understand the difference between the social self and the natural self, to discover the mechanics of self-love and to know the Me as an illusory centre. It is necessary to understand how the confusion between the social self with the natural self and the Me with the true self leads to unjust behaviour. This knowledge uncovers the evil of corruption and the power of concupiscence and opposes injustice. However, self-knowledge is not capable of freeing the self from self-love and restoring true justice in the soul. According to the Augustinian tradition, divine intervention is necessary to change the disposition of the heart and bring about charity. Therefore, it is the theory of corruption and grace, derived from the theology of St Augustine, that makes Pascal's belonging to the philosophical tradition of self-knowledge ambiguous. This ambiguity is present everywhere in the apologetic argumentation of the *Pensées*. Man cannot know the truths of

religion without charity, and charity, i.e. love of God, is not voluntary but is the effect of divine grace. However, man must make efforts to discover his corruption and understand that truth and happiness are found only in God. Natural knowledge thus plays an important role in the apologetic argument of the *Pensées*.

The Pascalian conception of the self aims at restoring an original openness in the structure of the self and self-knowledge plays an important role in this attempt. This Pascalian conception fits into different traditions but it also goes beyond them. Pascal's ambiguity shows itself in this respect: by leaning on traditions (Socratic and Augustinian) Pascal elaborates a modern conception. On the one hand, he shows that the human self has different dimensions, social and private and that man must learn to live and act in different contexts. On the other hand, Pascal demonstrates that he is not an essentialist. The Pascalian self is not seen as an essence hidden deep in the human soul, therefore, becoming oneself is meaningless according to Pascal. If one knows oneself and learns to love oneself in the right measure through the love of the 'body', one loses rather than finds oneself .

Notes

1 Nicole (1999: 309).

2 Cf. Christopher Moore: *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*. Moore defines the purpose of self-knowledge as responsibility: 'Socratic self-knowledge means working on oneself, with others, to become the sort of person who could know himself, and thus be responsible to the world, to others, and to oneself, intellectually, morally, and practically' (2015: 6).

3 The human self is a complex phenomenon which appears differently in different interpretations. There is, for example, a big difference between essentialist and non-essentialist interpretations of the self. These differences in interpretation always relate to how the thinkers define the complexity of the self. This complexity is described as an inner order or structure in the self. This is why in this study I will be talking about the structure of the self.

4 In Descartes, at least in the *Meditationes*, the question of self-knowledge is epistemological and ontological and not ethical. Contemporary debates about Descartes's *ego cogito* show this clearly. See in this regard the study by Pascal Ludwig: *Cogito et connaissance de soi introspective* (2018). See also the opinion of Martine Pécharman: 'chez Descartes . . . où la finalité de la connaissance de soi, n'étant pas immédiatement morale, mais épistémique, la substitution de la question: *qu'est-ce*

que l'homme ? à la question: *qu'est-ce que le soi (le moi) ?* se trouve rendue illégitime' (2008: 24).

5 Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. and trans. by Roger Ariew (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2005). I follow Philippe Sellier's numbering (Sel.): Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. by Philippe Sellier (Paris: Garnier, 1999). I also give Louis Lafuma's numbering (Laf.): Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. by A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

6 In order to remain faithful to Pascal's conception, I will henceforth translate the expression '*le moi haissable*' as 'the hateful Me' in this study.

7 Marion (1986: 340–5), Carraud (1992: 315–27), Guenancia (2011: 153–70) and Murchadha (2022: 69–112).

8 Carraud (2010: 15–42), Thirouin (2005), Mesnard (1992) and Moriarty (2020: 190–208).

9 The study by Pécharman entitled 'Connaissance de l'homme, connaissance de soi selon Pascal' (2008) is an exception. But these analyses focus more on the anthropological question than on the structure of the self in Pascal.

10 Since Pascal makes a distinction between the terms *'le moi'* and '*soi*' or '*soi-même*', I am obliged to use different terms in English: 'the Me' and 'the self'. Unfortunately, these differences do not appear in the English translations. The fragments where Pascal uses the term '*le moi*' are translated by English translators (A. J. Krailsheimer, R. Ariew) by 'self': '*le moi est haïssable*': 'the self is hateful' (Sel. 494, Laf. 597); '*Qu'est-ce que le moi?*': 'What is the self?' (Sel. 567, Laf. 688); '*La nature . . . de ce moi humain*': 'The nature . . . of this human self' (Sel. 743, Laf. 978). See: Wood (2013: 94–7). He uses the form 'the Moi' to translate '*le moi*'.

11 This study was written with the support of the OTKA/NKFI research fund K 147141.

12 This fragment can be found in chapter (*liasse*) 4, entitled 'Wretchedness' (*Misère*). According to Pascal, wretchedness and greatness are two opposite dimensions of the human condition. In this context, self-knowledge aims at the simultaneous discovery of these two opposite aspects of human nature.

13 This writing was published by Pierre Nicole in a treatise entitled *De l'éducation d'un prince* (1670). See Jean Mesnard's introduction to this text (Pascal, 1992: 1013–14).

14 'Si la pensée publique vous élève au-dessus du commun des hommes, que l'autre [pensée] vous abaisse et vous tienne dans une parfaite égalité avec tous les hommes, car c'est votre état naturelle' (Pascal, 1992: 1031). This text has no modern edition in English. I quote Samuel Webb's translation, available at: www.academia.edu/3244866/Pascals_Three_Discourses_on_the_Condition_of_the_Great_Translation_from_the_French_ (accessed 22 February 2023).

15 'Il faut s'oublier soi-même pour cela, et croire qu'on a quelque excellence réelle au-dessus d'eux [des autres hommes]' (Pascal, 1992: 1031).

16 'But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax. Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons? I judge that they are men' (Descartes, 1996: VII, 32; Descartes, 1984: 21).

17 'And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgement which is in my mind' (Descartes, 1996: VII, 32; Descartes, 1984: 21); 'My awareness of my own self is not merely much truer and more certain than my awareness of the wax, but also much more distinct and evident' (AT VII, 33, Descartes, 1984: 22).

18 This criticism has been thoroughly analysed by Jean-Luc Marion (1986: 343–55) and Vincent Carraud (1992: 315–27).

19 In quoting this fragment, Udo Thiel compares Pascal to Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld who refuse to interpret the human soul in an ontological context. These authors:

> see the person as an object not of abstract metaphysical thought, but of psychological observation. They are somewhat sceptical about reason as a means of grasping the nature of the self, and instead emphasize the constant changes that human beings undergo and the elusiveness of the self as an object of enquiry. For these authors, the emotional side of persons, rather than questions about their metaphysical make-up, is central. Pascal points out that metaphysically speaking, whatever the essence of a person is, what matters is that we love a person because of his or her observable qualities. (Thiel, 2011: 60)

Unfortunately, Thiel does not analyse this point in detail devoting only a page to Pascal.

20 In this regard, see the analyses of Carraud (2010: 15–16). Carraud quotes Pierre Coste, the translator of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, who translates Locke's self in 1700 as 'le moi', explaining that this expression comes from Pascal.

21 Marion speaks about the defeat of the Cartesian *ego* in Pascalian thought (Marion, 1986: 344), Carraud about the destruction of Descartes's 'egologie' (Carraud, 1992: 287).

22 *Pensées de M. Pascal sur la religion et sur quelques autres sujets* (Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1670), 282.

23 For a detailed analysis that carefully shows the influence of Augustinian theology on Pascal's thought, see Sellier (1995).

24 William Wood's book *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin, and the Fall* analyses in depth the theological background of Pascalian thought (2013).

25 Carraud correctly writes: 'The self [Me] is the relationship to oneself whose modality is self-love' (2010: 25).

26 This fragment contains a fictional dialogue and argument against a friend of Pascal's called 'Mitton' who was one of the theorists of the *honnête homme*. Pascal thus formulates his doctrine of the hateful Me in the context of a criticism addressed to the morality of the *honnête homme* which serves to make the human Me agreeable to others. This point has been analysed in detail by commentators (Moriarty, 2020: 190–1; Carraud, 2010: 17–19; Thirouin, 2005: 222–3).

27 See Laurent Thirouin's study devoted to Pascal's hateful self (2005). He underlines that this expression mainly expresses the hatred that others feel for the self, that is to say, that the self makes itself hateful to others by its self-love. Thus, the author distinguishes between interpersonal hatred of the self and intrapersonal hatred of the self (Thirouin, 2005: 245). In the fragment Sel. 494, Laf. 597, Pascal speaks of interpersonal hatred but elsewhere self-hatred appears as a precept and becomes an intrapersonal hatred.

28 See also fragment Sel. 253, Laf. 220, where Pascal writes of the Christian religion that, 'No other religion has proposed that we should hate ourselves. No other religion, then, can please those who hate themselves and who seek a being truly worthy of love' (Sel. 253, Laf. 220).

29 Guenancia also insists on this distinction between the Me (*moi*) and the self (*soi*) (2011: 155).

30 Letter of 17 October 1651 (Pascal, 1970: 857–8). Moriarty also quotes this letter but draws conclusions that are contrary to our own. He writes that, 'Pascal has not given convincing arguments in favour of the view that the natural tendency to pursue one's own good is of its nature disordered and disruptive. . . . Pascal takes all self-love to be vicious' (Moriarty, 2020: 202, 205).

10

Jacques Abbadie on Social Selves and Spiritual Selves

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Introduction

Early modern philosophers discussed different groups of questions concerning the self. One group of questions arises from the question of what kind of substance the self is, such as questions of what constitutes the substantiality of the self, what constitutes the identity of the self at one point in time and over time, and how mental and bodily states relate to the self as a substance. Another group of questions addresses the self through analysing various self-relations, such as self-knowledge, self-deception, self-reflection, self-love, self-esteem, self-acquiescence and self-contempt. For instance, it can be asked whether there can be self-knowledge without self-deception, whether self-love allows for justified self-esteem and whether self-reflection leads to self-acquiescence or self-contempt. The latter group of questions is highly relevant for the analysis of what could be called 'social selves' and 'spiritual selves'. The label 'social selves' could be used as an abbreviation for considerations concerning how the desire for social esteem is connected with various self-relations – for instance, whether the desire for social esteem is conducive to self-knowledge or self-deception, whether it is a reliable foundation for self-esteem or risks falling into self-contempt, whether it is an obstacle or an incentive to self-reflection and whether the self-acquiescence we experience when the desire for esteem is fulfilled is good for our well-being or not.[1] The label 'spiritual selves' could be used as an abbreviation for considerations concerning how the desire for being united with God is connected with self-relations – for instance, what role the search for God could play for self-knowledge and our ability to overcome self-deception, for developing justified self-esteem and avoiding self-contempt, for

finding a function for self-reflection and for avoiding detrimental forms of self-acquiescence.

The seventeenth-century French moralists discussed questions concerning social and spiritual selves by placing their considerations in the context of their reception of aspects of ancient philosophy. For the debate about social selves, the crucial event was the rediscovery of the philosophy of Epicurus, often read through the lens of its interpretation in Cicero's republicanism. For the debate about spiritual selves, the crucial event was the rediscovery of Augustine, often read as being incompatible with pagan ethics. Both events begin with monumental scholarly achievements: Pierre Gassendi's *Animadversiones in decimum librum Diogenis Laertii* (1649), in the former case, and Cornelius Jansen's *Augustinus* (1640), in the latter case. Both works were hugely influential in early modern France but typically the lines of thought inspired by one were developed without integrating much of the lines of thought inspired by the other.

One exception to this is the work of Jacques Abbadie (1654–1727). During his time as pastor of the Huguenot community in Berlin, he published an extended reflection about the role of self-knowledge in the foundations of morality, *L'art de se connoître soy-même* (1692).[2] This work offers a puzzling combination of views: one finds themes prominent in the Augustinian tradition, such as the weakness of human forces, the experience of dissatisfaction and boredom and the inability to sustain a realistic picture of oneself.[3] One then finds Epicurean themes, such as the idea that what is good in human life derives from the experience of pleasure and the idea that self-love and the desire for esteem are crucial motivating forces for social cohesion.[4] Arthur Lovejoy, who gave a detailed account of Abbadie's views on the desire for esteem as a psychological principle that unites society,[5] saw an incoherence between this principle and Abbadie's view that humans are also united in the world of religion.[6] By contrast, I argue that Abbadie offers a persuasive way of integrating a conception of social selves and a conception of spiritual selves. His approach to social and spiritual selves is something that Abbadie has in common with moralists inspired by the Augustinian tradition, such as Pierre Nicole (1625–95), from whom he borrows several ideas. However, Abbadie deviates from Nicole by arguing that the desire for social esteem can lead to positive self-relations (self-knowledge without self-deception, self-esteem without self-contempt, self-love without self-acquiescence) that are compatible with the positive self-relations that arise from the desire for being united with God.

My interpretive strategy presupposes that the Augustinian themes in Abbadie be taken seriously, thus diverging from the interpretive strategy suggested by Isaac Nakhimovsky, who defended the coherence of Abbadie's thought by

denying any substantial links to the Augustinian tradition. In Nakhimovsky's view, Abbadie integrates Epicureanism with Christian spirituality by building the concept of pleasure into his conception of eternal life.[7] Nakhimovsky points out that Abbadie adopts Malebranche's view that God is the only immediate cause of sensations and that Abbadie, therefore, supposes that God continues to be the immediate cause of pleasures in the soul after the death of the body.[8] As to the nature of the pleasures that are independent of bodily functions, Nakhimovsky suggests that Abbadie adopted Descartes's theory of 'internal emotions' – those emotions caused only by the reflection of the soul upon its states.[9] According to Nakhimovsky, Abbadie ascribed the 'internal pleasure of the soul and the lasting happiness that results, to the soul's awareness of the perfection it attains from the practice of virtue'.[10] Nakhimovsky concludes that 'Abbadie described an authentic relationship between self-love and morality in worldly life that directly opposed the Augustinian picture of society,'[11] and that 'Abbadie's moral theory amounted to a rejection of the Augustinian claim that only divine grace was able to correct the depravity and corruption produced by the fall.'[12]

The strongest argument that Nakhimovsky offers for his anti-Augustinian interpretation of Abbadie derives from the treatment of the desire for esteem in the Augustinian tradition: 'Abbadie argued against the Jansenists that the desire for esteem in particular, so long as it was not abused, was good in itself as well as the cause of many other goods.'[13] Augustine contested the idea that there could be anything like a justified desire for esteem. Augustine's argument derives from his concept of concupiscence, which is the love of other persons or corporeal objects but not for the sake of God. Jansen uses these considerations to draw a sharp contrast between Augustinian and Epicurean ethics. He suggests that Augustine's analysis of the Platonists and the Manicheans also applies to the Epicureans. As Augustine notes, those who regard the human soul as the highest good, desire the soul 'carnally' (*carnaliter*), even when they regard the body as the origin of evil.[14] Jansen argues that the idea of loving the soul carnally can be applied to Epicurean ethics, even though the Epicureans do not regard the body as the origin of evil because 'carnal predilections are those through which we are directed toward created goods without relating them to the creator'; this is why Jansen counts the Epicureans among the pagan philosophers who accept a form of self-love that is contrary to the Christian love of God.[15]

In what follows, I argue that widening the context of Abbadie's thought may change the impression that Epicurean and Augustinian views on the desire for esteem are incompatible. The question of how the problem of acquiescence in

creaturely pleasures could be answered from an Augustinian perspective is very present in Gassendi's *Animadversiones*. Taking a comparative approach to Gassendi and Abbadie will bring to light that Abbadie, too, was aware of this problem and responded to it in similar ways. Both thinkers put secular virtue in the perspective of human weakness and vulnerability. This implies that seeking esteem for secular virtue never leads to a form of acquiescence that is an obstacle to loving God. What is more, Gassendi and Abbadie adopted the Augustinian conception of *delectatio animi* – the experience of pleasure in the state of grace[16] – to argue for the compatibility between the role that pleasure plays in Epicurean ethics and its role in Augustinian spirituality. This similarity informs their respective characterization of the state of souls after the death of organic bodies.

The intricate web of similarities and dissimilarities between Abbadie and the Epicurean and Augustinian traditions needs to be disentangled step by step. I begin by showing that Abbadie derives from the Augustinian tradition the emphasis on how much the striving for esteem is fraught with self-deception and from the Epicurean tradition the idea that fulfilling socially useful duties merits esteem (see the section titled, 'Esteem and the Problem of Self-Acquiescence'). Abbadie's eclectic stance is confronted with Augustine's objection that pagan ethics lead to a form of self-acquiescence that confuses things that should be used for ulterior purposes with things that should be enjoyed for their own sake (section titled, 'Two Forms of Self-Enjoyment: Gassendi'). Abbadie's answer to this objection shares much with Gassendi's by distinguishing transitory, imperfect worldly pleasures from eternal, perfect happiness in the state of restored grace (sections titled, 'Two Forms of Self-Enjoyment: Abbadie' and 'Grace and Self-Esteem'). Still, Abbadie goes beyond both Augustine and Gassendi when he develops the theme of self-reflection and self-enjoyment in the state of restored grace: justified self-esteem can only be grounded on the capacity common to all humans of reaching such a state of perfection through divine grace (see the 'Conclusion').

Self-Love, Self-Deception and the Desire for Esteem

Although Abbadie defends the idea that the desire for esteem has some naturally good consequences for living in society, he is clear that this desire can also take dysfunctional forms. In the *Traité de la verité de la religion chrétienne* (1679; third, expanded edition, 1689), he notes that deceiving others consists in 'giving them an excessive idea either of our merit or our happiness'.[17] As he analyses it,

'we use this esteem of others whom we have surprised to deceive ourselves more efficiently'.[18] The resulting dynamic of esteem is characterized as an 'eternal circle of illusions and errors, which are the false principles of a false satisfaction'.[19] This will sound familiar to readers of Nicole, who observes that self-love motivates us to hide our faults and discover the faults of others.[20] As Nicole notes, we always try to be seen by others and see ourselves, only in those aspects which we believe to be free of faults.[21] This enterprise is self-refuting in several respects. It has the consequence that others never love us but rather the phantoms of their imagination that they have formed of us.[22] In this sense, successfully deceiving others deprives us of authentic human relationships. But deceiving others is rarely fully successful. This is so because imagining that one is free of faults is itself an illusion created by self-love.[23] Our blindness to our faults leaves enough to be discovered by the self-love of others. In one sense, the imagination of others is both a stabilizing and destabilizing factor for upholding our self-image. On the one hand, as Nicole emphasizes, the image that we form of ourselves depends much less on our real being than on that we have in the imagination of others.[24] Since people can see the portraits that others make of them, and many of these portraits are not favourable, considering these portraits could be a good remedy against self-deception.[25] On the other hand, people usually consider only those portraits that are favourable to them by immunizing them against unfavourable portraits that are considered an expression of partiality or inattention.[26] 'In this way, by keeping our mind at a distance from any object that could shock it . . ., by deceiving ourselves voluntarily, and fleeing from being disillusioned, vanity remains half-satisfied . . .'[27] Vanity is satisfied when others imagine we have positive personal qualities; but it remains 'half-satisfied', both because it cannot ignore that the imagination of others is the result of active manipulation and that we immunize ourselves from noticing that others imagine we have negative personal qualities.

The emphasis on how much esteem and self-esteem result from deceiving others and oneself explains another convergence between Abbadie and Nicole. As to the question of how respect for those in high positions can be justified, Abbadie maintains that social order can be understood as an aspect of divine order. If this is acknowledged, he holds, 'those who reign over the bodies, do not reign for this reason over the souls', which is why the respect shown to those in high positions is a 'preference of order, not a preference of excellence'.[28] Nicole, too, understands social order as an expression of providence, and therefore worthy of inner respect.[29] Among the socially beneficial effects of this respect, he emphasizes that it mitigates the fierceness of those in high positions and

simultaneously prevents the hate and envy of those in subordinate positions.[30] Nicole takes distributing ranks according to merit to be impossible, due to the natural injustice of humans, and undesirable: 'If one were great only due to merit, the elevation of the great would be a continuous advertisement that one has preferred them to many people who believe to surpass them in merit.'[31] Abbadie adopts the latter idea. As he argues, if high positions are filled according to birth, no experiences of shame and no violations of pride occur: 'this evidently happens to handle the pride of other people who would suffer too much if all preferences that one is obliged to concede to others for the sake of the well-being of society would derive from a preference that is due to merit'.[32]

However, Abbadie does not believe that social esteem should never function as a reward for merit. This distinguishes him from Nicole, who holds that feeling satisfaction over being esteemed is a passion that 'is vain, unjust and ridiculous'.[33] Nicole takes it as natural that those who esteem themselves desire to be esteemed by others.[34] But he takes this desire to derive from an illusion that does not represent creatures as they are and 'hide for us their faults and everything that could diminish our esteem and love'. In his view, faith instils in us the truths 'which teach us the true price and the true usage of creatures; but it does so by uncovering to us other objects and other goods whose greatness and beauty render all creatures contemptible to us'.[35] Consequently, Nicole recommends to Christians that they renounce entirely the desire to be esteemed for talents and willingly accept contempt for not having any talents – except for the talent to embrace humiliation and contempt.[36]

By contrast, Abbadie maintains that love of esteem is legitimate and natural in itself.[37] In particular, he takes esteem to be 'the tribute that one renders to inner qualities and personal merit'.[38] Ultimately, the conception of duty that underlies Abbadie's understanding of merit derives from his pleasure-based ethics. In his view, our duties derive from nature in the sense that 'nature commands us to seek our well-being',[39] because, he argues, in the human mind two factors work together: First, self-love naturally leads us to desire pleasure and hate unpleasurable experiences.[40] Second, nature has given us powers of reasoning that allow us to weigh expected pleasures and expected displeasures.[41] Duties, one could paraphrase his conception, are what reason demands from the perspective of long-term maximization of pleasures and minimization of pains. And fulfilling such duties is the merit deserving esteem. One of the socially valuable functions that Abbadie ascribes to the desire for esteem is that it prevents wrongdoing. When humans believe that they cannot obtain esteem, he observes,

> they abandon themselves to despair, which makes them capable of the blackest actions: this brings about this alliance that one has always seen between the cruelty that makes princes hateful and the pleasure that obliges them to stain themselves even more, once they believe themselves to be too black in the minds of humans to be able to rehabilitate themselves in their esteem.[42]

On the positive side, Abbadie maintains that the sciences, fine arts, governance, and equitable institutions are all due to the natural desire for esteem.[43]

Gassendi's Epicurean treatment of the morality of esteem contains similar ideas. Gassendi holds that justice is an adequate object of esteem because, by its nature, it is an other-related virtue.[44] As he argues, there are no morally valuable achievements 'if you take the desire for glory and honor away from minds'.[45] This is so, he argues, because there are many more individuals who strive for places of dignity than individuals who strive for virtue for its own sake.[46] As to why people desire esteem, Gassendi notes that Epicurus regards reputation (*fama*) as a source of pleasure in itself; he notes that it is also a source of security, which in itself is a source of pleasure.[47] His insight into the virtue-supportive role of the desire for esteem leads Gassendi to maintain that duties of gratitude and of esteem should be included among the duties of natural justice.[48] Thus, honor is owed as a matter of justice, in the sense that honor is a remuneration (*merces*) and reward (*praemium*) for labours undertaken for the common good.[49] In this sense, he takes reputation and honor to be the just price (*iustum pretium*) for actions that are useful for the community.[50] This is what the public good demands since, as Gassendi argues, no one would want to take the labour necessary for the political community upon themselves.[51]

Esteem and the Problem of Self-Acquiescence

While it is not difficult to identify the various sources of inspiration for Abbadie's remarks about the dynamic of esteem, nevertheless the question of coherence arises. It is here that Nakhimovsky's claim that Abbadie's positive assessment of the beneficial social effects of the desire for esteem is incompatible with Augustine's negative ethical assessment of the desire for esteem needs to be scrutinized. I do not believe that this incompatibility obtains. Rather, Abbadie develops a conciliatory strategy similar to Gassendi's reconciliation between an Epicurean account of the morality of the desire for esteem with an Augustinian account of spiritual selves. In this section, I spell out the problem as understood by Augustine and Jansen. In the following sections, I analyse what Abbadie's

solution has in common with Gassendi's and in which respect Abbadie goes beyond what is found in Gassendi.

As Jansen emphasizes, Augustine does not deny that seeking esteem could lead to the fulfilment of duties. However, Augustine holds that there are two constituents of a good act: (1) *officium*, 'that which has to be done'; and (2) *finis*, 'the sake for which it is done'.[52] This opens the possibility that an action can be considered good because it fulfils a duty deriving from natural or positive law, without however counting as virtuous because it is not done for the right goal. As Jansen explains, Augustine holds that good acts can be done well or badly; this is why, for Augustine, there is no contradiction in holding that there are good actions that deserve praise according to the standards of justice but are done badly because of a defect concerning their goal.[53]

The question, of course, is why actions that deserve esteem for fulfilling duties are defective concerning their goal. Augustine holds that in the desire for esteem real vices are hidden behind the image of virtue because seeking reward (*merces*) is opposed to seeking divine justice.[54] The opposition that Augustine sees thus arises from the observation that there is a sort of exchange of social esteem for actions that are regarded as virtuous and that such actions are done for the sake of esteem. As he cautiously formulates: 'I do not know whether there is no guilt in converting the non-commutable good (*incommutabile bonum*) that is left behind into commutable goods (*commutabilia*).'[55] This way of expressing the problem suggests that what is bad about the quasi-economic aspects of seeking esteem as a reward for merit is that we withdraw from divine goodness that is radically non-economic in character.

What Augustine objects to here can be understood as a special case of his general analysis of concupiscence (*concupiscentia*). As he defines it, '[c]oncupiscence is nothing other than the love of perishable things'.[56] It is 'the motion of the mind to enjoy oneself and one's neighbor and any bodily object not for the sake of God'; by contrast, the Christian virtue of *charitas* consists in the 'motion of the mind to enjoy God for His own sake and to enjoy oneself and one's neighbor for the sake of God'.[57] As Jansen explains, what is bad about the love of creatures is it is impossible to love something without experiencing rest once the desired object has been attained.[58] And when people acquiesce (*conquiescere*) in worldly objects, they no longer search for God: 'This perversity is found in all sins when we want to enjoy these things that should be used; and when we use other things that should be enjoyed.'[59] This applies even in cases where we love a person who fulfils the duties of civil life. As Augustine and Jansen argue, this is so because non-Christian virtues are turned into hidden

vices because they are an expression of arrogance and acquiescence in oneself.[60] Thereby, Augustine identifies an attitude toward the self that is an obstacle to loving God. This is why Augustine and Jansen hold that there is a dichotomy between the self-love that comes at the price of forgetting God and a form of loving God that involves contempt for oneself.[61]

Two Forms of Self-Enjoyment: Gassendi

Forgetting the search for God by taking delight in finite objects (including oneself) is the really hard problem that attempts at integrating Augustinian spirituality with an Epicurean account of the morality of esteem faces. Was Abbadie aware of the problem? I think he was, as was Gassendi before him. In a passage from the *Animadversiones*, Gassendi addresses the central issue that motivates Augustine's argument against the moral value of striving for esteem. Gassendi summarizes the Augustinian challenge thus:

> Many think that it detracts much from virtue when virtue is said to be for the sake of something else. They infer from this that virtue belongs to what is useful, which differs from what is honorable; and in this way, we should properly say that we use it rather than enjoy it, and this enjoyment can be found only in these things that exist for their own sake and are honorable . . .; as Saint Augustine says, humans become unjust when they enjoy what should be used and use what should be enjoyed.[62]

In his response to this challenge, Gassendi concedes that whatever is for the sake of something else can in some sense be called useful; but adds that the relevant sense of utility differs from economic advantages. Rather, in his view what is honorable is simultaneously useful and pleasurable. Deriving pleasure from human virtue, however, does not detract from loving God for His own sake. Natural felicity brought about through natural powers never offers a genuine point of rest. Rather, it is 'as optimal as it can be; in it as much as possible of the necessary goods and as little of evil is present.'[63] It is limited according to the circumstances of the region, the nature of particular societies, the social position in life, the physiological constitution of the body, and the influence of the different life ages.[64] Even if striving for such felicity is the goal that we pursue with our natural powers, it is a goal that always reflects the fact that a human being is 'a weak animal and, according to the condition of nature, exposed to

countless evils and miseries'.[65] But if so, then pursuing the kind of felicity that Epicurus describes is no obstacle to pursuing the felicity to which Christians aspire. Gassendi expresses the contrast between the two kinds of happiness he has in mind thus:

> I say mortal life to insinuate that beyond this life there is another, immortal life, in which sacred religion teaches that for good persons there is a felicity that infinitely goes beyond understanding, namely, enjoyment or vision and ineffable love of the more-than-highest being and more-than-excellent good . . .[66]

The distinction between the two conceptions of happiness allows Gassendi to accept that for the kind of felicity taught by the teachers of the Christian faith, one needs supernatural assistance.[67] Crucially, however, he takes pleasure to be an essential characteristic of supernatural happiness. Some of his motivation is biblical: 'Sweetness certainly is not excluded by the one who claims that his yoke is sweet . . . And certainly, this love cannot exist without enjoyment, or a sweetly affected will, through which God draws us toward himself and toward loving him . . .'[68] Some of his motivation is Augustinian. Referring to the treatise *De Epicureis et Stoicis* – a text that in early modern times was still wrongly taken to be an authentic work of Augustine – Gassendi writes:

> Augustine, after having first said that the desire for a happy life is common to Christians and philosophers, added, as if correcting himself: *I should have said to all humans: for if I could ask evil persons, do you want to be happy? no-one would say, I don't*. However, as it seems, this matter should be understood according to the division of felicity drawn by Epicurus in his precepts.[69]

Despite the misattribution, the passage from *De Epicureis et Stoicis* does not misrepresent the significance of the concept of felicity for Augustine. Jansen draws attention to a passage from Augustine's *Letter to Macedonius* that indicates why Augustine himself set his view of the nature of felicity apart from the view of pagan philosophers: 'We reject . . . the vanities and insane lies of false philosophers: because for us there will be no true virtue unless the one who helps us is present; nor felicity unless the one is present whom we enjoy.'[70] Jansen comments:

> And this is no wonder because true virtue and true felicity are inseparably connected. For it cannot happen that true virtue is not a way toward true felicity and that it does not contribute to seeking it . . . For as true virtue cannot but descend from the heavens, it cannot but in turn ascend to the heavens because felicity is nothing but enjoying what true virtue loved.[71]

The Augustinian view of the nature of felicity is thus a corollary to the view that the only suitable object of enjoyment is God. This turns out to be a highly relevant context not only for interpreting Gassendi but also Abbadie.

Two Forms of Self-Enjoyment: Abbadie

Abbadie, too, sees the problem that striving for esteem could be an obstacle to loving God. As he diagnoses it, 'the disorder primarily arises from that we so intensely think about making ourselves be esteemed by others that we do not think at all about making ourselves be approved by God'.[72] In his view, the problem is not that people would take social esteem to be more precious than the approval of God; rather, the problem is that success in striving for social esteem does not depend on moral self-cultivation: 'to acquire the esteem of humans it is not at all necessary that our hearts be changed, it suffices that we disguise ourselves in the eyes of others . . .'[73] If the striving for social esteem does not require moral self-cultivation, then it a fortiori does not lead us to consider whether we deserve divine approval. This reformulation of the problem of concupiscence demands a solution, and Abbadie's solution is similar to Gassendi's. Abbadie remarks about the human virtues that, 'even if they do not serve eternal salvation, they are destined toward the well-being of temporal society . . .'[74] As he points out, temporal well-being is limited in many respects: There is a limited number of sensations, limited time to form images of the imagination and abstract thoughts, and experiences of happiness are fleeting and imperfect.[75] Abbadie also draws attention to an experience we undergo even with the esteem that is due to personal qualities:

> If the approbation of humans were a sufficiently great good for us, we would have no reason to hide the plan that we have made to attract it, nor the joy that this approbation gives to us: but since the same instinct persuades us of our excellence, it convinces us secretly that this esteem is too little to restrict our aspirations to it, it is no wonder that we take so much care to hide the desire we have for being esteemed or the esteem that we have for ourselves.[76]

Thus, the dissatisfaction that remains even when the desire for esteem is fulfilled indicates that acquiring esteem is not the ultimate goal of humans. In the *Traité de la verité de la religion chrétienne*, Abbadie puts this experience in a theological perspective: '[N]ature itself, which teaches us to hide the desire we have for being esteemed, makes us sufficiently known that we are destined to

something different.'[77] Thus, the fulfilment of the desire for esteem will not lead to acquiescence; rather, the dissatisfaction that remains after any fulfilment of this desire encourages the search for God.

For Abbadie, as for Gassendi, it is the insight into the fragile and imperfect nature of temporal happiness that renders the desire for esteem compatible with loving God. But this is not the only similarity between their conciliatory strategies. Much of the conception of enjoying God common to Augustine and Gassendi is found in Abbadie. In the *Traité de la verité de la religion chrétienne*, Abbadie uses a calculus of pleasure to compare the felicity in eternal life favorably to the conditions of temporal life:

> If you cut back cupidity, you cut an abundant source of misery, and you free yourself of an infinity of encumbrances and fatigues that are oriented toward this center. Likewise, if you love God as you should, you would enjoy his glory, his perfections, and his felicity as if all of them belonged to you.[78]

The end of this quotation indicates that, for Abbadie, enjoying God is simultaneously a kind of self-enjoyment. Does this enjoyment rest in a kind of fiction, as might be suggested by 'as if'? I do not think so because the divine perfections, in Abbadie's view, stand in a causal relation to human perfections in eternal life.

This raises the intricate question of how Abbadie's account of self-enjoyment in eternal life could be understood. Abbadie's conception of the soul differs from Gassendi's because Abbadie adopts Cartesian dualism and Malebranchian occasionalism. It is these aspects that led Nakhimovsky to the view that Abbadie developed a version of enlightened Epicureanism that discarded the notion of grace. However, is it plausible to read Abbadie's remarks about the soul's capacity of deriving pleasure from reflecting on its perfections from the perspective of Descartes's inner emotions – the emotions that are 'brought forth in the soul by the soul itself; whereby they differ from those passions that always depend on some motion of the spirits'?[79] As Descartes describes inner emotions, they are a way of finding contentment in the inner life of the soul and of increasing the joy experienced by the soul, when they inform the soul about its perfection. For experiencing contentment, all the soul has to do is follow the demands of virtue, which according to Descartes reduces to the requirement of always doing the things that it judges to be best.[80] And Descartes describes the effect of such inner emotions as a kind of satisfaction in which even the strongest passions cannot trouble the tranquillity of the soul[81] – that is, exactly the state of mind that Augustine has described as self-acquiescence.

Compare this with Abbadie's view that, in temporal life, there is no such thing as full satisfaction. This view is grounded on his adoption of central themes from the Augustinian tradition, most explicitly in his *Traité de la verité de la religion chrétienne*. For instance, he there points out that prosperity does not prevent feeling miserable, being disgusted with the objects of one's desires, or having insufficient knowledge of the things and persons one admires.[82] In one sense, these experiences imply a kind of perfection, but only in the sense that 'humans are the only creatures who sense their misery and their neediness' and they can be miserable only through their ability to know themselves.[83] These issues are by no means absent from *L'art de se connoître soy-même*. This can be seen, for instance, in Abbadie's analysis of shame (*pudeur*) as an 'artful disguise of our intemperance and our lust . . . as if corruption consisted in the expressions rather than the sentiments'.[84] Such a disguise can restrain our actions and secure esteem for us, but it cannot offer the ground for an experience of perfection:

> The shamefulness of a man of the world can aspire to gain the esteem of others through an enacted purity. But immortal man seeks to be able to esteem himself, while he fears that he would not be able to honor himself when he looks at his perfections.[85]

The experiences that we make with self-reflection in secular life thus are not pleasurable. Rather, these experiences have something unpleasurable because our moral qualities cannot count as perfections from the perspective of eternal life. Hence, the pleasure in eternal life cannot be accounted for alone in terms of Cartesian internal emotions and Malebranchian occasional causes. Rather, the perfections that make self-reflection pleasurable cannot arise without divine grace.

That Abbadie does not eliminate the notion of grace from his theology is indicated in his *Caractères du chréstien et du christianisme* (1695). There, he claims that the will leading to conversion toward God is itself an outcome of divine grace. Sacred Scripture 'wanted us to see what God makes in us through his grace at the moment we are converted, when it says *that it is God who produces in us with efficacy the willing and the perfection according to his good liking* . . .'[86] Thus, this biblical passage conveys the idea that 'we are nothing by ourselves, and that God makes everything in us through his grace . . .'[87] From this perspective, it is not accidental that, in *L'art de se connoître soy-même*, Abbadie understands the distinct ideas characteristic of self-reflection in eternal life as a consequence of divine grace:

> God wanted that the confused sentiments of our nature attach the glory of this world to external objects that are foreign to us and that the distinct ideas cannot call us back from this error and teach us that this glory in its most excellent part arises from our resources, without knowing that it is God who produces it immediately in us.[88]

Thus, there is no incompatibility between the idea that we derive distinct ideas from self-reflection and the idea that distinct ideas characteristic of the felicity of eternal life are the outcome of divine grace. If so, Abbadie's conception of enjoying oneself in eternal life has much in common with Augustine's and Gassendi's.

Grace and Self-Esteem

Still, there is one sense in which Abbadie's description of the state of souls in eternal life goes beyond what can be found in Augustine and Gassendi. This becomes clear in his treatment of the desire for excellence in his account of the pleasures of eternal life. As far as I can see, Gassendi does not address this issue. Augustine does address it but concludes that the desire for excellence cannot play any role in the state of restored grace. This is so because he discusses the desire for excellence only from the perspective of the sin of arrogance. Again, Jansen's exposition of Augustine is a good guide. Jansen notes that, from the Augustinian perspective, the structure of concupiscence applies to the love of honor, praise, dominion, good reputation and natural excellence alike.[89] He concedes that, from an Augustinian point of view, ethical and intellectual excellence is something good in itself. However, it turns into something ethically bad when it is loved for its own sake or the sake of making a profit. Loving excellence for its own sake is an instance of arrogance (*superbia*) and vanity (*vanitas*):

> And it is the sin of arrogance for the only reason that excellence is loved, even if it is good, for the sake of excellence: and the concupiscence of the eyes or curiosity is reprehensible only because experiencing it, *humans want nothing but to know*, Augustine says, or because they try to know for no other goal than *for the sake of the pleasure of making experiences and knowing* . . .[90]

But if the striving for excellence is morally bad, then it is also illegitimate to desire to be esteemed for excellent qualities. That is, Augustine's position amounts to a radical rejection of the Roman attitude toward seeking esteem. He

does not believe that the Roman statesmen who figure prominently in ancient and early modern republicanism could function as role models: 'Cato should not have striven for the honors or dignities that he was striving for.'[91] Jansen comments:

> Who would doubt that praise and glory are good, given that they are also the reward of virtue? Nevertheless, to love praise and glory is a vice, not due to any consideration that comes from the outside but only due to the consideration that they are loved. For this is the vice of vainglory . . .[92]

This analysis of the desire for excellence has implications for the question of whether this desire can occur in the state before the fall or in the state of restored grace. Jansen holds that before sin, there cannot be any motions or temptations of excellence or praise or arrogance, be they small or big.[93] This is so because, he argues, arrogance is the worst of all sins; hence, if one assumes that it could occur before the fall, then one could assume that all other sins are present in the prelapsarian state, as well – which is contrary to the concept of a state of fully intact nature.[94] On the same grounds, Jansen also excludes the possibility that the desire for excellence could persist in the state of restored grace.[95] Connecting the desire for excellence with the vice of arrogance thus limits the occurrence of this desire to the state of fallen nature.

By contrast, Abbadie identifies a sense of desiring excellence that is compatible with the state of restored grace. This becomes clear when he discusses the sense of the expression 'new creature' in the *Caractères du chréstien et du christianisme*:

> This creature is more excellent than all others because it represents God better, that is to say, a greater number of his attributes because it relates more directly to his glory and above all because it depends more on God and because God there makes in some sense more than in any other.[96]

When Abbadie maintains that in eternal life the soul has a distinct idea of its perfections, then these perfections can be understood as a kind of excellence; but since distinct ideas in eternal life arise from divine grace, God is 'the one who produces in me all these perfections and who can even diversify to infinity the sentiments of my excellence . . .'[97] This understanding of the ability to enjoy excellence in the state of restored grace leads Abbadie to the surprising conclusion that arrogance in worldly life does not express inflated self-esteem but rather a deficit in self-esteem:

> The disorder does not so much derive from that humans esteem themselves too much but rather that they do not esteem themselves enough. I say that they do

> not esteem themselves enough because they esteem themselves in preference to other humans who have the same nature and the same perfections. A man who esteems himself due to external advantages that distinguish him seems to renounce the perfections of human nature that are common to him and others.[98]

Abbadie concludes that striving for esteem by seeking to distinguish oneself from others 'means to disdain oneself in some sense . . . because it amounts to renouncing what is, in fact, most estimable in oneself'.[99] In this sense, Abbadie has identified a kind of excellence that does not derive from surpassing others in a competition. Thereby he has identified a sense in which a comparative and competitive conception of esteem draws our attention away from those features that are common to all humans. And from a religious point of view, the most important feature common to all humans is their capability of receiving divine grace that confers genuine perfections on them. This is a kind of excellence that does not lead to arrogance because it derives from divine grace. It is not an obstacle to loving God but a stimulus for loving God. Because it does not depend on personal achievement, it also does not involve any contempt for others. And while the striving for esteem in a comparative and competitive framework expresses a lack of self-esteem, the insight into the common capability of receiving genuine perfections through grace provides grounds for self-esteem in the present world.

Conclusion

Like Gassendi, Abbadie pursues a conciliatory strategy that integrates an Epicurean account of social selves with an Augustinian account of spiritual selves. As to social selves, he holds that the fulfilment of the duties of civil life is a criterion that sets cases of merited esteem apart from cases of self-deception. But the imperfection of the happiness that social esteem can confer upon us also indicates a sense in which the striving for esteem is not threatened by a form of self-acquiescence that would undermine the search for more perfect happiness. Enjoying merited esteem is not an expression of the sin of arrogance and therefore does not deserve to be the object of self-contempt. Thereby, Abbadie has identified an attitude toward the self that sidesteps the Augustinian dichotomy between self-love at the expense of the loving God and loving God at the expense of self-contempt. As to spiritual selves, Abbadie's conception of the state of grace indicates a relation to the self that goes beyond the self-enjoyment

possible in secular life. This is so because self-reflection in secular life will always make us aware of how strongly our desire to fulfil civic duties is motivated by self-love. Self-reflection in secular life therefore will never lead to the pleasurable experiences that arise from the reflection about the perfections that are due to divine grace. Still, the ability to receive grace, which in Abbadie's view is common to all humans, can give rise to a form of self-esteem in secular life that is independent of how well we fulfil civic duties. Spiritual selves can thus entertain a level of self-esteem that is unattainable for those who regard self-esteem as a matter of competition and status.

Notes

1 For an overview of early modern debates about esteem and self-esteem, see Blank (2022).
2 On Abbadie's later political thought, see Whelan (1987; 1992).
3 This aspect has been emphasized by Force (2003: 59).
4 This aspect has been emphasized by Moriarty (2006: 216–17, 284–5).
5 Lovejoy (1961: 160–3).
6 Lovejoy (1961: 160 n. 9).
7 Nakhimovsky (2003: 2). This aspect of Abbadie's thought led to an acrimonious controversy between François Lamy and Nicolas Malebranche. For a detailed analysis of this controversy, see Lennon (2019: chapter 7).
8 Nakhimovsky (2003: 10); see Abbadie (1696: 149).
9 Nakhimovsky (2003: 11); on Descartes's theory of internal emotions, see Boros (2015).
10 Nakhimovsky (2003: 7).
11 Nakhimovsky (2003: 13).
12 Nakhimovsky (2003: 2).
13 Nakhimovsky (2003: 8).
14 Jansen (1640: 2, col. 321); Augustinus (1955: book XIV, chapter 5).
15 Jansen (1640: 2, col. 424).
16 On this concept, see Worsley (2020).
17 Abbadie (1689: v.1:297–8).
18 Abbadie (1689: v.1:298).
19 Abbadie (1689: v.1:298).
20 Nicole (1672: 285, 'Des jugemens téméraires,' § 12).
21 Nicole (1672: 236–7, 'Des moyens de conserver la paix avec les hommes,' II.16).
22 Nicole (1672: 255, 'Des moyens de conserver la paix avec les hommes,' II.41).
23 Nicole (1672: 285).

24 Nicole (1675b: 16, 'De la connoissance de soy-même,' I.13).
25 Nicole (1672: 18).
26 Nicole (1672: 20).
27 Nicole (1672).
28 Abbadie (1696: 398).
29 Nicole (1675a: 197, 'De la grandeur,' I.22).
30 Nicole (1675a : 201, 'De la grandeur,' I.25).
31 Nicole (1675a: 201–2).
32 Abbadie (1696: 157).
33 Nicole (1672: 235, 'Des moyens de conserver la Paix avec les hommes,' § 14).
34 Nicole (1688: 430–1, 'Sur l'Evangile du V. Dimanche d'après la Pentecôte,' § 7).
35 Nicole (1688: 356–7, 'Sur l'Epitre du III. Dimanche d'après la Pentecôte,' § 9).
36 Nicole (1688: 574–5, 'Sur l'Epitre du X. Dimanche après Pentecôte,' § 9).
37 Abbadie (1696: 380).
38 Abbadie (1696: 389).
39 Abbadie (1696: 70).
40 Abbadie (1696: 69).
41 Abbadie (1696: 70).
42 Abbadie (1689: v.2:84).
43 Abbadie (1696: 383).
44 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1361).
45 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1362).
46 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1363).
47 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1363).
48 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1755).
49 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1359).
50 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1581).
51 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1580).
52 Jansen (1640: 2, col. 574); see, Augustinus (2004: book IV, chapter 3).
53 Jansen (1640: 2, col. 575).
54 Jansen (1640: v.2: col. 576); see Augustinus (1955: book V, chapter 15).
55 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 575); see Augustinus (1953: *De libero arbitrio* II.3).
56 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 354); Augustinus (1952: *Quaestiones 83*, q. 33).
57 Augustinus (1963: book III, chapter 10).
58 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 356).
59 Jansen (1640:v. 2, col. 369); see Augustinus (1952: *Quaestiones 83*, q. 30).
60 Augustinus (1956: chapter 121); Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 607).
61 Augustinus (1955: book XIV, chapter 28); Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 424).
62 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1370).
63 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1370).
64 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1370).

65 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1370).
66 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1244).
67 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1245).
68 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1371); see Matthew 11.30.
69 Gassendi (1649: v.2:1244).
70 Jansen (1640: 2, col. 588); Augustinus (1898: *Epistola* 52).
71 Jansen (1640: 2, col. 588–9).
72 Abbadie (1696: 394).
73 Abbadie (1696: 394).
74 Abbadie (1696: 384).
75 Abbadie (1696: 68).
76 Abbadie (1696: 182).
77 Abbadie (1689: v.1:247).
78 Abbadie (1689: v.2:317–18).
79 Descartes (1970: § 147).
80 Descartes (1970: § 148).
81 Descartes (1970: § 148).
82 Abbadie (1689: v.1:110).
83 Abbadie (1689: v.1:113).
84 Abbadie (1696: 163).
85 Abbadie (1696: 164–5).
86 Abbadie (1695: 131–2); see Philippians 2.12-13.
87 Abbadie (1695: 132).
88 Abbadie (1696: 173).
89 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 356).
90 Jansen (1640: v.2: col. 360; see Augustinus (2014: book X, chapter 35).
91 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 358), see Augustinus (1955 book V, chapter 14).
92 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 358).
93 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 84).
94 Jansen (1640: v.2, col. 84).
95 Jansen (1640: v.2: col. 83).
96 Abbadie (1695: 149).
97 Abbadie (1696: 170).
98 Abbadie (1696: 164–5).
99 Abbadie (1696: 165).

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Fénelon on Friendship

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Introduction

Although the 'debate between the ancients and the moderns' is a widely researched chapter of the history of French ideas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,[1] the study of the open questions of classicism remains a key issue for the historical understanding of the period. This chapter analyses the views of François Fénelon (François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, archbishop of Cambray, 1651–1715) on friendship.[2] A wealthy and cultured aristocrat, tutor to the crown prince and politician, Fénelon frequently invoked ancient models, among which the classical ideal of friendship – especially in its Ciceronian form[3] – was a subject of prime importance.[4] In addition to the *Télémaque* (his popular novel telling the story of Ulysses' son), his fairy tales, his educational writings and the *Lives of the Ancient Philosophers*, the classical concepts of *amor* and *amicitia* recur frequently even in his theological and spiritual writings.

Fénelon's attitude to the ancient heritage is ambiguous, a mixture of approval and rejection, admiration and contempt. On the one hand, he exalts the classical concept of friendship as the pinnacle of ancient culture because the edifying examples of friendly love, which lift us entirely above ourselves, are the closest to the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice. On the other hand, he finds the ancient ideal of friendship odious and in fact sees it as a dangerous idol of the self: 'No one believes more than I do that all love without grace, and apart from God, can never be anything but self-love in disguise.'[5]

To some extent, this tension reflects the ambiguity of a traditional theological model, the political theology developed by Saint Augustine in his *De civitate Dei*. Viewed from this angle, the ambiguity in Fénelon's works can be traced back to the Augustinian stratum of his theological outlook. But as is typical of early

modern classicism, traditional patterns convey new messages in the context of nascent modernity.

The concept of friendship as used by Fénelon is multifaceted. I will distinguish the following five aspects, corresponding to five different but overlapping uses of the term.[6] The classical notion of friendship (1) highlights the moral basis of human coexistence in societies. (2) It provides a model for polite social relations, (3) sheds light on the essence of pure love, (4) surfaces as an idol of the sinful self and, finally, (5) alludes to the communal dimension of our true self found in God. The first two uses belong to the realm of politics, the last three to the realm of theology. In the first three aspects, it is the Ciceronian notion of friendship that makes the strongest impression, while for the last two, it is Augustinian theology that seems to provide the key. Taken together, they form a whole which is not free of tensions, but which nevertheless provides a coherent picture of Fénelon's conception of politics and theology. In my chapter, I seek to inquire about the role the classical concept of friendship plays in meeting the specifically modern challenges that Fénelon faced at the juncture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I argue that friendship – particularly in its classical forms – is a central concept in his thought, linking many areas of his political and theological interests and balancing his different ambitions.

First Aspect: Friendship as a Political Concept

The classic concept of friendship is omnipresent in Fénelon's writings. It is particularly predominant in his work on education, where the emphasis is placed on the ideal of virtue and self-sacrifice. These moral values are exemplified by various heroes from antiquity – by the Roman consul, Fabricius, who is 'harder to turn away from virtue than to turn the sun off its course',[7] or by Titus Quintus Flaminius, another hero who embodies the same ideal. Flaminius' portrait and the description of his military campaign in Thessaly provide a good opportunity for Fénelon to paint in bright colours the character of a virtuous hero whose victory over Philip, the king of the Macedonians, is the fruit of his wise acts of *clementia* or clemency. Like the long journey of Odysseus' son in *Télemaque*, the entire campaign unfolds before the reader's eyes as a continuous exercise in princely virtues, humanity, gentleness and moderation, sprinkled with acts of military might. Similar examples could be cited endlessly. Friendship 'founded only on virtue' is an unmissable episode in these stories.[8] At the end of Telemachus' adventures, his moral development is captured by Fénelon precisely

in the hero's new capacity for friendly feelings. Those who meet him ask in amazement:

> Is that then, . . . the young Greek, so haughty, proud, disdainful, and headstrong? See how gentle, humane, and compassionate he has become! Without doubt Minerva, who loved his father so much, loves him also: without doubt, she has bestowed upon him the most valuable gifts which the gods can confer upon men, by giving him wisdom, and a heart susceptible of friendship.[9]

Friendship based on virtue has a long history in ancient moral and political thought but the Fénelonian version goes back mainly to Cicero, for whom love is a natural impulse 'to unite in benevolence' (*ad benevolentiam coniungendam*, 8.26). The concept of nature Cicero has in mind is a Stoic one. Love can be interest-free precisely because it flows from nature, whose driving force is not pleasure but self-preservation.[10] In support of this assertion, Cicero refers to the theatregoers who readily applaud expressions of selfless love on stage because their own interests – not being at stake – do not distort their judgement. For Cicero, love does not derive from mutual satisfaction but is rather defined as a kind of congruence *(congruentia)* of character between two individuals with similar habits and ways of life (*mores et natura*, 8.27). The source of love is virtue and probity, excellence and moral integrity (9.29): *nihil est enim virtute amabilius, nihil quod magis alliciat ad diligendum* . . . 'for there is nothing more lovable than virtue, nothing that attracts more to be loved' (8.28).[11]

Fénelon's notion of friendship has political implications. Given the ancient roots of his approach, this is hardly surprising: in antiquity, friendship had strong political connotations, both in its Greek and Roman forms.[12] Under the Roman Republic, friendship, an elective relationship, formed the basis of political allegiances between citizens and allied states. Sallustius' use of the term *amicitia* in political contexts can be considered typical. He describes the rise of the Roman Empire as a process of acquiring 'friends' through the generosity of the state: *sociis atque amicis auxilia portabant, magisque dandis quam accipiundis beneficiis amicitias parabant*.[13] In the same vein, the decline of the state is represented by the corruption of its friendly relations: *amicitias inimitiasque non ex re sed ex commodo aestumare*.[14] For Sallustius, the shift from moral friendship to friendship of utility is a sign of moral decay with immediate political implications. This crisis in the political community was caused by the corruption and duplicity of individuals: *aliud clausum in pectore, aliud in lingua promptum habere*.[15] In Fénelon we find echoes of this approach. The idea he puts forward in his *Telemachus* is that good politics should be based on honesty and moral

excellence. In his view, there are inextricable links between classical moral values, Christian humanism and the well-being of society.[16]

But friendship plays an even more fundamental role in Fénelon's political theory. It is at the very origin of social relations, in fact, it forms the basis of all alliances between individuals:

> By being sociable, I do not mean here to live together, and to see each other in certain places and at certain times: the most ferocious beasts are of this kind. You can see each other every day without engaging in social commerce; you can live apart from all men and still be sociable. *By society, I mean a mutual trade in friendship.* All reasonable beings are obliged by the immutable law of their nature to live together in this way.[17]

Social bonds are rooted in friendship.[18] For Fénelon, the whole human race constitutes one great community, with God at its head, the common father of all, ruler of the community of spirits. Therefore, the system of social relations must be held together by the laws of friendship.[19] This 'beautiful and luminous idea', as Fénelon called it, was inspired by pagan and Christian models. In accordance with the Stoic cosmopolis, the friendly community of people extends beyond the boundaries of any particular society and Christians even include immaterial spirits:

> This is how we show that there can be a society of love between pure intelligences, whose common happiness is increased by the noble and generous joy and pleasure that each feels in making all the others happy and satisfied.[20]

This noble idea of a global society of virtuous individuals, however harmless it might seem, had a subversive power in the political climate of the last decades of the seventeenth century. The demand for a politics based on *true* ethical values and *Christian* morality was the hallmark of 'devout politics', a movement that radically opposed the violently expanding system of royal absolutism. During the reign of Louis XIV, devout critics of the court's *politique* mentality regularly applied moral considerations to political issues in order to censure a government that, while maintaining a façade of piety, often set aside religious considerations in order to pursue the *raison d'état*. The new techniques of power required subjects not to let their religious feelings compromise their loyalty or manifest themselves in direct political action. The resulting tensions explain the government's efforts to suppress theological extremism and mystical circles where spiritual commitment of the heart created grounds for opposition. The

details of Fénelon's political activity, his opposition to Louis XIV – particularly in what he saw as the most disastrous economic and social consequences of the king's aggressive foreign policy – are well known.[21] Fénelon's criticisms and attempts at reform were not limited to imparting higher morals to the duc de Bourgogne, he was at the centre of a devout group in Versailles, representing spiritual opposition through mystical tendencies and demanding moral considerations in political life. The classical values and friendship of the members had political repercussions that led to Fénelon's disgrace. The royal order to withdraw from Versailles to his diocese was tantamount to exile.[22]

Fénelon's ideal of friendship in the context of a Christian community can be best examined through his long letter of 1703 to Louis de Sacy, a Parisian lawyer who, after sending him a copy of his recently published book on friendship, asked the prelate to pass judgement on a delicate ethical question (a 'case of conscience'). The situation described by Sacy is as follows.[23] Suppose a friend of yours entrusts you with a secret on condition that you swear not to reveal it to anyone under any circumstances. After taking the oath, he tells you that he has committed a sin but suspicion has fallen on another person who is about to be arrested and charged with a capital crime. Sacy's question is: should a sworn secret be kept, even if it costs the life of an innocent person?[24] After carefully pondering possible objections based on fairness, justice and humanity, he opts for the affirmative and argues in favour of the sanctity of the oath. His reasoning is illuminating. As a lawyer, he believes that promises made under oath represent an important social institution that cannot be compromised without undermining trust. While breaking a promise may be useful in the short term to save the life of an innocent person, in the long term the damage done to the *vincula amicitiae* by perjury outweighs any benefit.[25] Sacy compares the situation to accepting a legal deposit. For a lawyer, he argues, the content of the deposit must be considered simply as non-existent. As a *private individual*, he may regret the death of an innocent person, but *as a lawyer*, that is to say from the point of view of his function, he cannot act against his profession.[26] Finally, Sacy gives a theological twist to his argument. He invokes God as the guarantor of oaths and insists that breaking one's word is always a sin against the divine majesty.[27]

Fénelon disagreed. In his lengthy reply, he challenged Sacy's reasoning on the grounds that social institutions, such as oaths and friendship, were created in the interests of a just and charitable society. If abused, social institutions lose ground. Not because they can be limited in scope, but because when applied against their

original purpose – the well-being of society – they do not even count as institutions. Promises made to destroy someone cannot be considered inviolable. Thus, in keeping with the *devout* ideal of Christian politics, Fénelon's negative response is based on the firm conviction that social institutions must conform to moral standards. Since their purpose is to promote the common good, they are conditional: deployed against their initial objective, are rendered null and void.

Volker Kapp rightly observes that Sacy's reflections on friendship were guided by his concerns for public morality in a social space to which 'the salons of high society and the legal security of relations between individuals' belonged. He points out that, despite these worldly considerations, the religious orientation of the whole framework remained undisputed.[28] Kapp is right: both Sacy and Fénelon saw the problem as involving considerations about God. Yet, we can add, the difference between the respective roles they assign to God is tangible. To put it somewhat bluntly, Sacy introduces God to support the institution of the promise as such but as far as the content of any particular oath is concerned, divine sanction plays no immediate role in its validity. The divine support concerns the *institution itself*, which, once established, operates according to its own rules. In other words, promises are valid because the institution of the promise is valid. For Fénelon, by contrast, the divine guarantee is immediately linked to the content of each act within the system. If a promise violates divine law, God refuses to support it, and no heavenly sanction is given to an oath that perverts the essence of swearing. This view is expressed in the difference between *confidence* and *trust*. There is no room for trust, Fénelon insists, in the case of a person who tries to destroy someone else through the loyalty of his friend, because trust flows from charity. Hence, the relationship in question is not trust (*confiance*) but unfounded confidence (*confidence*). However, Fénelon believes that 'fidelity must be founded on trust and not on a deceitful confidence which ensnares and abuses the bond of society against the security of society itself'.[29]

The lesson to be drawn from this 'case of conscience' sheds light on the Fénelonian concept of friendship. For Sacy, friendship appears as an indestructible bond with inviolable rights, but it soon becomes clear that his primary concern is legal security, so that friendly relations belong directly to the formal framework of social institutions and only indirectly depend on God. Justice, loyalty and fidelity are defined by formal rules within this framework. For Fénelon, on the other hand, friendship depends directly on God, who endorses only just relationships, and all the social functions of friendship flow from this source. For Fénelon, friendship as a social institution corresponds directly to friendship as a moral institution.

Second Aspect: Friendship as Polite Social Interaction

In line with the above, Fénelon argues that a prudent and circumspect Christian way of life must be attentive to the values to which people are attached. 'How can he who loves God, and wants nothing so much as to love him, have as intimate friends those who neither love nor know God, and who regard his love as weakness?'[30] This is why Fénelon urges the faithful not to trust everyone, because bad morals are 'contagious'.[31] Yet, for all this, his reservations do not lead to a total break with those who hold principles contrary to Christianity.

Therefore, Fénelon's arguments seem to pull in two directions. At the start of the discussion, he stresses that 'a heart full of God and feeling its own fragility' cannot be at ease with people who think differently. Seen in isolation, this is almost a truism: shared values make friendship, so true believers must seek out the companionship of other believers. On the other hand, we learn that in spite of this principle 'one must not break with certain friends to whom one has bound oneself by the *esteem of their probity*, by their services, by the pledge of a sincere friendship, or finally by the propriety of a fair and decent social interaction'.[32] This addition reveals an important facet of Fénelon's thought. What he has in mind when demanding the highest moral standards in politics is not an exclusive community of saints who share strict Christian values, requiring total separation from secular society. On the contrary, he appreciated the inclusive social concerns of the hierarchically ordered society of his time, the polite forms of conversation between people pursuing different goals and all kinds of social interaction based on mutual esteem. Aligning young people with these standards was one of his main objectives both in his instructions to young girls and in his works addressed to the duc de Bourgogne. In this programme, he exploited ancient literature and relied heavily on classical values. It is no coincidence that talking about social obligations he refers to 'probity', whose Latin equivalent (*probitas*) is one of the key terms in Cicero's account of friendship.[33] As regards this aspect of Fénelon's thought, classical ideas are built into his language. But it should not be forgotten that just a few passages ago he renounced these same ideas as 'dangerous' from the point of view of his spiritual aspirations.

The way he seeks to resolve this tension is instructive. He tries to support both concerns at the same time by easing the tension not at the level of principles, but at the level of manners:

> It is dangerous to offend the friends from whom one takes away without measure a certain familiarity and confidence which they possess; but, without breaking

> and without declaring one's alienation, one can find *gentle and imperceptible ways of moderating this commerce*. You see them in private, you distinguish them from half-friends, you open your heart to them on certain matters where probity and worldly friendship are enough to put them in a position to give wise advice, and to think as we do, even though we think the same things as they do from purer and higher motives; finally, you serve them, and you continue all the cares of a cordial friendship without giving up your heart.[34]

Instead of resolving the difficulty, this advice seems to introduce it into the heart of social interaction. Bordering on duplicity, Fénelon suggests remaining on friendly terms and cooperating with people who share common values with us. In so doing, one can conform to the norms of society, even maintain a 'cordial friendship' with people of various interests,[35] but at the same time one should proceed carefully, 'without giving up one's heart'. Maintaining cordial relations and limiting the scope of cooperation – this dual attitude is based on the fact that Christian goals may have a share in secular values to a certain extent, even if believers adhere to them 'for purer and higher motives'.

Although this approach suggests a kind of overlap between secular and spiritual concerns, the weight of explanation is not carried here by a Thomistic theology seeking harmony between secular values and the spiritual vocation. For Fénelon, the need for gentleness and moderation contributed to the functioning of societies much more by attenuating conflicts and masking competition between individuals than by fulfilling theological values. Of course, by insisting on the need for cordial relations, he contradicts neither the theological foundations of a 'mixed society' of the Augustinian type, nor the Thomistic hierarchy of secular and spiritual ends. What he does is bypassing these theoretical nuances in the interests of a polite community in which contradictory values coexist, yet do not lead to deadly conflict. Fénelon's solution is based on an implicit appreciation of modern forms of the division of labour between private sphere and public life. Instead of pitting social groups or religious communities against each other, the private/public divide forces individuals to hide their conflicts behind commonly respected modes of contact. In short, the *status quo* calls for a relatively neutral platform for interaction, governed by the rules of courtesy and decent behaviour.[36]

From this point of view, Ciceronian friendship offers valuable elements that Fénelon can exploit at various levels. On the one hand, he can draw on ancient sources to develop the concept of a Christian society founded on virtue. On the other hand, he relies on the values of decency and *urbanitas* when he claims to conform to the norms of politeness. As long as passions dominate public life

after the original sin and Christian values remain mere ideals, the way in which he wants to create a cohesive society is not so much to produce virtuous citizens (whose moral integrity maintains the *res publica*), but to operate at the level of good manners, which should ease the tension caused by conflicting values.[37] Readers of Fénelon's educational writings will find it hard to resist the temptation to see the classical examples as serving a civilizing ideal. They fit neatly into the pattern of aristocratic culture in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with its emphasis on heroic virtues, honesty, politeness and courtesy. In short, they were part of the historical change in public mentality that Norbert Elias called the 'civilizing process'.[38] Starting with the aristocratic ideal of *honnête homme* and spilling over into bourgeois society, this process has transformed the norms of behaviour in the modern world. That said, Fénelon's conception of friendship is not just a tribute to cultural currents, or a simple introduction to the highest morality of classical antiquity, but is also imbued with theological considerations that deserve special attention.

Third Aspect: The Ambiguity of Friendship

Although friendship could be very useful in pagan societies, Fénelon finds the main value of this relationship in the challenge it presents for Christians. Indeed, behind the pagan stories of generous and loyal friendship we can discover, he submits, the true idea of disinterested love. For Christians, the challenge of this idea is to build a society in which people renounce selfish motives and look beyond their own self-interest out of love for God: 'Will Christians refuse to give as much to the infinitely perfect God they know as these pagans thought they had to give to an abstract and confused idea of order, justice and virtue?'[39] This question reverses the perspectives: it places before the eyes of Christians the pagan forms of friendship – generally considered inferior to Christian moral standards – as a model far superior to their actual way of life, and worthy of competition. Patrick Riley takes to be 'a constant Fénelonian strategy to say: you see that even the pagans had a loftier idea of disinterestedness than is usually found in our modern times; the ancients at least understood non-egoistic motivation, even if they aimed at a less-than-final object – at friendship or civic virtue or beauty, not at God'.[40]

According to Fénelon, three elements of the pagan conception of friendship can be exploited to promote pure and disinterested Christian love. First, to preserve their reputations, people do their best to hide their self-interested

motives in friendship. This attempt indicates that we hold in high esteem the ideal of unselfish altruism, even if we cannot meet its standards: 'We so subtly disguise all motives of self-love in friendships to spare ourselves the shame of appearing to look for ourselves in others.'[41] Second, Fénelon takes up the idea from Cicero's *Laelius* that even self-love 'pays homage' to the idea of disinterested virtue, because we all love ourselves disinterestedly and find it offensive when others praise us out of selfish interest rather than for our own merits. So, paradoxically, self-love provides a model of selfless love, because that is how we love ourselves. Self-love within us is the right kind of love, but it is misapplied. The third benefit that a Christian believer can derive from pagan values comes from the exemplary self-sacrifice that they demonstrate in their heroic acts. According to Fénelon, the idea of a perfect and disinterested love prevailed in the politics of the ancient legislators, who maintained that 'one must prefer to oneself the laws and the fatherland, because justice so requires, and one must prefer to oneself what is called the beautiful, the good, the just, and the perfect'.[42] In the light of this principle, Fénelon believes that love in ancient times – even in pagan communities – drew men away from themselves and pushed them towards a greater good. He cites with admiration Cicero's examples of selfless love, such as the story of Damon and Phytias who sought death in the place of one another.[43]

To summarize, Fénelon's attitude to classical friendship is ambiguous. On the one hand, he maintains that the notion of friendship, as transmitted by the best authors, presents the essential traits of what he calls *amour pur et desinteressé*, in a clear and unambiguous manner. The ancient notion of friendship is all the more respectable in his eyes because it is not derived from a true knowledge of God. His is therefore a sincere tribute to the pagan idea of selfless virtue: 'not only is the practice of this thought a prodigy of virtue that surpasses man, but this thought alone is a wonder that we should be astonished to find in ourselves'.[44] Since classical values testify to the power of pure love, they can be seen as the first step out of the egotistical self. Yet, for all this, the pagan idea of friendship – despite its inherent truth – is the most perverted idea, for (as we shall see in the next section) 'without grace, all . . . friendships are nothing but self-love subtly disguised'.[45] Disguised self-love is the worst form of the *amour-propre*.[46]

The result is that, for Fénelon, the pagan ideal of friendship is both true and false. It is true insofar as it reveals the true nature of pure love through the force of jealousy in individuals who expect to be loved by their neighbours for their own merits. But it is also false because no human being represents a value in

itself, so that the application of true love to ourselves causes the human self to usurp the place that is reserved for God alone. Of course, God's situation and the creature's situation are asymmetrical. God cannot cede his glory to another; his jealousy is justified. This is why 'he is called the "jealous God" and his jealousy is essential to his perfection'.[47] On the other hand, jealousy caused by the wounded pride of human individuals is unjustified; it is proof that *amour-propre* has put the soul in the place of God. It is not just a sin, it is by definition the very essence of sin, similar to the first sin committed by Adam in paradise.

Fénelon's conclusion is reminiscent of the adage *'corruptuio optimi pessuma'*. The classical virtues are both the best and the worst. This ambiguity allows Fénelon to play a double game: he accepts a system of social relations based on classical values and rejects it in the spirit of an Augustinian theology that sees a deep gulf between unredeemed human nature and redeeming grace. The latter perspective explains why, ultimately, Stoicism cannot form the basis of true friendship, since self-sacrifice in love is not natural to the soul after the Fall. To the extent that human nature is corrupted, the soul, left to its own resources, tends to close in on itself and even if it manifests expressions of altruism and sincerity, self-love is present under sophisticated masks to cover up the workings of *amour-propre*. Self-love, hidden even in the most heroic expressions of love, is sophisticated enough to take advantage of the appearance of altruism. Fénelon often points out that civic virtues, however useful they may be to secular societies, threaten to erect 'idols of reputation and friendship'.[48]

Fourth Aspect: Friendship in the 'Dark Night of the Soul'

If Fénelon's general attitude towards secular friendship can be described as ambiguous, in his spiritual writings he seems to lean without too much hesitation towards a negative assessment. Even if friends are 'good, honest, full of loyalty, and everything that makes friendship perfect', he fears that friendly ties will hinder the soul's journey towards God: 'The more amiable they are, the more they are to be feared.'[49] This is why true friendship must be sacrificed on the path to God, along with other social relations, personal reputation, honor and virtue.[50] Nevertheless, friendship is not the primary target of Fénelon's criticism. What really worries him is that friendship is one of the institutions in which *amour-propre* manifests itself. Faced with the dangers of self-love, Fénelon proposes what might be called a voluntarist reduction of the self to a single natural faculty, the *will*.

To elucidate this, let us skip over the earlier stages of the soul's journey to God and focus on that advanced stage where the joy of self-improvement itself becomes an obstacle to further progress. For Fénelon, the worry is that the feeling of joy, derived from the soul's more and more intense love of God, is easily confused with the love itself. If pleasure derived from the love of God becomes the principle of progress, selfish impulses risk compromising the sincerity of love. This would be tantamount to the soul being shipwrecked on its journey. The sign of this danger is the soul's acute awareness of its own perfection and the complacency that follows from it, which is a trap on the path of spiritual development. Once aware of this, the soul becomes distrustful of its own pleasure and tries to renounce it. This is the beginning of the most struggling stage in the development, because the positive effect of love on the soul *itself* becomes an object of suspicion for the soul. In the state of this self-related despair, only tenacious willpower enables the soul to move forward, in the darkness as it were, because distrusting what it feels, it turns away from the knowledge of its real state and renounces the joy coming from self-knowledge.

At this stage, a split takes place within the *ego*. On the one hand, its power to persist in love and to move forward voluntarily following the instructions of a spiritual guide remains intact. The soul continues to benefit from a prevenient grace that predisposes its faculties to the union with God. Although reflection is suspended, the remaining capacities do not cease to operate in the soul, they even make real progress and, what is more, the soul's real psychological state (its true accomplishment in the journey) corresponds to these hidden operations. On the other hand, on the level of self-knowledge, the soul loses the sense of progress. Following in a long mystical tradition, Fénelon points out that truth about the soul's real state and awareness of that state can be divorced. As a result, the believer often finds herself abandoned by God, depressed and powerless. This mistake is symmetrical with the previous error whereby the soul believed itself to be virtuous and did not recognize the self-love at work in its own virtues. Now the soul falls prey to an opposite error, convinced of its own worthlessness, it does not see the virtues that the divine grace operates in it.

The latter division of the self is made possible by the distinction between direct mental acts and reflected mental acts. A direct mental act refers immediately to its object. As it does not transmit information to the subject about the act itself, the subject remains unaware of her performing the act. Reflective acts, on the other hand, refer back to the act itself, transmitting information about the soul's current state (viz. about its performing the act in question). In his famous treatise on pure and disinterested love, the *Maxims of*

the Saints (*Maximes des saints*, 1697), Fénelon states that only reflective acts give rise to feelings (tastes) about ourselves, generating anxiety and doubt, or certainty and satisfaction *a posteriori*. The result is 'a certainty that comes afterwards, through interested reflection, to give itself consoling testimony of its fidelity'.[51] If the soul is to renounce the anxiety for its fate, or the consolation that comes from self-knowledge, it must renounce reflection, as well as sensitivity. For reflection is self-interested in the sense that for the soul to have certainty of its present state – of its progress towards God – attention must be shared between itself and the object perceived. Even the fact of partially turning one's back on the direct object is considered 'infidelity'. According to Fénelon, it hinders the soul in its path towards God, because the resulting certainty gives the soul a consolation whose source is not God but the soul itself, satisfied with its own excellence.

Based on the split between psychological reality and self-reflective feelings, the dissociation within the *ego* introduces the stage of the soul's journey that ascetic literature calls *acedia*. This state of discouragement gives rise to the temptation to renounce perfection and happiness. But direct acts, 'which escape reflection', do their work in the background, unbeknownst to the soul. They are compared to plants in winter:

> They don't blossom outside. But under the ice and in the snow, they preserve a deep root and a secret nourishment that prepares abundant fruit for the fine season. This state of turmoil and obscurity, which is only for a time, does not even exist in all its duration without peaceful intervals, where certain very sensitive gleams of grace are like lightning in a stormy night, which leave no trace after them.[52]

The fact that no trace is left after them refers to the presence of divine support even in the absence of reflectivity. The movement of the soul must be disinterested, that is, it must not be prompted by any motive of reward. The result is 'blind' movement, movement without any awareness of being moved. But how long does this blind flight last? How can the soul overcome its anxiety about its real state? How can it acquire, to put it otherwise, the knowledge and certainty that it loves God? As Michel Terestchenko has shown,[53] these questions represented a profound anxiety in seventeenth-century mysticism. The way out proposed by Fénelon is based on the idea that concern itself for our own destiny is not directed at God but is a residue of self-love within us. Selfless love is prepared to renounce self-knowledge and accept what God has decided for the soul. Indeed, a person whose love is free of any residue of self-love renounces her own concerns about

her destiny and strives with all her strength to fulfil God's will. For in this lies truly pure love, which does not seek its own interest, and the joy that flows from love. This state of love is characterized by passivity but at the same time it presupposes the operation of the will in complete harmony with divine orders. Unreserved acceptance of God's will for oneself seems to be the hallmark of pure love. To illustrate this, Fénelon introduced what would be known as the 'impossible hypothesis' (*supposition impossible*), a kind of thought experiment according to which the soul really does love God selflessly, just in case it is willing to accept its own final and eternal damnation should it be the will of God.

After this long digression, we can return to Fénelon's use of the term *friendship* in the *Maximes.* There are only a few mentions of this term in this work but one of them appears at a key point, near the introduction of the 'impossible supposition'. Seeking to establish that true love is not concerned with personal happiness, Fénelon refers to the 'law of friendship', which consists in loving the other gratuitously.[54] Friendship (the *amor amicitiae* of the scholastics) requires nothing less than complete self-denial, he asserts. But in the light of the impossible hypothesis, we are now in a position to assess the precise meaning of this term. True friendship must be based on pure and disinterested love, that is to say, the firm determination of the will to seek the good of the other without the least regard for the subject's own happiness or unhappiness. What the impossible supposition shows is that in true love, the determination of the will must be maintained even if there is no link between the soul's accomplishment of the good and its real pleasure or final happiness. If the pleasure received is not necessarily linked to the perfection of the beloved, the hope of fulfilment, as a kind of reciprocity, spoils the purity of love.

All this represents a profound change in the Platonic tradition of love. For, in light of the above, the motive force of pure love cannot be a desire motivated by pleasure in the perfection of the beloved. The idea of love without the desire for reciprocity or fulfilment, represents a deep change that could not leave the concept of friendship intact.

Fifth Aspect: Restituted Friendship

Although he made profound changes in the Platonic concept of love, Fénelon did his best to restore the integrity of the tradition. In his *Pastoral Instruction* (*Instruction pastorale*), he attempts to reconcile his ideal of uninterested love with the motivating force of the object of love. He takes two steps to align his

firm rejection of any vestige of self-interest with the motivating force of the object of desire. First, he points out that the impossible supposition does not require the soul to renounce once and for all the hope of eternal happiness. In so doing, he forcefully emphasizes that the hope of happiness, abandoned as the foundation of true love, can be reintroduced *as a consequence* of God's will. As we have seen, pure love consists in the soul's determination to conform to God's will. But what if the divine will positively desires our happiness and orders the soul to hope for it? In this case, happiness is placed back into the concept of love from which it had been removed. It is not naturally part of the concept but it is part of it by the sovereign will of God. This is why, instead of deriving hope from the natural desire for happiness, Fénelon relates the hope of happiness to God's 'positive law' and 'express commandment'.

This first step is of great significance for the impossible hypothesis of the *Maxims*, because it sheds light on the reasons why it is impossible. Its impossibility has nothing to do with the natural connection between the love of God and the happiness of the soul. As is seen, the hypothesis is designed precisely to show that there is no necessary relation between these components of love. What makes the assumption impossible is an eternal act of the divine will that has established an indestructible link between virtue and reward, love and happiness. The fact that the 'structure of the world' favours virtue by rewarding it with happiness is a contingent fact and, as Fénelon tirelessly emphasizes, should add nothing to the moral character of virtuous action.[55] Divine commandments must be obeyed out of love, regardless of the positive or negative consequences for the person acting. Thus, the natural desire for happiness cannot be the driving force behind righteous action. In the same vein, in his *Pastoral Instruction*, Fénelon makes two assertions on this subject. First, he says that pure love requires the subject to abandon himself as the natural object of love, then he goes on to add that the divine commandment restores the self as the legitimate object of love. Notice that this restored and purified self-love involves an indirect and distant relationship, because it is not based on the intrinsic value of the virtuous self but depends on a commandment that is contingent on the divine will. If the self is not a legitimate target of love in itself, it becomes so precisely because it is ordered by God. '*Faith* assures us that God's glory and our happiness are inseparable.'[56]

The second step in Fénelon's reasoning consists in showing that, even if the foundation of self-love must be the disinterested will to follow divine orders, the object of love does not cease to exert a real attraction on the soul. Because the object of the soul's love is infinitely worthy of being loved, it never ceases to

arouse intense emotions and desires. Although the soul's love must be purified of these effects, these same emotions must be accepted at God's command. In other words, even if the constellation of love and happiness is contingent, their connection by a divine *fiat* seems to restore the rights of the Platonic model of love (as a desire for the good):

> The disinterested soul in pure charity *awaits, desires and hopes for God as its good, as its reward, as what is promised to it, and who is everything to it*. It wants him for itself, but not for self-love. It wants him for itself, *in order to conform to the good pleasure of God*, who wants that for itself. But it does not want that for self-love, because it is no longer the motive of its own interest that excites it.[57]

This indirect and distancing relationship has profound implications for Fénelon's conception of friendship. In the light of the above, it should be clear that in the course of the soul's journey, friendship was not abandoned in the name of the soul's spiritual aspirations to mystical union with God. On the contrary, friendship shared the fate of the soul itself that had to give up its natural drive towards happiness in order to abandon itself unreservedly to God. Indeed, pure love demands nothing less than total self-denial and it is this unconditional love of God that the *idem* (the *ego*) and the *alter idem* (the friend) ultimately fall victim to in tandem.[58] But here again, the perspective changes. Just as the *ego* has returned to the scene with the expectation of ultimate happiness, so, too, does friendship. If we look at the path travelled by the soul, we find the following stages. Leaving behind what Fénelon calls the *amitié de goût* ('friendship of taste', i.e. friendship based on *amour-propre*), the soul came to be seized by doubt as to the *validity* of its love. As we have seen, even the sincerest manifestations of apparently disinterested love are subject to suspicion, for affections not mediated by God reduce to self-love: 'When we love people without God, we love them only for ourselves. It is always either our crude interest, or our subtle and disguised interest, that we seek in them.'[59] But exposing self-love under the guise of self-sacrifice was not the end of the journey. Human relationships must achieve what Fénelon calls the state of 'friendship purified by religion'.[60] Purification by religion means restoring friendship in God. This idea recurs frequently in Fénelon's theoretical works but also in his private letters. In a letter of consolation, he asks, 'can we love our best friends better than by loving them with the love of God himself, and by loving God in them?'[61] Following St Augustine, the ideal of friendship that Fénelon had in mind is friendship in God.[62]

But Fénelon's message is not simply that shared values in God create natural community between friends. This would be the doctrine exposed by Augustine in

the *De civitate Dei*. Although he occasionally falls back to such a position, Fénelon's point is that friends ought love one another *precisely because* God wants it so. In this way, Fénelon restores broken social bonds not by promoting common participation in the divine essence, but by invoking positive commandments. The result is somewhat paradoxical: he demands both detachment and deep affection between friends. In the correspondence, these aspects intertwine in a particularly interesting way. Detachment seems to prevail when he offers consolation to friends who are mourning their loved ones, urging them to accept God's will. But affections are also present and emotions often overflow: 'But, my God, how expensive are good friends!' he says upon the death of one of his close friends, 'life is only softened by friendship, and friendship turns into inconsolable grief.'[63]

Conclusion: Friendship at the Crossroads of Spirituality and Politics

For Fénelon friendship is at the heart of social relations. Now, we are in a position to specify that the concept he keeps in mind is friendship as a restored relationship, mediated by the positive commandments of God. Accordingly, the political community he envisages is the community of spirits capable of responding to the moral requirement of disinterested love. Since friendship at the basis of social interaction must be based on common obedience to the will of God, the emerging community will be tolerant. What would be a permanent source of irritation to the pleasure-principle, now becomes the object of love in selfless individuals:

> What, then, is the way to love one's friends? It is to love them in the *order of God*; it is to love God in them; it is to love what he has put there, and to endure for his sake the deprivation of what he does not put there. When we love our friends only out of self-love, impatient, delicate, jealous self-love – full of needs and empty of merit – constantly defies both itself and its friend . . .[64]

As we have seen, loving friends in God implies an indirect relationship between individuals. At the same time, Fénelon emphasizes that 'the detachment of grace never breaks or weakens friendships, it only purifies them.'[65] It purifies them insofar as friendship is born of divine will and not of mutual pleasure. If the basis of friendship were pleasure, it would be impossible to eliminate interest and friendly love, even in its purest form, would result in friends looking out for themselves, which would make all the tenderness lean towards the *ego*.

If the basis of social relations is friendship restored in God, then the ultimate result is that Fénelon's ascetic vision of love emerges at the intersection of his political and spiritual concerns. From this perspective, one can make sense of the official perception that the dismantling of Madame de Maintenon's mystical circles and the side-lining of the group around the duc de Bourgogne were aimed at suppressing something of a cabal with strong political agenda. The classic values of friendship were given pride of place in this programme. From a spiritual point of view, classical virtues were to be transcended in the same way that the *ego* was to become suspicious of itself. In the same way, friendship had to be the centre of a renewed system of social relationships based on self-sacrifice, charity and obedience to God's will. Because for Fénelon friendship was the basis of a universal Christian society, he could deploy the idea of friendship in his critique of interest-based absolutism, its aggressive foreign policy and the resulting domestic repression.

At the same time, the opposition represented by Fénelon was keen to keep its distance from socially subversive forms of mysticism. Mystical guides demanded self-transcendence but, in the seventeenth century, self-transcendence was considered a dangerous idea. It was generally feared that excessive humility was akin to bold self-assertion. In a society of estates, stepping out of one's self threatened with shaking off the bonds of social norms and political order. After the painful experience of a long series of conflicts arising from uncontrollable religious emotions, early modern states were wary of their subjects' self-surpassing aspirations. In the turbulent era of debates about pure love, Fénelon set himself the important task of taming the concept of disinterested love. His ideal of Christian society was a mixed one, based both on altruistic self-transcendence and on the need for self-control, in line with the expectations of a society of good manners.[66] In short, his ideal was an aristocratic society of well-educated people dedicated to spiritual values and working for the common good, not a society of religious enthusiasts. To achieve this balanced vision, reaching back to the classical concepts of friendship played a central role. It acted as a check and balance on unbridled mystical tendencies.[67]

Notes

1 On the *querelle des anciens et modernes*, a chapter in early modern intellectual history, in which Fénelon played an important part, see the textbook edited by Marc Fumaroli (2001), with his introductory essay. On Fénelon's contribution to the debate, see especially, pp. 471–93.

2 For a full biography and theological assessment of Fénelon's work, see Gorday (2012).
3 Although the ancient theoretical literature on different types of friendship and companionship is extremely rich (the most important authors are Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Epicurus, Cicero, Plutarch, Seneca), the commentator on Fénelon's views is in a comfortable position because there is only one classic author who stands out in the works of the French prelate, his main source on the subject: Cicero.
4 Talking about 'classical' concepts and ideals refers to the normative elements of the rich and varied reception of ancient authors in the early modern period. This does not mean that the concepts in question represent a unified idea either among the classical authors of Antiquity or among their early modern readers.
5 *Personne ne croit plus que moi que tout amour sans grâce, et hors de Dieu, ne peut jamais etre qu'un amour propre déguisé* (*Sur le pur amour*, [*c.* 1690] G 1:670).
6 By talking about features and usages, I wish to avoid converting Fénelon's scattered statements and remarks into a coherent theory of friendship. Instead, if indulging in what Quentin Skinner called the mythology of 'ideas', the task of the following analysis will be to explore the links between the different appearances of an idea, some uses of which certainly go back to ancient models (cf. Skinner, 2002: v.1, 62–3).
7 *Fables et opuscules pédagogiques*, 42. §; OF 1:269: *qui est plus difficile à détourner de la vertu, que le soleil de sa course*.
8 Fénelon (1994: 76 [*Telemachus*]).
9 Fénelon (1994: 234).
10 Cf. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.11.4; *De finibus* 3.16.5.
11 Cicero (1971: 139, trans. by William Armistead Falconer).
12 Konstan (1997).
13 *Bellum Catilinae* 6.5.
14 *Bellum Catilinae* 10.5.
15 *Bellum Catilinae* 10.5.
16 See this frequently mentioned triad in his *correspondance*, CF 12:21: *L'humanité et la charité chrétienne sont les verus essentielles et fondementales de toutes sociétés . . .* On the connection between the ingredients of this vision, see Hanley (2020: introduction).
17 *Essai philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*, 3. §. OC 7:107a:

> *Je n'entends point ici, par être sociable, vivre ensemble, et se voir dans certains lieux et en certains temps: les bêtes les plus féroces le sont de cette sorte. On peut se voir chaque jour, sans être en commerce de société; on peut vivre séparé de tous les hommes, et être sociable. Par société, j'entends un commerce mutuel d'amitié. Or tous les êtres raisonnables sont obligés, par la loi immuable de leur nature, de vivre ainsi ensemble.*

18 See the Aristotelian antecedents of this thought in *The Nicomachean Ethics* 1155a2-28. esp. 22-3: 'Friendship (φιλία) seems too to hold states together' (Aristotle, 2009: 142). Viewed from this perspective, Fénelon's attitude can be seen typically premodern or even anachronistic, especially if we accept Alasdair MacIntyre's judgement who argues that in modern times 'friendship has been relegated to private life and thereby weakened in comparison to what it once was. . . . "Friendship" has become for the most part the name of a type of emotional state rather than of a type of social relationship.' Therefore, according to MacIntyre, 'the notion that friendship, company and a city-state are essential components of humanity is alien; and between us and this concept lies a great historical divide' (2007: 156 and 135).

19 Cicero, in his speech *For Sextus Roscius of Ameria*, takes it as a betrayal of friendship to destroy the very foundations of social bonds between people: *quam [sc. amicitiam] qui laedit, oppugnat omnium commune praesidium et, quantum in ipso est, disturbat vitae societatem* (*Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* 111).

20 OC 107b: *C'est ainsi que nous montrons qu'il peut y avoir une société d'amour entre des intelligences pures, dont le bonheur commun s'accroît de la joie et du noble et généreux plaisir que chacun éprouve à rendre tous les autres heureux et contents.*

21 For an excellent summary of the historical context, see Petitfils (2000: 525–43).

22 The connection of spiritual and political threads formed an important but complicated background to the debates surrounding *amour pur*. The relationship between the mystical and the political 'cabal' is analysed by several studies, for an enlightening and comprehensive review see Dole (2007). For the details of the pure love debate, see Le Brun (2002, 2021) and Lennon (2019).

23 See Sacy (1704: 101).

24 Questions about the conflict between moral considerations and friendship (εἰ δεῖ βοηθεῖν τῷ φίλῳ παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον, cf. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 1.3) also date back to the antiquity, see especially Theophrastus' treatise *On Friendship*.

25 Sacy (1704: 105): *c'est banir pour jamais la confiance d'entre les hommes* ('this is to banish trust forever from among human beings').

26 It should be noted, however, that for Sacy, friendship is not absolute, nor is it the highest social institution. It must yield in part to the interests of direct kinship (although kinship does not include collateral relatives) and in part to the interests of the fatherland but first of all to God. Sacy's point is that, in the order of obligations, friendship takes precedence over moral duties towards a stranger. See Sacy (1704: 100–1 and 144–50).

27 Sacy (1704: 109): *j'entreprens de prouver que jamais l'amitié ne peut autoriser à manquer à Dieu* ('I set out to prove that friendship can never authorize disobedience to God').

28 Kapp (2018: s.p.).

29 CF 12:21: *la fidélité se doit à la confiance et non pas à une confidence trompeuse qui se tourne en piège et qui abuse du lien de la société contre la sûreté de la société même.*

30 *Comment celui qui aime Dieu, et qui ne veut plus rien aimer que pour lui, auroit-il pour amis intimes ceux qui n'aiment ni ne connoissent point Dieu, et qui regardent son amour comme une foiblesse?* (*Manuel de piété*, OC 6:8).

31 The idea that behaviours are 'contagious' goes back to the philosophy of Malebranche, cf. the second part of his *De la recherche de la Vérité*.

32 *On ne doit pas même rompre avec certains amis auxquels on s'est lié par l'estime de leur probité, par leurs services, par l'engagement d'une sincère amitié, ou enfin par la bienséance d'un commerce honnête* (OC 6:8). Notice, however, that one could read these passages merely as a Christian rendering of the Ciceronian *remissio usus*, according to which dishonest friendships are *dissuendae magis quam discindendae* ('They should be unravelled rather than rent apart' (*Laelius* 21.76; Cicero, 1971: 185)).

33 See *Laelius* 8.27. In this passage, the term *probitas* appears in the explanation of the foundations of friendship. True friends, Cicero argues, see the brilliance of probity and virtue in each other and this is the source of mutual love between them: *si aliquem nacti sumus cuius cum moribus et natura congruamus, . . . in eo quasi lumen aliquod probitatis et virtutis perspicere videamur* ('once we have met someone whose habits and character are congenial with our own, . . . in him we seem to behold, as it were, a sort of lamp of uprightness and virtue' (Cicero, 1971: 138)). Cf. 9.29: *tanta vis probitatis est ut eam vel in iis quos numquam vidimus vel, quod maius est, in hoste etiam diligamus* ('if the force of integrity is so great that we love it, whether in those we have never seen, or, more wonderful still, even in an enemy' (Cicero, 1971: 141)).

34 *On pique jusqu'au vif, d'une manière dangereuse, les amis auxquels on ôte sans mesure une certaine familiarité et une confiance dont ils sont en possession; mais, sans rompre et sans déclarer son refroidissement, on peut trouver des manières douces et insensibles de modérer ce commerce. On les voit eu particulier, on les distingue des demi-amis, on leur ouvre son coeur sur certaines choses où la probité et l'amitié mondaine suffisent pour les mettre à portée de donner de sages conseils, et de penser comme nous, quoique nous pensions les mêmes choses qu'eux par des motifs plus purs et plus relevés; enfin, on les sert, et on continue tous les soins d'une amitié cordiale sans livrer son coeur.* (OC 6:8b)

35 The double meaning of friendship was not unknown in antiquity. See Seneca's letter to Lucilius (*Epistulae morales* 1.3), in which he castigates Lucilius for calling someone a friend but asking Seneca not to give that person too much information about himself (i.e. Lucilius). By so doing, says Seneca, *eadem epistula illum dixisti*

amicum et negasti (1.3.1). Then he goes on to propose a distinction between two senses of the term. In one sense, 'friendship' is a 'public word': *itaque . . . proprio illo verbo quasi publico usus es, quomodo omnes candidatos bonos viros dicimus, quomodo obvios, si nomen non succurrit, dominos salutamus*. In the other sense, friendship must be based on long deliberation, but once someone has been chosen as a friend, in a confidential relationship there is no room for secrecy. This is the true meaning of friendship: *Sed si aliquem amicum existimas, cui non tantundem credis quantum tibi, vehementer erras et non satis nosti vim verae amicitiae* (1.3.2). Note, however, that public usage of the term does not exactly correspond to how Fénelon uses its French equivalent. For Seneca, this seems to be just a way of speaking, without implying any deeper relationships, even at the level of superficial social contact.

36 A similar distinction arguably existed in ancient Rome and could serve as a model for early modern developments. See David Konstan's analysis of friendship in Roman politics, who says that Romans in Cicero's 'class were conscious of the difference between intimate friendships and polite or useful connections in public life' (1997: 128). Fénelon does not make the same principled distinction between these relations as was made in antiquity between benefit (*beneficium*) and friendship (*amicitia*). Rather, in Fénelon's writings, they form a continuum, and the distinction is made at the level of affections beneath the surface of friendly relations. Note, however, that Konstan documents the same phenomenon in Latin literature as well.

37 OC 6:8b. Cf. Hanley (2020) who, emphasizing the moderate character of Fénelon's political perspective, seems to make the same point.

38 See Elias (1983; 2000). On the different and sometimes antagonistic forms of *honnêteté* which played an important role in this process, see Magendie ([1925] 1993) and Stiker-Métral (2007).

39 *Les Chrétiens refuseront-ils de donner autant au Dieu infiniment parfait qu'ils connoissent, que ces Païens croyoient devoir donner à une idée abstrait et confuse de l'odre, de la justice el de la vertu ?* (OC 6:114b-115a).

40 Riley (1994: xxix).

41 *On ne déguise si subtilement tous les motifs d'amour-propre dans les amitiés, que pour s'épargner la honte de paroître se rechercher soi-même dans les autres* (OC 6:115a).

42 *Instructions sur la morale et la perfection chrétienne*, 19. §, OC 6:114b: *Celle idée du parfait désintéressement régnoit dans la politique de tous les anciens législateurs. Il fallait préférer à soi les lois, la patrie, parce que la justice le vouloit, et qu'on devait préférei' à soi-même ce qui est appelé le beau, le bon, le juste, le parfait.*

43 *De officiis* 3.10.45; *De finibus* 2.24.79.

44 *Instructions sur la morale et la perfection chrétienne*, 19. §, OC 6:115b: *Non seulement la pratique de cette pensée est un prodige de vertu au-dessus de l'homme, mais encore cette seule pensée est une merveille que nous devons être étonnés de trouver en nous.*

45 OC 6:113a: *toutes [leurs] amitiés sans grâce ne sont qu'un amour-propre subtilement déguisé.* Cf. G 4:52: *tout amour sans grâce et hors de Dieu n'est peut jamais être qu'un amour-propre déguisé* (all love without grace and outside of God can only ever be self-love in disguise).

46 Moralists of the seventeenth century, like Pascal, Nicole, La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld, often elaborated on this theme. See, for example, La Rochefoucauld's *Réflexions morales* § 81: 'We cannot love anything except in relation to ourselves, and we are merely following our own taste and pleasure when we prefer our friends to ourselves; yet only by such a preference can friendship be true and perfect' (*Nous ne pouvons rien aimer que par rapport à nous, et nous ne faisons que suivre notre goût et notre plaisir quand nous préférons nos amis à nous-mêmes; c'est néanmoins par cette préférence seule que l'amitié peut être vraie et parfaite* (La Rochefoucauld, *Collected Maxims*, 2007: 24–5)). Cf. Weber (2007).

47 *Sur l'amour pur*, G 4:44: *mais Dieu qui ne peut céder sa gloire à un autre, se nomme lui-même le* Dieu jaloux, *et sa jalousie est essentielle à sa perfection.*

48 *Manuel de piété*, 13. §, OC 6:65a: *une idole de la réputation et de l'amitié.*

49 *De la prière*, OC 6:9a: *plus ils sont aimables, plus ils sont à craindre*.

50 *Suis-je déterminé à sacrifier à Dieu, mes amitiés les plus fortes, mes habitudes les plus enracinées, mes inclinations dominantes, mes plus agréables amusemens? . . . Mais quelle étendue cette vérité n'a-t-elle point ! Hélas ! où est l'âme courageuse qui veut bien n'être rien et qui laisse tout tomber, tout perdre, talens, esprit, amitié, réputation, honneur, vertu propre? . . . Non-seulement pénitences corporelles, mais humiliations de l'esprit, sacrifices de santé, de repos, d'amitié, de réputation, de consolation intérieure, de paix sensible, de vie temporelle, et même de ce soutien intérieur qui est un avant-goût de l'éternité, tout cela est entre vos mains. Donnez, ôtez, qu'importe? faites, Seigneur, et ne me consultez jamais. Ne me montrez que vos ordres, et ne me laissez qu'à obéir.* (OC 6:39b, 54b, 59a)

51 *la certitude qui vient après coup et par réflexion intéressée, de se donner un témoignage consolant de sa fidélité* (MS 181).

52 *Elles ne fleurissent pas au dehors. Mais elles conservent sous la glace et dans la neige une racine profonde et une nourriture secrete qui prépare pour la belle saison des fruits abondants. Cet état de trouble et d'obscurcissement qui n'est que pour un temps, n'est pas même dans toute sa durée sans intervales paisibles, où certaines lueurs de grâces très sensibles sont comme des éclairs dans une profonde nuit d'orage, qui ne laissent aucune trace après eux.* (MS 181)

53 Terestchenko (2000; 2008).

54 *que la* règle de l'amitié *est d'aimer gratuitement* (MS 185).

55 In this regard, Terestchenko (2000) rightly emphasizes the parallels between Fénelon's conception of pure love and Kant's moral philosophy.

56 *La foi nous assure que la gloire de Dieu et notre bonheur sont inséparables* (MS 124).

57 *L'âme désintéressée dans la pure charité, attend, désire, espère Dieu comme son bien, comme sa récompense, comme ce qui lui est promis, et qui est tout pour elle. Elle le veut pour soi, mais non pour l'amour de soi. Elle le veut pour soi, afin de se conformer au bon plaisir de Dieu, qui le veut pour elle. Mais elle ne le veut point pour l'amour de soi, parceque ce n'est plus le motif de son propre interest qui l'excite.* (MS 125)

58 For this famous characterization of the friend by Cicero, see *Laelius* 21.80: *verus amicus . . . est enim is qui est tamquam alter idem.* ('the real friend . . . is, as it were, another self' (Cicero, 1971: 189)). Cicero's expression seems to be a translation of the corresponding Greek phrase from Aristotle (cf. *The Nicomachean Ethics* 1166a31-2: ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός).

59 *Correspondance avec le duc de Bourgogne*, 35, OC 7:233b: *Quand nous aimons les hommes hors de Dieu, nous ne les aimons que pour nous-mêmes. C'est toujours ou notre intérêt grossier, ou notre intérêt subtil et déguisé, que nous cherchons en eux.*

60 *Letter of 12 November 1710 to marquis de Fénelon*, OC 7:437.

61 *Letter of 30 December 1707 to the duc de Chevreuse*, OF 7:262a: *Peut-on aimer mieux ses meilleurs amis, que de les aimer de l'amour de Dieu même, et d'aimer Dieu en eux ?* Cf. *Letter of 7 July 1710 to marquis de Fénelon*, OC 7:431a: *Je vous donne à Dieu, et ne vous aime que pour lui: c'est la seule véritable amitié* (I give you to God, and love you only for him: it is the only true friendship). *Letter of 6 September 1712 to marquis de Fénelon*, OC 7: *Tu sais de quel coeur je t'aime; mais je ne veux t'aimer que d'une amitié de pure foi* (You know with what heart I love you; but I only want to love you with a friendship of pure faith).

62 The roots of this idea may go deeper in history. According to Gábor Boros, one could risk the thesis that in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, 'the ideal virtuous life presented in Book 10, the divine theoretical life, is the most solid base of friendship' (Boros and Santangelo, 2019: 519).

63 *Fénelon au vidame d'Amiens, 15. November 1710,* OF 7:332a: *Mais, mon Dieu, que les bons amis coutent cher! La vie n'a d'adoucissement que dans l'amitié, et l'amitié se tourne en peine inconsolable.* Also see Fénelon's exclamation in his letter of 27 February 1712 to the duc de Chevreuse after the death of the *dauphin* whom he calls, retrospectively, 'all our hope for the church and the state': *Ô mon Dieu, que la vraie amitié cause de douleur!* (OC 7:374b).

64 *Correspondance avec le duc de Bourgogne*, 35, OC 7:233b:

> *Quel est donc le moyen d'aimer ses amis? C'est de les aimer dans l'ordre de Dieu; c'est d'aimer Dieu en eux; c'est d'y aimer ce qu'il y a mis, et de supporter pour l'amour de lui la privation de ce qu'il n'y met pas. Quand nous n'aimons nos amis que par amour-propre, l'amour-propre impatient, délicat, jaloux, plein de besoins et vide de mérite, se défie sans cesse et de soi et de son ami . . .*

65 *Letter of 30 December 1707 to the duc de Chevreuse*, OF 7:262a: *Le détachement de grâcem ne rompt ni affaiblit jamais les amitiés; il ne fait que les purifier.*

66 On Fénelon's ideal of mitigated politics and moderation, see Hanley (2020: 48–9 and chapter 7).

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12

Kant's Scepticism Regarding Self-Knowledge of Our Moral Motives

Locally Restricted but Unmitigated

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Among of the most peculiar traits of Kant's critical philosophy is the contention that while we can know our moral maxims and thus reflect on our actions from a moral point of view, we cannot really know whether, in a given situation, our actions are or were really motivated by our endorsement of those maxims. This means that although we may have a firm sense of our moral duties, we can never be certain whether some particular action of ours is done from duty or just in accordance with it. This view is present in several of Kant's writings. Most explicitly, it is voiced in the second section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, but it is also rehearsed in *The Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, and it is also present in smaller writings such as 'On a Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy' or 'On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory but is of No Use in Practice.'

How can we make sense of this sceptical doubt within Kant's philosophy? One way is to look at it is as implied in the systematic framework of Kant's critical philosophy. In fact, as I shall show in the second section, part of the rationale for Kant's scepticism derives from the restrictions underlying his concept of knowledge that he established in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Thus, unless he were ready to abandon this concept, Kant had to maintain a scepticism regarding the knowledge of one's moral motives. However, as several scholars have argued, this scepticism poses major problems for his ethics, and the question therefore is whether it is a rather unwelcome by-product of Kant's epistemology, or whether a reading is possible on which these problems do not arise, an interpretation that Kant would have embraced wholeheartedly. In the

first case, one might wish to mitigate the apparent scepticism in one way or another; in the second case, by contrast, one could regard the denial of self-knowledge of one's moral motive as an important aspect of Kant's views on the human condition.

In this chapter, I shall not elaborate on the latter issue, but I will merely defend a reconstruction of Kant's scepticism on which several objections that have been articulated against it can be removed such that it turns out to be fully consistent with his ethical views. Such a reconstruction requires that we carefully distinguish features of ourselves we can know, according to Kant, from those we cannot possibly know. My claim is thus twofold: I assume, first, that Kant advocates a locally restricted but unmitigated scepticism and, second, that this scepticism is consistent with his ethics.

What are the concerns that have been voiced to challenge the assumption of Kant's scepticism being consistent with his ethics? Two points must be mentioned here. A first problem for Kant's ethics derives from the fact that he not just denies knowledge of our moral motives, but he also makes it an important demand of his doctrine of virtues that we ought to strive for self-knowledge of our 'heart'.[1] How can it be a moral demand that we strive for self-knowledge of our heart, if this is exactly what we can never know?[2] The second problem is more pressing, as it touches on the very fundaments of Kant's ethical approach. Note that some sort of self-knowledge, namely the knowledge of one's maxims or subjective principles of volition, is a prerequisite for the establishment of Kant's ethics. For this reason, some have argued that if we had no knowledge at all of our moral motivations, then, we would even lack the very criterion for knowing the moral value of any action. If, therefore, this were Kant's view, his ethics would be doomed to failure from the very beginning.[3]

My aim is thus to provide a reconstruction of Kant's denial of self-knowledge of our motives that addresses these two problems. This is no easy task, but given how prominently this denial figures in his writings, it would be unsatisfying to assume that it does not express Kant's real attitude.[4] I will hence not deny to Kant all scepticism regarding self-knowledge; instead, my reading, first, distinguishes the *object* of that sort of self-knowledge that is the target of his scepticism from those things Kant thinks we can or ought to know about ourselves. Second, I discern several *ways of knowing* our motivations in Kant, none of which, however, undermines the notion of there being an essential limitation in people's self-knowledge. On my account, Kant's view is this: even if the maxims by which we articulate our moral aims and intentions are immediately accessible to us, and even if we can come to know ourselves better due to our personal experience,

empirical inquiry or anthropological studies, our epistemic self-relation is still subject to certain limitations that prevent us from knowing why we acted as we did. In sum, my point will be that, while Kant's view does not preclude the existence of that kind self-consciousness or practical knowledge of our intentions that, in the wake of Elizabeth Anscombe, has been defended as fundamental for any rational self-relation, Kant nonetheless regards our self-knowledge of our motivations as restricted in a sense.

I shall pursue this task in several steps. I begin by revisiting the textual evidence for Kant's views on moral self-knowledge (section titled 'A Limitation in Man's Reach of Self-Knowledge?'), before taking a closer look at the passage in the *Groundwork* in which Kant's scepticism is argued for (section titled 'Constraints from Epistemology, or Why We Can't Know Our Moral Motives'). I will show that Kant's reminder of the human's tendency for self-deception is not to corroborate his sceptical denial; his view is, on the contrary, that self-flattery and self-deception arise when people want to compensate their ignorance regarding their motives. Our ignorance of our motives thus *prompts* or *occasions* self-deception, in which case it cannot itself be *caused* by self-deception in the first place. This means that the dependency relation between self-ignorance and self-deception works the other way around than it is often assumed. The section titled '*A priori* Self-Knowledge of One's Maxims' discusses several objections raised against a truly sceptical reading and shows that none of them is ultimately threatening for Kant's approach. I conclude with a few notes on the ethical and anthropological implications of my account.

A Limitation in Man's Reach of Self-Knowledge?

In the beginning of the second section of the *Groundwork*, Kant famously writes:

> In fact, it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity with duty rested simply on moral grounds and on the representation of one's duty. It is indeed sometimes the case that with the keenest self-examination we find nothing besides the moral ground of duty that could have been powerful enough to move us to this or that good action and to so great a sacrifice; but from this it cannot be inferred with certainty that no covert impulse of self-love, under the mere pretense of that idea, was not actually the real determining cause of the will; for which we like to flatter ourselves by falsely attributing to ourselves a nobler motive, whereas in fact we can never, even by

> the most strenuous examination, get entirely behind our covert incentives, since, when moral worth is at issue, what counts is not actions, which one sees, but those inner principles of actions that one does not see.[5]

In this passage, Kant explicitly denies that we can ever know with certainty whether we acted from moral duty when we think to have done so; on the contrary, even if we find no evidence of any sensible motive for some action distinct from moral duty, it would be wrong to infer that we actually acted from the latter.

Likewise, in *Religion within the Boundaries of Reason*, in the general remark 'concerning the restoration to its power of the original predisposition to the good' following the first part, we can read that:

> . . . the transformation of the disposition of an evil human being into the disposition of a good human being is to be posited in the change of the supreme inner ground of the adoption of all the human being's maxims in accordance with the ethical law, so far as this new ground (the new heart) is itself now unchangeable. Assurance of this cannot of course be attained by the human being naturally, neither via immediate consciousness nor via the evidence of the life he has hitherto led, for the depths of his own heart (the subjective first ground of his maxims) are to him inscrutable. Yet he must be able to hope that, by the exertion of his own power, he will attain to the road that leads in that direction, as indicated to him by a fundamentally improved disposition. For he ought to become a good human being yet cannot be judged morally good except on the basis of what can be imputed to him as done by him.[6]

Here again, Kant expresses a sceptical attitude, though, at first glance, the issue at stake seems to be different. Kant's question here is not whether we can know our moral motives, but whether, after having adopted 'the disposition of a good human being', we can be assured that 'maxims [are] in accordance with the ethical law'. By denying this question, Kant again restricts the reach of our self-knowledge with respect to our motives, to the effect that we can never really trust that the motive of some action actually consists in the representation of the moral law, as required by Kant's ethics. Moreover, in his argument for this denial of assurance, Kant invokes the notion of an irreducible limitation of human self-knowledge: that we cannot know whether the maxims on which the recognition of the morals law depends, is not just due to the fact that we lack evidence of the compelling force of the moral law, rather, Kant claims, this is so because 'the depths of [our] own heart[s] are . . . inscrutable'.

A similar phrase, finally, shows up in § 22 of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant writes:

> The depths of the human heart are unfathomable. Who knows himself well enough to say, when he feels the incentive to fulfill his duty, whether it proceeds entirely from the representation of the law or whether there are not many other sensible impulses contributing to it that look to one's advantage (or to avoiding what is detrimental) and that, in other circumstances, could as well serve vice?[7]

Just like in *Groundwork*, Kant denies here that we can ever be fully certain whether our actions are only motivated by the representation of the moral law and we can thus never be sure that our moral motivation is as pure as we might think.

This being said, it is surprising to learn that in § 14 of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant voices it as 'the First Command of All duties to Oneself' that we ought to '*know* (scrutinize, fathom) yourself', not in terms of our 'natural' but of our 'moral perfection' in relation to our duty. What this means, is explained in the next sentence:

> That is, know your heart – whether it is good or evil, whether the source of your actions is pure or impure, and what can be imputed to you as belonging originally to the *substance* of a human being or as derived (acquired or developed) and belonging to your moral *condition*.[8]

What Kant here requires us to strive for, is just what, in *The Religion within the Boundaries of Reason* as well as later in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he denies us to ever fully achieve, namely knowledge of how purely moral the motives are from which we act, or metaphorically speaking: self-knowledge of our 'heart' and 'whether it is good or evil'. It is worthwhile emphasizing that the two texts employ the very same terminology: what we are advised to do in *The Metaphysics of Morals* is to 'scrutinize', 'erforschen', the very same thing, namely the heart and its moral constitution, which in *Religion* was described as inscrutable, 'unerforschlich'.

Apparently, there is a tension between Kant's call for moral self-scrutiny and his scepticism regarding the ultimate reach of any striving for self-knowledge. This has not passed unnoticed in scholarship on Kant's ethics. However, commentators do not seem to regard this scepticism as posing a serious problem; with some exemptions,[9] they just mention it in passing,[10] whereas in more recent epistemological reconstructions it is downplayed[11] or even neglected.[12]

Exegetically, this neglect seems wrong. The idea of the heart's inscrutability is voiced in so many places and in such crucial passages of Kant's ethical writings, that it can hardly be denied that he *did* accept this restriction. *Philosophically*, however, those who refrain from attributing scepticism have an important point.

It is not clear how some sort of self-knowledge can be consistently declared to be the first command of all duties towards ourselves, when its very possibility is denied.[13] Moreover, the notion that we know our own motives also plays an important argumentative role in the establishment of Kant's ethics: were it simply Kant's assumption that we have no self-knowledge whatsoever of our own motives, he could not reasonably aim at establishing his moral approach on the idea of our subjective maxims of acting as he in fact does.[14]

Hence, the problem is this: How can we make sense of Kant's twofold attitude towards the possibility of people's self-knowledge of their motives without denying, on the one hand, that he maintained some sort of scepticism with respect to our self-knowledge of motive, or without ascribing, on the other hand, a view to him that undermines his proper ethics? A reconstruction of his account to our self-knowledge of our motives must take this problem seriously. It must, in short, make room for knowledge of one's maxims and allow it to play a foundational role in Kant's ethics, while maintaining the notion of Kant's scepticism expressed in the idea of the heart's inscrutability.

As a first step towards a solution of this problem, I shall now take a closer look at Kant's reasons for his scepticism.

Constraints from Epistemology, or Why We Can't Know Our Moral Motives

That the motives from which we act cannot be fully known is most clearly articulated in the second paragraph of the second section of *Groundwork* quoted in the previous section. There, more than in any other passage, Kant also explicitly mentions his reasons for his scepticism, although he does not elaborate on them at greater length. In what follows, I shall therefore illuminate these reasons by a close reading of this paragraph. Let me begin by rehearsing its main steps.

Kant begins by voicing his denial of self-knowledge of moral motives in unmistakable terms: such knowledge, he writes, 'is absolutely impossible'; the same sentence also hints at his reasons, when denying that we can 'by means of experience' identify any 'single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity with duty rested simply on moral grounds'. Kant continues by saying that even if an action could be identified that appears entirely unmotivated unless we assume it to be done for the agent's being moved by moral duty, it cannot be inferred from this that the action is done from duty. This is so because

we are not entitled to conclude from the (apparent) absence of experienceable motives that such motives do not exist. The paragraph ends by the mention of the danger of self-deception: however evident the lack of non-moral motives may appear, there can always be some covert self-centred motive and this is all the more likely the more we tend to flatter ourselves with false presumption of moral motives.

Bringing together several considerations in one paragraph, this passage is pretty dense. In reconstructing the rationale behind Kant's scepticism, these considerations should therefore be clearly distinguished:

(1) Kant's main reason why we cannot know our own moral motives is invoked by the phrase 'by means of experience'. What is denied here, apparently, is that the agent's being motivated by the representation of the moral law is experienceable; given the larger context, this applies to our own case as well as to the case of others. By contrast, all we can know by experience are those observable properties of an agent that serve as *non-moral causes* of actions that are merely *in conformity with duty*, and this is a matter of principle: non-moral causes of actions are such that they can be detected, even if, for contingent reasons, we cannot actually observe them. But if, by contrast, an agent acts *from duty* or – which is the same in Kant – *for moral reasons*, then, her motivation is unknowable, since it is not observable, and this is precluded for others, as well as for ourselves.[15] Thus, there is a division between facts about agents' motivational constitution we can know and other facts about the same issue we cannot know; and this division precisely distinguishes the *observable, but non-moral* from the *moral, but non-observable* motives.

(2) The role played by the idea of experience suggests that Kant's denial of self-knowledge of one's moral motives is largely based on his concept of knowledge, or 'Erkenntnis' in German, as it had been established in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[16] On this conception, famously, knowledge requires that its object be experienceable. But as Kant argues in *Groundwork*, this is not the case with the impact that moral ideas may have on the agent's action and this is so because they have their origin in practical reason. In this case, they cannot appear to us and even if they have causal efficacy, as Kant indeed assumes, they do not appear *as causes*. Kant thus thinks that moral or more generally: rational motivation just is not of the kind that can be known to cause some action strictly speaking.

(3) Kant next rejects any inference as invalid where we conclude from a (seeming) lack of evidence regarding our empirical mental states to their non-existence.

This, again, calls for explanation in terms of his views on the possibility of knowledge. Note that what we are confronted with here is an instance of the problem of induction. Assume we want to explain an action in terms of its empirical causation: from the notion that all observed candidates for empirical causes did not cause the action, we cannot infer that all observable candidates did not cause it. Hence, the problem is of the same kind as the problem that David Hume has raised in voicing his scepticism regarding the necessity of causal relations. But why should Kant, whose conception of causality was entirely different from the one underlying Hume's views about induction, be threatened by this same problem again? I cannot go into the details here but I think that we should not read Kant's views on causality as having overcome the problem of induction altogether.[17] Kant did not deny the problem of induction but more modestly argued that certain concepts such as causation, which Hume took to be affected by the problem of induction, such as causation, have an *a priori* origin. Hence, on Kant's view, the problem of induction is less pressing than Hume contends such that it no longer undermines *all* knowledge claims. But this does not solve the problem for ordinary empirical generalizations, where the source of knowledge is definitely empirical, which must still be dealt with. Since, therefore, it is only 'by means of experience' that motives causing actions can be known by us, there still exists a problem of induction here.

(4) In a final step, Kant undergirds his rejection of the above discussed inference by the assumption that we gladly compensate any given lack of evidence for motives of action by self-deceivingly flatter ourselves to have acted from a 'nobler motive'. It is important to notice that Kant really takes this to be a matter of compensation and not of grounding – a point which is unfortunately hidden by the English translation.[18] Taking the German wording seriously, we must assume that Kant does not regard the tendency of moralizing self-deception primarily as a *cause* of our lack of self-knowledge of moral motives, but rather as a *symptom*. His concern seems to be that, unless we concede that our lack of knowledge is insurmountable, self-deception may jump in and seduce us into accepting a mistaken self-understanding. Thus, self-deception would result in a further lack of self-knowledge but it is not the main and original cause of our self-ignorance. This point is psychologically interesting but, for our analysis, it mainly matters because it reveals that in Kant's argument his remark about our inclination to self-deceive us when evidence of non-moral motives lacks has only a subsidiary function.[19] While, therefore, from a moral psychological point of view, the human tendency for self-deception may be seen as constituting a 'greater threat'

to moral self-knowledge than Kant's scepticism,[20] it is the latter that should interest us more in reconstructing his argument.

To conclude this analysis, we can say, first, that Kant's scepticism regarding our self-knowledge of our motives is well-grounded in the conceptual division he draws between empirically knowable non-moral motives and empirically non-knowable moral motives of action (1) as well as, more generally, in his epistemological ideas about knowledge and its possible objects (2) as well as in the conceptual division he draws between empirically knowable non-moral motives and empirically non-knowable moral motives of action (1). Second, even if one denies that in pretending to know one's moral motives one runs into the problem of induction (3) or that people are threatened by the danger of self-deception (4), this does not weaken Kant's argument for scepticism, as these points only add to his main argument. We therefore better take Kant's claim of scepticism seriously, when interpreting his views on self-knowledge.

A priori Self-Knowledge of One's Maxims

I have argued that Kant's scepticism regarding people's self-knowledge of their motives is as firm, as it is limited: we cannot know 'by means of experience' whether some agent's actions including our own are motivated by moral considerations, but it is possible to access all other sorts of motives such as, for example, those deriving from self-love. Thus, Kant maintains an unmitigated, but locally restricted scepticism that does not commit him to a denial of all knowledge regarding all kinds of motives, but only implies ignorance of a very specific fact.

We can now see how the first problem mentioned above can be addressed. As some have pointed out, it is not immediately clear how self-knowledge of one's 'heart – whether it is good or evil, [and] whether the source of your actions is pure or impure' can be a moral demand, if the possibility of knowing one's moral motives is strictly denied. But this is no real problem. What Kant denies in section two of *Groundwork* is not the same as what he demands in *The Metaphysics of Moral*. What we should strive for, according to the 'the First Command of All duties to Oneself', consists either in the acquisition of empirical knowledge of our own idiosyncratic constitution or in some inferences to the human condition to be drawn from the contents of our moral maxims.[21] What is denied, by contrast, is that we can know whether we act from duty, when, in a given case, we presume to do so.

In a similar way, we can make sense of Kant's assumption in *Religion* that people can trust in their moral progress and thus hope for further progress, although 'assurance cannot be attained'.[22] This lack of assurance derives from the same epistemic limitation that also deprives us from self-knowledge of our moral motives: just as we cannot know that it is really our moral maxim that prompts us to act as the moral law requires it, so we cannot know either that our moral disposition is such that it necessarily causes morally good actions. And yet we can evaluate the maxims constituting our moral disposition upon their inherent moral value, in which case moral progress is at least conceivable. This is so because our conscience, in Kant's view, is mainly to indicate whether we assessed our maxims upon their moral value, when we adopted or revised them. This raises, of course, the question of how we can know our maxims in the first place. I shall address this question in a minute. Before, however, just let point out that all our conscience does is judging, second-orderly as it were, how seriously we are concerned with morality in the adoption of our maxims. While, therefore, Kantian conscience may provide us with self-knowledge of how carefully we compare our principles with the moral law and whether we truthfully believe them to be morally right, it does not provide us with any knowledge of whether, in a given instance, we actually acted on its grounds.[23]

The second problem mentioned above, however, is a far more serious concern that is not as easily dispelled. It is not clear yet whether and how self-knowledge of one's maxims can be granted, if one takes Kant to strictly deny all self-knowledge of one's moral motives.[24] It is true, Kant presupposes that people know that maxims, which is most obvious from the way in which the notion of duty is introduced in the first section of *Groundwork*. It is to 'explicate the concept of will that is to be esteemed in itself' that Kant appeals to the notion of duty.[25] Consequently, he does not introduce it by definition but by elaboration on some common presumption underlying our ordinary moral thought. However, to explicate a moral concept from people's ordinary moral thought is a meaningful undertaking only if we presuppose that people are already familiar with the principles underlying their thoughts about moral issues. Moreover, Kant must regard such self-knowledge as a common or even natural phenomenon, or else it would not make sense for him to invoke the idea of autonomy and to assign individual deliberation on the morality of one's maxims a major part in the establishment of his ethics.[26] Finally, as we have just seen, the notion of people's self-knowing their maxims is also underlying his understanding of the working of conscience.[27] This all shows that Kant cannot possibly tolerate sceptical doubts regarding our self-knowledge of our maxims without undermining his whole

ethical approach. But, on the other hand, we have also seen that in rejecting self-knowledge of one's moral motives, Kant relies on a division between observable features of our motivation and those purely moral features to which we have no empirical access. Taking this seriously, one is tempted to think that Kant's verdict is not to rule out all, but only empirical ways of knowing ourselves. The question arises, therefore, whether it could not be the case that, pace his strict denial, he left the door open for assuming us to have non-empirical, *a priori* self-knowledge of one's moral motives.[28]

At this point, it is worthwhile mentioning a recent debate in the epistemology of self-knowledge. Following some arguments by Sidney Shoemaker and Tyler Burge, who claimed that self-knowledge of one's mental states can neither result from perception nor derive from inference,[29] and inspired by Elizabeth Anscombe and Gareth Evans, Richard Moran suggested comprehending self-knowledge of one's attitudes as a matter of deliberating on the contents we commit ourselves to when forming a belief or an intention: my self-knowledge that I believe p or intend x does not derive from a process of introspection or any other merely 'theoretical' contemplation of what is the case with me, but we know it by means of deliberating on whether p obtains or x is such as to be intended. Thus, in Moran's account, self-knowledge of one's belief or intention is not a second-order affair but constituted by the same activity we engage into when we adopt these attitudes.[30] Given Kant's divisions, it is not wrong to name this self-knowledge *a priori*: it is *a priori* in the sense that it does not derive from a further, for example introspective, process.[31] This means that it is itself a necessary ingredient of a subject's having representations constituting her mental states, but it may still be the case that this process of deliberation is itself experienceable.[32]

In an attempt to defend Moran's approach, Matthew Boyle interpreted this notion of self-knowledge in Kantian terms and he thus assumed that the mentioned sort of deliberative self-knowledge is also underlying Kant's views on self-knowledge.[33] I am not convinced by all of Boyles interpretive claims about Kant,[34] but I think that a refined version of Moran's approach may indeed help to make sense of the Kantian notion of transcendental apperception and in particular of the famous claim in the B deduction that '[t]he I think must be able to accompany all my representations'.[35] Following this understanding, a subject's transcendental apperception is largely a matter of her knowing the precise contents of her thoughts or of getting clearer on them upon explicit reflection. Thus, the 'I think' that is to accompany all my representations refers to my ability to deliberate, in each situation, whether some particular matter of fact is to be

represented in my thought by predicate x, rather than by predicate y. To the extent that I am able to single out representations I consider as accurate and to discern them from others, to this extent my mental states qualify as candidates for cognition. This is how the 'I think' conditions, normatively speaking, my knowledge: that I know p depends on my having clarity about the contents of p.

We can now see how, against this background, Kant can dispel the worry of whether we can know the maxims by which we act. 'Of course, we know them,' he would say, 'we just know them in the same manner in which we know any other thought, viz. by discerning them, directly or upon reflection, from other thoughts that we also could, but do not actually endorse, given the evidence to judge or issue to decide.' The subjective principles or rules of acting constituting our maxims[36] are thus just a particular kind of thoughts: they represent the reasons out of which, we think, we ought to act. We are familiar with them by virtue of the very same ability that provides us with self-knowledge of any other thought, and by this same ability we may also reflect on them. What we then do is deliberating on whether some reason for action is such that we would or should embrace it. And even our cognition of a maxim's moral quality is nothing else than an instance of such deliberation: reflecting a maxim upon its generalizability, we come to think 'this must be binding for everyone', 'this cannot possibly be conceived as constituting general moral law' in much the same way in which we know ourselves to think 'this is blue' when we look at a blue object. So, we know our maxims in virtue of the same ability we also elaborate on them in ethical reflection.

One can even go one step further and claim that this same process is also what allows for conscious adoption of inherited principles by individual subjects:[37] we just consider these principles on whether they look convincing to us. More precisely, we deliberate on whether some articulated prescriptive claim is such that we can adopt it as our own maxim or subjective principle of acting. This shows that there is simply no essential distinction between the ability by which we know our maxims, adopt inherited prescriptions as our maxims or reflect on the moral quality of a particular maxim, they are all functions of the same basic ability constituting Kant's transcendental-apperceptive self-knowledge and this suffices to get Kant's ethics started.

We thus come to know our maxims in a very natural manner but this is not to say that, by the same token, we also know what causes our actions. It is the latter and not the former that Kant denies by his scepticism. But how can this be? Would this not imply that we can act for reasons without knowing them? Is this really an intelligible understanding of the idea of an agent's acting for reasons, or even of the very concept of action? Are the problems in Kant's views on self-

knowledge and moral action not far more serious, to the effect that they even threaten the concept of action?

I cannot address these worries in detail here, as they touch on the very fundament of our concept of action. But let me just sketch how, by the acceptance the previous proposal, they might be solved. We have to discern, first, between two meanings of our talk of 'reasons for actions'. In articulating a reason for an action, we can either invoke the rationale for this action, that is the grounds of its being a rational action, or we can, alternatively, refer to a cause that makes it likely that someone's effectively doing the action. Now, in common-sense psychological ascription of reason, we often merge these two senses; perhaps this is so, because an agent's knowledge of the rationale for an action can also be among the causes that render the agent's effectively doing it more likely. And yet these two kinds of reasons can come apart, just as our reasoning about some action and our doing it can come apart. Consider the example of the shopkeeper. We can imagine the shopkeeper to take it as his policy to serve his customers honestly and he can even be convinced that this is morally binding but it is still conceivable, in this picture, that he does not always act in accordance to this policy. He could conceivably be a very honest shopkeeper and truly believe honesty to be of highest importance and yet the day may come that he acts dishonestly. Or, take the reverse case and consider a businesswoman who declares it to be her priority that she maximizes her profits. She may thus calculate what needs to be done to reach this aim quite cold-hearted and yet she may get into a situation where a sense of moral duty or of what humanity requires overrides all self-centredness. An agent's action can obviously be in conflict with her deliberate principles; this is eventually what makes Kant distinction between 'acting according to some duty' and 'acting from it' intelligible: if it is conceivable, and be that only in a singular case, that a person acts against her declared subjective principles, then it is also possible that some action of hers is not done for the reason she invokes to make her action intelligible but only conforms with it. Hence, in Kant as well as in our ordinary descriptive metaphysics, thought and action are metaphysically distinct; they can come apart, in which case also the maxims we maintain in thought can come apart from the actions we commit.

On the same basis, we can also distinguish the agent's knowledge of her reasons from her knowledge that she acted for these reasons in a particular case. Knowing one's reasons is a matter of consciously believing some action to be right or to be such that it should be done and it is conscious in the sense that it always accessible to (further) deliberation. But while this self-knowledge brings

it about that we can improve our understanding of why some action is or seems right to us, self-knowledge of one's reasons does not entail that we know why an action is done, however recommendable the action may appear upon reflection. This is so because only knowledge of one's reason is due to that *a priori* self-knowledge or, in Kant's terms, transcendental apperception, that immediately relates us to the contents of our thoughts, whereas the latter kind of knowledge is a matter of knowing, by means of experience, how some action is brought about.

To conclude, we can say that given the proposed reading of Kant's concept of the transcendental apperception, we can make sense of the notion of self-conscious maxims underlying Kant's ethical approach in a manner that it is entirely consistent with his denial of there being any (self-)knowledge of the motives of actions. There is simply no need to mitigate his sceptical claims.

Conclusion

I have argued that Kant maintains a locally restricted but unmitigated scepticism, according to which only (self-)knowledge of truly moral but not of all motives is impossible. Moreover, I provided a reconstruction of the different kinds of self-knowledge present in Kant that prove his scepticism consistent with his ethics. In particular, two findings turned out crucial for this result. First, I have pointed out that Kant's arguments for his denial of there being self-knowledge of moral maxims are implied in the restricted scope of his concept of knowledge, 'Erkenntnis', and do not depend on the assumption of self-deception's being a pervasive threat. On the contrary, given the wording of the decisive passage, it is because we cannot possibly know our moral motives that self-deception is so abundant in people's reflection about their motives for some action and not the other way around. Second, elaborating on a recent reading of Kant's concept of transcendental apperception and applying it to illuminate people's moral reasoning, I have shown that self-knowledge of our maxims can be granted in Kant's view and this in a manner that is consistent with his scepticism.

The question might arise whether the proposed reading is really better off than its alternatives. Strikingly, the main challenge, namely that it is difficult to see how Kant's scepticism can be compatible with the assumption of self-knowledge of our maxims, is only rarely mentioned; and those who explicitly address this issue fall short in two respects: they can either not account for self-knowledge of one's maxi that must be granted for Kantian ethics,[38] or they rely on a mitigated reading of Kant's scepticism on which he did really mean to deny that we know the moral

causes of our actions.[39] Underlying these two shortcomings is, I think, a common tendency: assuming a different understanding of our self-knowledge of our maxims, interpreters did not see that, whereas this self-knowledge is intimately connected with our moral reasoning and thus provides us with reasons for actions and fosters conscience, it is also essentially distinct from that sort of empirical knowledge Kant requires for one's self-knowledge of the causes of one's actions. I am therefore indeed inclined to think that the reconstruction provided in this chapter is in a better position to account for Kant's approach than the existing rival accounts. This being said, I do not want to deny them any legitimacy or discard them as false. Depending on their aims, they might well be in a better position. All I wanted to show in this chapter is that a coherent but strict reading of Kant's scepticism regarding people's self-knowledge of their motivations is possible and hence his strong words can be taken literally.

Notes

1 Kant (1996: 562); AA VI: 441. Unless otherwise indicated, English citations of Kant refer to the *Cambridge Edition*. However, page numbers from the *Akademie-Ausgabe* (= AA) are added. In quotes from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, page numbers from the first edition (= A) or the second edition (= B) are added.

2 Ware (2009, 671ff.); Radhakrishnan (2019: 24).

3 Bernecker (2006: 163 and 175) or Emundts (2017: 192) for this point.

4 Many otherwise illuminating reconstructions (Bernecker, 2006; O'Hagan, 2009) tend to neglect Kant's scepticism or read it as overruled by his notion of moral self-knowledge (Ware, 2009). Dina Emundts explicitly criticizes Kant's 'drastic remarks' on the impossibility of self-knowledge of one's maxims in *Groundwork* as 'rhetorically misguided'; they are, in her view, an overstatement of the difficulties we face when we try to know our motives (Emundts, 2017: 196).

5 Kant (1996: 62); AA IV: 407.

6 Kant (1998: 71); AA VI, 51.

7 Kant (1996: 567); AA VI, 447.

8 Kant (1996: 562); AA (VI: 441).

9 Sherman (1993: 55–61), O'Neill (1998: 92–7), Grenberg (2005: 221 and 226), O'Hagan (2009), Ware (2009) and Radhakrishnan (2019).

10 Wood (1999: 201f.), Guyer (2000: 384f.), Esser (2013: 283), Naumann (2017: 327f.), Nagl-Docekal (2014: 120), Betzler (2019: 156f.) and Höffe (2019: 139).

11 Emundts (2017: 196).

12 Bernecker (2006).

13 For the function of moral self-knowledge for an agent's morality, see also Ware (2009: 676f., n. 10 and 12).

14 See, for example, Bernecker (2006: 175): 'Wissen um die eigenen Handlungsmotive ist ein unverzichtbarer Bestandteil von Kants Gesinnungsethik,' or Emundts (2017: 192):

> No external observation of the action itself can tell us whether an action is motivated by the categorical imperative, and no other person can judge here. . . . If this judgement is assumed to be possible, we must be able to know whether we acted because of the categorical imperative or not. Thus, we must be able to know our motives.

15 Unlike Emundts (2017: 192), who claims that 'the difference between an action motivated solely by the categorical imperative and an action in conformity with it can only be established from a first-person perspective', I do not think Kant pays attention here to the difference between first-personal and third-personal access to an agent's motives. Yet, such a difference certainly applies to self-knowledge of one's maxims, see further, p. 140.

16 In a recent paper, Eric Watkins and Marcus Willaschek point out that Kant's concept of cognition, 'Erkenntnis', differs from his concept of knowledge, 'Wissen', as only the second but not the first requires an act of assent, see Watkins and Willaschek (2017: 87f.). They also distinguish cognition in a broad sense, meaning all conscious representation of an object, from Kantian cognition in the narrow sense which constitutes the subject matter and goal in the first *Critique* (Watkins and Willaschek 2017: 87f.), I agree with them on both points but, nevertheless, prefer to use the term 'knowledge' as the English equivalent of Kant's 'Erkenntnis' because this is the term that comes up in 'self-knowledge'.

17 That Kant's main intention was not, as a widespread narrative has it, to refute Hume's view on causation and that, given his German audience, he was likely not to have felt any need to do so, has been shown for by Watkins (2005: 362 and 372f.). Watkins also argues that when Kant seeks to overcome Hume's scepticism, his focus is not specifically on the problem of induction but on Hume's scepticism with regard to reason (Watkins, 2005: 377, n. 28).

18 The German text says:

> *Denn es ist bisweilen der Fall, dass wir bei der schärfsten Selbstprüfung gar nichts antreffen, was außer dem moralischen Grund . . . mächtig genug hätte sein können, uns zu dieser oder jener Handlung . . . zu bewegen; es aber daraus nicht mit Sicherheit geschlossen werden, dass wirklich gar kein geheimer Antrieb der Selbstliebe unter der bloßen Vorspiegelung jener Idee die eigentliche bestimmende Ursache des Willens gewesen sei, dafür wir denn gerne uns mit einem uns fälschlich angemaßten edleren Bewegungsgrunde schmeicheln . . .*

Note, that the particle 'dafür' is translated by 'for which' into English. But this makes a relative pronoun of it, which would be a rare usage in German. More importantly, however, is this: 'für', and by implication also 'dafür', cannot belong to the verb 'schmeicheln', for 'schmeicheln' is combined with 'mit' and this was already the case in the eighteenth century as is clear from Grimm's dictionary (1852ff.). Therefore, Kant is likely to have employed 'dafür' in the sense of 'instead' or 'in exchange'.

19 This point is even missed in Béatrice Longuenesse's otherwise subtle analysis. Longuenesse is one of the few interpreters who emphasizes the radical nature of Kant's denial of self-knowledge of one's moral motives. However, she, too, explains it by reference to our 'natural propensity to deceive ourselves', cf. Longuenesse (2017: 231).

20 See, in particular, Ware (2009: 675, 682f.), but cf. also Emundts (2017: 195). It needs to be mentioned that Ware, before he goes on to expose the threat of self-deception, clearly affirms that 'the phenomenon of self-deception is only possible on the condition that I can never objective knowledge of myself' (2009: 675, n. 8).

21 See Radhakrishnan (2019) for a reading of Kant's moral self-knowledge along these lines.

22 Kant (1998: 71); AA VI: 51.

23 See Ware (2009: 690–7) for a detailed defence of the compatibility of Kant's scepticism with his concept of conscience. I largely agree with him on this matter, but note that he did not make the empirical character of conscience explicit, which point is crucial for my account.

24 See Bernecker (2006: 163 and 175) or Emundts (2017: 192) for this point.

25 Kant (1996: 52f.); AA IV: 397. Note also that the first section is a 'transition from common rational to philosophic moral cognition' (Kant, 1996: 49; AA IV: 393).

26 O'Neill (1998: 92–7) claims that on her communitarian reading of Kant, the problem vanishes since we can assume that Kant's maxims are just given prescriptions which are only reflected by the individual upon the means to materialize them. Her view thus is that our 'evidence for maxims' is distinct from our 'evidence for action' (p. 94); this implies that it is possible to have evidence for actions without knowing one's maxims introspectively. But this does not solve the problem, for the question remains: how do I know that I endorse a prescription and accept the ends it envisions as *my* ends? I do not see how this problem can be solved within O'Neill's communitarian reading, but see for an account below.

27 See the previous paragraph.

28 This is in fact what Bernecker (2006: 197) suggests when he ascribes the view to Kant that we know the contents of our maxims infallibly. In a similar vein, Ware (2009: 694) talks of the 'immediate consciousness of the verdicts of my conscience', whereas Emundts (2017: 193) invokes the idea of a 'consciousness of the principles that guide us'. Note that I do not disagree with them on this notion, I just think that it does not mitigate Kant's scepticism any bit.

29 Shoemaker (1994) and Burge (1996).
30 Moran (2001: 58).
31 Moran (2001: 21) himself names it thus.
32 For this point, see also Renz (2021: 8).
33 Boyle (2009: 133f.).
34 See also Renz (2015: 587–91) and Khurana (2019: 960 and 973f. n. 8) for critical remarks of Boyle's reading of Kant.
35 Kant (1998: 246); B 132.
36 I do not distinguish here between subjective principles and rules of action. But on this point, see also Herman (1993: 74).
37 A similar scenario is suggested by O'Neill (1998: 92–7, particularly n. 28); however, she does so on a communitarian approach that does not account for the way in which we accept some prescriptions as *our* maxim.
38 This is in particular the case with O'Neill's approach, see nn. 28 and 39 in this chapter.
39 This is the case with Bernecker (2006) and Emundts (2017).

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Introduction

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