Timo Airaksinen

Vagaries of Desire

A Collection of Philosophical Essays

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By

Timo Airaksinen

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Preface

This volume contains eleven essays on philosophical theories of desire, their applications and rhetorical aspects. They move via analysis towards rhetorical literary and metaphysical case studies on Kafka and Hobbes. The final two chapters deal with kinky sexual desire and its moral and motivational mysteries, first by focusing on BDSM and consensual S/M, and then reading Thomas Nagel's influential article on perversions and their psychological genesis. In this way, the chapters display the use of several philosophical strategies, such as analysis, criticism, literary interpretation, and rhetorical speculation side by side and one after the other, proceeding from modern logical clarity towards postmodern suggestiveness. This makes the volume multifaceted and, as I hope, polyphonous in a way that is not immediately obvious or trivial. All the papers can be read individually, they are self-contained and hence somewhat repetitious, which I apologise, but they also display a methodological progress from relative triviality towards what looks like an interpretative deep end where the philosophical ladders do not quite reach the bottom or where philosophy ends. Plato thought that philosophy should lead us up and away from the cave, but another way of seeing it is that it leads us to the bottom of the cave where all the fundamental secrets lie in eternal gloom and darkness. Plato dreams of truths in bright sunlight, which is nice but far too optimistic. In the end confusion and mystery prevail and the world, as I see it, covers itself in semantic noise, ambiguity, and metaphors as if to avoid the intolerable truth. In the end, linguistic tropes rule. When I looked at the essays in this volume in toto, I noticed, to my initial surprise, that the key metaphor here is travel. I was not planning it that way but when I think of it now I am inclined to say that it is a perfectly good one.

The papers here are new and previously unpublished. Exceptions are as follows: Chapter 10 "Sadomasochistic Desire" originally appeared under the title "The Language of Pain: A Philosophical Study of BDSM," *SAGE Open* 8 (2018), 1–9, but I have made some significant modifications. I also moved some material from that essay to the last one, "Sexual Differences," which is previously unpublished. My third relevant paper on sexuality is "A Philosophical and Rhetorical Theory of BDSM," *The Journal of Mind and Behaviour* 38 (2017), 53–74. The two Kafka essays in this volume belong to a series of four papers, of which two are published as "Nowhere to Go, Kafka," *Munich Social Science Review NS* 1 (2018), 91–110, and "Conspiracy Theories as Fiction: Kafka and Sade," *Munich Social Science Review NS* 2 (2019) (in press). The essay on Hobbes is the original version of the paper first published as a Spanish translation: "Dentro del

torbellino: Intencionalidad, deseo y felicidad en Thomas Hobbes." In *Naturaleza y teoria politica*, F. Bertelloni and M.L. Lukac (Eds.). Buenos Aires: Editoria de la Facultad de Filosofia e Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2018, pp. 114–143. For this volume I have modified the original version slightly but significantly.

What I have written in this volume is loosely based on some of my published essays, namely, "Desire and Happiness," *Homo Oeconomicus* 29 (2012), 393–412; "An Introduction to Desire," *Homo Oeconomicus* 31 (2014), 447–461; and "Narratives of Desire." In *Desire: The Concept and Its Practical Context*. T. Airaksinen and W.W. Gasparski (Eds.). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2016, pp. 3–58. See also "Narratives of (Mad) Desire," *Ethics in Progress* 4 (2014), 7–17; "Sade, or the Scandal of Desire," *Homo Oeconomicus* 30 (2013), 369–384; and "Psychology of Desire and the Pragmatics of Betterment." In *Pragmatism and Objectivity,* S. Pihlström (Ed.). London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 223–238.

My long standing interest in desire is an offshoot of my struggles with the notions of happiness. I originally toyed with the argument to the effect that satisfied desires make, or should make, a person happy. This contrasts with the idea that one cannot satisfy a desire de se, like some Buddhists may argue, which is to say that happiness is an ever delusive notion. Also, a crucial moment was when Dr Gerald Doherty (Turku) defined, in personal communication, de dicto desires as narrative idealizations referring at the same time to Jacques Lacan. I do not think he himself ever developed this idea but he seemed to take it as an obvious truth. I connected narrativity to the semantics of possible worlds, and this is how it began. Another key idea is that desire de dicto has a metaphorically and metonymically characterized intentional object. One can say that desire has a metonymic structure, as Lacan says; this is another way of admitting one never gets what one wants. We get an object that is only metonymically connected to what we want.

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Helsinki 4. July 2018

PART 1

Analytical Issues

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Depicting Desire

Definitions

Desire has many names: desire, want, will, wish, longing, craving, need, lust, greed, aspiration, appetite, and hope among others. Dictionaries make many of these, in different patterns, synonyms and they can be used as metonyms. They may indeed be synonyms but as well they can be given a specific meaning. For instance what is will and how is it related to desire? The problem is that the specific relations between such ordinary language terms are impossibly messy. It is a bad idea to start analysing them. Of course, we feel they all somehow belong together. Each of them represents a subject's vision of a better world or a transformation of the actual world into something better, or at least into a more desirable place. Even greed does so, although in a perverted manner. Perhaps this indeed is the common core of them all and thus they would represent variations of one and same theme. This is possible and I presume it is the case. Perhaps we may even assume that only one basic type of desire exists. At the same time we must agree that to find its proper definition is impossible. You cannot define ordinary language terms because they are used in such variable ways.

In what follows I review some attempts and later on we will find more. All of them are inadequate, which is to say that desire is a fuzzy concept. My own favoured characterization of the concept of desire is below. In the course of my deliberations on desire in this book, I am afraid I will deviate in many ways from the following ideas, but as a first approximation it may be useful:

> *Desire* or *rational desire* means, by definition, a subject's propositional attitude, that is, the subject recognizes and prima facie presents a claim to a salient feature of an imaginary possible world that one also hopes to get, or the intentional object of desire, which object is such that (a) its meaning can be disambiguated, (b) it is intrinsically attractive or desirable and can be socially understood as such, (c) it is plausible to consider the success of the claim in an accessible, new possible world; moreover, (d) the object is more desirable than any of the relevant features of the actual world, (e) the object is more desirable than any other object in those alternate possible worlds that are at least equally accessible, and

(f) the possible world where the desired object is located is acceptable in toto.

Let me explain. "Rational" means that we are not interested in, say, plain urges or addictions; desires are motivated by some reasons that are based on the desirability of the desired objects. The basic idea is that I recognize an object, consider it attractive, and make a claim to it as if I demanded it. I want to move over to a possible world in which my demand is satisfied. It can happen that some objects of desire are initially too vague or figuratively expressed and this must be corrected. The subject must not already possess the desired object, and it must be possible to get it. Also, the designated possible world must be better than the actual world. If this is not the case, one has no reason to consider that possible world and thus no desire emerges, but it is not enough to consider one possible world, and I cannot only consider the object in question but I must check what comes along with it, that is, the world. Too much extra bad baggage there means that I cannot afford to choose the given object, because it is located in a bad environment. I want to kill Bill but that spells twenty years in prison, which is to say that the object of my desire is located in a bad possible world. I may then reject the desire or the world. I drop the idea of killing him; I now want Bill dead or, alternatively, I accept the actual world where Bill and I both live. We may say the desire must not be too costly in the possible world where its object is located.

Richard Wollheim argues that "[o]ur desires do not generate a possible world." His argument for this is as follows: "Each desire offers us, as it were, a view through a keyhole, but there is no reason that there should emerge from these views of a coherent picture of what lies on the other side of the gate." He compares desire to belief and says the latter, all things considered, forms such a coherent picture. But all the (true) beliefs together form the picture of this actual world, which is of course also a possible world, too. Desires, on the other hand, sketch an aspect of a novel but accessible possible world, which is better than this actual world; that is the whole point of desiring. The possible world revealed by beliefs may be a coherent totality and in this sense a reconstruction of what we already have. However, when I desire something and tell the full story of its desirability conditions that I expect to be there, I sketch an aspect of the world that does not exist. It is a non-actual possible world such that the world where the sketch holds true is similar to the actual world in all other respects. It is not the actual world because of its novel features but it is a whole possible world because it is its novel features plus the remaining features of the actual world. In this way, desire constructs its own possible world.[1]

1 R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 53.

When I want to drink beer the new world contains me drinking beer and the rest remains the same.

Any idea and concept can be employed either as a definiens or a definiendum, or as that which explains or that which is to be explained. I may try to say something about desire or about something else by means of desire. In the first case I am interested in desire per se and in the second case of something else. If I am interested in desire, as I happen to be, the definition or characterization of desire is bound to be long, complicated, and yet incomplete.[2] Actually, it may look like a theory rather than a definition. But in the case of desire as a definiens one may be brief – the briefer the better. It all depends on what one tries to explain and what kind of explanatory machinery one needs; of course, one makes an attempt to use tools that are as simple as possible. For instance, Mark Schroeder uses "desire" as a "stipulative abbreviation" that is fit to explain his key cases and examples. But he consoles the reader by saying that "desires in this technical sense really are desires."[3] Minimal features create minimal problems but technical stipulations may lose contact with reality. Perhaps for this reason we have so many simplicistic definitions of desire, some of them too brief and some rather strange. Let me list a random sample plus some comments.

Richard Brandt in his "Rational Desires" says, "a person who desires S is in a state such that, *were* he to think of S, S would *seem attractive* to him" (italics in the original). I wonder why he uses a counterfactual construction here. He sums up his view as follows: "These two aspects of desire *appear* to be logically distinct: Seeming attractive seems to be somewhat different from being ready to do something if one sees it will produce something else. But psychologically I suppose they are connected in a law like manner."[4] This is to say, according to Brandt, that desires are motives, which I think is not true, and most philosophers today would approve.[5] Sometimes desire as an explanans is part of action explanation, if action is called for, but never as a motive. Of course we also have contexts like "Q: Why are you here? A: I wanted to see you," which justifies what I have done, but this is a different matter. Anyway, the idea that

2 A relevant example is knowledge. My favourite definition of knowledge as a definiendum is by M. Swain, *Reason and Knowledge*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, pp. 223, 231. It all started from E. Gettier's challenge and ended in an impasse.

3 M. Schroeder, *Slaves of the Passions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 9.

4 R. Brandt, "Rational Desires." In his *Morality, Utilitarianism, and Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 38–56, p. 42.

5 A.H. Goldman, *Reasons from Within*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 7, 87; J.M. Russell, "Desires Don't Cause Actions," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 5 (1984), 1–10; and T. Schroeder, *Three Faces of Desire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 16ff.

the person who desires O is, for that reason alone, also motivated to act on one's desire for O has been quite popular earlier (we will return to this). What comes to Brandt's characterization of desire, I find it too simple to be plausible. It indeed spells out a necessary condition of desiring, namely, that one finds the object desirable but of course it is not sufficient. I read classic car magazines and find most cars attractive so that I could consider myself as owning them, but yet I for all kinds of reasons do not desire any of them. Say, the possible world where I own such a car is alien to me. Moreover, I cannot see why Brandt talks about "seeming attractive." An object is or is not attractive to me and thus one cannot make sense of a qualification like seeming in this context. If an object seems attractive to me it is attractive to me and also the other way round. Also, some features of an object may be attractive to me without making the object desirable. I see an attractive painting that I do not find desirable because I see the painting in a disinterested aesthetic perspective. I may find little kids very attractive but I abhor any ascription of desire to our mutual existence. Desirability means attractiveness in a special way that is open to desire.[6]

Allan Gibbard says, "What's desirable, we can say, is what one ought to desire," when "ought" here is what he calls the "basic normative ought." Such ought is at work when we consider what we ought to believe given some positive and negative evidence.[7] The question about the nature of desirability is as important as it is difficult. Think of it in the past tense: "I ought to have believed he is a crook," when the relevant evidence was there but I refused to believe what it entails. However, it does not make sense to say, "I ought to have desired it," when I failed to desire something I had found desirable. Belief and desire behave differently here. Evidence forces belief and we should accept that, if we are rational. When I see you I must believe you are there. If counterevidence is present I ought to handle it properly. Nothing similar can be said of desirability and desire. Desirability does not force desire because it only allows for desire. We can say, "I ought to have chosen it," if my utility calculations indicate it is so. But it does not make sense to say "I ought to have desired it." Considering desirability, the normal strategy is to pass them by. You recognize a desirable object and you pass it by without normative consequences. Given that an ought is at work, this is impossible. Think of belief: if I accept some evidence I ought to formulate a corresponding belief. If I do not, I am irrational

6 For a Renaissance notion of desirability, see M. Mertens, *Magic and Memory in Giordano Bruno*. Leiden: Brill, 2018, p. 175. Mertens discusses Ficino and the idea of binding: certain perceptions bind us to the objects, that is, we find them desirable. Desirability is a bond between an object and the perceiver.

7 A. Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 14.

and that is a negative characterization and an unfavorable evaluation. Desirability is a prima facie invitation to explore the situation further in order to see whether you desire the intentional object in question. You start from its desirability and you narrate the case; finally you watch your desire to emerge or fail to emerge. In this sense desire generation is not an act but rather like a spontaneous mental event. Desirability is prima facie invitation to explore, and that entails permission. Therefore, evidence forces belief, which is a two place relation; desirability considerations do not force desire because a third variable is needed here, which indicates a three place relation: subject, desirability, and desire. I desire ice cream not only because it tastes good, which is its desirability condition, but because all people around me eat ice cream.

Desirability is a problematic notion, though. Think of the following desire and its motivation, when motivation is based on desirability conditions: "I want to hurt people because I do not want they hurt me." First we need to eliminate the second reference to wanting, for instance, by saying hurting is bad. Now we have an inconsistent looking sentence: "I want to hurt because hurting is bad." Perhaps the person wants to say: "I hurt people so they cannot hurt me," which sounds like an implausible strategy. If we accept it, the original picture of the desire changes accordingly: what I really want is not to get hurt and, thus, hurting others is just my instrumental desire or need. Another strategy is to find a set of mediating propositions between "I want to hurt" and "Hurting is bad." One can imagine that the mediation will prove to be complex and controversial and also that the person herself may not have much to say about it. Perhaps it has something to do with childhood traumas. I suspect such cases have given some psychologists and psychiatrists a motive to speak about unconscious motivation. Anyway, my basic idea is that the gap between a desire and its desirability conditions must be spelled out by means of a narrative that concerns the details of the case. Our motives tend to be deeper and more complicated than they first appear. Another lesson, as we saw, is that when we spell out the desirability conditions in full, our picture of the intentional object may change, too. What looked like the object appears as a grammatical construct that hides the psychological topics we need to discuss. The object disappears and a topic of desire appears in its place. We can ask, when I desire an object, what do I desire?

Graham Oddie puts his point in an impressively exact manner: "Goodness $=_{df}$ that property X such that, necessarily for any state P whatsoever, if one believes [...] that P has X, then one desires that P."[8] This is to say, if I believe an object is good, I also desire it. However, if an object is good it is, therefore,

8 G. Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 13.

intrinsically desirable, but I do not desire all desirable objects, as I already argued above. If desire is a mental state or episode, to desire all that is desirable must be an overwhelming task; it defies all the laws of cognitive economy. To kill Bill is a desirable idea to me. I can kill Bill in two different possible worlds, in the first one with no risk, and in the second with the risk of dying myself. It is misleading to say I want to kill Bill in both worlds just because the idea of killing Bill sounds so good. In the theory of desire, one must make a clear distinction between desire and desirability. For instance, many desirable things are impossible to get and, hence, you cannot desire them.

The simplest possible desire theory comes from Brian Loar: "I shall use 'desire' and 'want' interchangeably for the general pro-attitude." He continues: "The contents of desire are a matter of their potential interaction with certain beliefs leading to decisions."[9] Here again we find a confusion between desire and desirability, or pro-attitude. Actually, I may have a pro-attitude towards something I do not find desirable. Moreover, most of our pro-attitudes have nothing to do with our decision making. My son introduces his new girlfriend whom I instantly like but I have no power to make any decisions in this situation. Loar's idea resembles Brandt's definition. Michael Smith's definition is as follows, "desires [are] states that represent how the world is to be."[10] This focuses on the thesis of different directionalities of desire and belief, which says that desire determines a possible world and the actual world determines belief. In other words, when I say I desire something I hope the world will change accordingly. I may say, "I want you to do X" and thus I issue a command to you to change the world so that X. In this sense desire is an immodest propositional attitude. Smith also is sympathetic to the dispositional model of desire, that is, if I desire to act I am disposed to act accordingly, given that my beliefs concerning the relevant circumstance are correct.[11] To put it simply, desire indicates a disposition to act. But this idea applies only to desires that one may label actionist. Many, or most, desires are not actionist in the sense that they do not mention action. For instance, John desires that Mary loves him vs. John wants to make Mary love him. Desires of the type "I want to act" are a special case. The source of the overemphasis on the actionist cases seems to be Elizabeth Anscombe's idea, so elegantly formulated, "The primitive sign of wanting is trying to get."[12] Yes indeed, one may add, if one has something to get. I find it

9 B. Loar, *Mind and Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 87.

10 M. Smith, *The Moral Problem*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp. 7, 9, 116. This book has been quite influential.

11 Smith, 1994, p. 113.

12 E. Anscombe, *Intention*. Ithaca, NY: Cornel University Press, 1963, p. 1. See G.E. Schueler, *Desire*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 1ff.

strange that so many writers on rational action explanation use such an idea of desire; for instance, Richard Holton, "Desire in the sense we are after is a state that preoccupies an agent's attention with an urge to perform a certain action."[13] Holton gives the reader an ad hoc definition of desire tailor made to serve action explanation, but then he needs a desire in a special sense. When a gourmand says, "I want that dish," we cannot infer what he may do in order to get it, perhaps nothing. So, the problem is that an expression of desire may leave the relevant action ambiguous, or the very possibility of action is uncertain. In some cases action is impossible: "I want that you forget what I did." I may do something that is somehow relevant to the case, like pleading her or confusing her, but it is not quite like the action that I have in mind, namely, an act that makes her to forget. No such action exists.

Here is a simple argument against the idea that desires logically entail actions. I say, I want that I do not act, when I could act ceteris paribus. I may desire that I do not act, not in the sense of an omission that may itself be an action, but in the sense of bypassing all considerations of action. Action is then out of the question. This argument works also in those cases where one says that a non-actionist context excludes desire and calls for wish or hope. I do not think this is so but it of course is a possible standpoint. I say, I want her to want me, implying that I cannot directly, do anything about it. You may say, then you only wish or hope that she will want you. My first argument is immune to this caveat.

What about the dispositional theory of desire? This theory says desire logically entails the desiring agent's disposition to react by acting, if he could, in order to secure the subjectively desirable change of the world. A lover would act if he could in order to get the partner he wants. He cannot act but still it is true that he would if he could. Such a disposition is said to be a mark of the mental state properly called a desire. I cannot actively better my situation in the life-boat on the ocean but of course I am disposed to do so – if I could. The counterfactual here is true. Obviously desire and disposition to act are closely connected. Yet it is easy to show that this is not a necessary connection. Suppose you desire a change of the world such that its voluntary production is, for you, impossible either factually or normatively. In such a case it is irrational to want it in the dispositional sense. Suppose I want Bill dead. That does not imply I am disposed to kill him, if I believe that killing is wrong and I am a moral person. A young man wants to be a soccer star but he is too lazy to practice; hence, he is not disposed to act in terms of his desire. If he thinks he is a natural soccer star he has a reason that backs up his desire without allowing

13 R. Holton, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011, p. 102.

for any disposition to act. Suppose I want Bill dead but I have no disposition to kill him because I think I am no killer. Under no conditions would I kill him, or act with the intention to kill him or otherwise facilitate the relevant change of the world. I am not disposed to do so even if I want him dead; I have my good reasons for my omission. Of course someone may argue that I as a desiring person I am disposed to act regardless of the relevant impossibility, namely, in the following sense: suppose it were not impossible and then I would be disposed to act. This is too far-fetched to be plausible. The basic point is, I am not a person who kills and that is why I am not disposed to kill even if I desire him dead. The dispositional theory supposes that desire rests on a two place relation S – O, which is not true.

In this book I am interested in desire qua desire, or desire independently of action explanation. Human existence is so much more that action and hence desire as an explanandum should be taken seriously. William James puts it well: if the satisfaction of a desire, or obtaining its intentional object, is dependent on action, the mental state is called the will.[14] Given that I want to kill Bill, I can say it is my will to kill Bill: this usage does not seem to exist today in the relevant literature, which is a pity.

Nomy Arpaly and Timothy Schroeder famously promote a reward theory of desire: "[T]o have an intrinsic desire regarding it being the case that P is to constitute P as a reward," when aversions indicate punishment.[15] This only says that if I desire P, P must be a reward, which is to say that the only way an object can be desirable is to be seen as a reward. Therefore, here we meet another theory of desirability in disguise. To say whatever is desired must be rewarding, sounds like a prima facie plausible idea. Of course, a reward is not something like a social prize but some kind of subjective positive experience that tends to make me want more of it – but this sounds circular: if something is desirable it is rewarding, but only those things are rewarding that are desirable. There are desirable and undesirable rewards. I can imagine rewards that I find undesirable all things considered. I may find sexual voyeurism personally rewarding in the sense that I want more of the same; perhaps I feel like a potent predator and at the same time I shun from it. I may find it fearful and repulsive to find it rewarding. Voyeurism is rewarding to certain people, I know it is, but it also is too costly, or I may not find it fit for me as a person. If it is not, one's voyeuristic desire does not seem to be based on rewards. A good example is revenge.

14 W. James, *Psychology*, Vol. II. New York: Dover, 1890/1950, p. 486.

15 N. Arpaly and T. Schroeder, *In Praise of Desire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 128. This point is originally made in Schroeder, 2004. I feel uneasy about the idea of punishment. How can avoidance indicate punishment in any sense of the term?

I consider personal revenge, and to get it is typically deeply rewarding; yet, I refuse to see it as a desirable strategy because I know revenge is unethical and I am an ethical person. Hence, Schroeder's idea looks dubious: I may find a reward repulsive, and yet I want it; if I want it its desirability conditions must be found elsewhere.

In what follows, I will work under the assumption that whatever is attractive may also be desirable, and many types of attractive things exist. An attractive object pulls me towards it. Finally, it seems that the reward theory focuses on actions, which I said above is not a valid idea. Normally we think that some actions deserve their reward. Reward entails merit. If I get something from you, without my own effort, merit, or desert, I may be happy but where is the reward? Many desires are desires to get the object without personal effort. In a non-actionist context the idea of reward does not seem that attractive. One final point: instead of reward, we should talk about expected reward. Desires are often connected with time consuming projects where rewards are endlessly delayed. If my desire stays alive it must be for other reasons than expected rewards. I try to learn French pronunciation, which I know is endlessly frustrating. Where is my reward now?

Let us next take a peek on empirical psychology in order to see how psychologists may understand desire. Here is an example: desire is defined "as those wants and urges that are intricately linked to motivation, pleasure, and rewards."[16] Like Schroeder's definition this mentions rewards. However, as I said above, most philosophers do not like to link desire directly to motivation of action. The main problem, however, is that wants and urges are desires or at least so closely related to desire that the definition now becomes patently circular. The authors also say desires they are mostly interested in are appetitive desires, and they seem to mean desires that aim at some desirable object. This is the pull theory of desire based on the idea that the desiring person gravitates towards some desirable objects, or desire is based on reasons that motivate it. The opposite theory is a push theory that is normally understood as a naturalistic causal theory: some physiological states called drives push us towards certain objects that are believed to extinguish them.[17] No reasons are mentioned here. Such push-desires aim at their objects that signify the return of physiological equilibrium or status quo, which also can be seen as pleasure.[18]

16 W. Hofmann and L.F. Nordgren, "Introduction." In their (Eds.) *The Psychology of Desire*. New York: Guilford Press, 2015, pp. 1–14, p. 5.

17 See B. Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1921; and Schueler, 1995, p. 16.

18 S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Tr. J. Strachey. New York: Norton, 1921/1961, pp. 3–4.

In this sense, desire entails a specific physical and, hence, mental disturbance, which can be understood as a lack or a consequence of an experienced lack. Pull theories do not presuppose such a disturbance although some theorists have assumed otherwise, perhaps under Platonic influence. Push and pull theories must not be conflated.

Finally, let me mention a strange new definition of desire, which "concerns the various things one would like to have or to do even if it is impossible." The first part is typical of such short characterizations of desire and hence I need not comment on it, but the last part is truly strange. What could it possibly mean to argue that the intentional objects of desire are impossible to get?[19] What does it mean that I want to be the richest man of the world now; I may entertain this idea but that is all. I can say I wish I were rich, but then I use a counterfactual formulation. Of course, some varieties of desire, like longing, happily take an impossible object, as in "I long for my lost youthful vigor." Or, "I wish Bill would not be here," when he already is present, but here again we are dealing with a counterfactual possibility. If an object is believed to be impossible to get, we must first ask whether this impossibility is a logical or practical problem. In both cases, one cannot keep it as the object of one's desire. But if the problem is practical, we may still wish. If it is a logical impossibility, we cannot even wish for success. Thomas Hobbes wanted to square the circle; had he understood the self-contradictory nature of his efforts he should have dropped the project and quit thinking of it.

Now, one cannot desire objects one believes to be impossible or nonexistent, or if they exist, impossible to get. I cannot desire my youthful years back. I cannot want to see a centaur. These objects do not exist. I cannot desire that President Trump would serve me tea each morning from now on. I believe that it is a practically impossible scenario. I have no chance here and to entertain the idea is wishful thinking or daydreaming. Of course one can define desire so broadly that it includes such items as daydreaming and irrational desires but I cannot see why we should do so.

It is easy to confuse wish, hope, and desire. About hope, I want to use "hope" mainly in the following context: Desire logically entails hope – I cannot desire an object that I already have or that I cannot have. And hope entails desire. Thus, when I desire or even act according to my desire, I also hope to have or get it. Of course, I can say, for instance, "I hope to see you tomorrow," but then I want to see you and I hope that this will be the case tomorrow. If I wish, I may have no hope and therefore no desire: "I wish I were younger," All this is controversial and my view is partly stipulative, of course. But we need

19 F. Grammont, "Introduction." In *Naturalizing Intention in Action*, F. Grammont et al. (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 1–17, p. 9.

to standardize the use of these concepts for theoretical and argumentative purposes.[20]

Concerning rational desire, Brandt's idea in his above mentioned paper looks attractive: A desire is rational if no amount of additional information can change and correct it; otherwise it is irrational.[21] This is end-state rationality meaning a situation in which all our relevant reasoning and information gathering is already done. However, a more natural way of thinking here is process rationality: A desire is rational if and only if it responds to new information in a positive manner, that is, becomes better adapted to its environment of beliefs, values, and other desires. If it does not respond at all, it can be called obsessive-compulsive. If it responds only partially and too reluctantly, it is defective. Brand's theory looks obviously wrong if you look at it from the process point of view: fixed desires are indeed obsessive-compulsive. One may view the theory from the end state perspective and then it looks better. It says, if you cannot fix your desire it must be irrational. If any new thought makes a woman endlessly vacillate between her desires to marry her fiancé or leave him, her desire is in bad shape, that is, irrational. Obviously, we can approach the problem of rationality in two mutually incompatible directions. Another well-known way to understand rational desire is to ask whether I desire my desire or not. I want to smoke but I do not want to want to smoke, hence my desire is irrational. I want to be a good father and find no reasons against it, so my desire is rational.[22]

Two Types of Desire

Historically speaking, desire was an emotion, feeling, or passion of the soul, of which the paradigmatic type is love. Anthony Kenny says, "Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, and Hume all included desire among the passions of the soul."[23] Love indeed is a perfect combination of desire and emotion, but I love what I already have, which is an anomaly. Normally we desire what we could but do not have, but I cannot love what I do not have. However, love is loaded with emotion and feeling. Moreover, when you say you love him, you express your

20 See T. Pataki, *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 2014.

21 Brandt, 1992.

22 See C. Norris, "Frankfurt on Second-Order Desires and the Concept of a Person," *Prolegomena* 9 (2010), 199–242.

23 N.E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011, p. 8; and A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and the Will*. London: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1969, p. 100. However, the case of Aristotle is quite complicated; see G. Pearson, *Aristotle on Desire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

desire but you do not specify the object, or what you want. Proper, virtuous love does not want anything, does not demand anything, or seek personal satisfaction – desire does all that when it is considered as a propositional attitude. Think of sexual love. Sexual love wants sex, and that is why it differs from virtuous love that wants nothing. Yet, virtuous love entails desire, pure benevolent objectless desire that is like a feeling or emotion. It does not want anything. Yearning and longing are good examples, too. Both of them contain objectless desire. I long for something better in my life without knowing what it is. Here desire blends with feeling, or a feeling that something better should come about. When I long for something it cannot be said that I want something. This is to say, the modern discussion of desire as want is one sided. Let me take a historical example, Thomas Aquinas. Nicholas Lombardo writes, "Desire is a movement towards a good, while love is an inclination or a kind of complacency, and, as such, the principle of pleasure and the rest of passions." Next, "It is difficult to imagine how love's intentional object might be defined without compromising love's status as a distinct and elemental passion. Only for love and hatred does Aquinas avoid any clarification of the nature of the intentional object vis-à-vis presence and absence." According to Lombardo, Aquinas fails to specify "exactly how love is different from desire."[24]

Above I have sketched some basic ideas of desire as a propositional attitude that has its intentional object and whose desirability conditions are subject to their own motivational considerations. However, a different, Platonist context exists, where desire is a universal notion or a principle that lives its own life regardless of its instances. It is like the idea or form of desire as such and its role in human life and existence is far more fundamental compared to particular petty propositional desires. For instance, male desire as a phallic idea is not just a collection of propositional desires that happen to bother some men. Male desire is a universal principle of man and malehood and is only imperfectly or partially reflected in men's life understood as male life. Like in Plato's cave, men live a life determined by their propositional desires at the same time failing to understand that this is not what defines them. That is done by male desire and its phallic references. In Hegelian terms, men are alienated from their essence. Such a philosophical theory may sound dubious but in actual fact the concept of desire is still used in a way that corresponds with the Platonic usage.

24 Lombardo, 2011, pp. 58–59, 61. Edmund Burke writes: "curiosity is the most superficial of all the affections; it changes its object perpetually; it has an appetite that is very sharp, but very easily satisfied." In his *The Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Ed. P. Guyer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1757/2015, p. 27.

In an analytical perspective, desire is a propositional attitude. Its paradigmatic form is "Subject S desires that P," when P specifies the intentional object O of S's desire. When P occurs and S obtains O we say the relevant desire is satisfied and, as we may add, S is gratified. S got what she wanted. In this sense one can say that desire tracks satisfaction. In the same way, belief tracks truth, and therefore, G.E. Moore's famous "The cat is on the mat but I do not believe it" sounds so paradoxical. Also, desire is synonymous with want; or "I want P" and "I desire P" are synonymous: they are connected with the idea of motivation in the sense that both are conative states or episodes that focus on a goal or an object that one finds desirable in a suitable, non-actual possible world, which means a world the subject may actually reach. Such a possible world is accessible when the idea of accessibility can be operationalized by saying one knows what, realistically speaking, will realize the new possible world. Sometimes our own actions may do it, sometimes not. Mere wishes and day-dreams are then another thing. They do not depend on any considerations of realism.

I hope this view of desire may sound convincing but, as I said above, we also can find an alternative characterization of desire. From the analytical point of view, its existence is dubious, but this is no reason to reject the idea. What I am saying is that desire is desire but the two contexts of the use of "desire" are radically different.[25] Let me illustrate this by means of two quotations from a popular philosophical text:

> Freud argued that the female homosexual is a woman with a man's desire for a woman-phallus.

This sounds grammatically correct and thus prima facie familiar. Regardless of what it means, one can see that woman's intentional object of desire is a woman-phallus. So far so good, but then we find something new and disturbing (my italics):

> Irigaray calls for a more adequate treatment of female narcissism, which psychoanalysis undermines by repressing the woman's perspective in the imaging and symbolizing of her sexuality. Irigaray deconstructs *phallocentric desire* by replacing the single male organ with multiple female sex

25 Think of G. Doherty's book title *Pathologies of Desire* (New York: Lang, 2008) and its subtitle, *The Vicissitudes of the Self in James Joyce's* A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Its index does not mention "desire." The question is, in what sense does Doherty mean desire here? Whatever the sense is, it is based on the literary uses of the term.

> organs, and in this way addresses a female *auto-homo-erotic desire* not mediated by phallic intervention.[26]

In this second quotation "desire" is used in a new context. The question is, can we reduce phallocentric and auto-homo-erotic desire back to some oratio recta reports of propositional mental states and episodes called desire? I suggest this is not the case, which is to say that the second, Platonic way of using the concept of desire is both plausible and interesting. I am not saying that the reduction is always impossible; on the contrary, sometimes it is possible and such cases open up new vistas on desire and its objects. As I said above, we can distinguish between conatively based desire, which makes want and desire synonymous, and feeling based desire that defies this synonymy. Let me illustrate. Prison as a social environment is infused with desire. Inmates, guards, and visitors wallow in an emotional whirlwind that oscillates between apathy and passion, hopelessness and hope, calm and anger etc. All this entails desire that is not reducible to individual wants. It is related to shared and culturally construed feelings as a frame of mind (I use feeling, in spite of its obvious inadequacy, but I cannot find a better term) that penetrate the whole social world that is prison.

Think of a football stadium just before the start of the match, or a boxing arena. All the spectators pack in to share the feeling and participate in collectively shared desire. What desire? The desire to win and conquer is evident but equally well the desire to be there and share the multiple, complex desires that one can feel but not conceptualize. We desire to share the desire, which is then objectless. I want to be there, that is all I want; what is the object of this desire? It is "to be there," which is not an object but a feeling and an ever so ambiguous state of social existence, an altered state of mind and new normal. It is not an object of desire but desire itself coming into being, or desire in flesh, the essence of being there. Of course, this kind of desire is never satisfied, it is not satisfiable at all. Of course it does not track satisfaction; on the contrary, it feeds itself until it collapses to apathy and then returns with vengeance. It is then stronger than ever wanting more of the same, not any object but itself as that special desire and its associated feeling.[27] Football riots in England and elsewhere are a good example of the collective frustration that follows.

My last example is hospital, although school would be almost the same. What we have in a hospital is desire as quiet desperation and exaggerated hope, which means desire to get out of there – by the patients of course. For

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26 S. Phoca and R. Wright, *Introduction to Postfeminism*. Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999, p. 109.

27 S. Shepard, *Seven Plays*. New York: The Dial Press, 2005, "Tongues," p. 310.

the staff the same environment is diametrically opposite, but let us focus on the patients. Their desire cannot be reduced to individual desires and their intentional objects. They want to be healthy, that is true, they all want to be painless, some want to die, etc., but I am not talking about that. I am talking about an environment where desire rules as a kind of feeling of hope and hopelessness, in this case as an expression of all that is undesirable; in the same way a prison works as a social frame. The desire in question is "Let me out of here," "I wish I were somewhere else" or "I'd love to be somewhere else" or perhaps most accurately "I'd rather be anywhere else." They all hate the desire they share. Formally, this is desire to get away from the desire. In the sport stadium scene the same is expressed by "This is what I love, let it stay forever like this." The feeling we now understand as desire is objectless as it concentrates first on the situation and ultimately on itself. Or, as Jacques Lacan puts it,

> The enigmas that desire seems to pose for a "natural philosophy" – its frenzy miming the abyss of the infinite, the secret collusion with which it envelopes the pleasure of knowing and of joyful domination, these amount to nothing more than the derangement of the instinct that comes from being caught on the rails – eternally stretching forth towards desire for something else – of metonymy. Hence its perverse fixation at the very suspension point of the signifying change [...] There is no other way to conceive the indestructibility of unconscious desire.[28]

All this relates to an aspect of desire already known to Plato, that is, desire is unsatisfiable and always demands more. Or perhaps we want to read it as follows: Every instance of desire is satisfiable as such but desire itself is not – it has nothing to do with satisfaction because what it wants is more, first more of the same and then of something else. In that way desire is scary and anxiety ridden so that we want to control and even prevent it as much as we can.[29] But notice, to prevent all desires distributively is a different project from eliminating desire itself. One can still act on particular desires after desire is eliminated from one's life. Someone can say "I want to go to bed early," in which case his desire is part of the explanation of his action; at the same time we can say in his life desire plays no role, which happens in the life of, say, a Buddhist guru. Desire can be eliminated unlike the effects of desires.

The main example of desire is sexual desire but others can also be mentioned, for instance hatred and revengefulness in addition to many violent

28 Quoted in A. Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*. London: Routledge, 1991, p. 195.

29 See about how to minimize desire, G. Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*. Tr. A. Kotsko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

urges.[30] The analytical idea of desire fails to explain this; on the contrary, satisfaction of desire looks like a simple fact. I want ice-cream and I get it, which satisfies my desire. I want to kill Bill – why would I want to kill other people? How about hoarding desire?[31] I want stuff and then more until I drown in it, but the more I suffer from this mania the more stuff I want. It is easy to dismiss this as irrational behavior. It may be irrational but it is also real. Think of a hospital without desire. Sam Shepard puts all this into a wonderful literary form when he writes about unsatisfiable and ever increasing desire, "When it comes back there'll be nothing left but the hunger eating the hunger when it comes back. [...] Nothing left but the hunger."[32] Here, analytically speaking, the object of desire is the desire itself understood in a self-referential manner. Desire that desires itself is unstoppable even in those cases where desire is something negative like it is in a prison and a hospital. Even there, desire desires itself or feeds on itself. It is eternal and self-perpetuating.

I have used some mid-sized social frames as examples above, but what I said can now be said of individual cases as well. I love to be where I am now and I desire what I have; analytically, I cannot desire to be here now because I already am here. Yet, my desire is evident and unquestionable. I say I love the place. The explanation is, I want something one cannot conceptualize as an intentional object and that is why this something is not an object and, accordingly, my desire is no desire, or it is another kind of desire. The key to this mystery is feeling-for-here-and-now, or what we simply call feeling. I do not want as there is nothing to want but still I desire in the sense that I feel it all at the emotional level of my being.

Now, more analytically, we can dub this kind of desire that is not reducible to propositional attitudes feeling desire or for short f-desire, in contrast to propositional desires or p-desires. F-desires have their own properties, namely, they are typically but not necessarily shared, they stay unsatisfiable, and most of all they are self-focused and self-perpetuating, as if their intentional object or goal were the desire itself. Think of an expression like "male desire," which as an f-desire is not the sum total of men's p-desires. On the contrary, it is like an oration obliqua report on the male attitude towards male life understood as lust and striving after sex or whatever might work as if it were sex. Notice here the circularity, which replaces the linear drive towards the intentional object. Male desire is man's life as if constituted of, say, sex and violence, now

30 See E. Berkowitz, *Sex and Punishment*. London: Westbourne Press, 2013.

31 See R.O. Frost and G. Steketee, *Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2011.

32 Shepard, 2005, p. 310.

understood as topics and fields of desire where the relevant feelings roam. And part of this desire is that man wants to be man because this desire actually constitutes him. All f-desires are circular in the sense that they, as desires, focus on desire itself, which is natural if you think that f-desire means feeling for what there is, really or in imagination. These feelings are not directed towards some better possible words as p-feelings always are here-and-now. Hence, male desire understood as an f-desire is what men, as reported by others, desire as a feeling of the typical enjoyment of what they already have. Male desire is never what man reports oration recta. When I visit a hospital, prison, or a sports stadium I feel and share the relevant f-desire but then it is not my desire in the sense p-desire is, or de se. F-desire is ambiguous since I may have it but at the same time it is a social construct to be reported oratio obliqua.

As a male I share what is called the male desire and in this sense it is my own desire but as well it is what is reported as if from outside of me. An essential feature of male desire is male gaze. As a male, perhaps I never actually look at anybody in that way but still I may be accused of male gaze; I do not even know how to perform a male gaze but I find it easy to be guilty of it; that is, I do it according to others. The same can be said of male desire. Anyway, the main thing about f-desire is the feeling of being in a special place so that the desire reinforces my desire to be there. In what follows, I deal with p-desires. However, in some places, and especially in the case of Girard's mimetic desire, we will witness the return of f-desire.

Finally, here is a note on desires, important and less important. Jürgen Habermas says about concepts like knowledge as true, justified belief, or the classical Socratic definition, that it cannot be the correct definition because knowledge is something important and the definition does not reflect that.[33] In a sense this is true, knowledge is power but much what we tag as knowledge is not, like I know that it may or may not rain today. Perhaps the Socratic definition indeed is lacking, or it is not. In the same way one may say desires are important so that "I want ice cream" is different from "I want to be a good father to my children." Real desires introduce a new possible world, mere whims do not. From the point of view of my theory of p-desire this looks embarrassing: my theory requires that the subject situates the intentional object in a better possible world where it looks desirable everything considered. In other words, we consider the new possible world to be similar to our actual world except for the intentional object but then we allow the world change to see how much the emergence of the object changes it. When a good father emerges,

33 J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Interest*. Tr. J.J. Shapiro. London: Heinemann, 1972, pp. 62–63, 67.

much will change. But why talk about possible worlds and their changes if I just want a cone of ice cream? Minor desires that come and go like whims are different from major desires that alter and make the world better.

Why name such minor desires desires? They indeed seem to be p-desires and they possess all the necessary features of a desire, as it is easy to see. They have an intentional object and they track satisfaction. My solution is that the minor desires behave just like the major desires but the changes to the world that they entail are less important to us so that we do not bother to think about them. Therefore, minor desires are not really minor; what is minor is their effect on the world and that is why we are not interested in them or their full description. Their desirability conditions are seemingly simple: I like ice-cream and that is all. I want it, I get it, and I forget it; and to get it extinguishes the desire. It is an occurring desire that is conditional on its own satisfaction. If I want to be a good father, I know only approximately what the object is and what its requirements are. The object is intrinsically fuzzy. Hence now I never can reach the goal, except in the Pickwickian sense. I also must explain why I want what I want, and by doing it, I start playing with the idea of a novel and better possible world.

All this resembles Habermas' idea that knowledge is important. Real desires are important but one still must admit that minor bits of knowledge and small desires cannot be dismissed. Certainly, certain varieties of unimportant things are so unimportant that we need to pay no attention to them in practical life. Nevertheless, they can be used as examples, at least in philosophy, because they are so simple, but then we should not forget that the big and complicated things are what we really should be interested in. That is where the money is. Knowledge is power and desire makes us switch between worlds. It is interesting, though, that those perfectly good examples of minor knowledge and desire are meaningless as such. When a Buddhist says desiring makes us unhappy, he cannot mean such things as ice cream.[34] It is perfectly plausible to say that I can satisfy such a desire even if we know that all desires are in principle unsatisfiable. The answer to this dilemma is that ice cream desire is unsatisfiable but if we discuss it as an object of choice it may well happen that I got what I chose and in this sense wanted. I have already explained and will explain later what it is to desire ice cream in the full blown sense of p-desire. Its desirability conditions may grow until they look too grand to take seriously. Like Marcel Proust's little madeleine expands the narrative until it covers all his life world.

34 Actually, the Buddhist case against desire is complicated, see M. Kozhevnikova, "Desire in Buddhism." In *Desire*, T. Airaksinen and W. Gasparski (Eds.). New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2016, pp. 135–155.

Wishful Thinking and Wish-Fulfilment

Let us start from an idea of Thomas Nagel,

> That I have the appropriate desire simply *follows* from the fact that these considerations motivate me; if the likelihood that an act will promote my future happiness motivates me to perform it now, then it is appropriate to ascribe me a desire for my own future happiness.[35]

Here we see once again the dubious view of the essential connection between desire and action but let us forget and forgive it now. My point is, you may replace "an act" with "a thought" and rewrite. We get "if the likelihood that a thought will promote my future happiness motivates me to think of it now, then […]" and now we find something interesting, namely, the key idea behind wishful thinking. It is certainly possible to become happy by thinking of happy things. We want to think pleasant thoughts and we arrange our other thoughts in a way that satisfies the desire. All this comes to us naturally and it contributes significantly to our happiness levels. People who are unable to do it will find it difficult to live. They suffer from depression and other similar ailments.

Wishful thinking is somehow related to f-desires, although it is not always easy to see how. What is wishful thinking? The man from La Mancha, Don Quixote, is guilty of it for the following reason. He imagines a possible world of noble knights, a world that is inaccessible to him simply because it is fictional. It is not his private fiction, that is, it is not idiosyncratic, but derived from the contemporary genre of popular novels. His mimetic wish is to live in that exciting world and do heroic deeds. He imagines he lives there and he dresses accordingly, performs heroic deeds, and treats the people around him as if they were living members of his new brave world. Don Q says he wants to be a hero and then he is gratified; he believes he is a knight. His wish is fulfilled.

The main point about wish and wish-fulfilment is that the same thought that constitutes the wish also satisfies it. This fact clearly distinguishes between wish and the other relevant types of mental states discussed here. When I read a book of poetry and see myself as a fellow poet, the thought itself is fulfilling or satisfying. I may not believe I am a poet – that would be both unnecessary and irrational. I simply think of myself as a poet and thus satisfy my wish. We do this all the time even if we seldom notice what is going on. It is also remarkable that such wish-fulfilment may also be guilt ridden and anxious, think for example of nasty sexual thoughts and various types of unclean fantasies. This

35 T. Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, pp. 29–30.

is to say those wishes are not idle thoughts but on the contrary they are mental episodes we feel are part of our personality and something we are responsible for. Many wishes are delightful but they also can be anxious, or both at the same time. Now, the main point is that the same thought that constitutes the wish also satisfies it or is a sufficient condition of its fulfilment.

I argue that wish-fulfilment is spontaneous in the sense that wishes, if understood in the way I described above, are self-satisfying. This is the case because the wish in its new possible world is construed in a suitable manner. Think of Don Q. He imagines a world where he is a knight; he believes that he is a knight in a world that satisfies his desire to be a knight. He wants to be a knight and hence he constructs in his imagination a world in which he is a knight. To verify his success, he acts and deals with other people as if he were a knight.[36]

Don Q's new world is imaginary in two ways: first, as a literary construct (what he reads about) and, second, as his own mental construct (what he imagines). The first world is devoid of him but the second contains him as a knight. Such a double jeopardy is not necessary, though. A small man wishes he were tall and buys platform sole shoes. His favourite world (where he is tall) is not available to him, even if the new world where he thinks he is tall is possible. No known path from here to there exists and, thus, the only way the short man can get there is in his imagination. Now, when he responds to his imaginary world he verifies its existence and validity by buying those shoes. Thus the world is construed in such a special way that his wish is fulfilled, or his desire is satisfied.

I do not say that all wishes are fulfilled in this spontaneous manner. I only say wishful thinking has this occasional property. Many wishes are not instances of wishful thinking. I may refuse to construct such a special possible world where I am spontaneously gratified. I say "I wish this cancer goes away" but I do it without constructing the world where my cancer has disappeared. Hence, I have a wish that is not an example of wishful thinking.

As we know from psychoanalysis and elsewhere that wishful thinking can also be painful. I may imagine a bad possible world and place myself there, which makes me bad. As I understand it, wishes are not necessarily good and personally flattering. I suffer, say, from guilt feelings and by constructing a suitably bad world for myself I make myself guilty, which is a painful feeling. Suppose a person has paedophiliac wishes, which play with the ideas of acts he knows are both socially condemned and dangerous. He tends to agree that he

36 On imagination, see S. Nichols, Ed., *The Architecture of the Imagination*. New York: Clarendon Press, 2006.

should not entertain them and thus he should free himself of them. Perhaps he should get psychological help, although his abnormal sexual preferences have remained latent. His problem is that he tends to construct imaginary possible worlds where he is an active paedophiliac predator, a world that is modelled after the real world, as he knows it, containing real paedophiliacs. He knows he must not try to satisfy his sexual desires in the real world. He sees it as a royal road to a personal catastrophe, which is probably a valid belief. Next, he imagines it all and in this way satisfies his abnormal wishes. It is easy to see why this is painful to him because now he is an active paedophiliac, which promises him not only gratification but also the sense of personal catastrophe and verifies his belief that he is an abnormal, dangerous, and bad person.

Wish fulfilment does not necessarily entail a p-desire because desire entails an accessible possible world. Think of Don Q. However, the sexual case above shows that desire and wish-fulfilment are systematically connected. Our paedophiliac possesses the relevant desires because he has an access to the relevant possible world. He just thinks he must not take that path. Instead he constructs an imaginary world where he can satisfy his wishes. Empirical evidence shows that wish-fulfilment is often related to some surrogate actions, that is, it is not solely imaginary. As I said, such actions verify the success of wish-fulfilment to the person himself. Don Q actually starts wandering around dressed funny and followed by Sancho Panza. He attacks windmills and wine barrels. A small man buys platform shoes and the paedophiliac tries, innocently, to relate to young people and, less innocently, say, collects their suggestive pictures. Wish fulfilment may have its typical behavioural correlates. To move to the imaginary world where spontaneous wish-fulfilment is to occur one needs some behavioural items also as indicators of the pseudo-realism of the effort. In anxious cases, this makes one's anxiety ever more real and true.

My last question is, how are f-desire and wish-fulfilment related? We already saw that the Don Q case can be approached from both sides with an equal success. The difference is this: the existence of f-desire explains wish-fulfilment. If we do not mention f-desire we have hard time understanding why Don Q starts acting as he does, that is, what motivates his wishes. He starts a new life focusing on desire which he loves. He is a supreme expression of unadulterated desire. What desire? The desire to desire knightly things in the world where he believes he resides. Notice that only f-desire can do that, p-desire cannot. We know that p-desire always tracks satisfaction in an accessible possible world, unlike f-desire that loves the actual world of the person's desire. Don Q's desire does not track satisfaction because it is already satisfied. But that does not stop our knight. When he rides out dressed and equipped as a noble knight, he indeed sees himself as a noble knight. The negative case of the short man of

course requires its own explication, which must somehow be consonant with the Don Q's case – the difference between the two cases is illusory. Both agents create their own imaginary worlds where their f-desires flourish, and then they can proceed to the next stage, that is, wish-fulfilment. The construction of the imaginary world in question is now guided by the agent's f-desire, which he cannot enjoy in his actual world. An f-desire is the desire to stay in this new world, and wish-fulfilment handles it as if it were the actual world.

De Re and De Dicto: a Paradox

I will argue for the following paradox: Suppose that desire is a three place relation Subject – Object – Desirability Conditions, that is, all desires are conditional in this sense.[37] A desire sentence is open to de re and de dicto readings. The problem is, if you read it de re you miss the desirability conditions. If you read it de dicto you miss the object but retain the desirability conditions. How can you tell that both interpretations concern one and the same desire? Desire is de dicto if in the context of the sentence that expresses the desire is referentially opaque; if it not, the desire is de re. I love Mary who happens to be a nurse. De dicto I do not love a nurse but de re I do. Notice that Frege's Morning star/Evening star puzzle is an epistemological variant of de dicto/de re, in the sense that once we know that the two observed stars are actually planet Venus we have our de re object of belief. Incidentally, we have now a good reason to say that desire de dicto has no object, except in grammatical sense; instead it has what one may understand as a topic. As long as I pay attention to the fact that she is a nurse, Mary is not an object of love to me. I will clarify this in what follows.

From a grammatical point of view, a de dicto desire is, for instance, "I want that my car is red and fast," which picks a red and fast car as a desirable object. Compare de re: "I want a car that is red and fast," which picks a car that happens to be red and fast among other things. Here the de dicto topic is my car together with its essential properties, or its satisfied desirability conditions. These conditions are part of a narrative concerning the good-making features of the car, and their function is to motivate my desire. As I said above, no desire is without its reasons, which is to say that desire is a three place relation. De re desire has its object that is complete in the sense that its context

37 See K. McDaniel and B. Bradley, "Desires," *Mind* 117 (2008), 267–302. Desires can be conditional in many different ways.

is quasi-extensional or minimally intensional in such a way that the context is not referentially opaque – even if we have an intentional object here. The object has all the properties a car has. The car that I want may be red and fast but its colour may also fade fast. In de dicto context this does not make sense because the topic can handle only desirability conditions.

Think next of the following textbook style example of de re and de dicto desire (S) "I want the fastest car on the planet, that is, F." Then the world changes so that F no longer is the fastest car on the planet. If I originally read (S) de dicto, I no longer want F. I want B that is now the fastest one. If we originally read it de re, I wanted F and I still want F. In other words, I want the car, whatever car happens to be the fastest one now; or, I want this given car that once happened to be the fastest one. De re I desire the object in such a way that its change of status does not matter. In the de dicto case, to be the fastest car is an essential consideration: without it I cannot fix my desire. In a de re case this is not true. Once I have picked my intentional object of desire I have picked a real thing that has certain accidental properties. It remains the same thing even if it no longer is the fastest car on the planet. All this looks perfectly sound and understandable.

Alas, once you start thinking it in psychological terms you notice a troublesome fact, namely, the desirability conditions of the de re interpretation of sentence (S) have mysteriously vanished, yet you cannot desire without them. Why did I originally want that car that used to be the fastest on the planet. We have no hint. Desire is a three place relation but now the third place holder is missing. I say I want a car that is red, which does not mean that I desire the car de re because it is red. I say it happens to be red, among many other things. I must have a reason for desiring it, but now I cannot tell what it is. This is to say that de re interpretation of desire does not pick a desire but a bare object. In this way, desirability conditions figure only in de dicto interpretations of S. Let us look into this. As I said, the de dicto interpretation is clear: "I want F because F is the fastest car on the planet," specifies high performance as the essential or necessary desirability condition in the sense that I desire F if and only if it is the fastest car on the planet. If it is not, I do not desire F. It follows that, given the new possible world where F fails to be the fastest car, I no longer desire F de dicto. In other words, if the world changes so that the desirability conditions of a given desire do not hold, the desire vanishes. According to its de dicto interpretation, to be the fastest is, ceteris paribus, necessary and sufficient for the desire to emerge and endure.

How can one and the same desire have two interpretations one of which is a three place relation and second a two place relation? This looks as if de re and de dicto desires were two different desires, a fact that leads to a problem

concerning the individuation of desires.[38] It is not possible to say only that de re and de dicto interpretations concern the same desire if and only if both of them are concerned with F as the given object of desire. When F fails to be the fastest car, the de dicto desire changes, unlike de re; therefore, we now have two different desires. Let me specify: I say "I want the fastest car on the planet, F" and then F loses its elevated status. If I lose my interest in F, my original desire was de dicto, if I do not, my original desire was de re. Now the question is, as I said above, why did I desire F de re in the first place? The question is irrelevant. The only thing that matters is that it is F that I desire de re. De dicto it does not matter that it is F because the only thing that matters is the speed. I have a hard time seeing that behind the two interpretations we can find and see one individual desire. First, we find no object and an explanation for desiring, and then no explanation and an object. F does not join the interpretations and neither do the desirability conditions.

To solve this problem we need to give de dicto reading a priority position. I love the most beautiful man in the world (de dicto) and he happens to be Archibald (de re). When he no longer is so beautiful, I switch my love to Felix who now is aesthetically the best and my de re object changes accordingly. Why cannot I love Archibald now? The reason is that my de re reading of the situation mentions no desirability conditions, which is to say that I need to derive them from my current de dicto reading; hence, I de re love Felix. De re specifies the object but only de dicto tells us what the desirability conditions are in the given case. Archibald has de re all kinds of properties none of which are, considering my love, essential and hence I can love him for any different reasons. But only one set of properties is essential in the de dicto case and exactly those properties I must find in my de re object, if I am going to love him so that the de re and de dicto readings pick the same desire, or they are mutually complementary. If I still love ugly Archibald I must find myself a new desire de dicto. Most mysteriously, if I picked Archibald (de re) when I still desired the best beauty (de dicto), why did I pick him in the first place? If I still love him in the new world, I must have picked him for reasons that do not show in "Archibald is the most beautiful man in the world." The world has changed and I still love him – why did I originally pick him? Here we see two different desires at work. To get back to one desire, we must require that de re tracks de dicto desirability conditions. In this case, when the world changes I no longer love Archibald.

Summary: Suppose I desire X because of Y, or my topic is XY. The object of my desire is X. What is the name of my desire? If you identify XY and X, you

38 Cf. P.T. Markie and T. Patrick, "De Re Desire," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1990), 432–447, p. 433.

must tell why you do so. You can explain it by starting from XY and deriving X form it. In this way, the solution is by rank ordering the two interpretations so that de re becomes logically dependent on de dicto; or, de dicto is original and de re derivative in relation to it.

A de dicto desire may have no intentional object but rather a topic, which runs together with the description of the object and its desirability conditions; for instance "the fastest car." Think of a non-definite description "Fast car" and think of de dicto "I desire a fast car." De re this picks the class of fast cars, and any member of the class satisfies the desire. Now, it is strange to say that a class of fast cars would be the object of desire, except in a grammatical sense. This class is intrinsically fuzzy and anyway, it is a class of things, which to a non-realist is not a legitimate object. Hence, a definite description like "the fastest car on the planet" is misleading. It suggests that de dicto desires have objects. The dilemma is this: de dicto desire has no object and de re, while it has an object, does not specify any desirability conditions and thus one cannot say why it, and not something else, is the object of desire. Obviously, de dicto and de re must go together so that they are two aspects of one and the same desire. We need to know what the intentional object is and why it is an object of desire. This also becomes evident when we think of the following example. I want to marry John who is a serial killer, although I do not know it. De dicto I do not want to marry a serial killer, I want John. De re my object of desire is a serial killer.

> De dicto: I want to marry John because John is so tall.
> De Re: I want to marry a serial killer, who happens to be tall.

In this case the de re and de dicto desires do not share a common concept that would unify them and justify the idea that we have only one desire here. How do we individuate the desire? As I said, we must consider de dicto first and find the object in this way. I cannot say I want to marry a serial killer because I want to marry John. It may happen, of course, that I get a serial killer but that is another thing. De dicto desire fixes the de re object, which is the only object of desire, by specifying some desirability conditions that it alone possesses. Sometimes de re objects are not real objects. In that case, your desire fails altogether or you need to think of a very strange possible world where the object becomes real. I say, "I want you to know everything." This allows for no object in the real sense of the term but we may construct a possible world where one knows everything. In this sense the topic is this world and de dicto is the all the knowledge in it. Again, we need to proceed from de dicto to de re.

Let me make a couple of additional remarks. If I desire de re F that is not so fast, I need to tell why. Desire logically entails desirability. When I tell why, I refer to a desire that is different from the original that focused solely on speed. That is why in the de re case F must be speedy too. We only speak about F as if this fact were irrelevant. Of course I may still de re desire F in a world where it is not that fast, but then my desire has changed or the earlier desire de dicto was not a desire for the fastest car. It was for something else.

CHAPTER 2

Beliefs and Desires

The direction of fit thesis says that desire and belief are propositional attitudes that share an object, but in the case of desire the world should change so that it fits the desire; in the case of belief one's beliefs should fit the world. Generally, this is how it goes. Next, we notice that desire depends on belief to a larger degree than belief depend on desire. If beliefs depend on what we want, we deem them irrational. Desires on the other hand show legitimate dependency on beliefs. In order to desire I need valid beliefs concerning, first, the world where I am and, second, the accessibility of certain possible worlds, namely, those I desire. These beliefs show me what kind desires fit the world I aim in when I desire. This is to say that desires should fit the world, contrary to the direction of a fit thesis. For instance, I desire something and then I come to believe that I already possess the object – my desire collapses just like it does when I say I desire something I believe to be impossible in the intended possible world.

From Wollheim's Challenge to Human Needs

Take all your beliefs collectively, what do you get? You get, given that your beliefs are rational, an approximate picture or a map of the actual world. Take next all yours desires or wants collectively, what do you get? Wollheim argues, you do not get a possible world.[1] What do you get? According to him, a distributed collection of snapshots of some desirable states of affairs that do not belong to one particular world. In other words, they collectively do not track a possible world. This seems to be another difference between beliefs and desires. I agree with Wollheim but the case is not as simple as he assumes. He wants to consider all desires collectively. I try to show that, if desires are rational, they are both evidence and belief based and duly constrained by beliefs. This is to say any individual desire should fit a possible world, or it should track one, where it will be satisfied. In other words, my desire should fit a possible world in the sense that it reflects its special demands. In what follows, I try to show how to understand these claims.

1 R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 54.

Beliefs should accommodate themselves to the actual world and the world should accommodate itself to desires or wants – such is the dogma. In other words, I receive my beliefs from the world that my desire aim to change. Sometimes my beliefs track the world properly, sometimes not. Sometimes the world changes satisfyingly, either independently of us or via our actions; often the world fails to change in the required way. Of course, we hope for success. Needs look more complicated than this.[2] I discuss needs in the following sense: S needs X in order to have Y; or motor needs oil to run, which presupposes that the motor is made to run and someone may want the motor to run. Prima facie, such a need is a fact because the motor does not run without oil but it also has its normative dimension as the motor is designed and meant to run. It seems that when we talk about a need we talk about a fact or a state of affairs such that it favours the realization of a relevant desire. Sometimes needs, in this sense of the word, are called instrumental desires. As such this is misleading because motors desire nothing yet they need many things. This applies to human contexts as well: Your cancer sometimes needs an operation whether you want it or not.

Need is Janus faced concept because a need description may report a fact, which at the same time is what we want when we want something. Oil added to a motor is what the motor needs but suppose it also is desired by us and as such a desirable state of affairs. We can thus say needs are derivative desires in the sense that what is needed is also desired. I do not want oil except when I consider the motor and its proper functioning. We can then extend our example by noticing that at the local service station I say I want to buy some oil, that is, I want oil. But I want it only if I need it. The desirability conditions of this desire are derived from the need in question. An interesting complication follows: I may not like what I need, yet I (derivatively) desire it; hence, it follows that I desire something I do not like, or what I find repulsive as such. This is interesting because desires form chains where something is a need from the point of view of desire and desire from the point of view of another need. I want to go home and thus I need a taxi; I need to go home because I want to go to bed; I need to go to bed because I want to feel fresh at work, and so on. Here for instance "go to bed" is a need and desire at the same time. I hate to go to bed but yet I want it. Epistemologically it is interesting that you cannot tell how I feel about going to bed by just listening me to say I want to go to bed. If I speak about it in connection with a need I may hate it. As a need I (instrumentally)

2 See G. Thomson, *Needs*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p. xi, for a "rudimentary characterisation" of the concept of need. His approach is different from mine, for instance, he says "what we need is what we cannot do without." This may true of food but not of taxis.

desire it. Only the final and somehow ultimate desire may be unambiguously liked, and it is in this sense desirable and desired. It is an interesting question what this ultimate desire and its object is like when we say it can no longer be seen as a need. All other desires may be judged undesirable as such and yet desired, which hints at the possibility that most of our desires are derivative in nature and as such desired in an ambiguous manner. My suggestion is that needs behave like desires in the directionality argument although they also create the problem of the desirability of the desired objects in their derivative contexts.

I need a taxi to get back home, I hate taxis, although I say that I want a taxi now. Incidentally, this account does not conform to the idea, say, that desirability is grounded on reward:[3] satisfaction of a need may not be understood as rewarding in the same sense as that of desire; a reward is not an instrumental good. Yet, the same need is from another viewpoint a desire. Perhaps a better word is relief: when I get what I need I am relieved. Need indicates pressure and stress. I am then able to proceed to the next step on the path towards what is a higher order desire in the relevant chain, namely, to get to bed in order to be fresh and alert at work tomorrow. I need to be, but why? I want to look like a good worker, but why? I need my job, but why? What then is the ultimate desire here, this wonderful, ideal desire that explains the chain? The answer is beyond the methods of philosophy, as it seems. It is an empirical question, but whatever it is, it must be something one may hope to get with some justification. In other words, the possible world that the subject aims at is available to me, or I must know the path to it. We choose a world where satisfaction is possible, and this depends on our beliefs concerning different available worlds. Perhaps we are made happy by world where all goes well?[4] In any case, our needs and instrumental desires are dependent on our beliefs.

Modality: Beliefs as Constraints

When I desire I believe, among other things, that (i) what I desire is possible to get, or I can hope to get it, (ii) I can make sense of what I desire, and (ii) my desire is not immoral or otherwise normatively unavailable. These are some basic beliefs although more can be found, for instance, I must believe that the desire in question is my own desire in two different senses, namely, it is my

3 See N. Arpaly and T. Schroeder, *In Praise of Desire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 127–128.

4 See T. Airaksinen, "Desire and Happiness," *Homo Oeconomicus* 29 (2012), 393–412.

own desire in the sense that I myself am the desiring agent, and my desire not obsessive-compulsive. For instance, think of "The boss said I want coffee" is ambiguous because we cannot tell what the referent of "I" is. We disambiguate as follows: "The boss said 'I (myself) want coffee'," which makes it clear that the boss himself wants it, or the interpretation of the sentence is de se. Alternatively, "I" refers to the listener.

When I desire I can ask myself, why do I desire this and the answer may be, because someone else desires it; this is to say I personally may not find the object of desire desirable. This we may call a mimetic desire (see Ch. 4). Often an agent regrets an apparent desire exactly for this reason – it is not her own. If the desire is obsessive-compulsive because, let us say, of an addiction it is not unequivocally my own desire in the sense that is relevant to us here. Kant calls desires pathological if they do not spring from the person's free will but just happen to him.[5] In other words, when I say I desire this entails that I believe it is my own personal desire. Such beliefs concerning desire ownership are not restricted to actionist contexts in which I am supposed to act in order to realize the desired state of affairs or intentional object. I may entertain desires that presuppose the change of the world independently of all my actions, as if spontaneously, but yet I must believe these desires are my own. Suppose I listen to a charismatic preacher who wants us to do good to our brethren. I feel his influence and for a while I adopt this desire. I have adopted his desire, which may well entail the false belief that it is my desire as well. Let us look into the role of beliefs when we discuss the possibility (modality), understanding (hermeneutics), and normativity (ethics) of desire.

First, modality. When I desire, I desire something that is represented by a proposition that describes a possible state of affairs that I somehow see as and believe to be desirable. It is an open question whether I can desire something that I believe already exists. Let us assume here that I cannot do so. Why would I want to get an object I already have? Thomas Hobbes for instance says, what I have I love but what I do not have I desire – presupposing of course that we are discussing desirable states of affairs. This also is a medieval scholastic idea.[6] However, it seems possible to provide examples where I want what I have, for

5 Kant writes, "There are two sorts of love: practical love that lies in the will and in principles of action, and pathological love that lies in the direction the person's feelings and tender sympathies take." We could also say the latter type of love is passive love, something that happens to a person (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf). Another translation by H.J. Paton, *Groundwork*. New York: Harper, 1964, p. 67.

6 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651. Part 1, Ch. 6, Love and Hate; and N.E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire, Aquinas on Emotion*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011, p. 61.

instance, I have a wife and I believe our relationship is fully secure. I desire her not only sexually but as a person. I want to be with her although I am with her all the time.[7] One can dismiss this intuition by arguing that when I desire what I have, I first imagine that I do not have it or that I am going to lose it and, thus, I desire it in this derivative and counterfactual manner. Therefore, I desire my wife as if she were not here; if I, on the contrary, consider her as being present, I could not desire her. In my thoughts I can alienate her from my life as it is and hence, as she is no longer there, start desiring her. Another way of putting the same point is to say that I am afraid of losing her. I believe, and this is a quite reasonable belief I think, that she may leave me for reasons I have no way of knowing now and therefore I desire her. All these considerations refer to hermeneutical problems, namely, to the question what I actually desire. Also, we now understand why I am happy with my wife. I imagine that she is not there and thus I desire her. But because she in fact is there for me all the time, my desire will be satisfied and I am happy. If I am afraid of losing her, her presence offers me consolation, which again means my perpetual happiness.

Now, I believe that what I desire is a possibility in the sense that it can be satisfied, or the world may change in such a way that my desire is realized either permanently or occasionally. Desires can be conditional or unconditional in many ways: "I want ice cream" is a conditional desire in the sense that it depends on my getting or not getting ice cream. I desire ice cream only on the condition that I did not get it yet. It is an occasional and conditional desire. I want to marry Diana and nobody else ever; I marry her – such a desire is a permanently satisfiable conditional desire. Now, I want to marry Diana only on the condition that she agrees.[8] If she does not want it, our marriage becomes impossible – my relevant action is impossible – and I cannot desire things I cannot get. Of course, also a need constitutes a conditional desire, or it masks one. I desire something but only on the condition that I need it.

Also non-conditional desires exist: I dream of and then desire world peace. Suppose world peace comes about; the relevant desire does not disappear as it is not conditional on its own occasional satisfaction. I desire peace also in the time of peace because any peace is so fragile. And I presume no such accessible possible world exists where the human existence is guaranteed to rest in eternal peace. Kant's joke in "Zum ewigen Frieden" is well taken: only in the graveyard! It is indeed weird to say, in time of peace, "I no longer desire peace, although I love it." He who invented the aphorism "In time of peace, prepare for war" is right. Peace is a never ending process. Of course, this leads us to

7 See Ch. 1 on f-desires.

8 See K. McDaniel and B. Bradley, "Desires," *Mind* 117 (2008), 267–302.

recognize another problem: if the desire is unconditional in this way it cannot be satisfied; if it could, it would be conditional on its own satisfaction; but then the desire is impossible, which is to say the mental state in question does not qualify as a desire. The dilemma is this, either the desire is conditional on its own satisfaction or it is impossible. Perhaps the solution is simply by saying that one focuses on a possible world in permanent peace as if such a world existed. Hence, it is an empirical truth concerning that inaccessible world that my desire for it will remain unsatisfied, although it is not logically impossible. I cannot desire objects that I believe are located in logically inaccessible worlds, or logically inconsistent worlds, but this is not one of them. All this somehow resembles the compatibilism-incompatibilism debate concerning the free will. Here we must argue that the current unsatisfiability of unconditional or permanent desire is, in the end, compatible with its in-principle-satisfiability.

This can be illustrated by another example, namely, my desire to be a good father. This certainly is a viable project although it can never be completed in the sense that the desire would be satisfied. It is impossible to satisfy, yet it makes sense as a desire. Its satisfiability can live together with its impossibility. All this is based on the idea that to be a good father is a struggle that can be partially and temporarily satisfied, or we can satisfy it als ob. This makes the project worthwhile and it keeps the desire going. Think of the case where I want to be the best footballer in the world when I am seventy years old. This project makes no sense at all. Nevertheless, some impossibilities are worth desiring.

Be this as it may, I must believe that the world may change as my desire dictates – here we return to the directionality argument or direction of fit. If my desire is rational, the relevant beliefs are well grounded, or I have evidence for them. If I have no evidence for the possibility of the relevant changes that desire presupposes, or if the evidence suggests impossibility, the desire is either irrational or it is a fake, or I wish for the best. In other words, we may say that the desire is then irrational, or what I call desire is in that case something else, like a fantasy based wish – perhaps a mildly delusional mental episode. Suppose I am in a life boat out on the ocean. I believe quite reasonably that ships sail around here and hence I may be rescued; if I believe that no ships ever go where I presently am, I stop desiring even though I may still wish for the best. Perhaps I lose all hope because of my gloomy belief but it is not necessary; I wish for a miracle, which is against all of my current beliefs, but it does not matter in this case. People often entertain unreasonable ideas that approach fantasy wish-fulfilment. Suppose I have a cancer that my doctors call terminal. I want to live, which is a reasonable desire because the world may change and thus I have hope. But in this case I also have solid evidence for the proposition that I will not see that near future possible world where I will count among

the living. I can still wish for the best because I know that a future world of the living exists and I can imagine that I am there. Hence, the new evidence does wreck my unconditional and permanent desire to live although my survival is now reduced to mere wish in the light of the new medical information.

Based on the doctor's testimonial I have no hope of a cure but I still want to live, which is based on a different belief to the effect that people in fact continue to live in the future world. I want to be there with them. I want to be among the living is not an unreasonable desire because there is such a future world. Of course, my desire to be cured is a different desire that is indeed unreasonable in this case. If I cannot desire something and I stop desiring it, I formulate a new desire with which I can continue living. This happens when a patient cannot desire a cure but says she wants to live. According to my current beliefs, I will not be cured but I can still be alive, not for long perhaps but alive anyway. Thus, I can say I want to live. It is then irrelevant that lack of cure entails death when I believe I can still be alive in the future.

In this way, when my reasonable beliefs do not allow for a desire I may still hope. In the first instance no hope means a full restriction to desire: I must stop desiring. In the second instance hope means what it means, namely, I still entertain hope given that I find a suitable object. I know a better world exists and a path leads there from where I presently am, yet, such a world exists so that there is hope. People also hope for many far-away things like eternal life and resurrection of the dead. Anything that feels good makes them postulate far-away worlds that suit their current needs. Hopes are what they are.[9] They are dependent on evidence in the same way as desires, as we can easily see. A belief that it is impossible extinguishes the desire but may have no effect on hope that picks another object. What happens seems to depend on the strength of the negative information in the sense that full and decisive information kills both desire and hope. All alternate objects become void and meaningless. Yet the traces of desire do not vanish that easily: I say I would have liked it, or I turn to counterfactual conditionals. She is now married to another man, thus I know it is impossible for me to marry her now, but I would have liked to marry her. Perhaps we also can say, I would have wanted to marry her had it been possible. It is easy to confuse desire and the memory trace of the same desire so that we think one may desire what one believes to be impossible only because it once was possible. In this way my beliefs constrain what I can desire.

Often my negative beliefs turn my desires into their wishful counterfactual versions. Desire is different from wish that also depends on beliefs, but in a different manner. Wish and desire are two different kinds of propositional

9 See J.P. Day, *Hope: A Philosophical Inquiry*. Helsinki: Acta Philosophica Fennica 51, 1991.

attitudes. The main point is that wish is a modest and resigned mental state when desire has immodest urgency whether it is a mental state or episode. When I want I want the world change, which sounds like a demand on the world. As such desire is an immodest attitude while wish is modest. Wish means that I want a kind of blessing to fall upon me; desiring sometimes means that I would act if I could and hence force the ways of the world to change their direction. For this reason, perhaps, new information that changes my belief alters wish and desire in such a dissimilar manner. It is much harder to kill a wish than a desire, if we mean rational desire. In many cases a change of beliefs does not kill the desire but changes it into an epistemically irrational fantasy wish. Of course such a wish may be practically functional, too.

Let me specify the relationship between desire and hope. The point is, when I desire I necessarily hope to get the object. This is another way of saying that one cannot desire an impossible object because then I cannot hope to get it. I hope all goes well even when the evidence fails to fully support the idea. Hope has its independent psychological status but it also has a status that is conditional on desire. The standard schema concerning conditional hope is,

> I want/desire X and thus I hope I will get X, when I believe I have less than conclusive reasons to expect X to happen.

Some desires are action relevant and some are not. For instance, I want to walk back home just now, and I want her to love me for ever. The first sentence refers to action and thus entails action, but this is a special case. The second type of sentence expresses a non-actionist desire. Suppose I am in a burning house and I know that my neighbours are trapped in their apartment, too. I know that if the fire brigade saves me first my chances of survival are good and otherwise considerably less good. I cannot influence their choice and so I hope they will come my way first. I also want them to save me first. But how do I draw the distinction between hope and desire in this case? I may think that I can mention some good reasons why I should be saved first. My hope has strong support. I can insist on being saved first. However, if I believe that their right choice is a random one my relevant mental state is still that of hope – if I believe it is possible that they may save me first. We can read the narrative in the same way in the case of lovers: I think good reasons exist why she should love me and choose me before other men. If I am on a life-boat out on the ocean and I believe many shipping routes exist around where I am, I hope for my rescue. I can even say they should come soon. After I realize this is not going to happen, I only can wish for a miracle. In this way it is possible to draw a line between wish, hope, and desire. Of course this is not a line between natural kinds but rather a pragmatic linguistic convention. Look at the following

two propositions which illustrate the two ways we tend to use the concept of hope:

> I desire X but after I realize I should not expect to get it, I have no hope, and only a wish remains.

Or,

> I still hope that X but I realize it is unrealistic to expect X to happen.

In the second case hope resembles wishful thinking because it is independent of reasons. I do not expect X to happen but still I hope it will. In the first case I surrender hope. Dante's famous "Abandon hope all ye who enter here" entails hopelessness in an impossible predicament where one no longer desires. This is a third case because now the loss of hope entails apathy or a kind of mental collapse after which I feel nothing and live without motivation to live.

Hermeneutical Considerations

Should I entertain accurate beliefs concerning what I desire, when I desire? Can I have unconscious desires in the sense that I have no relevant beliefs or wrong beliefs on what I desire? Let us consider the following: my current desire is influenced by my belief on what I get when the world changes; should the prediction of what will happen be accurate on the basis of what I now believe concerning the case? The answer may be no, given that some of my desires are unconscious; yet, I do not think we need to talk about unconscious if we can explain the relevant phenomena by referring to some hermeneutical considerations.[10] The point is, desires are semantically complex mental entities. To speak of the intentional objects of desire as if they were automatically well-defined is misleading. If we do not admit this we will soon be in trouble. One should ask, what do you hope to get when you desire an object?

Unconscious means that some of our desires are outside the range of our beliefs and reasoning. We do not know even that they exist. It is a dramatic concept with certain historical credibility but it should be avoided anyway.[11] This is done by reading the relevant cases in an analytical manner; in other

10 D. Davidson, "Paradoxes of Irrationality." In *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, R. Wollheim and J. Hopkins (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 289–305. Davidson thinks that our model of mind must somehow be partitioned or layered.

11 The full story is told in H.F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*. New York: Basic Books, 1970.

words, we need not postulate any dubious, hidden entities or mental black boxes. Suppose I want to kill Bill but the Bride does it before me. I am not satisfied or am I? Let us say I am satisfied. How can that be when the Bride robbed me of the chance to do what I wanted? Obviously I wanted Bill dead and my conscious idea of wanting to kill Bill referred to my need to do so in order to reach my desired goal, a dead Bill. So, when I say I want to kill Bill I refer to my need to do so. As we know desires and needs are ambiguous in this way. We can then assume that a dead Bill is not only desired but as well needed because the final and ultimate desire is to get justice through revenge, or perhaps it is related to the demands of cosmic justice – there our search of the ultimate desire vanishes into some narrative metaphoric thickets. Anyway, we can ask why we need the concept of unconscious in this case – we do not. Instead, we can explain what happens in this case by using the concepts of need and desire: I need to kill Bill if I want him dead. But then the Bride kills him and my desire is satisfied and I am contented. This is only one example of course but it shows how the distinction between needs and desires can be utilized.[12]

What should we know about desire and what do we desire when desire is rational? Let us start from some methodological considerations and then try to answer the question. When one reviews the relevant literature on desire, one soon notices that the definitions of desire are simple or very simple, for instance, desire is a generic pro-attitude towards some states of affairs. One may think that it is enough to mention some key necessary conditions of how to use the concept. This is obviously fine if you use desire as an explanans when you, say, deal with the explanation of action, or action as explanandum. But the same does not do if you want to treat desire as an explanandum; in that case you need to focus on some sufficient conditions as well, and of course you worry about the argument that desire really is a cluster concept in a Wittgensteinian sense. Be that as it may, we should be able to specify what we desire when we desire, which may sound like a reasonable requirement.

If we understand desire as involving the attraction or the pull of desirable states of affairs it may sound like a good idea to come to know what they are. If desire is understood as a motivated push or a drive in the direction of the object, the situation may change. If I want ice cream because this desirable item attracts or pulls me towards itself, I may well ask why it does so. I ask for the

12 Sigmund Freud of course speaks about wish-fulfilment (*Wunsh*), which is not quite the same as desire. Wish-fulfilment is not the same as realizing a desire. Wishes are too closely connected to fantasy and imagination: I wish I were dead does not entail the same desire. See T. Pataki, *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 2014, pp. 4–5.

relevant motivating reasons.[13] If, on the contrary, my ice cream-eating-motive pushes me towards a near-by ice cream parlour, I wonder what the drive mechanisms behind it might be. I may even ask, what is wrong with me, like an addict should do. In her case the strength of the drive mechanism bypasses the reasoned decision making. Here we are interested only in the pull-cases, though.

If you want to plan your life, or give it a proper direction, and not to get disappointed too often, you need to know what you really want. This is to say you need to acquire and entertain correct and complete beliefs, or clear and distinct ideas, concerning your desires and their objects. All this may look easy. I want ice cream so what I desire, or the intentional object, is ice cream. When I get my ice cream I get what I wanted and all is well; my desire is satisfied and in this case also extinguished. I no longer want ice cream because one cannot desire what one already has. After eating it you may even hate ice cream but that is another thing. However, from the explanandum's side the problem does not look so simple, if you bother to give it some serious thought. Why do I want ice cream and not something else, why do I want it just now, ice cream is not exactly health food yet I crave after it? I want to be successful in life – what do I want? This is an example of such complex cases that are seldom mentioned at the analytical level. What about "I want wine" – what exactly do I want? When I try to understand myself and plan my future life answers to such questions as these sound important and even essential. Now, at least two approaches to my hermeneutical questions are possible: disambiguation and explanation. An example of the first task is clarification of what I want when I want wine and of the second an account of the reasons behind "I want that you buy me ice cream." Moreover, we need to decide what we want to do about such complex cases as "I want to be successful in life." I suggest that the methods of clarification of the simple cases can be applied to the complex cases as well.

"I want wine" requires something one may call propositionalization so that we see what is going on. To do this we need to use the details of the context where the desire occurs. I may want to drink wine or to drink more wine; I may want to buy wine or to own wine. Suppose I considered expanding my investment portfolio when I say I want wine, that is, I want to invest in fine wine. Perhaps I never drink wine or buy wine but yet I want wine. Here the problem that concerns some distant third-person audiences who have no access to the

13 As A. Goldman puts it, desires are not motives, instead he says they are "states of being motivated," in his *Reasons from Within: Desires and Value*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 7, also p. 87. I do not think the quoted idea is valid. See also J.M. Russell, "Desires Don't Cause Actions," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 5 (1984), 1–10.

details of my case. The desire and its expression occur in a given social situation where the disambiguation is normally easy, although difficult cases exist, too. A man tells a woman, I want you, and no one is immediately clear whether he wants a one-night stand or something like commitment. In such a case the person's own beliefs about the case are decisive, if he has any beliefs about it. In many cases the person himself has no clear picture of what he means when he says it, and this gives rise to all kinds of post factum and ad hoc elucidations and even apologies. Yet the rule is that by considering his own reasons in the situation the agent can form correct beliefs on them. If problems remain, which often is the case, they depend on the second hermeneutical problem, that is, explanation. To put it figuratively, explanatory reasons are sometimes so deep that one has difficulties following the line of reasoning that leads to the ultimate values. Let us see what this means in detail.

Now, an expression of desire always reveals a proposition that mentions what is desired, or the expression should be disambiguated so that this happens. As we already have seen, what is desired forms a chain of needs and desires whose terms are relative to the direction from which they are viewed: from above they are needs (instrumental) and from below desires (goals).[14] I also said that there is at the top end of this chain an ultimate desire that is as well the final and conclusive reason for desiring. Actually, all the reasons that explain the desires in the chain are desires, from the point of view of the agent. The key question is, then, what the agent may and should believe about them. It is easy to say that he should know them all but as we will see, this is pragmatically a dubious conclusion. The requirement is exaggerated and as such impractical.

Suppose you want wine because you want to diversify your investment portfolio; again this may mean more secure or more profitable – let us say more secure. It may now sound unnecessary to ask why, but we can continue by saying that you want to relax and sleep better. This is a figure of speech everybody can interpret; moreover, at this stage we may feel nothing can be added to the case. This is the final and ultimate desire here, or is it the final interpretation of the first desire to invest in a certain way? The question is: do we have one or more desires here? I would say we have one desire and its several readings, or in this case to want wine and to sleep well form one stratified desire or a system where wine is given the position of instrumental need. Yet, I say simply I want wine.

I want ice cream because it is summer and my dad used to buy me some during the best summers of my life when I still was truly happy. What do I want

14 See also, Airaksinen, 2012.

now? It seems I want all that the narrative describes including ice cream but not ice cream simpliciter. The de dicto version of my desire now appears in full glory. My first and simple desire is for ice cream, but then I can formulate my full desire on its basis: to relive the best summers of my life. "I want to be successful" can first be disambiguated thus: I want that I achieve great things so that I am admired; or, I achieve something in life that is admirably great. This desire is explained by other desires located higher in the chain: I want to show that I am a great person, then I want to be the best of my kin, and finally I want to show that the way they treated me when I was a child was outrageously unjust. The development of such an explanatory chain of desires show that the initial desire is never what is really desired. It is also true that any link in the chain, except the last one, may not be independently desirable to the person. She may not care for ice cream as such but desires it anyway, on the condition that she needs it for starting her desire narrative. She desires it instrumentally. The highest level items in the desire chain are quite general and often metaphoric items whose effects then start resembling wish-fulfilment. Ice cream that is bought in the summer may make you happy in this sense. Perhaps satisfied desires always make you happy? You want to eat ice cream so that your childhood summer memories would return. When they arrive they satisfy your wish in the sense that you wanted them back. At the same time this memory is a surrogate of the summer itself, so that you get the summer back. In other words, this memory and the summer together form a metonymic pair.

The lesson to learn is this, in simple cases we can follow the chain of desires all the way to the top with little trouble, unlike in the complex cases where the higher desires get too fuzzy all too quickly. Therefore, the likelihood of the agent herself having valid beliefs about them is small. She may have some beliefs concerning why she wants what she wants, when the desire is vague and complex, but that is all. Perhaps she does not need more because the original formulation of the need in question is a kind of sign-post that indicates the direction she wants and expects her future life to take. In simple cases, if I want ice cream why does it matter what else I desire in this connection? The agent may have quite limited interests in knowing what she really wants, at least in normal cases, or as we also may put it, in innocent and harmless cases. I have my beliefs concerning ice cream, its taste and its effects on me, and that seems enough. Why would I start thinking of deeper motives in such an innocent case? I may be worried about my current desire if it is too urgent, say, to be successful, and then I may ask and explore why I am so keen on success. Many desires worry us and our society as well, so that I may feel that a look at the deeper level of my desires is appropriate or even necessary. Alternatively, I may be too anxious to do so. Some desires and the related ideas of desirability

are scary. In many cases, of course, I deny what I find there, or I even deny that such a deeper level exists. Such beliefs are self-deceptive.

We may now safely say that a person believes that her expressed desires have their explanations based on some higher level desires, which reduce the original desire into a mere need and occasionally explain why what I seemingly desire is not prima facie attractive or likeable for me. As we will see, moral cases are especially relevant in this sense. It must be kept in mind that desires are a general source of personal anxiety and always strictly controlled in culture and society. The worry is that the higher level desires may reveal something that is shameful, improper, perverted, indecent, sick, abnormal, cursed, or immoral, or any combination of these. The second worry is that my needs or instrumental desires may look undesirable when I understand them as unconditional desires. I disapprove of alcohol but I now notice I need it and thus I say "I want alcohol."

Moral Beliefs

Here the dogma of directionality or the direction of fit makes a return: beliefs about the value and acceptability of what we desire restrict what we desire. This may show that desires are not independent of certain types of belief, or that desires ultimately behave like beliefs, all things considered. Here we distinguish between two possibilities: a negative belief concerning a given desire, first, restricts its acceptability and the area of application, and, second, changes the desire itself. The difference is, of course, that in the first case belief does not touch the desire unlike in the second case. Perhaps we can say that in the first case the belief/desire relationship is external and in the second case internal; obviously the internal case presents a more convincing threat to the direction of fit thesis. How it does it is not immediately clear, though.

We may call bad desires normatively inadmissible, which means that they must be rejected or at least modified according to what we believe about the desire and the world before and after we witness the desired change of the actual world. In fact, many desires and classes of desire are inadmissible, including some or all instances of violent, criminal, sexual, and perverted desires. I may believe my desire is inadmissible in the sense that after its satisfaction the world has changed into a direction that displays not only a marked loss of utility but also a violation of norms that I want to support and sustain. Those norms may be essential to me and my image of my own personhood. If the relevant desire cannot be changed, which is quite possible, I must drop it from my portfolio of desires. This is what I want to say: an inadmissible desire is not a

possible desire, as the agent sees it. Of course, many fuzzy cases come up in the course of real life but in morally relevant cases they should not be left as such. On the contrary, we must de-fuzzify them and make a firm decision whether a given desire is admissible or not. This is clear especially when we consider actionist desires, that is, desires that invite a change of the world though my intentional action. Many desires are non-actionist of course, for instance, "I want her to love me" or "I want better service in that restaurant." In both cases I am impotent.

Now, the crucial questions are, first, do my moral beliefs restrict my non-actionist desires and, second, do they restrict my desires as I entertain them in thought, imagination, and planning? This is analogous to the problem of whether non-actionist desires can be inadmissible. We observe that the cases above blend together when actionist desires drop out, in the following way. In the actionist cases, one may restrict or ban the action but keep the relevant desires intact, even if they were in some sense bad. It is possible that in non-actionist cases some desires are inadmissible in the sense that they should not be entertained at all, or they should be rejected and forgotten. This is to say that you cannot, with clear conscience, sit and wait something bad and evil to happen, which also is what you desire, even if it is not of your own making. One can immediately ask, can you prevent that change of the world? If you can and do nothing, we meet a bad Samaritarian, but let us bypass it.[15] Instead, we should discuss the stronger case in which I can do nothing to influence the bad situation – what then? I want you to die as painfully as possible, then you die of a horrible case of cancer; I am gratified and because of this also elated and happy. Should I think such desires are admissible? This example is closely related to banning the desires that are merely thought of, like Sigmund Freud's fantasy wish-fulfilment, with no anticipation of any actual change of the world. A person may well suffer because of knowing that they are inadmissible. Bad thoughts and along with them non-actionist desires may torture a person and thus imply a need of psychotherapy.

Perhaps Freud can help us here. His narrative accounts of his patient's problems are full of cases where they entertain mere wishes and still grossly suffer from their inadmissible nature. They fantasize in ways that corrupt and ultimately destroy their mental health. I cannot go any deeper into these issues, for obvious reasons. However, the following point is important: a healthy person learns to control her desires as well as her thoughts, imagination, wishes, fantasies, etc. We really believe that we are responsible for our inadmissible thoughts, sometimes unreasonably sometimes not. Also, we educate young

15 See J. Feinberg, *Harm to Others.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, Ch. 4.

people not to fantasize about wrong things and certainly not formulate bad desires because we think this actually increases the likelihood becoming a corrupt person in the future. Nobody knows what we think and quietly desire but yet we should control it as if our inner world were not private. We are social animals, which goes a long way in explaining these facts. Many religious ideologies emphasize something they call the purity of thought and soul, which presupposes the inadmissibility of bad thoughts.

This is to say, when we desire our desires are internally related to our beliefs concerning their admissibility and inadmissibility; they are not independent of the beliefs.[16] Another and similar case is the evaluation of desire as to its basic realizability as well as the consequences of its actual realization. Suppose I want wine in the sense that I want to drink wine now. Such a desire, like all desires, is by its nature unrestricted or in a figurative sense infinite. In a social-normative vacuum, I want all I can possibly get, which can be called the omnipotence of desire – which certainly is socially an unrealistic and dangerous idea. I want her, in the sense that I want she is my wife; such a desire, when it is infinite, is too demanding and for her scary. I cannot want all of her, whatever that may mean. I may also want and get a part of her, that part that is specified by the social institution of marriage, or perhaps even less. All I can hope to get of her is a part, or a minimal part of an autonomous and free person. Analogously with the case of wine I must have an idea what I may get and why. In this way I condemn, on the basis of my beliefs and consequent deliberations, the original infinite desire as inadmissible; yet, its suitably restricted part is admissible.

I can drink some wine and marry the woman of my dreams; moreover, I can hope all is well because my beliefs that regulate my desires are accurate and form a good deliberative basis. I know how to fit my desire to the world. Actually, I learn early in my life that infinite desires, whether they are actionist or not, make me anxious and disappointed and thus should be avoided. Think about the following non-actionist case: I want Bill dead when this desire is infinite. I do not restrict it any way as I really want him dead. I am not a murderer, so I wait and hope. I make inquiries about his life and try to find some evidence of his imminent death. This ruins my own life and makes me unhappy, so I must push such a desire into the background thickets of my imagination and more or less try to forget it. It does not fit the world that is so unwieldy. Therefore, I must admit that the omnipotence of desire is not only an invalid but also a dangerous idea. You never can have it all or all of it, so you must not desire it.

16 See also, T. Airaksinen, "Psychology of Desire and the Pragmatics of Betterment." In *Pragmatism and Objectivity,* S. Pihlström (Ed.). London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 223–238.

If you desire it, you must carefully restrict your desire so that it fits the world. You must acquire valid beliefs about what is right and wrong in the world, how it works, and what can be expected to happen. Hence, you must teach yourself how to restrict desires on the basis of beliefs, and this applies to all kinds of desires. Also, society expects it and may not tolerate too many unreasonable excursions by you into the field of infinite desires characterized by omnipotence fantasies. Moral education is another name for this process by means of which we make desires conform to the world. Desires must fit the world.

The Demise of Directionality

Desires are supposed to place a demand on the world by asking it to change according to what the person thinks is desirable. As I said above, two alternatives apply here. First, I desire what I desire and then I legislate on it on the grounds of what I believe about the world, my desires, myself, ethics, and other relevant things. This keeps desire and belief as two separate categories. In other words, I restrict, on the basis of my beliefs, what I desire. This however does not tell us much new about desire and its directionality. Beliefs should accurately reflect and represent the world and desires place their corrected demands on it.

Second, desire represents the world in a certain way, and this violates the postulate of its unidirectionality, or its typical direction of fit. It is no longer the case that desire insists on a certain type of world because now desire, along with belief, must fit the world, too. When I desire I hope, suppose, or insist that the world can and will change in a certain desirable way but I also realize that my desire must fit the world in order to be possible and admissible. Otherwise I terminate it and move on to replace it with something else. This is to say that desire itself contains a representative element, which is dependent on beliefs that are internally related to the desire in question. The simplest case is, of course, a desire whose realization I believe is impossible. This makes the desire impossible. Suppose I cannot formulate a clear idea of what I desire or I do not know what I want, therefore my desire is, in this sense, semantically inadmissible. Moral beliefs constitute, however, the strongest examples: I want Bill dead but I believe this is wrong – the desire is inadmissible. The reason for this is that the belief in question puts a wrong type of demand on the world. Moral beliefs are special in this respect: they both represent the world and legislate on it by making a demand on how the world should be. In this case the world should be such that Bill lives. My normative belief makes my desire inadmissible by at the same time conflicting with my desire and having an overriding status. Notice that all these conclusions presuppose the validity

of the analysis of the internal relationship of belief and desire. This very fact gives desire its representative character. Desire must fit the world as well as the world must fit the desire. Desires that do not fit the world are inadmissible and should be dropped from one's portfolio of desire. We can, via possible and admissible desires, read how the world is and how it can be.

Let me consider the last simple examples. I want ice cream in the sense that I want to eat ice cream now. Moreover, I want to eat only one cone because I believe the second helping is too much, so that such a desire becomes inadmissible. In this way my current desire takes into account the fact that too much of the good stuff is bad for me and a fortiori undesirable. In this way, my second desire represents the world according to my normative beliefs: it represents the world of excess. Suppose I want to kill Bill. The realization of this desire creates a possible world that I cannot accept, or the world of murder and mayhem. Hence, I struggle against the desire that represents such a bad world. It is not the case that first I formulate an infinite desire and then restrict it; on the contrary, I formulate the desire in such a way that it respects the nature of the world where I hope it can and will be realized. Omnipotent fantasy wishes are another thing, of course. In this sense well-formed desires represent the world in which they can be satisfied. By looking at my well-formed desires you can tell something about the world. Does this answer Wollheim's challenge? Does the total collection of my desires represent a certain world or at least a certain type of world? A mature, well informed, and independent person has a portfolio of desires that go a long way into that direction.

In sum: I often struggle against desire, which is to say I do not accept the possible world that is entailed by satisfied desires. Those desires do not fit the world I want to create, accept, and occupy. Suppose I desire A which entails a possible world that exemplifies something I do not accept and, therefore, I do not accept the world A represents. It follows that I replace A with B, which I can accept. The crucial fact is that in such a case my desire, that is desire for B, depends on how the world is. My desire for A does not fit the world as it should in order to be admissible. A represents a wrong world. Certainly desires are dependent on beliefs concerning the possible world they represent but desire for A is a wrong type of desire that tries to change the world but is not allowed to do so. A simply represents a bad world. Desires can tell us how the world is.

CHAPTER 3

Push and Pull Theories of Desire

The basic idea of this paper is as follows: there are two different approaches to desire, first, an externalist, naturalistic, and causalistic and, second, an internalist, normative and cognitivist approach. The first approach considers the motivational push essential when the second concentrates on the pull of desirability. In other words, an agent is driven by a drive or he is attracted by the intentional object of desire. I will indicate how to combine these two approaches. Also, I will show how all this helps us understand the variable strengths of desire. This is a difficult and somehow intractable problem. I utilize first F.H. Bradley's interesting analysis of desire in his unduly neglected *Ethical Studies* (2. edition, 1927) and then move on to Bertrand Russell's account of a pseudo-naturalistic type of a push theory in his classical *The Analysis of Mind* (1921). Russell develops interesting and challenging ideas for example concerning unconscious desire and human happiness.

Background Checks

Kant in his *Metaphysics of Morals* writes rather enigmatically, "Lust is called *unnatural* if one is aroused to it not by a real object but by his imagining it, so that he himself creates one, contrary to natural purpose; for in this way imagination brings forth a desire contrary to nature's end." Unnatural love is a "violation of duty to oneself."[1] As I read this, unnatural desire is a matter of pull and natural of push. An example of the latter is hunger that makes you oriented towards nourishment (natural object), and of the former a gourmand's imagination that creates desirable illusions of fine dishes (unnatural object). You should do what is right, which pushes you in the natural direction and turns you away from fantasies – these are as empty and unpredictable as they are haphazard. Natural desires do not depend on imagination, or if imagination is involved, it emerges automatically, that is, without implying the agent's personal contribution. We do not say the agent actively imagines; we say some images appear to him. This is a push theory of desire. The problem is that many instances of push are dangerous and unethical. The agent may be aroused by

1 I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*. Tr. M. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1797/1966, 6:425. Cf. Kant's definition of desire, 6:211.

not so laudable objects such as violence and murder. Be this as it may, we say natural desires depend on a special class of push generated mental states and processes.

Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish between the push and pull theories of desire is to use Thomas Nagel's distinction between motivated and unmotivated desires. Push theories deal with unmotivated desires. Nagel says the former "assail us" but the latter are "arrived at by decision and after deliberation."[2] The first description is given in terms of a metaphor (assail), which seems to be apt but at the same time incongruent with the second, perfectly literary or metonymic idea (deliberation and decision). My suggestion is to say that the push theories work without reasons and pull theories utilize reasons that allow one to identify an object as desirable. Think about the desire to eat. My relevant bodily deprivation pushes or drives me towards food and eating: if I believe it is food I make an attempt to eat it. But suppose the food is repulsive, or not desirable, which may well stop the drive. Obviously, the push and pull are not fully independent of each other, except if hunger is very strong. This does not refute the idea that push desire fails to employ reasons – the point is, the source of desire is elsewhere and reasons are just side-constraints.

The next question is, what should we say about Nagel's idea of decision and deliberation? The idea of deliberation may sound odd in this context: normally, the emergence of desire does not depend on deliberation although the selection of its object may show an influence of deliberation. I want a new car and then I choose the brand and the individual vehicle after deliberating it. Finally, I tell the sales person I want this particular vehicle. This may be true but we may still ask, can I decide on the basis of deliberation that I want a new car? Suppose I want a new car because my old is a wreck, it stopped working, and I need a car. Thus, I have my perfectly good reasons for wanting a new car. When I deliberate my situation, I notice that I want a new car, but to say that I decide to desire a new car is certainly beside the point. The relevant desire hits me when I notice that I have my reasons that make a new car a desirable proposition. De dicto, I want a new car on the basis of my considerations or deliberations of the desirability of a new car in my current life situation. But, de re, I do not have an object of desire yet. It is impossible to go and buy a car simpliciter. If you go to a dealership and say "I want one new car, please," they will think you are out of your mind. Now you must make a decision concerning exactly what kind of car you want. I wonder if this de re case is what Nagel has

2 T. Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. See the discussion by G.E. Schueler, *Desire*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 16–17.

in mind? You need to reach a stage in the life of the desire when you are able to say, "I want this vehicle" and point to it. Next, you may or may not form an intention to buy it. Its price tag may stop you from buying it.

I am not sure, however, at what stage the decision comes into the picture, at the level of de re desire or the intention to buy a particular vehicle. I suspect the correct idea is to say that intention and deliberation belong together, which is to say that the de re desire may not be based on a decision. You work your way through all the alternatives until you find what you want and then it is time to decide whether to buy it or not, which means an intention to buy or no intention at all.[3] What has happened is that you start with your de dicto desire and the relevant desirability conditions, you specify them step by step until you have a definite description of a relevant object, and there you have a de re object of desire. Notice that you work all the time at the level of desirability conditions and only in a secondary sense at the level of desires. Desires as if emerge because of the given desirability conditions, given the relevant, complex beliefs concerning the situation. In this perspective, we might invoke the idea of supervenience: desire supervenes on the desirability conditions of its intentional object plus the beliefs concerning the relevant background facts. Of course, Nagel is correct if he says you can deliberate on the desirability conditions, not always but at least sometimes. Some of them just appear to you or are undeniable, like beauty, pleasure, and intuitive moral goodness. A beautiful object is intrinsically desirable; whether you desire it or not depends on your beliefs concerning the case. You cannot decide whether beauty is desirable or not and neither can you decide on what you believe. Of course, you may deliberate on whether the object is truly beautiful and whether your beliefs are valid, but that is all. In sum: I follow the Nagel's lead by saying that push theories need not mention reasons unlike pull theories. Pull desires are motivated because they are dependent of their desirability conditions.

Now, the key problem concerning any naturalistic push theory of desire concerns actions; the pull theories of desire have no essential connection to action or bodily behaviour. I can desire in situations where action is not possible. For instance, my desire entails an intention not to act or to stay passive. Push theories, on the contrary, look as if they were necessarily action oriented, or are they? Desire, as such, is not a motive for action, and thus if push theory is going to be a theory of desire, it must allow for push without action. This is to say some push desires or drives have only mental consequences just like some pull desires that only shape one's mental landscape. Of course, push desire can

3 On desire and intention, see my "An Introduction to Desire," *Homo Oeconomicus* 31 (2014), 447–461, pp. 449–450.

do the same. Here we need to imagine a case in which one does not refrain from action merely because of one's beliefs, for instance, that the action is too costly. We need an example of a case where action is impossible because of its description; the description is then intrinsically non-actionist. An example of the first case is, "I was hungry but I did not start eating because the top dog wanted food." I am not sure good examples of the second case exist; all the possible cases look actionist in nature, like "I am afraid of him and therefore I want to be quiet." Notice that you need not deliberate your fear that brings about quiescence. This is an actionist case in disguise. Perhaps this works: "I want Bill dead," uttered by a person who is deeply committed to non-violence but who passionately hates Bill. Now his hatred brings about the push towards the death of Bill as the object of his desire. Yet, I do not want to kill Bill. In what follows, I suppose drives are desires along with the motivated pull desires. I will specify the relation between the two types of desire at the end of this paper.[4]

A good example of actionist push theory of desire comes from F.H. Bradley, who writes in his *Ethical Studies*,

> The essence of desire for an object would thus be the feeling of our affirmation in the idea of something not ourself, felt against our feeling of ourself as, without the object, void and negated; and it is the tension of this relation which produces motion.[5]

I call this definition negative, actionist, and semi-naturalistic. The definition also makes explicit a traditional, actually Platonic, but today often neglected problem, namely, whether the proper object of desire is positive or negative. Most philosophers today seem to think that desire is dependent on something positive whereas the tradition says it is all negative. A person is not complete without the object of desire, and therefore, when she believes this is the case she also desires the object, or she is driven to desire the object. Bradley's definition above is Platonic in that he speaks of the inner void and personal negation in the sense that what I lack is, metaphorically, like an open gash in my soul. If I desire something that logically entails that I miss it or I do not have it. Moreover, this lack is anxious, or the person feels she is "void and negated." We cannot desire what we already have, this is true, and hence I always desire what I do not have. But this is not all that Bradley and the Platonists say.

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4 Aristotle systematically distinguishes between push and pull theories, or irrational and rational desires; see G. Pearson, *Aristotle on Desire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 201.

5 F.H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 68.

They drastically simplify the idea of what a person does not have by making the lack categorical in the sense that without it the person is not what she should be. This is an oversimplification as the lack may as well be relative and conditional.

Suppose I want money. Does this fact logically entail that I (categorically) do not have money and, hence, this is the reason why I want it? If this is so, my categorical lack of money is a negative state of affairs that psychologically speaking indicates an anxious mental state, which I need to attend to and also amend. When the world changes favourably and I get money the mental disturbance vanishes, which is to say the relevant desire is satisfied. An obvious problem then arises, namely, my lack of money is a problem only if I find money desirable and I desire money. This makes the lack conditional on a desire. If I do not desire money, however good and desirable I may find moneyed existence, I am fine even when I do not have money, which is to say that the idea of the negatively characterized object of desire is problematic to the core. In other words, the categorical negative characterization of the lack of money itself cannot be a part of the definition of the relevant desire. We need a conditional characterization, that is, lack of money is bad only on the condition that you want money. The idea of lack logically entails a relevant desire when we mean a painful or otherwise disturbing deficiency. Looking back to Bradley´s definition, I certainly do not want to be "void and negated"; on the contrary, I want to be fully and positively recognized or recognizable.

What happens when I have money and I still want more money? In this case the lack of money is relative and conditional. If I already have money I cannot want money simpliciter, because you cannot want what you have, but I can want more money. In a way, I lack money but only in a relative sense. Also, if I want more money than I already have the previous logical problem concerning the characterization of lack does not matter. Now I have money and I want more of it: I want more only if I want money; if I want money, I want more money. This is unproblematic. To want more looks like a positive characterization although it also implies a relative lack. Therefore, I can still say I lack money, that is, the money that I now want. A rich man thinks he sorely lacks something, that is, more money. If he had enough he would not want more, as he may argue, but because he still lacks so much, compared to what is enough, he wants more. This example shows that the problem of the negative or positive characterization of the desired change of the world is a bogus problem. The difference between them is semantic or stipulative. More money or love is always a good thing as such but on the other hand it entails a definite and permanent but relative lack of the good thing. This looks like paradox: as long as you desire you must feel that you are missing something, although you just want more of it. Your desire for one more million or an extra

lover is not an expression of real lack of something good; what you want is more of the good thing. A major difference obtains between a person who has no money or love and the person who has plenty but never enough. What we see here is something like greed in action. Therefore, both Bradley and, as we will see, Russell are wrong, however different their philosophical perspectives may ultimately be.

Another way of putting the same point concerning the positive and negative characterizations of desire is in terms of enjoyment and felt relief. Sometimes you desire an object that brings you pure enjoyment, like a new car, or you may serve and satisfy your greed by getting more money. Sometimes you aim at equilibrium, as in the case where lack of love troubles you and therefore you want to find love. The result is relief. In this way the aim of your positive desire is enjoyment and negative desire relief, which in itself is an emotionally neutral mental episode.

How does Bradley's theory deal with the problem of desirability and its relation to actual desiring? The problem is that one can desire anything, including perhaps harming oneself.[6] Some philosophers have explained desirability in terms of pleasure, value, or reward. Accordingly, one finds an object worth desiring because one hopes to find pleasure, the object appears to be valuable, or it is believed to be rewarding as such. To hurt one's enemy may not be valuable or even pleasurable but it certainly is rewarding. Binge drinking of alcohol may bring about pleasure even if it is not rewarding as such and hardly valuable either. To donate money for the poor is not pleasant but it may be rewarding, and it certainly is valuable. Such considerations prove nothing, though, since for instance Bradley refers to the tension within that drives the agent to move and act on her desire in order to relieve the tension, as he calls it. All kinds of potential sources of tension exist but some of them become actual and even urgent so that they bring about action. It is hardly necessary to adopt Bradley's simple actionism without qualifications. According to his theory, the goal of desiring is to remove a felt tension that is a type of mental pain. Therefore, the object of desire is pain reduction – I already argued against such an idea.

What brings about desire, according to Bradley, is not the desirable object as such; what brings about desire is the lack of the object or the fact that I do not possess it. I focus on the object more or less clearly, at least so clearly that I can

6 See H. Pickard, "Self-Harm as Violence: When Victim and Perpetrator Are One." In *Women and Violence: The Agency of Victims and Perpetrators*, H. Widdows and H. Marway (Eds.). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 71–90; and M. Stocker, "Desiring the Bad: An Essay on Moral Psychology," *Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1979), 738–753.

see what I miss – this is painful and then my desire emerges. Notice that this explanation does not apply to small and personally insignificant types of lack. Yet, when told in this way the push theoretical narrative is naturalistic or in this sense causalistic: I aim at something I believe to be desirable and I feel the void when I face the lack or the loss of the object. This I experience as mental tension that feels like pain and finally I formulate a desire that may lead to action, the context allowing. Also notice Bradley's account of desirability: I find desirable anything that alleviates my bad feeling of being "void and negated." If I want to be a good father I indeed will feel void and negated as long as I am not a good father. Once the world changes so that I am a good father all is well; or, all is well as long as I believe I am a good father.

Anyway, the main point is that desirability alone cannot generate desire. It is only when the lack of the desirable object becomes painful enough in a suitable context that desire emerges in order to compensate for the loss and the lack in one's soul. However, as I said above, such a negative theory is not so easy to accept. In some cases no such tension may occur. As I said above, the problems concentrate around small desires. Suppose I want ice-cream. I find it difficult to believe that anyone would feel "void and negated" without a cone of ice-cream. Here the lack of ice-cream (push) may not be important at all compared to the temptation of eating ice-cream (pull). Suppose I want beer but I also feel it may be a bad idea. Hence, the lack of beer does not feel bad at all but having a beer still feels wonderfully tempting. Indeed, both the lack of the desired object and having it may be tempting, as long as having it remains more so.

Russell on Desire

In his *Analysis of Mind*, Bertrand Russell first presents an account of the cognitive theories of desire and then his own naturalistic and behaviourist ideas. He divides the theories into push and pull theories.[7] I suppose he knew Bradley's views because he certainly knew his main theories and works. In his own times, Bradley was famous and his books widely read: sic transit gloria mundi. Push theories are similar to Bradley's theory, which says an agent is pushed to formulate a desire and then act on it because of the painful tension he feels. Or, as he says, the tension brings about motion. A pull theory is a theory according to which the agent feels the pull or attraction of the desirable objects he faces,

7 See also A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, Ch. v.

or perhaps he imagines them. Desirability entails attraction and focuses on a hope for, say, a reward or relief. The two theories can be summarized as follows:

> *Push Theory*: An agent feels unpleasantly disturbed and then she either withdraws from the situation or compensates for the feeling of displeasure by doing something appropriate; if she believes that she can do something about the disturbance she desires whatever it is.
>
> *Pull Theory*: The person finds an object desirable and as such attractive in the sense that it promises so much situational good that the agent believes he now has a good reason to consider it, which entails the relevant desire.

Also an irrational version of pull theory may exist, namely, I have a reason not to desire although I still do. I desire X although I know X is definitely not going to happen, which constitutes a reason not to desire, or rationally I should not desire X. In such cases, I may use a special counterfactual expression like "I would have liked X to happen." For example, more indirectly "I should have been a male model," when it did not happen – which masks the desire in question, or "I would have wanted X to happen."[8] This expresses a kind of nostalgia for my long-lost opportunity to desire for X. I will argue that both theories are needed when one develops a full theory of desire. The pull theory is inadequate alone because it cannot explain the urgency or strength of some desires; the push theory is too stubbornly actionist and, moreover, it cannot handle hope – in this sense it is not a complete theory. Surprisingly, at least some push theories can accommodate wish-fulfilment.

Let us now concentrate on Bertrand Russell's version of the push theory, which he defends energetically, although not always with clarity or care, in his hastily composed little book. Say, I am itching, which is a highly motivating feeling, in the sense that I want to stop it. No more itching is my desired psychological equilibrium state, and thus I am driven to act accordingly: I scratch.[9] If I cannot, I am still inclined to act, or I would scratch if I could; and I know in normal conditions I can do so. Moreover, my beliefs concerning the desire related states of affairs are supposed to be valid. In other words, I believe I can alleviate the relevant bad feelings by certain means when the feeling brings about my desire, whose Russellian, radically revisionist push definition is as follows:

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8 In some languages, e.g. in Finnish, Spanish, Italian, and French this is a normal way of describing the situation; in French, *j'aurai voulu* (*Futur antérieur*).

9 See S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Tr. J. Strachey. New York: Norton, 1920/1961, pp. 3–4.

> The initial mental occurrence involving discomfort is called a "desire" for the state of affairs that brings acquiescence.

Desire has a purpose:

> The state of affairs in which this condition of quiescence is achieved is called the "purpose" of the cycle.[10]

The discomfort in question brings about action towards the state of affairs whose occurrence alleviates it. For this to happen, the person must entertain a belief to the effect that the desired remedy works as intended. This is a push theory because "[we] must suppose that the stimulus to the performance of each act is an impulsion from behind, not an attraction from the future." Or, in other words, what we have here is "a push, not a pull, an impulsion away from the actual, rather than an attraction toward an ideal."[11] This sounds clear.

Russell's theory is simple if it merely says that some states of discomfort are connected to beliefs concerning their alleviation and hence desire refers not to anticipated disappearance of the discomfort but to the fact of discomfort itself. In other words, I desire anything that I believe will bring about quiescence or status quo or equilibrium of the mind. The question is, what is the object of desire? Example: I want money and that indicates an uncomfortable state of disequilibrium, or a desire. I can fix it by getting money. That is why I say I desire money. Money is now the object of my desire, although it is mere means for the purpose of a desire, which is mental equilibrium. The initial disequilibrium causally makes me act according to my belief about what helps in this very case. In this way a push theory avoids the problem of intentional objects of desire and their desirability conditions, which are impossible to handle in terms of the extensionalist language of science. Any disequilibrium is causally and non-cognitively motivating and thus one can learn what to do in order to fix the problem even without thinking of it. I just do what I have learned I must do to make myself comfortable again – or, I may be conditioned to act in a functional manner. Russell says, I believe, that scratching (purpose) alleviates discomfort (desire) and hence I scratch (motions). Next, I automatically revise my belief system to the effect that scratching helps if I act accordingly. Hence, I desire scratching, which is the purpose of the relevant desire in service of the

10 B. Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1921. I have used the *Digireads.com Book*, 2008.

11 Russell, 1921, p. 31.

act cycle. This is of course unintuitive because now one desires the means and not the end-state. In other words, according to Russell, one does not desire relief but what brings about relief. Perhaps we should call it an instrumentalist theory of desire. Push and pull theories are radically different, of course. The object of desire in the pull theory is not the same as the purpose in the push theory where the focus is on instrumental desire or need: you need to scratch if you itch. However, in the pull theory what is desired is an intentional object; we think of how to get rid of the problem, when we are advised by our relevant beliefs. In push theory, desire spontaneously tracks its own disappearance, which here means something like satisfaction.

Unconscious belief: Let us next take a look at Russell's important distinction between conscious and unconscious desire because this allows us to see how different the push and pull theories really are. He says, a "desire is called 'conscious' when it is accompanied by a true belief as to the state of affairs that will bring quiescence, otherwise it is called 'unconscious'."[12] Suppose I suffer from a terrible headache and I wrongly believe that it will be alleviated by a medicine man's inspired dance around my sickbed, when explanation is brain cancer in need of surgery. Now, what I desire is the medicine man's visit and his inspired dance around my bed because I believe this helps better than anything else. Russell calls such a desire unconscious, which may sound mystical. Here is how I understand the idea. My cycle of desire and action in this case has its purpose, that is the inspired dance, and thus I aim at the best help against my present state of disequilibrium, or desire. I act accordingly. The point is that my desire for the medicine man's action brings about results that in fact indicate a purpose that is different from the original restitution of the equilibrium state of mind. I do not know what that purpose is as I think falsely that it is the equilibrium of no headache. What is the effect the dance brings about? Let us say it is the medicine man getting some money from me. This key fact is hidden from me and hence my desire is unconscious in the sense that I do not know what the inspired dance is for, hence my actions have their unintended consequences. Russell says the unconscious desire is to provide money to the medicine man. If my relevant beliefs concerning the effects of my actions are correct, they aim at the purpose that is the same as the intended purpose of my desire. This is now a conscious desire because its whole structure is transparent to me. Wrong beliefs mask the purpose so that it will remain obscure to me and in this sense unconscious.

As one may suggest, contra Russell, I do not desire the medicine man's dance because it does not help, and yet it prevents me from understanding what my

12 Russell, 1921, p. 35.

real desire is, that is, the thing that helps. Accordingly, my real desire remains unconscious. It exists although it is unknown and in this sense unconscious. However, according to Russell, real desire is necessarily conscious. Let us see what happens here. When the medicine man dances he brings about effects I cannot see or understand. This is because I falsely expect my headache vanish. His dance serves another purpose than the original one but because I cannot understand, realise, know, or imagine what it is, it is unconscious or hidden. We can also say I confuse two different desires, that whose purpose is getting rid of the headache and another one whose purpose is unconscious to me. In this sense, some desires are unconscious because we have a wrong idea of their purpose and the effects of the desired actions. When I believe that brain surgery helps, as it does, the whole cycle becomes conscious: I will reach the purpose that is present in my mind. The medicine man's dance, on the other hand, brings about a purpose I do not know, that is, an unconscious purpose.

When the medicine man dances, what is the hidden purpose of his actions? Suppose it is wish-fulfilment. Surprisingly, Russell's theory can accommodate the Freudian idea of wish-fulfilment; or perhaps this should be expected because Russell is influenced by Freud at this stage. Now, when the medicine man dances that dance may well make me feel better. This is because I hope it works, or as I realize, hope in this case is not based on warranted relevant beliefs, which makes it a wish. I wish I become better, and hence the dance makes me feel better as if directly and not via a link to my headache. Therefore, the dance works as wish-fulfilment. I wish it helps and indeed it helps because it directly satisfies my wish. Perhaps this is how the patient reasons: I want him to dance because that alleviates my pain; he is dancing; hence, my desire is satisfied; and because my desire is satisfied, my pain is alleviated. In other words, I use modus ponens: If he dances, pain disappears; he dances; therefore, pain disappears. As I see it, most Russellian unconscious desires may work in this way. This also explains their popularity and sustainability in the long run. They work although only in the sense of wish-fulfilment. As such the dance has no relevant effect; it does not change the world in any such direction. Yet it satisfies my need for cure.

As Russell himself writes, "a belief that something is desired has often a tendency to cause the very desire that is believed in."[13] Perhaps this should read: "the very cure that is believed in." He may mean that the belief in a cure is the cure. As he actually writes, he says that a belief that I have a painful situation may bring about the pain – this is true, too. By desire Russell, as we know, means the original state of disequilibrium, which does not make sense here.

13 Russell, 1921, p. 34.

He cannot mean that, say, a belief in a brain operation may bring about painful headache. However, consider this example: I think of beer and that very thought that beer is desired makes me painfully thirsty, when drinking beer cures the desire called thirst as a lust for alcohol. In other words, a belief that something works by helping to solve a painful problem (desire) has the paradoxical tendency either to cause the very effect (cure, purpose) that is desired, or to bring about the problem (disequilibrium, desire). Says Russell, "It is this fact that makes the effect of 'consciousness' on desire so complicated."[14] This is what wish-fulfilment does.

Suppose I take arsenic to cure my headache. Now the unconscious purpose is my imminent death because that is the effect of arsenic. It does not take long to learn that the method is wrong and thus the mistaken belief vanishes because it was an unconscious desire to die, as I will learn. In the case of the medicine man's dance this does not happen. The dance has no adverse consequences and therefore we have hard time learning anything from it. Yet, it satisfies my wish in the special sense of wish-fulfilment. Concerning hope, it is easy to see that we can find no role for hope in Russell's theory. Desire is an action based mechanism that works or does not work. To talk about hope is to talk about a pull theory: we hope that we get the object that exerts the pull. In the push theory, the push starts a causal mechanism that either fulfils its purpose or it does not. Hope entails a kind of psychological uncertainty no push theory may recognize. The mechanism makes me act without intervening thoughts.

Russell says, the scientifically uninformed mind entertains mostly unconscious desires, which is true. People pray for God to heal them and so they resort to wish-fulfilment: the prayer is the cure quite independently of its causal effects; here the "is" is the "is" of identity, or prayer is in itself the cure. However, what he may mean is this: when my belief system is corrected so that I learn the falsehood of my present beliefs my desire for the medicine man's visit disappears along with my beliefs. My desire was, in this way, conditional on false beliefs while the desire for, say, a surgical operation as a cure for my headache would be dependent on a true belief. But why is a magical desire called unconscious? I do not think Russell succeeds in making this clear. What he could say is that, counterfactually, if I knew that the operation helps I would desire it. In this way, my desire for an operation is unconscious, or should we say, latent. Figuratively speaking, the desire slumbers waiting my better beliefs to wake it up. Again, Russell definitely does not say so. According to him, I may think I desire something I do not desire. This happens when the chosen

14 Russell, 1921, p. 34.

purpose does not exist, in the sense that the purported cure in fact does not work against the disequilibrium in question. In other words, when I say I desire X, I may be wrong. I say I want to see the medicine man dancing when in fact I do not. According to pull theory, this is impossible because desire is a subjective affair. I cannot desire without believing I desire. According to push theory my existence of desire depends on the truth of some key propositions because it purports to be a naturalistic theory. It follows that I can desire without believing I desire, or I desire X and I think I desire Y.

Secondary desires: Another rather surprising Russellian invention is what he calls a secondary desire. He writes,

> A secondary desire, derived from a false judgment as to a primary desire, has its own power of influencing action, and is therefore a real desire according to our definition. But it has not the same power as a primary desire of bringing thorough satisfaction when it is realized; so long as the primary desire remains unsatisfied, restlessness continues in spite of the secondary desire's success. Hence arises a belief in the vanity of human wishes: the vain wishes are those that are secondary, but mistaken beliefs prevent us from realizing that they are secondary.[15]

Russell's point looks like this: unconscious desire has its purpose, which I sometimes adopt as a new and known purpose. I suffer from recurring headaches and desire massage to cure it. This involves an unconscious desire because massage does not help. However, I learn that massage relieves tension by relaxing me, and hence I accept it as the new purpose. I have thus acquired a new conscious desire. In fact, I have created a secondary desire that is still tied to the primary one, the cure of my headaches, whatever it is. As Russell says, the secondary desire is problematic. It successfully serves its own purpose, that is, relaxation which relieves tension. Hence the desire is real and conscious, yet it does not eliminate the primary problem, or headache. In some cases the secondary purpose may even make the situation worse. Every time I have a headache I order massage, which indeed is dysfunctional in the long run. To follow Russell here, he says life becomes better if such secondary desires can be dropped, which in my example is quite obvious, but only if the primary desire can then be taken care of, that is, the real cure can be found. The secondary purpose offers at least some comfort to me. Anyway, the secondary desire may make the elimination of the primary one more difficult.

15 Russell, 1921, p. 34.

The definition of secondary desire is as follows: A secondary desire is a new desire that emerges from the realization that an unconscious purpose has certain good effects. These confirm the new purpose and thus the secondary desire becomes conscious and real, when it serves the new purpose, even if it is misdirected. In the case of a secondary desire, its purpose tracks the original purpose. In the case of the primary desire, the desired action tracks the purpose. Secondary desire: I notice that some actions feel good, thus I will desire them (the means determine the goal). Primary desire: I do not feel good, this is why I will desire whatever makes me feel good (the goal determines the method).

Another example that is more in line with Russell's own rather florid rhetoric is as follows. Any secondary desire results from a misunderstood primary desire, as follows: I want to kill Bill, which desire is based on my disturbing bitterness towards Bill caused by his earlier actions. However, I believe that revenge is both morally wrong and prudentially speaking dangerous, which worries me; on this basis I do not want to kill Bill but this again entails a false belief about what would bring quiescence to me, instead of killing Bill, that is, an act omission. The omission then determines a secondary desire: I want to do nothing as I feel this helps against mental disturbance. So, in order to void a motivational conflict between killing and not killing, I want to travel around the world – this sounds like a third-level desire that is consonant with the original omission. Very quickly I notice I do not enjoy the trip as much as I should; and the reason is my primary desire for revenge, which still indicates an unresolved mental conflict. Then I go and kill Bill and return, and the rest of the trip is perfectly lovely, which shows that the belief concerning the effect of my trip was false. Russell's own exposition here is too hurried and sketchy to allow a more faithful exposition.

Desired Beliefs: Russell's third interesting point concerns desire for beliefs. This looks like an interesting topic. Suppose I believe I do not live for ever and this causes considerable discomfort to me, hence I desire eternal life. I realize this is possible only if there is a good God and, therefore, I want to believe the good God exists. I also believe God helps me, from which it follows that I can live forever. This is another instance of wish-fulfilment, which we discussed above. Russell writes,

> This desire for beliefs, as opposed to desire for the actual facts, is a particular case of secondary desire, and, like all secondary desires its satisfaction does not lead to a complete cessation of the initial discomfort. Nevertheless, desire for beliefs, as opposed to desire for facts, is exceedingly potent both individually and socially. According to the form of belief desired, it is called vanity, optimism, or religion. [...] It is very largely

> through desires for beliefs that the primitive nature of desire has become so hidden, and that the part played by consciousness has been so confusing and so exaggerated.[16]

According to Russell, such a desire for a desirable belief, or for the truth of such a belief, is an example of secondary desire and of course of unconscious desire. As we know, a mere belief can alleviate the discomfort that brings about the desired belief in question. Nevertheless, my belief that there is a good God who provides me with eternal life may not fully justify the idea that eternal life is available, and therefore some pain continues. Russell also says that the belief in God exemplifies an unconscious belief if it is false – let us suppose so. This is to say it cannot bring about the final quiescence even if it may produce optimism and give the person more courage to meet the pain of mortal existence. Thus emerges a new desire for God's help. The belief in God works now like the dancing medicine man. Dancing and believing have their effects that are not quite what one wants, but they produce, anyway, effects that may be beneficent. But because they are not the effects that are originally wanted, they do not produce the final quiescence. The new purpose is the relief general optimism provides. All this is psychologically plausible. When I say I believe that God gives me an eternal life, this phrase hides not only the unconscious desire for eternal life but also the conscious secondary desire for a more optimistic attitude towards the ever troubling possibility of the personal end of life. Russell's ideas concerning desire are coherent and interesting but I must say they also are unintuitively formulated. He aims to refute the cognitivist non-naturalistic theories of desire and, therefore, his approach is radically different from them. However, Russell may well be right when he thinks that a push theory must be formulated in a language that does not respect the intuitions derived from a pull theory. I will argue that pull theory is more fundamental than push theory but at the same time some idea of push is needed in the complete theory of desire.

Desirability Demystified

I will defend the following position: instrumental desire or need can be understood according to the naturalistic push theory although the final desired state of affairs, Russell's purpose, can be understood only via the cognitive and teleological pull model. A simple example illustrates this. Suppose I love Mary and I want her to be mine – what it means "to be mine" is an open question of

16 Russell, 1921, p. 35.

course but let it be so. According to Russell, this state of affairs troubles me like an open sore, and hence I desire consciously or unconsciously a cure, whose direct purpose is to make her mine and indirect purpose to alleviate my pain. I may generate a secondary desire that I should avoid and also a desire for good beliefs. The situation quickly grows conceptually complicated but then I tap my belief system and under its guidance start desiring certain best means for solving the problem and reaching quiescence.

Now, I want to buy Mary expensive and impressive gifts and ask my friends to talk to her about how good I am as a person and future husband and father. I want to believe this helps, as it indeed may, and thus I desire the whole package. Russell is an actionist theorists who puts his faith on the power of action; for instance, he would not stay put and wait and hope until Mary makes here decision about her lover, or perhaps such an omission is action, too. This is to say, for Russell, psychological causation is somehow related to the springs of action and creation of new beliefs. This also is what push means. Pain and discomfort push me to do something about it. This is what I call a motivational drive here. Its route is determined by the relevant beliefs concerning the direction where relief is to be found. Russell says the content of both attitudes should be the same, that is, what I believe and what I desire are based on an identical proposition. So, I believe X helps to alleviate my discomfort and the same X becomes the content of my relevant desire.

What we see here is, as I said above, a theory of the generation of instrumental desire or need. I want a new car and hence I need money that I also desire: I want the money to buy a new car. Strangely enough, Russell has nothing much to say about the final desire, in this case of the car. Why would I like to get a car, or why do I desire it? If the lack of car is simply disturbing and painful to think of why not get rid of the idea rather than start the complicated process of getting a car. The point is this: if the lack of the object or purpose of desire is painful I naturally try to avoid the idea. The desire simply pushes me out of its context because of its painfulness. We know this happens in real life and in philosophy: many theorists have recommended escape from the shackles of desire.[17] But think of Bradley who says the purpose of desire is somehow necessary for the person; without it he is "void and negated." Some desires are like that, unavoidable, some are not. I want a car and I drop the desire because of the simple reason it is too difficult to satisfy. Bradley's idea does not apply to this case. A samurai has humiliated his master and now he must commit

17 For instance, S. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*. Tr. E. Crawford and M. von der Ruhr. London: Routledge, 2002. She writes, "Desire is impossible: it destroys its object [...]. Because to desire something is impossible, we have to desire what is nothing." (pp. 94–95).

seppuku. He cannot drop the idea because then he really is "void and negated." Russell seems to follow Bradley too closely here.

I cannot get rid of an instrumental desire too easily if I already am committed to the purpose of it. This indicates that Russell's push theory may apply only to those cases in which the discomfort is of the type we cannot forget, avoid, get rid of, or ignore. Instead of trying to satisfy a desire I cannot drop I may try to circumvent it. Considering the push theory, one must specify what triggers off a desire, that is, the relevant cycle of actions. We do not act on any possible source of discomfort. I may well think that a given discomfort is what it is and nothing can be done about it. For instance, I have done something wrong and accept the pangs of conscience as a justified punishment. What can I do about it, nothing.

Why continue to talk about discomfort and its linguistic relatives? We can avoid it: I have plenty of wine at home but I want some more. I feel void and frustrated without this extra batch of wine, but then I tell myself that the idea is foolish and the desire vanishes – or at least it should. In many cases it does not, why? The reason is that the itch, or the discomfort and pain, caused by not storing more wine at home, refuses to disappear because more wine is such an attractive proposal; hence, the pull exhibits its typical effect here. The desire for the object or purpose is based on its pull, or the attraction of the desirable states of affairs, rather than the push generated by discomfort. Notice that the original discomfort is based on desirability considerations: More wine at home appears so good that the lack of wine feels painful. It is hard to be without good things that one believes are available. This is to say the push, or drive, is explained by desirability considerations, or attraction as pull.

Of course, it is implausible to argue that all push is generated by discomfort, analogously with physical discomfort like an itch. Such metaphors lead us astray. For instance, an artist need not feel first some acute discomfort before he can start working, as if pain had triggered off his desire to make art. It is enough that he believes he is an artist and artists do art. He formulates a normative belief to the effect that he as an artist should do art. Notice that in pull theories desire itself is not motivating unlike belief. Anyway, an artist should be interested in art; whatever that means, at least it means that an artist finds some artistic themes convincingly desirable. He becomes vulnerable to artistic desirability, so to speak. His life is characterized by sensitivity to art and hence he finds some art desirable but some, perhaps, repulsive. His values, as the normative elements of his psychological constitution, dictate what he feels is interesting and worthy of his attention and serious consideration. I do not say this example can necessarily be generalized. Its purpose is to show that desire is certainly not uniformly dependent on mental disequilibrium, discomfort, or

lack of acquiescence. We certainly know contexts where an emerging desire is pleasant and as such eagerly anticipated and sought for. Sometimes I cannot wait to get a chance to get philosophical, say, about some arcane historical problems. Those problems pull me towards them, but I must then ask why. The answer is, because of the drive under whose influence I currently am. Desire has both a pull and push component.

Push Theory Returns

Desires must be explained. The objects of desire are desirable, but why? They are good, pleasant, or rewarding. What then is the source of the pull? At this point it is instructive to think of negative desire whose object is bad, painful, and punishing. When you look at it, it is clear that desirable and undesirable things behave in a radically different manner. Good/ bad is not a problem: you like what is good and dislike what is bad. Pleasure/pain is a problem, just like reward/punishment: you may be nonchalant about pleasure and reward, while admitting that they, intrinsically, are desirable. But their opposites are of much more serious nature. Pain is unlike pleasure in many ways. You may lose your interest in pleasure and some excessive pleasures turn into pain in the long run. But it never happens that pain turns into pleasure or that I lose my interest in it.[18] Pain, and in some cases punishment as well, has a forceful and coercive quality that cannot be denied or neglected. Pain bypasses cognitive level of reasoning and reasons. Pain can grow until it is intolerable and then the victim goes into a pain shock. A person reacts to pain via drive away from it, when the drive is not a reasoned attitude. A push away from pain is a fact. What about a push towards good?

A desire that is based on good, pleasure, or reward looks different from negative desire, which is drive based unlike reason based positive desire. This is a mistake. Positive and negative desires must be in a symmetrical position concerning their typical objects. They are not two different types of desire. Therefore, if negative desire contains a push component positive desire has it as well. This is not to say that negative desire lacks a reasoned component, it does not. Suppose I cannot get a good thing without some pain. I may think the level of pain is such that I can accept it, or I may think I cannot. In the same

18 People sometimes seem to seek pain and deal with it as if it were pleasure; about BDSM and S/M, see my "A Philosophical and Rhetorical Theory of BDSM," *The Journal of Mind and Behaviour* 38 (2017), 53–74; and Ch. 10 of this book. Also, S. Newmahr, *Playing on the Edge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.

way, I desire and anticipate something good. I feel the urgency of my desire and realize no reasoning can diminish it. I love Mary who loves anybody else than me. Is my desire here negative or positive is hard to say, but the urgency of my attitude cannot be denied. My conclusion is that positive desire has its urgency level that we can explain in terms of push or drive. In positive desire we find a component, drive, that is not cognitive or reason based or voluntary.

This is to say that I find an object desirable in the sense that I would like to see my actual world change into a better possible world such that the object occurs there. However, this is not yet a satisfactory description of the situation because in normal cases I feel for it and am ready to invest into it. Sometimes my desire is a strong urge that I am afraid I cannot resist. Some desires are weak and meek, some are demanding and strong, some are overpowering. They have what I call here a variable urge factor. This entails a cause or, as I put it, drive. I am serious about the change of worlds, I tend to focus on it, I do hate to miss the opportunity, I wait for it to happen, or I invest in it somehow – but notice this may not include action, not even in counterfactual sense. I may invest much, sometimes so much an outsider cannot figure out why. In the case of an obsession or addiction the investments may indeed be irrationally high and, moreover, I myself may realize that this is the case.[19] Such situations are irrational or even pathological, but as such they do not interest us here except as reminders of the strongest urges. Also, cases where I say I desire something but pass it by, or fail to invest anything much at all in it, are anomalous in their own way. These cases may exemplify a confusion between actually desiring and recognizing desirability. We find many things desirable that we never desire or even come close to desiring. They may be somehow below me or as well above me, or to put it colloquially, they are not my cup of tea. Some desirable things get buried under other desirable things – you should not want everything as you will learn early on. You must choose. Many other psychological reasons exist for neglecting objects that as such are desirable. An interesting case is this: desirability ascriptions apply to a broad category of things, so broad that I find it too tedious and difficult to select one specific item that I desire. This is a well-known problem in consumer research: I go to a supermarket to buy tea and hence I presumably want tea. Yet I do not buy tea because I cannot choose from their excessive selection. I decide to postpone the acquisition by utilizing some more or less self-deceptive moves, for instance, I say I still have some tea at home. I want tea but I find out I do not want any of the displayed packages. In other words, the drive is still there although corresponding the attraction

19 See N. Heather and G. Segal, Eds., *Addiction and Choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

has vanished. I am unable to feel for any of the offered items and therefore I fail to invest in any of them. The self-deception shows that the drive remains.

Now, desirability is a necessary condition of desiring but what is the sufficient one? How and why do I move from a desirability ascription to actually desiring something, which entails a commitment to the case and willingness to invest in it? As I said above, I want to argue that it is a matter of a combination of my relevant drive (push) and the attraction (pull) of the desirable object, or an interplay between them. If I am not pushed, I may well consider a state of affairs desirable, even very desirable and as such tempting, without committing myself to it. I am not ready to invest in it. We find two distinct but not mutually exclusive possibilities here: the causally efficient push (drive) and its level of urgency can be explained by my beliefs concerning the situation, or it is based on some causally relevant, psychological background conditions. The two alternatives can be called cognitive and naturalistic.

A paradigmatic example of the naturalistic case is hunger. Food deprivation causes a bodily state called hunger, I have learned how to free myself from it, I believe that eating helps, and I eat. At some stage of this chain I may say I want food and start the relevant behavioural cycle that hopefully ends up in a better possible world where I am no longer hungry. All this can be explained in terms of Russell's theory of desire but it is easy to see that we need more. The naturalistic theory fails to explain the selection of the object of desire. I may be hungry but I do not want eat because no food looks desirable to me, and hence my prospective desire fails to emerge. I say, I need to eat and I would like to eat if I found edible fares. Drive is then necessary but not sufficient, as I said above. Of course most cases of desire are not as simple as hunger but a causally created drive is still necessary for the agent's prima facie commitment to the case. Think of emotions like anger. They often bring about relevant desires, like the desire to get even, which sometimes is so urgent that the selection of means can be less than perfect. Most emotions create drives, and this is true of positive emotions as well, which then lead to desires whose satisfaction modifies the emotions in the right way.[20] Many emotions bring about relevant desires, hence the drive is there, too. Emotions also make us committed to certain strategies of desire. Once the person is committed, she needs an object that cannot be chosen in terms of causalistic considerations alone. I feel strongly

20 I cannot go here into the details of the effects of emotions on desire. See for an empirical study in behavioural economics, D. Ariely, *Predictably Irrational*. New York: Harper, 2008, Ch. 5. Emotions change the agent's reasoning and valuation and this influences of what she takes to be desirable. The push theories can easily accommodate such results. An object, A, is not seen as desirable but A accompanied with a suitable emotion is desirable.

amorous and thus I want a sex partner tonight but I do not find any of the possibly willing partners desirable. Here the urgency of my desire (drive) makes me naturally less selective but still leaves some room for deliberation. This may not always be the case when the urge is extreme. The pull factor does not vanish easily, or the desirability conditions remain.

Let me then get back to the hunger case. My bodily deprivation generates a drive that pushes me away from the hungry state towards a new equilibrium, which I consider essential to my well-being. Next, I believe I need food and I say I want food, I choose what food I find desirable – if I have a choice or the drive is not overwhelming. I eat and that leads via a causal chain back to bodily equilibrium. Now I feel no hunger. Notice that in this case we normally speak of instrumental desires or needs as if they were the final desire and its goal. The reason is that eating food causally and as if automatically takes care of the hunger problem. Nevertheless, in this case eating is not the final desire but mere means.

Suppose I want fine food, which means hunger may be absent. I eat because fine food is attractive for me as such. I expect some enjoyable aesthetic and culinary experiences, I believe people in my position are supposed to eat fine food, and I am fully aware of my future bragging rights. In this case the drive is constituted through a complex system of personal and social beliefs, or expectations of the basis of such beliefs. As Russell says, all these beliefs are desirable beliefs in the sense that I am at least comfortable with them, or they are actually desirable and as such attractive to me. It follows that I want these beliefs, which is to say that my belief induced drive cannot be based on them. On the contrary, we must locate the factors that generate the drive in question at the deeper psychological level. In the case of fine food I have learned that these beliefs, which are now desirable as such, have been good and beneficial to me earlier. In other words, I believe that these beliefs are desirable as such and, moreover, I do not see any reason to negate them just now. Obviously the problem of belief based motivation has moved to a deeper level and so we need to ask whether the deeper beliefs as ur-beliefs are causally generated, as they should according to this naturalistic model of motivation.

Suppose I want to be a good father; what are my drive related ur-beliefs that explain my desire for the beliefs that I happen to desire in this case. We can use a reduction argument here as we must locate some beliefs that are not desirable as such but can explain the desirable beliefs that motivate the desire and explain its generation. Without such beliefs my desire is floating in thin air. It has no foundation. The only possible foundation seems to be a causal one, namely, in the course of my life all kinds of events and perceptions have causally generated beliefs in me such that they explain my desirable beliefs

that contribute to the creation of my ideas about what I want and why, that is, my desire oriented drive. For Russell, these experiences are always painful experiences of lost equilibria but this is obviously too narrow a view. The earlier experiences that generate our motivating ur-beliefs allow for a wide variety of situations, both pleasant and painful. Moreover, they need not be closely connected to desires that they generate according to the push model. The belief chains may be long and varied; who can say what experiences ground my desirable beliefs concerning the possible world where I am a good father? Good people have such-and-such beliefs about good fatherhood and hence those beliefs are desirable. I do not think a philosopher should try to go any deeper on this empirical psychological issue.

Notice that such psychoanalysts as Jacques Lacan and writers like René Girard claim that our desires are social copies or they are acquired through mimetic processes.[21] I cannot take a stand for or against such a theory here, yet it illustrates my view as stated above. Human beings are social creatures whose biology is tuned to social life and made sensitive to social cues. Clearly a causal connection exists between other peoples' desires and mine, simply because my social existence is impossible without my ability to copy desires and hence the influence of others to me is necessary and automatic. It is independent of my efforts and beliefs. I may sincerely believe their desires are crazy and yet I mimic them. Such desires may hurt me but that does not matter. I live my life copying some desires and rejecting others but I must copy a large number of them and do it again and again. All this starts when I am very young so that at this developmental stage the generation of my desires must be automatic and as such causally grounded. When I am a mature and rational adult I am able to manipulate to certain degree the desires that enter my social life through mimesis. I may reject some and adopt some, not really freely but still not deterministically either. My ur-beliefs must, nevertheless, be causally formed so that with their help I can figure out what later beliefs are desirable and what are not. All this contributes to my motivation that provides the drive towards certain objects and allows me to commit myself to certain selected desirable states of affairs and the related instrumental beliefs. In a word, a hidden push can be found however deeply it is buried and hidden in my epistemic system. Without it no pull can do its work, but without the pull no desire may make sense to me personally. I need to commit myself to some, and only some, attractive possibilities and go along with them.

21 R. Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel.* Tr. Y. Freccero. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1965, Ch. 1.

The last but not the least question I ask is, what explains the strength of desire, that is, the urgency or the degree of my personal investment in its object? The answer is, not the degree of attractiveness or desirability of its object but the strength of the push. Notice that very strong desires, or urges, are sometimes independent of the quality of the object once it is desirable per se. Those who really want strong alcohol, drink anything, whether it is desirable as such or not. They no longer care of what they consume. Perhaps, if push is weak the emphasis on desirability is strong and the other way round, strong push entails a diminished importance of the pull. A strong urge is not going to be stopped or sidestepped only because some attractive objects are unavailable. A starving person eats anything. A gourmand does not want to go hungry because he wants to enjoy his meals. However, in some cases such an inverted scale may not apply. A true wine connoisseur is supposed to enjoy a strong pull and strong push at the same time. Perhaps this is an illusion. Anyway, the main point is that I may not desire a fully attractive object and I may desire a less attractive one. My conclusion is that pull or desirability explains the direction and meaningfulness of the desire towards certain objects and push or drive explains its urgency, which again explains the amount of my investment in the object.

CHAPTER 4

Our Anxious Desires

Desires tend to be anxious. A historically important pessimistic tradition supports such a view. The general interpretation of the anxiety thesis depends on the fact that desires are difficult and even impossible to satisfy. Sociologically speaking, desires have been constricted and controlled in many ways in all societies. We also know that some schools of thought and belief have insisted on getting rid of all desires, or at least in minimizing their impact in social life. Also, some writers have promoted the belief to the effect that one should only desire what one already has. Such an extremism is not a viable solution to the problem. We must get along with the core of our desires. In this paper I focus on increasing and non-increasing values as desiderata, negative or zero-desires, and the problem of immodest desires. In my general model of desire and possible worlds such an immodesty requirement can be at least partially corrected: we aim at possible worlds that we can realize, or which are close enough to our own actual world.

Preliminaries

People tend to get anxious and desires can be problematic in a way that we can call, in a metonymic sense, anxious, too. We could as well talk about unhappy desires but we have a good reason not to do so: happiness and unhappiness are so general terms that their informative usage becomes difficult. It is better to talk about anxiety, or a specific type of unhappiness. Actually, to say what we mean by happiness, or to give a definition, is a hopeless task; yet, we may hope to understand what we mean by anxiety. Anxiety as a folk psychological term is, of course, a multifaceted concept but I suggest that the following account of it is sufficiently clear: Desires are anxious if a person anticipates or experiences personal frustration, that is, her desires will not be satisfied. Such negative anticipation may be rational or irrational; namely, the person may have her reasons or no reasons for his negative anticipation, and if he has good reasons his anticipation is fully rational. In this paper, I deal with rational anticipation of frustration but I do not explicate any theory of the relevant type of rationality. Irrational anticipation means more or less pathological pessimism, depression, or life in bad faith, which are psychological issues I cannot take

into account here. Of course, anyone may become depressed after experiencing a long string of anxious desires, in which case depression and pessimism start looking rational too. I will, however, concentrate here on the rationally anxious desires.

Not all desires are prone to immediate anxiety. One notable class of such exceptional desires is Sigmund Freud's wishes and wish-fulfilment: I wish I were good in mathematics but I am not. This does not necessarily imply a frustrated desire, for the following reasons. If it is a pure daydream, all is well. We often entertain ourselves with such daydreams. I also may act on the wish; for instance, I buy mathematics books, keep them in my bookcase, and even read them here and there. This makes me happy because now I feel as if I were good in mathematics. In fact, my wish is self-satisfying. When I look at those books for a while I am good in mathematics and a mathematician and this is enough for me in my present state of mind. If I desire or want to be a mathematician, I am prone to disappointment and frustration: I want to be something I can never be. Suppose a cancer patient who knows he will die soon. She wishes to be healthy but in her resignation she knows she is only wishing. In this paper I discuss desires that can be satisfied and the person has good reason to believe this is the case.

I assume that desire tracks satisfaction or that it is an essential truth about desire that it exists only to be satisfied. There are not idle desires. Sometimes we can easily see what this requires. For instance, I want a glass of water and when I get it I say I got what I wanted. Sometimes the situation is more complicated. I want to make more money than before. What do I want? Do I want money, more money, make money, or to make more money? The object of my de dicto desire is not immediately obvious. Certainly I do not want to make money in the sense that making money could satisfy my desire. To make money is just a means for getting money. It is something I need to do. It is possible of course that a person wants the means to reach an object but that always requires its independent explanation. Normally, I want the object of the desire and not what I need to reach the object. To answer the last question, namely, do I want money or more money, I need to spell out the whole situation. In other words, I need a narrative account of the desire. This entails spelling out the desirability conditions that motivate the desire, or answering the question "Why do you want it?" As I see it, the answer may prima facie look quick and simple but after some probing desires entail deep and complex explications, perhaps not in the case of a glass of water but then at least in the case of earning much money – why bother if the needed procedures are laborious, time consuming, and inherently risky? In this way, we say desires track satisfaction

in such life situations that are in most cases incompletely understood even by the person himself. He aims at objects that he supposes can satisfy his desires and make him content or gratified and in this special sense happy. He aims at such a possible world where he has what he wanted. Notice that sometimes this means acting sometimes not. In many cases we want to act or we need to act but often we only can wait and see how the world turns.

Sources of Frustration and Anxiety

Some sources of frustration are simple, for instance, the case of returning desire. Some desires are of the type that they extinguish when they are satisfied. Some of those return, some do not. Some desires are not of the returning type in the sense that one cannot extinguish them at all, for instance, one's desire to get attention and admiration from others. In this case, the more you get it the more you want it, and this means not only more of the same but more and more intense attention and admiration. Let me say something about these cases although they are not very interesting as such.

I satisfy my desire and then it vanishes permanently. This is fine, normally no frustration follows. Next, I satisfy my desire that vanishes and returns later. This case may be frustrating or not: In some cases desires are such that I want to get rid of them by satisfying them and, hence, their return is frustrating. There are painful desires, like hunger, or more generally, those that are generated by push and not pull. In some other cases, I welcome back the desire in question and enjoy the idea that I can entertain it again. Sex is a good example, but only if you do not think it is bad and sinful. Frustration seems to be case specific because objects are valued in different ways. In other words, some objects are desired wholeheartedly or without reservation, unlike some others towards which our evaluative attitudes are more complex. It all depends on how we describe and judge the desirability conditions of an object. Figuratively speaking, we may say some of the desirability conditions are clean and some are not. Let me give a simple example: I desire normal sex with my loving wife, which is a clean desire. I desire kinky sex with one of my students, which is a dangerous and in many way dubious object, and therefore it is not a clean one. In this way it seems that desires can be anxious even when they are not frustrated: it is enough that they are not clean. In this case they represent a threat. However, in this case we can say that unclean desires cannot be fulfilled in toto and that is the reason why they are anxious. Such desires contain mutually contradictory elements, which logically entail partial dissatisfiability. I want the object of desire and also want to avoid it; I cannot satisfy this combined desire. You

act according to the strongest push or pull, which does not bring about full satisfaction. You get one half and miss the other, which entails frustration.

If this is so, we can see why the Buddhists say unhappiness follows from desires and Arthur Schopenhauer condemns the will. Actually, they belong to an age-old pessimistic tradition that condemns desires. It extends from Heraclitus to Simone Weil.[1] I have no intention to delve into the history of this pessimistic tradition here. I only ask what it tells us that such a tradition exists and then look into some facts about desires that make them likely causes of unhappiness, and more exactly of frustration and anxiety. Other reasons may exist as well, like the Platonic worry that strong and irrational desires come to dominate our mental landscape, or pathos rules instead of nous and logos. This may bring about its own variety of frustration.

Think of two different types of value, increasing and non-increasing, like being alive and money.[2] The first type of value you may fail to recognize (only) when you possess it. The reason for this seems to be that you cannot increase it: you are alive and it does not make sense to say that you want to increase this good. Of course, figuratively speaking you may say you are only half alive or you desire to live more, but this is not what I have in mind. The hard fact is that you are either dead or alive. If you want to focus on such a value you first need to play with it. You imagine a counterfactual possible world where you are either dead, or close to being dead, and then you may enjoy the feeling and value of being alive. By doing so you satisfy a desire, namely that of realizing the value of being alive – but this desire is bound to be unclean. You are playing with dangerous goods when you remind yourself of the painful fact that this value will not last. You may experience the value of life in full when you think of death but then also the death becomes, perhaps too obvious for comfort. This is another anxious thought.

Concerning health, you certainly value it when you lose it. You value it because now you can imagine an increase of this value, which makes your life feel better. A sick person wants to become better, which is to say she wants the value called health to increase, perhaps to its maximal degree experienced by a healthy person. But to want to be better is in itself an anxious thought because it presupposes that you are not healthy and you hope to be better. In this sense, health unlike life is a semi-increasing, bounded value: it has a maximum that one reaches only rarely. Life is an absolutely non-increasing value so that we

1 P. Wheelwright, *Heraclitus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 58/#51, #52, and 84/#96; and S. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*. Trs. E. Crawford and M. von der Ruhr. London: Routledge, 2002.

2 A. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 240ff.

can say you enjoy life only when you are going to die, really or in your imagination; however, you cannot get better like in the case of health.

Next, let us look at the case of increasing value like money. Above I already hinted at the fact that only an increase of value is desirable. Take any increasing value and it loses its desirability when it remains stable without any immediately imaginable threat to it or a promise of increase. If you have much of the increasing value in question you need to be reminded of its value or otherwise you lose your interest in it. The main point is, however, that no maximum amount of money exists. You always can get and have more. If you have little, or subjectively too little – this also applies to people who possess much of the value in question – then you will enjoy every little bit of increase of this value in your own case; there is no limit to this. I think this is what Simone Weil refers to when she writes that desires are heavy to bear and the only way to get rid of them is to amass the desirabilia until you become too exhausted to carry on.[3] The desire will vanish when you no longer have the strength to desire what is desirable. This looks like a strange and demanding strategy but at least we can now understand what it is. The problem with increasing value is that you never have it all or enough of it.

Now, increasing value as the foundation of desirabilia forms the prototype of frustrated desire. In other words,? if you desire something that is based on increasing value you are bound to be disappointed. Paradoxically, the reason is that you can never reach to the top where you have all of the value you want. Why is this paradoxical? In the case of non-increasing value, you find yourself in the situation in which the appreciation of the value vanishes, namely, when you have the value to its full degree. In the case of increasing value, you as if (intentionally) aim at such a maximum where the appreciation or enjoyment of this value will then (unintentionally) vanish. Is it not paradoxical that a rich person aims at a situation in which his most valued objects become subjectively worthless? If he realized this, would he become even more frustrated? Of course, in this case such a maximum does not exist. Therefore, in one case we do not appreciate what we have if we do not imagine we lose it; in the other case we aim at the situation where the appreciation of the value would vanish. The conclusion is that, in the case of a non-increasing value, we realize or at least we should realize that we aim at something that has subjective value to us but we cannot enjoy it and yet we aim at it. All of this is bound to be anxious because it is painful. In one case we work hard to get something that does not allow satisfaction; the object duly escapes us. In the other case we reach the maximal object that is now without subjective value. We need to pretend that

3 Weil, 2002, p. 121.

we lose the value, that is, we deliberately frustrate ourselves and then check our present situation to make sure that we still have it all. In this sense we aim at something that cannot satisfy us, and this is frustrating and anxious.

I said above that both in the case of pseudo-increasing value, which is a value that tends to increase but also has a maximum, and non-increasing value the way to make the corresponding objects look desirable is to focus on their incremental growth, when it takes place factually or counterfactually. Such dialectics makes them subjectively valuable. The normal intuition in such a case seems to be that all of this is painful, in the sense that the person is reminded of life without the value in question. It is painful to rejuvenate your love by reminding yourself what it is to be unloved and unloving. If you are a consistent Epicurean you do not accept such strategy of making yourself conscious of a value by first suffering the pain brought about by the lack of this same value. You should avoid suffering whenever you can.[4]

Now, situations exist where you are able to enjoy the thought or reality of living without a given value. This holds true of any of the value types I reviewed above. Is this perverse or not? Here is an example. Safety is, perhaps, a semi-increasing human value we all appreciate when we have it in a partial sense. It is terrible and terrifying to live without it, that is, to feel the danger. Now, when we feel safe the subjective value of safety tends to vanish and so we remind ourselves about the life of those who must manage without safety and security. This is the standard strategy as I explained above. However, another strategy exists and along with it our thesis of universal frustration gets into trouble. When I am safe I may delight myself by playing dangerous games. If I am in an unsafe environment I may be less inclined to do so, but this is not important here.[5] The main point is that the loss of the maximal value – I only deal with this case here – can feel positively good or, in other words, it expresses some other, unrelated values that make this loss independently desirable. I understand the importance of safety so that I do what I do in a maximally safe way but what I do is as such dangerous. Alpinists use safety gear but that does not make them safe. It sounds like an oxymoron that I do dangerous things safely. I find it independently enjoyable and delightful to play with danger, if I do it safely; how is this possible? Perhaps in some atavistic manner I intend to prove, by taking risks, that I am unbreakable and invulnerable. In this magical way the idea tends to enhance my personal sense and appreciation of safety.

4 See D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, Ch. 7.

5 An interesting study is E. Freedgood, *Victorian Writing about Risk*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, Chs. 3 and 4.

I love money but I gamble, which looks like contradiction. Of course people deceive themselves so that they think that risking what is valuable you can get more of it. But this is not the point. The point is that I enjoy gambling as such while it reminds me of the value of money. Winning is so wonderful because of the risk and the risk is subjectively the greater the greater is my love of money. In both cases we correct our perception of value by means of strategies that, in this context, are independently and intrinsically desirable. This removes any traces of frustration from my situation. I do not mean, of course, the frustration that follows from failure and loss, but losses are what you should expect when you gamble. You know all the time that radical frustration is close by but you enjoy exactly that thought. Dialectically, you enjoy a non-increasing value when you play with the idea of losing it; but you enjoy it even more when you independently enjoy the play. Dangerous play is invigorating as such and, moreover, it keeps you focused on the non-increasing goods in your life.

Immodest Desires

Desire logically entails the lack of something desirable, is this true? I do not have money, hence I want money. If I have money, I do not want money although I may want more money. As Thomas Hobbes says, you want what you do not have, what you have you love.[6] This tradition is based on Plato in *The Republic* and it still seems to survive for instance in the theories of Jacques Lacan: "The term 'lack' is always related, in Lacan's teaching to desire. It is lack which causes desire to arise."[7] However, this is a mistake, in the following sense. To understand desire, the main term is desirability in the sense that you desire what is desirable. Some things are generally and continuously desirable, like power, love, and money. I want what is desirable; why would I want it only if I lack it? My main point is that desire entails a change of worlds from this actual world into something better, or a possible world that actualizes desirable qualities. Any desire aims at a better world that typically is similar to the actual world except for its additional, desirable features. In this sense, desire always aims at something more, so to speak, but this does not entail any lack in the actual world. However good the conditions in the actual world are, they can be better and then you have a good reason to desire accordingly. They cannot be better in terms of non-increasing values, of course, if you possess the

6 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, Part 1, Ch 6, Love and Hate.

7 D. Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1966, p. 95.

maximum. Anyhow, this is irrelevant because you cannot desire what you cannot get. You cannot get an increase of a non-increasing value. In the same way, you cannot desire what you already have.

The lack-theory is a theory of desire that says nothing of desirability considerations. Yet, they explain our reasons for desiring. Now, do we need a motivational theory like the lack-theory? I do not think so. I desire something on the condition that I can see and understand – or imagine – a better possible world in terms of its desirable features. This is enough both to motivate and justify a desire. This decision eliminates a traditional source of frustration. The point is that lack is bad and a failed attempt to correct the situation is frustrating. If all desiring entails a lack and we know that the lack remains regardless of our efforts, desire itself is a frustrating proposition. Anyone who desires will learn this fact. In this sense one must associate desire with suffering, that is, the starting point of desire is always lacking and in this sense bad. Some desires are like that but not all. Notice that desire always aims at a better possible world but the starting point may be categorically bad. Sometimes it is good, although it could be better. If it could not, one cannot desire.

Next, an additional distinction is needed, the distinction between occurring and potential desire. This may somehow relate to unconscious or subconscious desires, but I cannot go into the details of this old and deep problem here.[8] Now, a rather strange and certainly difficult problem is, when exactly do I occurrently desire something? Perhaps we must postulate something like an opening, invitation, or opportunity for desiring in the sense that I find something desirable and also I see an actual opportunity to imagine the relevant possible world, and then the relevant desire occurs. Notice I am not talking about action except in the metonymic sense of mental action. Therefore, the opportunity does not entail a chance of acting in any behavioural sense. It only means an opening for a thought of the better world that then makes it possible for an actual desire to emerge. I want a new car. Most of the time this is a potential desire, but when I actually see a nice new car this provides me an opportunity or invitation to desire a new car in the occurring sense. In this way, an occurring desire entails a thought of a better possible world that I happen to entertain just here and now. This possible world has its desirable features and I happen to have an opening to think about it. Desire is like a belief. I believe that 2+2=4 but I do not think about it all the time. When I think of it, I epistemically assent to 2+2=4. This means that belief is different from belief plus

8 See H.F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*. New York: Harper, 1970; and T. Pataki, *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis.* London: Routledge, 2014.

actual assent. In case of desire, I as if succumb to a desire, say, to possess a new car. Desire may be a mental state or an episode.

To complicate matters, I must put some restrictions on my desires – and at this point some anxious feelings will return. When I want something, I may formulate the object in general terms. I would like to love somebody. I want a new car. I may as well put the object in specific terms. I want the classic Ferrari I saw today in front of my house. I want to marry Ms/Mr X (add you favourite name). What happens here? The basic axiom is: I want the best and I want everything that is desirable. As such my desires know no limits. They are megalomaniac and absolutely immodest. Why this is so? The answer is simple: why would they not be immodest? If you want love or sex, why would you not want the best quality in maximal degree? You first evaluate the matter, you decide what is best, and then you want a maximal amount of it. If you want some good of course you want it all; I find this to be an obvious assumption. Next, I must recognize my limited powers in the real world. This happens because I want to reduce the risks and control my anxiety level, and we all have learned how to do so. We learn it early in life, actually at the same time when our first desires emerge. We will learn that potential desires are free but occurring desires requite control and various types of negative amendment. This brings about anxiety: I potentially desire max-X when I now need to reduce such an unrealistic desire to a realistic X. The tension between max-X and X is obvious and its case is disappointment and frustration. I always wanted a Ferrari but I drive a Fiat Punto. What you ideally desire and what you can get are two radically different things. Of course, a perfectly adjusted and realistic person learns to forget her maximal potential desires. It may happen that she is so modest that she only wants what she can get, or paradoxically, what she already has. Most of us also want what we cannot get. The worst case scenario is of course that where the person's occurring desires are or tend to be unrealistically immodest or maximal. This person must be unhappy.

To want too much will bring about frustration. If I desire too little, I will suffer in another way. The trick is to find the balance between too much and too little. Too much means either self-deception as to success or instant frustration. Too little means, figuratively speaking, a life of starvation, which at some point will come evident and cause suffering. It entails a life not lived. Too much modesty is a curse in the long run. This dilemma applies to everybody regardless of however powerful they may be. Perhaps some of us can dream of and desire much bigger things than I ever can manage without feeling the pangs of frustration. I cannot desire big things although I can day-dream of them and find my occasional happiness via wish-fulfilment. Desires are different, they must have a touch of realism in them in the sense that the better world must

somehow be possible when it is seen from my personal point of view. I would say, I can imagine a path that actually takes me from this actual world to the desirable possible world. Of course the path is missing if the possible world is the same as the actual world or if the possible world is internally inconsistent or impossible. However, we can say that the path is also missing if it is too difficult or, in other words, if the possible world is too far away from the actual world. If I say I desire a bigger yacht than any of the Russian oligarchs ever had, I do not think this qualifies as a full-fledged desire in the sense we are discussing here. The path to that possible world is too difficult for me or, in other worlds, it is too far from my actual world.

Obviously, we have a problem here. First, I said that desires are basically unlimited in quality and scope but now I say all desires are a priori limited by our path-related distance considerations between possible worlds. What I want to say is that desires are not day-dreams, empty wishes, or vain hopes; they are something more concrete as they entail the said path between the two worlds. Nevertheless, all desires are as unlimited as possible and in this sense they are immodest. I want as much as possible and perhaps a little more so that my desire flirts with vain hope and wish-fulfilment – and there I must stop. My desires are initially limited only by my realization that they are impossible, unfeasible, or perhaps silly. The basic idea here is as follows. In the case of potential desire I imagine a path to the better, desired possible world but the description of this path need not be realistic. In the case of an occurring desire the path should be at least minimally realistic or something that may take you to a better possible world. I want to be rich, which potentially means I want to multibillionaire, why would I not? I can imagine how this might happen but certainly not in any realistic sense. In daydreaming and wishful thinking the path does not figure at all. I as if jump directly to the ideal state of affairs. I quickly learn that such desires are a waste of time. If I play state lottery, I know the path to riches and I can even calculate the probability of my success. Yet, I should realize that money will not come to my direction.

When I want love I want a beautiful, rich, and young person who is desired by everybody – but this sounds silly. This cannot be a realistic occurring desire because it has no specified object and I am not that desirable myself, as I know painfully well. This is the first step towards anxiety via frustration. The lesson to learn is that I must restrict my desires in two ways, or to make their objects more concrete and less lofty. Therefore, when I say I want to marry Ms X and I want this individual Ford car I am fine. I did my homework and thus I now know what I can and should desire in the sense that my desires have some relevance to my life and its projects and programs. All realistic desires are restricted in this way although some other desires still may be more or less

outlandish and hopeless. I may desire something that is not within my range, considering my personal power, because the main thing is that the object is somehow relevant to my life, or the object is in my ball-park.

Concerning frustration, it may not be my main worry here. I may feel no frustration if I am a mature and well-educated person. I am happy with my restricted occurring desires so that I do not bother with my potential whimsies, as I see them. Yet, we can argue that only the total lack of desire may provide peace of mind without a trace of anxiety.[9] This is to say that even the best adapted desires may be anxious, why? The explanation is that controlling one's desires requires mental effort and moral work. Many desires are depended on a push factor, or they are brought about by emotive and conative drives that are not cognitively controlled, for instance, hunger and sexual urges. A normal person cannot ignore these even if one is properly trained to control them when they emerge. They are a constant source of mental effort or even struggle and therefore prone to bring about anxiety. It is hard to work against them. Heraclitus says, it is hard to struggle against your desire that wants everything and buys it by the price of your soul.[10] However, also frustration pays its part here: it is disappointing to notice how vulnerable one is and how hopeless the struggle against unacceptable desires can be. Finally, obsession and addiction make life really painful.

Some people desire a lot, some people desire very little, always depending on their personality, life history, and their sense of personal power. If you desire and hope to get too much you will be disappointed, frustrated, and anxious, so you learn to balance immodest desires in relation to life's modest realities, always depending on how much anxiety you are able to tolerate in your life. In our liberal commercial culture people might be happier if they did not desire so much, yet we are constantly pushed to desire even more. Air travel is a good example: in coach you want a business class seat that you know you could but should not buy; you may not want to fly first class because you say it does not add anything desirable to the experience – deep down you know you are deceiving yourself and that entails bad faith. Studies show that that air travellers in coach are bitter and anxious when they see business class cabins and passengers; they come to think of what their own life is like during the twelve hours ahead. Desire management is a battle to stay within some reasonable limits and yet retain the imaginary pleasures of that little extra provided by the

9 A relevant story is told by G. Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*. Tr. A. Kotsko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. The point is, if you follow the rules without thinking it and regard them as all that matters, you are free from desire.

10 See 11.

desirable thing, in this case the flight itself. Too little means your inner life is bland and boring, too much means you are always disappointed and anxious. Is a balance possible? Actually, when people are asked they tend to say their life is good as it is and they do not desire anything special. They say the smallest good things make them happiest. In Finland, at least 82 percent of people report, when asked, happiness or great happiness.[11] They refuse to desire big things, which is too risky and thus frustrating. Life is good as it is, whatever it is like – this what the relevant mental self-defence mechanisms do to you.

Zero Desires

In the literature on desire and desiring, I think I can detect a definite tendency towards positive and action related examples. I say I want a new car or I want to buy a new car, where a new car is the intentional object. I know I can afford to buy a car, or I can go and buy it; hence, the relevant action is in the books, so to say. Desire does not entail action, however, or even motivation but this is a difficult thing to remember when we think of desiring.[12] But we can find novel examples once we focus on what I call here zero desires. They have some interesting properties that are relevant to frustration and anxiety. I mean cases like, "I never want to see him again," which is a restriction on a general desire like, "I never want to see any unpleasant people around me," which as such clearly is an unrealizable desire that comes very close to a vain hope and empty wish. Even the word "never" sounds like too much to desire for. Hence, the properly restricted desire is, "I do not want to see him again," at the same time believing that this may still happen.

Zero desires (z-desires) are common. What are their desirability conditions like? In the example above, I want a possible world where he does not appear, so that his absence is what is desirable. In such cases what is desirable is the absence of something so that a desirable world is that which you can travel through without finding this person. Here the object of desire is the lack of something, like the world without poverty and gratuitous violence. Notice that z-desires have no object in the same sense as other desires have. This is a good

11 This figure is based on several studies, but what they show is unclear. Why do researchers jump from "They say they are happy" to "They are happy"? For instance, if 90 per cent of all people are happy, why do the medical experts say mental depression is a major medical problem in Finland; see (https://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en/home/mental-health/mental-disorders/depression).

12 I want a high grade from an exam. After the test I desire and hope for the best. Notice the ambiguity here: before the test my desire entails action but after the test it does not.

reason, perhaps, to stop talking about an object of desire, or objects of desire in a non-contextual sense. "I want an apple," seems to focus on an apple whose arrival will satisfy the desire and that is all. However, in order to understand any desire we must contextualize its object in the sense that now we focus on the accessible possible world where we find the apple. This is to say that we never want an apple as such. Such an intuition fits well the case of z-desires: their object is a desirable world, namely, any world where the key repulsive fact is missing. I prima facie want any of these worlds. Of course, we also could say that the desirable thing is a negative fact like, "not seeing this person." I may say I am satisfied and happy as long as I do not see this person, when the negative and desirable fact is, "not seeing this person for a long time, possible never." This looks like a narrative or an interrelated chain of facts and hence it may be a good idea to place it in a context in a new possible world. Then it is easier to specify what the desirable state of affairs really is: it is the world where he stays away from my field of perception and perhaps also from social neighbourhood so that there is no chance of meeting him. This sounds like a good idea, namely, to tell the whole story and not to say simply that the person is currently unseen. In this way, it also seems better to talk about a possible world without such a repulsive object and say that this world is desirable.

What then makes z-desires so frustrating? The fact is that z-desires are not satisfiable in the same way as other desires whose object looks so much simpler. I get an apple, a new car, or passionate love, if I do the right thing or (inclusive or) I get lucky. Sometimes things turn out as I hope, I know that, and so it is not irrational to desire those things. Such objects can be ambiguous, metonymic, metaphoric, fuzzy, undefined, too general, etc. but they will still retain their connection to positive facts. One may notice that no desired objects exist but the truth is that we at least have some signposts for tracking the ways the objects tend to move. If I want a car, the linguistic idiom does not tell too much but at least I know in what direction I should look when I am dealing with this desired object. It has something to do with cars or some other things that are somehow related to cars, perhaps figuratively, but anyway. Perhaps I want my manhood back but when we analyse this we can and must start with fine cars.

Now we should ask, are z-desires unique and more problematic than other desires? I argue that they indeed are because they do not have an object in the same sense as other desires do. Let us first notice the following ambiguity: "I never want to see you again" may mean "Stay away from my field of vision," so that the relevant object is the fact that this person indeed stays away from my field of vision. But the same sentence may as well mean that I want to live in that kind of the world where I may have nothing to do with him. This is an example of the expansive nature of desires, or of their inherent limitlessness.

What starts as a simple fact concerning the contents of my field of vision expands, when we consider it more closely, towards the idea that you totally disappear from my life. Then, because I must somehow limit this, I arrive at some middle ground position concerning your visibility in my life. Whatever this final position is it concerns the whole, or at least of a considerable slice, of a good possible world.

Now, a crucial asymmetry between positive and negative objects of desire exists, namely the second object cannot be satisfied in the same way the first one can. Compare, "I want to see you," and "I do not want to see you." In the positive case, every time I see you I feel good about the event – my desire is satisfied. In the second, everything is different: Every time I do not see you, I feel good – my desire is satisfied. This is nonsense, of course. When I do not see you I feel nothing. If I see you I feel bad because my desire is frustrated and I am anxious as long as I anticipate this. This happens because I might see you. Nothing guarantees that I do not see you, so I am always afraid of it, or at least I stay uneasy. I must anticipate disappointment and this entails anxiety. Therefore, z-desires are a source of continuous anxiety, perhaps it is mild and more or less hidden but it still lingers on. In the case of z-desire I can anticipate nothing but anxiety. The only way to feel satisfied about a z-desire is when you get some definite guarantees that the repulsive fact will not occur. If you do not want to see Bill you may desire that Bill is dead. But this sounds like a potential and immodest desire that you aim not to recognize. Bill´s demise is possible, of course; however, this is a novel fact that was not part of the original z-desire narrative concerning its desirable possible world. It is another expansion of the original z-desire. Think of it: "I do not want to see him ever again" is not the same as "I want to have guarantees to the effect that I will not see him ever again." These are two different desires. Moreover, the latter one concerning guarantees happens to be a positive desire: "I want guarantees …" To conclude: z-desires promise us no happiness through satisfaction; on the contrary, they promise us frustration through failure. The only positive aspect of z-desire is this. I do not want to see him ever again and I am anxious that I will see him. In some special cases I believe that the situation is particularly dangerous but he does not appear. I feel relieved and in this sense happy. But this is a special case.

One can make z-desires feel good as if they were satisfied. Here we can use the same strategy we used in the case of non-increasing value. The strategy was this simple: when you have the full count of the value you cannot get more and it all starts feeling unimportant, but you can recover your sense of value by imagining the loss of the value in question, or you may risk the value if you need a more concrete reminder. For a while your appreciation of the value

will return although it will not last. We can play the same game with z-desires: Imagine that the repulsive thing will appear or somehow risk the value and then you can feel the satisfaction. Remind yourself how good things are now when the repulsive possible world has not materialized and think of how bad it would feel if it did. You simply tell yourself that Bill is here and when he is not, you feel good. All this helps you keep conscious of the good thing, which feels good, although it does not change the basic truth, namely, you are battling your frustration and anxiety. Z-desires keep the good thing valueless and as such non-desirable unless compared to its repulsive alternative, which itself is less than ideal thing to do. To constantly remind yourself of what is a repulsive possibility is in itself a source of anxiety. Therefore, you cannot avoid anxiety, regardless what you do. When the bad thing stays away, the situation may stay indifferent to you but, of course, when the bad thing emerges you are unhappy; the threat exists so that when you expect bad thing emerge you are anxious; the only way to feel happy is the counterfactual strategy of imagining the emergence of the bad thing while it stays away; but to imagine a bad thing is in itself anxious. We are in trouble with our z-desires, which is based on the idea of the desirability of the absence of repulsive things. The situation is a good example of the Catch-22.

Desire as a Metonym

Here I follow Lacan, who says desire is a metonym.[13] We say de dicto "I want that the world is without war" and de re "I want the world that is without war." In the first case, if the world goes to war I do not want it any longer. In the second case, I may still desire it. In the first case, the lack of war is essential, in the second case it is not. De re you got what you wanted, a world that happens to be without war, and thus it does not matter if war breaks out later. In the case of de dicto interpretation of a desire the problem is my inability to spell out the exact meaning of desiderata. This is to say that I myself may not know what I want or what the intentional object of my desire is. Yet, most of the time we think the contrary to be true, and thus we refuse to see any problem. If you want to be a good father, what do you want? It is hard to say. What about "All my life I wanted to be as free as possible"? The de dicto interpretation focuses on the meaning of the desired proposition making it vulnerable to all the problems that stem from the semantics and pragmatics of language. For instance, it

13 Evans, 1996, pp. 38, 113f; and A. Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*. Tr. D. Macey. London: Routledge, 1970, pp. 195f.

is hard to believe that someone really wanted to be a sadistic monster, even if he says so, simply because such a self-ascription is socially so inadmissible, except if it is pronounced ironically or it implies pathological self-hatred. Nevertheless, "I want to be a sadistic monster" is a perfectly good desire description. A de dicto desire may surprise me and hence also frustrate me. I say to myself, anxiously, "I really did not want that." Let me bypass these problems and move over to the world of de re desires.

De re cases focus on the intentional objects of desire, when an object displays one single package of intentionality and desirability. Ice cream is sometimes an object one can appreciate by ascribing desirability and intentionality to it. It is good and I myself (de se) aim at it. In this way, ice cream as an object is the object I think of and aim at on the basis of its desirable characteristics. What can go wrong with de re interpretations of desire? I may not exaggerate too much if I say, everything.

Suppose I know what I want when I say, "I want a car that is red." However, I do not know that red paint fades significantly quicker than any other colour. If I knew it, I would be deeply troubled by the fact. In other words, I would be frustrated because now I must reconsider my preference for the colour red. According to another interpretation, I did not get what I really wanted. Another anxious choice is now facing me – I do not like it, namely, to keep the car or not. I want to marry a beautiful person but I should realize that with him or her comes an ugly family. All de re desires seem tainted in the sense that along with the good thing comes a bundle of bad things. Of course you may say you got more of the good thing than you ever wanted but then you must forget the other side of things. Moreover, at de re level we lose contact with desirability conditions. That the car colour is nice and fades quickly does not say anything of why I wanted it: they just happen to be properties of the car.

No desirability considerations occur in a vacuum, even if one may try in good faith. Typically, people think that their de dicto desires are motivated on the basis of some truncated account of them, especially when the object is rich in tempting features. I want her so much that I am unable to focus on the total package formed by all the relevant features of it (de re). The problem is, of course, that a simple object comes de re with a big baggage of other things, some of which not so attractive, some even repulsive. The basic rule is, when you have your object and possess it, you get many occasional or irrelevant things as well. Moreover, the evaluation of these extras should be independent of the desirability characteristics of the object itself. Often it is not so, which indicates a certain degree of irrational reasoning.

Psychologically speaking, we tend to desire something independently of the evaluation of its extra baggage. Is this irrational? I want a red car but now I

am told about the red colour. I may regret it but I still want it. I want a shot of whisky and I am told that it may be, in my current medical condition, a dangerous idea. I still want whisky although I regret that I should not have it. In this way, the extra features of my de re desire may not influence the desire itself but my decision to act on it, or the object's acceptance is in danger. Suppose I have paedophilic desires. I am fully aware that I should not entertain them because they are sick and shameful. I also know that such desires are dangerous but this is an actionist worry. Yet, my moral reservations may not suffocate my desire.

I call this phenomenon the independence interpretation of desired objects. When I fix my de dicto interpretation of the object, or I think I know what I want, I also am committed to it. When I consider the de re interpretation of the same desire I follow the principle of the priority of de dicto over de re, in the sense that the extra features of de re object do not matter – I desire the object regardless of them, or even regardless of any of its features. Of course, one may suggest that my de dicto desired object is originally formulated and accepted as desirable on the basis of my considered opinion of the de re object. For instance, I research the properties of red cars and learn about the fading of the colour. I still desire a red car and that means I do not mind the fading. This seems to be so in some cases, but not generally or as we may say, only partially. I may consider some of the extra features de re but only some and then fleetingly. The proof of this point is indirect. As I said above, our de dicto desires tend to be resistant to the introduction of repulsive de re considerations. I may have a hard time getting rid of some of my desires I know I should not have just by reminding myself of their intrinsic problems. Desires track their satisfaction persistently and even stubbornly, that is, a desire tends to be immune to criticism and counter-evidence. This may not be irrational because it only proves, as I said, that desires track their satisfaction. All this indicates that our de dicto desires are formed independently of a full evaluation of their full de re package. This is one reason why desires are, in the end, anxious: I should pay more attention to the de re side of desire, or I should not give de dicto such priority. The battle is between dreams and reality. I give an example of de re vs. de dicto. When a man (women are stronger) buys a new car, the sales person calls him a couple of weeks later just to see how he now feels about the car. This is important because at this time reality has hit and his dreams may be frustrated. He may be suffering from post-purchase blues. The best of all desires tend to be the most vulnerable.

All this makes desire frustrating, anxious, and even scary, so to speak. We instinctively know it is not a good idea to give a free range to our imagination concerning de dicto desiderata. The nature of frustration brought about by desire is, therefore, twofold: it is frustrating that desires are so stubborn, or hard

to extinguish, and in many cases the extra baggage that comes along with the de re object is something one finds too repulsive for comfort. I may have fixed my de dicto object without paying due attention to the problems at the de re level, or what I will get. It also seems that when I fix the object as something I actually desire this mental act does not allow for a realistic evaluation of the relevant extra features. Let me explain: I say I want to marry this beautiful person and I remind myself of the ugly family but I say I do not care. Epistemically speaking, I should consider the whole set of relevant properties of the case but I am unable to do that. When I focus on beauty I leave other relevant consideration aside as if they did not exist. If I am lucky enough to realize my desire or move to the new and better possible world, I am bound to notice that this world contains features that I do not want or even features that I find impossible to tolerate. Sometimes they come as a surprise, sometimes not. I may have known about them but, because of my desire, I did not form a realistic picture of them. The rule is, beliefs must remain independent of desire. Your desires depend on your beliefs but not the other way round.

Once I realize how risky desires are I cannot avoid of being anxious of them. I try to stay away from such desires, that is, desires may be dangerous. I do not want to expose myself to certain kind of desirability considerations. One way is to restrict your diet of commercial information and persuasion. Of course, nothing you do may eliminate all anxiety because it is embedded in the nature of desire. Whatever you desire ultimately disappoints you. Jacques Lacan says desire is a metonym in the sense that what you want and what you get are never the same but at least they are metonyms, that is, somehow related to each other at the linguistic level.[14] You want a horse and then you get this horse, so at the level of horsehood all is well but nothing guarantees your personal gratification. On the contrary, de re the horse is never the horse you wanted de dicto. Lacan's point is, what you wanted, an idealization, is related to what is, or the real thing, only metonymically. In this sense, you got what you got when you wanted a beautiful horse, and these two still form a metonymic pair. Actually, you can form as many such metonymic pairs as you like and then wonder if you got what you really wanted. What you want and what you get form a set of metonymic pairs. Given that you wanted a horse, what you get can be characterized in so many different ways. How to certify that de dicto

14 But for Lacan at least this does not mean that desire can be simply reduced to the idea of yearning or pining for something lost. Desire for him is always a desire for something else, because it is caught in what he calls "the rails of metonymy." (www.lacanonline.com/2010/05/what-does-lacan-say-about-desire/). Also, Evans, 1966, pp. 36ff., 116; and D. Leader, *Why Do Women Write More Letters than They Post? A Meditation of the Loneliness of Sexes*. London: Faber & Faber, 1996, pp. 118–110.

and de re interpretations still concern one given desire? They need not share a concept, that much is certain, like "horse" and a "bag of bones." Or what to say about the highly ambiguous Biblical metaphor, you want to give "no pearls to the swine"? It seems you need to start from de dicto desire and trace its effects all the way to the real world. If the de dicto object can be traced back to reality we have one given desire. Think of this example: de dicto I want to be a good father and de re what one gets is a sadistic monster. The key problem must be that de dicto and de re depend on different types of intentional interpretation. De re comes close to being an extensional context while de dicto pics a super-intensional one. The former recognizes all properties of the object unlike the second which is dependent on what is included in the intentional object. You do not want to look at what you actually got in life, it is far too risky.

CHAPTER 5

René Girard and Mimetic Desire

René Girard is famous for his mimetic theory of desire across different fields of scholarship. My aim is to scrutinize his theory from a philosophical point of view. His basic idea and theory appear to be deceptively simple. The theory has two parts, namely, the main thesis and its implications. The thesis says, a desiring subject always copies her desires from a model, or it has a relevant source. Desire is triangular or based on a three-place relation: subject – model – object. Next the main implication: subjects are anxious and hate each other because their desires are not properly recognized as their own. How could they be so recognized, they are copies and copies always are less valuable than the original. Paradoxically, no original exists because all models are desires and all desires are copies. I analyze and criticize Girard by showing how complex and unintuitive his theory actually is. I pay attention to the genesis of anxiety. I develop a sketch of an alternative view in terms of scripts of desire on the social stage.

Girard on Desire

René Girard says all desires are mimetic, or copied from some identifiable sources.[1] His first and, as it seems, foundational example is Don Quixote of La Mancha who read too many historical romances and now wants to be a wandering knight. Of course, he recreates himself as fiction and therefore this is him as fiction in fiction, which is to say that first his readers speak about him in oratio obliqua and then he himself is driven to do the same. When we speak of him we refer to him via the fictional narrative created by Cervantes. When Don Quixote speaks about himself he refers to himself via the fiction he has

1 See R. Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Tr. Y. Freccero. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1965. This theory is evidently too simple to be psychologically valid. We sometimes copy desires but we also modify and reject them. I may not desire X simply because you desire X. My desires may represent other subjects' desires but to say they are copies is an oversimplification. However, from an analytical point of view, the simple view is fine. Girard's scholarly output is large but I focus only on his basic thesis. We cannot benefit from extensive empirical considerations here. They may lead us towards the ideas presented in J.D. Holden, *Second that Emotion*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2012; and K. Greenfield, *The Myth of Choice*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

read, say, when he compares himself with the mythical and fictional heroes of the past. Girard says his character Don Q now is mimetic in nature, or a repetition or a copy of those knights that he finds on the pages of the novels he read. Girard says desires – all desires – are mimetic and his audience has listened.[2] They have copied Girard's thesis. Anyway, we should ask what Girard means by his rather grandiose hypothesis.

It is of course possible that the man from La Mancha is the innocent victim of the following logical blunder, namely, he thinks he wants to be a wandering knight and believes that such a desire is satisfiable. The intentional object is, obviously, "wandering knight," so that "I am a wandering knight" is a proposition whose truth gratifies him. This is not so, as one can easily see, for instance, he fails to perform great deeds. Of course, once he has convinced himself that he indeed is a wandering knight he starts wandering around seeking for heroic opportunities. He made himself what he is now, a fictional character, but next he must write the narrative of his own adventures and this is what he is going to do. When you read the legend of Don Q you learn that to be a knight is what our man wants de dicto; thus, he lives like a wandering knight, from one imagined heroic deed to another doing good and punishing the bad. What he says is that he wants to share in the virtues of those immortal knights. He has not really copied the objects of desire, rather he has copied the essential desire itself, and then these objects constitute his new self-image. Fictional desires make a fictional self, of course, like Don Q a wandering knight. In this sense, it is the desire itself he wants, not some specific and special intentional objects, like rescuing young ladies. Or, we can say that he directly wants the desire and indirectly the heroic exploits. He always is happy with the overall scheme, or the grand desire itself, although his exploits never make him happy or satisfied. The noble knight attacks windmills that he thinks are hostile monsters, and that hurts.

He wants to be a wandering knight, which now is his new identity. We can emphasize three points here. First, what he imagines, his heroic adventures, follow from his desirable and desired new identity. In this sense "wandering knight" is what I call a desire frame, which is not an object as such, independently of the heroic deeds. He needs to save fair maidens only because he wants to be a wandering knight who necessarily rescues them; it is all based on this one grand desire, or desire frame, that determines his needs and deeds. The concept of need is not instrumental but constitutive in this context because he does not say "I want to save her" but "This is what a wandering knight does:

2 On mimesis, see A. Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

I as a knight save maidens, she is a maiden, and therefore I save her." Second, Don Q as a wandering knight lives through a grand desire that he shares with his fellow fictional characters, the greatest of the hoary great knights. Third, Don Q enjoys it all, or he is as if immersed in the feeling of knightly virtue, the excitement of adventure, and the sense of power and capability etc. The key term here is feeling, or an emotive state without its fixed object or even descriptive sense. It is the feeling of being of a correct type of agent, and this feeling is good. It may be called pride but as well humility or any of the other relevant emotively charged states of mind. In sum: What do we have here? Don Q lives through a grand desire that works as a desire frame determining the actions that constitute his knightly identity at the same time sharing the great, proud feeling of being a knight. Accordingly, it is highly misleading to say that he wants to be a knight in the sense that "to be a knight" form the de dicto intentional object of a specific desire. Such a desire can be satisfied by the person becoming a knight, but Don Q does not want to become a knight or even to be a knight in this sense; what he wants is to live through the desire and enjoy it. In this sense, he desires the relevant desire. What is this desire? It is being what one already is. According to the propositional attitude theory of desire, this is impossible. You cannot desire, in the propositional sense, what you already have.[3] You may love it, as Thomas Hobbes says, but what you have you cannot figure as the intentional object of a given desire. Desire in this sense requires that you figure out a new possible world where your desire can be satisfied. But Don Q does not only love what he is and what he does; on the contrary, he wants to do what he does and what, fictionally, he already is. In this sense, he enjoys his desire and in this sense he desires his satisfied desire, which therefore cannot have an intentional object and therefore cannot be a propositional attitude. He desires his desire; he desires to be a wandering knight, which in itself is a desire. Then his subsequent actions are based on his identity and motivated by it. Not all actions require propositional desires in their background.

The greatest of ideas are often simple but the simplest of ideas may be deceptive because simplicity does not guarantee the truth or originality of the idea. René Girard argues that desires are mimetic and his large audience tends to agree: "there is an irresistible impulse to desire what Others desire, in other words, to imitate the desires of others."[4] This is empirical psychological point. The logically stronger idea follows: all desires are copies. These two theses are mutually independent and their relationship remains obscure to the

3 See the idea of f-desire, Chapter 1.

4 Girard, 1965, p. 12. Thorstein Veblen figured this out already in 1899 in his classic *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Dover, 1899/1964.

end. What Girard says is that I desire things but such a mental state or episode cannot be described by means of a two-place relation; we need a third variable and consequently a three-place relation, or as he sees it, a triangle. I do not only desire something but I desire it on the basis of a relevant model that I copy. Girard seems to say that such a model is provided by other people whom we witness and from whom we adopt what we desire, when we desire. In this way, I desire X because of a model provided by other people. In other words, I know what they desire and therefore I desire it as well.

Now, I ask only one question: How should we understand Girard's point that desire is a triangle in the sense that "I desire X …" must be completed by mentioning the source of this desire, or a model, that I copy when I desire.[5] We know that X has its source, or a model that I copy. This is to say that my desire is not autonomous but, on the contrary, derivative. Are all desires derivative in this sense? Perhaps Girard should say he is interested in only those desires that are derivative? I can find no simple answer in Girard's own writings. They tend to be heuristic rather than analytical, suggestive rather than convincing, and literary rather than discursive. He is more like an inventor than an architect of ideas, and a preacher rather than a teacher. Here I approach his writings as if his grand vision of desire were a theory, however impolite that may be. However, it is clear that the mimetic theory is interesting because it postulates triangular desires and, thus, we should focus on it.

Let us say all desires are triangular; if we say some are and some are not we no longer have a triangular theory of desire. On the contrary, we have a two-place theory that is supplemented by certain ideas of triangularity, which is not that interesting a view. Only if we argue that all desires are triangular, do we say something exciting. Let us keep it all simple and stipulate that Girard presents a theory of mimetic desire saying that all desires in the end are copies of some given models. These models are persons, although in the case of Don Q the models came from literary sources. But this was Girard's initial first example, and in his later writings the sources of desire are persons. Therefore, let us say all desires are copies of other agent's desires. This may create a tricky problem: certain types of agents are sources of desire and others are recipients. I do not want to raise the question of how those authoritative positions are created and maintained. Instead, I suggest that all agents are at the same level: we all copy other people's desires; I copy them, they copy me. If we dismiss this point, we also need to explain where the authorities get their characteristic desires. Whom are they supposed to mimic? Who are the authoritative super-sources

5 Girard, 1965, Ch. 1 "'Triangular' Desire." See also M. Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*. Lanham: Cowley Publications, 2005, Ch. 1 "Desire is Mimetic."

and why? Notice that Girard's theory is not new if he speaks of the mimesis of desire simpliciter, which has been known since Antiquity in all forms of hero worship. The Christians speak of imitating Jesus Christ as a special model. If all desires are mimetic, what about Jesus's desires?

Of course one may still ask what happens to unique or idiosyncratic desires. A person desires something new in the sense that the desire is peculiar to him and only to him. It may well happen that other persons possess or have possessed such a desire but our person has no previous experience of it. Her desire is certainly a normal desire but, anyway, exhibits a two-place relation. Should we say that a unique mental state cannot be a desire but something else, like a perversion, whim, quirk, or craze? Of course, if the desire is unique to the subject, it may be such. Logically and analytically much depends on the answer but, for Girard, it does not matter. He says that all desires exhibit a three-place relation, although he cannot really mean it. What he means is that all interesting desires do so. Two-place desires are, therefore, oddities we need not worry about. They may or may not be desires and that is all one can say. When you think of it, it is surprisingly difficult to describe a desire which is totally unique to a given subject in the sense that no one never heard about it, or it is not a combination of some familiar desires. This psychological difficulty speaks for the three-place theory of desire.

Model, Not Desirability

Now, if we accept the three-place relational theory of desire, what are we speaking about? Notice that desire is usually depicted by means of a two-place relation: I desire X. However, according to Girard, desire entails a three-place relation: I desire X as Q, that is, as desired by others. But this is not an immediately convincing novelty; I always desire X as something, namely, as desirable. I cannot desire something that is undesirable or repulsive. For instance, I desire X as something pleasant, valuable, or rewarding. This theory has one glitch, though. Some objects of desire are intrinsically desirable, for instance, I desire her love or I want a reward. Perhaps I want pleasure. In this case I cannot ask for an explanation of the desirability of love, reward, or pleasure – these objects are intrinsically desirable. If I want ice-cream, you always can ask why, which is an invitation to produce the third element of the desire triangle, that is, the desirability condition. In this case, one may get something like some quick pleasure. I suggest the following solution: suppose X is an intrinsically desirable object, which is to say it represents a two-place version of the original three-place one. In other words, I want X because of D but now I need not mention D. It

is redundant. I truncate the original three element desire because the third member is now tautological. Hence, all desires are not explicitly triangular. Of course, the easy way out is to say that, in the case of an intrinsically desirable desire, the third element is there but it need not be explicated. "I want love" is an abbreviation of "I want love (because love is desirable)"; compare, "I want ice-cream because it is sweet (because sweetness is desirable)."

In this perspective we can say, Girard has created another theory of desirability, namely, X is desirable to me when it is actually desired by others. Therefore, desirability means "actually desired by others." Notice how radical an idea this is: other people do not desire X as something pleasant, valuable, or rewarding because they inherit their desires from others, or in other words, the only thing I find directly desirable is other subjects' objects of desire, whatever they are. The desirability of X means "desired by others." This entails the fact that no object of desire is desirable as such. For instance, a pleasure that is rejected by all others cannot be desirable. If some subjects desire it, it is desirable. This is to say that we always need three terms to describe a desire: the subject who desires, the object of her desire, and the source of desirability, which now specifies the mimetic option. In this sense mimetic desire constitutes the new normal: if we are normal subjects our desires are copies, or our normal desires are copies, from which it is only a short leap to the idea that the desired X is a normative entity; that is, I should desire X because others do so and, hence, X as a desired object conforms to the new normal. If I fail to desire X and instead desire idiosyncratic Y, I am abnormal, which is something I should avoid. In this way desire tends to create second order normative desires: If I desire X, I also should want to desire X and so I desire to desire X. I will return to the import of this idea below.

Girard and his followers may also emphasize desire as a three-place relation in a deeper sense. They may argue that I desire X not only because X becomes desirable to me via others desiring it but because I copy the desire itself. Notice that desirability does not logically entail actual desiring because desirability is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition of desiring. Many, or most, desirable objects are such that I do not desire them. I simply fail to do so. Do not lust after your neighbor's spouse, however desirable he/she is, is a good idea but it presupposes that some desirable things are not desired. In the same way, I understand that X is desirable to other people and I may also find X personally desirable without desiring it, but I cannot desire X if it is not desirable. Now, Girard seems to say that I actually desire X because others desire X; that is, I desire X along with the others; this is a theory of desire acquisition that bypasses the problems of desirability altogether, why? The standard theory might be something like this: I find X desirable, X is significant to me in

my present situation, and I hope I may get X from where I am now, so I desire X. Perhaps Girard's theory says that I believe X is desired by others, I recognize this, I relate to these people, and I believe I can get X, so I desire X. Notice that I need to restrict the class of people I imitate; it can be called my model class. We can now talk about a mimetic imperative, which triggers off my actual desiring: desire what others desire and never ask why they desire it. This makes desirability conditions vanish. We come close to having a novel push theory of desire. Those do not play with desirability conditions.

Next, Girard's three-place theory of desire radically changes the way we talk about desire. I normally say "I desire X," which now logically entails "We desire X" because my desire of X necessarily is shared with others. However, I never can be sure of other people's desires – I must infer them from their behavior and testimonies, which tend to be incomplete and even misleading sources of information. Therefore, I copy what I believe they desire. Hence, I say something like "I desire X since, I believe, among other things, that they desire X," which entails "I believe we desire X." Perhaps they do not desire X or they desire X* that is not quite the same as X. Here we find a novel three-place relation, "It appears (1) to me (2) that we desire X (3)." Or even "It appears to me that I should desire X like my sources do," which, for two reasons, does not entail "I desire X." First, strictly speaking, no such thing exists – proposition "I desire X" is empty; as a two place relation it is only a linguistic shortcut. Second, obviously I may resist the force of "should." The third term indicates my leap from a two-place relational expression to a three-place expression, which brings about the additional thought that makes my expression an instance of oratio obliqua. In other words, it is no longer true that I desire X oratio recta or de se. I cannot say "I myself desire X" because now we desire X.

When I say I desire X, I use an ellipsis, which can be true only if it is accepted in the mood of linguistic generosity. This mood comes in two different types: first, in regard to evidence and, second, to abbreviations and shortcuts, that is, ellipsis. We often accept propositions whose evidential support is inadequate when we think, counterfactually, that the full support to it would be easy to find. The proposition may also be so conventional that we accept it regardless of evidential lack, like "Mothers love their children." However, we are now interested in the second type of linguistic generosity, namely, tolerating shortcuts. We do this all the time. When I use a two-place relational expression instead of a three-place one, this is what happens. In most every-day situations I can be generous but situations where I should not may exist as well. Too much generosity is not a virtue because in that case I may miss, so to speak, the true nature of some key facts, events, and attitudes. In Girard's case, it is almost too easy to be generous because three-place relational expressions tend to be

so clumsy and tedious to use. I then use a simpler expression hoping that my audience understands that I mean something much more complicated. It is indeed difficult to see how to formulate the relevant oratio obliqua expressions. I suggested above something like "I think we desire X," although that does not sound quite right. How should we formulate it in order to express Girard's seminal and celebrated idea correctly?

As we know, Girard's main idea concerns desire acquisition and not desirability, expressed in its core form as follows,

> I desire X because others, whom I mimic, do so.

This causalistic formulation requires a counterfactual background: If others did not desire X, I would not desire X regardless of what it is like. Girard must think that this entails something like a principle of dependence of desire: desire depends of mimesis, or

> I would not desire X or Y, if I did not mimic others,

This entails a set of general conditions that hold of all desire, for instance: I am in a suitable position to mimic others, there is something to mimic, and I have the relevant abilities and prior interests. Then, I mimic others and desire what they desire, understood in terms of the idea that desire always has its object. Mimesis will, therefore, look like a process of object acquisition. If and only if I believe that they desire X, it follows that, granting some relevant background conditions, I also desire X. I desire X because they do so. If I find X unsuitable, I may instead desire Y, if I first locate a suitable set of other people desiring Y. Of course, I cannot copy all the desires I happen to observe in my social environment.

Now, what is the correct oratio obliqua formulation of a desire sentence, if Girard is right? One may suggest that the following sentence tells us what desire really is,

> (s) I realize that I prima facie should accept X, which my source appears to desire, to be the object that I am to copy in the right socio-mental context and call it oratio recta "I myself desire X" under the principle of linguistic generosity.

It follows that, according to Girard, I no longer desire X simpliciter but my relevant mental episodes change into something else, like the acceptance of others' desires and their objects plus a normative condition. Of course, we cannot say of others that they desire X, except in terms of the principle of linguistic

generosity. We can change their desire descriptions into three-place relations. I then imitate desires that are not desires simpliciter but something else understood in terms of (s). We are all in the same boat, so to speak, because we all mimic each other. This should be easy to accept: we cannot create two different classes of desire, those that we copy and those that are results of copying.

Now, we may say that desire is, by definition, something that I accept as the object of my relevant propositional attitude that we usually call desire. Next, we need to eliminate the word "desire" because otherwise our account is circular. We do it by replacing "desire" by its nominal definition, such as a "propositional attitude that entails the direction of fit of the world to the thought"; in other words, in the case of desire, I think of a possible world that should conform to my thought of it. When I want to be rich, I am invited to think of a possible world where I am rich and my actual world should change accordingly. We then get something like this, call it (s'):

> (s') I myself accept X, which my source appears to desire as X, as the object I am to copy in the right socio-mental context where we all accept X as the object that one should recognize as what we desire, when we face an accessible possible world that is better than the actual world.

Now, sentences (s) and (s') refer to actual episodes of desire: according to (s) and (s'), I myself actually desire X. This of course requires that the background conditions are right so that I can move from considering X in positive light to actually desiring X.

Notice that (s') gives rise to a problem, which is its reference to possible worlds. The mimetic theory does not need it because now desire does not track its satisfaction. But along with it also disappears the direction of fit argument that looks essential to any theory of desire.[6] We may well argue that this fact refutes Girard, but I will not pursue that line of criticism here. Let me explain: When I copy another subjects' desire X, I need not think that X indicates a better possible world. Neither do I think that that world should conform to what I desire; on the contrary, I feel the normative force of X and thus I copy it. What happens when X is realized, if it is realized? The world may have not changed into a better one from my personal point of view. I did not desire X because I wanted a better world; I desired X because this is what the others desire. Actually, it does not matter whether I get the desired object, or not. I need not pay attention to why my sources want X because it is enough for me that they do so. Hence, mimetic desire is not desire in the normal sense. Here is a simple

6 See Ch. 2 in this book.

example. I cannot eat ice-cream. It makes me sick. My reference group desires ice-cream and therefore I desire it. I get it but the consequences are bad. I have desired something of which I know it is bad for me, or the object is not desirable for me.

It does not matter why exactly my sources desire X. It follows that it does not make sense to talk about the satisfaction of the desire for X in connection of mimetic desire. Getting X may not make my world any better. In other words, I did not acquire the X-relevant desire because it promises to make my world better but simply because others desire X. If my better world mattered, it would not exhibit such blind copying, and so it is essential to Girard that the desirability of X is not mentioned.

We now talk about desire and desiring in a novel sense. Suppose we adopt Girard's triangle, or his three-place theory. I then argue that we also must accept the causal or push idea of mimetic desire. In this case it follows, as I showed above, that Girard sketches an idea of some socio-mental processes that do not generate desires in the standard sense of the term. None of the formulations above really qualifies as an account of desire, as the term is usually understood. Perhaps Girard talks about a causal theory of action where mimesis is the driving force? I see that all people wear blue jeans and so will I do the same. My motivation is mimetic in such a way that it bypasses desire and leads directly to action, that is, to buying and wearing blue jeans. We can then, post hoc, say I desire blue jeans but this is a backward looking explanation meant to convince my audience that I knew what I was doing. In other words, the use of the term "desire" is an ad hoc rationalization in foro externo. Actually, I act because I am causally driven to act, and thus I need to tell about it to others using our common language of desire. Mimesis bypasses desire when it is in an actionist context. We move from imitation to action and afterwards explain it all by means of desire language. If I adopt their desire, I cannot say I de se desire the given object.

Scripted Desires

Next, let us consider another possible triangular theory of desire inspired by Girard. Objects of desire are socially scripted for their desirability on the social stage and this is to say they are not copies of other persons' desires. I need not mimic others because we all act according to shared scripts. What is important is that we share the socially constructed scripts.[7] Also, we need to talk about

7 For an another type of approach, see N. Rescher, *Unselfishness: The Role of the Vicarious Affects in Moral Philosophy and Social Theory*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975, Ch. 2.

life on social stage where we play our designated roles. How the scripts are created must be addressed as well. All this comes very close to what Girard says.

Let us first look at the structure and dynamism of individual desires. The main point here is that de dicto desire can be understood as follows: An agent desires de dicto X, which entails that he understands X in terms of a narrative about X; I call this the narrative account of de dicto desire. Suppose I want X and I say so. This should be followed by a why-question, except in those cases where X is understood to be prima facie intrinsically desirable.[8] This is to say one finds X desirable as such, for instance, when X is morally valuable or aesthetically pleasing. However, in most cases I must answer a why-question by referring to an explanation of my choice of X in such terms that brings X closer to something that is prima facie intrinsically valuable. This question-answer game may contain more than just one move and it also may end up in a position where no common view on the desirability of X can be found. We are here dealing with subjectively and culturally open ended value judgements, so this is something to be expected. The main point is, however, that such a dialectics generates and utilizes narratives that constitute socially understandable de dicto desirability conditions.

An example: I want to be a good father. It is hardly plausible to ask why but necessary to ask what I mean, or what I think a good father is like and what one needs to do in order to become a good father. I say I want to be a stern and strict father to my children, and then a why-question is in place. The reason is obvious: stern and strict are evaluations that normally do not carry a positive tone of value in today's normal context. I then explain that I want my children, girls included, to be ready for the armed services where they will be warriors. Many of us might disagree on the desirability of such an object and hence ask for additional explanations. When these arrive the narrative gets richer and, hopefully, more convincing in terms of its desirability ascriptions. Of course such an account of the creation of de dicto desire and its narrative basis may not require actual social exchange; I will relate it to myself in my own terms when I reflect on my desires and the values behind them – everyone can do it. We tend not to do it when the desire in question feels uncontroversial or conventional. When the desire is weird and normatively challenging, my relevant soliloquy may show signs of self-deception.

Let us then look at what I called social scripts of desire. By referring to them one can say desires are socially constituted without saying that they are copies

8 We also use desire language to give motivational explanations, for instance, "Why did you steal the money?" Answer: "I wanted to buy something." Also, we can issue hidden commands like "I want you to go and get it."

of other people's desires. Let us take a closer look into the notion of a script. Scripts are socially recognized and shared ideas of what is and can be desirable. Such scripts are more or less widely shared, or more or less partisan. The latter category is interesting because it creates and follows certain social divisions that can be and will become problematic at many different levels and ways. However, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that when we desire we desire according to a shared social script, or that our desires are scripted. Of course, we have a large number of scripts available to us, some I may not understand, some I find repulsive, and some I find understandable and attractive in the sense that they actually exert a pull towards them. A simple case is like this: a given script is normally accepted by my own social reference group and therefore I find it attractive.

Let me give more examples: you might refuse to understand some religiously motivated ascetic regimes. Many people find sadomasochistic sex-plays difficult to accept as reasonable or attractive – they cannot imagine they would feel the pull of them. One may find social generosity in terms of voluntary work and financial donations valuable objects but nevertheless feel no pull. Here one recognizes the script without personally adopting it. Finally, one may find learning foreign languages a valuable object as a script, recognize it, and also adopt it. Learning a foreign language may be an actionist or non-actionist desire, depending on how one reads the term "learn." It may imply one's own activity and action or it may not. I may hope to learn a language by some passive adoption method, especially if the targeted competence level is low. Be this how it may, the pull depends on the acceptance of the given script in my social reference group.

The scripts are socially available to guide individual desire selection and formation processes, or in their extended form, to instruct one of what there is to be desired, what to expect of one's desires, and what to be aware of in terms of negative consequences. Scripts can be divisive and controversial: my idea of fun may include criminal and violent desires for which a full set of scripts are available via competent model agents, for instance in prisons. Notice that one may adopt a criminal script even if my actual social surroundings are law abiding. This is because the person can imagine an accessible possible world in which such scripts are in normal use. Later on, she may find herself in a situation in which the relevant social reference group is a real one; again, prison is a relevant example. Therefore, I only require the known social existence of the script that explains its pull. But it is a prima facie plausible to argue, I think, that a person gravitates towards the actual social groups that support and develop the scripts that the person finds attractive. She finds such groups desirable.

By recognizing a script one starts on a slippery slope towards adopting it and the relevant social identity, which is sometimes cursed sometimes admirable. Notice that many types of scripts are mutually exclusive, or they imply mutually incompatible social identities; a person with multiple identities may exist, or course, like the mythical Mafioso who is at work a cruel killer and at home a tender father, thus realizing the respective, mutually incompatible scripts of his two roles side by side. The explanation of this is simple: the scripts need not be universalizable. Anyway, any unscripted goals imply Otherness due to unrecognizable desires that lead to socially impossible and false identities. We may call them perverted. We may then fail to know what to say about your alleged desires. The key principle is, if you personally desire something X a relevant script also exists.

Scripted desires are located on social platforms, or whatever you may call them, for instance the stage and the backroom.[9] On the stage you need to display desires that suit your present role and social identity, support them, and continue them as expected by those who know, recognize, and adopt related scripts and roles. If there is a backroom, which I doubt, we are free to adopt different desires without role related constraints – there we are free. But, as I said, I doubt the existence of such private social spaces. It seems that any backroom behavior is scripted as well, or in other words, it is just another type of social stage. For instance, locker rooms are far from the arenas where one performs but they are not backrooms. We are in this sense totally and unavoidable social creatures who are bound together by our scripted desires on the social stages where we play our designated roles. However, if we want we can draw a distinction between the stage and the backroom, in the following way. On the stage we utilize the scripts adopted from our actual social reference group. We express ourselves as we should. In the backroom we may desire whatever pleases us, in the sense that there the scripts are based on the desires of alternate social groups. These must exist but not in the actual world where the person happens to live. He may adopt all kinds of imaginary models in the sense that he imagines his membership in some existing reference groups. In other words, he imagines a possible world where these groups are his social reference groups. The backroom is where the person is free in this limited sense. It is not a place where he can desire without any scripts. It is not a madhouse.

I cannot develop this special theme any further here. I only hope I have made it clear how the argument proceeds: our desires are socially scripted

9 E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York: Anchor, 1959, Ch. 3 "Regions and Region Behavior." Together with Veblen, Goffman explains much of the mimetic life of social beings.

cultural entities without any clear-cut formation process or procedure; the scripts are so basic to our social life that they cannot be explained in any simple terms. They are there and they have always been there as dynamic and malleable as ever. We live by them. Moreover, all this happens on the social stage, which is partially defined and constituted through the scripts that we play over there. The next step, would we like to continue on this track, is to consider the relationship between the stage and social roles, but obviously this would take us too far from my intended Girard interpretation and criticism.

The next question is, then, what is the relationship between our personal narratives of de dicto desire and social scripts. These considerations take us a long way towards a definite criticism of Girard's idea of mimesis. What looks like mimesis can be explained as follows in a way that exhibits at least some analytical clarity. A script is a model for personalized narratives of desire or, in other words, we formulate narratives according to a given script, which guarantees them at least some social communicability, comprehension, and acceptance. This would not happen without scripts because I might form a narrative of my de dicto desire that I could not communicate, perhaps not even to myself. This is to say I cannot tell what I desire and consequently I must say I do not desire – my attempt to generate a desire fails both in foro interno and externo. I may feel an urge in a certain direction or in a certain field of considerations but I cannot tell what it is. Therefore, I need a script according to which I formulate the narrative for my prospective desire and the desirability of its object. An example: all people eat ice cream in summertime in the park, when the sun is shining and birds are singing. This is a well-known script for that special stage performance that most of us willingly partake in our summer fun roles. We then formulate our narratives accordingly so that we may answer the questions about our willingness to eat ice cream then and there. In some cases, the script is so obvious and recognizable that I do not even notice its influence on my desire – it comes forth as if automatically.

Here we need to consider two different types of cases. First, I de dicto desire an object whose full narrative is such that it provides both some clarification of the meaning of the object and an explanation of its intrinsic desirability. Suppose a case where it is not clear what script I have adopted and, therefore, I have to review and question the narrative in order to get answers to the questions concerning the missing features of the object, both normative and analytical. I want to marry Mary. We all know several different suitable narratives: my parents want it and I want to be a good son, I want her money, I lust her, I love her, or I cannot get anybody else. I need to tell a full narrative concerning the desire and its object before you or I know what is going on. Second, we have

many cases that are clear from the outset, so I need not formulate a narrative – instead I adopt the script as such and let it replace my prospective narrative.

Another type of case exists as well, namely a case in which the obviousness of the narrative conclusion is not based on the prima facie intrinsic desirability of the object of desire, like in the good father case. In the ice cream case we cannot say that ice cream in the park is somehow an intrinsically valuable object of desire – it is not. Instead we say that its script is so well-known, widely spread, and easily acceptable that we do not need to explain it any further. If you do not know this kind of action on the social stage, how could I explain it to you? No one should come and ask why I eat ice cream in the park or what it means to do so. If I want to learn Medieval Latin I must be ready to answer questions unlike if I want to learn English. The only possible questions in the latter case are when, where, and how, all of which in a minimal sense clarify my narrative. However, its desirability is obvious and the meaning of the relevant desire clear. As I have argued, I do not copy other people's desires, nor do they copy mine; instead, we all act on publicly known social scripts according to which we formulate our narrative de dicto desires. Scripts and narratives are thus logically connected: there is no desire without its narrative and no narrative without its script; this is the law of the land of desire so that only madness may live beyond its borders.

What then is wrong with Girard's mimetic theory? Better theories can be formulated but this is not the same as saying the mimetic theory fails. To put it briefly, any account of the mimetic process of desire acquisition is a simplification of the script/narrative dialectics. Mimesis may work as a heuristic tool, or as an explanans for some more interesting phenomena, such as religious remedies for persistent social violence – as Girard himself does. However, if desire is the explanandum the mimetic theory does not do much work. Nevertheless, it is obviously true that we copy each other's behavior, emotional reactions, values, desires, and many other things. The question then is, what is behind it. To copy is to affirm and contribute to the existing script that allows one to desire according to one's own desire narrative.

Desires, Not My Own

Let us suppose that the Girard's mimetic theory of desire is valid. Then it is fit to explain a peculiar phenomenon, namely, the anxiety that is so often associated with desires for instance in such fields as sex and religion.[10] The main

10 See M. Foucault, *Abnormal*. Tr. G. Burgchell. London: Verso, 2003, Ch. 8.

point is that copied desires are not the agent's own as I already explained; they still belong to others. One borrows them or they are mere reflections in a mirror that is the agent. If I copy my desires I may wonder what I have copied, what those desires are, and, most basically, what these desires mean to me versus the source of them. Girard says I envy and even hate the source because the source is somehow prior and supreme in relation to me.[11]

How can I make desires my own, or how to identify with them? In this sense, the copied desires look like alien entities and unmanageable intrusions by the Other. How could this fail to trouble me, especially if I realize that all my desires are copies or reflections of the Other? I feel as if I had no identity nor self. My desires are no longer my own and yet I am supposed to express myself – my unique and invaluable selfhood – in terms of them; the desires I have, must be my own. Such psychological dissonance must trouble me no end and lead to nameless and objectless, free floating anxiety.[12] I am not what I am supposed to be. Girard writes, "The subject is convinced that the model considers himself too superior to accept him as a disciple." This provides one possible explanation of the gap between the agent and her model/source: a model is always better and preferable to a copy so that the two players' relations are characterized by their mutual alienation. Notice, however, the following facts. All desires are copies, therefore no model enjoys original desires. It follows that a model may consider herself superior to me but because her desires are copies as well, she must feel the relevant and related negative effects, too. Moreover, because she copies she must copy me, which is to say I can feel superior to her. The result is that no privileged model agents exist; on the contrary, we all copy each other and thus we also hate each other, as if democratically.

An obvious solution is identification, or a mental process by means of which I somehow make those mimetic desires my own. Alas, we know we tend not to succeed because our desire induced anxiety levels in fact remain high and thus we quarrel and fight, just as Girard says. This indicates a lack of a process, method, and filter that systematically reject such desires that are bad, meaningless, or unsuitable for me. As an old man, I should not copy the desires of young men. Moreover, when I am already equipped with a characteristic set of desires, I only copy such desires that fit the already established desires of mine, or if they do not fit directly, at least they tend to make my original set of desires

11 Girard, 1965, pp. 11, 41.

12 See R.A. Wicklund and J.W. Brehm, *Perspectives on Cognitive Dissonance*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2013, p. 1. Cognitive dissonance implies a desire that the agent wants to reduce or eliminate but has trouble of doing so. This brings about anxiety, see Ch. 4 in this volume.

somehow better – which presupposes the existence and use of some criteria of betterment. This shows that Girard's mimetic theory of desire acquisition requires some rather complicated psychological theorizing if one wants to keep it going. Anyway, I want to concentrate on the problem of alien desires, the desires of the Other, or copied desires, those that are not my own and remain so. The problem is this: mimesis as the source of desire does not explain the right thing; the reason for this being that no copied desires are mine. In many cases, when I copy a desire I do not know what to do with it, so to speak. What should I copy when the set of sources for copying is so immense, even when I restrict it to those of my social reference group? What we need is a method or a process that allows me to find and own my prospective desires. Then the two main questions are, what are the desires I identify with and how do I do it?

Think of Don Quixote, Girard's original hero and inspiration. The old man, Mr. Alonso Quixano of La Mancha, reads too many chivalric romances and because of them wants to be a wandering knight himself.[13] He is going to perform heroic deeds all over Spain. Girard starts his own, rather quixotic project together with the knight, but what that starting point is, is not at all easy to say. Mr. Quixano reads historic fiction and finds some narratives of desire there that he promptly copies and puts into action in his own inimitable manner. He is mimicking some outlandish narratives about heroes whose desires Mr. Quixano takes to be invaluable in the sense of being sublime and noble, and as such intrinsically desirable. This presupposes his own values point of view that allows him to say the chivalric desires are admirable in their nobility and the corresponding actions heroic and as such worth trying. However, the narrator says the old man goes crazy in the sense that he is incapable of understanding properly what he reads: "In short, his wits being quite gone, he hit upon the strangest notion that every madman in this world hit upon."[14] In this way, he identifies with the knights of these chivalric romances because he is mad, or he goes mad by reading them. In both cases the idea is that no one in his normal state of mind would do so. Obviously we need better examples of the genesis of mimetic desire.

Perhaps we should read Don Quixote's madness as symptomatic of the discrepancy between his normal desires and his novel, simulated desires. Indeed, the material he copies and mimics is so outlandish and improbable that he

13 P. Tabori, *The Natural History of Stupidity.* New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993, Chs. 3 and 9. Tabori describes very well the world where Don Quixote wanted to live. It was a mad world and that is why he was mad. It is mad to want to imitate madness; his is mimetic madness.

14 *Don Quixote*, Ch. 1. Tr. J. Ormsby (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5921/5921-h/5921-h.htm).

must be crazy to identify with it. Hence, it is not really the case that the read material, chivalric romances, make him mad but that he is mad to identify with them in the first place. The author, Cervantes, certainly plays nicely with this crucial ambiguity in the beginning of the novel. We also can say the old gentleman's madness is a metaphoric expression of the experienced anxiety when one lives by so many desires that are not one's own and make life a mere show of impersonation on a misconstrued social stage. His desires are, therefore, mere caricatures of what they might and should have been, that is, his own. It is undoubtedly a different thing to desire de dicto in the mood of oratio recta or oratio obliqua. I may desire X or apparently and allegedly desire X, which indicates a major difference between the relevant attitudes towards the respective desires. In the first case you can honestly stand behind your desire ascriptions and their communication knowing it is your own desire based on your unique role on the social stage. In the second case the same can be said only if you personally recognize certain desires and they, as copies, actually fit their models, so that your own already existing desires support the new items. However, all this presupposes either that some of your existing desires are originally your own, that is, they are not copies, or that an independent identification procedure for occurring desires exists and works. If all desires are copies, you can never make new desires your own.

In any case, you can avoid the problem of alien desires that tend to cause anxiety or presuppose a bout of madness. We need something that helps us deal with alien desires. It seems hard to accept the claim that you could live on by such alien desires when all of your desires are equally alien. If it is indeed the case that all our desires are copies of the desires of the Other, we must have developed some mechanism of identification of what is our own, or otherwise we were still grappling with our endless desire based anxieties. Perhaps we to some extent do so, as we can see when we think of how anxious so many of our desires still make us. We are driven to copy, act out, and live through so many desires that in the end are alien to us and whose fruit is denied from us.

Let me suggest the following: Many desires are forbidden on the social stage, for instance, certain sexual desires, all blatant expressions of egoism, many religiously suspicious ideas, etc. In some Muslim countries blasphemy is punishable by death via sentencing that can be official as well as based on vigilantism. Here the idea is that desires become visible in action and speech. Now, desires and their outward expressions can be dangerous, so the first step is to forbid them and educate people to avoid them; then, bad desires are simply not available for copying. Once we know this, it is much easier to identify with those desires that are still available. Various kinds of sanctioning systems control what one can and should copy, like do not copy female desires if you are male, and

so on. It is therefore true that the life on the social stage is carefully regimented in terms of what desires are available to whom to copy and all this tends to be sanctioned. Yet, such procedures can never overcome the final and ultimate problem, namely, the desires that I am allowed to mimic are not my own desires and they never will be.

The only way to overcome this fundamental problem is to say that, if I may hope to be a happy and fulfilled person, I copy those desires the source of which is such that I can identify with it. In this way, I identify with model persons and then their desires, which I copy, if they are such that I can adopt them as my own. I need to recognize my models and find them acceptable, and only after that can I safely adopt some novel desires. In this case, I doubt if one still can maintain that we copy all our desires. If I identify with a desire model A and because of that adopt desire X, am I still copying X from A? I do not think so. To copy entails another kind of relation to the source, a relation that is in the sense external and not internal. This is the difference between internal and external relations: My desire for X is internal if and only if I am not what I am without my desire for X. In this sense, my desire for X constitutes me as a person; otherwise the relation is external. Perhaps we can say that many desires are external but those that matter must be internal. Of course, such minor desires may well be copied; it does not matter. The major desires must be internal or the person is in major trouble; one must not copy such desires – even the scripted desires may prove to be problematic, if we hope to be unique individual persons.

Here a new problem emerges. How do I mimic desires? Such desires must be available to be mimicked, which they normally may not be. On the contrary, desires are mental entities and episodes, of which the agent and only the agent herself may be aware of. Desires are displayed on the social stage, that much is certain, but how does that happen? The common assumption is that desires become visible in bodily actions and verbal behavior, which may be true to a certain extent. However, we should not make assumptions to the effect that desires are visible on the social stage because they are motives for action – they are not motives for action. Sometimes desires are of the actionist type in the sense that their formulation refers to action, but this is not always the case. Many desires are of the non-actionist or idle type. If desires are not motives and they are idle, how do you copy them? The only possibility is through verbal behavior or written accounts; Don Quixote reads books and many of us listen to verbal reports of others. This leads to the following situation: many desires are hidden, they are fictionalized, or they are made known via inherently unreliable and often untrustworthy testimonies. Desires are not as straightforward to mimic as Girard may make us believe. What we get is a kind of double oratio

obliqua: I copy something like “He says he desires X” or “She behaves as if she wanted Y” and so the result is not something like “I copied X” and therefore “I accept that I now must desire X” but

> I copy (I must desire what (he says he desires)), that is, X

or,

> I accept I must desire X that is what he seems to desire on the basis of his actions on the social stage.

To me, such a construction seems dubious. If taken seriously, the mimetic theory looks intractable. Obviously, we are able to desire X de dicto and oratio recta and thus Girard’s theory of desire acquisition is too complicated to be valid, even if it initially looks so simple and appealing.

PART 2

Desire in Context: Philosophy and Literature

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CHAPTER 6

Death, Desire, and the Generation of Metaphor

The metaphoric account of death is constructed in terms of transition and travel, another metaphor. But then, all metaphors travel. Just like in the case of desire, the originally metonymic idea turns into a metaphoric one once its transitionary and transcendental nature is developed in full. Desire, understood as a metonym, becomes a metaphor when it travels along the same path that any metaphoric construction must use, from this world to another desirable possible world, from one realm of discourse to another. Ultimately, my desires are flights of fancy and they blend in with wish-fulfilment, just like the ideas of death do. The point is, therefore, that a metaphor itself is a process that is characterised by a meaning moving over to another field of discourse. In this sense, death, desire, and metaphor exhibit a dynamic isomorphic structure: death takes one from here to eternity, desire aims at a novel desirable possible world, and every metaphor evokes a fresh field of discourse beyond the limits of the ordinary.

Prelude: Death and Dress

Tom Paine, in his once so famous pamphlet *Common Sense*, makes a brave literary effort in terms of figurative language when he writes,[1]

> Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence.

What he means is that society may be good for people, or a blessing, however troublesome social life may sometimes be, but government, the seat of coercive power, is nothing but a "necessary evil."[2] It is our own fault that we do not manage to preserve the sphere of social life intact but need the weapons of violence implemented by the state and its elites to guarantee our life and limb: this is what he means by "lost innocence." The government threatens us and we listen. We all wear that badge when and because we succumb to the power of the government as a purveyor of violent death and serfdom. Indeed, government associates both with safety and violent death, which is not far from what Paine intends to say. Government is the agent of death both literally and

1 T. Paine, *Common Sense*. London: Penguin Classics, 1776/1986, p. 65.
2 Ibid.

metonymically (wars, death penalty) and metaphorically (the law as a sword, mortal god).[3] However, how he says it is more important than what he says.

Let us first modify his original aphorism thus,

> Death, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence.

What is then the true paradigm case of the badge of lost innocence, or death? It must be the Biblical event of Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. They ate it and then saw their nudity in dire need of clothing to cover their shame, which indeed entails the loss of innocence.[4] Their shame, masked with clothing as scant as a fig leave, was accompanied first by fearful doom of labour and death and then by death itself. Of course, whatever they do or wear they cannot hide their crime and hence die they must, first metaphorically and then literally. They try to hide their crime with a badge of lost innocence, which is nothing but an oxymoron – to hide is to announce. Their dress reveals their crime. Now the man and wife are metaphorically dead – they have lost their life – although they still walk about and out of the Garden of Eden and live a long, productive life afterwards.

Paine's contemporary audiences knew full well what that paradigmatic case of "lost innocence" is: sin and death in Paradise. It is not like death, one should not exploit such a simple simile where a metaphor is clearly needed. Government is the badge of death as the fruit of crime, a cause of lost innocence that must be camouflaged as quickly as possible by a dress – another metaphor appears here. For example Hobbes and Hegel both agree that all governments are initially based on violence and conquest, even crime, so that Paine just follows a long-lasting tradition here.[5] Hence, if death is the original badge of lost innocence, then it follows that Government is death, or death of freedom and individuality. This is easy to see via a simple substitution of "death" for "badge of lost innocence":

> Government, like a dress, is death (of innocence), or Dress is death.

3 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651: "laws are of no power to protect them, without a sword" (Ch. 21). The sword is Hobbes's recurring metaphor.

4 For instance, Adam in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1674) says about Eve: "Defaced, deflow'red, and now to death devoted? / Rather how hast though yielded to transgress" (Book IX, 901–902).

5 Hobbes: "Conquest, is not the victory itself; but the acquisition by victory, of a right, over the persons of men." (*Leviathan*, Review, and Conclusion). G.W.F. Hegel: "Heroic coercion is a rightful coercion," when heroes found states in the condition of nature (*Philosophy of Right*. Tr. T.M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952, § 93, Addition). Hegel repeats this Hobbesian idea in many places, for instance, §§ 102, 167, 350.

Obviously, one can wear death if dress is death and death is dress – all mortals do. As Plato says, all humans live their life under the false pretence that they are alive.[6] What we normally call life is bodily life but everything that is dependent on the body is an illusion. It follows that life is an illusion and the body death, or body is the badge of death, or a dress. In this sense, body is what dies. In other words, independently of its illusory temporal contingencies a body is dead. Real life is elsewhere.

The key metaphor, namely, a dress is "the badge of lost innocence," is how Paine puts it. Then death is a badge or dress, something that tells us a story, and not a state of affairs. No dress fails to tell a story, which is to say that dress/death is a metaphor. We can call this a transitional metaphor that mediates between a terrible crime, or our lost innocence, and the consequent shame and death. Dress covers our shame, our sex that is; death shields our lost innocence and this is its sole function in this literary context. When Paine says that the dress covers us as a badge, is it the badge that covers and not the dress? Although we know that a badge, in its metonymic sense, covers nothing as it just indicates the right direction of thought and perception by labelling something that needs a label to indicate how to take it. It reveals what there is. Hence, a badge covers nothing but that very fact makes the dress look like something that labels, directs, and reveals. "A dress as a badge" is a strange metaphor, because a dress that does not cover is not a dress. At the metonymic level this indicates a paradox, which is easily resolved through its metaphorization. Now a dress covers (metonym) but it also reveals (metaphor) when it is used as a badge that reveals. A dress can be a badge but a badge cannot be a dress. When you wear your dress you tell your story. When you wear a badge you remain naked.

Now, death is the strangest of badges, why? Because death as a metaphor first hides and then, as a dress, covers it all and hence moves one across the boundaries of discourse to somewhere unimaginable, that is to the Promised Land. In other words, metaphor moves the thought via a transition towards transcendence; this is what metaphor does just like death itself does as a metaphor. Let me explain. A metaphor always is about distant and strange realms of meaning, just like death is about the faraway lands where we travel when we die. A badge attempts the same, namely, it tells us to move across the fixed boundaries of this world. Think of a badge of honour: it invites us to move over to the dream world of the ideals of virtue, honour, and heroism. The badge is then no longer a mere label that indicates what there is and what to think of its carrier; on the contrary, it is now a badge that refers outside of itself, like a medal of honour that refers to some distant battlefields or the red badge of

6 See Plato, *Republic*, 514a–520a: The real life is outside of the Cave.

courage that moves its bearer to a world of imagination and fiction. Think of a yellow star: it is a badge that directs deranged thought to fictional crimes that necessitates both shame and the dress/badge. A dress code, therefore, refers to the iconic cult of dressing prim and proper, or fancy and lavish; it is a paradox and parody, as it is easy to see, a vain attempt to forget what a dress is all about – an attempt to write the name of our crime in nice lettering. The proof: your dress must cover your sex. Your dress is then the badge that commemorates the original sin whose reward is death. But you play with and around this truth when you follow a dress code that covers the original purpose of the dress; it is all ironic. The badge refers to death and yet you dress fancifully.

Meaning of Death

Gerald Doherty writes in his seminal *Theorizing Lawrence* about death as a metaphor and a metonym.[7] I agree with him, how could I not, as he makes this detail foundational, namely, the transitional and transcendent nature of death, or the ascending/descending travelling metaphor of death that is so dear to people in the Christian and Muslim cultures, or the Heaven and the Hell in afterlife. For a strict anti-Catholic Buddhist like Doherty himself, such notions must remain totally alien but, yet, they are there to be seen and pondered about. He is not a Pure Land or Field of Merit Buddhist. He believes in Nibana, which is written on his gravestone in Rymättylä, Finland. Let us look at Doherty's seminal ideas.

I already referred to the transitional and dynamic death metaphor: death is a trip either to Heaven or Hell. Also static metaphors can be formulated, although one might argue that they do not make much sense without their transitional counterparts. Think of the old Aristotelian eudaimonistic rule, "No one can be called happy before death" and its Japanese militaristic version, "No man can be called brave before his death." Here death, at its metaphoric level, is the ultimate pinnacle of meaning, the final thanatological truth about the purpose of human life and about its supreme moment of judgement – as Doherty reminds us. A person dies and the true nature and meaning of her life is thus revealed in full at that crucial moment when nothing can be added or taken away as one's life is now complete. Completion is a fitting sub-metaphor

7 G. Doherty, *Theorizing Lawrence, Nine Meditations on Tropological Themes*. New York: Lang, 1999, pp. 51–56. When we call the end of life death we are dealing with a metonymic pair. When we call death the end of everything we introduce a metaphor. Unlike in the metonymic case, we hesitate to say it is true/false.

here. The same idea can be seen in the Christian idea of Last Judgement where all humans are classified as good or bad by some absolute Celestial Authority. Here they are, beyond time and place, all souls, naked and bare, without dress, so that their careers can be seen at a glance and judged accordingly – such is the positive but static metaphor of death. The problem of this static metaphor is that it is impersonal: the static metaphors of death are different from the dynamic metaphors of personal death and dying. Death is the completion of life, we said, but where is then the person? All death assumes a person. Now she is no longer there so that we need as if to deny her death and make her travel across some distant lands towards a transcendent goal. Only in this way can we make sense of her death *qua* personal death. She cannot die, on the contrary, she only moves from here to there. In other words, death is not real when it means a person traveling between worlds; when death is not real it becomes a metaphor of the person's ultimate destiny. The static idea of death as an end loses the person when her transition from here to the goal preserves her. This is because an end is the static stop and the goal where one aims at. What reaches the end disappears; whatever aims at a goal lives on. When a runner reaches the end he no longer is a runner; when he aims at the finishing line he must move on.

This is the starting point of fundamentally dynamic narratives, the essence of which is a vertical metaphor of transition and transcendence. Some of these metaphors are religious but not all. A medic turns to shocked relatives and says, "I am afraid he is gone," which is to say the patient has passed away, not only out but all the way out and away. When you pass out you may still come back unlike in the case where you pass away. Now you are gone and that is to say you are not coming back. This is a simple unidirectional and horizontal transition metaphor that utilizes the idea of some kind of border that you cross and a gate you go through, and that is all – the dead person just vanished from our view but she still is out there somewhere as a traveller. Religions may then utilize much more detailed travel narratives.

The plot thickens when the dead person goes to Purgatory, approaches Heaven, meets its Gate Keeper, reaches the Paradise or the Elysian Fields, the Pure Land, or the Upper Room, and then perhaps meets her Maker. Perhaps she goes to the deepest Hell to suffer there. Obviously, the dead person is not really dead; on the contrary, their death is a badge of his rebirth and a rite of passage that opens up the gateway to something that is so much bigger and better beyond all time and place. This is the land of salvation, purity, eternal happiness and ever-lasting glory, or the new life of pure joy, adulation, devotion, harps, and white dresses under angelic wings. In this way death paradoxically turns itself into a firm denial of death in terms of a transcendent narrative that utilizes

the widest variety of desirable notions, when death turns out the be the gateway into such rich applications of desirable images. The key metaphor here is the gateway and the route of access to the realm of transcendent existence – whose purpose is the firm denial of death as a metonym. Here the metonym itself is the enemy to be conquered, if you want to live forever. Death as the end of life sounds intolerable indeed. It is a nasty and demeaning metonymy.

Of course, death must be treated as a metonym, too. It is something that happens to all of us when one's time has arrived. Death is then the end of life as a hard fact, which now exhibits its metonymic garb: death is the moment your life ends, when your key organs stop working, when you draw your last breath, when you kick the bucket, when you give up the ghost, or however you might want to describe this final episode of your life, dying. Notice, incidentally, that such phrases have no metaphoric import; on the contrary, they support the metonymic notion of death. They illustrate the fact that one's life has ended. Now, the metonymic language of death also resists death in its peculiarly stubborn manner, as if we refused to admit the very possibility of death and dying. All this is understandable because death is the final, dark, bottomless abyss and dying the chaotic maelstrom that sucks you in ever so relentlessly, as Edgar Allan Poe so masterly narrates.[8] Nobody can help you, yet all that lives dreads death and screams for help, when death is treated at the metonymic level of discourse. Only the ascending metaphor of a paradise can relieve your anguish and hence you need and desire it. You aim at it, yet the cruel and depressing metonym is always there for you to think about. I will argue that such a metonym struggles against death while death as metaphor celebrates it by saying that life beyond death is your real life and your earthly wanderings but a shadow of it. You advance from death to life in Heaven – here we have first an ascending and then a vertical metaphor in a true Platonic context.

The metonyms of death wage their endless war against death. Think of this,

> George was such a good person. We all miss him so much now when he is deceased and we stand by his grave.

Such a metonymically construed narrative of the dead George can be expanded at will without making it feel too strained or misleading. It simply tells us how things are. George is dead when we stand there, the participants in his burial ritual listening to the stream of positive jargon straight from the priest's liturgy book. However, metonymic language, unlike the metaphors that celebrate death, struggles to admit the key fact, namely, the end of the life of the person.

8 E.A. Poe, "A Descent into the Maelström." In *Complete Tales and Poems*. New York: Vintage, 1975, pp. 127–170.

This entails no person. We say, "We miss him," as if he were there to be missed; or, as if there still were somebody called George around. There is nobody. We stand at his grave; whose grave is it? The proper name no longer refers because George fails to exist. Yet we still treat George as an existing personal entity when we use this proper name. What we should have said is, "We miss what used to be George," or "We stand by the grave of a corpse that, when he was a living person, was named George."[9] But how could we love a corpse? Nobody misses a cadaver; one misses a person.

It is impossible to miss the person who does not exist – there is nobody to miss – and a proper name fails to make sense when the referent simply is no longer there. It is all fictional. Such a fake manner of treating metonymic death is not just a matter of linguistic convenience, as it might be, but a matter of deep metaphysical fear. The metonymic treatment of death is intolerably cruel and painful to us. Hence, we need to escape to the more tender realms of ascending positive metaphors. Sometimes we do not go along that route, for instance, when we actually stand by George's grave and remember him ever so sweetly. Alas, the cruel fact is that this is not George's grave, and thus there is nobody to remember, sweetly or not, must be intolerable to the living; hence, we must modify our metonymic language of death accordingly. We keep George alive by our linguistic conventions, which obviously consoles us enough to make the idea of death somehow tolerable. Alternatively, such metonymic games provide us an opportunity to make the crucial leap to the happy lands of transcendent metaphors, or *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*:

> We now stand by George's grave but we honestly believe that He himself is knocking at the Gates of Heaven and entering the Upper Room where we will meet Him. When our own time is up we are ready to follow George and to give up this Vale of Tears in order to start living anew.

The parallel incongruities of the metonymic and metaphoric accounts are as obvious as they are revealing. First, we say (metonymically) that George lies dead in his grave here and now but then we continue to talk as if he still were present. Second, we say that our dear dead George is now alive somewhere else, that is, in Heaven (metaphorically). Ever so paradoxically, George is now in his grave and also in Heaven, in other words in two different places at the same time. Such contradictions do not sound so bad if both the metonymic and

9 K. Burke, in his *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) explains this phenomenon as follows: it is the "personal name that can be said to survive the physical death of a particular person who bore it." (p. 209). A person's name is a talisman that keeps the person alive for us. This is the thesis I try to argue for above.

metaphoric language tell us the same story: George is still somehow around first here and then there as well. The metonymic language struggles and threatens to break down due its grammar but metaphors reign free and as supreme as ever. Hence, the Land of the Dead is ruled by metaphors that are immune to such paradoxes. Ultimately our metaphors must win or otherwise we could not face death. We may try to manage by using a metonym: "This is George's grave," and thus deny the death of George. But we know this is false. We need a metaphor even if we may not use the full travel story from here to eternity. A minimal metaphor may well suffice: "George is gone." This is enough to expel the truth that no George exists, just a rotting body in a cold grave. At the full blown rhetorical level, death is a mixed metaphor: at the same time static and dynamic, good and bad, ascending and descending account of life outside all life – it is a notion that is rich in content but always in denial of itself.[10]

Meaning of Desire

Tropologically speaking, desire is a transitive and transitionary notion, just like death, and it, like death, helps us understand metaphor and metaphorization. One of our very basic desires is, anyway, the desire not to die. Two sorts of desire are relevant here: (mere) wish-fulfilment and (true) want; I also call them wishes and desires because not much hinges on such a choice of words adopted from the morasses of folk-psychology. Of course, wish-fulfilment is a Freudian term but, again, not much depends on this historical detail.[11]

Notice that a wish is self-satisfying: what you wish you also get just by wishing for it; this is called wish-fulfilment. This is different from longing for something you know you do not have and cannot get. Actually, the object of a wish and longing may be the same, just the attitude is different. When I wish to be young again, I feel I am young; when I long for my youth I know I will never get it back. For this reason one can speak of wish-fulfilment even if you never fulfil your longings. Wishes are sweet and longings bitter. Wish-fulfilment is conditional only on the properly developed wish itself and its narrative content. Desires are not so easy to satisfy: their satisfaction depends on something that

10 I have benefited from K. Burke's Appendix D: Four Master Tropes, in his seminal *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). I regret I cannot deal with the ironic aspects of the topics I focus on in this short paper. Most of them suggest a dialectic reading, which indicates irony; also Doherty, 1999, p. 55.

11 See for instance T. Pataki, *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 2014.

is outside of the desire itself, or their de re object. Therefore, desire as want is different from a wish.[12] Suppose I want to be a decent person and good father. What I want is a new possible world where I am a decent person and a good father, that is, a world that is otherwise similar to this actual world where I am what I am now. In other words, I want something that satisfies my desire and hence gratifies me personally, a world where I am a better person than I actually am here and now. More specifically, what I want is to transit to that world; hence, desire is a transitionary idea. Notice, and this is important, that the differences between the new possible world and my actual world is dictated by my desire, otherwise no satisfaction of desire may emerge. This is of course unrealistic: the new world where I am a good father must have many non-intended features as well. My wife may not like me anymore and my friends may change as well. We can take this into account by means of the standard distinction between de dicto (what I nominally mean concerning my want) and de re desire (what I actually get as the object of my want). De dicto I want the world where I am good and no other changes; de re I get a world that has changed much more than that. Notice also that de dicto desire entails, as above, a narrative account of the intentional object and goal of desire. Hence, to make sense of my current desire I must narrate my account of good fatherhood and decent personhood so that they make sense to me and my intended audiences.

The same is true also of such trivial desires as I want ice-cream. Ice-cream is not desirable as such – even if some people like it – hence I need to tell more about it so that it starts looking desirable to me. I say, I always eat ice-cream when the sun shines, which reminds me of my late dear father who always bought me some. Of course, certain objects of desire are desirable as such. If I say I do not desire good life, a special explanation is needed. Also notice the difference between wish-fulfilment and desire here: I desire that I go and get ice-cream unlike in the case of a wish when some imaginary substitute may do the work for me. For example, I look at children in the park enjoying their ice-cream, I mentally re-live my childhood, and that is that – I wish I could be like them. It is like the difference between being in the audience of a boxing match or climbing into the ring wearing boxing shorts and donning a pair of gloves. One more basic point is crucial concerning desire: what I want and what I get always are two different things. Strictly speaking, I never get what I want: I want to relive my childhood summers but whatever I do or get will not bring them back. I may want ice-cream and get some ice-cream, but I did not want

12 See T. Airaksinen, "Desire and Happiness," *Homo Oeconomicus* 29 (2012), 393–412; and "Narratives of Desire." In *Desire*, T. Airaksinen and W. Gasparski (Eds.). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2016, pp. 3–58.

just ice-cream but so much more, and this is to say I did not get what I wanted. Of course it is not necessary to be so strict because you also may adopt a more moderate approach: if you get something somehow comparable with the de dicto object of your desire you may call it satisfaction. We learn to be flexible and modest with our desires in order to avoid disappointment.

Now, wishes are describable as metonymies unlike desires that combine metonymy with what I call the two directions of metaphor, one trivial and occasional and the other essential and necessary. Let me start from wish-fulfilment. I wish to be a logician and I visited the mathematics library to fulfil my wish there where I, in my mind, miraculously transform myself from a philosophy professor into a logician. This change can be described at the level of metonymy because both terms philosophy professor and logician indicate the same person; this philosophy professor is a logician in my new wish-defined world. It is a metonymic pair. My two personal characterizations are here mutually compatible although this need not be the case. I know I am not a brave person but when I watch war films I am a brave hero, which is fine. But I may wish to be a soaring eagle in the sky, which is impossible, or I imagine I am immortal. All such cases display metonymic pairs.

Jacques Lacan says all desires are metonyms, which may be true but not unconditionally, because desires have their metaphoric elements as well. Let us begin from their metonymic aspects. Look at the following example: I want you to love me and I expect to find a proof of that. Now, your love – first as I want it and then as I get it, if I get it – includes two different things that are related in metonymic terms. As I see it, this is Lacan's point.[13] There is a pseudo-temporal gap as all gratifications are deferred: I want your love and I get it later; what I already have I cannot desire. Hence, what I get is never the same thing that I wanted. Of course, such a pseudo-temporal argument is figurative meaning simply that the de re object is different from the de dicto object. What happens is that I, ambiguously, want both as if they were the one and the same object, which would guarantee desire satisfaction and my gratification. Such an ambiguation is a practical blessing as it allows you to keep up the illusion that you in fact are gratified – though it is an illusion. Once you notice the nature of this ambiguity you also will see the metonymic language at work: your quest for ice-cream specifies an object that is not the ice-cream in your hand. You probably believe it is because you protect yourself by introducing the relevant ambiguity, which is based on the metonymic relation between the two different intentional objects, objects understood as de dicto and de re, as

13 See D. Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1996, p. 38; and A. Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*. Tr. D. Makey. London: Routledge, 1970, pp. 195ff.

ice-cream as you think of it and as you may find it after getting it. Both are present to you in the given situation so that you may freely pay attention to the one or the other without making any changes into the actual world or introducing any alternate possible worlds. You have both objects at the same time so that it does not really matter if they are mutually different. This is how the metonymic language of desire works to save your day.[14]

This is just a beginning because desire has its twin metaphoric aspect as well, as I said above. Trivially, I want to be a stud, where stud is a conventional metaphor for a sexually active male. Such a metaphor is easy to rewrite in metonymic terms: I want to be a ladies' man, or perhaps I want to be admired as such, or I want to compensate for my earlier disappointments. Whatever we say the original metaphor disappears. Of course, in some cases such a linguistic reduction is tricky. When you say men are dirty pigs, what are you saying? What do you want to say? Such metaphors pack an overdose of meaning.

The second type of metaphor is a deeper one. As I see it, a metaphor always travels through the fields of discourse in an unpredictable manner when its purpose is to impress and perhaps stun the reader by revealing something new. A metaphor is meaning in transition so that its import is ultimately transcendental. It moves over gaps and traps ending up in a realm that transcends conventional linguistic borders, except perhaps one: it must somehow make sense however outlandish it may be. It may try to shake off all sense, yet sense must it make. When I say I want to be a stud I travel to the world of horse breeding – but not that of winter tires – and invoke all the images of wild stallions in heat. If men are dirty pigs, we discuss life in pig sty, which does not sound nice. The first metaphor is obviously ascending and the second descending. These two examples are trivial as methodological pointers. The truth is that metaphors travel to distant lands where they celebrate their newly found transcendent semantic liberties. Metaphors and desires work in the same way.

Death as a metaphor evokes a transition through a gate or across a river to the distant Pure Land, Paradise, Upper Room, or Heaven; what then are the truly transcendent realms that desire aims to occupy, or what are those desirable possible worlds where desire comes true and one's personal gratification a fact? To answer it is to admit that desire has its own camouflaged metaphoric aspect, just like death does. Death can be treated metonymically and desire is open to the same kind of treatment but both also evoke a more complex and ultimately more rewarding treatment in terms of metaphors of transience and transcendence.

14 See my "Psychology of Desire and the Pragmatics of Betterment." In *Pragmatism and Objectivity*, S. Pihlström (Ed.). London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 223–238.

Desire certainly possesses its own dynamism and, along with it, a metaphoric, transitionary, and transcendental structure – but what about its content? Death has, as a gateway to the better world, its unequivocally metaphoric content; we can then ask whether desire manages as well. The prima facie metaphoric treatment of the object of desire is often trivial, as we saw. However, in the non-trivial transitionary cases desire opens up vistas and conceptual possibilities that certainly compare with the rich metaphoric means of death, such as the last moment of truth that condenses the whole life's career into one fleeting but final perception, as described by Doherty. I may say my best literary projects are now dead; that is, their place is in the Great Waste Basket from where I can never recover them.

Now, the focus of desire, or what we want, travels from here to there, or to another possible word where it finally unravels its true meaning. Here is a narrative example: We are on a lifeboat out on the ocean. We have spent a long time in it, we are thirsty, hungry, sunburnt, afraid, and increasingly desperate and we desire a rescue. It is not implausible to want it yet we can do nothing but sit and pray. Then a ship emerges from behind the horizon and saves us. We want to be able to move from the world where we are helpless into another one where help arrives. How are these two worlds related to each other? They are related metaphorically, of course. In our present example this is not so readily perceivable perhaps, but before going into more complex cases we must deal with the present one – if all desires are metaphoric this one must be so as well.

Obviously, to be saved in this new and still imaginary possible world where a ship appears on the horizon is loaded with symbolic meaning. What happens is that the people must now describe the event of the emerging ship in novel terms. What they do is to rewrite their de dicto narrative account of the object of desire. How the shipwrecked see the event depends on many different things, their psychology, belief systems, religion, culture etc.; however, they must react. Just like the moment of death the moment of desire satisfaction is a transcendent event, which entails the realization of a new possible world as a revelation and game-changer, or as the truth of the matter. The desiring agent now reacts to it in a characteristic manner that is not be without metaphoric elements. The emerging ship is sent by God, it is a miracle, it is an answer to our prayers, it is a solution to all our problems, it is whatever you want to call it except a ship whose legal duty it may be to do something about the lifeboat. That would be a metonymic treatment of the case at the level of de re interpretation of desire. But to say that the ship saves us is to say it is a saviour, which comes very close to Saviour. However, we now discuss the de dicto case, the meaning assigned by those people to their emerging desire satisfaction,

the rescue. For them all of it is bound to be metaphoric. It was metaphoric all the time as they were waiting for a miracle to happen but now, when the ship is there and the de re desire reactivates, all the metaphors become visible and they force themselves to the speech and vision of the people in need. Such a case is nicely analogous with that of death that we discussed above. The Jaws of Death are now avoided.

Indeed, a less trivial example is the will to live, when we give it a metaphoric treatment and forget the corresponding metonymies of death and dying. I say I do not want to die, which is to say I want to go on living. I tell myself a narrative about the event of my dying, my suffering, my fear, etc. I also imagine how my relatives and friends suffer both mentally and materially when I am no longer there to support them. All this takes place in a new possible world that does not exist yet and which I do not want to exist in the future. In normal conditions, this world is not desirable as such and thus I feel I need to avoid it. But what can I do? I know I must die. I then metaphorize my fate, for instance, in this way: I will pass away; hence I do not die but move on to another realm of existence, which I know is better than the present one. I relate to myself the traditional and conventional narrative about such a transition as travel towards Heaven, which is a complex ascending metaphor, or even an allegory, of my newly found better life beyond what I used to know in this Valley of Tears. I know people around me share the same allegory and so I need not worry about that. In this way, the metaphorization of death by means of the traditional travel narrative works to satisfy my desire not to die. I do not die but I live because I travel towards Heaven – this is what I want. The question whether such a desire is satisfiable is beside the point. Desire may also be wish-fulfilment; as far as it is not, the harsh reality of facts will prove to be disappointing.

I have argued that desire can ultimately be understood in metaphoric terms. In other words, the idea of satisfaction of desire brings back the previously supressed metaphoric content. I have no car but when I get it, I get the missing part of my manhood back. It is a long trip from cars to manhood and that is why we need a metaphor here. When I get the car it is the moment of truth when all the hidden metaphors become visible, or a moment of celebration where nothing will be left hidden. The car emerges under the cover of heavy metaphoric meaningfulness revealing the true nature of the de dicto object of a desire that is a hidden metaphor.

Now, my main point is that the full narrative de dicto object of desire grows more and more metaphoric until its contact with its original field of discourse vanishes, like car that is transformed into something else. Think of what all

this entails to the realizability of our desires.[15] How to realize a metaphor in the real world, when the metaphor is ineliminable, unlike in our trivial "I want to be a stud" example? Of course, after eliminating the initial metaphor, you can grow it back by expanding the given object narrative. This is the return of the metaphor.

Now, it seems the foundations of our conative life are metaphoric. When we reach this level, we are at the end of the discourse that also threatens to be the death of discourse. After the full and final metaphors have emerged you have nothing else to say; if you say, you cross the limits of understanding, you stop making sense, you do not communicate, and this is the same as opening the gates to somewhere over there that is like the dark abyss of death, or the veritable hell of idiosyncratic private language no one deciphers. Obviously, this means "hell" as a descending metaphor; however hard I try I cannot lead you back to the heaven of understanding. After the last metaphors a gate opens to the foreign world of non-communication and confusion that is devoid of an alternative. In other worlds, my desires, if they indeed are mine, do no longer communicate. They make social interpersonal sense only as long as they are not private, or as long as they are read mimetically, but then they are lacking as desires. They are now more like desire frames or prototypes I am invited to develop further so that they become my own – and then they gradually lose their interpersonal meaning. Or, we stay at the mimetic level and do as others do, but this is no longer the game of desires we are interested in this paper.[16] It is just mimesis-coordinated social game, a kind of monotonous ritual performance to the highly syncopated music of the social stage, or a dance to the end of time. True desires, when they are my own, always flirt with the limits of communication; this is because of their metaphoric de dicto content. You always can ask, meaningfully, why should you want it?

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15 Pessimist have denied the possibility of satisfying one's desires and hence eudaimonia and ataraxia on that very basis, from Buddhists to Simone Weil; see her *Gravity and Grace*. Tr. E. Crawford and M. von der Ruhr. London: Routledge, 2002, Ch. "The Impossible." The case of Buddhism is, of course, complicated. Desiring brings about unhappiness, think of the following: "I once asked Soen Roshi, 'Why did you want to become a monk?' 'I so badly wanted to become a monk'. he answered. 'But why?' 'I so badly wanted to become a monk'. His wow was truly profound. The intensity of it was remarkable [...]." (K. Tanahashi and R.S. Chayat, *Endless Wow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa*. Boston: Shambhala, 1996, p. 17). Soen professes a strong desire but his words are at the same time so ironic that the whole skene reads like a parody. He refuses to tell why, which is to say the object of his de dicto desire is missing. This is impossible, if we discuss a desire. The de re object is monkhood. Consequently, he cannot be disappointed if he is a monk.

16 See Ch. 5 in this volume.

Generating Metaphors

We have seen that metaphor, death, and desire all share the same structure, that is, they all transfer a rich set of meanings from one field of discourse to another, death from here to eternity and desire from here to some desirable possible worlds.[17] In this sense, their trajectory is a one way road – the respective meanings travel but they will never return – and, because of this, they are genuinely transcendent. By this I mean that once the meanings have been transferred to the novel fields of discourse, they cannot return back to their original fields. If men are dirty pigs, it does not follow that you may say dirty pigs are men. That does not work. Of course, you can play with this impossibility: standing by a pig sty you say "Look, so many men there," which counts as a rather sophisticated irony without metaphoric content. We see that the case of metaphor is different from that of irony and metonymy. If Alexander's armies conquered the world, it is equally true that Alexander conquered the world. In other words, "Alexander" and "Alexander's armies" (metonym) can be used interchangeably whereas "man" and "dirty pig" (metaphor) cannot. Moreover, in the case of a metaphor, the corresponding sentences are not true/false. The paradigmatic case of transcendence is of course death: no one comes back from Heaven and Hell. Yet the Ancient Greeks, like Pythagoras, Ulysses, and Orpheus, could return from Hades, which makes the foundations of their tales of death and afterlife metonymic: life and death can also be seen as a metonymic pair whose terms are in some cases mutually interchangeable.[18] The effect is curious: a person in Hades is by definition dead but because he can return he is alive – this idea of the returning dead is an oxymoron and perhaps also ironic. Metaphoric meaning travels so far that they cannot return and the dead soul does the same. The unidirectionality of travel is crucially important here, although the concept of travel should entail the possibility of return. Roads can be travelled in two directions. Therefore, the idea of travel as it exists in metaphor, desire, and death has its typical mysterious aspect.

Desire, when its narrative is developed in full, also travels to a point of no return. When it passes this point the desired object never returns back to its original metonymic parent form. After realizing what a car really means to him, a person can never again consider car as a mere technological industrial product, if it remains as the object of his de dicto desire. When a young man

17 Doherty writes: "Like the death-process to which it corresponds, metaphor posits as fundamental the crossing from one semantic domain to another" (Doherty, 1999, p. 52).

18 See P. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009, for instance Ch. 10 "Plato and Orpheus."

finally understands what he desires when he desires the woman of his life, there is no return back to the former normal. Perhaps this is why in our Western Christianity based culture desire is so scary to us. We do a lot of work to supress, deny, avoid, and sublimate our desires. "Desire" is a suspicious and even anxious word, especially sexual desire. This can be understood as follows. Desire means anxiety exactly because of its transcendent nature. Once you meet the deepest metaphoric aspects of our desire you also face and feel its transcendent nature; the first aspect entails unsatisfiability and the second irreversibility. You are tempted into a direction of travel that promises no return. When your desire becomes metaphoric, how could you satisfy it? You remain unhappy, yet you cannot find your way back. You now carry the emblem of lost innocence, like a dress you cannot undress. You have what you have and you cannot give it back regardless of how you think of it. Your world has changed irrevocably. Obviously, the fate of Humpty Dumpty illustrates successful desires.

In this way, death, desire, and generation of metaphor all behave in the same way, only their respective degree of concreteness varies: death is an (simple) event, desire a (complex) mental episode, and metaphor a (useful) linguistic trope; hence, I can desire death as a metaphor. All three share a structural similarity, which seems to entail that we need to draw a distinction between metaphor and meta-metaphor that covers all three diverse cases. In fact, what we normally call a metaphor is actually a meta-metaphor, I mean we can treat metaphor as another metaphor just like we treated death and desire as metaphors, or metaphoric linguistic structures.

Example: The verifiable fact that you are a witch anchors your destiny to the age-old tradition that is delivered to us from the dawn of time. This sentence contains three key metaphors, anchoring, delivering, and dawn of time. The second is a dead metaphor that no longer works as a metaphor. Dawn of time may sound pompous. Anchoring is a better metaphor, although certainly not too fresh or interesting one, but it is a working metaphor anyhow. This is to say that the meaning of the sentence travels from a factual social description to seafaring and its methods of keeping a vessel from moving in current and wind. It is a simple horizontal metaphor that amasses new meanings to the case and solidifies our imagery assuring us of the reality and seriousness of the case that is witchcraft. Think of these metaphors whose target is the former Romanian dictator Mr Ceausescu who was Romania's Hero of Heroes, the Genius of the Carpathians, and the Danube of Thought. These come very close to mixed metaphors. They spread their meaning in diverse directions, like a scattergun of one's own cursed imagination, allowing us to form no unified idea of what is said or intended. Hence, we want to give up dead and mixed metaphors and concentrate on those that travel with us towards some new

and fresh realms of allusion, thus proving us with new insights on what one's linguistic intentions and imagery might do. Metaphors, when we focus on their creation and construction, are both transitionary and transcendental, or even transitory, just like death and desire metaphors are. It is all about making meanings travel between the realms of discourse, first to Heaven and Hell, then to new possible worlds, and finally anywhere where a meaning can go – when the travel is a one way road.

Metaphor is a novel cluster of meanings, true, but I do not mean this basic fact; what I am interested in is how we may construe our metaphors in terms of flight of fancy. The metaphoric process brings about metaphors like those of death and desire; here the metaphoric process is a dynamic frame whose slots take in various ideas and images and turn them into specific metaphors. When you consider death as a metaphor you are bound to travel to distant lands and realms all the way to Heaven and Hell from where no one ever came back – this is what the metaphor-generating process does to us. An abstract truth, death, gets its concrete formulations in terms of Heaven and Hell, or the reification of the place where the metaphoric process will necessarily take you anyway. There is no metaphor without transition and travel of meaning that now admit its concretization in terms of the Land of the Dead on the other side of the River Styx or, if you like, the Gates of Paradise watched respectively by Charon and St. Peter.

The case of desire is similar: your travel between possible worlds is embedded in the essence of desire. This is what desire is, our feeling and perception of the pull of the better world, our imagination reaching out from here to the place where what is desirable lies. As we know, such a process is isomorphic with what generates our metaphors; it follows that desire generates its own metaphors as long as we pay close attention to the de dicto desire, or the meaning of what we desire. We never desire what we seem to desire. We desire something that is metaphorically specified by its de dicto object, as I tried to show above. However, the most fundamental truth is this: because they follow the rules of metaphor generation, death and desire end up being metaphoric, too. We create them like we create all our metaphors. To put it in the simplest possible manner, all travelling meanings are in the end metaphoric; or, meanings when they travel become metaphors.

CHAPTER 7

Kafka: Tropes of Desire

This paper focuses on Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle* paying close attention to the metaphors and other tropes employed in the text. I will show that the first is metaphoric throughout, unlike the second, which relies more on metonymy. Also the third master trope, irony is identifiable in the texts. All that is based on the dominant desires of the two main characters in the novels, a bank clerk, Joseph K, and a land surveyor, K: to know the name of his alleged crime and to find a way to the Castle who has promised to employ K. Concerning the interpretation of Kafka's meaning in the novels, I argue that both texts are meaningless in a special way. The texts do not allow for a literal meaning, because their tropological structure is devised in such a way that ultimately nothing is meaningful. The main examples are the priest in the Cathedral and the story of the man and his own Gate of Law in *The Trial.*

Introduction: Two Persons, Two Tasks, Two Desires

Both novels, *The Trial* and *The Castle* begin by introducing a meaningful looking event: Joseph K, a bank clerk, is arrested at home for an unspecified crime, and K, a land surveyor, arrives in a snow covered village next to the Castle of Count Westwest.[1] These two events immediately introduce the reasons for their dominant desires, desires that will rule the narrative throughout, relentlessly but at the same time hopelessly. Through these two obviously innocent events, both men are trapped in the web of desires that will from now on dominate their life and action and in the end prove hopelessly demanding and even fatal. The two narratives appear to me mimetically related. They reflect and repeat each other as if they were two variants of one extended idea or allegory.[2] Both men are doomed to suffer and fail although they will never admit their defeat. Their respective situations may not look exceptionally difficult or extraordinary in any sense. Joseph K wants to know what the charge against him is, as he has done nothing, as the narrative says as if it were objectively true and not merely a subjective opinion of Joseph K. It is remarkable that such an oratio recta

1 F. Kafka, *Complete Novels*. Trs. W. and E. Muir. London: Vintage, 2008.

2 See A. Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

expression is used here by the author and not an oratio obliqua like "He thinks he is innocent." He in fact is innocent; so, in this sense his crime cannot have a name but he is still charged of something. He wants to know one name, the name his accusers have put on his alleged crime. Next, of course, he wants to clear his name. In order to do so, he must find a location where to do it, or to meet his accusers or at least their authorized representatives. All this proves to be impossible. His desire cannot be satisfied but he fails to understand it. Obviously his conception of the law and personal guilt is inadequate, which is to say that his respective beliefs are hopelessly wrong. This is surprising because as an educated citizen Joseph K should know how the legal system works – we all do in our own country.

The situation of K, the land surveyor is much simpler: he needs to go to the Count's Castle where he has been invited to work as a land surveyor. He knows all the relevant facts, he has work to do up in the Castle but for some unspecified reason he cannot enter or even approach it; in fact, he is not even allowed to try. He is stuck in limbo down in the valley, in the village, and its various *Weinstuben.* He wants to go up to the Castle, yet he cannot, and he has no idea why. Again, there is something he does not understand – he never will. When the novel ends, it was never completed by its author, he is still where he was when the story began. He is reduced to the role the Willie of the Valley, ultimately a rather suspicious and dirty character, who has sex with bar girls while the cave he has entered slowly collapses on him. This plot is much simpler than the first one: to try to understand the metaphysics of crime and guilt is a task of altogether different scope from an attempt to enter a building. In the same way, the sufficient conditions of success are different: at what point do you think, with justification, that you know what the law is, compared to knowing when you have entered a building? Of course, in the case of Joseph K, we may hope to simplify his task by simply requiring that he should know the name of his alleged crime. But then, in a legal context, the name of the crime may well be and remain a mystery to all who are involved, an essentially contested ascription suggested by the prosecution. In many legal cases, the true title of the crime emerges only in the decision of the court and may well change when the verdict is appealed. This is of course a problem because the accused cannot know the name of her crime, or what she did; how could she have known that she committed a crime when she acted? Is it enough to argue that she must have known she did something wrong but not exactly what it is? And how can we say she did something wrong if we do not know what she did? In this sense, Joseph K's situation is not that outlandish. The accused may ask, plausibly, what did I do, tell me?

I suggest that Joseph K faces a metaphysical abyss where he enters at his own peril. K on the contrary faces a practical task, a job he cannot do, and this draws him into an endless circle of failed attempts, a stuck wheel he is unable to turn. He has the relevant evidence to the effect that he cannot and he must not enter the Castle but he refuses to recognize this evidence and modify his beliefs accordingly. This allows him to desire a goal that, simply, is unavailable to him. His problem seems to be his inability to find the reasons for his own failure; and because he finds no reasons he is unable to change his beliefs, which keep alive his vain desire to enter the Castle. If somebody told him why he probably would turn around and go back home. But no such reasons will appear and thus he cannot alter his relevant beliefs and desires. He learns all kind facts about the Castle and its officials, but nothing that would be relevant to his key desire: to enter and then start working there. In this way *The Castle* is an endless narrative that cannot have an ending. The only ending would be the death of K. Joseph K of course dies in the end since he is guilty and this dictates the logic of his fate, but K is only working hard to be able to go a place where he should be able to go. What kind of a logical ending could there be? Perhaps it is impossible to say. You try until you die, which entails a narrative that is hardly worth telling.

Tropological Considerations: *The Castle*

The hypothesis is that the narrative of *The Castle* mainly utilizes metonymy without allowing much metaphoric content to enter its plot whereas *The Trial* is through and through metaphoric. However, the master trope in both contexts is mocking irony whose rule is both undeniable and all-conquering.[3] To give a simple example: first, introduce desires that are crucial to the narrative plot, around which everything turns, and then at the same time make it immediately clear that such desires are unsatisfiable – this is an application of irony. The reader quickly realizes what the plot is, namely, that the main character's desire is impossible, or even quixotic – this is the second source irony, or a kind of narrative meta-irony that is lifted out of the text to come and trouble the reader. The reader comes to know so much more than the characters in

3 See K. Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, D: Four Master Tropes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962. Irony oratio recta indicates a denied disturbance in information flow when the speaker knows that the audience understands what is happening. You pour a drink to my lap and I do not react except by saying "nice work." Another type of irony is irony oratio obliqua: only the audience knows that the information flow is disturbed and disturbing although the observed speakers should and could see it that way, too.

the novels that the reader is ultimately mocking them. Why would they go and search the law and the route to the Castle when they must fail? Obviously their respective beliefs about their own situational context are all mistaken and even unreasonable.

Kafka's literary strategy is to embed this into a narrative frame that resembles what we say and read about any normal, everyday life. Both Joseph K and K both try to live as usual although they are constantly troubled by their unfulfilled desire to know the name of the crime and discover a path to the Castle. When the narrative progresses, normal life dominates it as if the author wanted to tell about it and not of something else that is so much more important. This is another source of irony: from the point of view of the narrative what is important is treated as of secondary importance. Especially in *The Castle* this ordinary life aspect dominates the narrative, less so in *The Trial*. In the latter novel we find some embedded narratives that are highly symbolic and loaded with metaphors, for instance, the discussion with the priest in the dark and old Cathedral. A parallel embedded narrative in *The Castle* tells the story of a young girl, Amalia, who is accused by the Castle of a rather strange crime, namely, disturbing the peace of mind, because of her beauty, of an official of the Castle named Sortini. However, this narrative is totally different from the episodes told in *The Trial*; the mysteries of the former have not much metaphoric import. The crime mentioned is like that of Oedipus: Amalia intended no harm, she could not avoid the damaging incident, yet she is guilty in the eyes of all. She must suffer because of her crime; actually, all her people must suffer as if her guilt were contagious. As I said, here Kafka plays with some ancient punitive principles in a context where they become merely atavistic and vengeful. Metaphors are largely missing here as the narrative is played at the level of metonymic language accompanied by some bitter ironies just like Amalie's beauty that enrages Sortini. How did he see Amalia? Whatever the answer is, it must take into account a disturbance in the information flow between the two persons. This is case of oratio obliqua irony. The audience knows that Sortini's perception of Amalia is all too weird. On the other hand, males may react in this way. Female beauty sometimes is disturbing and hence it brings about an aggressive reaction.

Another ironic point is that Sortini, as a high-ranking official from the Castle, behaves like a drunken sailor (the language he uses) or an adolescent boy (hating what he could not immediately get). The effect of the narrative style and technique in *The Castle* is certainly sinister and depressing, starting from the surrounding nature, the snow covered isolated valley continuing to its nasty and in a way primitive inhabitants ending up with the description of the Castle itself. The Castle is not a castle in the same sense as the Castle of Prague

is; on the contrary, it is just a group of peasant houses on the hill looking so nondescript that a careless observer would not pay attention to it. The gestalt of the Castle is not right, it does not look what it is and, hence, K's failed desire to get there gets more and more difficult to comprehend. We know that he wants to find his way there, he insists on an invitation, he is morally aggravated because they break their contract with him, all that is true; but at the same time the visual cues we are offered tell us that the place is not that important or interesting. Again the information flow in the text is disturbed. The following metonymic pair of terms is obvious here: Castle and houses, in a sentence, "This castle is a group of houses." Again the effect is ironic: why try so hard to enter a building like that? It cannot be a worthwhile effort, passion, and desire, not worthy of all the aggravation that leaves K stranded in that miserable village. The reader here understands so much more than the land surveyor, although the same information is available to K as well, that the effect is ironic. The picture is like this:

> K wants, more than anything else, to enter the Castle
>
> He believes that the Castle is an important place and its officers are noble men in the centre of his own mental universe.
>
> The Castle, which he has seen, is just a group of ordinary houses and its officials, whom he knows about, daunting thugs.

The second and third sentences are certainly mutually inconsistent, yet K refuses to see this crucial fact. The reader can see it, it is obvious, and hence one cannot escape the ironic effect in this case. Another point concerns the metonymic aspects of this same example. The ironic effect is now created by means of a simple metonymic pair: an aristocratic Castle is a group of peasant houses. The two terms are freely exchangeable with each other or they refer to the same physical, real entity, which is at the same time a Castle and a group of houses on a hill. The hill binds them together, isolates them from the rest of the village and, in the text, emphasizes the crucial importance of this very metonymy. "A fine Castle it is" counts as an ironic statement when it refers to that bunch of houses, that fata morgana, on a hill, given that the audience knows how the things are – K certainly does not. This mocking statement then adds to the overall nasty atmosphere in the narrative of *The Castle*.

In relation to such visual considerations, we can find the testimonial of the teacher K meets: there is not much difference between the Castle and

the peasants,[4] yet K feels he himself does not belong to either group. The crucial point is the lack of differences that again indicates a metonymic pair of terms, the Castle and the peasants. Moreover, the gap there is so narrow, where should K place himself in this classification? He is the Other, a stranger, an abnormal intruder in a community that does not seem to recognize and even less respect such outsiders. On the other hand, when the narrative progresses the reader quickly notices that for instance Klamm, an official from the Castle and a frequent visitor to the village, is really much different from the peasants. For instance, he has no stable visual form and he is intolerable to see.[5] When one reads about him it becomes clear that he indeed is different from the peasant, so different that they look like opposites. From a tropological point of view it is of course possible to form metonymic pairs of terms that are opposites or at least mutually incompatible. This again indicates an application of irony here. Klamm is unlike the peasants but an official like Klamm and a peasant anyway form a metonymic pair: their properties are different but at the same time the teacher is right when he says the differences are insignificant; in other words, they are not real. Klamm and a peasant are both, from K's point of view, mysterious, strange, repulsive, rude, difficult human beings whose presence offers him no hope, no fun, no purpose, and no satisfaction. Klamm himself may be a strange individual whose characteristics challenge K but at the same time their meaningful aspects hide a reference to a person who is equally identifiable by listing the characteristics of a peasant. The two terms are freely exchangeable if you pay attention to the reference and not meaning. If you say, "I see a Castle official and I see a peasant," the difference is illusory, at the level of meaning; at the level of reference they refer to a class of people who are and are not dissimilar. Actually, when you read the various descriptions of Klamm and draw a summary you notice that Klamm need not be a person but a name of a class, type, or principle of people. That is why he changes his looks all the time and is so hard to look at. Klamm behaviour resembles that of Sortini, so much so that the Klamm-class and Sortini-class of people behave linguistically like a metonymic pair, too. Deep down there they are not different.

The Castle and its people become stranger and stranger when the narrative develops even if it never quite reaches any metaphoric depth. Of course one

4 *The Castle*. Kafka, 2008, p. 12.

5 This is called polymorphy. "Jesus was capable of appearing in various different forms simultaneously." The same applies to the Devil, or "the polymorphous Satan" in early Christian writing. If the change is permanent, it is metamorphosis. Klamm may indeed be polymorphic. (I. Czachesz, *The Grotesque Body in Early Christian Discourse*. London: Routledge, 2014, pp. 115, 117). Of course, demons may have no fixed shape and thus Klamm can also be seen as a demonic character.

may always read such strange narratives metaphorically and ask, for instance, what the Castle is a metaphor of, but in this case this temptation should be resisted. The narrative is designed to stay at the level of metonyms. Not all strange stories are metaphoric. The noble Castle can be just a group of peasant houses without inviting any significant metaphoric readings. The strangeness of the metonyms that are employed here is only ironic, not metaphoric. Dreamlike, surrealistic episodes need not be read metaphorically either. Here is an amusing non-metaphoric example. Soon after his arrival to the village K makes an effort to walk up the hill to the Castle. What can be more logical or practical? Walk there along the road, knock on the door, and ask for an audience, and your business in the Castle will get a head start. Now, from the point of view of the main narrative it is crucially important to block that route; the narrative must close all the obvious routes to the Castle. K cannot get there, he has no means to do it; so, the reader will ask the question why not walk up there. Here is how it is done, like in a dream:

> If he forced himself to walk at least as far as the entrance to the castle, that was more than enough in his present state. So he walked on, but it was a long way. For he was in the main street of the village, and it did not lead to Castle Mount but merely passed close to it before turning aside, as if on purpose, and although it moved no further away from the castle, it came no closer either. K. kept thinking that the road must finally bring him to the castle, and, if only because of that expectation, he went on. Because of his weariness he naturally shrank from leaving the road, and he was surprised by the extent of the village, which seemed as if it would never end, with more and more little houses, their window-panes covered by frost-flowers, and with the snow and the absence of any human beings – so at last he tore himself away from the road on which he had persisted and struck out down a narrow alley where the snow lay even deeper. Pulling his feet out of it as they kept sinking in again was hard work. He broke out in a sweat, and suddenly he stopped and could go no further.[6]

This is a great surrealist paragraph. It is the correct road as K is later told, yet when he walks it the village never ends, the road turns so that it keeps the same distance from the Castle regardless of how long he walks. It is like trying to reach the end of the Universe that is infinite but limited. The road is mocking him, teasing him until he gets too tired to continue. K also notices a time

6 *The Castle*. Tr. A. Bell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

distortion: a couple hours have been a whole day. Again no metaphors are needed here. The road is strange, its exhausts him, and makes him look stupid; obviously the road is not meant to take him to the Castle – yet, it is the right road that leads to the Castle. It is simply the road to the Castle that does not take you to the Castle. This inconsistent pair is both a paradiastole and a metonym: the same road takes you to the Castle and does not do so; again the meaning is different but the reference is the same, the very same road. The author applies the ancient rhetorical trope of paradiastole here, or combines two mutually inconsistent predicates as if it all were unproblematic. It is a paradiastole because a mere deviation is now called the road to the Castle.[7] For K, the right road leads him nowhere. Next I try to show how and why Kafka uses metaphors in *The Trial*. This allows us also to see why the central and most memorable tropes on *The Castle* need not be read as metaphors.

Tropological Considerations: *The Trial*

The Trial is a metaphoric narrative through and through, unlike *The Castle*. The text is a process in its treatment of metaphoric emphasis: from the description of the everyday life of Joseph K, a bank clerk, and its metonymies the narrative progresses ever so gradually towards its metaphysical and metaphoric depths, culminating in the epic discussion with the priest in the old and gloomy, desolated Cathedral, to say nothing of its crowning allegory of the old man at the Gates of Law. The main narrative has its sub-narrative that again has its sub-narrative. How could a mystery that is embedded in a mystery in a mysterious main narrative be understood? Obviously one tries to read the narrative about the priest and the narrative by the priest as two mutually independent stories, but this cannot be right. This leads us towards a deep and unresolvable mystery, into the dark night of interpretation where all cows are black – as Hegel once said about Schelling's philosophy. As I said above, I have nothing to say about such mysteries; the deepest of allegories I accept as what they are, allegories that either have an obvious meaning or no fixed meaning at all. Allegories are easy to read because they have their known and undisputable meaning or no meaning at all. In other words, allegories tend to be conventional, for instance religious mysteries. What the devout see as deep truths are

7 *Wiktionary* defines "paradiastole": A form of euphemism in which a positive synonym is substituted for a negative word. Actually, the relevant expression need not be a euphemism as it may be used ironically, like here. The Bible says, for instance, the last come first and first come last, which is a paradiastolic depiction of the human condition.

to others mere platitudes, or nonsense, like the following: "Mind as a whole wholly enclosing itself, free of all body, unerring, unaffected, untouched, at rest with itself, capable of containing all things and preserving all that exists and its rays (as it were) are the good, the truth, the archetype of spirit, the archetype of soul."[8]

Now, what makes *The Trial* progressively more symbolic is the nature of Joseph K's desires. They grow so complex that the simple desires of the land surveyor K look insignificant; K wants to enter the Castle, meet the people who hired him, and start working. To find something metaphoric here is a big task that can be done but not within the limits of the actual narrative. The case of the bank clerk Joseph K is different: when the narrative progresses the initial metonyms change into metaphors and then into ever more challenging metaphors until the whole narrative structure vanishes into a chaos of allegories. This is what happens to Joseph K, psychologically, when he learns more and more about his own case and the social context where he is and where it all happens. He is a professional person, an educated man, who should be familiar and knowledgeable of the legal institutions of the country; it is totally surprising that he has no clue about what will happen once he is charged of a crime. A new gate opens up in front of him, arrive two bailiffs who have a message to him, then he is arrested because of an unspecified crime although he has in fact done nothing. This is an ironic hyperbola because certainly he has done something and also something wrong in the course of his life. Yet he case is clear, two persons have emerged from somewhere through an invisible door that opens up to and from somewhere where he has never been, which is called the Law. He now faces an existence he has no idea of. This the Law. Now he wants to know the name of his crime and also the Law and its relevant agents and agencies, the judges and law courts. Logically enough, he wants to proceed as far high up the ladder as necessary in order to find the persons, the high judges, who accuse him of the crime, whatever it is, that he never committed, and who also can absolve him. He wants to clear his tarnished reputation and, what this entails, avoid the punishment. However, K does not seem to think of the punishment too much, except in the end.

Let us look at the desires of K. If we simplify a little we can find the following intertwined desires that he feels must be satisfiable; these are cognitive, knowledge related desires that look satisfiable in any developed society: I want to know the name of my crime, who accuses me, where can I find them, how can I clear my name. All these are normal and as such innocent desires. Never

8 *Hermetica*, "Corpus Hermeticum II." Tr. B.P. Copenhaver. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 11.

does it occur to Joseph K to ask any deeper questions like, "What kind of door has opened up to the Law?" The priest in the Cathedral seems to focus on that problem. Why is all this new to you? Why have you not heard of the similar problems with the law in the case of other people you know? Or, what is happening to you, where are you now? Joseph K approaches the new and surprising situation in a matter of fact manner, as if all were normal, and he only must do some research to clear the matters up. The final allegory of the man and the guard at the Gates of Law shows how wrong he has been. Is this his crime?

The situation indicates a deep irony and even ridicule. Joseph K is unable to recognize his new situation as new and hence he continues as usual. The ironic construal of the oratio obliqua case progresses as usual: Joseph K does not know what he obviously should know, the reader knows that the world and its description have changed, and this gap is the source of the inherent irony to be found in the case. Joseph K finds out that all the attics of Prague are actually offices of the Law but, nevertheless, he keeps on searching as if it were somehow normal that attics have been turned into offices without him knowing it. Basically the foundational irony of *The Trial* is even simpler than that: the first sentence of the narrative, namely "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K, for without having done anything wrong he was arrested on fine morning" is the foundation of all the subsequent ironies: fine morning it is when you get arrested![9] Joseph K was arrested although he had done nothing wrong. You must pay attention when you think of it because of the fantastic, metaphysical implications of all this, but only when you have read the whole narrative from its innocent beginning to its horrifying end-scene the vertigo hits you. The first sentence opens up all the gates of hell, the infinite and everlasting tortures of the cursed valley of Gehenna, from where no convicted person ever came back. In the end Joseph K is taken to an old quarry, his own Gehenna. The supreme irony now is that the reader may anticipate it all, unlike Joseph K, whose innocence in the long run approaches stupidity as he is unable to change his very frame of thought.

To approach the metaphoric structure of *The Trial*, let us pay attention to the transcendent approach there compared to the dominant immanence of *The Castle*. K knows where the Castle is, he has received an invitation, and he even found the road leading to the Castle; yet, he cannot get there. All this is within the category of immanence as it takes place in the same world where he already is. The Castle may be far, both literally and figuratively, but yet it is where he himself is. He knows people who are from the Castle and who go to the Castle.

9 *The Trial.* Kafka, 2008, p. 3.

Joseph K's situation is different, it is transcendent, although initially it may not look so: the two bailiffs enter his room through a door, he visits a court to attend the preliminary hearings of his case – all this is normal. But then the context starts changing as he learns how strange the facts actually are: the court is everywhere, in every house, in every attic; everybody belongs to the law, even the little giggling girls he meets in the staircase; the indictment cannot be denied or overturned although the proceedings can be postponed indefinitely; he sees paintings of high judges although they are not really high; the highest judges are so high they cannot be said to exist or they exist in some inaccessible realms, they cannot be depicted, which is to say their existence is, somehow, another thing.

Here we see the narrative process extending from some simple facts to the metaphysical realms of the law that are so deep and profound that they are far beyond Joseph K's normal abilities of comprehension. The narrative is now transcendent. Joseph K has left through the same door where the bailiffs once entered and now he is in another realm of existence where his guilt is obvious and his ability to influence his own destiny is totally lacking. The door is the key metaphor. Think of what he sees when he opens the door of a closet: a cruel and awful whipping scene.[10] This underlines the significance of the door as a gateway to another world and its transcendence – I do not think this strange and isolated scene has any other function or interpretation than that. What I mean by transcendence is this: Joseph K is reaching towards facts and truths that are no longer knowable because they reside not here but there. Joseph K hardly understands the situation. He is totally unable to figure out the fact that what he wants is beyond his capabilities as an indigenous dweller of a wrong world; the problem is that he cannot come to know the law that is independent of everything he knows and believes on an experiential basis, or on the basis of what he has learned during his life.

This is what metaphors do: a metaphor moves the original meaning to a new field of discourse that is prima facie disconnected from it, to a new context that opens up rich sources of novel meanings, associations, ideas, contrast etc. transforming what is said into another thing. I say after narrowly escaping a serious accident, this time I got lucky, the guardian angel was with me. The point then is, I was not lucky in terms of what happened to me. I do not say, I was lucky that speeding car did not hit me. I say, the guardian angel has not always been with me but in this case she was. The guardian angel indeed protected

10 *The Trial*. Kafka, 2008, Ch. 5 "The Whipper." This chapter is easy to read as an expression of Joseph K's raw guilt feelings: he is as if responsible for the suffering of the bailiffs because he has filed a complaint about them, which he knows he has not done. Again he is accused of something he has not done.

me. Such a linguistic move changes the context into a metaphoric one, or into a rather childishly construed semi-religious perspective where the close call gets an altogether different reading, now full of allusions, reminiscences, emotions, and delight. The threatening accident metamorphoses into an event full of promise, gratefulness, and a kind of joy; the metaphor of the guardian angel is by its nature a celebratory one, a tell-tale sign of my new attitude, and an entrance into a novel mythical world. In this way a meaning, that of a near accident, has travelled to a transcendent realm of myth and metaphysics.

The example above belongs to the category of intrinsic metaphors, or metaphors that are created to be metaphors, so that their only role in discourse is as metaphors. In other words, they do not have a literal meaning in any discursive model. They certainly have their metonymic uses, but metonym is a special type of metaphor. Think of this: a guardian angel and God's protecting hand form a metonymic pair in which both terms refer to the same thing, whatever that might be, perhaps good luck or a happy coincidence in a threatening situation. Such intrinsic metaphors show clearly what it means to say that metaphors are essentially transcendent in the sense that they break the immanent limits of a discourse and travel to some distant lands where they gain their fresh halo of ever richer meanings. Notice that intrinsic metaphors need not be mythical; think of "albatross," or "a burden that is psychological and sometimes might feel as if you are cursed because of that burden," and compare it with "a heart of stone."[11] The former is an extrinsic metaphor because albatross, the bird, actually exists. The word "albatross" can be used metaphorically or literally. The latter is an intrinsic metaphor because no heart is made of stone and, hence, the phrase is nothing but a metaphor.

Certainly the intrinsic master metaphor in *The Trial* is the Law whose meaning is explained by the priest in the Cathedral. It is indeed an intrinsic metaphor. At this point we see that what the Law is and what it entails is no longer something one can understand literally in reference to positive law. The Law is not the law. Certainly it is not the same as the law we mean when we talk about the law, law court, and the rule of law, namely, a certain set of published norms that are created by the lawgiver in a certain authoritative order. No, the Law is a metaphor of something that the reader does not quite understand. In fact it is an intrinsic metaphor because it deals with the Law that has nothing to do with the law. From an ironic point of view, it is clear that Joseph K cannot see this crucial point, namely, that the Law is an extended metaphor of something that is non-existent. However, it is a deadly metaphor as we learn in the end when Joseph K is taken to an old quarry to be killed with a butcher's

11 http://metaphors.com/metaphor/albatross/.

knife through the heart, like a dog. This indicates that the Law is something because it has such concrete causal consequences: even if the Law is merely a far-fetched metaphor what the high judges think and say may kill people – this formulation is a mere guess as we do not know the mechanisms of the Law. Metaphors are just linguistic constructions, but in the case of Joseph K, metaphors may kill. And his death certainly sounds and feels real.

I cannot offer any ideas of what the Law is in Joseph K's newly found universe. I suggest that it is a mistake to attempt to do so. What we have here is a trap: the author teases us with a number of misleading clues as if trying to convince us that the new Law has something to do with the old law. It has not; what we have here is a misleading and empty metaphor, or a metaphor of something we cannot say what it is. The effect of such narrative is surrealistic. The first sentence already says it all, Joseph K has done nothing, yet he is arrested – although he is not really arrested. Next, he is interrogated but that is not really so. His case is processed somewhere, which does not seem to be true, and finally he is punished in a way which has nothing to do with a legal execution; actually, he is butchered (the knife) or put away like a dog (as he says). All the evidence is there, *The Trial* is not about a trial – there is no legal process or trial in the book. The title of the book is a misnomer. What Joseph K is so ardently chasing is a metaphorically construed end that is in the end no end; it is not what it looks like to be; it is not even what it is said to be.

Therefore, what I want to say is this: *The Trial* is first about the Law and then Joseph K in the hands of the Law, but this Law is not the law. It is a dark and hidden metaphor we cannot decipher, some kind of a metaphor of itself. The same alien and nameless Other comes into the room through Joseph K's door that opens up to a foreign, transcendent reality where an odd, reified metaphor called the Law reigns supreme. He has no idea what is it, except that it misjudges and threatens him. Perhaps the Law is the metaphoric, or allegoric, expression of some kind of an existential threat. That may work, although in the end it is a trivial idea. Another possibility is that the Law is the metaphor of universal guilt that harasses us endlessly and relentlessly, if we give it a chance. Both suggestions can be adopted, if you like, but I cannot see any direct evidence for them. You may say that Joseph K enters his own subconsciousness without being able to do any analytical work there. He meets his guilt but he cannot make sense of what his superego tells him. He lives in denial, thinking that he is innocent, although the Law knows better.

I reject all such suggestions simply because the narrative fails to support them. I see the narrative as the story of an impossible desire, just like in the case of K in the Castle, which is not a castle. The whole point of Joseph K's effort is his attempt to understand the metaphor that is now called the Law.

Above I already listed his apparent desires, or an interconnected set of desires, but that is ultimately misleading as well. What he wants to get, the ultimate goal of his de dicto desire, is to know the import of the metaphor of the Law. This he cannot do because the Law is, as such, meaningless, or it has no de re interpretation. Look at the following two sentences that are parallel to what Pontius Pilate asks during the trial of Jesus: What is truth (de dicto)? And, What is (the) truth (de re)?

> I want to know what the Law is; that is, I am asking for the definition of it (de dicto).
>
> I want to know what the Law says; that is, I am asking for a verdict in my case (de re).

It is clear that Joseph K cannot draw a distinction between these two formulations. If he does not figure out the first problem, the second one remains meaningless. If he starts from the second sentence, he assigns a meaning to the first one without thinking of its justification. He indeed seems to assume that what is now called the Law is what is conventionally called the law. He fails to see the intrinsically metaphoric nature of it. Joseph K should not be asking any of those questions he is asking as if the Law were law. The more he keeps asking the more confusing the case becomes. No castle on the hill exists as a place where K could try to get. This is the difference between a metonym based desire (Castle) compared to a metaphor based one (the Law). In fact, no metaphoric formulation of the goal of desire allows for the satisfaction of the desire. How could it? The task of metaphor is to enrich and divert the relevant meanings until they are intractable. This is to say, in the end you do not know what you want. This entails no satisfaction. If he wants to be a stud, what does he want? You need to provide an exact answer if you want to see what de re object corresponds with this de dicto formulation of the desire. We talk about a stud simply because we do not know, we cannot know, and we do not want to know. We leave the strange business of desire satisfaction to rest in the dense cloud of fog raised by an apt metaphor.

As I argued, metaphors travel towards some transcendent realms where their meaning feeds itself from novel, unexpected, and rarefied sources, which is to say that metaphors sometimes reach the state where they seem to work well but they in fact are meaningless, at least if we talk about cognitive meaning. Normally we compensate this by fixing the meaning of the metaphor by a convention, rather than dropping it altogether. Somehow the metaphor feels so fine and valuable that we do want to keep it. But then we require a meaning,

which it can get only by conventional means. In the same way, Kafka invents a fine metaphor but at the same time leaves it meaningless. Now, the community of authoritative interpreters can come up and tell the readers what the meaning is and, if they have the authority to achieve this, that is then the meaning. They may say the Law means guilt – and it indeed does. Religious Christian authorities do this all the time.[12]

I already offered an example of intrinsic metaphors: all these are undecipherable without authoritative conventions. God the Creator is a possible example. Think of it. If an artist creates a statue, is this what creation is and God's work its metaphor? I do not think so. God's creation is the original case and artistic creation is its metaphor. But if it goes this way, we have no idea what creation means, except that it is something that an artist sometimes achieves. Holy Ghost is a metaphor of what? This metaphor is meaningless without an authoritative advice and decision. What about secular cases? You can turn many would-be metaphors into meaningless suggestions by spelling out their meaning in a narrative form, just like Kafka does in *The Trial* and refuses to do in *The Castle* where mere metonyms rule over an ironic universe. Think of the door as a metaphor in *The Trial:* a bailiff enters through the door, "At one there was a knock at the door and a man entered whom he had never seen before in the house."[13] When you say that much, the metaphoric use of "door" disappears. Suppose you for some reason do not know the metaphoric meaning of "He is a stud." You tell a full story of the life in a horse breeding farm, how semen is collected, the insemination done, and the mares treated. Do you think anyone can connect these facts to the life of a successful and good looking young male? Metaphors always seem to contain conventional elements unlike similes and some poor metaphors that are only simple, condensed similes. Kafka plays with this very idea by creating an unconventional yet familiar looking metaphors without ever providing a key to their interpretation. The end of the book, in the old quarry, makes this clear. The end is ironic to the core: that way of killing a person has nothing to do with the law, neither has it nothing to do with how to resolve your guilty feelings or experienced threats. Persons, however timid or guilty, do not perish like stray dogs.

Joseph K pretends that he might come to know what the Law is and even meet with its representatives, or the high judges. He deceives himself and he is wrong, but this is not the main point. The point is that he at the same time

12 In his excellent biography *Kafka, The Early Years* (Tr. S. Frisch. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) Reiner Stach offers some typical, biographical interpretative keys, as if he could not resist the temptation, see pp. 66f. Then p. 71 seems to condemn the earlier interpretative method as definitely "naïve."

13 *The Trial.* Kafka, 2008, p. 3.

draws his readers into this maelstrom of misleading desires. The reader wants to know and spell out what the Law as the law is, at the same time getting blinded by and to the fact that no such knowledge exists. The source of the mistake is easy to see: we should not say that all metaphors, however good and interesting they are, have their cognitive meaning, or even that they can be given such a meaning.[14] Joseph K's destiny forms a narrative but narratives do not work like true life histories. Narratives as literature may contain cognitively meaningless metaphors. To leave the main metaphor meaningless is the ultimate expression of irony in fiction.

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14 Cf. E.R. MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988.

CHAPTER 8

Lost in Kafka's America

Notorious, English, adjective, meaning
reputable and *dis*reputable

Franz Kafka's *Amerika*, or *The Man Who Disappeared,* may be a relatively neglected work. Whether this is true or not, I find the text rich and stimulating. Young Karl Rossmann lands in America and then runs away from everything that is America, as it is depicted in *Amerika,* all the way to Oklahoma Theater. Among other significant places is the Grand Hotel Occidental where Karl tries to settle down, unsuccessfully of course. All his desires are meek and weak, and the surroundings are nothing but overpowering. He is a virtual *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*; hence he is the person who disappeared. In this chapter I develop a theory of metaphor without target, that is, original or empty metaphor, which corresponds to desire without object. Sometimes metaphors, like those in *America,* do not allow a cognitive interpretation in the sense that we could say what they are metaphors of although we know what they say. They are what I call original or empty metaphors. Hence, we cannot interpret *Amerika* in the sense that we tell what it all means, or indicate what the object Kafka talks about is. The Grand Hotel Occidental has thirty lifts that move incessantly up and down like pistons; what does this mean? It means what you want it to mean, that is, nothing. Nevertheless, it is a fitting picture in *Amerika's* America.

Preliminaries, or False Starts

Kafka is strange and *Amerika* even stranger in the way that its text has no interpretation. In other words, it does not interpret itself. Or, it does not say what it says. It is just a text and should be approached as such. Of course one may suggest any number of interpretations and then try to say what it all means but this is bound to be subjective: we say what kind of impression the text makes upon us. But some of these impressions are more interesting than others. It is as if one said what the text looks like and then recommends a certain vision. Of course, any reading, including the present one, must offer some kind of interpretation of the text at least in the sense that one explicates what is said in the text and analyses some aspects of it. But it is a different matter to identify

the reasons of why the author said it, what the author wanted to say it, and what the purpose of his writing project was. Also, one can try to locate some more or less hidden references to the author's life, life-world, and personal characteristics in his texts.[1] This second strategy is to overwork the connection between Kafka's biography, or his life, his actual experiences, and their overall circumstances.[2] For instance, Kafka was an anxious mind, hence his fictional characters are often anxious and troubled. He knew what anxiety is and hence he wrote about it. This is the methodology I want to avoid. Literary scholars may like it and use it for their benefit, but from the philosophical point of view I rather avoid it. Notice that I might say that Kafka's text looks like, say, a passage to hell, but I do not say he wanted it to look like a passage to hell or this is what the text is all about. I write about how I see the text, not how it was meant to be seen or should be seen. Some fiction looks socially and psychologically programmatic, I know, but not Kafka.

Of course, whatever a person does, including artistic activities, has its explanation but in many contexts such explanations are beside the point. The product may be more interesting than the process of production. And the product can be seen and appreciated independently of the process. Sometimes we read better when we do not know much about the author. The same is true of philosophy: in order to appreciate George Berkeley's arguments for immaterialism, I need not know who he was. It is relevant to know something, for instance, that his works were written in the early 18th century, but do we really need much more? To a certain degree philosophical texts function independently of their historical genesis.

Biographies are interesting in a voyeuristic sense, like Reiner Stach's monumental biographical Kafka trilogy, but I notice I read them with certain embarrassment: for instance, in the second volume Stach hints at Kafka's incestuous desires towards his sister. He does not index the word nor does he elaborate.[3] Why should we know this fact? He also makes a funny mistake on the Picture 38: he says that "Felice has her arm around the mother's waist." Actually the mother has her arm around Felice's waist. This page is typical of the wordiness of Stach's writing and shows how dubious biographical interpretations and tales tend to be. Should we really know all this about Kafka in order to read

1 See for instance H. Binder, *Kafka – Kommentar zu den Romanen. Rezensionen, Aphorismen und zum Brief an den Vater*. Bochum: Winkler, 1976.

2 See for instance the excellent introduction by D. Shields Dix, "The Man Who Disappeared: Kafka Imagining *Amerika*" (http://www.kafka.org/index.php?aid=239).

3 R. Stach, *Kafka, The Decisive Years*. Tr. S. Frisch. Orlando: Harcourt, 2005, p. 297.

his text with interest, sympathy, benefit, and pleasure? Stach reads like faction, or a type of historical novel rooted in fact. We might even call it a fantasy biography. He imagines so much psychological detail it makes me uncomfortable. How can he know all of this? Should I really base my reading of Kafka on it?

To read Kafka's fiction with the intention of saying what he wants to say is suspicious. Of course it is a key convention in literature that a novel contains narrative elements that tell something about something. It may even have a plot that is somehow recognizable or familiar to the reader. However, in the case of Kafka, that he should say something else than what he is saying is a kind of fallacy of over-interpretation. To explain my own approach, let me first sketch the problems of such a strategy. It feeds on the reader's curiosity whose background is one's inability to read novels as fictional pseudo-narratives that ultimately turn out to be empty, or the text as text. One somehow wants to get more, to peek into the mind of the author and get an account of his hidden thoughts and intentions as if it were obvious that she had some, as if she could not write a text without embedding some messages in it. Alternatively, one says the hidden meaning is unconscious thus creating an hierarchy of hidden messages: the text is just a surface that hides the narrative messages of the author when a certain portion of them are invisible even from the point of view of the author himself; that is, they remain unconscious but yet undoubtedly real. For instance, in *Amerika*, Kafka wants to tell the reader in a critical tone about the miseries of the German speaking immigrants in New York.[4] Perhaps he even wanted to warn his compatriots of dangerous Irishmen such as wayward Robinson. In this sense, it is as if his book contained a message to its readers.

The next question is biographical: what did Kafka know about New York and how did he get the information? Such questions can be answered to a certain degree so that the required detective work becomes an engaging pursuit. Certainly *Amerika* tells something about Karl Rossmann and his adventures in America sometimes in a realistic tone, excluding of course the last chapter about the Oklahoma Theatre but definitely including the first one, "The Stoker." However, even in that case one may ask why Oklahoma and where did he get the idea of that obscure state. The book also contains all kinds of factual mistakes, which may well be deliberate, like the Statue of Liberty wielding a sword, no harbor piers in New York, a bridge between New York City and Boston, high hills around New York, and mountains like the Rockies between New York and Oklahoma. Also, Karl is given a ticket to California by his uncle, Senator Jacob, but this is never mentioned again although Karl needs to get away and escape.

4 *Amerika*. In F. Kafka, *Complete Novels*. Trs. W. and E. Muir. London: Vintage, 2008.

Now, I am fully aware of the norm that one should not quote student papers, but because the following quotation illustrates too well my critical points, I cannot resist the temptation: "To a certain degree, by creating his own conception of America, Kafka takes the role of master and creator, producing for himself a feeling of power and superiority over the supposed land of freedom. This sense of superiority enables Kafka to criticize the capitalist and industrialized America through his description of the streets of New York."[5] The very argument Edmond Lau is making here, that Kafka criticizes the capitalist and industrialized America – of course a reading of the novel as old as its publication – contradicts the very impossibility of interpretation I argue for elsewhere. According to Lau, Kafka's unconscious feelings are at work together with his conscious intentions: he wants to criticize USA and especially its thin idea of freedom. In fact this is done in the very first paragraph of the book. In this view America, not *Amerika*, is a megalomaniac project, which breathes paranoia and explains the sufferings of Karl in and around New York as well as his escape to the Oklahoma Theatre as a Freudian wish-fulfilment.[6] Lau is convinced and assures us that Kafka wanted to criticize America and its falsely propagated institutions and values. How can we know this? We know that he read material on the American life and social realities before starting to write his book. Of course a reader may speculate about what Kafka wanted to say in his fiction, how his text is related to his own life and person, where he got his ideas, and who are those real life persons who are immortalized as his fictional characters. This may satisfy the reader's curiosity and entertain him. At the same time *Amerika* will lose a part of its fascination as fiction. For instance, Reiner Stach writes,

> These days we consider whether Kafka intended to depict the erosion of the bourgeois individual overwhelmed by social structures or whether his literary work was only a symptom of this erosion. It makes no sense to speak of Kafka's "realism" or "decadence," especially when these categories are exploited in ideological, heavy-handed arguments. It is indisputable that Kafka's work contains experiences that would soon prove highly significant for the history of the 20th Century. [...] But how did he gain access to these experiences?[7]

5 E. Lau, "Franz Kafka's *Amerika*: The American Dream" (http://people.csail.mit.edu/edmond/writings/amerikan-dream.pdf).

6 See T. Pataki, *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: The Tyranny of Desire.* London: Routledge, 2014.

7 Stach, 2005, p. 294.

Stach also writes, "Of course he [Kafka] he could never have written a quasi-political book like Brod's, even in optimal conditions. Kafka wished not convince or prove, but to give pure literary form to what inspired him."[8] It follows from these two quotations that Kafka's work was only a "symptom of this erosion." It also logically follows that Kafka was interested in such an erosion of the bourgeois individual, which may or may not be true, who can say? Did he have this concept? Did he like it? The idea of law certainly interested Kafka, but who can say what he meant by the enigma called "the Law"?

Think of Mr. Pollunder's vast, dark, incomplete country mansion where Karl spends an unforgettable night when he is harassed by the host's wild daughter Klara. He gets lost in the house only to discover that he will be kicked out of there. Does this mean Kafka intends to mock the young and wealthy New York ladies and the grand building projects of their parents? Kafka's women are what they are both in Europe and USA – rather special creatures.[9] Moreover, the description of the big house is a kind of metaphysical nightmare, an empty and dark world that opens up towards the vast universe that blows through the house as a wind from nowhere. It is not a house, it is an allegory, pure gothic: "A breath of dark emptiness met him" when Karl gets lost in the dark, windowless, never-ending corridor. "What purpose could be served by this great, deep chamber? One stood here as if in the gallery of a church."[10] This paragraph resembles us of Edgar Allan Poe's gloomy houses. It is Karl's House of Usher.

Less metaphysical, but not much, are the depictions of the Grand Hotel Occidental where Karl works, motor traffic, and finally a political rally. The first is a beehive, the second an enormous machine, and the third a tragedy as the wonderfully popular looking political candidate has no hope of success anyway. He is doomed but they still celebrate him. All that happens in *Amerika* is or is not a picture of America. Here is one more example of a less than commendable reading of *Amerika*:

> Karl Rossmann, however, refuses to accept responsibility for his desires, and it is a mark of Kafka's own immaturity that he allows Karl to be constantly seduced and abused, never to act as seducer or abuser. Compare Karl's childlike description of sex with K's wholly knowing, wholly mutual encounter with Frieda, in *The Castle*: "She sought something and he sought something, in a fury, grimacing, they sought with their heads

8 Stach, 2005, p. 62.

9 S. Delianidou, *Frauen, Bilder und Projektionen von Weiblichkeit und das männliche Ich des Protagonisten in Franz Kafkas Romanfragmenten*. New York: Lang, 2012.

10 *Amerika*. Kafka, 2008, p. 257.

> boring into each other's breasts; [...] like dogs desperately pawing at the earth they pawed at each other's bodies."[11]

I am not sure if this describes "wholly mutual sex." In fact, it looks like two persons attacking each other without caring of the partner or responding to his or her desire. Well, Karl's rape scene is pretty impressive, too. Again, an unconscious motive for writing this allegedly exists, this is "Kafka's own immaturity," accompanied by a couple of inaccurate textual references: Karl viciously attacks Delamarche in the fat singer Brunelda's flat, opera singers are supposed to be fat, and this is certainly more than K or Joseph K ever did in *The Castle* or *The Trial*. K's sex life may be better than Karl's but then perhaps Karl's initial account of the rape is a lie.[12] And Joseph K and K are certainly not anything like aggressive and abusive persons; on the contrary, both are victims beyond relief or hope. Both certainly try to solve their problems, Karl just runs away from them; when he is abusive it is because his escape road is blocked. He also gets actively and aggressively involved in the case of the Stoker, his new friend.[13] Finally, why would Karl's immaturity make the book look less interesting or the author himself immature? Think of *Simplicissimus,* or *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* (1668) by Hans J.C. von Grimmelshausen, which may well have been a model for *Amerika*, something I might suggest were I using the comparative method here. There the young and perfectly innocent half idiot hero wanders from horror to horror during the Thirty Year's War. Perhaps Kafka's *Amerika* mirrors another classic where a young innocent hero meanders through the thickets of pain and suffering, namely, D.A.F. Sade's *Justine, ou Les Malheurs de*

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11 K. Kirsch, "America, '*Amerika*'" (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/04/books/review/Kirsch-t.html).

12 According to Stach (2005, pp. 42–43), and *Kafka, The Early Years* (Tr. S. Frisch. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017 pp. 331–332) Kafka visited prostitutes but had a deep seated fear of impotence and considered sex with women somehow disgusting. He even considered white marriage with Felice Bauer. It is very tempting indeed to say that these facts are relevant to the understanding of the women in his fiction. But such temptations should be resisted.

13 However, the two chapters, "The Stoker" and "The Nature Theater of Oklahoma" are exceptional. The first was written and published independently of the rest of the text, so Karl's active involvement is untypical. And the last chapter was written later and it indeed is different because of the introduction of something like a fantasy element. The recruitment office is fantastic: Hundreds of women on platforms dressed in white as winged angels blow into golden trumpets. Everyone is promised a job. Many are called and all are chosen – what a parody of the Christian idea of salvation this is, if you are willing to see it that way (Matthew 22:14; *Amerika*. Kafka, 2008, p. 420). Incidentally, picture 51 (a movie theatre) in Stach, 2017, looks much like the recruitment center in *Amerika*.

la Vertu (1791). Karl Rossmann belongs to a long and noble tradition of comic wanderers, like those in Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'Optimisme* (1759). For a modern minded reader one may recommend *The Tin Drum,* or *Die Blechtrommel* by Günther Grass (1959). In film, a good example is *Forrest Gump* (1994).

Empty Metaphors

My own strategy is as follows: I read *Amerika* in all its amusing and thrilling detail but avoid saying why that is and what it all means; instead I may say what it looks like to me. Even less do I try to say something about the historical person F. Kafka. I do not know him and I accept that. What am I doing then? I say I savor the text and get my satisfaction out of its wonderfully exciting and mysterious features that prove the unique genius of its author. What amazes me most in Kafka's text is its strangeness, its notoriety, in the sense that its richly detailed texture may look like a realistic description of what there is and what takes place, how things look and events turn out; yet, something is wrong. It is difficult to pinpoint what it is however strongly the reader may feel the effect. Very seldom is something truly and openly weird in the surrealist sense but throughout the text the details are somehow unreal, in a way that is difficult to specify, for instance, the action around the hotel elevators where Karl is employed as a lift boy. The description of them grows into a grotesque vision without mercy.

Now, what I want to study in this paper is the ultimate aimlessness of this all. I do not mean the content of the narrative in a psychological sense. Certainly we can say that Karl's desires are negligible as he only wants to get a job and shelter – it is all very minimalistic indeed. He would have liked to stay in the Grand Hotel Occidental and remain in the custody of the fine women there, the Governess and her secretary Therese. His desires also are negative as he wants to get out of trouble and get rid of his pesky companions Robinson and Delamarche. It is not at all clear that he wants to stay with his uncle Jacob and he certainly runs away from the scary country mansion of Mr. Pollunder and its intrusive inhabitants. Much of this is psychologically ambiguous. As I see it, the unique strangeness of life in *Amerika* results from its rhetorical features, which at the same time constitute remarkable literary innovation. All this depends on what I call the openness of the rhetoric of narrative. The rest of this paper tries to explain what it is.

Let me provide a summary account of my more concrete aims. Normally in metaphors like "Men are pigs," we find a target (men) and a source (pigs), but not so in the case of Kafka. He operates at the level of sources without allowing

us to see what the target is, hence the confusion of those interpretations that pretend to find the targets. In regard to desire, we have the typical propositional attitude and then the proposition that specifies the desired object, but not in the case of Kafka. His texts, *Amerika* included, operate with simple one place metaphors and desire ascriptions that are seemingly impossible. To give three simple examples: New York traffic is depicted in such a detailed manner that we must take it metaphorically, yet it shows no target, which creates its special effect. The sword displayed by the Statue of Liberty, what does it say? This clearly is not the statue we know. What is Mr. Pollunder's mansion that, as incomplete as it is, opens up into the void darkness? Perhaps it depicts the gates of hell, the darkness visible, but there is no telling. We cannot read it like that, which again indicates a story that only pretends to be readable.[14]

Travel, including motor traffic, running from the police, walking between cities, and the incessant up and down motion of hundreds of lifts, are both away and towards something. Strangely, travel leads to morally judgmental encounters that display implied guilt and explicit threat of punishment. Accordingly, travel is a key theme and a main metaphoric source here. Metaphors travel, too, from one given meaning to a cascade of new meanings that must be read anew and construed as related to the original target. In other words, what the target loses in this exchange the source gains, as in "Men are pigs," where men lose their status as men and move over to the category of domestic animals , their looks and behavioral patterns. We may mean bad table manners, as if pigs had any manners, or their looks as pink, hairy, smelly, clumsy sty dwellers, always depending on the context. This is to say, once you meet a source you need an interpretive key, provided by some extraneous cues, if you want to get back to the target or to what is left of it after the attack by the source. Once I am called a pig it is impossible for me to recover my former status – the stigma sticks. Once a pig, always a pig. In other words, you cannot infer from pigs back to men. However, Kafka provides us with no such key and this is the reason why we do not know what he is talking about, or his target. What are those hotel elevators that pump up and down for ever driven by those unruly boys Karl once identified himself with? We cannot tell, yet we feel we should. The customers are beautiful and demanding, the boys who wear stinking uniforms can demand nothing; if this is about social class and class society, the target is worth mentioning. Is this the reason why Kafka does not

14 R. Barthes has a theory of unreadability: "The language they founded is obviously not linguistic, a language of communication. It is a new language, traversed by (or traversing) natural language, but open on to the semiological definition of Text." (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola*. Tr. R. Miller. London: Cape, 1977, p. 3).

allow it to be mentioned, because in a novel all such readings are out of place? The upper class customers are not much more than ghosts. Such social themes are too banal to mention and specify, and you, together with the author, live better without such infamy.

Metaphoric tropes travel away from the world of targets into the new, fuzzy and ambiguous world of sources that mock the targets. Their dictionary meanings start looking like shackles in their fixed rigidity we struggle to free ourselves from. Metonyms represent one way of getting out of the traps of language. They work like the lifts in the Grand Hotel Occidental. They provide a set of terms all referring to the same case but in such a way that you can move from one to the other, at the same time not moving at all or changing the world. I say "My king won the battle against your king," what do I say? I could have said his army won, but then it is just a metonym that does not add anything to the case as it really is. I could have said "My king's army's soldiers won the battle," but I am still in the same lift that travels between the co-referential meanings. I do not speak about kings or even armies but of a battle that is like the Grand Hotel where the lifts move up and down. They, like metonyms, never produce anything good unlike true travel from one location to another, that is, a metaphor. Travel leads Karl to new places where he faces new challenges and new tasks of reading the case right, which are the necessary conditions of his survival. That is, anyway, the only thing that Karl may want.

When meanings travel from a target toward the chaos of the source, or Karl makes progress towards a new challenge of judgmental confrontation, the task is the same: to make sense of what is said and to see what it all entails. Here the metaphor's progress towards its interpretation corresponds to Karl's travel towards his accusers he must make sense of. The source and Karl, they both need to succeed if they want to remain as what they are, a novel cluster of meanings in a text and Karl in *Amerika*. But how could they do that if no key is provided? What then is the source and what is Karl's way out? Kafka depicts a meaningless struggle against impossible odds leaving one insoluble riddle behind so that one can face another. This is the true meaning of travel in the case of the extended metaphor that is *Amerika*, or an allegory that we fail to model.

Notice that here travel is not from target to source, or from one solved critical riddle to another more mysterious one that we can then call in metaphoric names, or to make it a source. No, travel is always between metaphors, from one to another, just like Karl moves from one trouble to another, or perhaps we should say from one attempt to locate a target to another. In this way, we move at the meta-level from one context of motion to another without stopping between them. Karl does not stop before he is stopped, not after his valiant first attempt to defend the nameless stoker on the ship. After that he is

lost as he becomes the lost person[15] Kafka intends to depict. After one good try Karl starts vanishing, growing thinner and thinner as a character – while accusations against him grow – only to be lost in the train to the Oklahoma Theater. The theater has a place for everyone, which is to say no one figures there anymore.

In what follows I use allegory in the sense of an extended metaphor, which entails that its parts are metaphoric as well. Therefore, it may not look like, for instance, that Karl's mad dash away from the police officers – only to be saved by the deux ex machina in the garb of Delamarche – has any metaphoric meaning, although it must. An allegory is a totality of interconnected metaphors and hence I try to read the details of *Amerika* metaphorically, too. In a traditional painting, for instance, the allegoric symbolism is defined by convention: apes, dogs, and human skulls all have their conventional and thus identifiable meanings. They refer to and represent their targets. Another example, a book is a book, or the *Bible* is the Book, which creates an instance of metonymy. There is only one book worth reading, the *Bible*, and hence the book is the *Bible* – otherwise we miss the point. The *Bible* and the book is a metonymic pair under the present set of conventions. However, in the case of *Amerika* we move and travel outside such well-known conventions. We are now on our own, unaided, traveling along not knowing what accusations will hit us next. Of course, one may say that I already gave a key that opens the lock of *Amerika*, namely, travel. It is then an allegoric journey, a kind of Pilgrim's Progress set in ironic terms, from home to nowhere, which should reveal the target. I wish this were true. Alas, it is not. The problem is that this travel is not metonymically related to motion, decline, or progress. On the contrary, this travel makes the same point that I mean when I say a target changes into a source and finds for itself a new meaning, albeit a contested one, in the new set of strange possible worlds, like the world where pigs' table manners are mentioned. The travel is metaphoric in the very special sense in which the essence of metaphor itself is travel. In this sense, Karl's travel is the metaphor of a metaphor. Or, Karl when he travels is like Jesus who is God walking on Earth, or perhaps he is like an incomplete sensory image falsely derived from its eternal Platonic realm of ideas as universals. Travel illustrates what metaphor does and how it works in its own rhetorical realms.

Some metaphoric sources do not allow for targets. These are special, deep metaphors whose whole life is dedicated to being sources. The term "pig" refers and hence pig is a shallow simile-related metaphor, in the role we gave to it earlier, and pigs can have a metonymic role as well. But think of "heart of stone" or

15 The original tittle of *Amerika.*

even "Light my fire" both of which, understood as single metaphoric sources, have no other use that this. They do not refer and hence we cannot identify them as targets. Instead, they come close to "cold hearted" and "Love me dear" although that closeness does not permit their metonymic use together with "heart of stone" and "Light my fire." Of course, cold heart is not necessarily made of stone and dear is not a fiery term. If you do not agree, how do you argue that stone and cold mean the same here? Your only chance is a detailed narrative in which you treat these terms as metonyms and claim that they both make sense in the narrative. But original task was to compare two metaphoric sources, so the argument forms a vicious circle. Suppose a metonymic pair. Then, if a target has been given a metaphoric garb, we cannot argue that this same metaphor also takes as its target the second item of the original metonymic pair. Metaphors, as to their sources, are metonym specific.

Amerika can be understood accordingly: the allegoric narrative is, in itself, a deep metaphor whose reader necessarily misses its target. "Heart of stone" and "Light my fire" are meaningless exactly because we cannot find their targets via similes or metonyms without retorting to a known convention, but Kafka refuses to rely on conventions, which forces the reader to read the allegory as it is, without a target. In other words, deep metaphors cannot be understood as wayward similes that would help us find their source: "What a pig" is an easy case. You say men stink like pigs and they eat like pigs, and then you know the target is a certain kind of man, like in "Men are pigs." But when you say "Light my fire" I have no idea what you mean, if I try to find a corresponding simile – it does not exist. I need to listen to the song (The Doors, 1966) and pick up the convention there or ask someone. *Amerika* works its deep allegories in this same sense.

Textual allegory of the type one meets in *Amerika* can also be understood in the following way. Sometimes a metaphor displays a clear connection between a target and a source, like in "Men are pigs." Sometimes this link grows weaker and more negligible, like in "Light my fire," where the metaphoric elements do not seem to connect in any obvious manner, yet they do so in a way that can be called implicit. "Light my fire" means "Make me want to make love with you," or something like that. The emergence of a target is, therefore, a matter of interpreting a background narrative, which can be done in so many ways that the results are necessarily subjective. The same applies to "That woman has a heart of stone," which also requires its narrative background, although "heart of stone" can certainly be read in a conventional and even stereotypical manner. In that sense the first of the two metaphors is a much better poetic effort, unlike the second that is a mere phrase without much independent interest. When a metaphor is truly banal its effects start sounding like an intentional

play of words, which as such is a laudable achievement even though it may also be a dangerous move – it is easily missed and misunderstood.

We are now interested in metaphors without target, or the target and the source are the same thing. I call this an original metaphor in order to remind the reader of the way such a metaphor is created. In the case of an original metaphor we take a metonymic pair and start piling up meanings on one side of the pair, and we continue until the term is reborn as a metaphor. But what is it a metaphor of? It is possible that the second member of the given metonymic pair looks, say, like the opposite of the metaphorically described member, that is, the given co-referent object has disappeared. This again means that the term is no longer simply a metaphoric expression of an identifiable target. Through its metaphorization the target has disappeared. It has lost its meaning, and along with it, its identity as a target. Of course, it must retain some connection to the original metonymic pair so that it hangs on to this given setting via a narrative that utilizes certain conventions and other standardized associations.

Let me take an example before moving over to Karl Rossmann's sad adventures in the fictional New York. The metonymic pair is death and the end of life. We know that both refer to the same thing, whatever its definition might be. The basic point about this referent is that the members of the given metonymic pair provide the most basic meanings of what we are talking about. In this sense "death" refers to death or the end of life and nothing more basic can be said about it. We all know what it is. Some obvious metaphors exist – they all work as euphemisms – some colorful like "kick the bucket" and some less so like "pass away" or somewhat less idiomatically "he is late." We can however adopt another way to the metaphorization of death. We start by enriching the meaning of death by saying it is the moment of truth that culminates the life of a person and ultimately allows us to say whether a person had a happy and meaningful life, or did one waste it? Aristotle says that a person can be called happy only after his death. The Imperial Japanese Army gave higher medals of honor only to dead soldiers because only a dead man never fails to act like a brave soldier. In some criminal law codes the dying man's testimonial is taken to be a priori veridical. In this sense we enrich the meaning of death. Next we say death is a transition to a better world that is pure and happy, where one meets one's Maker and one's own relatives with whom one then joins the chorus of heavenly souls singing the praise of the Lord – depending on your metaphysics and religion. Now we have made death a transition to another realm, a radical metaphoric move, which has severed all its connections to death as the end of life. In terms of a magnificent paradiastole, we make death the opposite of the end of life myth. No end of life exists since what looks like the end

is actually a new beginning, which is recommended as a new verbatim and even factual truth. This is an original metaphor that does not permit a target. We cannot say that the end of life is the beginning of life. What we mean is that death becomes a metaphoric death and as such it moves over from the metonymic realm to that of metaphor. We have created a metaphoric account, or an allegory, of death such that it qualifies as an original metaphor; in other words, it is a metaphor of itself. This nicely corresponds to the idea that we know what dying is but not what death is. We know when the person is dead but not what happened to him, in the present metaphysical and metaphorical sense. We need to perform some rites over the dead body to make the allegory more concrete and, in a paradoxical sense, understandable.

Amerika is an original allegory in the sense that we really cannot tell what its target is. Certainly it is not New York. Now we also know why everything in *Amerika* is in its own way subtly strange and disturbing. It is because we are not looking at targets, even if it may appear so, but derivative sources. Normally our sources are primary sources and as such readily recognizable as sources, but in the case of an original allegory we utilize derivative sources of metaphors, or metaphors that presuppose the main narrative and derive their meaning from it. The main problem is that we cannot say what the allegory is meant to say and, therefore, we cannot say how the derivative metaphors work.

As I said above, a key derivative metaphor in *Amerika* is travel, which in this case indicates aimless and circular wandering or something even worse, the eternal but repetitive motion of hundreds lifts going up and down in the hotel. The juggernaut of motor traffic rushes on along the straight and wide roads so that we get a picture of three types of motion and travel. Karl's wandering leads him from trouble to trouble until in the end he finds his chance for redemption. The Oklahoma Theater emerges as if from nowhere, it is a deux ex machina that may save Karl from further travel. He is a modern Ulysses who, in the end, finds his way back to Ithaca, although we do not know what will happen there. They promise all kinds of good things, most of all inclusion in the mock biblical sense of "You are all invited and all are chosen." There is a meaningful position to everyone in that grand theater and its infinitely large production machinery. This theater is a Paradise. Suppose we have here a reference to industrial production and its factories where all are indeed chosen but in what terms, that is another question. However, this is exactly what we must not do, try to guess what the Oklahoma Theater really is. It is nothing but the concluding derivative metaphor embedded in the great allegory that is *Amerika*.

In the case of the hotel lifts, what makes them appear so odd is their great number, thirty. Imagine a hotel lobby with thirty busy lifts. The traffic is always

odd and wonderful in *Amerika*. What is this traffic, then? It is another original, empty allegory, an extended metaphor of something one cannot tell. Karl gazes at a road:

> [M]otor-cars flew lightly pass one another as they had done the whole day, as if a certain number of them were always being dispatched from some distant place and the same number were being awaited in another place equally distant. During the whole day since early morning Karl had not seen a single car stopping, not a single passenger getting out.[16]

Cars never stop, the drivers are like ghosts sitting motionless in their vehicles that rush forward like a stampede of metal monsters so that traffic itself looks like the depicted target, not the vehicles and even less the drivers. "Now and then an automobile shot out of the mist and all three turned their heads to gaze after the large monsters, which were so remarkable to look at and passed so quickly that they never even noticed whether anyone was sitting inside."[17]

Karl's travels become meaningful, and this is the only form of travel that is meaningful, because it leads him to trouble. He was guilty of wrongdoing when he left the Old Country and he still is wherever he goes. For him, every road taken is a wrong turn, until the last one that is announced by some angels blowing their horns. What they do is to announce the allegoric nature of it all, an extended original metaphor of something we may be unable to recognize. *Amerika* is an allegory in the sense that it depicts the Other as a realm that cannot be depicted and travels that explore what is in these realms unknowable, like the house of Mr. Pollunder that opens up into a dark abyss and houses such a female fiend as Miss Pollunder, Klara, an American mimetic expression of the servant women at home who, as Karl sees it, raped him at home. But the American version is also her opposite, a rich, elegant, young, and resourceful lady. The reader travels with Karl, first to a new land and then explores it, and finally escapes to the Oklahoma Theater that is or is not a trap, alternatively an industrial hell or a heavenly paradise. Karl may be able to stay in the sweet land of metaphors or in the end he is on his way back to that of metonymies of work and suffering.

16 *Amerika*. Kafka 2008, p. 291. This is just one of many remarkable depictions traffic. The lifts move up vertically, cars horizontally.

17 *Amerika*. Kafka, 2008, pp. 283–285. The context here is trucks and cargo transportation.

Irony: from Here to Eternity

Karl Rossmann's worldly desires are deplorably weak but yet oddly persistent. They also are objectless. Mainly he wants to survive, or stay away from trouble, and find and keep a job, but nowhere do they materialize as full desires since they consistently lack a de re object. At this point the key desires are related to the condemnation of him by various other people, and then they judge on his guilt and its consequences. Karl does it, too, but others do it much more. The rule is, to exist is to judge, to judge is to denounce, and to denounce is to punish – it is not a desirable world this one.

To survive is not an object of desire, for the following reason. The agent, when she desires, wants to change her present world into a more desirable one, or in this sense, into better world. In this way she travels from one world to another – desire has the same structure, that of travel as a metaphor. All of them are modelled in the same way. However, when you want to survive you are already surviving, otherwise you cannot desire, and hence you desire the status quo. In other words, you do not want to travel away from this given world where you are surviving just now. On the contrary, you want to remain exactly where you are. Logically speaking, you cannot desire what you already have; you may love or hate it but to desire you cannot. To desire means to change the world into another and better one, but because Karl is in the world where he survives he cannot desire to survive.

So, in this sense Karl remains without desire. What he is going to do is to go on with his life, which he of course finds very difficult to do in the world where he is all the time accused and made look guilty of all kinds of bad things. So he must travel although he may not agree to do so. Basically his travels mean escaping the bad things that harass him day after day. His accusers want to catch him and punish him, so they have their desires. The Head Porter in the Grand Hotel Occidental even wants to torture him, as he actually does. In fact, Karl meets people who insist condemning and punishing him, although he also meets some women who want to help him in the grand hotel. Among men, Robinson is even weaker than Karl and therefore cannot threaten him. He is just pesky. Karl, in the original plan of the book is the man who disappeared, and this must mean him as a recognizable person. But every attack against him diminishes him and weakens him until he responds to the trumpet calls of those angels. This is the end of the road for him, although it also is a new beginning in the train bound for the Oklahoma Theater. He is now dead, we can say so, because Karl's story has a structure that is isomorphic with the standard account of death. You reach the end that is a new beginning that takes you to

the Promised Land where everyone has a place. The end is abrupt and chilling like a descent to the cave that is Hades. Stach seems to read it as a happy end where "Promises and fulfillment take the place of threats and disappointment." He also reports on Kafka's idea of the "paradisiacal magic" of the ending and then adds "It was not the whole truth."[18] The ending is ultimately ambiguous.

What is irony and how is it related to allegory and its metaphors in this case? The answer is, the metaphors here are original and corresponding desires empty or objectless. Kafka's great narrative achievement is a tale about a semantic void, or there is much ado about nothing. Incidentally, this also explains why *Amerika* as a novel is relatively neglected compared with *The Trial* and *The Castle*. *Amerika* is pure irony and as such a formalistic effort, unlike the two other books which we can read as traditional, albeit expressionistic, novels that contain a plot one can follow. This need not be so: in *The Trial* no trial emerges and in *The Castle* the castle is a Fata Morgana, a group of ordinary houses on a hill. These false facts and fake news constitute the ironic frame of these two novel novels. In spite of this, they cannot be compared with *Amerika* whose ironic aspect is overpowering like it is in all novels that wander so aimlessly. To go around in circles is a paradigmatically ironic idea of travel as is desire without an object. The same is true of course of original metaphors that are really metaphors of nothing and as such void. Such metaphors are like Mr. Pollunder's house, which is a grand construction without walls. When you explore it you will only find the wind that blows through it as if coming from nowhere.

Let me first explain how I understand the master trope of irony and then how it applies to the case of original metaphor and void desire. We find sarcasms as well as delightful ironies. I drink cheap beer and tell a group of connoisseurs that I absolutely love it. That is a simple sarcasm, if I know what I am saying. On the wall of a cheap bar in a working class neighborhood one can read: "Drink always when you can!" This is a rather sophisticated joke, partially because of its inherent ambiguity and, of course, because of its patent invalidity. Those punters drink always when they can, of course, whenever they have money and they are able to walk in, but even they may recognize the irony. Irony rules any situation where the speaker utters a falsehood knowingly and her audience knows that she knows how it is and also knows what she really thinks about the matter. Irony is about an attempt to mislead when it is not supposed to succeed. It is like masking the truth that need not to be masked and the audience knows it. In this sense the speaker depends on her audience and

18 Stach, 2005, pp. 251, 252.

their knowledge and understanding. The situation is complex as irony needs a speaker, audience, various sets of true beliefs and at least one falsehood. But this is only a basic frame. Irony takes many forms, just like metaphor. Actually many, or even most, metaphors are ironic, if you want to read them so. For instance, "Men are pigs" certainly has its ironic reading as it is false, as the audience knows, and yet it is treated as if it were true. Of course one may say that the sentence is not meant to be true but merely valid in a metaphoric sense. That, however, is not enough to dispel the feeling that it is sarcasm.[19]

Now, I will argue that both the grand allegory of *Amerika* itself and Karl Rossmann's related desires are ironic, that is, *Amerika* as a text is an allegory that may and even should be taken in an ironic sense. The great, final carnival of irony comes along with the idea of the Oklahoma Theater. It is throughout a pure, desperate irony and cursed joke; yet, all along the textual tone is factual, seldom exhilarating but mostly bitter and sardonic, which is not to say that a certain type of reader could not laugh at it – I do. How does this irony work? Kafka is a sophisticated writer, which is shown in how he deals with his metaphors and desires: the first trope misses its target or refuses to recognize one, and the second dismisses its object as if deliberately.

Both metaphor and desire suggest a false impression, namely, that behind the rhetorical trope and the mental episode lurk the terra firma of the real world. That is why the crux of the matter is that both metaphor and desire are designed and exist only for the purpose that they circumvent reality. In the case of desire the agent dismisses the real world and aims at a better, alternate possible world that houses the object of desire. In the case of metaphor he masks what there is by an expression that moves the discourse into another, possibly distant and foreign field of meanings, thus confusing the original issue. But as we already saw, Kafka dismisses such simple opportunities because he writes as if no reality existed. For him, no de re object makes sense and the target of metaphor vanishes leaving us to struggle with original metaphors. Therefore, here lays the deep source of irony, or one of the reasons why Kafka is such a wonderful writer and great literary inventor. The allegory is ironic in the sense that it speaks as if America in *Amerika* were real and at the same time signals that it is not when no one in the audience knows what that reality would be like. Kafka amasses a load of meanings upon what once was real, New York and America, until it all becomes unrecognizable. The details of the narrative look like errors but are in fact designed to indicate the allegorical development that leads toward the original metaphors that the overall technique generates.

19 Another, more general, way of understanding irony is to say it indicates any effort to celebrate an abnormality or discrepancy in what is familiar.

Here is an example: In Grand Hotel Occidental the Manageress declares Karl's guilt, "The Head Waiter [...] has clearly pronounced your guilt, and I must say it seems undeniable to me. Perhaps you merely acted without thinking, but perhaps too you are not the boy I thought you were. And yet [...] I cannot help still thinking of you as a fundamentally decent lad."[20] Karl is here the person who disappears because his attributes get all mixed up. His supporter the Manageress first takes Karl to be Karl and then dismisses his personal identity. He is good and bad, trustworthy and not, he deserves punishment or perhaps not. Karl's crime was to leave his lift unattended for a couple of minutes while he helps Robinson, but this little error grows into massive proportions when his enemy the Head Porter gets involved. He tortures Karl by painfully grabbing his arm but Karl somehow manages to escape. What does the Head Porter want? He wants nothing, he accuses him of an unspeakable crime, he treats him like shit, he just rages over the case and torments Karl, becoming more and more unreasonable while the situation progresses. He grows when Karl diminishes. For him Karl is a terrible criminal but again Karl is absolutely nobody: even his crime is unmentionable.[21] Here lies the irony of the case; Karl is dragged to the limelight as if he were somebody, a bad man, a criminal or something like this, which he is not. The scene develops and spins out of control as if spontaneously without the influence of any of the dramatis personae. How could they influence the proceedings as they do not know what has happened, or even what happens, and they cannot say what they want. As usual, Karl escapes, runs away, and continues his wanderings only to face the threat that a suspicious and paranoid police officer takes him back to the Grand Hotel, where he can only expect to face more torture.

The irony of the situation is created through an original metaphor. What looks like a metaphoric target is Karl's brief absence from his lift – of course such a target is just an illusion as I explained above. Now Kafka amasses meanings on top of this little event until it becomes metaphoric, or a metaphor of doom, guilt, and suffering when one is facing an insignificant failure. In the same way death as the end of life is an insignificant minor event as such but its metaphoric development gives it all the significances it may need to qualify as the greatest of all events. The same pattern is repeated here. We know Karl is nobody but now he is treated as if he were John Dillinger, a number one public enemy, to an ironic effect. In the case of death we miss the corresponding irony because we feel we must take death seriously and experience it as real and true

20 *Amerika*. Kafka, 2008, p. 352.
21 *Amerika*. Kafka, 2008, p. 355.

threat. This may not happen, think of dance macabre: in this way his enemies dance around Karl ever so malevolently as if they wanted something from him. As we know Karl is nobody, you cannot want anything from him, he is unfit to be an object of any desire, a person who already disappeared – the effect is superbly ironic. You harass somebody who is nobody.

CHAPTER 9

Thomas Hobbes on Intentionality, Desire, and Happiness

Hobbes offers a surprisingly modern account of happiness, or felicity, as continuous success in life. At the same time, he recognizes its paradoxical aspects, namely, happiness is never devoid of anxiety. His idea of happiness is based on desires, which is to be expected because for Hobbes persons are dynamic agents who aim at their own good directed by deliberation. I pay attention to the problems of intentionality. Deliberation is presented by Hobbes in extensional language, according to the principles of his scientific project, although intensional language is clearly needed when we discuss the success of projects and something like hitting a set target. I review and criticize the views of some authors who write as if Hobbes's project were plausible, or he could reduce causa finalis to causa efficiens. In the end, I offer some comments on Hobbes's alleged egoism.

Theories of Happiness

The following theories of happiness have been popular. They answer the question, when can we say a person is happy? I provide a brief sketch of each of them, relate Hobbes to some of them, and finally go deeper into his theorizing. Here are six typical views of happiness:

> A virtuous and only a virtuous person is happy, or happiness is virtuousness.
>
> A person who enjoys life is happy, or happiness means maximal pleasure and avoidance of pain. This is hedonism.
>
> A person who is calm and contented is happy, or happiness is peace of mind (ataraxia); it is also possible she enjoys the benefits of apatheia or freedom from passions.
>
> A person is happy when she systematically gets what she wants, or happiness is fulfilled desire.

> A happy person is, somehow, a complete person, or happiness is flourishing as self-realization, or "becoming what you are" in terms of one's realized potential. This is eudaimonia.
>
> A happy person enjoys a full range of social goods, such as loving family, prosperity, and overall appreciation and success in her social and political life, in addition to such natural goods as good health.

The idea that happiness is or follows from moral virtue has been the dominant theory from antiquity to the early modern times. Socrates is perfectly happy in his prison cell although he is sentenced to die and he is innocent. One could expect that these two conditions over-determine his unhappiness, but they do not. He is happy because he is virtuous. This has been called a "Socratic paradox" in ethics, and a paradox it is, namely, to say a virtuous, happy person is immune to the vagaries of the world is clearly an exaggeration. Normally, we think the world makes one happy or the world takes happiness away. However, the Socratic view does not respect this intuition.

Hobbes's own view of virtue is rather bleak, perhaps even ironic. He knows perfectly well how important and central this notion has been and still is. Therefore, he plays down virtue's import in a way that he knows so well, by ironic belittlement:

> [T]herefore that modesty, equity, trust, humanity, mercy (which we have demonstrated to be necessary to peace), are good manners or habits, that is, virtues. The law therefore, in the means to peace, commands also good manners, or the practice of virtue; and therefore it is called moral.[1]

In the Aristotelian lore, moral or practical virtues are acquired character traits but no one would call them mere good manners. Nevertheless, Hobbes says that the laws, both natural and civic, command the good and that is why they are moral. Perhaps they are moral because no peace can prevail without those virtues and in this sense the law's purpose presupposes them, but that alone does not make them moral virtues in the traditional sense. Hobbes says virtues are moral when they aim at peace, peace makes it possible to act and succeed, and hence virtues promote happiness; but virtues as such do not make men happy. Hobbes could well ask, why would they?

Now, it is still possible that virtue brings about happiness and if it does, it certainly is valuable happiness. Obviously, many types of successful happiness ascriptions are devoid of value or they may even be evil – hedonistic

1 *De Cive*, 1642, Ch. 3, Sec. 31. All references to Hobbes's works are to the standard Molesworth edition.

happiness has been the main culprit here. Today, many philosophers may find it difficult to explicate why exactly virtue should make a person happy. Here I mean, of course, the tradition of Aristotelian and medieval virtues as character traits, the so-called pagan virtues like moderation, courage, justice, and practical wisdom where also the Christian virtue of benevolentia can be added.[2] As a personal reminiscence, let me tell that I, while lecturing on virtue ethics, easily counted nine different theories, including of course the Roman-Machiavellian virtù as manly capability and the Kantian virtue of consistently following one's moral duty. There are also many popular watered down views of virtue, such as the 17th century British view of natural virtue meaning not much more than decent social behaviour of a good Anglican, a view supported by, e.g., Edmund Burke, George Berkeley, and Jonathan Swift.[3] Such a view is clearly related to Hobbes's view but in their case without any trace of irony or disdain.

Why does virtue make the virtuous happy? Nicholas E. Lombardo puts the point succinctly:

> Virtue's more characteristic affections are joy and pleasure. Virtue generated joy because the will attains goods that it desires through virtue, and when the will attains some desired good the volitional affection of joy necessarily results [...] There is usually some sensible pleasure too as the joy spills over into the sense appetite.[4]

Stanley Cunningham further explains,

> While happiness has to do with the reasoning and intellectual part of the soul, it would be wrong to conclude that it does not also include pleasure. [...] Albert characterizes the pleasure element of happiness a profound element of flourishing, an expansivess and tranquillity of the [virtuous] soul.[5]

I find these ideas highly interesting in the sense that they blend most of the listed theories of happiness together. For this reason, it seems that we cannot pretend that all the happiness theories are fully independent of each other. On the contrary, happiness theories should be named after their dominant

2 See J. Casey, *Pagan Virtue, An Essay on Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

3 S. Breuninger, *Recovering Bishop Berkeley: Virtue and Society in the Anglo-Irish Context*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010, pp. 18, 19.

4 N.E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010, p. 107.

5 S.B. Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008, p. 261.

element, that is, the virtue theory of happiness is what it is because the idea of virtue dominates it. Yet it employs pleasure, ataraxia, and desire as its subelements, as the two quotations above make clear. Perhaps we can continue and expand on this line of thought by saying that some theories of happiness are less significant than others. The criterion would then be how many different elements of happiness theories they include. For instance, hedonism does not seem to mention any other happiness theory. The self-realization theory does not necessarily include virtue, but virtue theory mentions self-realization and flourishing as well as pleasure.

Of course one may remark that the role of the notion of desire and desire satisfaction is inessential. The fact that some desires as desires get satisfied is not important at all; all that matters is *what* one gets, or what it is and how one gets it, when one's desire is satisfied. This is uncontroversial, as far as I can see.[6] A more difficult problem is that of pleasure in hedonism. If virtue is essentially a matter of intellect and reasoning; that is, it is cognitive in nature, its conative and emotive aspects are secondary but real. The next question must be, is the virtue derived pleasure of the same type of pleasure as that spoken of by the hedonists proper? My intuition says that answer must in the negative. Let us focus briefly on the early hedonists like the Cyrenaics: "living pleasantly is a synonym for 'happiness'"; moreover, "if we could accomplish the goal of living pleasantly, there would be nothing further to desire."[7] It is also significant that all this applies mainly to the present time events: "directing too much care and attention to the future is self-defeating." This is easy to understand for the simple reason that to take care of the future is often incompatible with enjoying of what you have here and now. Any worries about the future tend to destroy, or at least postpone, the present enjoyment.

Hedonism may also lead to pessimism, namely, you calculate and compare the ratio between pleasure and pain, and you notice a systematic bias towards pain. What can you do? Obviously your life is not worth living. You have basically two alternatives, try ataraxia or commit suicide. Of course, one should try the first alternative first and then, if it does not work, reject hedonism altogether. An interesting philosopher in this respect is the Cyrenaic Hegesias "The Death-Persuader" who wrote a book named *The Man Who Starved Himself to Death*, obviously to avoid a life with a surplus of pain and misery. It is said that Hegesias was banned from teaching philosophy in the Ptolemaic Alexandria because people committed suicides after listening to this teaching. It is of

6 See T. Airaksinen, "Desire and Happiness," *Homo Oeconomicus* 29 (2012), 393–412.

7 K. Lampe, *The Birth of Hedonism: The Cyrenaic Philosophers and Pleasure as a Way of Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 88.

course well known that also Socrates talked about the life after death so convincingly that Cleombrotus of Ambracia leaped from a high wall to his death.[8]

It is difficult to know how much weight one can put on the stories like this, but at least we can say that hedonism can be a dangerous philosophy of life and it was traditionally understood as such. What about ataraxia, which was later developed in its fullest by Epicurus and his school? Hegesias recommends autonomy and autarky as medicine against unhappiness. If you are independent and self-sufficient you need not worry. Other people's opinions cannot shake you and your resources suffice to repel need and vacuous desire. The result is the feeling of indifference: "Slavery is just as indifferent as freedom to the measure of pleasure."[9] This is not easy to accept, I admit, but the main message is clear: it does not matter if you are a slave or a free person, the pleasure or its lack is still of a similar type. What you feel does not depend on who you are or what you are. Here autonomy and self-sufficiency mean indifference to external conditions, such as slavery. If you need and desire nothing, nothing can shake you. You stay beyond the pleasure-principle; but are you still a hedonist?

I have sketched above two main theories of happiness, virtue theory and hedonism. The former is quite demanding as it requires virtue in the holistic sense: a cardinal virtue can be ascribed to a person only on the condition that the person possesses each one of the set of virtues. Otherwise you will meet the Platonic "Courageous robber" paradox. In other words, a virtuous person is born at the moment when the last of his missing virtues is added to the totality of his good character traits. The set of virtues is meaningful as long as each virtue in the set is individually meaningful. Moreover, its parts are called potestative: "A person in possession of the virtue itself possesses all the capabilities of all that virtue's parts."[10] Very few of us can even dream of being virtuous in this all-inclusive sense. Happiness obviously belongs to a mature sage only. The sufficient conditions of virtuousness seem too demanding to be realistic. The hedonist theory, on the other hand, is dangerous. A true hedonist may find out that she will be unhappy the rest of her life, which is to say that her life is totally meaningless from now on. What should she do? Is a meaningless life worth living in the long run? Of course a hedonist may focus on this moment now, but when she looks back only to find unhappy moments and memories what should she think?

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8 See F.C.S. Schiller, *Our Human Truths*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939, p. 140.

9 Lampe, 2014, p. 129.

10 M.J. Tracey, "The Moral Thought of the Albert the Great." In *Companion to Albert the Great*," I.M. Resnick (Ed.). Leiden: Brill, 2013, pp. 347–379, p. 360. Also, Cunningham, 2008, pp. 104ff.

Happiness and Desire

Thomas Hobbes draws a difference between happiness in this life and eternal happiness in the Christian heaven. "What kind of felicity God hath ordained to them that devoutly honour Him, a man shall no sooner know, than enjoy; being joys, that now are as incomprehensible, as the word of school-men beatifical vision is unintelligible."[11] For instance, when is God happy? Can we make him happy? This is certainly a traditional question. For instance, George Berkeley struggles with the problem of earthly happiness in this Vale of Tears and Misery as late as in the middle of 18th century.[12] According to some reports, early Christian thinkers did not tolerate earthly happiness at all before Albertus Magnus or so. Let us see what Hobbes has to say about the heaven.

> Furthermore, concerning attributes of happiness, those are unworthy of God which signify sorrow (unless they be taken not for any passion, but, by a metonymy, for the effect); such as repentance, anger, pity. Or want, as appetite, hope, concupiscence, and that love which is also called lust; for they are signs of poverty; since it cannot be understood that a man should desire, hope, and wish for aught, but what he wants and stands in need of. Or any passive faculty; for suffering belongs to a limited power, and which depends upon another. When we therefore attribute a will to God, it is not to be conceived like unto ours, which is called a rational desire; for if God desires, he wants, which for any man to say, is a contumely; but we must suppose some resemblance which we cannot conceive.[13]

This quotation is highly revealing as to our human desires and happiness, too. God cannot have what are traditionally called irascible feeling and emotion and the same applies to concupiscent feelings, or something we want in the positive sense. Hobbes applies here the rhetorical trope of metonymy, as he says, or the replacement of a whole with a part or the other way round. God is totally autonomous and autarchic – but for some reason not indifferent – which is to say that we can only talk about His actions and their effects on us and the world. These we can observe.

Hobbes says here that man wants what he is missing; God does not want so he does not miss anything, and consequently he cannot desire anything.

11 *Leviathan*, 1651. Part 1, Ch. 6.

12 T. Airaksinen, "In the Upper Room: Metaphysics and Theology in Berkeley's Ethics," *Philosophy & Theology* 27 (2015), 427–456, pp. 448ff.

13 *De Cive*, Ch. 15, Sec. 14.

He feels and experiences no aversion or attraction as if a mere object could influence Him. We desire because we need, and a need logically entails lack and suffering. In other words, we are not autarchic and we will stay that way as long as we live. So, we must always desire and desire as such entails suffering; desire is its birth and starting point. We lust and we wish and hope simply because we want something we do not have. In this way Hobbes rejects all the theories of ataraxia; the point is that we are not autarchic and hence we always need and want something, which logically entails a perturbation of the mind.

In the quotation above, Hobbes makes it clear that we must desire, we cannot avoid that. He also talks about rational desire, which refers to and rests on deliberation. Rational desires depend on deliberation unlike irrational desires that function independently. When my tooth aches more or less intolerably my relevant desires may not be rational at all: they are not reason based. However, I need to think what to do next in order to get rid of that irascible desire, and this is a rational process that brings about rational desires. This is not to say that my rational desires are always optimally good; they are just rational. If I deliberate on the matter and decide *not* to go and see a dentist, my solution is not optimal but it is still rational due to the preceding deliberation.

Let us next look at some well-known paragraphs of *Leviathan* on desire and happiness. These texts are so well-known that it is more or less unnecessary to repeat them here, but let me do it for the reference's sake so that we can discuss some of their details. To put it simply: "Continually to be out-gone, is misery. Continually to out-go the next before, is felicity."[14] Hobbes seems to say here that a winner is happy, which sets the path for his subsequent ponderings on happiness or felicity. The following three lengthy quotations make it perfectly clear how Hobbes handles the theory of happiness. Clearly, he is a desire theorist. His is also a value neutral theory as he does not take a stand on the relative merits of virtue and pleasure based desires. However, he seems to be closer to the hedonist theories simply because he fully recognizes the danger inherent in seeking happiness. Happiness flirts with anxiety, a truth that is totally foreign to any proper virtue theory. A sage is never anxious. At the same time, the Hobbesian style of happiness is open to anyone almost on any basis, when virtue theory is open to a limited number of the members of the moral and religious elite. In this sense Hobbes's theory is radical and in many respects novel as well – in the case of Hobbes we are used to such creativity.

He breaks away from the virtues theories without lapsing to full hedonism, or the theories of living a pleasant life here and now. Hobbes also sternly

14 *The Elements of Law*, 1640, Part 1, Ch. 9, Sec, 21.

rejects any prospects of ataraxia in this human world of ours. It is obvious that life is restless and also anxious to the end. I do not think Hobbes even thinks of ataraxia in the sense of giving it a place in this philosophical account of the real prospects of life. He is also an instrumentalist value theorist. There is no supreme good or summum bonum, which again goes against the virtue theories, but there is a supreme instrument, which is called power. Some philosophers, like Berkeley, think that a future state or place in Heaven is our final end and ultimate goal (see note 10). Hobbes as an enlightenment thinker cannot say so. We have a life to live here on earth and that is the only life we got. What happens afterward is another thing. We need to be ready of course in the sense that we are good Christians, but that desire, goal, and value has no influence on what he says about "felicity in this life." He would never say, for instance, that we consider suicide when our power is gone and desires unsuccessful. Life is a struggle and hence we must struggle on. This also puts an end to all talk about Epicurean ataraxia and Stoic apatheia. Hobbes is a theorist of power and that is clearly visible here. Let us now look at the following key text in some detail

> Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call FELICITY; I mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense.[15]

The main points are: an agent desires things, or a desired object, a desideratum. When he satisfies his desire, this is called success. One single success may not yet entail felicity or happiness, which is an intuitive condition. I may say, "I am so happy I got the job," but this alone does not mean that I am happy. I may be delighted, but that is all. Hence, happiness results from a series of satisfactions. The next relevant point is that Hobbes refers to his mechanistic world view – life is a motion and motion implies restlessness, which again implies lack of tranquillity, peace of mind, or ataraxia. It is indeed interesting that desire is intrinsically a restless state of mind, and yet, desire we must. Hobbes seems to be saying that one can be happy even without ataraxia. In this sense, his is a dynamic theory of happiness. We now go to the next quotation.

> To which end we are to consider, that the felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such finis ultimus, (utmost aim,) nor summum bonum, (greatest good,) as is spoken of in

15 *Leviathan*, Part 1, Ch. 6.

> the books of the old moral philosophers. Nor can a man any more live, whose desires are at an end, than he, whose senses and imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is, that the object of man's desire, is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire.[16]

Hobbes says there is no greatest good, and here he says he is no hedonist. Pleasure as such is only one of the possible goals in life, nor is a promise of eternal life the ultimate good in "this life." What we have is a plurality of goods in a seemingly idiosyncratic fashion. A philosopher cannot say much of them; at most, one should pursue goals that strengthen one's vital motion and in this way makes one stronger – and happier. Such things are good things and as such worthy of pursuing as objects of one's desires. Another key point is that a satisfied desire has its double nature: it is at the same time a conclusion and a beginning. I desire in order to get something, or to satisfy my desire. This is a logical point concerning the nature of desire. However, at the same time it is a starting point for a new desire, or actually all kinds of desires. The problem is, as it is easy to see, that the more one desires and the more one gets, the more one must desire. If every satisfied desire brings about a number of new desires, the final number must be very large. This is what Plato worries as a problem of excess, or pleonexia*;* we will return to this problem. Hobbes continues,

> So that in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this, is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.[17]

We can wonder whether the Hobbesian kind of felicity or happiness is what it should be, or happiness as we normally understand it. Happiness, according to him, is always mixed with anxiety and fear and this must be taken very seriously. Happiness is a precarious thing always haunted by uncertainly, fear, anxiety, and distress. It is a kind of maelstrom where we all endlessly whirl around. The more we want to be happy the more we desire and the more we

16 *Leviathan*, Part 1, Ch. 11.

17 Ibid.

have to fear, but we cannot avoid wanting to be happy. We have no choice in this matter, however violently we are driven around within this mad dialectics of happiness and anxiety. This is how Hobbes describes all of us as social human beings, as if democratically, and not as would-be followers of demi-god-like philosopher sages who empower them to achieve all that is good.[18]

One is, with a good reason, afraid that the next step of the progress of desire will be a failure or even something worse. However successful one is it is never enough, and this is a troubling thought. Perhaps we also can read Hobbes as follows. My desire can be read both in de dicto and de re modes. The continuous progress of desire can be understood accordingly. My desire entails a mental representation of the desideratum in question. This is what it is, sometimes realistic sometimes not, socially meaningful or idiosyncratic etc. Such a de dicto object is my own free creation, which is constrained by the world as it is. Many de dicto objects are impossible de re. In many cases the de re characterizations of the de dicto object are untrue. I may want to see a centaur but all the de re representations of a centaur are false. There are no centaurs in this world. Now, whatever object a Hobbesian agent desires, he cannot get them all. One often desires the wrong thing, for instance, when the cause of desire is the combination of imagination and human vanity. This does not promise any good for the agent.

Basically, if I want something I want it all, all of it, and ceteris paribus nothing less suffices. I maximize. However, as we know, I never get what I want because now I already want something else and more of it. Where is my happiness, then? At the same time I am, indeed, successful. Hobbes talks about "continual success" that makes me satisfied and happy, as if there could be such success in any demanding sense of the term. At most, we can say the thought of continuous success makes me happy. In this way desire is Janus faced entity: it is satisfiable and unsatisfiable at the same time, and it depends on you how you view it, either as an optimist or pessimist. However, ultimately pessimism seems to win because, even when you are satisfied and happy, you must go on towards new desires and struggles. This is to say that your optimism is here-and-now but pessimism is forever. Perhaps it is a question of time perspective: now you see your happiness, then you do not – and forward must you go. In this sense life is a motion, process, and struggle that has no designated end.

You take what you can get and you call this happiness, if you succeed often enough and perhaps even systematically. To do that requires the proper means, which means power. In this sense, Hobbes is an instrumentalist happiness

18 On how to recruit followers, see B. Frischer, *The Sculpted Word: Epicureanism and Philosophical Recruitment in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

theorist. There is no summum bonum but there certainly is power as the supreme means and instrument. A rational person does not aim directly at his own personal good but does it always via power and more power. This is to say, whatever you aim at you must be sure that what you get provides at the same time the means of getting more. And there is never enough power to go around because other people also aim at power – this is the cause of struggle and also of quarrel.[19] The rule is, enjoy what you can, get what you like and love, but never forget the requirement of your further desires. All this is of course based on the idea that ataraxia is impossible due the nature of life as motion. This leads us to another dialectical characterization of the situation, or figuratively speaking, to another glance at the Janus faced case. This face is now that of enjoyment of success and delight of achievement – a smiling face while the other face is the grim face of an agent eternally worried about his power, power base, and competition. This face is turned towards the struggle where one meets an enemy, perhaps a personal one, perhaps a social one, or it is a natural threat. Your new house may burn down and you certainly want to protect it by taking some suitable precautionary measures. This is another source of anxiety.

Pleonexia

The logic of desire dictates that one desires everything that is good from one's own personal point of view. Ceteris paribus, desire is an essentially maximizing attitude. Of course I am so adapted to the real world constraints on my desires and their desiderata that I may want to deny this fundamental truth. But think of the direction-of-fit argument as it applies to beliefs and desires as propositional attitudes.[20] When I believe that Mars is a planet, all is fine because my belief fits the facts. When I think that moon is cheese, this is not the case; I must correct my belief. When I desire your love, I want to live in a world where you give me what I want, that is, your love. In a successful and happy case the world fits my desires, that is, you love me. However, I do not want love simpliciter, I want tender, all-encompassing, eternal, unconditional love, and in this sense my desire is essentially immodest. I want it all, even if the real world is so obviously recalcitrant. It never, or very seldom, delivers all I desire, which is an additional cause of anxiety. The following quotation clarifies the situation, in connexion of Plato and his *Republic*.

19 See P. Caws, Ed., *Causes of Quarrel*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

20 See M. Smith, *The Moral Problem*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, Ch. 4.7.

> Elementary natural needs such as drinking and eating are not of the same order as those that are concerned with possession and are not necessary to survival. The 'vehement gang' of terrible desires (see *Rep*. 573e), wild and unbridled, belong to registers that are sometimes mutually different, including the imaginary. It wakes up when the rest of the soul is asleep, in our dreams. Let us say that the epithymetical part is, in this topic of the soul, the seat of desires that are as irrational as they are abundant and polymorphous. Hence their heterogeneity is a source of constant confusion. We may also wonder how devoid of all cognition these desires actually are. Does not any desire suggest some activity of the mind: memories of pleasures past, anticipation of forthcoming pleasures as well as imagination of a state of affairs whose realisation feels desirable?[21]

Hobbes certainly realizes all of this, in his own way, and his solution rests on his idea of deliberation. He says we are dealing with "rational desires," not with irrational impulses or drives; hence, we must take a look at Hobbes's theory of deliberation.[22]

The most famous idea concerning deliberation is, of course, this: The last act of deliberation is what we call the will. When you read it the first time, you may think it solves the problem of pleonexia or uncontrollable desire and greed. Alas, this is not so. The impression is false. The last act of deliberation, or the will, can be anything, as it is easy to see. Suppose a particular process of deliberation is a long one; when and where does it stop? It is easy to think that it has a natural or inherent stopping point, for instance, at the point when the best alternative and solution is found. The process of deliberation would be inherently optimizing in nature. However, Hobbes does not say anything like this. The context is not intensional in the sense that it aims at the best possible solution, where it is designed to stop so that the will may initiate the relevant action. On the contrary, the context is extensional in the sense that the will emerges wherever the process of deliberation happens to stop. Perhaps we can call this an early instance of behaviourism, too.

This makes sense, no doubt about it, because Hobbes just wants to give a definition of the will and he wants to do it without postulating any mysterious, new mental faculty called the will. In this way he also avoids the notorious problem of the free will. But he also misses something with respect of the

21 A. Castel-Bouchouchi, "Plato and the Causes of Excess," *Homo Oeconomicus* 31 (2014), 463–478, p. 467.

22 See S.A. Lloyd, Ed., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hobbes*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012, pp. 119ff.; and J. Lemetti, Ed., *Historical Dictionary of Hobbes's Philosophy*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012, pp. 101–102.

theory of desire, namely an explication of the idea of rational desire. The last step of deliberation may well be something outrageous, say, when the process happens to stop due to some external influences at a bad point. It may stop while one deliberates something crazy and so the will is crazy as well. Nothing guarantees the best possible ending in such an extensional context.

We can find a wonderful analogy of this problem of the correct stopping point in medieval philosophy. As Edward Grant explains, the problem is this: "Can God always reward the meritorious and punish the unmeritorious?"[23] Suppose death approaches at the time point t. Next, suppose that the agent is during his last hour alternatively meritorious and not. During the last half an hour the same is repeated and so on at each similar division of time. In every half-time his merits vary. In this way his life approaches the time point t without ever reaching it. Now, the death comes and cuts his life short but it is impossible to determine whether the agent was meritorious or not at his last moment – simply because there is no such moment: "the instant of death does not form part of the infinite series of decreasing proportional parts of the man's final hour." The idea that the agent is rewarded on the basis of the last act of the judgement of his merits does not work, according to this rather fanciful but valid argument. In the same way, the last act of deliberation as the sole determinant of the will does not make sense. In both case one misses the desideratum, that is, the proper verdict of what to do and why.

Actually, Hobbes has several different models of deliberation but I pay attention only to two of them. In *The Elements of Law*, after saying that "In deliberation the last appetite, as also the last fear, is called WILL, (viz.) the last appetite will to do; the last fear will not to do, or will to omit," he then writes,

> Voluntary also are the actions that proceed from sudden anger, or other sudden appetite, in such men as can discern of good and evil; for in them the time precedent is to be judged deliberation. For then also he deliberateth in what cases it is *good to strike, deride, or do any other action proceeding from anger or other such sudden passion.*[24]

First Hobbes utilizes an extensional model of deliberation as a weighting process of some motion promoting or hindering physiological impulses. They stop wherever it happens to stop, for whatever reasons this may take place. This is the will. But then his tone of voice changes and he introduces an intensional context where the agent aims at his personal good and considers the best time

23 E. Grant, *The Nature of Natural Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010, p. 302.

24 *The Elements of Law*, Part 1, Ch. 12, Sec. 2 and 4. Original italics.

and opportunity to act. Here deliberation results in the agent's own idea of what is good for him, which is his intentional mental state of, say, object appreciation. This entails the existence of an optimal end point of deliberation.

Once we recognize this crucial ambiguity, our problem of the Hobbesian pleonexia is solved, as if automatically. The agent is bound to see that those reckless and ever expanding desires, even if there were a natural impulse to follow them, are not feasible, if understood in the light of deliberation in its value laden intensional context. In that context deliberation can aim at something and this something is what the agent himself thinks is good. No rational agent would ever be inclined to continue on the road to full pleonexia, except perhaps in some very special circumstances. One could suggest that a person who is going to die soon and knows it would maximize his or her desires for the last time and live those last days with a maximal recklessness. Normally this does not happen as the person still deliberates in terms of her own good in the usual restricted and restricting manner. This may look irrational as the extended time perspective, against which all deliberation takes place, is now missing. Nevertheless, this seems to be a hard, empirical, psychological fact. In normal life, people's deliberation may occasionally fail, it may be erroneous in many ways, but the truth is that it stays there. This logically entails that people have some good idea of the means by which they can handle and control their desires without lapsing into the abyss of pleonexia.

Desire and Its Intentionality

Luc Foisneau has beautifully explained the mechanistic psychology of desire in Hobbes. I do not have anything to add to his basic account.[25] However, there is a possibility of a serious misunderstanding, as follows, "Appetites and aversions have what one could call an intentional object. Hobbes expresses this intentionality when he says that an endeavour, 'when it is toward something which causes it, is called appetite, or desire.'"[26]

This is what an endeavour is for Hobbes: "These small beginnings of motion, within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR."[27] Hence, when I see, say, a lovely bottle of wine my attention and appetite are directed to it, as the

25 L. Foisneau, "Hobbes on Desire and Happiness," *Homo Oeconomicus* 31 (2014), 479–489.

26 L. van Apeldoorn, "Reconsidering Hobbes's Account of Practical Deliberation," *Hobbes Studies* 25 (2013), 132–142, p. 38.

27 *Leviathan*, Part 1, Ch. 6.

cause of the endeavour, and after that my bodily actions tend to follow. It is not relevant here how such a fundamental process of endeavour formation takes place. It is enough to keep in mind that Hobbes has such a physiological theory that he formulates in terms of extensional language. It is formulated in terms of physical force and motion in a physiological context in the best, new scientific fashion in his *De Corpore*.[28]

We have already seen that Hobbes is vague and ambiguous in his discussion of the intensional context in the case of deliberation. Concerning desires, he appears to have the same kind of problem. His account in *De Corpore* of appetite and aversion, or desire, is basically mechanistic: a good thing is what makes the animal spirits move faster and expands one's heart, which one experiences as rewarding, pleasant and in general positive. This is how desire as appetite, a concupiscent feeling, works. The case of irascible feelings works in an analogous manner. The animal spirits slow down, etc. This makes you weak. Let me remark about one problem, though. Irascible feelings and negative desires of course lead to avoidance and refusal to act, but that is not all. Often when one encounters something bad, one tends to attack and thus reacts fast with great vigour and determination. How is this possible when the heart shrinks, the vital motion is slow, and animal spirits passive? In the case of plain fear such passivity makes sense, but not in the case of rage, anger, and, say, revengeful emotions. We also know, though, that once a person is in great danger and his relevant beliefs concerning survival are negative, he lapses into apathy. He cannot act. But if one believes that there is a way, the person may well act with a greater vigour than in the case of positive expectations.

Be this as it may, we should not think and admit that the mechanistic account can handle the case of desire as it should be handled. Desires are through and through intentional since they have an intentional object – actually they have two, namely, a de dicto and a de re object. It is of course true that Hobbes himself tries to get rid of this problem, if he sees it at all having been blinded by his own fervent anti-scholasticism. Hence, it is a mistake to identify intentionality of desire with its object directedness, and it is hard to see how and why Apeldoorn sees it appropriate to repeat Hobbes's own words here as if they presented a solution to the problem. Even Foisneau struggles with this problem.

> Fundamentally, animal motion is oriented motion and orientation necessarily implies an aim. However, because the final cause is systematically reduced to the efficient cause, the aim is less important here as a

28 T. Hobbes, *De Corpore. Elementorum philosophiae sectio prima*. Ed. K. Schuhman. Paris: Vrin, 1999, x, 7, p. 103.

> cause than as a function of the evaluation by which a subject represents this or that aim as desirable.[29]

I think the first sentence is the main problem, as I try to explain. Moreover, I do not know how to reduce a final cause to an efficient cause; I presume this is impossible. All the four Aristotelian causes are supposed to be logically independent of each other, or you cannot eliminate the teleological cause by referring to the efficient cause. And finally, the function of evaluation is presumably deliberation in its intentional sense in an intensional context, in which case intentionality is just assumed to be there. In this way, the notion of deliberation is divided into two different types, namely, mechanistic and intentional. The problem then is that Hobbes's analysis is no longer consistently mechanistic, which is of course understandable because we now discuss intentionality in an intensional context.

There may be no solution because no reduction of intentionality to mechanism may work. It is like saying that one wants to reduce the theory of intensionality to that of extensionality, as if intensional language would be an aspect of some luxuriating and overblown language usage. When you think of it, it is clear that these two sentences differ from each other in the relevant sense:

> I threw the ball aiming at the bull's eye and it hit where it should.
> The ball went in the direction of the bull's eye and hit it straight on.

From the fact that the ball went in a certain direction we cannot infer anything about any desire, aim, or value. It just went that way because of some antecedent causally relevant factors and events. To be directed "toward something which caused it" suffers from the same malady because it refers to an extensional context. One should reformulate the whole issue to make sense of it. Hobbes himself writes,

> These words, appetite and aversion, we have from the Latins; and they both of them signify the motions, one of approaching, the other of retiring. So also do the Greek words for the same, which are {orme} and {aphorme}. For nature itself does often press upon men those truths, which afterwards, when they look for somewhat beyond nature, they stumble at. For the Schools find in mere appetite to go, or move, no actual motion at all: but because some motion they must acknowledge, they call

29 Foisneau, 2014, p. 484.

> it metaphorical motion; which is but an absurd speech: for though words may be called metaphorical; bodies and motions cannot.[30]

Here Hobbes says it clearly: directedness is the key, either towards or away when a target exists. Here we know what the target is by looking at the motion, when in the case of desire we should know the direction by looking at the target, or the aim or object of desire. What we have here are causa efficiens and causa finalis at work. Also, Hobbes typically attacks the Scholastic theory trying to make it look ridiculous. Yet it is true that desires have their own internal dynamism, namely, when you desire an object, the object as a desideratum attracts you (a concupiscent case) and as if draws you towards itself. This is, in a sense, a motion within the soul, even if it is not real motion.

Desire is an intentional state. As a state of mind it is about something that has its desirable object or desideratum understood either de dicto or de re. In other words, the agent thinks of an object so that the object forms the content of his thought. In this sense, the thought and the corresponding desire are about the de dicto object. If the agent is in a position to act on her desire she must have good reasons to do so, after which a corresponding intention to act emerges. Notice that not all desires allow the agent's actions: I desire your love, but there is no single action that would help me there. If I want wine, normally I can go and fetch some. Again, the object is something the agent aims at in the sense that it should fit the desire in question. If it does, the desire is satisfied, and a good string of satisfactions means the agent is happy. Now, my own key idea here is that a desire is always about an object or object representation in the mind; this is an a priori truth.

For this very reason, you cannot infer from directionality to intentionality. When a ball moves towards a target, we mention the target metaphorically. Wherever the ball hits, that is its target – notice the analogy with the mechanistic reading of the notion of deliberation above. It is only if the ball is aimed at something by an agent that we may call it literally a target. The agent thought about it. Hence, to be a target proper logically entails a desire and intention as well as an intensional context of our language. In the same way the goodness oriented process of deliberation is intentional. Nothing is good or proper in an extensional context. Nothing is good without the potential or actual presence of a thinking mind. In sum: Where the ball lands depends on its direction of motion, but whether the place where it lands is its target or not depends on the spot being intentionally set or at least seen and understood as the target in question.

30 *Leviathan*, Part 1, Ch. 6.

Egoism

Finally, let me say something about Hobbes's egoism.[31] Is his idea of happiness egocentric or is it not? Many readers have seen and still see Hobbes as a strict egoist because his account of desire and its good is so person-centred. Every person desires and aims at his or her own good. Here is a simple argument that casts a shadow over this standard view.

> An agent necessarily desires what appears to be good for him. (No egoism)
> An agent necessarily desires his own good, or what is good for him. (Egocentrism)
> An agent necessarily only desires his own good. (Egoism)
> An agent does not want something if it is good for others (Negative Egoism)

In all these cases a person aims at a target object that is good and, consequently, forms a corresponding desire (that is about the object), whose satisfaction systematically and often enough justifies us calling him happy. In the first case above, many things may appear good to me, including social and other-regarding good. Our view on these matters may be wide and sympathetic of other people. In the second case, we may well want everything that is good for us but this certainly leaves room for other-regarding desires as well. Of course, if one is keen on one's own desires and their number and scope are large, one is an egocentric or perhaps even an egomaniac person, but this is not egoism proper. In the third case, such a person is an egoist in the proper sense of the term. In the fourth case the agent is a misanthrope. My own view is that Hobbes's texts are ambiguous here and, hence, the problem may well be unresolvable. However, any accusation of egoism is hard to support on these grounds. A careful textual analysis is needed to clarify the issue. My conjecture is that Hobbes may well be a fake egoist in the sense indicated in the first sentence above. A person can, in that case, be and become happy together with other people and not only alone.

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31 B. Gert has famously and persistently defended the view that Hobbes is not an egoist, see his *Hobbes: Prince of Peace*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010. I tend to agree with him.

PART 3

Sexuality

CHAPTER 10

Sadomasochistic Desire

This paper attempts to promote the recognition of the sexualized social world of BDSM in philosophical and tropological perspective. BDSM and especially S/M is hard to understand in its own, characteristic motivational perspective because such negative experiences as, say, pain and humiliation indicate aversion rather than attraction; hence we ask what kind of desire is this supposed to be. To cause pain to others is typically condemned. To cosset pain and suffering is said to be perverse. My main point is, we can better understand BDSM via its typical language and rhetoric, especially by paying attention to the key role of linguistic metonymy when we discuss the riddles of pain and pleasure. I conclude that, within some reasonable limits, BDSM as a type of consensual kinky sex is not vulnerable to the standard forms of criticism.[1]

Kinky Sex

Psychological, legal, and sociological issues are mainly outside the scope of this philosophical and tropological essay.[2] Yet, the relevant problems of BDSM are begging for explanation. BDSM refers to (often organized) activities such as bondage, domination, discipline, submission, and sadomasochism.[3] BDSM is what one may call a sexual diversion, "serious leisure," and sometimes even a life-style.[4] It is often practiced in clubs and other social venues where the performers and their audiences can enjoy the show. Of course, BDSM also takes place privately. It is important to distinguish between BDSM proper,

1 This paper contains partially rewritten parts of my paper "The Language of Pain: A Philosophical Study of BDSM," *SAGE Open* 8 (2018), 1–9.

2 Tropology in rhetoric studies the use of tropes or figurative language. The present paper is related to my "A Philosophical and Rhetorical Theory of BDSM," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 31/1 (2017), 53–74.

3 A useful Terms Dictionary can be found at https://www.bdsm-education.com/dictionary.html. "Bondage and discipline (B/D), dominance and submission (D/S), and sadism and masochism (S/M), also known as BDSM/kink, is becoming an increasingly popular topic in both mainstream media and people's sexual lives." S. Pillai-Friedman, J.L. Pollitt, and A. Castaldo, "Becoming kink-aware, a necessity for sexuality professionals," *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 30 (2015), 196–210, p. 196.

4 "Serious leisure" is a useful term first introduced by Robert A. Stebbins, "Serious Leisure: A Conceptual Statement," *Pacific Sociological Review* 25 (1982), 251–272.

BDSM-inspired sexual foreplay, everyday sadism and masochism, and commercial pornography: BDSM is a social activity, which is to say the participants share a common view of its definition, rules, and values.

I start by asking what BDSM is and what it is not. Let us pay attention to the dialectical interplay between what is intrinsically desirable and undesirable, like pleasure and pain. I discuss the motivation of and the relevant reasons for BDSM activities, given the enigma of how pain, humiliation, and bondage can be so desirable. The standard view is that the explanation is related to sexual and erotic pleasure, but BDSM enthusiasts may also have deeper personal, cognitive reasons for doing what they are doing. The key philosophical point is this: in the BDSM field many of our normal definitions of terms such as violence, sex, pain, and enjoyment either lose their conventional meaning or become alien, ambiguous, controversial, or essentially contested. This challenges anyone who wants to study this field, a trial that we should not underestimate. It is important to distinguish between two perspectives: insiders and outsiders tend to consider BDSM activities in different light. The outsiders, even when they are knowledgeable, sympathetic, and impartial, may fail to understand the desires, practices, and values of the insiders, that is, the practitioners and their intended audiences. Such a failure is particularly disturbing in the case of power wielders like religious, medical and legal authorities. BDSM is indeed a subversive field and as such it resists attempts of domination and control, even at the conceptual level. It is subversive because, among other strange things, it refuses to respect the accepted standard definitions of pain and pleasure, or *jouissance*.[5] A BDSM aficionado's ideas of a delightful activity can be difficult to follow.[6]

Tropological Delineations

Here is an instructive description of BDSM and particularly of sadomasochism or S/M that focuses on "[t]he sexual organization of social risk, for one of S/M's characteristics is the erotizing of scenes, symbols, contexts, and contradictions which society does not typically recognize as 'erotic'." BDSM is about playing risky games understood as sex between two seemingly unequal partners. Also, BDSM can be seen as "radical sex" that is "our 'exploration of eros and the

5 "'Pleasure' was associated with extremely intense sensations," E. Faccio, C. Casini and S. Cipoletta, "Forbidden Games: The Construction of Sexuality and Sexual Pleasure by BDSM Players," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 16 (2014), 752–764, p. 752.

6 N. Largier, *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal.* Tr. G. Harman. New York: Zone Books, 2007.

liberation of erotic potential from Puritan ethics."[7] This looks like a reference to fetishism: one finds or makes non-erotic goals of desire erotic; this is the kind of fetishism we may call functional because its objects are actions and practices. Often we associate fetishism with things like women's high heeled shoes; this can be called material fetishism, when a fetish is a prima facie non-sexual thing loaded with sexual meaning. In other words, the erotic and the non-erotic switch their places under the umbrella of hazard jointly shared by a top and a bottom. The top dominates the bottom and brings about, say, pain and humiliation for both of them to enjoy.

Next, I will derive a novel key characterization of BDSM, which is, as it is easy to see, closely related to the standard one mentioned above. The main point (of S/M) is that the characterizations of erotic/pleasure and non-erotic/pain change places, in other words, they exemplify reversible pairs. Hence, in a BDSM context pain and pleasure are related metonymically.[8] Kenneth Burke writes:

> [We]might extend the [metonymic] pattern to include such reversible pairs as disease-cure, hero-villain, active-passive [and] we should "ironically" note the function of the disease in "perfecting" the cure, or the function of the cure in "perpetuating the influences of the disease."[9]

Pain-pleasure is indeed one of such metonymic pairs: the direct function of pain is now to maximize pleasure, which in the S/M context seems to be a

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7 A. McClintock and B. Thomson, quoted by R.F. Plante, "Sexual Spanking, the Self, and the Construction of Deviance." In *Sadomasochism: Powerful Pleasures*, P. Kleinplatz and C. Moser (Eds.). New York: HPP, 2006, pp. 59–79, pp. 61–62. It is questionable whether all the forms of BDSM are sexual or erotic, for instance activities that focus on slavery and punishment, as Yolanda Estes says (see n. 19). A masochist who longs for humiliation in the hands of a paid dominatrix because of his deep guilt feelings may not seek sex but some kind of psychotherapy. To call BDSM a sexual field, without qualifications, is mere gloss. It is of course impossible to give a definition of sex or eroticism. They are typically cluster concepts (no necessary conditions of being a sexual content can be found unlike sufficient conditions.) When one calls, say, an activity "sexual" one is displaying a contextual marker around which one can then delineate his discursive intentions.

8 Metonymy is a rhetorical trope that makes two related terms interchangeable, for instance, because they refer to a container and contained. In this case I say "I drank one bottle" when I could have said "I drank one beer." You say, "King William won the battle of Hastings" when you could have said "The King's armies won the battle." In the case of BDSM a product of an activity is sometimes substituted for the activity itself. We say that the "pleasurable sensation" (product) is interchangeable with "the painful flogging" (activity). (See http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-metonymy.html).

9 K. Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, p. 512.

positive bodily sensation and in the case of disciplinary or humiliating activity a mental pleasure. Now we can freely alternate "pain" and "pleasure," as in "Whip me, give me pain" and "Whip me, give me pleasure." "Pain" and "pleasure" both refer to one self-identical thing, namely, what I want from this social exchange. No doubt, the rhetorical context is characterized by its metonymies.

Of course, in most narrative fields the relationship of pain and pleasure is far from metonymical, like torture in legal and punitive contexts and hurt in many medical procedures. When we discuss serious pain close to that that of torture, and not some pain-like playful little titillations, this makes the BDSM context a special one: it is a context in which serious pain and rich pleasure are indeed related metonymically in cooperative setting. To make the case stronger, also consensual cooperation between the top and the bottom shows its metonymic features: when you are hurt by an agent this seems like a paradigmatic case of conflict; yet, BDSM is all consensual and hence cooperative. Such a double metonymy strongly characterizes the unique world of BDSM. In the language of BDSM, pain and pleasure as well as conflict and cooperation freely switch places.

If it does not happen in other contexts, this type of metonymy indeed identifies BDSM, and more specifically consensual S/M. I think this is so: the relevant double metonymy is unique to BDSM, but this of course depends on various factors I cannot discuss here. Metonymy, when that is used as a characterization of BDSM, reveals its paradoxical, revolutionary, and truly subversive nature: any social context where conflict and cooperation are related metonymically and X and Y also are situated metonymically, when X is something intrinsically undesirable and Y is its antonym, is an instance of BDSM. X and Y are intended bodily or mental sensations resulting from certain typical social exchange like activities. This applies to everyday masochism, too. If I am begging for punishment and maltreatment, say, in domestic life, I desire it, which makes me a masochist. If I enjoy punishing my subordinates and derive pleasure from it, I am a sadist; I derive pleasure from actions that are not enjoyable as such, or desirable from the point of view of one's audiences.[10] The difference to BDSM is that an every-day sadistic exchange is never cooperative or consensual. Of course, such a usage of the terms "sadism" and "masochism" may sound odd and perhaps dated today. We may reject the idea of sadistic and masochistic personality types but it is difficult to reject the use of those terms altogether.

Here is an illustration: The top cuts his bottom's skin with a sharp blade making him bleed. This activity combines the horror of free flowing blood, the

10 See for example Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. Tr. H.E. Barnes. New York: Gramercy Books, 1994, pp. 394ff. About the ultimate failure of sadism, see pp. 405–406.

perceived hazard of being cut as mental pain and panic, and being wounded as physical agony. Next, the bottom reports delight as well as strong pleasurable feelings and sensations. In this case, delight and pleasure are substituted for horror, mental pain and physical suffering, although the bottom can also report unadulterated pain. Hence, the pain-pleasure pair is freely reversible, just as both Plante and Burke (above) say they should be; this is what a metonymic relation means in this definitional context. Burke's additional point about irony comes in as follows: in an everyday context, when I am hurt and someone asks if I am hurt, I can answer –ironically – by saying "What a pleasure this is, don't you see!" To maximize your pleasure by letting someone hurt you, indeed contains an analogous ironic aspect, at least if seen from an outsider's perspective. Indeed, in an S/M context irony is clearly visible to outsiders but perhaps not always to the participants themselves. The same can be said of experienced horror and joy: the dedicated audiences of horror films are masochists since they enjoy horror. They often seem to realize this anomaly, or their perception of their own strange sensibilities, which, due to its irony, makes the whole experience even more enjoyable to them. Of course, in such a context the ironic aspect is so strong that the audience may laugh – and they do. Interestingly enough, horror and laughter in such a context come close to being interchangeable. Sometimes this tendency is so strong that the show becomes ridiculous. Notice how irony and metonymy overlap here: what is ironic, that is to laugh at horror, starts looking as an instance of metonymy where laughter and horror become interchangeable. Metonymy and irony always are closely connected. Alas, however ironic the logic of BDSM plays may be, legal and medical authorities have traditionally refused to see it that way; or perhaps they live in denial so deep that it turns into aggression. This could to a degree explain the relevant elites', as non-intended audiences, tendency to reject and also strongly condemn BDSM.

Do the desires of BDSM have their metaphoric meaning, too? The joy of BDSM also is in its metaphors. What is then the metaphoric message of urinating or defecating on a bottom? Such activities beg for metaphoric reading since a metaphor changes the considered context into another one that is only remotely connected to the original and by doing so creates a set of secondary meanings: "Men are nothing but pigs" moves the discourse across the limits of fine social etiquette and the hard facts of the human sciences into that of animal husbandry and its real life smells and sounds. Staci Newmahr says the key metaphor of BDSM is that of life and death.[11]

11 S. Newmahr, *Playing on the Edge: Sadomasochism, Risk and Intimacy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011, p. 184. This is an admirable book that gives a good idea of

Newmahr may well be right; however, the tropological themes in BDSM can be developed further than that. For instance, anal fisting belongs to BDSM, or we can situate it as a practice in the repertoire of BDSM.[12] The idea sounds radical, painful, and dangerous, or impossibly repulsive from the point of view of its non-intended audiences. Of course, anal sex constitutes an entire genre of pornography, or the hard core of it, but anal fisting goes one step further along with vaginal fisting. The more demanding idea and practice of anal fisting rests also on a cooperative metonym, on the symbolism of two persons understood as one, connected in a way that cannot be cracked. Why is this different from heterosexual penis-vagina penetration as a kind of bond between two persons? It is different because in many ways it is so much more demanding, just like other BDSM activities. Extraordinary deeds create extraordinary effects. Vanilla sex may make no impression on a couple, unlike such extreme experiences as anal fisting. Just the knowledge that so many people strictly disapprove of it may be decisive. Therefore, we see here a special dialectical interplay between individuality and unity. Yet there must be more to it. If so, what is the relevant metaphor? The mythology of anal unification crosses the limits of its original medical anatomical context in which the main allusion is to stretching of the dry and tight anus instead of the fluid and flexible vagina. Again, irony emerges along with desire and its metonymies: the fluid flex (pleasure) under a fist is substituted for the anus as paradigmatically dry tight thing (pain). Tightness and flexibility now belong to the same context as ironic opposites. Next, our mental representations vacillate between what is real and anatomic, tight anus, and the key metaphoric ideal, an unbreakable bond between two persons. Here we can see an alternative metaphor to Newmahr's life and death, namely that of an unbreakable bond. Of course, we also can view anal fisting in terms of life and death: vagina is for giving life and anus for extracting dead waste. This is almost too obvious, though.

Here the idea of a bond is indeed a new metaphor built on the top of an ironically applied metonymy. There is no bonding in the original descriptive context but now it all, with its perfect plausibility, depends on the secondary

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the insider's perspective on BDSM. About D/S, see K. Cunningham, *Conquer Me*. Eugene, OR: Greenery Press, 2010, 108ff. She makes a crucial distinction between submissiveness and masochism, and consequently, I think, between domination and sadism. For instance Anne Desclos' *The Story of O* (1954) describes O's submissiveness and not masochism. She does now desire suffering. She says she loves her Master and therefore she submits. The master, however, wants total submissiveness without love.

12 See M. Weinberg, C. Williams, and C. Moser, "The Social Constituents of Sadomasochism," *Social Problems* 31/4 (1984), 379–389; and C.J. Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How We Have Sex Without Women or Men," *Social Text* 52/53 (1997), 223–236.

meaning of bonding as something highly commendable and hence ethically valuable and as such desirable. Such a bond is a pledge with a deep and complex narrative (secondary) meaning ranging from commitment to love.[13] At the same time one may feel that such a narrative must be false and definitely refuse to recognize how and why one could freely substitute "fluid, pleasant flex under a fist" for "dry, painful tightness." Thus, one misses the awareness – and avoids the danger – of the key metaphor of an unbreakable social bond. All this must sound subversive, perhaps even repulsive. The metaphor must then be denied as it is simply too dangerous to bear. It may look like sheer madness and perversity that must be seen as (medically) pathological and (legally) suspect activity. Again, to distinguish between a view from inside and outside is crucial: outsiders may be able to see the rhetorical construction of the key metaphor and assent to its basic validity but the participants live it. Without such a metaphor, say, anal fisting functions like sheer violence, when it in reality is full of meaning. BDSM activities may not be about raw animal pleasures.

Here is then my amended characterization of BDSM: By BDSM we mean (more or less openly) sexualized social activities where a pair of mental predicates like pleasure and pain can be freely substituted one for the other (metonymy), these predicates being mutually incompatible in their standard contexts (irony), and they are charged with shared meaning (narrative) based on metaphoric shifts of their fields of discourse. All this takes place in a cooperative context that can and normally is called a conflict situation, which is another source of metonymy here. Here we see the two opposites, life/death and pleasure/pain, constantly meeting and departing at the symbolic level.[14] Hence, the metonymic aspects of S/M focus on the interplay of two bodily feelings and sensations, pain and pleasure, whereas at the metaphoric level we look across borders and find, say, a player reporting experience of purification, discovery of one's true self, or her seamless unification with another person, her top or bottom – seeing "fresh light and value" in the world beyond this one. One may indeed mention the symbolisms of life and death within BDSM, like Newmahr says; they are the key metaphors. For its non-intended audiences BDSM may well mean the open gates of hell and the abyss of damnation, perhaps this is so for a true edge player as well; but then their background narratives are radically different.

13 On narrativity and narrative meaning, see G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*. Tr. J.E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 25–26.

14 On death and sex, see G. Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. Tr. M. Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001; also E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

The Riddles of Motivation

The field of BDSM is large and fantastically varied. Its borders are fuzzy and much of it is hidden and secretive, or made to look like pornography. The field is enclosed in abjuration, moralism, misinformation, and myth. For philosophical argument's sake, let us simplify the field as follows: a BDSM participant (bottom) enjoys pain, punishment, humiliation, and bondage; according to the definition of BDSM above the participants successfully transmute them into pleasure, respect, and even liberty – this looks like some miraculous psychological alchemy. However, if the participants, especially the bottoms, do not find their desire for pain, humiliation, and bondage somehow rewarding, they would not consent to playing these roles.[15] It is not possible to say "I enjoy pain" and to mean it literally: pain is not an object that can be enjoyed as such. Yet, the logic of the play here presupposes the mental pain/pleasure transmutation in question, no doubt about it. But how is it possible? Pain as such cannot be pleasure. It is logically inconsistent to maintain pain to be pleasurable. (We discuss now the logic of some psychological concepts, not their rhetorical usage like we did above.) This problem makes BDSM, and especially S/M, a supremely interesting case from the point of view of psychological hedonism in philosophy, which is a topic as old as philosophy itself.[16]

The standard view of pain is that it is a distressing, paradigmatically disagreeable bodily sensation, and a highly motivating mental state. Moreover, it is logically inconsistent to say something like this: I feel exactly the same pain as yesterday but now it does not feel so bad. In the same way, it is inconsistent to maintain that I still have the same pain but, say, that my medication makes it easier to tolerate. In other words, I cannot doubt that I am in pain.[17] If I tolerate pain better the pain is now less severe. Pain is pain, a raw sensation, and that is all; yet, an S/M bottom may say he enjoys it when whipped hard with a singletail. The pain can be close to intolerable and he may exhibit all its relevant behavioural pain symptoms but he says he somehow enjoys it. Does he really enjoy pain? How is this to be understood? Does it mean that he did not experience severe pain, for instance, because he was so highly stimulated by the activity in question? Sometimes positive excitement, mind control or, say,

15 T. Schroeder, *Three Faces of Desire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 66.

16 See D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

17 P.S.M. Hacker, "On Knowledge and on Knowing that I Am in Pain" (http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/scr/hacker/docs/Knowledge%20of%20Pain.pdf). It is logically speaking nonsense to say something like "I doubt I am in pain" when I show all the relevant pain symptoms.

sexual arousal works like a pain-killer: "Campanella [...] could so abstract his attention from any sufferings of his body, that he was able to endure the rack itself without much pain [...]."[18]

Someone may then ask, can excitement also explain why one enjoys pain? Perhaps you can talk about the delight the situation brings about instead of physical pleasure? How to explain the excitement as a kind of delight then? Certainly it is not the case that excitement creates an altered bodily state where the pain itself becomes enjoyable – one cannot enjoy pain as such. Hence, the bottom feels the pain but also somehow enjoys both the situation where it is delivered and his relation to the top. For instance, a love bite hurts but because it is a love bite it is also enjoyable: it says she loves me. In this example, pain, or pain-and-love, is pleasant because of its relation to love. However, it is impossible that pain would be enjoyable as such; pain is not its own reward.

We know that certain somatic perceptions are a mixture of pain and pleasure, as reported for instance by marathon runners. Such mental states are mixed pleasures. Hence, in S/M pain plays the bottom may at the same time feel pain and report enjoyment or delight as interconnected and mutually synchronized feelings. It is possible that the bottom feels two separate sensations, physical pain and pleasure, but the pleasure is so strong that the pain can be (to some extent) neglected. In this case pain is not pleasure but pain and pleasure arrive as if side by side both having their own causal genesis. Pain and pleasure in S/M are, as I see it, two different and separate sensations that emerge and vary together in such a synchronized manner that it is natural to conflate them in personal reports. Just like the love bite really hurts and it feels good but it is the bite that hurts and feels good; we should not say the pain feels good when the bite feels good. In the same way whipping may feel good and delightful even if we refrain from saying that the associated pain feels good. It is crucial to ask what exactly feels good and what is delightful.

Let me illustrate the explanations given above by means of two rather disturbing semi-pornographic examples of BDSM play performed in front of an audience and shown on the Internet. Two naked, good looking young women are tied together from their left wrists by a rope two feet long. Both have a singletail whip in their right hand. They lash each other tit-for-tat as hard as they can. They tremble, grimace, scream, cry, and weep showing all the bodily symptoms of real pain, which clearly is extreme. Each lash leaves a bright red mark on the skin. They go on for a long time. A second example: This is a competition to determine who lasts longer. Two naked young women (bottoms)

18 E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*. Ed. P. Guyer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1757/2015, pp. 53, 106.

lie down on a platform on the belly; we can see their faces but nothing else. We hear the whip and the blow. The women are clearly scared of what will happen to them. Behind them stands a whipper (top) with a heavy singletail whip. He lashes them one after the other and commands them to count the strokes aloud. We see that the pain is absolutely overwhelming, like torture, and the women really agonize. In this situation, pleasure of any type is out of the question. One surrenders, they both stand up, and the top comes to the front and congratulates them – very sternly, devoid of any sympathy at all, and then walks away. The audience applauds. Here we have a case of pure and real pain and pain behaviour with no hint of enjoyment, pleasure, sex, or eroticism. These women are afraid, not visibly eager, and certainly did not show any signs of enjoyment at all. At the same time, they do not look like being coerced to do what they do.[19] Yet, I must admit that coercion looks like the most plausible explanation here.

Pain and suffering may indeed have their sacred and cathartic quality. Religious asceticism tends to recommend them. Religiously meaningful torture like self-flagellation has its rich and lasting heritage, extending from the Egyptian cult of Isis to the Dominican order.[20] It is clear that in these cases pain is accompanied by one's own, deep sense of reward and feeling of satisfaction, which is motivating. Again, pain is not its own reward although the reward is not possible without the self-inflicted pain; this is what the flagellant believes. He certainly is no hedonist. Hence, BDSM is not necessarily about sensory enjoyment as such. It is deeply related to higher cognitive and emotional functions. According to this view, when you freely suffer humiliation and bondage and risk your health, you will emerge from that situation as a renewed person.[21] At its best, it is a life-altering, other-worldly experience that is as rare as it is personal, a truly remarkable achievement. In this way we can argue against the hedonistic model of BDSM and in favour of a cognitive model.[22] Analogously, we may mention disgusting pleasures: a person feels deep

19 Newmahr (2011) emphasizes intimacy as the true reward, see p. 186: "SM is about creating intimacy through social interaction." Yolanda Estes seems to agree; see her "BDSM: My Apology." In *Desire, Love, and Identity*, G. Foster (Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, Chapter 8.

20 See J. McCabe, *The History Of Flagellation*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2007; and R. Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality*. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1971, Ch. 7 "Perversion." Pearsall pays special attention to English public schools.

21 On professional dominas, see H. Smith and C. Cox, "Dialogue with a Dominatrix." In *S and M, Studies in Sadomasochism*, T. Weinberg and G.W. Levi Camel (Eds.). Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1983.

22 The cognitive model emphasizes the participants' beliefs about the activity. These beliefs motivate and justify the activity. A participant reports, "I love to play because I want to see

pleasure when he has reason to feel bad about the pleasure in question. This is a common experience but no one would say that the pleasure itself is disgusting – pleasure is pleasure and the reasons for being disgusting are another thing. One simply feels pleasure that is accompanied with disgust; this is to say, there are no disgusting pleasures, only reasons for thinking that some pleasures are disgusting and then the relevant negative feelings will follow. Many people enjoy pornography in such a conflicted way.

These reflections apply primarily to the bottom; perhaps they also apply to the top, but in her case the key term must be power.[23] We know that wielding power is often stimulating and enjoyable, sometimes ecstatically so. When we notice that the top in his sadistic role is not able to enjoy any direct sensory pleasure, we conclude that he works hard for some rewarding and satisfying beliefs and ideas of personal and social supremacy and power. Here we must keep in mind that tops and bottoms may switch their roles and hence utilize all the opportunities inherent in BDSM. There is another consideration that deserves to be mentioned: it is undeniable that people are strangely fond of witnessing other persons' pain, suffering, and death – in these days mainly but not solely in fictional terms. Somehow this stimulates and fascinates us no end, as our contemporary popular culture so amply proves.[24] We want to see it and so it must somehow be rewarding. Violence and its victims are in the core of popular entertainment, war and mayhem sell well, and the raped and tortured body in its various forms is viewed with the superbly enjoyable mixture of horror and enthralment. Can this psychological fact explain the top's sadistic motivation? Perhaps it can. Perhaps this interest in violence and pain also is connected to power: when I view another person's pain it empowers me, as if the victim were suffering in my hands. Yet, as a spectator, I am not responsible, I am innocent, I cannot be blamed for the other person's suffering; so I am free to enjoy it as if I were supremely powerful, so powerful that no moral norms may touch me. This is what the top achieves, too.

Let me next address very briefly humiliation. For many BDSM participants, humiliation seems to be a form of respect. This again sounds paradoxical but can be tentatively explained as follows. In their mutual social situation tops and bottoms are engaging in a relationship where they feel for each other

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what is deep within each of us." (Newmahr, 2011, p. 173). To play is to explore, which has little to do with direct sensual stimulation like bodily pleasure or even with sex.

23 "Pleasure [...] does not have to be specifically sexual, rather it may stem from power," Faccio, Casini and Cipoletta, 2014, p. 753. Power derived pleasures must be cognitive-emotional, not physical.

24 S. Bok, *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment*. Reading: Addison Wesley, 1998.

and share their mutual respect and intimacy; in other words, they freely cooperate, which entails respect regardless of what they happen to do. The top is supposed to care for her bottoms; hence, she would not serve that evil trinity, or pain, humiliation, and bondage, raw to her bottoms. They all know what humiliation entails in everyday life but in BDSM play the top is supposed to respect her bottom and she shows it by humiliating him – this may well be the point of the activity. We just need to understand respect in a special way, when it depends on humiliation. My argument is as follows: Suppose the top respects the bottom. Next, the top humiliates her. The top shows his respect by means of humiliating her; it does not do to say, the top shows his respect along with humiliating her. Again we meet a metonymical relation between humiliation and respect, as my key characterization of BDSM requires: humiliation and respect mean the same thing. When we move over from tropological consideration to psychological mechanisms we may then suggest that humiliation and respect are related instrumentally, that is, humiliation brings about or creates the sense of respect. Anyway, "humiliation" and "respect" are freely substitutable terms in this context.

Sade and Sadism

We must draw a firm conceptual distinction between a BDSM top and a bona fide sadist, or a habitually cruel and cold person, and his typical sources of enjoyment. The usual image of sadism and masochism is dominated by ideas that do not correspond to social and consensual BDSM activities but rather reflects the ideas of the Marquis de Sade. Therefore, it may be useful to clarify this background.[25] In BDSM, the top, although she enjoys and exploits her dominant position, at some level also wants to please her bottom and enjoys an intimate and respectful relation with him. Yet, her identity can be that of a sadist because she enjoys hurting the bottom. However, a sadist in Sade's sense rejects all this and intends to exploit, belittle, humiliate, subjugate, hurt, and harm a victim, ultimately aiming at his death. Let us briefly pay attention to certain aspects of Sade's novels, such as *Justine*, *Juliette*, and *The 120 Days of Sodom*, to understand this better.[26] He often describes what can be called plays or games between sadists and their victims arranged in the form of ever changing, diverse illustrative vignettes.[27] It all happens as if on theatre

25 See for instance (https://www.academia.edu/11723094/The_history_of_sadism_and_masochism_).

26 See T. Airaksinen, *The Philosophy of the Marquis de Sade*. London: Routledge, 1995.

27 R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*. Tr. R. Miller. London: Jonathan Cape, 1976, pp. 154ff.

stage – Sade wanted, unsuccessfully, to be a playwright. A sadistic libertine brings in a victim or group of them and the action may start. Often it takes the following cyclic form: philosophical reflection – sexual arousal – torture – sex – killing – discharge of energy in ejaculation – exhaustion; and then back to philosophical reflection and dialogue.

This idea of the repetitive circle of libertine life works as follows. The heroes are philosophers who discuss and theorize pleasure, sex, beauty, virtue, religion, power, and death. This offers them new ideas and stimulates them, which leads them to attack their victims by torturing them, then having forced sex with them, and often killing them. Here murder is the highest and most natural form of voluptuousness. Sex in itself is a rather mechanical act in the sense that the heroes, men and women, discharge like a loaded gun when one pulls the trigger. It also is clear that the heroes are never intimate with their victims; on the contrary, they isolate, violate, and harm them as the Other and in as many ways they ever can invent. The victims are nothing but victims mostly without face, character, personality, or individuality. They are expendable to the degree that they almost do not count as living human beings; yet, their sufferings are – rather strangely – supposed to be meaningful and as such stimulating and enjoyable. Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* is actually a summa of all vices in the realm of sex and sexuality: nothing is left unmentioned and the heroes do try it all.[28] They are, therefore, paradigmatic non-consensual sadists who play their deadly games with their helpless and often faceless victims who certainly are not masochists. Sade justifies all this under the banner of total freedom and full enjoyment of the supreme pleasures of life. His oeuvre is a catechism of freedom in the condition of nature, or alternatively, a display of pure, unmitigated subversives at any cost. However you want to read it, Sade plays with his twisted reason and lethal love in the name of the game of sex and pleasure. He wants to make the most destructive form of sadism the cornerstone of his world-view: the sole source of pleasure that is strong and exciting enough for free and resourceful persons. Such is the story of wild and varied, atavistic, theatrically staged sexual rage.

It is naïve to think that the roles of tops and bottoms would automatically complement each other – without a paradox – because a sadist cannot torment the victim who obviously enjoys and desires the punishment, which then makes the sadist unhappy. A Sadian sadist needs a helpless, reluctant, struggling, suffering, and unhappy victim. The problem is that the masochist does not suffer in the required and desired manner. He is not avoiding pain and humiliation as he should; on the contrary, he gravitates towards it. For a sadist

28 See the English translation by R. Seaver and A. Wainhouse, New York: Grove Press, 1966.

this does not do. Therefore, a masochist cannot find himself a bona fide sadist, they will refuse to serve. Hence, he needs situations where some unsuspecting person torments him, not quite knowing or caring of what he or she is doing. A masochist must find his own Venus in Furs who, while not a sadist proper, is sufficiently resilient, cruel, cold, and demanding to satisfy his hidden desires. This is what Leopold von Sacher-Masoch communicates to his readers.[29] In his novels, masochists do not desire physical pain but some rather sophisticated forms of humiliation, mental suffering, and anguish. For example, a man longs for his loved one who persistently neglects and demeans him. She is there for him (as an ideal object of desire in de dicto sense) and at the same time she is not (as an individual person, or de re). This is what the man ultimately desires even if he begs her to change her behaviour. If she did, his love life would flop. Hence, a masochist struggles in a context he both hates and enjoys at the same time finding all that disgrace deeply meaningful. It is his desire's essence and he hates it. This may look like Teasing-and-Denial but it is not: the love-object, the woman, does not play the game designed by the masochist as a victim; on the contrary, she plays no games. If she were, she would be giving something to the victim, the next move, which a cold and cruel person would never bother to do. She is not enjoying it; she could not care less. Both Sade and Sacher-Masoch write fiction, though. The point is that the characters they created are very different from those of the persons playing in the field of BDSM, who engage in these activities in a genuinely free and consensual manner.

Problems with Consent

Consent means that some persons as rational agents freely agree to act in some way that is supposed to co-ordinate their actions and satisfy their desires either jointly or individually. In this sense, consent means social co-operation, or a starting point of joint action. It is easy to see why consent is important in such a context as BDSM where the activities can be so unusual, dangerous, controversial, and subversive. Consent or co-operative agreement between a top and his or her bottom is important also for moral reasons. Without consent the bottom can, with justification, blame the top for violating him and causing him unnecessary and ultimately unwanted suffering. In other words, consent turns the BDSM scene into a co-operative game, which then protects the participants against negative legal consequences. We can then ask whether

29 See G. Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty,* and L. von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*. Tr. J. McNeil. New York: Zone Books, 1989. Deleuze also writes about Sade.

such consent should be explicit or is merely implicit consent sufficient. This is difficult to determine in any unequivocal manner. However, the problems of consent are crucially important when we discuss the moral aspects of BDSM.

The moral problems of consensual BDSM depend on the acceptable limits of consenting: it is obvious that a person, in normal circumstances, is not supposed to be able to genuinely consent to everything that may be done to him or her. I cannot give you a morally or legally valid permission to kill me. Another relevant example is a slave contract. Now, the bottom agrees to stay on leash and wear a dog collar, obey and serve the top without asking any questions. Disobedience is severely punished and the slave can be auctioned away. In this sense, the bottom is supposed to be the top's private property. Of course, according to traditional natural law, slave contracts are forbidden; in the positive law they are unknown, but a discipline-oriented couple may well agree on such a contract. The main question is, of courses, how seriously all this should be taken. If it is just play-acting it may be justifiable but it also can be taken seriously – it is, however, difficult to say how seriously.

In certain situations, trivially enough, if drugged or coerced, a person's consent is invalid. If the person is mentally unbalanced her apparent consent is again invalid. In such cases, it cannot entail a valid permission to act on him or her. The problem is that consent should be free but it is not free if the person is mentally unbalanced, drugged, or coerced. In the case of mentally unbalanced persons it is difficult to verify that they know both what they are consenting to and what the consequences of their consent are. Their apparent consent is not properly informed. It follows that that a valid consent entails sufficient information and correct beliefs. You must not be cheated or mislead to consent. Such an information requirement is a complex issue we must neglect here.[30]

Some situations may be too dangerous to allow for consenting.[31] For example, someone who finds breath control or choking play personally acceptable, desirable, rewarding, and exciting might consent to her partner making her faint by the lack of air. However, this may lead to death by asphyxiation and then it is unclear whether the top is morally and legally responsible. Two things can be said to contest such dangerous consent: it might be claimed that the consent is invalid because it is possible that certain consequences are risky

30 See Nir Eyal "Informed Consent," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/informed-consent/>.

31 For a legal interpretation of this maxim, see C. White, "The Spanner Trials and the Changing Law on Sadomasochism in the UK." In Kleinplatz and Moser, 2006, pp. 167–187. See M. Stocker, "Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology," *The Journal of Philosophy* LXXVI (1979), 738–753. He argues that one may (rationally) want to hurt herself.

but inadequately understood or appreciated by the bottom. At this stage her mental stability and competence may be re-evaluated. However, given that the bottom is risk-aware, informed, and mentally competent, it may be difficult to argue that the consent is invalid even though the activity in question were uncommon, disgusting, hard to comprehend, and seriously risky. After all, many commonly accepted social activities are seriously risky as well, for example, extreme sports. In professional boxing the fighters agree on a common but mutually exclusive goal of incapacitating the other by violent means. No charges have been pressed even after a death in the ring. Why should BDSM be different, as it in a legal perspective in fact is? The answer may well be: boxing is a fully institutionalized self-regulating activity with its own well-understood rules and norms, unlike BDSM that is just an informal field of dangerous activities. BDSM is thus compared with bar-room brawling rather that professional boxing. Whether this is a justified legal and moral idea should be reviewed critically. An attempt to protect a consenting, competent adult from herself, or from taking too serious risks, is paternalism, which is unjustifiable in a liberal moral framework.[32]

Now, a logical impasse may emerge. Suppose I think an S/M activity is dangerous and repulsive. I infer it is impossible that anyone would like to participate in it freely and consensually. Justified by this key premise, I argue that the participant indeed is unfree, mistaken, and somehow coerced; hence, his apparent consent is invalid. Such faulty but such frequently exploited reasoning should not be taken seriously. It is, anyway, possible that you freely desire something that is incomprehensible to me and my social reference group. It is argued, from an outsider's perspective, that when the risks of a BDSM activity are high and the activity in question somehow strange and disgusting the consenting person cannot be mentally normal. It cannot be normal to consent to that type of activity because any suggested motive to participate in it is incomprehensible. In other words, the outsiders, as a non-intended audience, refuse to understand the insiders' life projects and the related reasons for action.

However, this way of thinking is question begging if there is no independent evidence for mental problems. What must be scrutinised is whether the person is in fact mentally damaged because, say, he or she was sexually abused as a child. However, the same is not done in the case of professional boxers. This may, anyhow, explain in a seemingly valid way the strange desires as pathological symptoms and thus allow us to dismiss consenting. A person's pathological state undermines his personal responsibility and voids his explicit consent. However, to do so we need first to verify the existence of psychological damage

32 See H. Häyry (Gylling), *The Limits of Medical Paternalism*. London: Routledge, 1991.

and then prove that it and not something else is the cause of the unacceptable behaviour in question. This is seldom possible. Ideally we should be case-specific: this requires us to show that given damage X one will indeed later on demonstrate unrealistic, sexually relevant risk acceptance; moreover, we should also show that all or at least most who suffer from X would do so. There should not be X sufferers who do not display BDSM symptoms. The problem is that so many children are maltreated, so many have mental problems, and yet so few love BDSM. The key term is accurate prediction: does X reliably predict BDSM and only that? Accordingly, we should find a special type of X that accurately predicts and explains BDSM. It is not easy to show that exactly this specific damage causes the allegedly abnormal behaviour exhibited in BDSM activities. Without verifiable, detailed information about the history and causes of the relevant mental problems, all these so-called explanations are nothing but thinly veiled character assassinations. Moreover, from the fact that damage X predicts BDSM, it does not follow that BDSM is intrinsically undesirable or socially unacceptable – simply because X is involved.

Safe and Sane?

BDSM play is, or should be, safe and sane – as the standard insiders' saying goes.[33] The ideological mantra is something like the following. Its deep ironies are easy to appreciate: the players enjoy activities that are supposed to exemplify the paradigms of blood, horror, pain, and danger, whose key metaphors are said to be life and death; yet, it all should be safe and sane. How can that be? Here the ironic aspect is created by the reference to safety when the play is supposed to appear as unsafe as possible, at least at the symbolic level. Now pain play starts looking like mere teasing, domination threatens to collapse into play acting, humiliation is based on pretending, and slavery becomes an innocent domestic role. We can say BDSM becomes gentrified. Such ironies create a tension within the whole field of BDSM: can it be taken seriously? Here is its secondary irony, BDSM must be made palatable to its unintended audiences, and especially to those social elite power wielders who may ban the whole movement; in other words, the ultimate expressions of subversion become the expressions of something like safe and sane practices. Under these conditions, why would the insiders bother anymore?

Somehow something must be done to make the play as safe as possible, without compromising its inherent excitement. The basic rule is, no permanent

33 See Newmahr, 2011, p. 146.

personal harm or injury may ensue. Therefore, safe words are used; these are part of the consent discussed above. They are specific code words whose utterance stops the play. Notice, that the bottom may scream and plead for the top to stop, which he is not going to do if the magic safe word is not uttered. When pain or humiliation is too much to take, uttering the safe word saves the bottom. As I said above, this pre-empts the whole idea of S/M play, if it is to be taken seriously. It is easy to see that this kind of soft ideology can and must be challenged. Therefore, safe words are not always used, namely, if they are against the very idea of the play, in this case edge play. Of course, a play without a safe word can and will be genuinely dangerous, but some players insist on it, that is edge players, or those who participate in the most dangerous games, such as mock hangings or severe beatings, without subscribing to the normal code of "safe, sane, and consensual."[34] Perhaps the last condition, consent, is also the last one to disappear. When it is gone, the action is no longer a play, as it becomes real and all its inherent irony is gone as well. This is to say that without its ironies, BDSM is not what it is supposed to be. Irony is its essential feature or otherwise we will meet the shadow of the Marquis de Sade. The tropological landscape changes when the essential irony is replaced by the romance of self-destruction, impossible threats, and mortal danger at the edge of the abyss of horror. Tropologically, we move over from the mundane realms of metonymy to the ever fascinating depths of metaphor, from what is merely dangerous and subversive to what is criminal and sick.

Edge players may try and save their face by arguing that all that is required is that both players, the top and the bottom, understand the shared risks of the activity, or they are fully risk aware.[35] "Sanity" now means risk aware, which represents the last vestige of consent in this context. Without risk awareness the bottom does not know what she is doing; she has no free will. Without it you have a bottom who is a mere victim to be violated at will by all powerful tops in the true Sadian manner. The lack of a safe word certainly makes the play more exciting and, what is important, more genuine, not only an "as-if" play of pain and pleasure. I mean, without a safe word the play becomes more real and convincing, or less imaginary but also less metaphoric. This last point seems to contradict what I said above. Now, tropologically speaking, if a safe word tolerates S/M's metaphors, the lack of it certainly signifies its return to metonymy, to raw reality. As Newmahr says, S/M is about life and death, first as symbols and now as a real possibility. You no longer play with the idea of death, you love and live it. The apparent contradiction between my two

34 On edgework, see Newmahr, 2011, Ch. 7.

35 This is RACK (risk aware consensual kink), see Newmahr, 2011, p. 147.

accounts of the tropology of edge play can easily be reconciled as follows: its deeper metaphoric aspect is available only to the participants and their intended audiences whereas the unintended audiences stay at the level of reality and its harsh and trivial metonyms; in fact, this is where the accusations of pathological desire and criminal activity make their entrances. The metaphors become exclusive and incommunicado. Accusations of perversity and threats of punishment quickly ensue as the non-intended audiences wield their power to protect their own threatened sensibilities. What is subversive should not be taken lightly, or even mentioned in vain. What is called perverse represents dismay and panic when it comes too close.

CHAPTER 11

Tricky Sexual Differences: What Is Perversion?

The purpose of this paper is to explicate in detail why we should not use – or even mention – the terms perversion and pervert: these are not only essentially contested but inherently discriminatory terms. Thomas Nagel's famous article "Sexual Perversion" is an often reprinted contribution to the philosophy of sexuality. I critically review his arguments and compare them with those of Sigmund Freud and others. He explains the genesis of perversions based on developmental trauma. Freud does not identify and label perverted persons in such a simplicistic manner as he admits that healthy persons may play with perverted desires. Yet, he also finds perversions pathological. All this talk should change because hetero vanilla sex cannot be the only viable type of sex. Of course, evil sexual practices exist, like rape, but this has nothing to do with perversity. Also sex and love are two separate things.

The Tropes of Perversity

Sexuality is a touchy cultural topic loaded with a moralistic package, and therefore also strictly regimented by the church (mortal sin), positive law (crime), natural law (unnatural behaviour), tradition and its mores (dirty and disgusting practices[1]). Medical lore follows suit: certain sexual desires are called paraphilias or paraphilic disorders as if they were pathologically symptomatic thus deserving a fancy name.[2] For instance, BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, and Masochism, also D/S or contractual domination and submissiveness) has been classified together with fetishism, paedophilia, zoophilia, coprophilia or scatology etc., so offensive is its popular image. For instance, the scatological fetish, or playing with human excrement, may be difficult to accept as normal.[3]

1 Disgust is the key term when we discuss perversion, see for instance R. Herz, *That's Disgusting.* New York: Norton, 2012, Ch. 6 "Lust and Disgust." Dirt stains and pollutes a person and brands him more or less permanently. Labels like "pervert" stick.

2 For the state of the medical debate on this, see S. Wright, "Depathologizing Consensual Sexual Sadism, Sexual Masochism, Transvestic Fetishism, and Fetishism," *Arch Sex Behav* (2010) 39:1229–1230; and U. Khan, "Sadomasochism in Sickness and in Health: Competing Claims from Science, Social Science, and Culture," *Curr Sex Health Rep* (2015) 7:49–58.

3 Scatology is an essential if nauseating part of M. de Sade's idea of "simple pleasure"; see the early days and weeks of the *120 Days of Sodom*. See also S. Freud, *On Sexuality, Three Essays on*

Is BDSM a perversion? Is it a paraphilia? Is it a paraphilic disorder? The best answer may well be in the negative; it is kinky and perhaps weird but these two terms are not necessarily condemnatory; their tropology today may be ironic, intentionally subversive, and multi-dimensionally suggestive, they may be socially unmanageable and even creatively playful. We may also call BDSM minority sex because minority is a relational or non-essential term – the situation may change when social conventions and customs change, like in the case of gay sex in many liberal cultures of today. However, calling BDSM perverse or paraphilic sex and a paraphilic disorder assigns it a non-relational or essentially negative, unique and ultimately discriminatory characterization. An argument against such a negative rhetorical strategy exists: it is ad hoc. If you want to censure or condemn a type of wish, desire, need, or action you should not use a term that is tailor-made for this special purpose only; it is called negative labelling, which as such is an ad hoc strategy devoid of explanatory weight. The strategy has Biblical roots: to call a desire a sin is to label it as something against the religious canon; the next step is to metonymically relate sin to immorality; and thus a sectarian condemnation turns into a universalizable moral judgement. In this way, sin becomes applicable to everyday social life achieving in the process an extra-religious moralistic meaning tone that also seems to justify its use. Sin extends its halo into the fields of morality and the law. This happens to perversion and, to a lesser degree, to paraphilia as well.

It is customary to describe a kinky sexual activity in common negative terms, which make its disapproval appear not prejudiced but objective and coherent. However, one must avoid labelling or applying special categorical terms in an ad hoc manner, terms that work in a given context only. For instance, by calling BDSM sick, unnatural, immoral, or sinful you make it one of the activities condemned by the medical community, concerned citizens, and some Christian churches.[4] Call it ugly, disgusting, criminal, and insane and you attract a different audience. You should specify the reasons for your condemnation because no bad thing can be bad in its own unique way and in its own special mode, like the perverse or paraphilic activities allegedly are. But such specification may not be easy if you do not lean heavily on negative emotional terms.

When one uses the term perverse, one uses a term that condemns certain desires and actions within the broad and wide open field of sexuality and eroticism. Such a usage is, tropologically speaking, fetishist. The word works as a

the Theory of Sexuality, Pelican Freud Library Vol. 7. Tr. J. Strachey. London: Penguin Books, 1977, p. 104, and about "disappearance of their anal eroticism," in the case of those neurotics who are now "orderly, parsimonious, and obstinate" (p. 210).

4 See E. Berkowitz, *Sex and Punishment*. London: Westbourne Press, 2013.

linguistic and rhetorical talisman, a magic name that is required to do one special job only: to place a negative and discriminatory label on something that is already abhorred, or required to be so. This is because perversion has no independent meaning base. As a verbal talisman and fetish it does not; instead, we create a new use for the word, or a new word, that has no independent meaning base, no previous use or history. This is what a verbal fetish does, it works as if in a vacuum where its emerging effect looks like a kind of miracle. In the end, the irony of this all is that BDSM appears as a type of sexual fetishism, which condemns it as a perversion that in itself is a fetishist trope. Hence, to speak of perversions is perverted, which is nothing but criticism's suicide.

Perversion talk as a linguistic performative convinces and condemns without a reason or ground. Perhaps the general non-sexual meaning of perversion, if it has a discursive meaning, is something like happily but incomprehensibly violating one's own self or essential interests? A meaning like that can be coined but a glance at a thesaurus shows that perversion fails to have proper synonyms; the best I can find is distortion. BDSM would then be distorted sex, but along with such a trope we certainly approach the fuzzy realms of metaphor. If perversion means a hopelessly twisted affair it does not say much about sex; sex tends to be hopelessly twisted anyway in all its forms. That is why we talk about vanilla sex, but who says vanilla sex is a simple thing?[5]

I suppose the terms paraphilia and paraphilic disorder fare a little better in this respect but then they are technical medical terms that should be carefully unpacked in order to see what they cover and hide. Why coin such terms? Why not use statistical terms such as rare and uncommon? Even strange, non-standard, and abnormal might do. The question is, even if we prioritize vanilla sex, or sex that is or simulates human reproductive activity, what is the reason for condemning all the other sources of sexual pleasure? Why provide them with a common characterization after all? No good answer exists. It has been suggested, of course, that paraphilic disorders are personally painful and harmful in the long run, and thus the sufferer tends to seek for help. They are in this sense like diseases. This may well be so but different people react differently to different activities. Some individuals flourish, some suffer, so that it is difficult to say anything informative about an activity like BDSM. A happy voyeur may

5 A paradox of perversion: if perversion is sick sex, or deviant sex, one may desire it exactly because of this – the more sick and deviant the better. Perversion as the new normal would deprive perverts of their desire and pleasure; see J. Dollimore, *Sex, Literature and Censorship*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001, pp. 89ff. The problem is that this applies to vanilla sex as well. For some people all non-procreative sex is exciting and normatively ambiguous, think of devout Catholics. The other side of the paradox is that deviant desires may be a source of great pain. Can one want sick sex because of its painfulness?

exist along with others who suffer because of their desire. If they cause true social harm, they commit a misdemeanour and crime, which is an altogether different worry. The best rule of thumb is, as it seems to me, if BDSM related desire brings about intolerable pain, suffering, and harm (de se) to a person that calls for psychotherapy and medical help. However, even in this case one might want to resist the temptation of calling BDSM the problem. The relevant, in this case harmful, activities need not be condemned in a broader context. The sexual disorder is this person's own personal problem. In fact, it is his own problem like any other problems he may have. We may call it a BDSM generated problem; say, deep anxiety and depression, just like we call a broken leg a fall related bone problem. Yet, one cannot say BDSM is the problem because happy BDSM aficionados exist, we know that. BDSM is not like a broken leg.

Freud: Perverted and Pathological Desires

Any account of any type of perversion provided by the members of its non-intended audience tends to be philosophically and analytically objectionable. The same can be said of scholarly definitions. I give two examples, a classic psychoanalytical definition by Sigmund Freud, and later on the famous philosophical one by Thomas Nagel. Other definitions exist but these two are, as far as I can see, representative and certainly influential. Sigmund Freud first notices that obviously healthy people may make certain strange additions to their otherwise normal and healthy vanilla sex centred sexual repertoire.[6] Unlike Nagel, he maintains that they are normal, except that their sexual life is or tends to be abnormal, and, hence, sexual perversions do not always require a psycho-pathological aetiology or signify anything like mental illness. Hence, perverted sex is predicated on desires, activities, and practices, and not on persons. Nevertheless, Freud says that many sexual desires and practices are "so far removed from the normal in their content that we cannot avoid pronouncing them 'pathological'."[7] Here a dubious emphasis is placed on non-statistical and pseudo-normative reference to something called normal. This is the central trope in conservative contexts whose key purpose is to put a lid on the life and language of some activities that are too shameful to mention. Again, Freud

6 He repeats this idea, see Freud, 1977, p, 74, also pp. 61–62, 66, 74, 87. Ultimately, it sounds as if perversion is internal to all sexuality, which comes close to saying that no healthy or normal sexuality exists.

7 Freud, 1977, p. 74. This is a bad idea, for obvious reasons. A gloriously beautiful person is not pathological. A mathematical genius may not be pathological.

says that some practices, and not people, are sick and so, metonymically, they make people sick. Such desires and practices should carry a label "Do Not Try!" Fetishism, including some aspects of BDSM, certainly belongs to this category almost by definition: a fetishist attaches sexual value to non-sexual things and actions, which, consequently, are "so far removed from the normal." The idea is clear: A woman's shoe – an industrial artefact – is indeed far removed from normal sexual objects.

Freud's definition of perversion, or abnormal and pathological sex, contains a preliminary point and two main parts. First, perversion metonymically replaces vanilla sex taking its role in life and language. Then the first part of the definition itself: perversion entails a "sexual instinct [...] overriding the resistance or shame, disgust, horror, and pain"; and the second part: "perversion has the characteristic of exclusiveness and fixation." Especially the second part should justify the epithet perverse as a pathological symptom.[8] But a person may show, in vanilla sex, a strong fixation to the partner's genitals – obviously Freud does not mean this. Perversions are supposed to be endlessly repetitive and fully rigid and in this sense demeaning, inhuman, or machine like – when machine becomes the hidden key metaphor in this context. Only machines are fully rigid. This is interesting even if it does not really apply to BDSM, as it easy to verify. The members of BDSM community can be and are fully flexible with their desires, say, a top and a bottom may change their roles (see Ch. 10).[9] Nevertheless, active BDSM community members are able to deal with "shame, disgust, horror, and pain" – this is the name of their game. A submissive person is supposed to enjoy disgusting humiliation. Therefore, what Freud is afraid of they desire, which is a source of irony here. In fact, Freud emphasizes disgust as an essential component in connection with perversions.[10]

Notice that shame and disgust apply to many or most people who are starting their sex lives; it can be hard to perform a complete fellatio (give head) or cunnilingus (eat pussy) and enjoy it. In vanilla sex, genitals may remain a source of disgust, which the sexual lust then overrides. But you do not become perverted when you get used to it. Freud's, and we will see, Nagel's definitions are conservative and perhaps logically dubious. Their main purpose is to justify the desire for vanilla sex by making its alternatives look bad to the non-intended audiences of the type of sex play in question.

8 S. Freud, 1977, p. 75; also pp. 66–67 and p. 75.

9 Freud (1977, p. 73) says that a "sadist is always at the same time a masochist," and that entails flexibility.

10 Freud, 1977, pp. 64, 76 etc.

Nagel: the Substantiality Thesis

Thomas Nagel's "Sexual Perversion" (SP in what follows) has been reprinted numerous times and widely quoted.[11] He has a mission, namely, to reveal the secrets of good sex and not only good sex but ethically sustainable sex as well. The paper seems to have a special appeal to a wide range of specialists in the philosophy of sex and sexuality. Therefore, I ask a simple question, namely, is this justified? If it is, we should find a solid and valid analysis of good sex and a convincing reason to reject a wide variety of sexual desires and practices because they are perverted. Concerning sexual perversions in SP, I find three layers: first, Nagel defends the idea that the idea of sexual perversion is a substantial one; that is, it is not a mere colloquial pejorative term. Second, he provides us a narrative account of non-perverted and ideal sexual behaviour. Third, he tells us what sexual perversion is and what causes it. I deal with these points one by one.

Let us now look into the details of SP. The first argument has two parts, first the argument from anti-relativity and then the argument from generalization. Nagel writes,

> What is regarded as unnatural admittedly varies from culture to culture, but the classification is not a pure expression of disapproval of distaste. In fact it is often regarded as a *ground* for disapproval, and that suggests that the classification has independent content.[12]

The key concept here and throughout the paper is unnatural. Anyway, the first part of Nagel's substantiality argument says that however much different cultures and times vary in terms of their sexual ethics they all use a notion of unnatural sex, which they disapprove. They have their ideas about good and acceptable sex as well as on bad and forbidden sex, or unnatural, sex. We have found a cultural universal. Often they reject something because of the violation of a taboo, for instance. Unnatural as a condemnatory term may not have such a universal appeal as Nagel believes.[13] Roman Catholic philosophers use the term freely but that is another thing. Be this as it may, the main point is that

11 T. Nagel, "Sexual Perversion" (in his *Mortal Questions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) has been recently reprinted, for instance, in such a major textbook as G. Foster, Ed., *Desire, Love, and Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

12 Nagel, 1979, p. 40.

13 Well, this is easy to say, but look for instance M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge, 1966/2008, p. 175: "The people [Walbiri of Central Australia] have no beliefs concerning sexual pollution."

in many cultures the tit-for-tat arousal between man and woman is considered weird or even impossible. Ancient Greeks may have thought so. Plato hated painted ladies and desired beautiful young men even if he hardly imagined that they would desire him. Are these people perverted?

The second part of the argument for substantiality is the generalization thesis, which begins like this: "Can we imagine anything that would qualify as gastronomical perversion?"[14] Nagel answers his own question thus: "Even an appetite can have perversions if in addition to its biological function it has a significant psychological structure." I am not sure this is true of appetite for food. We do not use the term perversion in any serious sense in connection with food. Sex is, indeed, a special case. I am not a pervert if I desire dog meat, bull's balls, or pig's trotters. If one eats excrement one is probably psychotic. If one entertains sexual interests in a dog or pig, one is, colloquially speaking, a pervert. Perversion indeed is, when it us used seriously, a special negative term dedicated to sexuality. Nagel has not shown the substantial and generalized nature of the concept of perversion.

The gastronomical part of SP is important because it hints at what Nagel really is after, and that is his ideal sex as love. Culturally I see it as a typical Hollywood Americanism. Sex without love is dirty business. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that that porn industry flourishes in the US but prostitution is strictly illegal, except in the great state of Nevada. Anyway, Nagel writes: "any omelet with the crucial characteristics would do as well," when I desire and find a perfect omelette. Next, Nagel says, "any person with the same flesh distribution" would not do equally well when it comes to sex. In sex, there is something more than sex, which I call love. This reveals the underlying moralism in Nagel's paper: I do not love omelets, except perhaps metaphorically, but I love my sex partner. This and only this explains the difference.[15] Now, if we discuss sex qua sex one may well desire any potential partner who displays that same, lovely "flesh distribution." Sex is like that and that is why some people think of all sex as bad and dirty business. To make sex more palatable Nagel discusses ideal sex, which is nothing but sexually loaded type of love, although he shuns the term. He does not like to discuss love although he is unable to avoid it. In the modern urban secular world, sex and love are two separate things. The quest for mutual respect between the partners is another matter. Respect is a moral term and morality is always in demand. But love is too much to ask for.

14 Nagel, 1979, p. 42.

15 My wife suggests the following argument: A perfect omelet made by your loving wife is certainly preferable to a similar restaurant omelet.

Nagel: Ideally Good Sex, or in the Singles Bar

What is the very best sex like then? Nagel argues, "[sex] involves a desire that one's partner be aroused by the recognition of one's desire that he or she be aroused." This tit-for-tat arousal sometimes happens but it is obviously too ambitious as a requirement, as Nagel recognizes, too. I wonder why he bothers to introduce the point. You and your partner may have mutually different sources and causes of arousal and yet your sex is certainly not perverted only because of that. However, if you two share "reciprocal interpersonal sexual awareness" you cannot go wrong. But what if I am aroused by the sight of your high heeled shoe and you are aroused by my arousal, independently of its source? How should one judge this exchange? It may be perverted, I suppose. Nagel may answer that the source of arousal must be perceived arousal, yet you must start somewhere. The question is, what is the relevant starting point of the cycle of arousals? What characteristics of the other person one should find initially attractive? What if I find only ugly persons sexy? What about their hair? If so, is it fetishism?

Ideal sex is always natural and normal, says Nagel. Is BDSM, as a test case, perverted by Nagel's standards? One thing is certain, however, BDSM can also be a mutually agreeable, freely chosen, and fully rewarding, mutually communicative sexual experience, as reported by the participants themselves. The top is aroused by the expressed pain of the bottom and the bottom is aroused by the top's aggression. Of course, Nagel may say that the sources of arousal here are not sexual in nature and not the same for both players, as they are in ideal vanilla sex: both partners are aroused by the sexual arousal of the partner, symmetrically. Is it important that the mutual sources of arousal are fully symmetrical? I do not understand why this should be so.

According to SP, a normal man goes to a bar and notices a nice looking normal woman who notices him.[16] They spy on each other and both believe that one finds the other sexually attractive and displays the first signs of arousal. Anyway, all this leads them to a virtuous circle where he gets excited from her being excited and the same happens with her.[17] Finally they both are sufficiently aroused to meet and talk, and then they to go to bed and satisfy their mutual lust: "For sexual arousal might begin with a person sensing that he is sensed being assailed by the perception of the other person's desire rather

16 Do singles bars still exist? (See https://punchdrink.com/articles/whatever-happened-to-the-singles-bar-tgi-fridays-maxwells-plum/). Today, sex traffic is on the net.

17 The paradoxes of this recursive approach are shown by R.D. Laing, *Knots*. New York: Vintage, 1970.

than merely by the perception of the person. But there is a further step." In bed, we get pleasure from the pleasure of the other. The more the other enjoys the more I enjoy her enjoyment. In this way we both reach the maximal enjoyment. "[H]e becomes conscious of his sexuality through his awareness of its effects on her and her awareness that this effect is due to him."[18] Nagel is (too) strongly influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre here. Their concepts of flesh and sexuality do not come to an agreement. For Sartre, flesh meets flesh and becomes one, but for Nagel this cannot happen because one always must recognize the other, which entails a certain distance. Nagel's ideal couple never really fucks. Suppose I go to bed with my partner in order to see him or her react to my own sexuality. This may be important to me but it cannot be the point, if I am not a single minded narcissist or a pervert. Moreover, I do not understand what it means to become conscious of my own sexuality in this context. If one is a virgin, it may be fine but for an established husband or wife the situation is certainly different. As I see it, a sex act is for sexual satisfaction and orgasm. Yet I agree that sex is not only for sexual pleasure; sexual enjoyment is more that sexual pleasure as such.

I can of course see what Nagel means, namely, the moral ideal is a sexual encounter where the partners fully recognize each other as players of the same interactive game. However, many other ways to practice the best sex exist, also outside the singles bar, for instance, between well-established married couples. They need not spy on each other at a distance. Actually, anonymous sex between two strangers is seldom that good, or think of the glory hole. I wonder why Nagel makes his theory so dependent on mutual arousal and lust when he earlier hinted at the role of love. In a singles bar they as if serve omelets and other treats where the good distribution of flesh is all that counts. People there may avoid all references to love. I agree with Nagel that morally good sex requires that the partners at least recognize each other. But then, if that is the sole requirement, some perverts might achieve it as well. Nagel should somehow show that only natural and normal sex allows first for mutual recognition and then love.

The problems of the SP model of the best sex are then obvious. I mention two special problems. The first one is narcissism and, second, lack of sexual content. In the single's bar narrative the narcissistic aspect is overpowering.[19] Next, the tit-for-tat model of mutual recognition may not be sexual. The only way out is to say that both parties are interested in sex and then they expect

18 Nagel, 1979, p. 46. Jon Nuttall in his *Moral Questions: An Introduction to Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, p. 74) supports the same idea.

19 See J. Berman, *Narcissism in Novel*. New York: New York University Press, 1990, p. 21.

to derive their forthcoming pleasure from it. Therefore, they interact with the other person in order to enjoy maximal mutual arousal. They interact to score, get laid, and receive their share of sexual pleasure. If they are moral individuals they fully respect the other's similar interests and they understand that without mutual recognition their own sexual enjoyment must be lacking. The bottom line is indeed sexual pleasure, not their mutual recognition or one's ability to make the other sexually aroused. The key point is that when the time is ripe for the sexual pleasure a moral person takes care of the partner; thus both may enjoy sex equally. Alas, the problem is that moral people, who alone are capable of the best sex, may not derive more sexual pleasure out of the sex act than bad people. They may feel better about their sexual exploits because they know they also gave pleasure, which is nice. They validly believe that they are not perverts, which is even nicer. A bad person may, alas, feel better when he thinks of her ability to non-consensually hurt and humiliate the partner – but this is not best sex according to Nagel.

Nagel: the Genesis of Sexual Perversion

Nagel's definition of sexual perversion in SP is something like this: A sexual inclination qualifies as a perversion if and only if it exists because of a particular psychological trauma in the person's earlier life. This presupposes a damaged person, or a pervert. Perhaps we can add: later in life the inclination becomes urgent and compulsive. For instance, this particular trauma has made the person unable to recognize another person's sexual arousal or to love him. Alternately, because of the trauma, the person's sexual focus is turned away from its vanilla objects; think of fetishism. Fetishism bypasses the recognition of the other as a person because the focus is on an object that is as such non-sexual. Let us now ask how Nagel argues for his definition.

Perverted sex is unnatural: "The concept of perversion implies that a normal sexual development has been turned aside by distorting influences" and "if humans will tend to develop some version of reciprocal interpersonal sexual awareness unless prevented, then the cases of blockade can be called unnatural or perverted." Here is then Nagel's famous theory of sexual perversion. Perversion means unnatural sex and unnatural means that a person's normal psycho-sexual development became distorted by some external influences or trauma so that the person, say, becomes unable to recognize the other. Notice that for Nagel people are perverted and abnormal when in the case of Freud acts and practices are perverted. For Nagel, a mentally healthy person cannot play perverted games; for Freud she can. But how can I know that this normal

looking particular sex habit I am truly fond of, and which my partner seems to enjoy as well, is not the result of a trauma at some point of my psycho-sexual development? It is possible that my preference is a sexual perversion. Hence, I am unsure whether I am a pervert and in need of psychotherapy. Even when my sexual preferences are apparently normal they may be perverted. A trauma is not always remembered. Obviously, Nagel should first say that the trauma is the cause of dysfunctional sex, and then specify what is dysfunctional. But he only says that tit-for-tat arousal is functional, which is not enough.

Nagel writes, sex between normal persons can "achieve its goal on occasion" and thus provides "the conception of perversion with a foothold." What could this mean? As I see it, we sometimes have very good sex, as close to the ideal as humanely possible, which is impossible in the field of perversions (cf. the final chapter of this paper). Perversions may hedonistically be as good as you like, but still they somehow fail. Nagel's argument goes like this: The ideal and best sex is based on mutual recognition and arousal, perverts are unable to do so, hence their sex is always less than ideally good: "But if humans will tend to develop some version of reciprocal interpersonal sexual awareness unless prevented, then cases of blockage can be called unnatural or perverted."[20] This is what one can expect when the persons are perverted. Perverts may fare well but they can never reach perfection.

Hence, under Nagel's own criteria for instance consensual BDSM qualifies as a sexual perversion, to say nothing of non-consensual sadism, but his criteria seem ad hoc. He infers that BDSM players must be somehow damaged individuals. However, we have no idea of the natural, or free and spontaneous, development of human sexuality because early sex education is always socially controlled and even coercive. We have no idea what kind of sexuality Homo sapiens would develop were he and she fully unconstrained. Perhaps it would be wild, perhaps tame, and most likely promiscuous and bi-sexual. It may contain bestiality. The truth is that indigenous and aboriginal cultures employ wildly different sexual mores and practices. The Christian norms are not universal, nor is the Victorian heritage unquestionably natural, that much is clear. What is nearly universal is the multidimensional anxiety brought about by sex and sexuality in its non-intended audiences. It is true that all cultures control sex, even if Margaret Mead in Samoa did not realize it.[21]

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20 Nagel, 1979, p. 49.

21 A particularly impressive account is in G.H. Herdt, *The Guardians of the Flutes*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, pp. 234ff.; and R.M. Berndt and C.H. Berndt, *The First Australians*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1999, Ch. VI. Think of the controversy over Margaret Mead's vision of perfectly free consensual sex in Samoa inspired by D. Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological*

What Nagel means, as I see it, is that sexual perversions are trauma based obsessive-compulsive mental disorders. If the trauma causally determines one's sexual inclination, it will be repeated across all or most sexual contexts in one's life. Nagel's concept of sexual perversion is, thus, obsessive-compulsive; this is what he aims to explain – without mentioning or explicating this point. But, what if a pervert shows some flexibility in his abnormal preferences? Nagel is then in trouble. For instance, some S/M players freely switch between the roles of top and bottom, as Freud knows. Sometimes they like to watch. They are flexible even if sadism is a paradigm example of sexual perversions in SP. Compulsive rigidity is not a necessary condition of sexual perversity. Is it sufficient? Of course it is not. If I must kiss my wife in bed, I am not perverted only because of this.

Now, it is clear that sexual perversions are not necessarily rare or even uncommon. So we can forget the statistical meaning of abnormal. What about abnormal in the sense of violating a norm? This meaning fits the common idea of sexual perversion nicely, if we add like Freud that perversions are disgusting. As Nagel says, sex is always a regulated social affair. Sexual perversions are abnormal in the sense that they include sexual behaviour that violates important social norms. Perhaps sexual perversion designates sexual behaviour that breaks certain social norms of normal sexual behaviour. What if the norms is: Do not perform disgusting social acts, if the act is not vanilla sex? Such norms can be reasonable or unreasonable; popular or partisan; medical, religious, or legal; conventional or radical; traditional or novel; new or old. They may express a blind taboo, psychological disgust, elite opinion, medical community's scientific theory, or religious dogma – the opportunities are limitless. Moreover, the ideas of sexual perversion are malleable, as the homosexual narratives show. Another example is masturbation.[22] When norms change certain forms of sex get liberated and when this happens more and more people find their variety tempting. People want to explore new possibilities because they feel free and unconstrained, which is fun. Incidentally, Nagel stumbles when he evaluates the status of homosexuality and sadism. Sadism is first a perversion "if anything is" and then sadism is a "really difficult case" to evaluate. About homosexuality, he recognizes that homosexual sex can be as good as

Myth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983. Mead was a sensation and Freeman a scandal because so many people wanted to believe in "good" sex at least in one place in the world; also see (https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-imprinted-brain/201702/margaret-mead-and-the-great-samoan-nurture-hoax). Nagel's good sex is Mead's Samoan sex.

22 M. Foucault pays attention to the childhood masturbation panic in early 1900s, see his *Abnormal.* Tr. G. Burgchell. London: Verso, 2003, Ch. 5.

heterosexual but then he says that it is possible that it is unnatural, depending on the genesis of the relevant desire. This is to say that of two similar sexual acts one may be perverted and one normal. The ambiguity is startling.

Some Probable Reasons for the Success of SP

Why did so many editors want to reprint SP? Why is it constantly mentioned in literature on sex? Why has SP been so enviably successful and still is? Who are the readers of the paper? Do people read it? How do they see it? What does it do to university students? These questions require an answer, because SP has its problems and shortcomings. It is a suggestive but carelessly argued paper. At the same time it obviously is an appealing piece of writing by a famous philosopher who has an excellent reputation all over the world, or at least wherever philosophy is studied and practiced. At the same time not many major philosophers have touched such issue as sex and sexuality, to say nothing of perversion, a taboo. The topic is more or less disgusting even in liberal countries, not in the sense that it could not be mentioned but in the sense that going too deep into case-studies, examples, and terminology is highly suspicious and also nauseating to many. SP avoids such pitfalls smoothly. It is written in a style that allows for no objection on the basis of obscenity. It is impossible to censor.

The main point, however, is that SP provides us with a reasoned conservative account of sexuality, its fringes, and those peculiar extensions that some of us still want to call perversions. SP is conservative, it detects an enemy, it says that the enemy is real, studies it, explains its genesis, and at least indirectly shows us the way out. This is done by telling what the ideal case of a sexual encounter is, or narrating the best sex. As we have seen, this is sex between undamaged strangers who fully recognize each other and derive their arousal and allegedly also their pleasure from the observation that they are able to excite each other sexually. This looks like a seductive scenario in the sense that both partners are fully equal, they interact in their mutual ways, and both partners have their full-fledged opportunity to sexual pleasure. Also, this scenario does not prescribe any special type of sexual activity, which may be anything you want and everything that is sexual and created via mutual recognition. This certainly allows for homosexuality but not for instance bestiality. However, Nagel certainly does not want to accept S/M, however consenting.

SP does not deserve the reputation it has. Perhaps the following facts explain its prolonged success: SP is written by a leading philosopher, SP deals

with a rare topic in the English language philosophy, the topic is superbly interesting and emotionally challenging, the argument is conservative and as such minimally disturbing, the style is so abstract that no nasty sexual images emerge, the concept of ideal sex is pleasing to both sexes, the ideal sex is for middle-class, healthy, young, nice people who visit suitable social venues, frequent the dating sites on the net in search of sex and companionship, and most importantly, nothing much is said about sexual perversions. We find no descriptive accounts of perverse sex or even their names. SP paints a picture in which sexual perversion is just a name and a philosopher's little tame game that can be discussed at the dinner table. You may not want to eat all those strange dishes, but those who want to do so you know are traumatized. It is a consoling thought. They are damaged persons. The final consolation to the reader is that no one chooses their perversions freely. You, an honest, good, normal, middle-class person, are safe. Perversity always is the problem of the Other. You may want strange things in bed but it does not matter because you are not traumatized and you know it.

Finally, this is the main attraction of SP: it recommends sex as a moral affair that is intimately connected to recognition and love, which the good people enjoy more than the bad. Nagel preaches a moralistic model that also suits religious educators and responsible editors who want to look cool, calm, controlled, and enlightened. What has this to do with perversions and sexual perverts? Practically nothing, as I have tried to argue. If SP is not read critically its effect will be, as far as I can see, negative from the point of view of sexual liberty and mutual understanding between people of diverse sexual preferences and inclinations. I do not think we should label anyone psychologically injured and his or her sexual inclinations unnatural without thinking what we are doing. As I said, the basic rule is, also in the modern sexual jungle, condemn those who maltreat others and help those who suffer because of their own personal inclinations.[23] That is all that should interest us. Let us not try to rationalize and promote personal prejudices about sex.[24]

23 Think of the poor narcissists, Berman, 1990, p. 18: "Behind narcissists' self-love lies self-hate, behind their grandiosity lies insecurity."

24 Even sexual therapists are not innocent of this fallacy. J. Virtanen in his sexology textbook *Kliininen sexologia* (Clinical Sexology) (Helsinki: WSOY, 2001) notices that some women find it easier to reach orgasm when their movements during sex are forcefully restricted. If this is a necessary condition for an orgasm, he says, the person is paraphilic (p. 115). This is a dubious claim.

Cases of Criticism

Narcissism: A narcissist is psychologically incapable of the SP style best sex, this should be obvious, because her focus is always solely on herself. However, narcissism is not a sexual perversion; it is an ego or character problem. Now, according to SP, the best sex begins when you are aroused by your perception that the other is aroused because of you. Such a perception is a narcissist reaction, which is clear when one thinks of a non-veridical perception of the other. It is not necessary for you to be a proper narcissistic personality in order to find such a perception superbly appealing, although it helps. It may just appeal to your narcissist side. The same can be said about the other. Therefore, the first steps towards good sex are best taken by two proto-narcissists. Other persons are in trouble if they are unable to believe that they are so sexually attractive that such an attractive other could be serious in his/her admiration.

Now, think of what happens when you end up in bed with your new admirer. According to SP, you now get your enjoyment out of the situation where you please the other and bring about the maximal sexual pleasure to her, and she feels the same. In this case, you and the other behave like altruists for whom the pleasure of the other is the most important thing. What you aim at is the veridical perception that the other enjoys you in bed. The other thinks in the same way, so you two enjoy great and even ideal sex. Under these conditions the sexual encounter works well, as SP emphasizes. However, the psychological demands on you and the other obviously make an inconsistent set: a narcissist is now supposed to convert into an altruist. Your focus will change from yourself (he/she likes me) to your partner (I want to please him/her) so that the beginning calls for a narcissist and the end for an altruist. People can do that only if they are not true narcissists, otherwise they cannot. In this way the requirements are mutually incompatible. I do not think the quest for the presentation of such a double personality is a good idea. Think of an advice given to a young person: start as a narcissist and then switch over to altruism, and all will be fine, your partner will like you.

Sexual Pleasure: If I derive my sexual enjoyment in bed from pleasing the other, the situation looks abnormal, if not perverted. I please the other in bed when I should take care of my own sexual pleasure. I do not go to bed with the other to please her or see her react to my action for the simple reason that this is not a sexual motive. I go to bed in order the get my maximal sexual pleasure out of the situation, but given that I am a moral person, I do not want to satisfy myself regardless of the other's satisfaction, and certainly not at the expense of the other. In the first case I am a sexual predator and in the second an exploiter. My motive for having sex is sexual pleasure even if the morally laudable motive

for having sex also recognises the other's similar interests. The bottom line is, therefore, that when I go to bed with the other I want sexual pleasure. Nagel writes, mysteriously, "if enjoyment is considered very important" in good sex; how could it not be?[25]

Is Nagel's SP style altruism in bed a perversion? It is not, according to how I understand perversions. However, according to the SP model of sexual perversion the matter is not so simple. Suppose we locate a psychological trauma in the life history of the sexual altruist that explains why he is not primarily seeking for his own sexual pleasure but that of the other and deriving his enjoyment from it. Because of his trauma he, as an altruist, is incapable of getting pleasure directly from sex. He always prefers the other's enjoyment to his own sexual pleasure. This just might qualify him as a sexual pervert. You must not go to bed to please the other. Your sexual behaviour is then unnatural. To exaggerate a little, you are the other's consenting sexual slave.

Explanation of Sexual Perversions: What is wrong with the explanation of the origin of sexual perversion in SP? Suppose a trauma T explains sexual perversion P. This is possible but only if we know what P is, and SP says precious little about perversions, actually so little we do not know what they look like. However, if you want to use the SP model of their explanation you must first correlate T and P. If the correlation is high enough you may proceed towards showing that T brings about P. The trouble is that SP never says what P is like and thus we cannot establish any correlation between T and P. We only learn that sadism is a perverse preference but not what the fully identifying description of sadism is. Therefore, SP can say only this much: given that you can identify the forms of sexual perversion you also can identify their causal history, which is explicable in terms of a mental trauma. Each trauma causally produces its corresponding perversion. Such an explanatory method is fine, but as I said you must first provide a descriptive account of perversions, which SP definitely fails to do. You cannot explain what you do not know.

Think of two persons A and B who share exactly the same sexual inclinations and the relevant behavioural patterns, say, they are sadists. A has suffered an identifiable and verifiable psychological trauma at some point of his early life, which explains his sexual perversion. B's history does not contain any similar traumatic events but yet he is a compulsive sadist, too. According to Nagel, we must say that B is not a sexual pervert, unlike A. In B's case her sadism is, say, a socially learned bad habit and thus we cannot call her a sexual pervert. It follows that often, or perhaps in most cases, we do not know whether a sadist is sexually perverted, because we cannot find a trauma in one's life history, or we

25 Nagel, 1979, p. 52.

cannot prove that his trauma is responsible for a sexual perversion this person happens to exhibit. The cause of the phenomenon is not part of the meaning of the phenomenon. If you break your leg by falling at home or on the football field, it is still just a broken leg. If you want to know what a broken leg is, it is not enough to talk about football games and say a broken leg is what you get when you play football. I should not call a doctor and say I have what one gets on the football field. She wants to know what I have.

Cultural relativism vs. scientific explanation: Nagel says that all cultures draw a distinction between good and bad sex, or normal or natural and twisted or perverted sex, although the patterns of good sex varies widely between the cultures. In our Christian, post-Victorian cultural environment we call tit-for-tat arousal based vanilla sex (V) normal and natural. What a happy co-incidence it is that we can show scientifically that non-traumatized and undamaged persons tend to develop in this direction. Psychological trauma and developmental damage explain perverted character and desires, say, X.

Now, suppose that, in a temporally or ethnically distant culture K, people appreciate sexual behaviour X and condemn V. Scientifically speaking it follows that the members of K are somehow damaged individuals because only the relevant damage brings about such behaviour. It is true that distant cultures have social norms that deviate from our norms. This may show that perversion is a substantial concept but it also shows that the members of those cultures are psychological damaged perverts. The question is, how can we help them and make them understand the value of V. These people are simply wrong when they disapprove and condemn V and prefer X. I find this conclusion rather alarming. One should not mix cultural relativism and scientific objectivism.

In sum: I desire X and, therefore, I am a pervert in the scientific sense that I am a damaged individual. In culture K, person P desires X and, therefore P is a pervert, too. P is a damaged individual. However, P has learned that X is good sex, but he is wrong. I have learned that X is not good sex and I am right. Yet, I cannot control my desires, which is typical of my illness.

Best sex: In the last two pages Nagel panics and attempts to save face. He as if condemned perversions in the main argument of the SP, but now he wants to take it all back. He said earlier that perverted sex, or sex by perverts, cannot be ideal sex. Now he writes, "It is not clear that unperverted sex is necessarily *preferable* to the perversions." This is to say, perverts can enjoy sex, or have as good sex as normal people, which is a strange idea. If a pervert is always and necessarily a damaged person, how can his/her sex be ideally good? If a pervert is a person who is damaged by the relevant trauma but their sex life is perfect, why speak of trauma at all? Can I really say, I am a damaged person but it does not matter? What is a damage that has no consequences? Of course, a pervert

may like sadomasochistic games or homosexual encounters, unlike the normal person, but what does this matter if both fully enjoy beautiful sex?

In the end, SP self-destructs:

> [E]ven someone who believed, for example, that homosexuality was a perversion could admit a distinction between better and worse homosexual sex, and might even allow that good homosexual sex could be better *sex* than not very good unperverted sex. If this is correct, it supports the position that, if judgements of perversion are viable at all, they represent only one aspect of the possible evaluation of sex, even *qua sex.*[26]

Even if the idea of perversion were valid, which is not certain, it does matter when we discuss sex. Why Nagel did write SP, becomes unclear. And he forgets that in SP he really discusses perverts, who are damaged individuals, not perversions, like Freud. Nagel does not evaluate sex or sexual behaviour; on the contrary, he wants to identify some damaged persons. Finally, the point is not what people believe about perverted sex because Nagel has given an objective and scientific criterion for identifying perverts among us. Homosexuality is perverted sex if homosexuals can be shown to be damaged by a developmental trauma. SP may be a popular read but its basic tenet is sinister. SP condemns certain persons by naming those perverts, and this without offering even one thought to healing. It is not enough to say that a damaged individual can have good sex, as long as it is bad sex. And it is bad sex because perversion is at the same time a substantial and pejorative term. The last two pages of SP indicate that Nagel himself comes close to realizing these problems, but all he does is to put up a smokescreen.

Conclusion: Anxious Desires

To conclude, let me quote two authors, first a self-confessed kinky person, a submissive woman, and the second, an author, scholar, and cultural critic. Kacie Cunningham defends her own lifestyle as follows; I have a hard time imagining a good counterargument.

> So, are submissives born or made? The answer, as near as I can tell, is that submissives are, like all other people, created by the environment out of the raw material which is provided by nature. Some people would

26 Nagel, 1979, p. 52.

> certainly like to claim that we are deviants, warped by childhood trauma, but I reject that. I say that we are what we are, regardless of how we got to be this way, and all that really matters is that we accept – and celebrate – ourselves.[27]

However, a counterargument can be suggested. What could it be and how to evaluate it? Jon Nuttall writes:

> [T]here need be nothing wrong with sexual activity which is not normal. As I am using the term, to describe a sexual activity as perverted is to describe it as being other than what sex should be like and not simply other than what it is actually like. Perverted activities may or may not be normal [...]; they are, however, activities which I want to single out as being wrong [...]. The term "perverted," I suggest, is primarily a term to describe a person's moral character.[28]

This is to say D/S is, or at least may be perverted and therefore morally wrong, hence Cunningham's argument may look suspicious. However, to say that perversions are what sex should not be like, and then say that the should here is the moral should, looks so strange that we need not take is seriously. What I am worried about is that Nuttall's book is a textbook. I do not think one can define perversion as sex that is morally wrong. The resulting list of perverted sexual desires will be too strange to be useful or even interesting. What Cunningham is saying is, leave me alone and let me live my life; certainly, the worst intrusion is to start asking whether she is an immoral character or not. Her own book provides ample proof to the effect that she is a good person.

Nuttall and Nagel reason in the same problematic way. What Nuttall should do is first to give an independent characterization of perverse sex, and then identify its typical features that make it morally wrong. But what he actually does is to define perversion as morally wrong and then classify all sexual desires and practices as perverse and not perverse on that basis. I wonder what this classification would be like. I must confess I have no idea. We saw above that Nagel reasons in this way, too. Think of the wide definition of rape today. Would Nuttall really call all those who are condemned of rape in, say, Sweden perverts?

Ronald Pearsall writes in his remarkable book on Victorian sex and sexuality:

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27 K. Cunningham, *Conquer Me*. Eugene, OR: Greenery Press, 2012, p. 12.

28 Nuttall, 1993, p. 76.

> Perversion is a word that has no final meaning. What might be a perversion in one century can be normal in the following. It helps to consider it as a subjective term, denude it of its ethical overtones, and ask of a specific perversion: What physical harm it does? Then ask a subsequent question: What psychological harm does it do *beyond satisfying the wishes of the protagonists?*[29]

Pearsall is right: it does not make sense to say that a satisfied desire or wish alone may constitute that kind of psychological harm against which any ethically responsible person should fight – in a paternalistic fashion. Certainly one should not harm others in the course of sexual play and one may want to be careful with pleasures that harm the person herself. But if she ardently desires something that she knows harms herself in a way that she does not desire, she needs psychiatric help. This is the only such case I can imagine. Think for instance of cosmetic amputations. If one self-consistently wants them, the injury does not constitute harm to oneself. However, one may want the amputations when one does not accept the related injury, which entails harm to self. This leads to cognitive dissonance and in the long run to painful anxiety. Then it is mad to want cosmetic amputations, and perhaps, perhaps, perverted, too.

My conclusion is closely related to what Igor Primoratz says, namely, perversion is a "concept best discarded."[30] If this is to say that the concept should be neither used nor mentioned, then we agree. Today we must not use or mention racist terms and the same applies to perversion. The idea of perversion is subjective, culturally and historically relative, pejorative, essentially contested, and inherently discriminatory. Originally it is a hate concept. Moreover one should not assume it covers unethical behaviour, criminal action, or mental illness.

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29 R. Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality*. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1971, p. 422; original italics.

30 I. Primoratz, *Ethics and Sex*. London: Routledge, 1999, p. 63. Incidentally, he says that M. de Sade discards the concept of perversion. This is not quite true because he discusses sexual crimes (*Les Crimes de l'Amour*), and according to him, it is this that makes sex worthwhile. Vanilla sex is worthless.

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